

William Shakespeare

**The Tragedy
of
King Lear**

**With New and Updated
Critical Essays
and a Revised Bibliography**

Edited by Russell Fraser

THE SIGNET CLASSIC SHAKESPEARE
General Editor: Sylvan Barnet



A SIGNET CLASSIC

William Shakespeare

**The Tragedy
of
King Lear**

**With New and Updated
Critical Essays
and a Revised Bibliography**

Edited by Russell Fraser

THE SIGNET CLASSIC SHAKESPEARE
General Editor: Sylvan Barnet



A SIGNET CLASSIC

OceanofPDF.com

Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[Introduction](#)

[The Tragedy of King Lear - ACT 1](#)

[ACT 2](#)

[ACT 3](#)

[ACT 4](#)

[ACT 5](#)

[Textual Note](#)

[The Date and Sources of King Lear](#)

[From The True Chronicle History of King Leir](#)

[Commentaries](#)

[A. C. BRADLEY](#)

[HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER](#)

[MAYNARD MACK](#)

[LINDA BAMBER](#)

[JOHN RUSSELL BROWN](#)

[SYLVAN BARNET](#)

[Suggested References](#)

[OceanofPDF.com](#)

M. William Shak-spere:

HIS
True Chronicle Historie of the life and
death of King L E A R and his three
Daughters.

With the vnfortunate life of Edgar, sonne
and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his
fullen and assumed humor of
TOM of Bedlam:

*As it was played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall vpon
S. Stephens night in Christmas Hollidayer.*

By his Maiesties seruants playing vniually at the Gloabe
on the Banckes side.



LONDON,

Printed for Nathaniel Butter, and are to be sold at his Shop in Pauls
Church-yard at the signe of the Pide Ball neere
St. Dunstons Church. 1608.

Title page of Q1 (1608), the earliest version of *King Lear*

OceanofPDF.com

William Shakespeare

The Tragedy
of
King Lear

With New and Updated
Critical Essays
and a Revised Bibliography

Edited by Russell Fraser

THE SIGNET CLASSIC SHAKESPEARE
General Editor: Sylvan Barnet



A SIGNET CLASSIC

OceanofPDF.com

This book is for Allan Macdonald
Requiescat a labore
Doloroso et amore

OceanofPDF.com

SIGNET CLASSIC

Published by New American Library, a division of
Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street,
New York, New York 10014, USA
Penguin Group (Canada), 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto,
Ontario M4V 3B2, Canada (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)
Penguin Books Ltd., 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England
Penguin Ireland, 25 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2,
Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd.)
Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124,
Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty. Ltd.)
Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd., 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park,
New Delhi - 110 017, India
Penguin Group (NZ), cnr Airborne and Rosedale Roads, Albany,
Auckland 1310, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd.)
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty.) Ltd., 24 Sturdee Avenue,
Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Copyright © Russell Fraser, 1963
Copyright © Sylvan Barnet, 1963, 1986, 1987, 1998
All rights reserved
eISBN : 978-1-101-14227-1

 REGISTERED TRADEMARK—MARCA REGISTRADA

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 97-61986

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

The scanning, uploading, and distribution of this book via the Internet or via any other means without the permission of the publisher is illegal and punishable by law. Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

<http://us.penguingroup.com>

OceanofPDF.com

Shakespeare: An Overview

Biographical Sketch

Between the record of his baptism in Stratford on 26 April 1564 and the record of his burial in Stratford on 25 April 1616, some forty official documents name Shakespeare, and many others name his parents, his children, and his grandchildren. Further, there are at least fifty literary references to him in the works of his contemporaries. More facts are known about William Shakespeare than about any other playwright of the period except Ben Jonson. The facts should, however, be distinguished from the legends. The latter, inevitably more engaging and better known, tell us that the Stratford boy killed a calf in high style, poached deer and rabbits, and was forced to flee to London, where he held horses outside a playhouse. These traditions are only traditions; they may be true, but no evidence supports them, and it is well to stick to the facts.

Mary Arden, the dramatist's mother, was the daughter of a substantial landowner; about 1557 she married John Shakespeare, a tanner, glove-maker, and trader in wool, grain, and other farm commodities. In 1557 John Shakespeare was a member of the council (the governing body of Stratford), in 1558 a constable of the borough, in 1561 one of the two town chamberlains, in 1565 an alderman (entitling him to the appellation of "Mr."), in 1568 high bailiff—the town's highest political office, equivalent to mayor. After 1577, for an unknown reason he drops out of local politics. What is known is that he had to mortgage his wife's property, and that he was involved in serious litigation.

The birthday of William Shakespeare, the third child and the eldest son of this locally prominent man, is unrecorded, but the Stratford parish register records that the infant was baptized on 26 April 1564. (It is quite possible that he was born on 23 April, but this date has probably been assigned by tradition because it is the date on which, fifty-two years later, he died, and perhaps because it is the feast day of St. George, patron saint of England.) The attendance records of the Stratford grammar school of the period are not extant, but it is reasonable to assume that the son of a prominent local official attended the free school—it had been established for the purpose of educating males precisely of his class—and received substantial training in Latin. The masters of the school from Shakespeare's seventh to fifteenth years held Oxford degrees; the Elizabethan curriculum excluded mathematics and the natural sciences but taught a good deal of Latin rhetoric, logic, and literature, including plays by Plautus, Terence, and Seneca.

On 27 November 1582 a marriage license was issued for the marriage of Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. The couple had a daughter, Susanna, in May 1583. Perhaps the marriage was necessary, but perhaps the couple had earlier engaged, in the presence of witnesses, in a formal "troth plight" which would render their children legitimate even if no further ceremony were performed. In February 1585, Anne Hathaway bore Shakespeare twins, Hamnet and Judith.

That Shakespeare was born is excellent; that he married and had children is pleasant; but that we know nothing about his departure from Stratford to London or about the beginning of his theatrical career is lamentable and must be admitted. We would gladly sacrifice details about his children's baptism for details about his earliest days in the theater. Perhaps the poaching episode is true (but it is first reported almost a century after Shakespeare's death), or perhaps he left Stratford to be a schoolmaster, as another

tradition holds; perhaps he was moved (like Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*) by

Such wind as scatters young men through the world,
To seek their fortunes farther than at home
Where small experience grows. (1.2.49-51)

In 1592, thanks to the cantankerousness of Robert Greene, we have our first reference, a snarling one, to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright. Greene, a graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge, had become a playwright and a pamphleteer in London, and in one of his pamphlets he warns three university-educated playwrights against an actor who has presumed to turn playwright:

There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers,
that with his *tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide*
supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank
verse as the best of you, and being an absolute
Johannes-factotum [i.e., jack-of all-trades] is in his
own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.

The reference to the player, as well as the allusion to Aesop's crow (who strutted in borrowed plumage, as an actor struts in fine words not his own), makes it clear that by this date Shakespeare had both acted and written. That Shakespeare is meant is indicated not only by *Shake-scene* but also by the parody of a line from one of Shakespeare's plays, *3 Henry VI*: "O, tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide" (1.4.137). If in 1592 Shakespeare was prominent enough to be attacked by an envious dramatist, he probably had served an apprenticeship in the theater for at least a few years.

In any case, although there are no extant references to Shakespeare between the record of the baptism of his twins in 1585 and Greene's hostile comment about "Shake-scene" in 1592, it is evident that during some of these "dark years" or "lost years" Shakespeare had acted and written. There

are a number of subsequent references to him as an actor. Documents indicate that in 1598 he is a “principal comedian,” in 1603 a “principal tragedian,” in 1608 he is one of the “men players.” (We do not have, however, any solid information about which roles he may have played; later traditions say he played Adam in *As You Like It* and the ghost in *Hamlet*, but nothing supports the assertions. Probably his role as dramatist came to supersede his role as actor.) The profession of actor was not for a gentleman, and it occasionally drew the scorn of university men like Greene who resented writing speeches for persons less educated than themselves, but it was respectable enough; players, if prosperous, were in effect members of the bourgeoisie, and there is nothing to suggest that Stratford considered William Shakespeare less than a solid citizen. When, in 1596, the Shakespeares were granted a coat of arms—i.e., the right to be considered gentlemen—the grant was made to Shakespeare’s father, but probably William Shakespeare had arranged the matter on his own behalf. In subsequent transactions he is occasionally styled a gentleman.

Although in 1593 and 1594 Shakespeare published two narrative poems dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, and may well have written most or all of his sonnets in the middle nineties, Shakespeare’s literary activity seems to have been almost entirely devoted to the theater. (It may be significant that the two narrative poems were written in years when the plague closed the theaters for several months.) In 1594 he was a charter member of a theatrical company called the Chamberlain’s Men, which in 1603 became the royal company, the King’s Men, making Shakespeare the king’s playwright. Until he retired to Stratford (about 1611, apparently), he was with this remarkably stable company. From 1599 the company acted primarily at the Globe theater, in which Shakespeare held a one-tenth interest. Other Elizabethan dramatists are known to have acted, but

no other is known also to have been entitled to a share of the profits.

Shakespeare's first eight published plays did not have his name on them, but this is not remarkable; the most popular play of the period, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, went through many editions without naming Kyd, and Kyd's authorship is known only because a book on the profession of acting happens to quote (and attribute to Kyd) some lines on the interest of Roman emperors in the drama. What is remarkable is that after 1598 Shakespeare's name commonly appears on printed plays—some of which are not his. Presumably his name was a drawing card, and publishers used it to attract potential buyers. Another indication of his popularity comes from Francis Meres, author of *Palladis Tamia: Wit's Treasury* (1598). In this anthology of snippets accompanied by an essay on literature, many playwrights are mentioned, but Shakespeare's name occurs more often than any other, and Shakespeare is the only playwright whose plays are listed.

From his acting, his play writing, and his share in a playhouse, Shakespeare seems to have made considerable money. He put it to work, making substantial investments in Stratford real estate. As early as 1597 he bought New Place, the second-largest house in Stratford. His family moved in soon afterward, and the house remained in the family until a granddaughter died in 1670. When Shakespeare made his will in 1616, less than a month before he died, he sought to leave his property intact to his descendants. Of small bequests to relatives and to friends (including three actors, Richard Burbage, John Heminges, and Henry Condell), that to his wife of the second-best bed has provoked the most comment. It has sometimes been taken as a sign of an unhappy marriage (other supposed signs are the apparently hasty marriage, his wife's seniority of eight years, and his residence in London without his family). Perhaps the second-best bed was the bed the couple had slept in, the best bed

being reserved for visitors. In any case, had Shakespeare not excepted it, the bed would have gone (with the rest of his household possessions) to his daughter and her husband.

On 25 April 1616 Shakespeare was buried within the chancel of the church at Stratford. An unattractive monument to his memory, placed on a wall near the grave, says that he died on 23 April. Over the grave itself are the lines, perhaps by Shakespeare, that (more than his literary fame) have kept his bones undisturbed in the crowded burial ground where old bones were often dislodged to make way for new:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blessed be the man that spares these stones
And cursed be he that moves my bones.

A Note on the Anti-Stratfordians, Especially Baconians and Oxfordians

Not until 1769—more than a hundred and fifty years after Shakespeare's death—is there any record of anyone expressing doubt about Shakespeare's authorship of the plays and poems. In 1769, however, Herbert Lawrence nominated Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in *The Life and Adventures of Common Sense*. Since then, at least two dozen other nominees have been offered, including Christopher Marlowe, Sir Walter Raleigh, Queen Elizabeth I, and Edward de Vere, 17th earl of Oxford. The impulse behind all anti-Stratfordian movements is the scarcely concealed snobbish opinion that "the man from Stratford" simply could not have written the plays because he was a country fellow without a university education and without access to high society. Anyone, the argument goes, who

used so many legal terms, medical terms, nautical terms, and so forth, and who showed some familiarity with classical writing, must have attended a university, and anyone who knew so much about courtly elegance and courtly deceit must himself have moved among courtiers. The plays do indeed reveal an author whose interests were exceptionally broad, but specialists in any given field—law, medicine, arms and armor, and so on—soon find that the plays do not reveal deep knowledge in specialized matters; indeed, the playwright often gets technical details wrong.

The claim on behalf of Bacon, forgotten almost as soon as it was put forth in 1769, was independently reasserted by Joseph C. Hart in 1848. In 1856 it was reaffirmed by W. H. Smith in a book, and also by Delia Bacon in an article; in 1857 Delia Bacon published a book, arguing that Francis Bacon had directed a group of intellectuals who wrote the plays.

Francis Bacon's claim has largely faded, perhaps because it was advanced with such evident craziness by Ignatius Donnelly, who in *The Great Cryptogram* (1888) claimed to break a code in the plays that proved Bacon had written not only the plays attributed to Shakespeare but also other Renaissance works, for instance the plays of Christopher Marlowe and the essays of Montaigne.

Consider the last two lines of the Epilogue in *The Tempest*:

As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

What was Shakespeare—sorry, Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam—*really* saying in these two lines? According to Baconians, the lines are an anagram reading, “Tempest of Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam; do ye ne’er divulge me, ye words.” Ingenious, and it is a pity that in the quotation the letter a appears only twice in the cryptogram, whereas in the deciphered message it appears three times. Oh, no

problem; just alter “Verulam” to “Verul’m” and it works out very nicely.

Most people understand that with sufficient ingenuity one can torture any text and find in it what one wishes. For instance: Did Shakespeare have a hand in the King James Version of the Bible? It was nearing completion in 1610, when Shakespeare was forty-six years old. If you look at the 46th Psalm and count forward for forty-six words, you will find the word *shake*. Now if you go to the end of the psalm and count backward forty-six words, you will find the word *spear*. Clear evidence, according to some, that Shakespeare slyly left his mark in the book.

Bacon’s candidacy has largely been replaced in the twentieth century by the candidacy of Edward de Vere (1550-1604), 17th earl of Oxford. The basic ideas behind the Oxford theory, advanced at greatest length by Dorothy and Charlton Ogburn in *This Star of England* (1952, rev. 1955), a book of 1297 pages, and by Charlton Ogburn in *The Mysterious William Shakespeare* (1984), a book of 892 pages, are these: (1) The man from Stratford could not possibly have had the mental equipment and the experience to have written the plays—only a courtier could have written them; (2) Oxford had the requisite background (social position, education, years at Queen Elizabeth’s court); (3) Oxford did not wish his authorship to be known for two basic reasons: writing for the public theater was a vulgar pursuit, and the plays show so much courtly and royal disreputable behavior that they would have compromised Oxford’s position at court. Oxfordians offer countless details to support the claim. For example, Hamlet’s phrase “that ever I was born to set it right” (1.5.89) barely conceals “E. Ver, I was born to set it right,” an unambiguous announcement of de Vere’s authorship, according to *This Star of England* (p. 654). A second example: Consider Ben Jonson’s poem entitled “To the Memory of My Beloved Master William Shakespeare,”

prefixed to the first collected edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1623. According to Oxfordians, when Jonson in this poem speaks of the author of the plays as the "swan of Avon," he is alluding not to William Shakespeare, who was born and died in Stratford-on-Avon and who throughout his adult life owned property there; rather, he is alluding to Oxford, who, the Ogburns say, used "William Shakespeare" as his pen name, and whose manor at Bilton was on the Avon River. Oxfordians do not offer any evidence that Oxford took a pen name, and they do not mention that Oxford had sold the manor in 1581, forty-two years before Jonson wrote his poem. Surely a reference to the Shakespeare who was born in Stratford, who had returned to Stratford, and who had died there only seven years before Jonson wrote the poem is more plausible. And exactly why Jonson, who elsewhere also spoke of Shakespeare as a playwright, and why Heminges and Condell, who had acted with Shakespeare for about twenty years, should speak of Shakespeare as the author in their dedication in the 1623 volume of collected plays is never adequately explained by Oxfordians. Either Jonson, Heminges and Condell, and numerous others were in on the conspiracy, or they were all duped—equally unlikely alternatives. Another difficulty in the Oxford theory is that Oxford died in 1604, and some of the plays are clearly indebted to works and events later than 1604. Among the Oxfordian responses are: At his death Oxford left some plays, and in later years these were touched up by hacks, who added the material that points to later dates. *The Tempest*, almost universally regarded as one of Shakespeare's greatest plays and pretty clearly dated to 1611, does indeed date from a period after the death of Oxford, but it is a crude piece of work that should not be included in the canon of works by Oxford.

The anti-Stratfordians, in addition to assuming that the author must have been a man of rank and a university man, usually assume two conspiracies: (1) a conspiracy in

Elizabethan and Jacobean times, in which a surprisingly large number of persons connected with the theater knew that the actor Shakespeare did not write the plays attributed to him but for some reason or other pretended that he did; (2) a conspiracy of today's Stratfordians, the professors who teach Shakespeare in the colleges and universities, who are said to have a vested interest in preserving Shakespeare as the author of the plays they teach. In fact, (1) it is inconceivable that the secret of Shakespeare's non-authorship could have been preserved by all of the people who supposedly were in on the conspiracy, and (2) academic fame awaits any scholar today who can disprove Shakespeare's authorship.

The Stratfordian case is convincing not only because hundreds or even thousands of anti-Stratford arguments—of the sort that say “ever I was born” has the secret double meaning “E. Ver, I was born”—add up to nothing at all but also because irrefutable evidence connects the man from Stratford with the London theater and with the authorship of particular plays. The anti-Stratfordians do not seem to understand that it is not enough to dismiss the Stratford case by saying that a fellow from the provinces simply couldn't have written the plays. Nor do they understand that it is not enough to dismiss all of the evidence connecting Shakespeare with the plays by asserting that it is perjured.

The Shakespeare Canon

We return to William Shakespeare. Thirty-seven plays as well as some nondramatic poems are generally held to constitute the Shakespeare canon, the body of authentic works. The exact dates of composition of most of the works are highly uncertain, but evidence of a starting point and/or of a final limiting point often provides a framework for informed guessing. For example, *Richard II* cannot be earlier

than 1595, the publication date of some material to which it is indebted; *The Merchant of Venice* cannot be later than 1598, the year Francis Meres mentioned it. Sometimes arguments for a date hang on an alleged topical allusion, such as the lines about the unseasonable weather in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.1.81-117, but such an allusion, if indeed it is an allusion to an event in the real world, can be variously interpreted, and in any case there is always the possibility that a topical allusion was inserted years later, to bring the play up to date. (The issue of alterations in a text between the time that Shakespeare drafted it and the time that it was printed—alterations due to censorship or playhouse practice or Shakespeare's own second thoughts—will be discussed in "The Play Text as a Collaboration" later in this overview.) Dates are often attributed on the basis of style, and although conjectures about style usually rest on other conjectures (such as Shakespeare's development as a playwright, or the appropriateness of lines to character), sooner or later one must rely on one's literary sense. There is no documentary proof, for example, that *Othello* is not as early as *Romeo and Juliet*, but one feels that *Othello* is a later, more mature work, and because the first record of its performance is 1604, one is glad enough to set its composition at that date and not push it back into Shakespeare's early years. (*Romeo and Juliet* was first published in 1597, but evidence suggests that it was written a little earlier.) The following chronology, then, is indebted not only to facts but also to informed guesswork and sensitivity. The dates, necessarily imprecise for some works, indicate something like a scholarly consensus concerning the time of original composition. Some plays show evidence of later revision.

Plays. The first collected edition of Shakespeare, published in 1623, included thirty-six plays. These are all accepted as

Shakespeare's, though for one of them, *Henry VIII*, he is thought to have had a collaborator. A thirty-seventh play, *Pericles*, published in 1609 and attributed to Shakespeare on the title page, is also widely accepted as being partly by Shakespeare even though it is not included in the 1623 volume. Still another play not in the 1623 volume, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, was first published in 1634, with a title page attributing it to John Fletcher and Shakespeare. Probably most students of the subject now believe that Shakespeare did indeed have a hand in it. Of the remaining plays attributed at one time or another to Shakespeare, only one, *Edward III*, anonymously published in 1596, is now regarded by some scholars as a serious candidate. The prevailing opinion, however, is that this rather simple-minded play is not Shakespeare's; at most he may have revised some passages, chiefly scenes with the Countess of Salisbury. We include *The Two Noble Kinsmen* but do not include *Edward III* in the following list.

1588–94	<i>The Comedy of Errors</i>
1588–94	<i>Love's Labor's Lost</i>
1589–91	<i>2 Henry VI</i>
1590–91	<i>3 Henry VI</i>
1589–92	<i>1 Henry VI</i>
1592–93	<i>Richard III</i>
1589–94	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
1593–94	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
1592–94	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>
1594–96	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
1595	<i>Richard II</i>
1595–96	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
1596–97	<i>King John</i>
1594–96	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
1596–97	<i>1 Henry IV</i>
1597	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
1597–98	<i>2 Henry IV</i>
1598–99	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
1598–99	<i>Henry V</i>
1599	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
1599–1600	<i>As You Like It</i>
1599–1600	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
1600–1601	<i>Hamlet</i>
1601–1602	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
1602–1604	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
1603–1604	<i>Othello</i>
1604	<i>Measure for Measure</i>
1605–1606	<i>King Lear</i>
1605–1606	<i>Macbeth</i>
1606–1607	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
1605–1608	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
1607–1608	<i>Coriolanus</i>
1607–1608	<i>Pericles</i>
1609–10	<i>Cymbeline</i>
1610–11	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>
1611	<i>The Tempest</i>
1612–13	<i>Henry VIII</i>
1613	<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>

Poems. In 1989 Donald W. Foster published a book in which he argued that "A Funeral Elegy for Master William Peter," published in 1612, ascribed only to the initials W.S., *may* be by Shakespeare. Foster later published an article in a scholarly journal, *PMLA* 111 (1996), in which he asserted the claim more positively. The evidence begins with the initials, and includes the fact that the publisher and the printer of the elegy had published Shakespeare's *Sonnets* in 1609. But

such facts add up to rather little, especially because no one has found any connection between Shakespeare and William Peter (an Oxford graduate about whom little is known, who was murdered at the age of twenty-nine). The argument is based chiefly on statistical examinations of word patterns, which are said to correlate with Shakespeare's known work. Despite such correlations, however, many readers feel that the poem does not sound like Shakespeare. True, Shakespeare has a great range of styles, but his work is consistently imaginative and interesting. Many readers find neither of these qualities in "A Funeral Elegy."

1592–93	<i>Venus and Adonis</i>
1593–94	<i>The Rape of Lucrece</i>
1593–1600	<i>Sonnets</i>
1600–1601	<i>The Phoenix and the Turtle</i>

Shakespeare's English

1. Spelling and Pronunciation. From the philologist's point of view, Shakespeare's English is modern English. It requires footnotes, but the inexperienced reader can comprehend substantial passages with very little help, whereas for the same reader Chaucer's Middle English is a foreign language. By the beginning of the fifteenth century the chief grammatical changes in English had taken place, and the final unaccented -e of Middle English had been lost (though it survives even today in spelling, as in *name*); during the fifteenth century the dialect of London, the commercial and political center, gradually displaced the provincial dialects, at least in writing; by the end of the century, printing had helped to regularize and stabilize the language, especially spelling. Elizabethan spelling may seem erratic to us (there were dozens of spellings of *Shakespeare*, and a simple word like *been* was also spelled *beene* and *bin*), but it had much

in common with our spelling. Elizabethan spelling was conservative in that for the most part it reflected an older pronunciation (Middle English) rather than the sound of the language as it was then spoken, just as our spelling continues to reflect medieval pronunciation—most obviously in the now silent but formerly pronounced letters in a word such as *knight*. Elizabethan pronunciation, though not identical with ours, was much closer to ours than to that of the Middle Ages. Incidentally, though no one can be certain about what Elizabethan English sounded like, specialists tend to believe it was rather like the speech of a modern stage Irishman (time apparently was pronounced *toime*, old pronounced *awld*, *day* pronounced *die*, and *join* pronounced *jine*) and not at all like the Oxford speech that most of us think it was.

An awareness of the difference between our pronunciation and Shakespeare's is crucial in three areas—in accent, or number of syllables (many metrically regular lines may look irregular to us); in rhymes (which may not look like rhymes); and in puns (which may not look like puns). Examples will be useful. Some words that were at least on occasion stressed differently from today are *aspèct*, *còmplete*, *fòrlorn*, *revènue*, and *sepùlcher*. Words that sometimes had an additional syllable are *emp[e]ress*, *Hen[e]ry*, *mon[e]th*, and *villain* (three syllables, *vil-lay-in*). An additional syllable is often found in possessives, like *moon's* (pronounced *moones*) and in words ending in *-tion* or *-sion*. Words that had one less syllable than they now have are *needle* (pronounced *neel*) and *violet* (pronounced *vilet*). Among rhymes now lost are *one* with *loan*, *love* with *prove*, *beast* with *jest*, *eat* with *great*. (In reading, trust your sense of metrics and your ear, more than your eye.) An example of a pun that has become obliterated by a change in pronunciation is Falstaff's reply to Prince Hal's "Come, tell us your reason" in *1 Henry IV*: "Give you a reason on compulsion? If reasons were as plentiful as blackberries, I

would give no man a reason upon compulsion, I" (2.4.237-40). The *ea* in *reason* was pronounced rather like a long a, like the *ai* in *raisin*, hence the comparison with blackberries.

Puns are not merely attempts to be funny; like metaphors they often involve bringing into a meaningful relationship areas of experience normally seen as remote. In *2 Henry IV*, when Feeble is conscripted, he stoically says, "I care not. A man can die but once. We owe God a death" (3.2.242-43), punning on *debt*, which was the way *death* was pronounced. Here an enormously significant fact of life is put into simple commercial imagery, suggesting its commonplace quality. Shakespeare used the same pun earlier in *1 Henry IV*, when Prince Hal says to Falstaff, "Why, thou owest God a death," and Falstaff replies, "'Tis not due yet: I would be loath to pay him before his day. What need I be so forward with him that calls not on me?" (5.1.126-29).

Sometimes the puns reveal a delightful playfulness; sometimes they reveal aggressiveness, as when, replying to Claudius's "But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son," Hamlet says, "A little more than kin, and less than kind!" (1.2.64-65). These are Hamlet's first words in the play, and we already hear him warring verbally against Claudius. Hamlet's "less than kind" probably means (1) Hamlet is not of Claudius's family or nature, kind having the sense it still has in our word *mankind*; (2) Hamlet is not kindly (affectionately) disposed toward Claudius; (3) Claudius is not naturally (but rather unnaturally, in a legal sense incestuously) Hamlet's father. The puns evidently were not put in as sops to the groundlings; they are an important way of communicating a complex meaning.

2. *Vocabulary.* A conspicuous difficulty in reading Shakespeare is rooted in the fact that some of his words are no longer in common use—for example, words concerned with armor, astrology, clothing, coinage, hawking,

horsemanship, law, medicine, sailing, and war. Shakespeare had a large vocabulary—something near thirty thousand words—but it was not so much a vocabulary of big words as a vocabulary drawn from a wide range of life, and it is partly his ability to call upon a great body of concrete language that gives his plays the sense of being in close contact with life. When the right word did not already exist, he made it up. Among words thought to be his coinages are *accommodation*, *all-knowing*, *amazement*, *bare-faced*, *countless*, *dexterously*, *dislocate*, *dwindle*, *fancy-free*, *frugal*, *indistinguishable*, *lackluster*, *laughable*, *overawe*, *premeditated*, *sea change*, *star-crossed*. Among those that have not survived are the verb *convive*, meaning to feast together, and *smilet*, a little smile.

Less overtly troublesome than the technical words but more treacherous are the words that seem readily intelligible to us but whose Elizabethan meanings differ from their modern ones. When Horatio describes the Ghost as an “erring spirit,” he is saying not that the ghost has sinned or made an error but that it is wandering. Here is a short list of some of the most common words in Shakespeare’s plays that often (but not always) have a meaning other than their most usual modern meaning:

<i>'a</i>	he
<i>abuse</i>	deceive
<i>accident</i>	occurrence
<i>advertise</i>	inform
<i>an, and</i>	if
<i>annoy</i>	harm
<i>appeal</i>	accuse
<i>artificial</i>	skillful
<i>brave</i>	fine, splendid
<i>censure</i>	opinion
<i>cheer</i>	(1) face (2) frame of mind
<i>chorus</i>	a single person who
	comments on the events
<i>closet</i>	small private room
<i>competitor</i>	partner
<i>conceit</i>	idea, imagination
<i>cousin</i>	kinsman
<i>cunning</i>	skillful
<i>disaster</i>	evil astrological influence
<i>doom</i>	judgment
<i>entertain</i>	receive into service

envy
event
excrement
fact
fancy
fell
fellow

fond
free
glass
hap, haply
head
humor

imp
intelligence
kind

let
lewd
mere(ly)
modern
natural
naughty
next
nice
noise
policy
presently
prevent
proper
prove
quick
sad
saw
secure
silly

malice
outcome
outgrowth (of hair)
evil deed
(1) love (2) imagination
cruel
(1) companion (2) low person
(often an insulting term if
addressed to someone of
approximately equal rank)
foolish
(1) innocent (2) generous
mirror
chance, by chance
army
(1) mood (2) bodily fluid
thought to control one's
psychology
child
news
natural, acting according
to nature
hinder
base
utter(ly)
commonplace
a fool, an idiot
(1) wicked (2) worthless
nearest
(1) trivial (2) fussy
music
(1) prudence (2) stratagem
immediately
anticipate
handsome
test
alive
serious
proverb
without care, incautious
innocent

sensible
shrewd
so
starve
still
success
tall
tell
tonight
wanton
watch
will
wink
wit

capable of being perceived
by the senses
sharp
provided that
die
always
that which follows
brave
count
last night
playful, careless
keep awake
lust
close both eyes
mind, intelligence

All glosses, of course, are mere approximations; sometimes one of Shakespeare's words may hover between an older meaning and a modern one, and as we have seen, his words often have multiple meanings.

3. *Grammar*. A few matters of grammar may be surveyed, though it should be noted at the outset that Shakespeare sometimes made up his own grammar. As E.A. Abbott says in *A Shakespearian Grammar*, "Almost any part of speech can be used as any other part of speech": a noun as a verb ("he childed as I fathered"); a verb as a noun ("She hath made compare"); or an adverb as an adjective ("a seldom pleasure"). There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of such instances in the plays, many of which at first glance would not seem at all irregular and would trouble only a pedant. Here are a few broad matters.

Nouns: The Elizabethans thought the -s genitive ending for nouns (as in *man's*) derived from *his*; thus the line " 'gainst the count his galleys I did some service," for "the count's galleys."

Adjectives: By Shakespeare's time adjectives had lost the endings that once indicated gender, number, and case. About the only difference between Shakespeare's adjectives and ours is the use of the now redundant *more* or *most* with the comparative ("some more fitter place") or superlative ("This was the most unkindest cut of all"). Like double comparatives and double superlatives, double negatives were acceptable; Mercutio "will not budge for no man's pleasure."

Pronouns: The greatest change was in pronouns. In Middle English *thou*, *thy*, and *thee* were used among familiars and in speaking to children and inferiors; *ye*, *your*, and *you* were used in speaking to superiors (servants to masters, nobles to the king) or to equals with whom the speaker was not familiar. Increasingly the "polite" forms were used in all

direct address, regardless of rank, and the accusative *you* displaced the nominative *ye*. Shakespeare sometimes uses *ye* instead of *you*, but even in Shakespeare's day *ye* was archaic, and it occurs mostly in rhetorical appeals.

Thou, *thy*, and *thee* were not completely displaced, however, and Shakespeare occasionally makes significant use of them, sometimes to connote familiarity or intimacy and sometimes to connote contempt. In *Twelfth Night* Sir Toby advises Sir Andrew to insult Cesario by addressing him as *thou*: "If thou thou'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss" (3.2.46-47). In *Othello* when Brabantio is addressing an unidentified voice in the dark he says, "What are you?" (1.1.91), but when the voice identifies itself as the foolish suitor Roderigo, Brabantio uses the contemptuous form, saying, "I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors" (93). He uses this form for a while, but later in the scene, when he comes to regard Roderigo as an ally, he shifts back to the polite *you*, beginning in line 163, "What said she to you?" and on to the end of the scene. For reasons not yet satisfactorily explained, Elizabethans used *thou* in addresses to God—"O God, thy arm was here," the king says in *Henry V* (4.8.108)—and to supernatural characters such as ghosts and witches. A subtle variation occurs in *Hamlet*. When Hamlet first talks with the Ghost in 1.5, he uses *thou*, but when he sees the Ghost in his mother's room, in 3.4, he uses *you*, presumably because he is now convinced that the Ghost is not a counterfeit but is his father.

Perhaps the most unusual use of pronouns, from our point of view, is the neuter singular. In place of our *its*, *his* was often used, as in "How far that little candle throws *his* beams." But the use of a masculine pronoun for a neuter noun came to seem unnatural, and so *it* was used for the possessive as well as the nominative: "The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long / That it had it head bit off by it young." In the late sixteenth century the possessive form *its* developed, apparently by analogy with the -s ending used to

indicate a genitive noun, as in *book's*, but *its* was not yet common usage in Shakespeare's day. He seems to have used *its* only ten times, mostly in his later plays. Other usages, such as "you have seen Cassio and she together" or the substitution of *who* for *whom*, cause little problem even when noticed.

Verbs, Adverbs, and Prepositions: Verbs cause almost no difficulty: The third person singular present form commonly ends in -s, as in modern English (e.g., "He blesses"), but sometimes in -*eth* (Portia explains to Shylock that mercy "blesseth him that gives and him that takes"). Broadly speaking, the -*eth* ending was old-fashioned or dignified or "literary" rather than colloquial, except for the words doth, hath, and saith. The -*eth* ending (regularly used in the King James Bible, 1611) is very rare in Shakespeare's dramatic prose, though not surprisingly it occurs twice in the rather formal prose summary of the narrative poem *Lucrece*. Sometimes a plural subject, especially if it has collective force, takes a verb ending in -s, as in "My old bones aches." Some of our strong or irregular preterites (such as broke) have a different form in Shakespeare (*brake*); some verbs that now have a weak or regular preterite (such as *helped*) in Shakespeare have a strong or irregular preterite (*holp*). Some adverbs that today end in -*ly* were not inflected: "grievous sick," "wondrous strange." Finally, prepositions often are not the ones we expect: "We are such stuff as dreams are made on," "I have a king here to my flatterer."

Again, none of the differences (except meanings that have substantially changed or been lost) will cause much difficulty. But it must be confessed that for some elliptical passages there is no widespread agreement on meaning. Wise editors resist saying more than they know, and when they are uncertain they add a question mark to their gloss.

Shakespeare's Theater

In Shakespeare's infancy, Elizabethan actors performed wherever they could—in great halls, at court, in the courtyards of inns. These venues implied not only different audiences but also different playing conditions. The innyards must have made rather unsatisfactory theaters: on some days they were unavailable because carters bringing goods to London used them as depots; when available, they had to be rented from the innkeeper. In 1567, presumably to avoid such difficulties, and also to avoid regulation by the Common Council of London, which was not well disposed toward theatricals, one John Brayne, brother-in-law of the carpenter turned actor James Burbage, built the Red Lion in an eastern suburb of London. We know nothing about its shape or its capacity; we can say only that it may have been the first building in Europe constructed for the purpose of giving plays since the end of antiquity, a thousand years earlier. Even after the building of the Red Lion theatrical activity continued in London in makeshift circumstances, in marketplaces and inns, and always uneasily. In 1574 the Common Council required that plays and playing places in London be licensed because

sundry great disorders and inconveniences have been found to ensue to this city by the inordinate haunting of great multitudes of people, specially youth, to plays, interludes, and shows, namely occasion of frays and quarrels, evil practices of incontinency in great inns having chambers and secret places adjoining to their open stages and galleries.

The Common Council ordered that innkeepers who wished licenses to hold performance put up a bond and make contributions to the poor.

The requirement that plays and innyard theaters be licensed, along with the other drawbacks of playing at inns and presumably along with the success of the Red Lion, led James Burbage to rent a plot of land northeast of the city

walls, on property outside the jurisdiction of the city. Here he built England's second playhouse, called simply the Theatre. About all that is known of its construction is that it was wood. It soon had imitators, the most famous being the Globe (1599), essentially an amphitheater built across the Thames (again outside the city's jurisdiction), constructed with timbers of the Theatre, which had been dismantled when Burbage's lease ran out.

Admission to the theater was one penny, which allowed spectators to stand at the sides and front of the stage that jutted into the yard. An additional penny bought a seat in a covered part of the theater, and a third penny bought a more comfortable seat and a better location. It is notoriously difficult to translate prices into today's money, since some things that are inexpensive today would have been expensive in the past and vice versa—a pipeful of tobacco (imported, of course) cost a lot of money, about three pennies, and an orange (also imported) cost two or three times what a chicken cost—but perhaps we can get some idea of the low cost of the penny admission when we realize that a penny could also buy a pot of ale. An unskilled laborer made about five or sixpence a day, an artisan about twelve pence a day, and the hired actors (as opposed to the sharers in the company, such as Shakespeare) made about ten pence a performance. A printed play cost five or sixpence. Of course a visit to the theater (like a visit to a baseball game today) usually cost more than the admission since the spectator probably would also buy food and drink. Still, the low entrance fee meant that the theater was available to all except the very poorest people, rather as movies and most athletic events are today. Evidence indicates that the audience ranged from apprentices who somehow managed to scrape together the minimum entrance fee and to escape from their masters for a few hours, to prosperous members of the middle class and aristocrats who paid the additional fee for admission to the

galleries. The exact proportion of men to women cannot be determined, but women of all classes certainly were present. Theaters were open every afternoon but Sundays for much of the year, except in times of plague, when they were closed because of fear of infection. By the way, no evidence suggests the presence of toilet facilities. Presumably the patrons relieved themselves by making a quick trip to the fields surrounding the playhouses.

There are four important sources of information about the structure of Elizabethan public playhouses—drawings, a contract, recent excavations, and stage directions in the plays. Of drawings, only the so-called de Witt drawing (c. 1596) of the Swan—really his friend Aemout van Buchell's copy of Johannes de Witt's drawing—is of much significance. The drawing, the only extant representation of the interior of an Elizabethan theater, shows an amphitheater of three tiers, with a stage jutting from a wall into the yard or center of the building. The tiers are roofed, and part of the stage is covered by a roof that projects from the rear and is supported at its front on two posts, but the groundlings, who paid a penny to stand in front of the stage or at its sides, were exposed to the sky. (Performances in such a playhouse were held only in the daytime; artificial illumination was not used.) At the rear of the stage are two massive doors; above the stage is a gallery.



Johannes de Witt, a Continental visitor to London, made a drawing of the Swan theater in about the year 1596. The original drawing is lost; this is Aernout van Buchell's copy of it.

The second major source of information, the contract for the Fortune (built in 1600), specifies that although the Globe (built in 1599) is to be the model, the Fortune is to be square, eighty feet outside and fifty-five inside. The stage is to be forty-three feet broad, and is to extend into the middle of the yard, i.e., it is twenty-seven and a half feet deep.

The third source of information, the 1989 excavations of the Rose (built in 1587), indicate that the Rose was fourteen-sided, about seventy-two feet in diameter with an inner yard almost fifty feet in diameter. The stage at the Rose was about sixteen feet deep, thirty-seven feet wide at the rear, and twenty-seven feet wide downstage. The relatively small dimensions and the tapering stage, in

contrast to the rectangular stage in the Swan drawing, surprised theater historians and have made them more cautious in generalizing about the Elizabethan theater. Excavations at the Globe have not yielded much information, though some historians believe that the fragmentary evidence suggests a larger theater, perhaps one hundred feet in diameter.

From the fourth chief source, stage directions in the plays, one learns that entrance to the stage was by the doors at the rear (*"Enter one citizen at one door, and another at the other"*). A curtain hanging across the doorway—or a curtain hanging between the two doorways—could provide a place where a character could conceal himself, as Polonius does, when he wishes to overhear the conversation between Hamlet and Gertrude. Similarly, withdrawing a curtain from the doorway could "discover" (reveal) a character or two. Such discovery scenes are very rare in Elizabethan drama, but a good example occurs in *The Tempest* (5.1.171), where a stage direction tells us, *"Here Prospero discovers Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess."* There was also some sort of playing space "aloft" or "above" to represent, for instance, the top of a city's walls or a room above the street. Doubtless each theater had its own peculiarities, but perhaps we can talk about a "typical" Elizabethan theater if we realize that no theater need exactly fit the description, just as no mother is the average mother with 2.7 children.

This hypothetical theater is wooden, round, or polygonal (in *Henry V* Shakespeare calls it a "wooden *O*") capable of holding some eight hundred spectators who stood in the yard around the projecting elevated stage—these spectators were the "groundlings"—and some fifteen hundred additional spectators who sat in the three roofed galleries. The stage, protected by a "shadow" or "heavens" or roof, is entered from two doors; behind the doors is the "tiring house" (attiring house, i.e., dressing room), and above the stage is some sort of gallery that may sometimes hold

spectators but can be used (for example) as the bedroom from which Romeo—according to a stage direction in one text—“goeth down.” Some evidence suggests that a throne can be lowered onto the platform stage, perhaps from the “shadow”; certainly characters can descend from the stage through a trap or traps into the cellar or “hell.” Sometimes this space beneath the stage accommodates a sound-effects man or musician (in *Antony and Cleopatra* “*music of the hautboys [oboes] is under the stage*”) or an actor (in *Hamlet* the “*Ghost cries under the stage*”). Most characters simply walk on and off through the doors, but because there is no curtain in front of the platform, corpses will have to be carried off (Hamlet obligingly clears the stage of Polonius’s corpse, when he says, “I’ll lug the guts into the neighbor room”). Other characters may have fallen at the rear, where a curtain on a doorway could be drawn to conceal them. Such may have been the “public theater,” so called because its inexpensive admission made it available to a wide range of the populace. Another kind of theater has been called the “private theater” because its much greater admission charge (sixpence versus the penny for general admission at the public theater) limited its audience to the wealthy or the prodigal. The private theater was basically a large room, entirely roofed and therefore artificially illuminated, with a stage at one end. The theaters thus were distinct in two ways: One was essentially an amphitheater that catered to the general public; the other was a hall that catered to the wealthy. In 1576 a hall theater was established in Blackfriars, a Dominican priory in London that had been suppressed in 1538 and confiscated by the Crown and thus was not under the city’s jurisdiction. All the actors in this Blackfriars theater were boys about eight to thirteen years old (in the public theaters similar boys played female parts; a boy Lady Macbeth played to a man Macbeth). Near the end of this section on Shakespeare’s theater we will talk at some length about possible implications in this convention

of using boys to play female roles, but for the moment we should say that it doubtless accounts for the relative lack of female roles in Elizabethan drama. Thus, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, out of twenty-one named roles, only four are female; in *Hamlet*, out of twenty-four, only two (Gertrude and Ophelia) are female. Many of Shakespeare's characters have fathers but no mothers—for instance, King Lear's daughters. We need not bring in Freud to explain the disparity; a dramatic company had only a few boys in it.

To return to the private theaters, in some of which all of the performers were children—the “eyrie of... little eyases” (nest of unfledged hawks—2.2.347-48) which Rosencrantz mentions when he and Guildenstern talk with Hamlet. The theater in Blackfriars had a precarious existence, and ceased operations in 1584. In 1596 James Burbage, who had already made theatrical history by building the Theatre, began to construct a second Blackfriars theater. He died in 1597, and for several years this second Blackfriars theater was used by a troupe of boys, but in 1608 two of Burbage's sons and five other actors (including Shakespeare) became joint operators of the theater, using it in the winter when the open-air Globe was unsuitable. Perhaps such a smaller theater, roofed, artificially illuminated, and with a tradition of a wealthy audience, exerted an influence in Shakespeare's late plays.

Performances in the private theaters may well have had intermissions during which music was played, but in the public theaters the action was probably uninterrupted, flowing from scene to scene almost without a break. Actors would enter, speak, exit, and others would immediately enter and establish (if necessary) the new locale by a few properties and by words and gestures. To indicate that the scene took place at night, a player or two would carry a torch. Here are some samples of Shakespeare establishing the scene:

This is Illyria, lady. (*Twelfth Night*, 1.2.2)
Well, this is the Forest of Arden. (*As You Like It*, 2.4.14)
This castle has a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses. (*Macbeth*, 1.6.1-3)
The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day.
(*Macbeth*, 3.3.5)

Sometimes a speech will go far beyond evoking the minimal setting of place and time, and will, so to speak, evoke the social world in which the characters move. For instance, early in the first scene of *The Merchant of Venice* Salerio suggests an explanation for Antonio's melancholy. (In the following passage, *pageants* are decorated wagons, floats, and *cursy* is the verb "to curtsy," or "to bow.")

Your mind is tossing on the ocean,
There where your argosies with portly sail—
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
Or as it were the pageants of the sea—
Do overpeer the petty traffickers
That cursy to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings. (1.1.8-14)

Late in the nineteenth century, when Henry Irving produced the play with elaborate illusionistic sets, the first scene showed a ship moored in the harbor, with fruit vendors and dock laborers, in an effort to evoke the bustling and exotic life of Venice. But Shakespeare's words give us this exotic, rich world of commerce in his highly descriptive language when Salerio speaks of "argosies with portly sail" that fly with "woven wings"; equally important, through Salerio Shakespeare conveys a sense of the orderly, hierarchical society in which the lesser ships, "the petty traffickers," curtsy and thereby "do... reverence" to their superiors, the merchant prince's ships, which are "Like signiors and rich burghers."

On the other hand, it is a mistake to think that except for verbal pictures the Elizabethan stage was bare. Although Shakespeare's Chorus in *Henry V* calls the stage an "unworthy scaffold" (Prologue 1.10) and urges the spectators to "eke out our performance with your mind" (Prologue 3.35), there was considerable spectacle. The last act of *Macbeth*, for instance, has five stage directions calling for "*drum and colors*," and another sort of appeal to the eye is indicated by the stage direction "*Enter Macduff, with Macbeth's head*." Some scenery and properties may have been substantial; doubtless a throne was used, but the pillars supporting the roof would have served for the trees on which Orlando pins his poems in *As You Like It*.

Having talked about the public theater—"this wooden O"—at some length, we should mention again that Shakespeare's plays were performed also in other locales. Alvin Kernan, in *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court 1603-1613* (1995) points out that "several of [Shakespeare's] plays contain brief theatrical performances, set always in a court or some noble house. When Shakespeare portrayed a theater, he did not, except for the choruses in *Henry V*, imagine a public theater" (p. 195). (Examples include episodes in *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*.)

A Note on the Use of Boy Actors in Female Roles

Until fairly recently, scholars were content to mention that the convention existed; they sometimes also mentioned that it continued the medieval practice of using males in female roles, and that other theaters, notably in ancient Greece and in China and Japan, also used males in female

roles. (In classical Noh drama in Japan, males still play the female roles.) Prudery may have been at the root of the academic failure to talk much about the use of boy actors, or maybe there really is not much more to say than that it was a convention of a male-centered culture (Stephen Greenblatt's view, in *Shakespearean Negotiations* [1988]). Further, the very nature of a convention is that it is not thought about: Hamlet is a Dane and Julius Caesar is a Roman, but in Shakespeare's plays they speak English, and we in the audience never give this odd fact a thought. Similarly, a character may speak in the presence of others and we understand, again without thinking about it, that he or she is not heard by the figures on the stage (the aside); a character alone on the stage may speak (the soliloquy), and we do not take the character to be unhinged; in a realistic (box) set, the fourth wall, which allows us to see what is going on, is miraculously missing. The no-nonsense view, then, is that the boy actor was an accepted convention, accepted unthinkingly—just as today we know that Kenneth Branagh is not Hamlet, Al Pacino is not Richard III, and Denzel Washington is not the Prince of Aragon. In this view, the audience takes the performer for the role, and that is that; such is the argument we now make for race-free casting, in which African-Americans and Asians can play roles of persons who lived in medieval Denmark and ancient Rome. But gender perhaps is different, at least today. It is a matter of abundant academic study: The Elizabethan theater is now sometimes called a transvestite theater, and we hear much about cross-dressing.

Shakespeare himself in a very few passages calls attention to the use of boys in female roles. At the end of *As You Like It* the boy who played Rosalind addresses the audience, and says, "O men, ... if I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me." But this is in the Epilogue; the plot is over, and the actor is stepping out of the play and into the audience's everyday

world. A second reference to the practice of boys playing female roles occurs in *Antony and Cleopatra*, when Cleopatra imagines that she and Antony will be the subject of crude plays, her role being performed by a boy:

The quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels: Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness.
(5.2.216-20)

In a few other passages, Shakespeare is more indirect. For instance, in *Twelfth Night* Viola, played of course by a boy, disguises herself as a young man and seeks service in the house of a lord. She enlists the help of a Captain, and (by way of explaining away her voice and her beardlessness) says,

I'll serve this duke
Thou shalt present me as an eunuch to him. (1.2.55-56)

In *Hamlet*, when the players arrive in 2.2, Hamlet jokes with the boy who plays a female role. The boy has grown since Hamlet last saw him: "By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine" (a lady's thick-soled shoe). He goes on: "Pray God your voice ... be not cracked" (434-38).

Exactly how sexual, how erotic, this material was and is, is now much disputed. Again, the use of boys may have been unnoticed, or rather not thought about—an unexamined convention—by most or all spectators most of the time, perhaps all of the time, except when Shakespeare calls the convention to the attention of the audience, as in the passages just quoted. Still, an occasional bit seems to invite erotic thoughts. The clearest example is the name that Rosalind takes in *As You Like It*, Ganymede—the beautiful

youth whom Zeus abducted. Did boys dressed to play female roles carry homoerotic appeal for straight men (Lisa Jardine's view, in *Still Harping on Daughters* [1983]), or for gay men, or for some or all women in the audience? Further, when the boy actor played a woman who (for the purposes of the plot) disguised herself as a male, as Rosalind, Viola, and Portia do—so we get a boy playing a woman playing a man—what sort of appeal was generated, and for what sort of spectator?

Some scholars have argued that the convention empowered women by letting female characters display a freedom unavailable in Renaissance patriarchal society; the convention, it is said, undermined rigid gender distinctions. In this view, the convention (along with plots in which female characters for a while disguised themselves as young men) allowed Shakespeare to say what some modern gender critics say: Gender is a constructed role rather than a biological given, something we make, rather than a fixed binary opposition of male and female (see Juliet Dusinberre, in *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* [1975]). On the other hand, some scholars have maintained that the male disguise assumed by some female characters serves only to reaffirm traditional social distinctions since female characters who don male garb (notably Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*) return to their female garb and at least implicitly (these critics say) reaffirm the status quo. (For this last view, see Clara Claiborne Park, in an essay in *The Woman's Part*, ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz et al. [1980].) Perhaps no one answer is right for all plays; in *As You Like It* cross-dressing empowers Rosalind, but in *Twelfth Night* cross-dressing comically traps Viola.

Shakespeare's Dramatic Language: Costumes, Gestures and Silences; Prose and Poetry

Because Shakespeare was a dramatist, not merely a poet, he worked not only with language but also with costume, sound effects, gestures, and even silences. We have already discussed some kinds of spectacle in the preceding section, and now we will begin with other aspects of visual language; a theater, after all, is literally a “place for seeing.” Consider the opening stage direction in *The Tempest*, the first play in the first published collection of Shakespeare's plays: “A tempestuous noise of thunder and Lightning heard: Enter a Ship-master, and a Boteswain. ”

Costumes: What did that shipmaster and that boatswain wear? Doubtless they wore something that identified them as men of the sea. Not much is known about the costumes that Elizabethan actors wore, but at least three points are clear: (1) many of the costumes were splendid versions of contemporary Elizabethan dress; (2) some attempts were made to approximate the dress of certain occupations and of antique or exotic characters such as Romans, Turks, and Jews; (3) some costumes indicated that the wearer was supernatural. Evidence for elaborate Elizabethan clothing can be found in the plays themselves and in contemporary comments about the “sumptuous” players who wore the discarded clothing of noblemen, as well as in account books that itemize such things as “a scarlet cloak with two broad gold laces, with gold buttons down the sides.”

The attempts at approximation of the dress of certain occupations and nationalities also can be documented from the plays themselves, and it derives additional confirmation from a drawing of the first scene of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*—the only extant Elizabethan picture of an identifiable episode in a play. (See pp. xxxviii-xxxix.) The

drawing, probably done in 1594 or 1595, shows Queen Tamora pleading for mercy. She wears a somewhat medieval-looking robe and a crown; Titus wears a toga and a wreath, but two soldiers behind him wear costumes fairly close to Elizabethan dress. We do not know, however, if the drawing represents an actual stage production in the public theater, or perhaps a private production, or maybe only a reader's visualization of an episode. Further, there is some conflicting evidence: In *Julius Caesar* a reference is made to Caesar's doublet (a close-fitting jacket), which, if taken literally, suggests that even the protagonist did not wear Roman clothing; and certainly the lesser characters, who are said to wear hats, did not wear Roman garb.

It should be mentioned, too, that even ordinary clothing can be symbolic: Hamlet's "inky cloak," for example, sets him apart from the brightly dressed members of Claudius's court and symbolizes his mourning; the fresh clothes that are put on King Lear partly symbolize his return to sanity. Consider, too, the removal of disguises near the end of some plays. For instance, Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Portia and Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice* remove their male attire, thus again becoming fully themselves.

Gestures and Silences: Gestures are an important part of a dramatist's language. King Lear kneels before his daughter Cordelia for a benediction (4.7.57-59), an act of humility that contrasts with his earlier speeches banishing her and that contrasts also with a comparable gesture, his ironic kneeling before Regan (2.4.153-55). Northumberland's failure to kneel before King Richard II (3.3.71-72) speaks volumes. As for silences, consider a moment in *Coriolanus*: Before the protagonist yields to his mother's entreaties (5.3.182), there is this stage direction: "*Holds her by the hand, silent.*" Another example of "speech in dumbness" occurs in *Macbeth*, when Macduff learns that his wife and

children have been murdered. He is silent at first, as Malcolm's speech indicates: "What, man! Ne'er pull your hat upon your brows. Give sorrow words" (4.3.208-09). (For a discussion of such moments, see Philip C. McGuire's *Speechless Dialect: Shakespeare's Open Silences* [1985].)



Of course when we think of Shakespeare's work, we think primarily of his language, both the poetry and the prose.

Prose: Although two of his plays (*Richard II* and *King John*) have no prose at all, about half the others have at least one quarter of the dialogue in prose, and some have notably more: *1 Henry IV* and *2 Henry IV*, about half; *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, a little more than half; *Much Ado About Nothing*, more than three quarters; and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, a little more than five sixths. We should remember

that despite Molière's joke about M. Jourdain, who was amazed to learn that he spoke prose, most of us do not speak prose. Rather, we normally utter repetitive, shapeless, and often ungrammatical torrents; prose is something very different—a sort of literary imitation of speech at its most coherent.



Today we may think of prose as “natural” for drama; or even if we think that poetry is appropriate for high tragedy we may still think that prose is the right medium for comedy. Greek, Roman, and early English comedies, however, were written in verse. In fact, prose was not generally considered a literary medium in England until the late fifteenth century; Chaucer tells even his bawdy stories in verse. By the end of the 1580s, however, prose had established itself on the English comic stage. In tragedy, Marlowe made some use of prose, not simply in the speeches of clownish servants but even in the speech of a tragic hero, Doctor Faustus. Still, before Shakespeare, prose

normally was used in the theater only for special circumstances: (1) letters and proclamations, to set them off from the poetic dialogue; (2) mad characters, to indicate that normal thinking has become disordered ; and (3) low comedy, or speeches uttered by clowns even when they are not being comic. Shakespeare made use of these conventions, but he also went far beyond them. Sometimes he begins a scene in prose and then shifts into verse as the emotion is heightened; or conversely, he may shift from verse to prose when a speaker is lowering the emotional level, as when Brutus speaks in the Forum.

Shakespeare's prose usually is not prosaic. Hamlet's prose includes not only small talk with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern but also princely reflections on "What a piece of work is a man" (2.2.312). In conversation with Ophelia, he shifts from light talk in verse to a passionate prose denunciation of women (3.1.103), though the shift to prose here is perhaps also intended to suggest the possibility of madness. (Consult Brian Vickers, *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* [1968].)

Poetry: Drama in rhyme in England goes back to the Middle Ages, but by Shakespeare's day rhyme no longer dominated poetic drama; a finer medium, blank verse (strictly speaking, unrhymed lines of ten syllables, with the stress on every second syllable) had been adopted. But before looking at unrhymed poetry, a few things should be said about the chief uses of rhyme in Shakespeare's plays. (1) A couplet (a pair of rhyming lines) is sometimes used to convey emotional heightening at the end of a blank verse speech; (2) characters sometimes speak a couplet as they leave the stage, suggesting closure; (3) except in the latest plays, scenes fairly often conclude with a couplet, and sometimes, as in *Richard II*, 2.1.145-46, the entrance of a new character within a scene is preceded by a couplet, which wraps up the

earlier portion of that scene; (4) speeches of two characters occasionally are linked by rhyme, most notably in *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.5.95-108, where the lovers speak a sonnet between them; elsewhere a taunting reply occasionally rhymes with the previous speaker's last line; (5) speeches with sententious or gnomic remarks are sometimes in rhyme, as in the duke's speech in *Othello* (1.3.199-206); (6) speeches of sardonic mockery are sometimes in rhyme—for example, Iago's speech on women in *Othello* (2.1.146-58)—and they sometimes conclude with an emphatic couplet, as in Bolingbroke's speech on comforting words in *Richard II* (1.3.301-2); (7) some characters are associated with rhyme, such as the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; (8) in the early plays, especially *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, comic scenes that in later plays would be in prose are in jingling rhymes; (9) prologues, choruses, plays-within-the-play, inscriptions, vows, epilogues, and so on are often in rhyme, and the songs in the plays are rhymed.

Neither prose nor rhyme immediately comes to mind when we first think of Shakespeare's medium: It is blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter. (In a mechanically exact line there are five iambic feet. An iambic foot consists of two syllables, the second accented, as in *away*; five feet make a pentameter line. Thus, a strict line of iambic pentameter contains ten syllables, the even syllables being stressed more heavily than the odd syllables. Fortunately, Shakespeare usually varies the line somewhat.) The first speech in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, spoken by Duke Theseus to his betrothed, is an example of blank verse:

Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace. Four happy days bring in
Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,
Like to a stepdame, or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's revenue. (1.1.1-6)

As this passage shows, Shakespeare's blank verse is not mechanically unvarying. Though the predominant foot is the iamb (as in *apace* or *desires*), there are numerous variations. In the first line the stress can be placed on "fair," as the regular metrical pattern suggests, but it is likely that "Now" gets almost as much emphasis; probably in the second line "Draws" is more heavily emphasized than "on," giving us a trochee (a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one); and in the fourth line each word in the phrase "This old moon wanes" is probably stressed fairly heavily, conveying by two spondees (two feet, each of two stresses) the oppressive tedium that Theseus feels.

In Shakespeare's early plays much of the blank verse is end-stopped (that is, it has a heavy pause at the end of each line), but he later developed the ability to write iambic pentameter verse paragraphs (rather than lines) that give the illusion of speech. His chief techniques are (1) enjambing, i.e., running the thought beyond the single line, as in the first three lines of the speech just quoted; (2) occasionally replacing an iamb with another foot; (3) varying the position of the chief pause (the caesura) within a line; (4) adding an occasional unstressed syllable at the end of a line, traditionally called a feminine ending; (5) and beginning or ending a speech with a half line.

Shakespeare's mature blank verse has much of the rhythmic flexibility of his prose; both the language, though richly figurative and sometimes dense, and the syntax seem natural. It is also often highly appropriate to a particular character. Consider, for instance, this speech from *Hamlet*, in which Claudius, King of Denmark ("the Dane"), speaks to Laertes:

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit. What is't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane

And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking? (1.2.42-46)

Notice the short sentences and the repetition of the name “Laertes,” to whom the speech is addressed. Notice, too, the shift from the royal “us” in the second line to the more intimate “my” in the last line, and from “you” in the first three lines to the more intimate “thou” and “thy” in the last two lines. Claudius knows how to ingratiate himself with Laertes.

For a second example of the flexibility of Shakespeare’s blank verse, consider a passage from *Macbeth*. Distressed by the doctor’s inability to cure Lady Macbeth and by the imminent battle, Macbeth addresses some of his remarks to the doctor and others to the servant who is arming him. The entire speech, with its pauses, interruptions, and irresolution (in “Pull’t off, I say,” Macbeth orders the servant to remove the armor that the servant has been putting on him), catches Macbeth’s disintegration. (In the first line, *physic* means “medicine,” and in the fourth and fifth lines, cast the water means “analyze the urine.”)

Throw physic to the dogs, I’ll none of it.
Come, put mine armor on. Give me my staff.
Seyton, send out.—Doctor, the thanes fly from me.—
Come, sir, dispatch. If thou couldst, doctor, cast
The water of my land, find her disease
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
I would applaud thee to the very echo,
That should applaud again.—Pull’t off, I say.—
What rhubarb, senna, or what purgative drug,
Would scour these English hence? Hear’st thou of
them?
(5.3.47-56)

Blank verse, then, can be much more than unrhymed iambic pentameter, and even within a single play Shakespeare’s

blank verse often consists of several styles, depending on the speaker and on the speaker's emotion at the moment.

The Play Text as a Collaboration

Shakespeare's fellow dramatist Ben Jonson reported that the actors said of Shakespeare, "In his writing, whatsoever he penned, he never blotted out line," i.e., never crossed out material and revised his work while composing. None of Shakespeare's plays survives in manuscript (with the possible exception of a scene in *Sir Thomas More*), so we cannot fully evaluate the comment, but in a few instances the published work clearly shows that he revised his manuscript. Consider the following passage (shown here in facsimile) from the best early text of *Romeo and Juliet*, the Second Quarto (1599):

Ro. Would I were sleepe and peace so sweet to rest
The grey eyde morne smiles on the frowning night,
Checkring the Eafterne Clouds with streaks of light,
And darknesse fleckted like a drunkard reeles,
From forth daies pathway, made by Tyrans wheeles.
Hence will I to my ghostly Frien close cell,
His helpe to craue, and my deare hap to tell. *Exit.*
Enter Frier alone with a baskes. (night,
Fri. The grey-eyed morne smiles on the frowning
Checking the Easterne clowdes with streaks of light:
And fleckeld darknesse like a drunkard reeles,
From forth daies path, and *Tisans* burning wheeles:
Now erethe sun advance his buining eie,

Romeo rather elaborately tells us that the sun at dawn is dispelling the night (morning is smiling, the eastern clouds are checked with light, and the sun's chariot—Titan's wheels—advances), and he will seek out his spiritual father, the Friar. He exits and, oddly, the Friar enters and says pretty

much the same thing about the sun. Both speakers say that “the gray-eyed morn smiles on the frowning night,” but there are small differences, perhaps having more to do with the business of printing the book than with the author’s composition: For Romeo’s “checkring,” “fleckted,” and “pathway,” we get the Friar’s “checking,” “fleckeld,” and “path.” (Notice, by the way, the inconsistency in Elizabethan spelling: Romeo’s “clouds” become the Friar’s “clowdes.”)

Both versions must have been in the printer’s copy, and it seems safe to assume that both were in Shakespeare’s manuscript. He must have written one version—let’s say he first wrote Romeo’s closing lines for this scene—and then he decided, no, it’s better to give this lyrical passage to the Friar, as the opening of a new scene, but he neglected to delete the first version. Editors must make a choice, and they may feel that the reasonable thing to do is to print the text as Shakespeare intended it. But how can we know what he intended? Almost all modern editors delete the lines from Romeo’s speech, and retain the Friar’s lines. They don’t do this because they know Shakespeare’s intention, however. They give the lines to the Friar because the first published version (1597) of *Romeo and Juliet* gives only the Friar’s version, and this text (though in many ways inferior to the 1599 text) is thought to derive from the memory of some actors, that is, it is thought to represent a performance, not just a script. Maybe during the course of rehearsals Shakespeare—an actor as well as an author—unilaterally decided that the Friar should speak the lines; if so (remember that we don’t know this to be a fact) his final intention was to give the speech to the Friar. Maybe, however, the actors talked it over and settled on the Friar, with or without Shakespeare’s approval. On the other hand, despite the 1597 version, one might argue (if only weakly) on behalf of giving the lines to Romeo rather than to the Friar, thus: (1) Romeo’s comment on the coming of the daylight emphasizes his separation from Juliet, and (2) the

figurative language seems more appropriate to Romeo than to the Friar. Having said this, in the Signet edition we have decided in this instance to draw on the evidence provided by earlier text and to give the lines to the Friar, on the grounds that since Q1 reflects a production, in the theater (at least on one occasion) the lines were spoken by the Friar.

A playwright sold a script to a theatrical company. The script thus belonged to the company, not the author, and author and company alike must have regarded this script not as a literary work but as the basis for a play that the actors would create on the stage. We speak of Shakespeare as the author of the plays, but readers should bear in mind that the texts they read, even when derived from a single text, such as the First Folio (1623), are inevitably the collaborative work not simply of Shakespeare with his company—doubtless during rehearsals the actors would suggest alterations—but also with other forces of the age. One force was governmental censorship. In 1606 parliament passed “an Act to restrain abuses of players,” prohibiting the utterance of oaths and the name of God. So where the earliest text of *Othello* gives us “By heaven” (3.3.106), the first Folio gives “Alas,” presumably reflecting the compliance of stage practice with the law. Similarly, the 1623 version of *King Lear* omits the oath “Fut” (probably from “By God’s foot”) at 1.2.142, again presumably reflecting the line as it was spoken on the stage. Editors who seek to give the reader the play that Shakespeare initially conceived—the “authentic” play conceived by the solitary Shakespeare—probably will restore the missing oaths and references to God. Other editors, who see the play as a collaborative work, a construction made not only by Shakespeare but also by actors and composers and even government censors, may claim that what counts is the play as it was actually performed. Such editors regard the censored text as legitimate, since it is the play that was (presumably) finally put on. A performed text, they argue, has more historical

reality than a text produced by an editor who has sought to get at what Shakespeare initially wrote. In this view, the text of a play is rather like the script of a film; the script is not the film, and the play text is not the performed play. Even if we want to talk about the play that Shakespeare “intended,” we will find ourselves talking about a script that he handed over to a company with the intention that it be implemented by actors. The “intended” play is the one that the actors—we might almost say “society”—would help to construct.

Further, it is now widely held that a play is also the work of readers and spectators, who do not simply receive meaning, but who create it when they respond to the play. This idea is fully in accord with contemporary post-structuralist critical thinking, notably Roland Barthes’s “The Death of the Author,” in *Image-Music-Text* (1977) and Michel Foucault’s “What Is an Author?,” in *The Foucault Reader* (1984). The gist of the idea is that an author is not an isolated genius; rather, authors are subject to the politics and other social structures of their age. A dramatist especially is a worker in a collaborative project, working most obviously with actors—parts may be written for particular actors—but working also with the audience. Consider the words of Samuel Johnson, written to be spoken by the actor David Garrick at the opening of a theater in 1747:

The stage but echoes back the public voice;
The drama’s laws, the drama’s patrons give,
For we that live to please, must please to live.

The audience—the public taste as understood by the playwright—helps to determine what the play is. Moreover, even members of the public who are not part of the playwright’s immediate audience may exert an influence through censorship. We have already glanced at governmental censorship, but there are also other kinds. Take one of Shakespeare’s most beloved characters,

Falstaff, who appears in three of Shakespeare's plays, the two parts of *Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. He appears with this name in the earliest printed version of the first of these plays, *1 Henry IV*, but we know that Shakespeare originally called him (after an historical figure) Sir John Oldcastle. Oldcastle appears in Shakespeare's source (partly reprinted in the Signet edition of *1 Henry IV*), and a trace of the name survives in Shakespeare's play, 1.2.43-44, where Prince Hal punningly addresses Falstaff as "my old lad of the castle." But for some reason—perhaps because the family of the historical Oldcastle complained—Shakespeare had to change the name. In short, the play as we have it was (at least in this detail) subject to some sort of censorship. If we think that a text should present what we take to be the author's intention, we probably will want to replace *Falstaff* with *Oldcastle*. But if we recognize that a play is a collaboration, we may welcome the change, even if it was forced on Shakespeare. Somehow *Falstaff*, with its hint of *false-staff*, i.e., inadequate prop, seems just right for this fat knight who, to our delight, entertains the young prince with untruths. We can go as far as saying that, at least so far as a play is concerned, an insistence on the author's original intention (even if we could know it) can sometimes impoverish the text.

The tiny example of Falstaff's name illustrates the point that the text we read is inevitably only a version—something in effect produced by the collaboration of the playwright with his actors, audiences, composers, and editors—of a fluid text that Shakespeare once wrote, just as the *Hamlet* that we see on the screen starring Kenneth Branagh is not the *Hamlet* that Shakespeare saw in an open-air playhouse starring Richard Burbage. *Hamlet* itself, as we shall note in a moment, also exists in several versions. It is not surprising that there is now much talk about the *instability* of Shakespeare's texts.

Because he was not only a playwright but was also an actor and a shareholder in a theatrical company, Shakespeare probably was much involved with the translation of the play from a manuscript to a stage production. He may or may not have done some rewriting during rehearsals, and he may or may not have been happy with cuts that were made. Some plays, notably *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, are so long that it is most unlikely that the texts we read were acted in their entirety. Further, for both of these plays we have more than one early text that demands consideration. In *Hamlet*, the Second Quarto (1604) includes some two hundred lines not found in the Folio (1623). Among the passages missing from the Folio are two of Hamlet's reflective speeches, the "dram of evil" speech (1.4.13-38) and "How all occasions do inform against me" (4.4.32-66). Since the Folio has more numerous and often fuller stage directions, it certainly looks as though in the Folio we get a theatrical version of the play, a text whose cuts were probably made—this is only a hunch, of course—not because Shakespeare was changing his conception of Hamlet but because the playhouse demanded a modified play. (The problem is complicated, since the Folio not only cuts some of the Quarto but adds some material. Various explanations have been offered.)

Or take an example from *King Lear*. In the First and Second Quarto (1608, 1619), the final speech of the play is given to Albany, Lear's surviving son-in-law, but in the First Folio version (1623), the speech is given to Edgar. The Quarto version is in accord with tradition—usually the highest-ranking character in a tragedy speaks the final words. Why does the Folio give the speech to Edgar? One possible answer is this: The Folio version omits some of Albany's speeches in earlier scenes, so perhaps it was decided (by Shakespeare? by the players?) not to give the final lines to so pale a character. In fact, the discrepancies are so many between the two texts, that some scholars

argue we do not simply have texts showing different theatrical productions. Rather, these scholars say, Shakespeare substantially revised the play, and we really have two versions of *King Lear* (and of *Othello* also, say some)—two different plays—not simply two texts, each of which is in some ways imperfect.

In this view, the 1608 version of *Lear* may derive from Shakespeare's manuscript, and the 1623 version may derive from his later revision. The Quartos have almost three hundred lines not in the Folio, and the Folio has about a hundred lines not in the Quartos. It used to be held that all the texts were imperfect in various ways and from various causes—some passages in the Quartos were thought to have been set from a manuscript that was not entirely legible, other passages were thought to have been set by a compositor who was new to setting plays, and still other passages were thought to have been provided by an actor who misremembered some of the lines. This traditional view held that an editor must draw on the Quartos and the Folio in order to get Shakespeare's "real" play. The new argument holds (although not without considerable strain) that we have two authentic plays, Shakespeare's early version (in the Quarto) and Shakespeare's—or his theatrical company's—revised version (in the Folio). Not only theatrical demands but also Shakespeare's own artistic sense, it is argued, called for extensive revisions. Even the titles vary: Q1 is called *True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three Daughters*, whereas the Folio text is called *The Tragedie of King Lear*. To combine the two texts in order to produce what the editor thinks is the play that Shakespeare intended to write is, according to this view, to produce a text that is false to the history of the play. If the new view is correct, and we do have texts of two distinct versions of *Lear* rather than two imperfect versions of one play, it supports in a textual way the poststructuralist view that we cannot possibly have an unmediated vision of

(in this case) a play by Shakespeare; we can only recognize a plurality of visions.

Editing Texts

Though eighteen of his plays were published during his lifetime, Shakespeare seems never to have supervised their publication. There is nothing unusual here; when a playwright sold a play to a theatrical company he surrendered his ownership to it. Normally a company would not publish the play, because to publish it meant to allow competitors to acquire the piece. Some plays did get published: Apparently hard-up actors sometimes pieced together a play for a publisher; sometimes a company in need of money sold a play; and sometimes a company allowed publication of a play that no longer drew audiences. That Shakespeare did not concern himself with publication is not remarkable; of his contemporaries, only Ben Jonson carefully supervised the publication of his own plays.

In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, John Heminges and Henry Condell (two senior members of Shakespeare's company, who had worked with him for about twenty years) collected his plays—published and unpublished—into a large volume, of a kind called a folio. (A folio is a volume consisting of large sheets that have been folded once, each sheet thus making two leaves, or four pages. The size of the page of course depends on the size of the sheet—a folio can range in height from twelve to sixteen inches, and in width from eight to eleven; the pages in the 1623 edition of Shakespeare, commonly called the First Folio, are approximately thirteen inches tall and eight inches wide.) The eighteen plays published during Shakespeare's lifetime had been issued one play per volume in small formats called quartos. (Each sheet in a quarto has been folded twice, making four leaves, or eight pages, each page

being about nine inches tall and seven inches wide, roughly the size of a large paperback.)

Heminges and Condell suggest in an address “To the great variety of readers” that the republished plays are presented in better form than in the quartos:

Before you were abused with diverse stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious impostors that exposed them; even those, are now offered to your view cured and perfect of their limbs, and all the rest absolute in their numbers, as he [i.e., Shakespeare] conceived them.

There is a good deal of truth to this statement, but some of the quarto versions are better than others; some are in fact preferable to the Folio text.

Whoever was assigned to prepare the texts for publication in the first Folio seems to have taken the job seriously and yet not to have performed it with uniform care. The sources of the texts seem to have been, in general, good unpublished copies or the best published copies. The first play in the collection, *The Tempest*, is divided into acts and scenes, has unusually full stage directions and descriptions of spectacle, and concludes with a list of the characters, but the editor was not able (or willing) to present all of the succeeding texts so fully dressed. Later texts occasionally show signs of carelessness : in one scene of *Much Ado About Nothing* the names of actors, instead of characters, appear as speech prefixes, as they had in the Quarto, which the Folio reprints; proofreading throughout the Folio is spotty and apparently was done without reference to the printer’s copy; the pagination of *Hamlet* jumps from 156 to 257. Further, the proofreading was done while the presses continued to print, so that each play in each volume contains a mix of corrected and uncorrected pages.

Modern editors of Shakespeare must first select their copy; no problem if the play exists only in the Folio, but a considerable problem if the relationship between a Quarto and the Folio—or an early Quarto and a later one—is unclear. In the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, the First Quarto (Q1), published in 1597, is vastly inferior to the Second (Q2), published in 1599. The basis of Q1 apparently is a version put together from memory by some actors. Not surprisingly, it garbles many passages and is much shorter than Q2. On the other hand, occasionally Q1 makes better sense than Q2. For instance, near the end of the play, when the parents have assembled and learned of the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, in Q2 the Prince says (5.3.208-9),

Come, *Montague*; for thou art early vp
To see thy sonne and heire, now earling downe.

The last three words of this speech surely do not make sense, and many editors turn to Q1, which instead of “now earling downe” has “more early downe.” Some modern editors take only “early” from Q1, and print “now early down”; others take “more early,” and print “more early down.” Further, Q1 (though, again, quite clearly a garbled and abbreviated text) includes some stage directions that are not found in Q2, and today many editors who base their text on Q2 are glad to add these stage directions, because the directions help to give us a sense of what the play looked like on Shakespeare’s stage. Thus, in 4.3.58, after Juliet drinks the potion, Q1 gives us this stage direction, not in Q2: “*She falls upon her bed within the curtains.*”

In short, an editor’s decisions do not end with the choice of a single copy text. First of all, editors must reckon with Elizabethan spelling. If they are not producing a facsimile, they probably modernize the spelling, but ought they to preserve the old forms of words that apparently were pronounced quite unlike their modern forms—*lanthorn*, *alablaster*? If they preserve these forms are they really

preserving Shakespeare's forms or perhaps those of a compositor in the printing house? What is one to do when one finds *lanthorn* and *lantern* in adjacent lines? (The editors of this series in general, but not invariably, assume that words should be spelled in their modern form, unless, for instance, a rhyme is involved.) Elizabethan punctuation, too, presents problems. For example, in the First Folio, the only text for the play, Macbeth rejects his wife's idea that he can wash the blood from his hand (2.2.60-62):

No: this my Hand will rather
The multitudinous Seas incarnardine,
Making the Greene one, Red.

Obviously an editor will remove the superfluous capitals, and will probably alter the spelling to "incarnadine," but what about the comma before "Red"? If we retain the comma, Macbeth is calling the sea "the green one." If we drop the comma, Macbeth is saying that his bloody hand will make the sea ("the Green") *uniformly* red.

An editor will sometimes have to change more than spelling and punctuation. Macbeth says to his wife (1.7.46-47):

I dare do all that may become a man,
Who dares no more, is none.

For two centuries editors have agreed that the second line is unsatisfactory, and have emended "no" to "do": "Who dares do more is none." But when in the same play (4.2.21-22) Ross says that fearful persons need we emend the passage? On the assumption that the compositor misread the manuscript, some editors emend "each way, and move" to "and move each way"; others emend "move" to "none" (i.e., "Each way and none"). Other editors, however, let the passage stand as in the original. The editors of the Signet Classic Shakespeare have restrained themselves from making abundant emendations. In their minds they hear

Samuel Johnson on the dangers of emendation: “I have adopted the Roman sentiment, that it is more honorable to save a citizen than to kill an enemy.” Some departures (in addition to spelling, punctuation, and lineation) from the copy text have of course been made, but the original readings are listed in a note following the play, so that readers can evaluate the changes for themselves.

Floate vpon a wilde and violent Sea
Each way, and moue,

Following tradition, the editors of the Signet Classic Shakespeare have prefaced each play with a list of characters, and throughout the play have regularized the names of the speakers. Thus, in our text of *Romeo and Juliet*, all speeches by Juliet’s mother are prefixed “Lady Capulet,” although the 1599 Quarto of the play, which provides our copy text, uses at various points seven speech tags for this one character: *Capu. Wi.* (i.e., Capulet’s wife), *Ca. Wi.*, *Wi.*, *Wife*, *Old La.* (i.e., Old Lady), *La.*, and *Mo.* (i.e., Mother). Similarly, in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, the character whom we regularly call “Countess” is in the Folio (the copy text) variously identified as *Mother*, *Countess*, *Old Countess*, *Lady*, and *Old Lady*. Admittedly there is some loss in regularizing, since the various prefixes may give us a hint of the way Shakespeare (or a scribe who copied Shakespeare’s manuscript) was thinking of the character in a particular scene—for instance, as a mother, or as an old lady. But too much can be made of these differing prefixes, since the social relationships implied are not always relevant to the given scene.

We have also added line numbers and in many cases act and scene divisions as well as indications of locale at the beginning of scenes. The Folio divided most of the plays into acts and some into scenes. Early eighteenth-century editors increased the divisions. These divisions, which provide a convenient way of referring to passages in the plays, have

been retained, but when not in the text chosen as the basis for the Signet Classic text they are enclosed within square brackets, [], to indicate that they are editorial additions. Similarly, though no play of Shakespeare's was equipped with indications of the locale at the heads of scene divisions, locales have here been added in square brackets for the convenience of readers, who lack the information that costumes, properties, gestures, and scenery afford to spectators. Spectators can tell at a glance they are in the throne room, but without an editorial indication the reader may be puzzled for a while. It should be mentioned, incidentally, that there are a few authentic stage directions—perhaps Shakespeare's, perhaps a prompter's—that suggest locales, such as "*Enter Brutus in his orchard,*" and "*They go up-into the Senate house.*" It is hoped that the bracketed additions in the Signet text will provide readers with the sort of help provided by these two authentic directions, but it is equally hoped that the reader will remember that the stage was not loaded with scenery.

Shakespeare on the Stage

Each volume in the Signet Classic Shakespeare includes a brief stage (and sometimes film) history of the play. When we read about earlier productions, we are likely to find them eccentric, obviously wrongheaded—for instance, Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear*, with a happy ending, which held the stage for about a century and a half, from the late seventeenth century until the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth. We see engravings of David Garrick, the greatest actor of the eighteenth century, in eighteenth-century garb as King Lear, and we smile, thinking how absurd the production must have been. If we are more thoughtful, we say, with the English novelist L. P. Hartley, "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently

there.” But if the eighteenth-century staging is a foreign country, what of the plays of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? A foreign language, a foreign theater, a foreign audience.

Probably all viewers of Shakespeare’s plays, beginning with Shakespeare himself, at times have been unhappy with the plays on the stage. Consider three comments about production that we find in the plays themselves, which suggest Shakespeare’s concerns. The Chorus in *Henry V* complains that the heroic story cannot possibly be adequately staged:

But pardon, gentles all,
The flat unraisèd spirits that hath dared
On this unworthy scaffold to bring forth
So great an object. Can this cockpit hold
The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
Within this wooden *O* the very casques
That did affright the air at Agincourt?
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts.
(Prologue 1.8-14,23)

Second, here are a few sentences (which may or may not represent Shakespeare’s own views) from Hamlet’s longish lecture to the players:

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines.... O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings.... And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them, for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be

then to be considered. That's villainous and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. (3.2.1-47)

Finally, we can quote again from the passage cited earlier in this introduction, concerning the boy actors who played the female roles. Cleopatra imagines with horror a theatrical version of her activities with Antony:

The quick comedians
Extemporally will stage us, and present
Our Alexandrian revels: Antony
Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' th' posture of a whore. (5.2.216-21)

It is impossible to know how much weight to put on such passages—perhaps Shakespeare was just being modest about his theater's abilities—but it is easy enough to think that he was unhappy with some aspects of Elizabethan production. Probably no production can fully satisfy a playwright, and for that matter, few productions can fully satisfy us; we regret this or that cut, this or that way of costuming the play, this or that bit of business.

One's first thought may be this: Why don't they just do "authentic" Shakespeare, "straight" Shakespeare, the play as Shakespeare wrote it? But as we read the plays—words written to be performed—it sometimes becomes clear that we do not know *how* to perform them. For instance, in *Antony and Cleopatra* Antony, the Roman general who has succumbed to Cleopatra and to Egyptian ways, says, "The nobleness of life / Is to do thus" (1.1.36-37). But what is "thus"? Does Antony at this point embrace Cleopatra? Does he embrace and kiss her? (There are, by the way, very few scenes of kissing on Shakespeare's stage, possibly because boys played the female roles.) Or does he make a sweeping gesture, indicating the Egyptian way of life?

This is not an isolated example; the plays are filled with lines that call for gestures, but we are not sure what the gestures should be. *Interpretation* is inevitable. Consider a passage in *Hamlet*. In 3.1, Polonius persuades his daughter, Ophelia, to talk to Hamlet while Polonius and Claudius eavesdrop. The two men conceal themselves, and Hamlet encounters Ophelia. At 3.1.131 Hamlet suddenly says to her, “Where’s your father?” Why does Hamlet, apparently out of nowhere—they have not been talking about Polonius—ask this question? Is this an example of the “antic disposition” (fantastic behavior) that Hamlet earlier (1.5.172) had told Horatio and others—including us—he would display? That is, is the question about the whereabouts of her father a seemingly irrational one, like his earlier question (3.1.103) to Ophelia, “Ha, ha! Are you honest?” Or, on the other hand, has Hamlet (as in many productions) suddenly glimpsed Polonius’s foot protruding from beneath a drapery at the rear? That is, does Hamlet ask the question because he has suddenly seen something suspicious and now is testing Ophelia? (By the way, in productions that do give Hamlet a physical cue, it is almost always Polonius rather than Claudius who provides the clue. This itself is an act of interpretation on the part of the director.) Or (a third possibility) does Hamlet get a clue from Ophelia, who inadvertently betrays the spies by nervously glancing at their place of hiding? This is the interpretation used in the BBC television version, where Ophelia glances in fear toward the hiding place just after Hamlet says “Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?” (121-22). Hamlet, realizing that he is being observed, glances here and there before he asks “Where’s your father?” The question thus is a climax to what he has been doing while speaking the preceding lines. Or (a fourth interpretation) does Hamlet suddenly, without the aid of any clue whatsoever, intuitively (insightfully, mysteriously, wonderfully) sense that someone

is spying? Directors must decide, of course—and so must readers.

Recall, too, the preceding discussion of the texts of the plays, which argued that the texts—though they seem to be before us in permanent black on white—are unstable. The Signet text of *Hamlet*, which draws on the Second Quarto (1604) and the First Folio (1623) is considerably longer than any version staged in Shakespeare's time. Our version, even if spoken very briskly and played without any intermission, would take close to four hours, far beyond "the two hours' traffic of our stage" mentioned in the Prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*. (There are a few contemporary references to the duration of a play, but none mentions more than three hours.) Of Shakespeare's plays, only *The Comedy of Errors*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest* can be done in less than three hours without cutting. And even if we take a play that exists only in a short text, *Macbeth*, we cannot claim that we are experiencing the very play that Shakespeare conceived, partly because some of the Witches' songs almost surely are non-Shakespearean additions, and partly because we are not willing to watch the play performed without an intermission and with boys in the female roles.

Further, as the earlier discussion of costumes mentioned, the plays apparently were given chiefly in contemporary, that is, in Elizabethan dress. If today we give them in the costumes that Shakespeare probably saw, the plays seem not contemporary but curiously dated. Yet if we use our own dress, we find lines of dialogue that are at odds with what we see; we may feel that the language, so clearly not our own, is inappropriate coming out of people in today's dress. A common solution, incidentally, has been to set the plays in the nineteenth century, on the grounds that this attractively distances the plays (gives them a degree of foreignness, allowing for interesting costumes) and yet doesn't put them into a museum world of Elizabethan England.

Inevitably our productions are adaptations, *our* adaptations, and inevitably they will look dated, not in a century but in twenty years, or perhaps even in a decade. Still, we cannot escape from our own conceptions. As the director Peter Brook has said, in *The Empty Space* (1968):

It is not only the hair-styles, costumes and make-ups that look dated. All the different elements of staging—the shorthands of behavior that stand for emotions; gestures, gesticulations and tones of voice—are all fluctuating on an invisible stock exchange all the time.... A living theatre that thinks it can stand aloof from anything as trivial as fashion will wilt (p. 16)

As Brook indicates, it is through today's hairstyles, costumes, makeup, gestures, gesticulations, tones of voice—this includes our *conception* of earlier hairstyles, costumes, and so forth if we stage the play in a period other than our own—that we inevitably stage the plays.

It is a truism that every age invents its own Shakespeare, just as, for instance, every age has invented its own classical world. Our view of ancient Greece, a slave-holding society in which even free Athenian women were severely circumscribed, does not much resemble the Victorians' view of ancient Greece as a glorious democracy, just as, perhaps, our view of Victorianism itself does not much resemble theirs. We cannot claim that the Shakespeare on our stage is the true Shakespeare, but in our stage productions we find a Shakespeare that speaks to us, a Shakespeare that our ancestors doubtless did not know but one that seems to us to be the true Shakespeare—at least for a while.

Our age is remarkable for the wide variety of kinds of staging that it uses for Shakespeare, but one development deserves special mention. This is the now common practice of race-blind or color-blind or nontraditional casting, which allows persons who are not white to play in Shakespeare. Previously blacks performing in Shakespeare were limited to

a mere three roles, Othello, Aaron (in *Titus Andronicus*), and the Prince of Morocco (in *The Merchant of Venice*), and there were no roles at all for Asians. Indeed, African-Americans rarely could play even one of these three roles, since they were not welcome in white companies. Ira Aldridge (c.1806-1867), a black actor of undoubted talent, was forced to make his living by performing Shakespeare in England and in Europe, where he could play not only Othello but also—in whiteface—other tragic roles such as King Lear. Paul Robeson (1898-1976) made theatrical history when he played Othello in London in 1930, and there was some talk about bringing the production to the United States, but there was more talk about whether American audiences would tolerate the sight of a black man—a real black man, not a white man in blackface—kissing and then killing a white woman. The idea was tried out in summer stock in 1942, the reviews were enthusiastic, and in the following year Robeson opened on Broadway in a production that ran an astounding 296 performances. An occasional all-black company sometimes performed Shakespeare's plays, but otherwise blacks (and other minority members) were in effect shut out from performing Shakespeare. Only since about 1970 has it been common for nonwhites to play major roles along with whites. Thus, in a 1996-97 production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, a white Cleopatra, Vanessa Redgrave, played opposite a black Antony, David Harewood. Multiracial casting is now especially common at the New York Shakespeare Festival, founded in 1954 by Joseph Papp, and in England, where even siblings such as Claudio and Isabella in *Measure for Measure* or Lear's three daughters may be of different races. Probably most viewers today soon stop worrying about the lack of realism, and move beyond the color of the performers' skin to the quality of the performance.

Nontraditional casting is not only a matter of color or race; it includes sex. In the past, occasionally a distinguished

woman of the theater has taken on a male role—Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) as Hamlet is perhaps the most famous example—but such performances were widely regarded as eccentric. Although today there have been some performances involving cross-dressing (a drag *As You Like It* staged by the National Theatre in England in 1966 and in the United States in 1974 has achieved considerable fame in the annals of stage history), what is more interesting is the casting of women in roles that traditionally are male but that need not be. Thus, a 1993-94 English production of *Henry V* used a woman—not cross-dressed—in the role of the governor of Harfleur. According to Peter Holland, who reviewed the production in *Shakespeare Survey* 48 (1995), “having a female Governor of Harneur feminized the city and provided a direct response to the horrendous threat of rape and murder that Henry had offered, his language and her body in direct connection and opposition” (p. 210). Ten years from now the device may not play so effectively, but today it speaks to us. Shakespeare, born in the Elizabethan Age, has been dead nearly four hundred years, yet he is, as Ben Jonson said, “not of an age but for all time.” We must understand, however, that he is “for all time” precisely because each age finds in his abundance something for itself and something of itself.

And here we come back to two issues discussed earlier in this introduction—the instability of the text and, curiously, the Bacon/Oxford heresy concerning the authorship of the plays. *Of course* Shakespeare wrote the plays, and we should daily fall on our knees to thank him for them—and yet there is something to the idea that he is not their only author. Every editor, every director and actor, and every reader to some degree shapes them, too, for when we edit, direct, act, or read, we inevitably become Shakespeare’s collaborator and re-create the plays. The plays, one might say, are so cunningly contrived that they guide our responses, tell us how we ought to feel, and make a mark

on us, but (for better or for worse) we also make a mark on them.

—SYLVAN BARNET

Tufts University

OceanofPDF.com

Introduction

In structure *Lear* differs significantly from the other tragedies of Shakespeare. It is like them in this. It dramatizes the fall of a hero who, assailed by the rebel passion, gives it sovereign sway and masterdom, and is in consequence destroyed. That is the case of Brutus, Othello, and Macbeth. But the resemblance is more ostensible than real. Ostensibly the play is one long denouement. In fact the declining action, which is the dogging of the hero to death, is complemented by a rising action, which is the hero's regeneration. As the tragic action moves down toward darkness, the more hopeful action that lives within it begins to emerge. This emergent, or renascent, action is a condition of the hero's loss of the world. The play fools us. Its primary story is not the descent of the King into Hell, but the ascent of the King as he climbs the Mountain of Purgatory and is fulfilled. The suspense the play develops is a function of the ascending action, which is not material but spiritual. Battles and thrones count for little. What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?

The rising and falling curves, the hero tasting his folly, the hero triumphing over it, intersect in the center of the play, in the fourth scene of Act 3. It is on the heath that Lear reaches his nadir. His characteristic utterance is the command: the wonted reversal follows: he is made less than the slave of a detested groom. These are the injuries that he himself has procured. So far the parallel is precise to the action of the other tragedies.

But now the crucial difference. It is also on the heath that Lear is made pregnant to pity. That is another and an unexpected kind of reversal. "In boy, go first." These words,

addressed to the Fool, who stands shivering in the rain before a hovel that is the refuge of a madman, constitute the real, as opposed to the apparent, hinge of the play. They do not signal the decay but the metamorphosis of the King, Lear the Socialist, got up in a red shirt. The great apostrophe to the poor follows at once:

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! (28-33)

From this point, the action turns upward.

The structure of the subplot duplicates and so of course clarifies and confirms that of the central story. As the King is limed, and by his own folly, so are Gloucester and Edgar. "A credulous father, and a brother noble" (1.2.192). The one is, initially, an unthinking sensualist. The other, the younger, is initially a kind of clown: "and pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy" (145-46). But the degradation of Gloucester is not ratified. He also undergoes a miraculous transformation. The critical point or pivot at which this transformation is announced is located, like Lear's, in the mathematical center of the play (3.3), which is also, with a fit symmetry, the symbolic center where meanings are clarified. The man who wants to please everyone and would have all well between the contending parties, is emboldened suddenly to choose. "If I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the King my old master must be relieved" (18-19). In that decision is his death, but also his salvation.

The retrieving of Edgar is more spectacular, if not so abruptly achieved. Edgar is conceded the chance to grow and prosper. He seizes his chance; he makes himself over. "Bear free and patient thoughts" (4.6.80). The dupe of the

opening scenes is the philosopher who dominates in the close of the play.

This is not to pretend that the close is thereby made happy. "All's cheerless, dark, and deadly" (5.3.292). Kent's somber valediction is approved. If the kindness of the one daughter hints at the redemption of Nature, it does not take off entirely the general curse which twain have brought her to. The implication is uneasy in Edgar's assertion (as of one who is saying "what we ought to say") that man must obey the weight of the time. His flawed heart, on the evidence of the play, is too weak to support it. His nature cannot carry the affliction or the fear.

What ribs of oak, when mountains melt on them,
Can hold the mortise? (*Othello*, 2.1)

Human beings endure until they expire, dying the pain of death every hour, in a night that pities neither wise man nor fool. What is more unsettling, to be wise is not to be provident. "Man may his fate foresee, but not prevent." And thus Webster's conclusion, in *The White Devil*: " 'Tis better to be fortunate than wise." Man is the natural fool of fortune. That is the title he is born with. It is the stars, and not our own endeavors, that govern. After all we are their tennis balls, struck and bandied which way please them. We do not get our deserts. The optimism is foolishness, to which we are prone.

I would not take this from report. It is,
And my heart breaks at it. (4.6.143-44)

The wry conjunctions contrived by the playwright—who knows out of what bitterness or whimsy—attest to its folly. Edgar, in a sanguine mood, is sure that the worst returns to laughter. He is confronted at once with the bleeding visage of his father.

The worst is not

So long as we can say "This is the worst." (4.1.26-27)

But Shakespeare is not done with him yet. "If ever I return to you again, I'll bring you comfort" (5.2.3-4). That is Edgar's promise to Gloucester before the battle. It is a rash promise, and poor comfort attends on it. A hiatus ensues, filled up with alarums and excursions. Then Edgar reenters and speaks again: "Away, old man.... King Lear hath lost" (5-6).

The optimism of Albany, as it is even more extravagant, is more sternly reproved.

All friends shall taste

The wages of their virtue, and all foes

The cup of their deservings. (5.3.305-06)

In that cheerful saying his philosophy is embodied. But the pentameter line, only three feet long, lacks its conclusion. Albany, rather cruelly, is made to supply the missing feet: "O, see, see!" It is the last agony of Lear to which his attention is directed.

Albany, as he presents the hopeful man who insists, a little too suavely, that God's in His Heaven, is Shakespeare's particular butt. It is he who cries, of Cordelia: "The gods defend her!" (258) The stage direction follows, enforcing the most monstrous conjunction in the play: "Enter Lear with Cordelia in his arms." The gods do not defend us. Perhaps they are unable to. "The gods reward your kindness," says Kent to Gloucester. That is the reading of the Folio, and surely it is the right reading. But the reading of the Quarto provokes speculation: "The gods deserve your kindness." It is as if the gods are weak, and require that humans collaborate with them in wielding the world. Lear, as his ardor for the right grows upon him, shakes the superflux to the wretched. His intent is, as he says, to show the heavens

more just. It is at least tenable to interpret: his intent is to justify their feckless ways as he can.

Maybe the heavens are worse than insufficient. What is said of the King, suggests not merely a lack of capacity in the ordering of things, but a malevolent purpose, as if the gods had marked us down for their sport. On this reading, Lear's reference to himself and Cordelia as "God's spies" will mean, as an early commentator suggested, "spies placed over God Almighty, to watch his motions." Maybe there is need of surveillance, if the human sacrifices on which the gods themselves throw incense are offered up for their pleasure; if the brand of fire that parts the predestined victims is handed down, and with an antique malice, from Heaven. "Can so much wrath dwell in heavenly spirits!" The Roman poet Virgil raised the question first, and it is still a problem for Shakespeare. The chill that invades us as, huddled with the others against the roaring wind and rain, we await the advent of unaccommodated man: "What art thou that dost grumble there i' th' straw?" is occasioned by the wild surmise, so much more fearful because it is involuntary, that the fiend is really walking up and down in the earth, and with the sufferance and even the connivance of Heaven. In the pitiless conclusion of *King Lear*, the dominion of the Prince of Darkness seems confirmed, and his presence a substantial presence as, with his terrible vans, he enshadows and overwhelms the just and the unjust alike.

If Fortune brag of two she loved and hated,
One of them we behold, (282-83)

Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never, (309-,10)

That is, I daresay, only an apparition, the disnatured child of night thoughts, and as such may be dispelled. But it needs more than to rub one's eyes, or to mutter a pious

ejaculation. To such a degree is this true that even critics so tough-minded as Dr. Johnson have averted their eyes rather than acquiesce in the final horror with which the dramatist confronts them. It is too literal, too realistic for “dramatick exhibition.” And yet it is remarkable that this play, in which Shakespeare’s unremitting fidelity to fact is almost an occasion for scandal, manifests in its beginning a studied and a deliberate indifference to fact. If subsequent scenes are so realistic as hardly to be endured, the opening scenes have not to do with realism but with ritual and romance. Their abiding characteristic is a niggling formality. They do not wear the aspect of life so much as the aspect of art. Kent, lapsing into rude rhyme as he takes his departure, catches and communicates that aspect. His language is gnomic, admonitory, and simple—not naïvely but consciously simple: “artificial.” He is not, for the moment, a real (an eccentric) man who displaces air like Hamlet or Parolles. He is, and by design, a flat character, highly conventionalized, who figures in an old-fashioned morality play. He would speak a prophecy before he goes.

The language of the other protagonists is of a piece with his. It does not evoke—not yet—the savage business of dragons of the prime (for all that the dragon is portentous in the threatening speeches of the King), so much as the ceremonious (the otherworldly !) business of proceedings at law and finance. Legal and fiscal metaphors reverberate. Gloucester, treating of his sons, asserts that the elder is no more dear than the younger, in his account. Lear, enacting his intention to abdicate the throne, renounces interest of territory, or possession. In lieu of Kent’s insistence that he reserve his state, he stipulates his troop of knights as reservation, explicitly a legalism, in which the action of retaining a privilege is denoted. He would extend his largest bounty where nature challenges merit, or makes title to it. Regan, whose tenders of affection aim at that title, finds that Goneril has anticipated her very deed of love. The King,

in whose simple-minded understanding love is a commodity, urges his youngest daughter to discover what portion her protestations can draw. But Cordelia loves only according to her bond. Failing to please, her price is fallen. Goneril pleases, in that she is taken as permitting to her father twice the retinue permitted by Regan. Her devotion may therefore be measured. She is precisely twice her sister's love.

Lear is not easily persuaded of his error, that devotion—in his psychology, a ponderable thing—is to be assessed and ought to be requited in ponderable ways. The inadmissible equation is there still, in the crass appeal to Regan when his agony is upon him:

Thy half o' th' kingdom hast thou not forgot,
Wherein I thee endowed. (2.4.178-79)

He is appropriately answered, since that respects of fortune are his love:

Good sir, to the purpose. (180)

This veneer of the unreal and the ritualistic, overlaying the initial action of the play, is not peculiar to the love test. The characters themselves move in an air of unreality. There is about them a felt sense of contradiction, as between what they are and what they seem to be. Lear is not a king but the show of a king. It is an insubstantial pageant over which he presides, recalling, in its unreality, the specious parade with which an earlier tragedy of Shakespeare's commences, that of Richard II, the mockery king of snows. Kent's acumen is verified when, with a lack of respect that is intended to shock and thereby to quicken perception, he sees and salutes his master, not as a monarch but as an old man.

But if Lear is an unreal image, so are the wicked daughters. Their essential vacuity, echoing to the touch, announces itself as it issues in their exaggerated

protestings of love. Kent points to it obliquely in his praise of Cordelia:

Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
Reverb no hollowness. (1.1.155-56)

Gloucester discerns it, magnified to cosmic proportions, in the disordered state of the macrocosm, riven by machinations, by the hollowness that is hypocrisy. All that glisters is taken for gold. The pretension of the hypocrite, who professes herself weighs more than the practice of the candid and guileless retainer, who professes himself to be no less than he seems. The mere appearance is everything, and hence what is lifelike and vital is eclipsed. The characters are cut in alabaster, like monumental statues. The same metaphor describes the fool and the knave and the paragon of virtue, divesting each of human personality. Gloucester, who seems a good old man, is brazed by self-indulgence, become like hard metal. Regan, in whom nature appears tender-hefted, is hardened to insensibility, made of that self metal as her sister. Cordelia is, conversely, a little-seeming substance. But Cordelia is rendered also in nonhuman terms: her love, a precious metal, is more ponderous than her tongue.

an enemy to all other joys
Which the most precious square of sense professes,
(73-74)

Stylization of language and gesture is notable in such a play as *The Tempest*, and for excellent and obvious reasons. Shakespeare's resort to it in *King Lear* seems, however, gratuitous, and even antipathetic to the spirit of the play. *Lear* is not masquelike nor, certainly, romantic, in the harrowing story it tells. But observe that *The Tempest* begins, not formally, but realistically, with the faithful depicting of a ship driving on the rocks, a wild and literal scene in which the blasphemy and execration of real and

affrighted persons bask the throbbing of the storm. And then the scene shifts abruptly. The auditor or reader, whose belief is purchased at the outset by a terrific glimpse of the real world, is brought safe to shore: is induced to enter, and willingly, the world of enchantment and romance. The fact of the transition, and the implausibility attendant on it, elude him. The tempest is still dinning in his ears.

In *King Lear* the dramatic problem is exactly reversed. It is to ensure that those whose disenchantment the playwright is already preparing, who are to be compelled to look on the Gorgon-features, will not evince incredulity or petrification. The problem is resolved by emphasizing at the outset the elements of unreality and romance. The impelling action of *Lear* is made to resemble a fairy tale, which is, I suppose, its ultimate source. The auditor or reader is fooled. Before he is aware, he has become a participant in the fierce and excessively painful dispute between damnation and impassioned clay.

But there is more than craft to Shakespeare's design in thus introducing his drama. He makes his characters unreal initially because he means them, at least in part, to be symbolic. The stylized quality of the beginning, as of a charade, its legalistic and ceremonious nature, the exalting in it of appearance as against reality, all work to the fulfilling of that primary intention. And though *Lear* is essentially representational drama, though realism very quickly takes precedence over ritual, the element of the symbolic is never dissipated altogether but figures in important ways until the end. Just as in *Twelfth Night*, whose burden is mistaken identity and the hoc-cus-pocus of identical twins, realism intrudes persistently to temper and give substance to romance—

In nature there's no blemish but the mind;
None can be called deformed but the unkind.

Virtue is beauty; but the beauteous evil
Are empty trunks, o'erflourished by the devil.
(*Twelfth Night*, 3.4.379-82)

—so in *King Lear*, an anti-romantic play in that its burden is a relentless anatomizing of evil, the symbolic declines to yield entirely to the representational. It persists, not to give substance to the teal, which is substantial enough—

Out, vile jelly!
Where is thy luster now? (3.7.84-85)

—but to order the real and make it meaningful, to avoid a confounding of it with the merely sensational. Not to grasp this ordering function is, necessarily, to run counter, to smell a fault where no fault is. Thus the embarrassment of critics so estimable as Goethe (for whom the action of the play was a tissue of the improbable and absurd), and Colendge (who saw the first scene as dispensable), and A. C. Bradley (who detected and enumerated in the whole, more and grosser inconsistencies than in any other of the great tragedies).

Misconstruction of the role and character of Cordelia typifies this failure to come to terms with the symbolic. Cordelia is, of old, a deeply disquieting figure. Why does she love, and yet remain silent? The question has engendered a little galaxy of answers. It is a question not to be asked. The first principle of good dramatic manners is to concede to the dramatist his given, so long as he is able to exploit it. Here, the given is the heroine's fatal reserve. It is the lever that starts the play on its progress. As such, it may not be queried, any more than the procedure that governs in chess or in the writing of an Italian sonnet.

But "reserve" is after all the wrong word. It suggests the wrong frame of reference. It leads to the rationalization of conduct on realistic grounds. To make the horrid point, this judgment of a contemporary critic may be cited, that

Cordelia loved her father “less than she loved her own way and hated her sisters.” That is a fair sample of the appeal to realism. It is at all costs to be avoided. Cordelia does not betray, what Coleridge thought to perceive, “some little faulty admixture of pride and sullenness.” No stain of guilt or responsibility attaches to her. She is not imperious, like the King, not headstrong, not intractable. The appeal to heredity is a variation of the appeal to realism, and is, in this context, equally and altogether inapposite. Shakespeare’s characters, unlike Eugene O’Neill’s, have no antecedents. It is of no use to say that Cordelia is her father’s daughter. The reason she will not speak is because she cannot speak; and she cannot because the heart of a fool is in his mouth but the mouth of the wise is in his heart.

This is to say that the muteness of Cordelia (like the fantastic credulity of Gloucester) is not so much a reflection of character as it is the embodiment of an idea. Less real than symbolic, her affinity is more to a creature of fairy tale like Cinderella than to a heroine of the realistic drama like Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In delineating her behavior the playwright may be, psychologically, so penetrating and exact as really to catch the manners living as they rise: that is partly an extra, added attraction, over and above what we need. More important is his intention, not to portray a believable woman, but to dramatize the proposition that plainness is more than eloquence, that beauty is to be purchased by the weight, that meager lead, which rather threatens than promises aught, buys more than silver and gold. The agitation of those who worry the details of the love test in an attempt to make it credible, which means to make it conformable to the canons of the realistic theater, is founded on their misapprehension of symbolic action.

When Cordelia is depicted as the last and least, it is not her slightness of stature that the dramatist is glancing at—

or not that, decisively. He is preparing an ironic and a pregnant echo, to amplify Kent's assertion, a little later:

Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least
(1.1.154)

But more than that, he is invoking the promise of Scripture, unspoken in the play, and yet close to the theme, which is the heart (but not the moral!) of the play: The first shall be last and the last shall be first. When Cordelia herself exclaims, as she prepares to engage the British powers, it is not altogether the realistic business of an imminent battle to which she is adverting. (Certainly that business does not much preoccupy Shakespeare.) And therefore we are not to wonder why the King of France was, so inopportunistly, called back to his kingdom, nor whether Shakespeare's allegiance or circumspection dictated the victory of the English. We want to catch in what is said an older saying, the sentence of the Evangelist, so much more than a literary reminiscence, and estimate accordingly the symbolic role the speaker plays: "Knew ye not that I must go about my father's business." It may be that Cordelia is that quintessence of womanhood celebrated reverentially (and with an appropriate silence as to particulars) by critics like A. W. Schlegel: "Of Cordelia's heavenly beauty of soul, I do not dare to speak." But it is not after all the literal woman to whom Shakespeare is holding up the mirror. Compare Beatrice in *Much Ado*, or Rosalind in *As You Like It*.

O dear father,
It is thy business that I go about, (4.4.23-24)

It is a nice but an indispensable point to determine, just when the dramatist intends that the canons of ordinary realism are to be set aside or, better, transcended. Pretty clearly he wishes to transcend them when, in Act 2, Kent is made to sleep in the stocks, and Edgar, unmindful of him, to step forward and tell of his proposed transformation.

Bradley is bemused: "One cannot help asking ... whether Edgar is mad that he should return from his hollow tree ... to his father's castle in order to soliloquize." But Shakespeare, in juxtaposing the two characters, is not concerned with motivation or, certainly, with locale. No doubt the Bedlam is understood to remain on the heath. But precisely where he is, is not a question that ought to detain us. Neither are we to ask why he fails to perceive that someone else is up there with him on stage, in full view of the audience, and so, presumably, of himself; nor how Kent, for all his travails, can sleep undisturbed through twenty lines of blank verse. In the bringing together of the two good men, each of whom has been driven to the lowest and most dejected point of fortune, a dramatic emblem is achieved, a speaking picture, whose purport is not realistic but symbolic. What Shakespeare is after is this dark association, or sequence:

A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.
(2.2.160)

Edgar I nothing am. (2.3.21)

In the same way the symbolic overtops the conventionally real when, in the final act, Edgar issues his challenge to Edmund. One is not to belabor the improbability of Edmund's failure to recognize his brother, though, in point of fact, the failure is itself symbolic: the villain is indeed beguiled, and not because the plot demands this but because of his own willful behavior. But what is central to the scene is the intimation one hears, in the blast of the trumpet that announces the combat, of that final trump that vindicates the right and summons the perpetrator of wrong to the Judgment. When—another illustration—Edgar, opposing Oswald, assumes the character of a rustic, the clownish dialect he speaks is, realistically, absurd: what is its occasion? Symbolically, however, it is deeply congruous. The power of truth is attested to, however ludicrous its aspect, and the frailty which is falsehood exposed, in this

meeting of the ragged fellow, whose West Country accent gives him out to be a bumpkin, but who intrinsically merits and possesses all honors, and the gilded courtier, whose extrinsic show and sophistication betoken all honors and are as paste and cover to none.

The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. (3.4.146)

In Edgar's vanquishing of Oswald, which is the triumph of the lowly and the unprepossessing over the world of robes and furred gowns, Lear's great social speeches are enacted and answered.

A similar intention, to effect on stage a symbolic tableau, dictates the grouping of the protagonists at the end of the play. All are there in the resolution, occupying, I think, the same positions they assumed at first, and not least the wicked sisters, whose dead bodies are brought on, no doubt to exemplify this judgment of the heavens, but more, to direct the attention of the audience back and back, over all the dreadful ground that has been traced, to the opening scene. In their beginning is their ending. Perhaps the great wheel of the play, now come full circle, is impelled in its progress by something more than mechanical law.

What this other law may be is the central question Shakespeare poses and endeavors to answer. Lear, as is fitting, is made to enunciate it: "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" (1.4.236) But the question is not peculiar to Lear but is implicit in the utterance and conduct of all those who inhabit the darkness with him. Kent as Caius is interrogated by the King:

What art thou?

A man, sir. (10-11)

But what is it, to be a man? What is man to profess? To what law are his services bound? Gloucester interrogates Edgar: "Now, good sir, what are you?" and is answered:

A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows,
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Am pregnant to good pity. (4.6.224-25)

Cornwall, whose disposition will not be rubbed or stopped, does not manifest that pity. It is ascendant, though tardily, in Gloucester, who, if he dies for it, must relieve his master. Why is that? And why had Kent rather break his own heart than the King's? How does one construe that fitness to which Albany appeals, in declining to let his hands obey his blood; or that pleasure, a more intriguing word, which inclines the Old Man to succor the blinded Gloucester, "Come on't what will"? What point inheres in Albany's characterization of Oswald, as Oswald reports it:

he called me sot,
And told me I had turned the wrong side out; (4.2.8-9)

and in what manner does it comment on the Captain's decision to collaborate in the killing of the King and Cordelia:

If it be man's work, I'll do it. (5.3.40)

There ought here to ensue a brief though perceptible silence, in token of the irony and expectation with which these laconic words are charged. The dramatist is bidding us essay a definition of the nature of man's work and, concomitantly, of the nature of man. Edmund, with his customary coldbloodedness, addresses himself to the task:

men
Are as the time is. (31-32)
Kent speaks to it, describing Oswald:
A tailor made thee. (2.2.55-56)

So in whimsical ways does the Fool, begging pardon of Goneril:

Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint stool; (3.6.51)

and also the King, whose confusion is at once real and assumed:

Your name, fair gentlewoman? (1.4.242)

and, in sterner ways, the Servant, drawing his sword against Cornwall:

Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.
(3.7.79-80)

To divine the way in which these lines reticulate is to resolve at least a corner of the mystery which is the play.

—RUSSELL FRASER

University of Michigan

OceanofPDF.com

[DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Lear, King of Britain

King of France

Duke of Burgundy

Duke of Cornwall, husband to Regan

Duke of Albany, husband to Goneril

Earl of Kent

Earl of Gloucester

Edgar, son to Gloucester

Edmund, bastard son to Gloucester

Curan, a courtier

Oswald, steward to Goneril

Old Man, tenant to Gloucester Doctor

Lear's Fool

A Captain, subordinate to Edmund Gentlemen, attending on Cordelia

A Herald

Servants to Cornwall

Goneril

Regan } daughters to Lear

Cordelia

Knights attending on Lear, Officers, Messengers, Soldiers, Attendants

Scene: Britain]

OceanofPDF.com

The Tragedy of King Lear

ACT 1

Scene 1. [King Lear's palace.]

Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund.

Kent I thought the King had more affected⁰¹ the Duke of Albany[°] than Cornwall.

Gloucester. It did always seem so to us; but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most, for equalities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.[°]

Kent. Is not this your son, my lord?

Gloucester. His breeding,[°] sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am brazed[°] to't.

Kent. I cannot conceive[°] you.

Gloucester. Sir, this young fellow's mother could;

whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

¹ The degree sign (°) indicates a footnote, which is keyed to the text by line number. Text references are printed in boldface type; the annotation follows in roman type. 1.1.1 affected loved

2 Albany Albanacte, whose domain extended "from the river Humber to the point of Caithness" (Holinshed)

5-7 equalities... moiety i.e., shares are so balanced against one another that careful examination by neither can make him wish the other's portion

9 breeding upbringing

11 brazed made brazen, hardened

12 conceive understand (pun follows)

Kent. I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue° of it being so proper.°

Gloucester. But I have a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account:° though this knave° came something saucily° to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson° must be acknowledged. Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

Edmund No, my lord.

Gloucester. My Lord of Kent. Remember him hereafter as my honorable friend.

Edmund My services to your lordship.

Kent. I must love you, and sue° to know you better.

Edmund. Sir, I shall study deserving.

Gloucester. He hath been out° nine years, and away he shall again. The King is coming.

Sound a sennet. ° Enter one bearing a coronet, ° then King Lear, then the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany, next Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and Attendants.

Lear. Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

Gloucester. I shall, my lord. *Exit [with Edmund].*

Lear. Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.°

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast° intent

To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we

17 issue result (child)

18 proper handsome

21 account estimation

21 lame fellow (without disapproval)

22 saucily (1) insolently (2) lasciviously

24 whoreson fellow (lit, son of a whore)

31 sue entreat

33 out away, abroad

34 s.d. sennet set of notes played on a trumpet,
signalizing the entrance or departure of a
procession

34 s.d. coronet small crown, intended for
Cordelia

38 darker purpose hidden intention

40 fast fixed

Unburthened crawl toward death. Our son of
Cornwall,
And you our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish°
Our daughters' several° dowers, that future strife
May be prevented° now. The Princes, France and
Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
And here are to be answered. Tell me, my daughters
(Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest° of territory, cares of state),
Which of you shall we say doth love us most,
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge.° Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first.

Goneril. Sir, I love you more than word can wield° the matter;

Dearer than eyesight, space° and liberty;
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
A love that makes breath° poor, and speech
unable:°
Beyond all manner of so much° I love you.

Cordelia. [Aside] What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.

Lear. Of all these bounds, even from this line to this, With shadowy forests, and with champains riched,°

With plenteous rivers, and wide-skirted meads,°
We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issues°
Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter,

45 constant will to publish fixed intention to
proclaim

46 several separate

47 prevented forestalled

52 Interest legal right

55 nature ... challenge i.e., natural affection
contends with desert for (or lays claim to)
bounty

57 wield handle

58 space scope

62 breath language

62 unable impotent

63 Beyond ... much beyond all these
comparisons

66 champains riched enriched plains

67 wide-skirted meads extensive grass-lands

68 issuesdescendants

69 perpetual in perpetuity

Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall? Speak.

Regan. I am made of that self mettle[°] as my sister, And prize me at her worth.[°] In my true heart

I find she names my very deed of love;[°]
Only she comes too short, that[°] I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys
Which the most precious square of sense
professes,[°]
And find I am alone felicitate[°]
In your dear Highness' love.

Cordelia. [*Aside*] Then poor Cordelia!

And yet not so, since I am sure my love's More ponderous[°] than my tongue.

Lear. To thee and thine hereditary ever

Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,
No less in space, validity,[°] and pleasure
Than that conferred on Goneril. Now, our joy,
Although our last and least;[°] to whose young love
The vines of France and milk[°] of Burgundy
Strive to be interest;[°] what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

Cordelia. Nothing, my lord.

Lear. Nothing?

Cordelia. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

Cordelia. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty According to my bond,[°] no more nor less.

Lear. How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little, Lest you may mar your fortunes.

71 self mettle same material or temperament
72 prize ... worth value me the same (imperative)
73 my ... love what my love really is (a legalism)
74 that in that
76 Which ... professes which the choicest estimate of
sense avows
77 felicitate made happy 80 ponderous weighty
83 validity value
85 least youngest, smallest
86 milk i.e. pastures
87 interest closely connected, as interested parties
95 bond i.e., filial obligation

Cordelia. Good my lord, You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I

Return those duties back as are right fit,^o
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply,^o when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight^o shall
carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.

Lear. But goes thy heart with this?

Cordelia. Ay, my good lord.

Lear. So young, and so untender?

Cordelia So young, my lord, and true.

Lear. Let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower!

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate^o and the night,
By all the operation of the orbs^o

From whom we do exist and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,°
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous
Scythian,°
Or he that makes his generation messes°
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved,
As thou my sometime° daughter.

Kent. Good my liege—

Lear. Peace, Kent!

99 Return ... fit i.e., am correspondingly dutiful
102 Haply perhaps
103 plight troth plight
112 mysterles of Hecate secret rites of Hecate
(goddess of the infernal world, and of witchcraft)
113 operation of the orbs astrological influence
116 Propinquity and property of blood relationship and
common blood
118 Scythlan (type of the savage)
119 makes his generation messes eats his own
offspring
122 sometime former

Come not between the Dragon° and his wrath.
I loved her most, and thought to set my rest°
On her kind nursery.° Hence and avoid my sight!
So be my grave my peace, as here I give
Her father's heart from her! Call France. Who stirs?
Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany,
With my two daughters' dowers digest° the third;
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.°
I do invest you jointly with my power,
Pre-eminence, and all the large effects

That troop with majesty. Ourself,° by monthly
course,
With reservation° of an hundred knights,
By you to be sustained, shall our abode
Make with you by due turn. Only we shall retain
The name, and all th' addition° to a king. The sway,
Revènuè, execution of the rest,
Beloved sons, be yours; which to confirm,
This coronet° part between you.

Kent. Royal Lear,

Whom I have ever honored as my king, Loved as my
father, as my master followed, As my great patron
thought on in my prayers—

Lear. The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft.°

Kent. Let it fall° rather, though the fork° invade

The region of my heart. Be Kent unmannerly
When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old
man?

Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak

124 Dragon (1) heraldic device of Britain (2) emblem
of ferocity

125 set my rest (1) stake my all (a term from the card
game of primero) (2) find my test

126 musery care, nursing

130 digest absorb

131 Let... her i.e., let her pride be her dowry and gain
her a husband

134-35 effects/That troop with majesty
accompaniments that go with kingship

134 Ourself (the royal “we”)

135 reservation the action of reserving a privilege (a
legalism)

138 addition titles and honors

141 coronet (the crown which was to have been Cordelia's)

145 make from the shaft avoid the arrow

146 fall strike

146 fork forked head of the arrow

When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound

When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state,°

And in thy best consideration° check

This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment,°

Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
Reverb° no hollowness.°

Lear. Kent, on thy life, no more!

Kent. My life I never held but as a pawn°

To wage° against thine enemies; nor fear to lose it,
Thy safety being motive.°

Lear. Out of my sight!

Kent. See better, Lear, and let me still° remain The true
blank° of thine eye.

Lear. Now by Apollo—

Kent. Now by Apollo, King, Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

Lear. O vassal! Miscreant!° [*Laying his hand on his sword.*]

Albany, Cornwall. Dear sir, forbear!

Kent. Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow

Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift,
Or, whilst I can vent clamor° from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

Lear. Hear me, recreant !°

On thine allegiance,° hear me!

That thou hast sought to make us break our vows,

151 Reserve thy state retain your kingly
authority

152 best consideration most careful reflection

153 Answer ... judgement I will stake my life on
my opinion

156 Reverb reverberate

156 hollowness (1) emptiness (2) insincerity

157 pawn stake in a wager

158 wage (1) wager (2) carry on war

159 motive moving cause

160 still always

161 blank the white spot in die center of die
target (at which Lear should aim)

163 vassal! Miscreant! base wretch!
Misbeliever!

167 vent clamor utter a cry

168 recreant traitor

169 On thine allegiance (to forswear, which is to
commit high treason)

Which we durst never yet, and with strained° pride

To come betwixt our sentence° and our power,

Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,

Our potency made good,° take thy reward.

Five days we do allot thee for provision°

To shield thee from diseases° of the world,

And on the sixth to turn thy hated back

Upon our kingdom. If, on the tenth day following,

Thy banished trunk° be found in our dominions,

The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,

This shall not be revoked.

Kent. Fare thee well, King. Sith° thus thou wilt appear,

Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.
[*To Cordelia*] The gods to their dear shelter take
thee, maid,
That justly think'st, and hast most rightly said.
[*To Regan and Goneril*] And your large speeches
may your deeds approve,^o
That good effects^o may spring from words of love.
Thus Kent, O Princes, bids you all adieu;
He'll shape his old course^o in a country new. *Exit.*
Flourish. ^o *Enter Gloucester, with France and*
Burgundy; Attendants.

Gloucester. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

Lear. My Lord of Burgundy,

We first address toward you, who with this king
Hath rivaled for our daughter. What in the least
Will you require in present^o dower with her,
Or cease your quest of love?

Burgundy. Most royal Majesty,

I crave no more than hath your Highness offered,

171 strained forced (and so excessive)
172 sentence judgment, decree
174 Our poteacy made good my royal authority
being now asserted
175 for provision for making preparation
176 deseases troubles
179 trunk body
182 Sith since
186 approve prove true
187 effects results
189 shape... course pursue his customary way
189 s.d. Flourish trumpet fanfare
194 present immediate

Nor will you tender° less.

Lear. Right noble Burgundy,

When she was dear° to us, we did hold her so;
But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands.
If aught within that little seeming substance,°
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,°
And nothing more, may fitly like° your Grace,
She's there, and she is yours.

Burgundy. I know no answer.

Lear. Will you, with those infirmities she owes,°

Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,
Dow'ed with our curse, and strangered° with our
oath,
Take her, or leave her?

Burgundy. Pardon me, royal sir. Election makes not up° on
such conditions.

Lear. Then leave her, sir; for, by the pow'r that made me,

I tell you all her wealth. [*To France.*] For you,
great King,
I would not from your love make such a stray
To° match you where I hate; therefore beseech° you
T' avert your liking a more worthier way°
Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed
Almost t' acknowledge hers.

France. This is most strange,

That she whom even but now was your best object,°
The argument° of your praise, balm of your age,
The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle°

197 tender offer

198 dear (1) beloved (2) valued at a high price

200 little seeming substance person who is (1)
inconsiderable (2) outspoken
201 pleced added to it
202 fitly like please by its fitness
204 owes possesses
206 strangered made a stranger
208 Election makes not up no one can choose
211-12 make such a stray / To stray so far as to
212 beseech I beseech
213 avert ... way turn your affections from her
and bestow them on a better person
216 best object i.e., the one you loved most
217 argument subject
219 disamantle strip off

So many folds of favor. Sure her offense
Must be of such unnatural degree
That monsters it,° or your fore-vouched° affection
Fall into taint;° which to believe of her
Must be a faith that reason without miracle
Should never plant in me.°

Cordelia. I yet beseech your Majesty,

If for° I want that glib and oily art
To speak and purpose not,° since what I well intend
I'll do't before I speak, that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
No unchaste action or dishonored step,
That hath deprived me of your grace and favor;
But even for want of that for which I am richer,
A still-soliciting° eye, and such a tongue
That I am glad I have not, though not to have it
Hath lost° me in your liking.

Lear. Better thou

Hadst not been born than not t' have pleased me better.

France. Is it but this? A tardiness in nature°

Which often leaves the history unspoke°
That it intends to do. My Lord of Burgundy,
What say you° to the lady? Love's not love
When it is mingled with regards° that stands
Aloof from th' entire point.° Will you have her?
She is herself a dowry.

Burgundy. Royal King,

Give but that portion which yourself proposed,
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,
Duchess of Burgundy.

222 That monsters it as makes it monstrous,
unnatural

222 fore-vouched previously sworn

223 Fall into taint must be taken as having been
unjustified all along i.e., Cordelia was unworthy of
your love from the first

224-25 reason... me my reason would have to be
supported by a miracle to make me believe

226 for because

227 purpose not not mean to do what I promise

233 still-soliciting always begging

235 lost ruined

237 tardiness in nature natural reticence

238 leaves the history unspoke does not announce
the action

240 What say you i.e., will you have 2

41 regards considerations (the dowry)

241-42 stands ... point have nothing to do with the
essential question (love)

Lear. Nothing. I have sworn. I am firm.

Burgundy. I am sorry then you have so lost a father That you must lose a husband.

Cordelia. Peace be with Burgundy

Since that respects of fortune° are his love,
I shall not be his wife.

France. Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being poor,

Most choice forsaken, and most loved despised,
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon.
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
Gods, gods! 'Tis strange that from their cold'st
neglect

My love should kindle to inflamed respect.°
Thy dow'rless daughter, King, thrown to my
chance,°

Is Queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.
Not all the dukes of wat'rish° Burgundy
Can buy this unprized precious° maid of me.
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind.
Thou lovest here, a better where° to find.

Lear. Thou hast her, France; let her be thine, for we

Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again. Therefore be gone,
Without our grace, our love, our benison.°
Come, noble Burgundy.

*Flourish. Exeunt [Lear, Burgundy, Cornwall,
Albany, Gloucester, and Attendants].*

France. Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cordelia. The jewels of our father,° with washed° eyes

Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are,

250 respects of fortune mercenary
considerations

257 inflamed respect more ardent affection

258 chance lot
260 wat'rish (1) with many rivers (2) weak,
diluted
261 unprized precious unappreciated by others,
and yet precious
263 here ... where in this place, in another place
267 benison blessing
270 The jewels of our father you creatures
prized by our father
270 washed (1) weeping (2) clear-sighted

And, like a sister,° am most loath to call
Your faults as they are named.° Love well our
father.
To your professèd° bosoms I commit him.
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
I would prefer° him to a better place.
So farewell to you both.

Regan. Prescribe not us our duty.

Goneril. Let your study

Be to content your lord, who hath received you
At Fortune's alms.° You have obedience scanted,°
And well are worth the want that you have wanted.°

Cordelia. Time shall unfold what plighted° cunning hides,

Who covers faults, at last shame them derides.°
Well may you prosper.

France. Come, my fair Cordelia. *Exit France and Cordelia.*

Goneril. Sister, it is not little I have to say of what most
nearly appertains to us both. I think our father will hence
tonight.

Regan. That's most certain, and with you; next month with
us.

Goneril. You see how full of changes his age is. The observation we have made of it hath not been little.

He always loved our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.°

Regan. 'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

272 like a sister because I am a sister i.e., loyal, affectionate

273 as they are named ie., by their right and ugly names

274 professèd pretending to love

276 prefer recommend

280 At Fortune's alms as a charitable bequest from Fortune (and so, by extension, as one beggared or cast down by Fortune)

280 scanted stinted

281 worth... wanted deserve to be denied, even as you have denied

282 plighted pleated. enfolded

283 Who ... derides those who hide their evil are finally exposed and shamed ("He that hideth his sins, shall not prosper")

294 grossly obviously

Goneril. The best and soundest of his time° hath been

but rash; then must we look from his age to receive not alone the imperfections of long-ingrafted° condition,° but therewithal° the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

Regan. Such unconstant starts° are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment.

Goneril. There is further compliment° of leave-taking

between France and him. Pray you, let's hit° together ;
if our father carry authority with such disposition as he
bears,° this last surrender° of his will but offend° us.

Regan. We shall further think of it.

Goneril. We must do something, and i' th' heat.°

Exeunt.

Scene 2. [*The Earl of Gloucester's castle.*]

Enter Edmund [with a letter].

Edmund. Thou, Nature,° art my goddess; to thy law

My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom,° and permit
The curiosity° of nations to deprive me,
For that° I am some twelve or fourteen
moonshines°

297 of his time period of his life up to now
299-300 long-ingrafted implanted for a long
time
300 condition disposition
300 therewithal with them
303 unconstant starts impulsive whims
305 compliment formal courtesy
306 hit agree
307-8 carry ... bears continues, and in such
frame of mind, to wield the sovereign power
308 last surrender recent abdication 309 offend
vex
311 i' th' heat while the iron is hot
1.2.1 Nature (Edmund's conception of Nature
accords with our description of a bastard as a

natural child)
3 Stand... custom respect hateful convention
4 curiosity nice distinctions
5 For that because
5 moonshines months

Lag of° a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,°
My mind as generous,° and my shape as true,
As honest° madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? With baseness? Bastardy? Base? Base?
Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
More composition° and fierce° quality
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops°
Got° 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to th' legitimate. Fine word, "legitimate."
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,°
And my invention° thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top th' legitimate. I grow, I prosper.
Now, gods, stand up for bastards.
Enter Gloucester.

Gloucester. Kent banished thus? and France in choler parted?

And the King gone tonight? prescribed° his pow'r?
Confined to exhibition?° All this done
Upon the gad?° Edmund, how now? What news?

Edmund. So please your lordship, none.

Gloucester. Why so earnestly seek you to put up° that letter?

Edmund. I know no news, my lord.

Gloucester. What paper were you reading?

Edmund. Nothing, my lord.

Gloucester. No? What needed then that terrible dispatch° of it into your pocket? The quality of noth-

6 Lag of short of being (in age)

7 compact framed

8 penerons gallant

9 honest chaste

12 composition completeness

12 fierce energetic

14 fops fools

15 Got begot

19 speed prosper

20 invention plan

24 prescribed limited

25 exhibition an allowance or pension

26 Upon the gad on the spur of the moment (as if pricked by a gad or goad)

28 put up put away, conceal 33-34 terrible dispatch
hasty putting away

ing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see. Come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

Edmund. I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is a letter from my brother that I have not all o'er-read; and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.°

Gloucester. Give me the letter, sir.

Edmund. I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.°

Gloucester. Let's see, let's see.

Edmund I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste° of my virtue.

Gloucester. (*Reads*) "This policy and reverence° of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times;° keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish° them. I begin to find an idle and fond° bondage in the oppression of aged

tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. ° Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue° for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, EDGAR.” Hum! Conspiracy? “Sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue.” My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? A heart and brain to breed it in? When came you to this? Who brought it?

Edmund. It was not brought me, my lord; there’s the cunning of it. I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.°

40 o’erlooking inspection

44 to blame blameworthy

47 essay or taste test

48 policy and reverence policy of reverencing
(hendiadys)

49-50 best of our times best years of our lives (i.e.,
our youth)

51 relish enjoy

51-52 idle and fond foolish

53-54 who ... suffered which rules, not from its own
strength, but from our allowance

56 revenue income

64-65 casement of my closet window of my room

Gloucester. You know the character° to be your brother’s?

Edmund If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but in respect of that,° I would fain° think it were not.

Gloucester. It is his.

Edmund. It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

Gloucester. Has he never before sounded° you in this business?

Edmund Never, my lord. But I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect° age, and fathers declined, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

Gloucester. O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter. Abhorred villain, unnatural, detested,° brutish villain; worse than brutish! Go, sirrah,° seek him. I'll apprehend him. Abominable villain! Where is he?

Edmund. I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should run a certain course;° where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap° in your own honor and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down° my life for him that he hath writ this to feel° my affection to your honor, and to no other pretense of danger.°

Gloucester. Think you so?

66 character handwriting

69 in respect of that in view of what it is

70 fain prefer to

74 sounded sounded you out

71 perfect mature

81 detested detestable

82 sirrah sir (familiar form of address)

88-89 run a certain course i.e., proceed safely, know where you are going

91 gap breach

92 pawn down stake

93 feel test

94-95 pretense of danger dangerous purpose

Edmund. If your honor judge it meet,° I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance° have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay than this very evening.

Gloucester. He cannot be such a monster.

Edmund. Nor is not, sure.

Gloucester. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him,° I pray you; frame° the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself to be in a due resolution.°

Edmund. I will seek him, sir, presently;° convey° the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.°

Gloucester. These late° eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of Nature° can reason° it thus and thus, yet Nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects.° Love cools, friendship falls off,° brothers divide. In cities, mutinies;° in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction, ° there's son against father; the King falls from bias of nature, ° there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time.° Machinations, hollowness,° treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly° to our graves. Find out this

97 meet fit

99 auricular assurance proof heard with your own ears

106 wind me into him insinuate yourself into his confidence for me

106 frame manage

107-08 unstate ... resolution forfeit my earldom to know the truth

109 presently at once

109 convey manage

111 withal with it

112 late recent

113-14 wisdom of Nature scientific learning
114 reason explain
114-15 yet ... effects nonetheless our world is
punished with subsequent disasters
116 falls off revolts
117 mutinies riots
119-20 This ... prediction i.e., my son's villainous
behavior is included in these portents. and bears them
out
121 bias of nature natural inclination (the metaphor is
from the game of bowls)
122 best of our time our best days
123 hollowness insincerity
124 disquietly unquietly

villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing.° Do it carefully.
And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished; his offense,
honesty. 'Tis strange.

Exit.

Edmund This is the excellent foppery° of the world, that
when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own
behavior,° we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the
moon, and stars; as if we were villains on° necessity; fools
by heavenly compulsion ; knaves, thieves, and treachers by
spherical predominance;° drunkards, liars, and adulterers by
an enforced obedience of planetary influence;° and all that
we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on.° An admirable
evasion of whoremaster° man, to lay his goatish° disposition
on the charge of a star. My father compounded° with my
mother under the Dragon's Tail,° and my nativity° was
under Ursa Major,° so that it follows I am rough and
lecherous. Fut!° I should have been that° I am, had the
maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my
bastardizing. Edgar—

Enter Edgar.

and pat he comes, like the catastrophe° of the old comedy. My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam.°—O, these eclipses do portend these divisions. Fa, sol, la, mi.°

Edgar. How now, brother Edmund; what serious contemplation are you in?

125 it ... nothing you will not lose by it
128 foppery folly
129-30 often ... behavior often caused by our own excesses
132 on of
133-34 treachers ... predominance traitors because of the ascendancy of a particular star at our birth
134-35 by ...influence because we had to submit to the influence of our star
136 divine thrusting on supernatural compulsion
137 whoremaster lecherous
138 goatish scivious
139 compounded (1) made terms (2) formed (a child)
140 Dragon's Tall the constellation Draco
140 nativity birthday
141 Ursa Major the Great Bear
142 Fut! 's foot (an impatient oath)
142 that what
145 catastrophe conclusion
146-47 My ... Bedlam I must be doleful, like a lunatic beggar out of Bethlehem (Bedlam) Hospital, the London madhouse
148 Fa, sol, la, mi (Edmund's humming of the musical notes is perhaps prompted by his use of the word "divisions," which describes a musical variation)

Edmund I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

Edgar. Do you busy yourself with that?

Edmund. I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed^o unhappily: as of unnaturalness^o between the child and the parent, death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities,^o divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against King and nobles, needless diffidences, ^o banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, ^o nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

Edgar. How long have you been a sectary astronomical? ^o .

Edmund. Come, come, when saw you my father last?

Edgar. Why, the night gone by.

Edmund. Spake you with him?

Edgar. Ay, two hours together.

Edmund. Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word nor countenance?^o

Edgar. None at all.

Edmund. Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him; and at my entreaty forbear his presence^o until some little time hath qualified^o the heat of his displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.^o

Edgar. Some villain hath done me wrong.

Edmund. That's my fear, brother I pray you have a continent forbearance^o till the speed of his rage goes slower; and, as I say, retire with me to my

155-56 succeed follow

157 unnaturalness unkindness

158 amities friendships

159-60 diffidences distrusts

160-61 dissipation of cohorts falling away of supporters

162-63 sectary astronomical believer in astrology

169 countenance expression
172-73 forbear his presence keep away from him
173 qualified lessened
175-76 with ... allay even an injury to you would not
appease his anger
178-79 have a continent forbearance be restrained
and keep yourself withdrawn

lodging, from whence I will fitly° bring you to hear my lord
speak. Pray ye, go; there's my key. If you do stir abroad, go
armed.

Edgar. Armed, brother?

Edmund. Brother, I advise you to the best. Go armed.

I am no honest man if there be any good meaning
toward you. I have told you what I have seen and
heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror°
of it. Pray you, away.

Edgar. Shall I hear from you anon?°

Edmund. I do serve you in this business.

Exit Edgar.

A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices° ride easy. I see the business.
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit.
All with me's meet° that I can fashion fit.° *Exit.*

Scene 3. [*The Duke of Albany's palace.*]

Enter Goneril, and [Oswald, her] Steward.

Goneril. Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his
Fool?°

Oswald. Ay, madam.

Goneril. By day and night he wrongs me. Every hour He flashes into one gross crime^o or other

181 fitly at a fit time

188-89 image and horror true horrible picture

190 anon in a tittle while

195 practices plots

197 meet proper 197 fashion fit shape to my purpose

1.3.2 Food court jester

5 crime offense

That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it.

His knights grow riotous,^o and himself upbraids us

On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,

I will not speak with him. Say I am sick.

If you come slack of former services,^o

You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.^o

[*Horns within.*]

Oswald He's coming, madam; I hear him.

Goneril. Put on what weary negligence you please,

You and your fellows. I'd have it come to question.^o

If he distaste^o it, let him to my sister,

Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,

Not to be overruled. Idle^o old man,

That still would manage those authorities

That he hath given away. Now, by my life,

Old fools are babes again, and must be used

With checks as flatteries, when they are seen
abused.^o

Remember what I have said.

Oswald. Well, madam.

Goneril. And let his knights have colder looks among you.

What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so.

I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,

That I may speak.° I'll write straight° to my sister
To hold my course. Go, prepare for dinner.
Exeunt.

7 riotous dissolute
10 come ... services are less serviceable to him than
formerly
11 answer answer for 14 come to question be
discussed openly
15 distaste dislike
17 Idle foolish
21 With ... abused with restraints as well as soothing
words when they are misguided
25-26 breed ... speak find in this opportunities for
speaking out
26 straight at once

Scene 4. [A hall in the same.]

Enter Kent [disguised].

Kent. If but as well I other accents borrow

That can my speech defuse,° my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue°
For which I razed my likeness.° Now, banished
Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand
condemned,
So may it come,° thy master whom thou lov'st
Shall find thee full of labors.
*Horns within. ° Enter Lear, [Knights] and
Attendants.*

Lear. Let me not stay° a jot for dinner; go, get it ready. [*Exit an Attendant.*] How now, what art thou?

Kent. A man, sir.

Lear. What dost thou profess?° What wouldst thou with us?

Kent. I do profess° to be no less than I seem, to serve him truly that will put me in trust, to love him that is honest, to converse with him that is wise and says little, to fear judgment,° to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no fish.°

1.4.2 defuse disguise

3 full issue perfect result

4 razed my likeness shaved off, disguised my natural appearance

6 So may it come so may it fall out

7 s.d. within offstage 8 stay wait

12 What dost thou profess what do you do

14 profess claim

17 judgment (by a heavenly or earthly judge)

18 eat no fish i.e., (1) I am no Catholic, but a loyal Protestant (2) I am no weakling (3) I use no prostitutes

Lear. What art thou?

Kent. A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the King.

Lear. If thou be'st as poor for a subject as he's for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent. Service.

Lear. Who wouldst thou serve?

Kent. You.

Lear. Dost thou know me, fellow?

Kent. No, sir, but you have that in your countenance° which I would fain° call master.

Lear. What's that?

Kent. Authority.

Lear. What services canst thou do?

Kent. I can keep honest counsel,° ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it,° and deliver a plain message bluntly. That which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the best of me is diligence.

Lear. How old art thou?

Kent. Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for anything. I have years on my back forty-eight.

Lear. Follow me; thou shalt serve me. If I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet. Dinner, ho, dinner! Where's my knave?° my Fool? Go you and call my Fool hither.

[*Exit an Attendant.*]

Enter Oswald

You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter?

Oswald So please you—*Exit.*

28 countenance bearing

29 fain like to

33 honest counsel honorable secrets

33-34 mar...It i.e., I cannot speak like an affected courtier ("curious" = "elaborate," as against "plain")

43 knave boy

Lear. What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll° back.
[*Exit a Knight.*] Where's my Fool? Ho, I think the world's asleep.

[*Re-enter Kniglit.*]

How now? Where's that mongrel?

Knight. He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.

Lear. Why came not the slave back to me when I called him?

Knight. Sir, he answered me in the roundest^o manner, he would not.

Lear. He would not?

Knight. My lord, I know not what the matter is; but to my judgment your Highness is not entertained^o with that ceremonious affection as you were wont. There's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general dependants^o as in the Duke himself also and your daughter.

Lear. Ha? Say'st thou so?

Knight. I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent when I think your Highness wronged.

Lear. Thou but rememb'rest^o me of mine own conception. ^o I have perceived a most faint neglect^o of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity^o than as a very pretense^o and purpose of unkindness. I will look further into't. But where's my Fool? I have not seen him this two days.

Knight. Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the Fool hath much pined away.

Lear. No more of that; I have noted it well. Go you

47 clotpoll clodpoll, blockhead

54 roundest rudest

58-59 entertained treated

61 dependants servants

67 rememb'rest remindest

67-68 conception idea

68 faint neglect i.e., "weary negligence" (1.3.13)

69-70 mine own jealous curiosity suspicious concern
for my own dignity

70 very pretense actual intention

and tell my daughter I would speak with her. Go you, call hither my Fool. [*Exit an Attendant.*]

Enter Oswald.

O, you, sir, you! Come you hither, sir. Who am I, sir?

Oswald. My lady's father.

Lear. "My lady's father"? My lord's knave, you whoreson dog, you slave, you cur!

Oswald. I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon.

Lear. Do you bandy° looks with me, you rascal?

[*Striking him.*]

Oswald. I'll not be stricken,° my lord.

Kent. Nor tripped neither, you base football° player.

[*Tripping up his heels.*]

Lear. I thank thee, fellow. Thou serv'st me, and I'll love thee.

Kent. Come, sir, arise, away. I'll teach you differences. °
Away, away. If you will measure your lubber's ° length
again, tarry; but away. Go to!° Have you wisdom?° So.°
[*Pushes Oswald out.*]

Lear. Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee. There's earnest°
of thy service. [*Giving Kent money.*]

Enter Fool.

Fool. Let me hire him too. Here's my coxcomb.°

[*Offering Kent his cap.*]

Lear. How now, my pretty knave? How dost thou?

Fool. Sirrah, you were best° take my coxcomb.

Kent. Why, Fool?

86 bandy exchange insolently (metaphor from tennis)

87 stricken struck

88 football (a low game played by idle boys to the scandal of sensible men)

91-92 differences (of rank)

92-93 lubber's lout's

93 Go to (expression of derisive incredulity)

93-94 Have you wisdom i.e., do you know what's good for you 94 So good 96 earnest money for services rendered

97 coxcomb professional fool's cap, shaped like a coxcomb

99 you were best you had better

Fool. Why? For taking one's part that's out of favor.

Nay, an° thou canst not smile as the wind sits,° thou'lt catch cold shortly. There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banished° two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will. If thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb. —How now, Nuncle?° Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters.

Lear. Why, my boy?

Fool. If I gave them all my living,° I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters.

Lear. Take heed, sirrah—the whip.

Fool. Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out, when Lady the Brach° may stand by th' fire and stink.

Lear. A pestilent gall° to me.

Fool. Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

Lear. Do.

Fool. Mark it, Nuncle.

Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou owest,°
Ride more than thou goest,°
Learn more than thou trowest,°

Set less than thou throwest,°
Leave thy drink and thy whore,
And keep in-a-door,
And thou shalt have more
Than two tens to a score.°

Kent. This is nothing, Fool.

102 an if
102 smile ... sits ingratiate yourself with those in
power
104 banished alienated (by making them
independent)
107 Nun- de (contraction of "mine uncle")
110 living property
115 Brach
bitch
117 gall sore
123 owest ownest
124 goest walkest
125 trowest knowest
126 Set ... throwest bet less than you play for (get
odds from your opponent)
129-30 have ... score i.e., come away with more than
you had (two tens, or twenty shillings, make a score,
or one pound)

Fool. Then 'tis like the breath of an unfeed° lawyer —you
gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing,
Nuncle?

Lear. Why, no, boy. Nothing can be made out of nothing.

Fool. [*To Kent*] Prithee tell him, so much the rent of his land
comes to; he will not believe a Fool.

Lear. A bitter° Fool.

Fool. Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a
bitter Fool and a sweet one?

Lear. No, lad; teach me.

Fool.

That lord that counseled thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me,
Do thou for him stand.
The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;
The one in motley° here,
The other found out° there.°

Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

Fool. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

Kent. This is not altogether fool, my lord.

Fool. No, faith; lords and great men will not let me.°

If I had a monopoly° out, they would have part on't. And ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll be snatching. Nuncle, give me an egg, and I'll give thee two crowns.

132 unfeed unpaid for

140 bitter satirical

150 motley the drab costume of the professional jester

151 found out revealed

151 there (the Fool points at Lear, as a fool in the grain)

156 let me (have all the folly to myself)

157 monopoly (James I gave great scandal by granting to his "snatching" courtiers royal patents to deal exclusively in some commodity)

Lear. What two crowns shall they be?

Fool. Why, after I have cut the egg i' th' middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' th' middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt.° Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away. If I speak like myself° m this, let him be whipped° that first finds it so.

[*Singing*] Fools had ne'er less grace in a year,

For wise men are grown foppish,
And know not how their wits to wear,
Their manners are so apish.°

Lear. When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?

Fool. I have used° it, Nuncle, e'er since thou mad'st thy daughters thy mothers; for when thou gav'st them the rod, and put'st down thine own breeches, [*Singing*] Then they for sudden joy did weep,

And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep°
And go the fools among.
Prithee, Nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach
thy Fool to lie. I would fain learn to lie.

Lear. And° you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped.

Fool. I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are.

They'll have me whipped for speaking true; thou'lt
have me whipped for lying; and sometimes I am
whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any
kind o' thing than a Fool, and yet I would not be

165-66 bor'st ... dirt (like the foolish and
unnatural countryman in Aesop's fable)

168 like myself like a Fool

168 let him be whipped i.e., let the man be
whipped for a Fool who thinks my true saying to

be foolish

170-73 Fools ... apish i.e., fools were never in less favor than now, and the reason is that wise men, turning foolish, and not knowing how to use their intelligence, imitate the professional fools and so make them unnecessary

176 used practiced

181 play bo-peep (1) act like a child (2) blind himself

185 And if

thee, Nuncle: thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' th' middle. Here comes one o' the parings. *Enter Goneril.*

Enter Goneril.

Lear. How now, daughter? What makes that frontlet° on? Methinks you are too much of late i' th' frown.

Fool. Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning. Now thou art an O without a figure.° I am better than thou art now: I am a Fool, thou art nothing. [*To Goneril.*] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue. So your face bids me, though you say nothing. Mum, mum,

He that keeps nor crust nor crum,°

Weary of all, shall want° some.

[*Pointing to Lear*] That's a shealed peascod.°

Goneril. Not only, sir, this your all-licensed° Fool,

But other° of your insolent retinue

Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth

In rank° and not-to-be-endured riots. Sir,

I had thought by making this well known unto you

To have found a safe° redress, but now grow
fearful,
By what yourself too late° have spoke and done,
That you protect this course, and put it on
By your allowance;° which if you should, the fault
Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,°
Which, in the tender of° a wholesome weal,°
Might in their working do you that offense,
Which else were shame, that then necessity
Will call discreet proceeding.°

194 frontlet frown (lit., ornamental band)
199 figure digit, to give value to the cipher (Lear
is a nought)
203 crum soft bread inside the loaf
204 want lack
205 shealed peascod empty pea pod
206 all-licensed privileged to take any liberties
207 other others
209 rank gross
211 safe sure
212 too late lately
213-14 put... allowance promote it by your
approval
214 allowance approval
215 redresses sleep correction fail to follow
216 tender of desire for
216 weal state
217-19 Might ... proceeding as I apply it, the
correction might humiliate you; but the need to
take action cancels what would otherwise be
unfilial conduct in me

Fool. For you know, Nuncle,

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo° so long
That it had it head bit off by it° young.

So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.°

Lear. Are you our daughter?

Goneril. Come, sir,

I would you would make use of your good wisdom
Whereof I know you are fraught° and put away
These dispositions° which of late transport you
From what you rightly are.

Fool. May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?
Whoop, Jug,° I love thee!

Lear. Does any here know me? This is not Lear.

Does Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his
eyes?
Either his notion° weakens, or his discernings°
Are lethargied°—Ha! Waking? 'Tis not so.
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

Fool. Lear's shadow.

Lear. I would learn that; for, by the marks of sovereignty, °
knowledge, and reason, I should be false° persuaded I had
daughters.

Fool. Which° they will make an obedient father.

Lear. Your name, fair gentlewoman?

Goneril. This admiration,° sir, is much o' th' savor°

Of other your° new pranks. I do beseech you
To understand my purposes aright.
As you are old and reverend, should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,

221 **cuckoo** (who lays its eggs in the nests of
other birds)

222 it its

223 **darkling** in the dark

227 **fraught** endowed

228 **dispositions** moods
231 **Jug** Joan (? a quotation from a popular song)
234 **notion** understanding 234 **discernings** faculties
235 **lethargied** paralyzed
238-39 marks of sovereignty i.e., tokens that Lear is king, and hence father to his daughters
239 **false** falsely
241 **Which** whom (Lear)
243 **admiration** (affected) wonderment
243 **is much o' th' savor** smacks much
244 **other your** others of your

Men so disordered, so deboshed,° and bold,
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shows° like a riotous inn. Epicurism° and lust
Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel
Than a graced° palace. The shame itself doth speak
For instant remedy. Be then desired°
By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
A little to disquantity your train,°
And the remainders° that shall still depend,°
To be such men as may besort° your age,
Which know themselves, and you.

Lear. Darkness and devils!

Saddle my horses; call my train together.
Degenerate° bastard, I'll not trouble thee:
Yet have I left a daughter.

Goneril. You strike my people, and your disordered rabble
Make servants of their betters.

Enter Albany.

Lear. Woe, that too late repents. O, sir, are you come?

Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses.
Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
Than the sea-monster.

Albany. Pray, sir, be patient.

Lear. Detested kite,° thou liest.

My train are men of choice and rarest parts,°
That all particulars of duty know,
And, in the most exact regard,° support
The worships° of their name. O most small fault,

248 **deboshed** debauched
250 **Shows** appears
250 **Epicurism** riotous living
252 **graced** dignified
253 **desired** requested
255 **disquantity** your train reduce the number
of your dependents
256 **remainders** those who remain
256 **depend** attend on you
257 **besort** befit
260 **Degenerate** unnatural
269 **kite** scavenging bird of prey
270 **parts** accomplishments
272 **exact regard** strict attention to detail
273 **worships** honor

How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
Which, like an engine,° wrenched my frame of
nature
From the fixed place;° drew from my heart all love,
And added to the gall.° O Lear, Lear, Lear!
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in [*Striking*

his head.]

And thy dear judgment out. Go, go, my people.

Albany. My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant Of what hath moved you.

Lear. It may be so, my lord.

Hear, Nature, hear; dear Goddess, hear:
Suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful.
Into her womb convey sterility,
Dry up in her the organs of increase,[°]
And from her derogate[°] body never spring
A babe to honor her. If she must teem,[°]
Create her child of spleen,[°] that it may live
And be a thwart disnatured[°] torment to her.
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
With cadent[°] tears fret[°] channels in her cheeks,
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits[°]
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child. Away, away! *Exit.*

Albany. Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

Goneril. Never afflict yourself to know the cause,

But let his disposition[°] have that scope
As[°] dotage gives it.

Enter Lear.

Lear. What, fifty of my followers at a clap?[°]

275 **engine** destructive contrivance

274-76 **wrenched** ... **place** i.e., disordered my
natural self

277 **gall** bitterness

286 **increase** childbearing

287 **derogate** degraded
288 **teem** conceive
289 **spleen** ill humor
290 thwart disnatured perverse unnatural
292 **cadent** falling
292 fret wear
293 **benefits** the mother's beneficent care of her child
299 **disposition** mood
300 **As** that
301 **at a ciap** at one stroke
Within a fortnight?

Albany. What's the matter, sir?

Lear. I'll tell thee. [*To Goneril*] Life and death, I am ashamed

That thou hast power to shake my manhood°
thus!

That these hot tears, which break from me
perforce,°

Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs
upon thee!

Th' untented woundings° of a father's curse
Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond° eyes,
Bewep° this cause again, I'll pluck ye out
And cast you, with the waters that you loose,°
To temper° clay. Yea, is it come to this?

Ha! Let it be so. I have another daughter,
Who I am sure is kind and comfortable.°

When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails
She'll flay thy wolvisish visage. Thou shalt find
That I'll resume the shape° which thou dost think
I have cast off for ever.

Exit [Lear with Kent and Attendants].

Goneril. Do you mark that?

Albany. I cannot be so partial, Goneril, To the great love I bear you°—

Goneril. Pray you, content. What, Oswald, ho! [*To the Fool*] You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master!

Fool. Nuncle Lear, Nuncle Lear, tarry. Take the Fool° with thee.

304 **shake my manhood** i.e., with tears

305 **perforce** involuntarily, against my will

307 **untented woundings** wounds too deep to be probed with a tent (a roll of lint)

308 fond foolish

309 **Beweep** if you weep over

310 **loose** (1) let loose (2) lose, as of no avail

311 **temper** mix with and soften

313 **comfortable** ready to comfort

316 **shape** i.e., kingly role

318-19 **I cannot** ... you i.e., even though my love inclines me to you, I must protest

322 **Fool** (1) the Fool himself (2) the epithet or character of “fool”

A fox, when one has caught her,
And such a daughter,
Should sure to the slaughter,
If my cap would buy a halter.°
So the Fool follows after.° *Exit.*

Goneril. This man hath had good counsel. A hundred knights!

‘Tis politic° and safe to let him keep
At point° a hundred knights: yes, that on every
dream,
Each buzz,° each fancy, each complaint, dislike,
He may enguard° his dotage with their pow’rs
And hold our lives in mercy.° Oswald, I say!

Albany. Well, you may fear too far.

Goneril. Safer than trust too far.

Let me still take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be taken.° I know his heart.
What he hath uttered I have writ my sister.
If she sustain him and his hundred knights,
When I have showed-th' unfitness—

Enter Oswald.

How now, Oswald?

What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

Oswald. Ay, madam.

Goneril. Take you some company,° and away to horse.

Inform her full of my particular° fear,
And thereto add such reasons of your own
As may compact° it more. Get you gone,
And hasten your return. [Exit *Oswald.*] No, no,
my lord,
This milky gentleness and course° of yours,
Though I condemn not,° yet under pardon,

327-28 **halter, after** pronounced “hafter,”
“auter”

330 **politic** good policy

331 At **point** armed

332 **buzz** rumor

333 **enguard** protect

334 in mercy at his mercy

337 **Not ... taken** rather than remain fearful of
being overtaken by them

343 **company** escort 344 **particular** own

346 compact strengthen

348 **milky ... course** mild and gentle way
(hendi- adys)

349 **condemn not** condemn it not

You are much more attasked° for want of wisdom
Than praised for harmful mildness.°

Albany. How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell; Striving
to better, oft we mar what's well.

Goneril. Nay then—

Albany. Well, well, th' event.° *Exeunt.*

Scene 5. [Court before the same.]

Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool.

Lear. Go you before to Gloucester with these letters.
Acquaint my daughter no further with anything you know
than comes from her demand out of the letter.° If your
diligence be not speedy, I shall be there afore you.

Kent. I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your
letter. *Exit.*

Fool. If a man's brains were in's heels, were't° not in danger
of kibes?°

Lear. Ay, boy.

Fool. Then I prithee be merry. Thy wit shall not go slipshod.°

Lear. Ha, ha, ha.

Fool. Shalt° see thy other daughter will use thee kindly;° for
though she's as like this as a crab's° like an apple, yet I can
tell what I can tell.

350 **attasked** taken to task, blamed

351 **harmful mildness** dangerous indulgence

355 **th' event** i.e., we'll see what happens

1.5.3-4 **than** ... letter than her reading of the letter
brings her to ask

8 **were't** i.e., the brains

9 **kibes** chilblains

11-12 **Thy** ... **slipshod** your brains shall not go in slippers (because you have no brains to be protected from chilblains)

14 **Shalt** thou shalt

15 **kindly** (1) affectionately (2) after her kind or nature

15 **crab** crab apple

Lear. Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

Fool. She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou canst tell why one's nose stands i' th' middle on's° face?

Lear. No.

Fool. Why, to keep one's eyes of° either side's nose, that what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into.

Lear. I did her wrong.

Fool. Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

Lear. No.

Fool. Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.

Lear. Why?

Fool. Why, to put 's head in; not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns° without a case.

Lear. I will forget my nature.° So kind a father! Be my horses ready?

Fool. Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the seven stars° are no moe° than seven is a pretty° reason.

Lear. Because they are not eight.

Fool. Yes indeed. Thou wouldst make a good Fool. *Lear.* To take't again perforce!° Monster ingratitude!

Fool. If thou wert my Fool, Nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

Lear. How's that?

Fool. Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.

20 **on's** of his

22 **of** on

32 **horns** (1) snail's horns (2) cuckold's horns

33 **nature** paternal instincts

36 **seven** stars the Pleiades

36 **moe** more

36 **pretty** apt

40 **To ... perforce** (1) of Goneril, who has forcibly taken away Lear's privileges; or (2) of Lear, who meditates a forcible resumption of authority

Lear. O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! Keep me in temper;° I would not be mad!

[Enter Gentleman.]

How now, are the horses ready?

Gentleman. Ready, my lord.

Lear. Come, boy.

Fool. She that's a maid now, and laughs at my departure,
Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut shorter.°

Exeunt

47 in temper sane

51-52 **She ...** shorter the maid who laughs, missing the tragic implications of this quarrel, will not have sense enough to preserve her virginity ("things" = penises)

ACT 2

Scene 1. [*The Earl of Gloucester's castle.*]

Enter Edmund and Curan, severally.^o

Edmund. Save^o thee, Curan.

Curan. And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his duchess will be here with him this night.

Edmund. How comes that?

Curan. Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad? I mean the whispered ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments.^o

Edmund. Not I. Pray you, what are they?

Curan. Have you heard of no likely^o wars toward,^o 'twixt the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

Edmund. Not a word.

Curan. You may do, then, in time. Fare you well, sir. *Exit.*

Edmund. The Duke be here tonight? The better!^o best!

2.1.1 s.d **severally** separately (from different entrances on stage)

1 Save God save

9 **ear-kissing arguments** subjects whispered in the ear

11 likely probable

11 **toward** impending

16 The better so much the better

This weaves itself perforce^o into my business.
My father hath set guard to take my brother,
And I have one thing of a queasy question^o

Which I must act. Briefness° and Fortune, work!
Brother, a word; descend. Brother, I say!

Enter Edgar.

My father watches. O sir, fly this place.
Intelligence° is given where you are hid.
You have now the good advantage of the night.
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?
He's coming hither, now i' th' night, i' th' haste,°
And Regan with him. Have you nothing said
Upon his party° 'gainst the Duke of Albany?
Advise yourself.°

Edgar. I am sure on't,° not a word.

Edmund. I hear my father coming. Pardon me:
In cunning° I must draw my sword upon you.
Draw, seem to defend yourself; now quit you° well.
Yield! Come before my father! Light ho, here!
Fly, brother. Torches, torches!—So farewell.

Exit Edgar.

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion°
[Wounds his *arm*]
Of my more fierce endeavor. I have seen drunkards
Do more than this in sport. Father, father!
Stop, stop! No help?

Enter Gloucester, and Servants with torches.

Gloucester. Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

Edmund. Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,
Mumbl'ing of wicked charms, conjuring the moon
To stand auspicious mistress.

Gloucester. But where is he?

17 **perforce** necessarily

19 **of a queasy question** that requires delicate handling (to be “queasy” is to be on the point of vomiting)

20 **Briefness** speed

23 **Intelligence** information

26 **i’ th’ haste** in great haste

28 Upon **his** party censuring his enmity

29 **Advise yourself** reflect

29 on’t of it

31 **In cunning** as a pretense

32 **quit you** acquit yourself

35 **beget opinion** create the impression

Edmund. Look, sir, I bleed.

Gloucester. Where is the villain, Edmund?

Edmund. Fled this way, sir, when by no means he could—

Gloucester. Pursue him, ho! Go after.

[*Exeunt some Servants.*]

By no means what?

Edmund. Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;

But that I told him the revenging gods
‘Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend;°
Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
The child was bound to th’ father. Sir, in fine,°
Seeing how loathly opposite° I stood
To his unnatural purpose, in fell° motion°
With his prepared sword he charges home
My unprovided° body, latched° mine arm;
But when he saw my best alarumed° spirits
Bold in the quarrel’s right,° roused to th’
encounter,
Or whether gasted° by the noise I made,
Full suddenly he fled.

Gloucester. Let him fly far.

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;

And found—dispatch.° The noble Duke my master,
My worthy arch° and patron, comes tonight.
By his authority I will proclaim it,
That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,
Bringing the murderous coward to the stake.
He that conceals him, death.°

Edmund. When I dissuaded him from his intent,

And found him pight° to do it, with curst° speech
I threatened to discover° him. He replied,

48 **bend** aim

50 **In fine** finally

51 **loathly opposite** bitterly opposed

52 **fell** deadly

52 **motion** thrust (a term from fencing)

54 **unprovided** unprotected

54 **latched** wounded (lanced)

55 best **alarumed** wholly aroused

56 Bold ... **right** confident in the tightness of my
cause

57 **gasted** struck aghast

60 **dispatch** i.e., he will be killed

61 **arch** chief

65 death (the same elliptical form that
characterizes “dispatch,” 1.60)

67 **pight** determined

67 **curst** angry

68 **discover** expose

“Thou unpossessing° bastard, dost thou think,
If I would stand against thee, would the reposal°
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
Make thy words faithed?° No. What I should

deny—

As this I would, ay, though thou didst produce
My very character°—I'd turn it all
To thy suggestion,° plot, and damnèd practice.°
And thou must make a dullard of the world,°
If they not thought° the profits of my death
Were very pregnant° and potential spirits°
To make thee seek it."

Gloucester. O strange and fastened° villain! Would he deny
his letter, said he? I never got° him. *Tucket° within.*

Hark, the Duke's trumpets. I know not why he
comes.

All ports° I'll bar; the villain shall not 'scape;
The Duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture I
will send far and near, that all the kingdom
May have due note of him; and of my land,
Loyal and natural° boy, I'll work the means
To make thee capable.°

Enter Cornwall, Regan, and Attendants.

Cornwall. How now, my noble friend! Since I came hither,
Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

Regan. If it be true, all vengeance comes too short Which
can pursue th' offender. How dost, my lord?

Gloucester. O madam, my old heart is cracked, it's cracked.

69 **unpossessing** beggarly (landless)

70 **reposal** placing

72 **faithed** believed

74 **character** handwriting

75 **suggestion** instigation

75 **practice** device

76 **make ...** world think everyone stupid

77 **not thought** did not think
78 **pregnant** teeming with incitement
78 **potential spirits** powerful evil spirits
79 **fastened** hardened
80 **got** begot
80 s.d. Tucket (Cornwall's special trumpet call)
82 **ports** exits, of whatever sort
86 **natural** (1) kind (filial) (2) illegitimate
87 **capable** able to inherit

Regan. What, did my father's godson seek your life? He whom my father named, your Edgar?

Gloucester. O lady, lady, shame would have it hid.

Regan. Was he not companion with the riotous knights That tended upon my father?

Gloucester. I know not, madam. 'Tis too bad, too bad.

Edmund Yes, madam, he was of that consort.°

Regan. No marvel then, though he were ill affected.°

'Tis they have put° him on the old man's death,
To have th' expense and waste° of his revenues.
I have this present evening from my sister
Been well informed of them, and with such cautions
That, if they come to sojourn at my house,
I'll not be there.

Cornwall. Nor I, assure thee, Regan.

Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father A childlike° office.

Edmund. It was my duty, sir.

Gloucester. He did bewray his practice,° and received This hurt you see, striving to apprehend him.

Cornwall. Is he pursued?

Gloucester. Ay, my good lord.

Cornwall. If he be taken, he shall never more

Be feared of doing° harm. Make your own purpose,
How in my strength you please.° For you, Edmund,
Whose virtue and obedience° doth this instant
So much commend itself, you shall be ours.
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need;
You we first seize on.

Edmund. I shall serve you, sir, Truly, however else.

Gloucester. For him I thank your Grace.

99 **consort** company
100 **ill affected** disposed to evil
101 **put** set
102 expense and waste squandering
108 **childlike** filial
110 bewray **his practice** disclose his plot
114 **of doing** because he might do
114-15 **Make** ... **please** use my power freely, in
carrying out your plans for his capture
116 **virtue and obedience** virtuous obedience

Cornwall. You know not why we came to visit you? *Regan.*
Thus out of season, threading dark-eyed night.

Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some prize,°
Wherein we must have use of your advice.
Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
Of differences,° which° I best thought it fit
To answer from° our home. The several
messengers
From hence attend dispatch.° Our good old friend,
Lay comforts to your bosom,° and bestow
Your needful° counsel to our businesses,
Which craves the instant use.°

Gloucester. I serve you, madam.

Your Graces are right welcome.

Exeunt. Flourish.

Scene 2. [*Before Gloucester's castle.*]

Enter Kent and Oswald, severally.

Oswald. Good dawning° to thee, friend. Art of this house?°

Kent. Ay.

Oswald. Where may we set our horses?

Kent. I' th' mire.

Oswald. Prithee, if thou lov'st me, tell me.

Kent. I love thee not.

122 **prize** importance

125 **differences** quarrels

125 **which** (referring not to “differences,” but to the letter Lear has written)

126 from away from

127 **attend dispatch** are waiting to be sent off

128 **Lay ... bosom** console yourself (about Edgar's supposed treason)

129 **needful** needed

131 **craves the instant** use demands immediate transaction

2.2.1 **dawning** (dawn is impending, but not yet arrived)

1-2 Art **of this house** i.e., do you live here

Oswald. Why then, I care not for thee.

Kent. If I had thee in Lipsbury Pinfold,° I would make thee care for me.

Oswald. Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not. *Kent.* Fellow, I know thee.

Oswald. What dost thou know me for?

Kent. A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats;° a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited,° hundred-pound,° filthy worsted-stocking° knave; a lily-livered, action-taking,° whoreson, glass-gazing, ° superserviceable,° finical° rogue;

one-trunk-inheriting° slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service,° and art nothing but the composition° of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition.°

Oswald. Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!

Kent. What a brazen-faced varlet art thou to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days since I tripped up thy heels and beat thee before the King? [*Drawing his sword*] Draw, you rogue, for though it be night, yet the moon shines. I'll make a sop o' th' moonshine° of you. You whoreson cullionly barbermonger,° draw!

9 **Lipsbury Pinfold** a pound or pen in which strayed animals are enclosed ("Lipsbury" may denote a particular place, or may be slang for "between my teeth")

14 broken meats scraps of food

15 **three-suited** (the wardrobe permitted to a servant or "knave")

16 **hundred-pound** (the extent of Oswald's wealth, and thus a sneer at his aspiring to gentility)

16 **worsted-socking** (worn by servants)

17 **action-taking** one who refuses a fight and goes to law instead

17-18 **glass-gazing** conceited 18 **superserviceable** sycophantic, serving without principle.

18 **finical** overfastidious

18-19 **one-trunk-inheriting** possessing only a trunkful of goods

19-20 **bawd ... service** pimp, to please his master

20-21 **composition** compound

24 addition titles

33 **sop o' th' moonshine** i.e., Oswald will admit the moonlight, and so sop it up, through the open wounds

Kent is preparing to give him
34 **cuillonly barbermonger** base patron of
hairdressers (effeminate man)

Oswald. Away, I have nothing to do with thee.

Kent. Draw, you rascal. You come with letters against the King, and take Vanity the puppet's° part against the royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado° your shanks. Draw, you rascal. Come your ways!°

Oswald. Help, ho! Murder! Help!

Kent. Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue! Stand, you neat° slave! Strike! [*Beating him*]

Oswald. Help, ho! Murder, murder! *Enter Edmund, with his rapier drawn, Cornwall,*

Regan, Gloucester, Servants.

Edmund. How now? What's the matter? Part!

Kent. With you,° goodman boy,° if you please! Come, I'll flesh° ye, come on, young master.

Gloucester. Weapons? Arms? What's the matter here?

Cornwall. Keep peace, upon your lives. He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

Regan. The messengers from our sister and the King.

Cornwall. What is your difference?° Speak.

Oswald. I am scarce in breath, my lord.

Kent. No marvel, you have so bestirred° your valor. You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee.° A tailor made thee.°

Cornwall. Thou art a strange fellow. A tailor make a man?

Kent. A tailor, sir. A stonecutter or a painter could

37 Vanity the **puppet's** Goneril, here identified with one of the personified characters in the morality plays, which were sometimes put on as puppet shows

39 **carbonado** cut across, like a piece of meat before cooking

40 **Come your ways** get along

42 **neat** (1) foppish (2) unmixed, as in “neat wine”

46 **With** you i.e., the quarrel is with you

46 **goodman** boy young man (peasants are “goodmen”; “boy” is a term of contempt)

47 **flesh** introduce to blood (term from hunting)

52 **difference** quarrel

54 **bestirred** exercised

55 **nature disclaims in** thee nature renounces any part in you

55-56 A **tailor made** thee (from the proverb “The tailor makes the man”)

not have made him so ill, though they had been but two years o’ th’ trade.

Cornwall. Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

Oswald. This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of° his gray beard—

Kent. Thou whoreson zed,° thou unnecessary letter! My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted° villain into mortar and daub the wall of a jakes° with him. Spare my gray beard, you wagtail! °

Cornwall. Peace, sirrah! You beastly° knave, know you no reverence?

Kent. Yes, sir, but anger hath a privilege.

Cornwall. Why art thou angry?

Kent. That such a slave as this should wear a sword,

Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,

Like rats, oft bite the holy cords° atwain

Which are too intrince° t’ unloose; smooth° every passion

That in the natures of their lords rebel,
Being oil to fire, snow to the colder moods;
Renege,° affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks°
With every gale and vary° of their masters,
Knowing naught, like dogs, but following.
A plague upon your epileptic° visage!
Smile you° my speeches, as I were a fool?

- 64 **at suit of** out of pity for
- 65 **zed** the letter Z, generally omitted in contemporary dictionaries
- 67 **unbolted** unsifted, i.e., altogether a villain
- 68 **jakes** privy
- 68-69 **wagtail** a bird that bobs its tail up and down, and thus suggests obsequiousness
- 71 **beastly** irrational
- 76 **holy cords** sacred bonds of affection (as between husbands and wives, parents and children)
- 77 **intrince** entangled, intricate
- 77 **smooth** appease
- 80 **Renege** deny
- 80 **halcyon beaks** (the halcyon or kingfisher serves here as a type of the opportunist because, when hung up by the tail or neck, it was supposed to turn with the wind, like a weathervane)
- 81 **gale and vary** varying gale (hendiadys)
- 83 **epileptic** distorted by grinning
- 84 **Smile you** do you smile at

Goose, if I had you upon Sarum Plain,°
I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.°

Cornwall. What, art thou mad, old fellow?

Gloucester. How fell you out? Say that.

Kent. No contraries° hold more antipathy Than I and such a knave.

Cornwall. Why dost thou call him knave? What is his fault?

Kent. His countenance likes° me not.

Cornwall. No more perchance does mine, nor his, nor hers.

Kent. Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain:

I have seen better faces in my time
Than stands on any shoulder that I see
Before me at this instant.

Cornwall. This is some fellow

Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth
affect
A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb
Quite from his nature.° He cannot flatter, he;
An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth.
And° they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.
These kind of knaves I know, which in this
plainness
Harbor more craft and more corrupter ends
Than twenty silly-ducking observants°
That stretch their duties nicely.°

Kent. Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,

Under th' allowance° of your great aspect,°
Whose influence,° like the wreath of radiant fire

85 **Sarum Plain** Salisbury Plain

86 **Camelot** the residence of King Arthur
(presumably a particular point, now lost, is
intended here)

89 **contraries** opposites

92 **likes** pleases

99-100 **constrains ... nature** forces the
manner of candid speech to be a cloak, not for

candor but for craft

102 **And** if

105 **silly-ducking obesrvants** ridiculously
obsequious attendants

106 **nicely** punctiliously

08 **allowance** approval 108 aspect (1)
appearance (2) position of the heavenly bodies

109 **influence** astrological power

On flick'ring Phoebus' front°—

Cornwall. What mean'st by this?

Kent. To go out of my dialect,° which you discommend so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer. He° that beguiled you in a plain accent was a plain knave, which, for my part, I will not be, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to't.°

Cornwall. What was th' offense you gave him?

Oswald. I never gave him any.

It pleased the King his master very late°
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;°
When he, compact,° and flattering his displeasure,
Tripped me behind; being down, insulted, railed,
And put upon him such a deal of man°
That worthied him,° got praises of the King
For him attempting who was self-subdued;°
And, in the fleshment° of this dread exploit,
Drew on me here again.

Kent. None of these rogues and cowards But Ajax is their fool.°

Cornwall. Fetch forth the stocks!

You stubborn° ancient knave, you reverent°
braggart,
We'll teach you.

Kent. Sir, I am too old to learn.

110 **Phoebus'** front forehead of the sun
111 **dialect** customary manner of speaking
112 **He** i.e., the sort of candid-crafty man Cornwall
has been describing
114-15 **though ... to't** even if I were to succeed in
bringing your graceless person ("displeasure"
personified, and in lieu of the expected form, "your
grace") to beg me to be a plain knave
118 very late recently
119 **misconstruction** misunderstanding
120 compact in league with the king
122 **put** ... man pretended such manly behavior
123 **worthied him** made him seem heroic
124 **For ... self-subdued** for attacking a man
(Oswald) who offered no resistance
125 **fleshment** the bloodthirstiness excited by his
first success or "fleshing"
126-27 None ... **fool** i.e., cowardly rogues like Oswald
always impose on fools like Cornwall (who is likened to
Ajax: [1] the braggart Greek warrior [2] a jakes or
privy)
128 **stubborn** rude
128 **reverent** old

Call not your stocks for me, I serve the King,
On whose employment I was sent to you.
You shall do small respect, show too bold malice
Against the grace and person^o of my master,
Stocking his messenger.

Cornwall. Fetch forth the stocks. As I have life and honor,
There shall he sit till noon.

Regan. Till noon? Till night, my lord, and all night too.

Kent. Why, madam, if I were your father's dog, You should not use me so.

Regan. Sir, being his knave, I will.

Cornwall. This is a fellow of the selfsame color° Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away° the stocks. *Stocks brought out.*

Gloucester. Let me beseech your Grace not to do so.

His fault is much, and the good King his master
Will check° him for't. Your purposed° low
correction

Is such as basest and contemnèd'st° wretches
For pilf'rings and most common trespasses
Are punished with.

The King his master needs must take it ill
That he, so slightly valued in° his messenger,
Should have him thus restrained.

Cornwall. I'll answer° that.

Regan. My sister may receive it much more worse,

To have her gentleman abused, assaulted,
For following her affairs. Put in his legs.

[*Kent is put in the stocks.*]

Come, my good lord, away!

[*Exeunt all but Gloucester and Kent.*]

133 **grace and person** i.e., Lear as sovereign and in
his personal character

140 **color** kind

141 away out

144 **check** correct

144 **purposed** intended

145 **contemnèd'st** most despised

149 **slightly valued in** little honored in the person of

150 **answer** answer for

Gloucester. I am sorry for thee, friend. 'Tis the Duke's pleasure,

Whose disposition° all the world well knows
Will not be rubbed° nor stopped. I'll entreat for
thee.

Kent. Pray do not, sir. I have watched° and traveled hard.

Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.°
Give° you good morrow.

Gloucester. The Duke's to blame in this. 'Twill be ill taken.°
Exit.

Kent. Good King, that must approve° the common saw,°

Thou out of Heaven's benediction com'st
To the warm sun.°
Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,°
That by thy comfortable° beams I may
Peruse this letter. Nothing almost sees miracles
But misery.° I know 'tis from Cordelia,
Who hath most fortunately been informed
Of my obscured° course. And shall find time
From this enormous state, seeking to give
Losses their remedies.° All weary and o'erwatched,
Take vantage,° heavy eyes, not to behold
This shameful lodging. Fortune, good night;
Smile once more, turn thy wheel.°
Sleeps.

156 **disposition** inclination

157 **rubbed** diverted (metaphor from the game of bowls)

158 **watched** gone without sleep

160 A ... **heels** even a good man may have bad fortune

161 Give God give
162 **taken** received 163 **approve** confirm
163 **saw** proverb
164-65 **Thou ... sun** i.e., Lear goes from better to worse, from Heaven's blessing or shelter to lack of shelter
166 **beacon ... globe** i.e., the sun, whose rising Kent anticipates
167 **comfortable** comforting
168-69 **Nothing ... misery** i.e., true perception belongs only to the wretched
171 **obscured** disguised
171-73 **shall ... remedies** (a possible reading: Cordelia, away from this monstrous state of things, will find occasion to right the wrongs we suffer)
174 **vantage** advantage (of sleep)
176 **turn** thy **wheel** i.e., so that Kent, who is at the bottom, may climb upward

[Scene 3. A wood.]

Enter Edgar.

Edgar. I heard myself proclaimed,

And by the happy^o hollow of a tree
Escaped the hunt. No port is free, no place
That guard and most unusual vigilance
Does not attend my taking.^o Whiles I may 'scape,
I will preserve myself; and am bethought^o
To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury, in contempt of man,
Brought near to beast;^o my face I'll grime with filth,
Blanket^o my loins, elf^o all my hairs in knots,

And with presented° nakedness outface°
The winds and persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof° and precedent
Of Bedlam° beggars, who, with roaring voices,
Strike° in their numbed and mortified° bare arms
Pins, wooden pricks,° nails, sprigs of rosemary;
And with this horrible object,° from low° farms,
Poor pelting° villages, sheepcotes, and mills,
Sometimes with lunatic bans,° sometime with
prayers,
Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod, Poor Tom,°
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.° *Exit.*

2.3.2 **happy** lucky

5 **attend my taking** watch to capture me

6 **am bethought** have decided

8-9 **penury ... beast** poverty, to show how
contemptible man is, reduced to the level of a beast

10 **Blanket** cover only with a blanket

10 elf tangle (into, "elflocks," supposed to be caused
by elves)

11 presented the show of

11 **outface** brave

13 proof example

14 Bedlam (see 1.2.r. 146-47)

15 strike stick

15 **mortified** not alive to pain

16 pricks skewers

17 **object** spectacle

17 **low** humble

18 **pelting** paltry

19 **bans** curses

20 **Poor ... Tom** (Edgar recites the names a Bedlam
beggar gives himself)

21 **That's ... am** there's a chance for me in that I am
no longer known for myself

[Scene 4. Before Gloucester's castle. Kent in the stocks.]

Enter Lear, Fool, and Gentleman.

Lear. 'Tis strange that they should so depart from home,
And not send back my messenger.

Gentleman. As I learned,
The night before there was no purpose^o in them Of
this remove.^o

Kent. Hail to thee, noble master.

Lear. Ha!

Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?^o

Kent. No, my lord.

Fool. Ha, ha, he wears cruel^o garters. Horses are tied by the
heads, dogs and bears by th' neck, monkeys by th' loins,
and men by th' legs. When a man's overlusty at legs,^o then
he wears wooden netherstocks.^o

Lear. What's he that hath so much thy place mistook To set
thee here?

Kent. It is both he and she,

Your son and daughter.

Lear. No.

Kent. Yes.

Lear. No, I say.

Kent. I say yea.

2.4.3 **purpose** intention
4 remove removal

6 **Mak'st ... pastime** i.e., are you doing this to amuse yourself

7 **cruel** (1) painful (2) "crewel," a worsted yarn used in garters

9-10 **overlusty at legs** (1) a vagabond (2) ? sexually promiscuous

10 **netherstocks** stockings (as opposed to knee breeches or upperstocks)

Lear. No, no, they would not.

Kent. Yes, they have.

Lear. By Jupiter, I swear no!

Kent. By Juno, I swear ay!

Lear. They durst not do't;

They could not, would not do't. 'Tis worse than murder

To do upon respect° such violent outrage.

Resolve° me with all modest° haste which way

Thou mightst deserve or they impose this usage,

Coming from us.

Kent. My lord, when at their home

I did commend° your Highness' letters to them,

Ere I was risen from the place that showed

My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,°

Stewed° in his haste, half breathless, panting forth

From Goneril his mistress salutations,

Delivered letters, spite of intermission,°

Which presently° they read; on° whose contents

They summoned up their meiny,° straight took horse,

Commanded me to follow and attend

The leisure of their answer, gave me cold looks,

And meeting here the other messenger,

Whose welcome I perceived had poisoned mine,

Being the very fellow which of late

Displayed° so saucily against your Highness,
Having more man than wit° about me, drew;
He raised° the house, with loud and coward cries.
Your son and daughter found this trespass worth°
The shame which here it suffers.

23 **upon respect** (1) on the respect due to the King
(2) deliberately

24 Resolve inform

24 modest becoming

27 **commend** deliver

29 **reeking** post sweating messenger

30 stewed steaming

32 spite of **intermission** in spite of the interrupting of
my business

33 presently at once

33 on on the strength of

34 meiny retinue

40 Displayed showed off

41 more man than wit more manhood than sense

42 **raised** aroused

43 worth deserving

Fool. Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way.°

Fathers that wear rags

Do make their children blind,°

But fathers that bear bags°

Shall see their children kind.

Fortune, that arrant whore,

Ne'er turns the key° to th' poor.

But for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours° for
thy daughters as thou canst tell° in a year.

Lear. O, how this mother° swells up toward my heart!

Hysterica passio,° down, thou climbing sorrow, Thy
element's° below. Where is this daughter?

Kent. With the Earl, sir, here within.

Lear. Follow me not;

Stay here. *Exit.*

Gentleman. Made you no more offense but what you speak of?

Kent. None.

How chance° the King comes with so small a number?

Fool. And° thou hadst been set i' th' stocks for that question, thou'dst well deserved it.

Kent. Why, Fool?

Fool. We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no laboring i' th' winter.° All that follow

45-46 **Winter's ... way** i.e., more trouble is to come, since Cornwall and Regan act so ("geese" is used contemptuously, as in Kent's quarrel with Oswald, 2.2. 85-6)

48 blind i.e., indifferent

49 bags moneybags

52 **turns** the key i.e., opens the door

53 **dolors** (1) sorrows (2) dollars (English name for Spanish and German coins)

54 **tell** (1) tell about (2) count

55-56 **mother ... Hysterica passio** hysteria, causing suffocation or choking

57 **element** proper place

62 **How chance** how does it happen that

63 And if

66-67 **We'll** ... winter (in the popular fable the ant, unlike the improvident grasshopper, anticipates the winter when none can labor by laying up provisions in the summer. Lear, trusting foolishly to summer days, finds himself unprovided for, and unable to provide, now that "winter" has come)

their noses are led by their eyes but blind men, and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking.° Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy neck with following. But the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again. I would have none but knaves follow it since a Fool gives it.

That sir, which serves and seeks for gain,
And follows but for form,°
Will pack,° when it begins to rain,
And leave thee in the storm.
But I will tarry; the Fool will stay,
And let the wise man fly.
The knave turns Fool that runs away,
The Fool no knave,° perdy.°

Kent. Where learned you this, Fool?

Fool. Not i' th' stocks, fool.

Enter Lear and Gloucester.

Lear. Deny° to speak with me? They are sick, they are weary,

They have traveled all the night? Mere fetches,°
The images° of revolt and flying off!°
Fetch me a better answer.

Gloucester. My dear lord,

You know the fiery quality° of the Duke,
How unremovable and fixed he is
In his own course.

Lear. Vengeance, plague, death, confusion!

Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

67-70 **All ... stinking** i.e., all can smell out the decay of Lear's fortunes

78 form show

79 **pack** be off 83—84 **The ... knave** i.e., the faithless man is the true fool, for wisdom requires fidelity. Lear's Fool, who remains faithful, is at least no knave

84 **perdy** by God (Fr. *par Dieu*)

87 **Deny** refuse

88 **fetches** subterfuges, acts of tacking (nautical metaphor)

89 **images** exact likenesses

89 **flying off** desertion

91 **quality** temperament.

Gloucester. Well, my good lord, I have informed them so.

Lear. Informed them? Dost thou understand me, man?

Gloucester. Ay, my good lord.

Lear. The King would speak with Cornwall. The dear father

Would with his daughter speak, commands—tends°
—service.

Are they informed of this? My breath and blood!

Fiery? The fiery Duke, tell the hot Duke that—

No, but not yet. May be he is not well.

Infirmity doth still neglect all office

Whereto our health is bound.° We are not
ourselves

When nature, being oppressed, commands the
mind

To suffer with the body. I'll forbear;

And am fallen out° with my more headier will°

To take the indisposed and sickly fit

For the sound man. [*Looking on Kent*] Death on
my state!° Wherefore

Should he sit here? This act persuades me
That this remotion° of the Duke and her
Is practice° only. Give me my servant forth.°
Go tell the Duke and's wife I'd speak with them!
Now, presently!° Bid them come forth and hear
me,
Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum
Till it cry sleep to death.°

Gloucester. I would have all well betwixt you.
Exit.

100 **tends** attends (i.e., awaits); with, possibly, an
ironic second meaning, "tenders," or "offers"
105 **Whereto ... bound** duties which we are required
to perform, when in health
108 fallen out angry
108 headier **will** headlong inclination
110 **state** royal condition
112 **remotion** (1) removal (2) remaining aloof
113 **practice** pretense
113 **forth** i.e., out of the stocks
115 presently at once
117 **cry ...** death follow sleep, like a cry or pack of
hounds, until it kills it

Lear. O me, my heart, my rising heart! But down!

Fool. Cry to it, Nuncle, as the cockney° did to the eels when
she put 'em i' th' paste° alive. She knapped° 'em o' th'
coxcombs° with a stick and cried, "Down, wantons,° down!"
'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse,
battered his hay.°

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, Servants.

Lear. Good morrow to you both.

Cornwall. Hail to your Grace.

Kent here set at liberty.

Regan. I am glad to see your Highness.

Lear. Regan, I think you are. I know what reason

I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad,
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepulchring an adultress.° [*To Kent*] O, are you
free?

Some other time for that. Beloved Regan,
Thy sister's naught.° O Regan, she hath tied
Sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here.
[*Points to his heart.*]

I can scarce speak to thee. Thou'lt not believe
With how depraved a quality°—O Regan!

Regan. I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope

You less know how to value her desert
Than she to scant her duty.°

Lear. Say? how is that?

120 **cockney** Londoner (ignorant city dweller)

121 **paste** pastry pie

122 **knapped** rapped

122 **coxcombs** heads 123 **wantons** i.e., playful
things (with a sexual implication)

125 **buttered his hay** i.e., the city dweller does from
ignorance what the dishonest ostler does from craft:
greases the hay the traveler has paid for, so that the
horse will not eat

130—31 **divorce** ... **adultress** i.e., repudiate your
dead mother as having conceived you by another man

133 **naught** wicked

136 **quality** nature

137-39 **I** ... duty (despite the double negative, the
passage means, "I believe that you fail to give Goneril

her due, rather than that she fails to fulfill her duty")

Regan. I cannot think my sister in the least

Would fail her obligation. If, sir, perchance
She have restrained the riots of your followers,
'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,
As clears her from all blame.

Lear. My curses on her!

Regan. O, sir, you are old,

Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of his confine.° You should be ruled, and led
By some discretion that discerns your state
Better than you yourself.° Therefore I pray you
That to our sister you do make return,
Say you have wronged her.

Lear. Ask her forgiveness?

Do you but mark how this becomes the house:°
"Dear daughter, I confess that I am old.
[*Kneeling.*]
Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food."

Regan. Good sir, no more. These are unsightly tricks. Return
you to my sister.

Lear. [*Rising*] Never, Regan.

She hath abated° me of half my train,
Looked black upon me, struck me with her tongue,
Most serpentlike, upon the very heart.
All the stored vengeance of heaven fall
On her ingrateful top!° Strike her young bones,°
You taking° airs, with lameness.

Cornwall. Fie, sir, fie!

Lear. You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames Into
her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,

146-47 **Nature ... confine** i.e., you are nearing the end of your life

148-49 **some ... yourself** some discreet person who understands your condition more than you do

152 becomes the **house** suits my royal and paternal position

158 abated curtailed

162 top head

162 **young** bones (the reference may be to unborn children, rather than to Goneril herself) -

163 **taking** infecting

You fen-sucked° fogs, drawn by the pow'rful sun,
To fall and blister° her pride.

Regan. O the blest gods!

So will you wish on me when the rash mood is on.

Lear. No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.

Thy tender-hefted° nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce, but thine
Do comfort, and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,
To bandy° hasty words, to scant my sizes,°
And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt°
Against my coming in. Thou better know'st
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,°
Effects° of courtesy, dues of gratitude.
Thy half o' th' kingdom hast thou not forgot,
Wherein I thee endowed.

Regan. Good sir, to th' purpose.°

Tucket within.

Lear. Who put my man i' th' stocks?

Cornwall. What trumpet's that?

Regan. I know't—my sister's. This approves° her letter,

That she would soon be here.

Enter Oswald.

Is your lady come? *Lear.* This is a slave, whose easy borrowed^o pride

Dwells in the fickle grace^o of her he follows.
Out, varlet,^o from my sight.

Cornwall. What means your Grace?

166 fen-sucked drawn up from swamps by the sun
167 **fall** and blister fall upon and raise blisters
170 **tender-hefted** gently framed
174 bandy volley (metaphor from tennis)
174 scant my sizes reduce my allowances
175 oppose the bolt i.e., bar the door
177 offices ... childhood natural duties, a child's duty
to its parent
178 Effects manifestations
180 to **th' purpose** come to the point
182 approves confirms
184 easy borrowed (1) facile and taken from another
(2) acquired without anything to back it up (like
money borrowed without security)
185 **grace** favor
186 **varlet** base fellow

Lear. Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope
Thou didst not know on't.

Enter Goneril.

Who comes here? O heavens!
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway

Allow° obedience, if you yourselves are old,
Make it° your cause. Send down, and take my part.
[To Goneril] Art not ashamed to look upon
this beard?

O Regan, will you take her by the hand?

Goneril. Why not by th' hand, sir? How have I offended?

All's not offense that indiscretion finds°
And dotage terms so.

Lear. O sides,° you are too tough!

Will you yet hold? How came my man i' th' stocks?

Cornwall. I set him there, sir; but his own disorders°
Deserved much less advancement.°

Lear. You? Did you?

Regan. I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.°

If till the expiration of your month
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me.
I am now from home, and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.°

Lear. Return to her, and fifty men dismissed?

No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage° against the enmity o' th' air,
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,
Necessity's sharp pinch.° Return with her?
Why, the hot-blooded° France, that dowerless
took

190 Allow approve of

191 **it** i.e., my cause

195 **finds** judges

196 sides breast

198 disorders misconduct

199 advancement promotion
200 seem so i.e., act weak
205 **entertainment** maintenance
208 **wage** fight
210 **Necessity's** sharp pinch (a summing up of
the hard choice he has just announced)
211 **hot-blooded** passionate

Our youngest born, I could as well be brought
To knee° his throne, and, squirelike,° pension beg
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter°
To this detested groom. [*Pointing at Oswald.*]

Goneril. At your choice, sir.

Lear. I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad.

I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell.
We'll no more meet, no more see one another.
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter,
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,
A plague-sore, or embossed carbuncle°
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee.
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it.
I do not bid the Thunder-bearer° shoot,
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging° Jove.
Mend when thou canst, be better at thy leisure,
I can be patient, I can stay with Regan,
I and my hundred knights.

Regan. Not altogether so.

I looked not for you yet, nor am provided
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister,
For those that mingle reason with your passion°

Must be content to think you old, and so—
But she knows what she does.

Lear. Is this well spoken?

Regan. I dare avouch° it, sir. What, fifty followers?

Is it not well? What should you need of more?

Yea, or so many, sith that° both charge° and
danger

Speak 'gainst so great a number? How in one house

213 knee kneel before

213 **squirelike** like a retainer

215 **sumpter** pack horse

223 **embossèd** carbuncle swollen boil

226 **Thunder-bearer** i.e., Jupiter

227 **high-judging** (1) supreme (2) judging from
heaven

233 **min-** gle ... **passion** i.e., consider your
turbulent behavior coolly and reasonably

236 **avouch** swear by

238 **sith that** since

238 **charge** expense

Should many people, under two commands,
Hold° amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.

Goneril. Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance

From those that she calls servants, or from mine?

Regan. Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack° ye,

We could control them. If you will come to me

(For now I spy a danger), I entreat you

To bring but five-and-twenty. To no more

Will I give place or notice.°

Lear. I gave you all.

Regan. And in good time you gave it.

Lear. Made you my guardians, my depositaries,°

But kept a reservation° to be followed
With such a number. What, must I come to you
With five-and-twenty? Regan, said you so?

Regan. And speak't again, my lord. No more with me.

Lear. Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favored°

When others are more wicked; not being the worst
Stands in some rank of praise.° [*To Goneril*] I'll
go with thee.
Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,
And thou art twice her love.°

Goneril. Hear me, my lord.

What need you five-and-twenty? ten? or five?
To follow° in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

Regan. What need one?

Lear. O reason° not the need! Our basest beggars

241 **hold** preserve

244 **slack** neglect

248 **notice** recognition

250 **depositaries** trustees

251 **reservation** condition

255 **well-favored** handsome 2

56-57 **not ... praise** i.e., that Goneril is not so bad as
Regan is one thing in her favor

259 **her love** i.e., as loving as she

261 **follow** attend on you

263 **reason** scrutinize

Are in the poorest thing superfluous.°

Allow not nature more than nature needs,°

Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady:

If only to go warm were gorgeous,

Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm.° But, for true
need—

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I
need.

You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age, wretched in both.
If it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool° me not so much
To bear° it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water drops,
Stain my man's cheeks. No, you unnatural hags!
I will have such revenges on you both
That all the world shall—I will do such things—
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep.
No, I'll not weep.

Storm and tempest.

I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws°
Or ere° I'll weep. O Fool, I shall go mad!

Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, Kent, and Fool.

Cornwall. Let us withdraw, 'twill be a storm.

Regan. This house is little; the old man and's people Cannot
be well bestowed.°

Goneril. 'Tis his own blame; hath° put himself from rest°

And must needs taste his folly.

264 **Are ... superfluous** i.e., have some trifle not
absolutely necessary

265 **needs** i.e., to sustain life

267-69 **If ... warm** i.e., if to satisfy the need for
warmth were to be gorgeous, you would not need the

clothing you wear, which is worn more for beauty than warmth

274 **fool** humiliate

275 **To bear** as to make me bear

284 **flaws** (1) pieces (2) cracks (3) gusts of passion

285 Or ere before

288 **bestowed** lodged 289 **hath** he hath

289 **rest** (1) place of residence (2) repose of mind

Regan. For his particular,° I'll receive him gladly, But not one follower.

Goneril. So am I purposed.°

Where is my Lord of Gloucester?

Cornwall. Followed the old man forth.

Enter Gloucester.

He is returned.

Gloucester. The King is in high rage.

Cornwall. Whither is he going?

Gloucester. He calls to horse, but will I know not whither.

Cornwall. 'Tis best to give him way, he leads himself.°

Goneril. My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

Gloucester. Alack, the night comes on, and the high winds

Do sorely ruffle.° For many miles about
There's scarce a bush.

Regan. O, sir, to willful men

The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors.
He is attended with a desperate train,

And what they may incense° him to, being apt
To have his ear abused,° wisdom bids fear.

Cornwall. Shut up your doors, my lord; 'tis a wild night.

My Regan counsels well. Come out o' th' storm.
Exeunt.

291 **his particular** himself personally

292 **purposed** determined

297 **give ... himself** let him go; he insists on his own
way

300 **ruffle** rage

305 **incense** incite

305-06 **being ... abused** he being inclined to harken
to bad counsel

OceanofPDF.com

ACT 3

Scene 1. [*A heath.*]

Storm still.° Enter Kent and a Gentleman severally.

Kent. Who's there besides foul weather? *Gentleman.* One minded like the weather most unquietly.°

Kent. I know you. Where's the King?

Gentleman. Contending with the fretful elements;

Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,
Or swell the curlèd waters 'bove the main,°
That things might change,° or cease; tears his white
hair,

Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless° rage,
Catch in their fury, and make nothing of;

Strives in his little world of man° to outscorn
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.

This night, wherein the cub-drawn° bear would
couch,°

The lion, and the belly-pinched° wolf

Keep their fur dry, unbonneted° he runs,

3.1. s.d. **still** continually

2 **minded ... unquietly** disturbed in mind, like
the weather

6 **main** land

7 **change** (1) be destroyed (2) be exchanged
(i.e., turned upside down) (3) change for the
better

8 **eyeless** (1) blind (2) invisible

10 **little world of man** (the microcosm, as
opposed to the universe or macrocosm, which it
copies in little)

12 **cub-drawn** sucked dry by her cubs, and so
ravenously hungry 12 **couch** take shelter in its
lair

18 **belly-pinched** starved

14 **unbonneted** hatless

And bids what will take all.°

Kent. But who is with him?

Gentleman. None but the Fool, who labors to outjest His
heart-struck injuries.

Kent. Sir, I do know you,

And dare upon the warrant of my note°
Commend a dear thing° to you. There is division,
Although as yet the face of it is covered
With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;
Who have—as who have not, that° their great
stars
Throned° and set high?—servants, who seem no
less,°
Which are to France the spies and speculations
Intelligent° of our state. What hath been seen,
Either in snuffs and packings° of the Dukes,
Or the hard rein which both of them hath borne°
Against the old kind King, or something deeper,
Whereof, perchance, these are but furnishings°—
But, true it is, from France there comes a power°
Into this scattered° kingdom, who already,
Wise in our negligence, have secret feet
In some of our best ports, and are at point°
To show their open banner. Now to you:
If on my credit you dare build° so far

To° make your speed to Dover, you shall find
Some that will thank you, making° just° report
Of how unnatural and bemadding° sorrow
The King hath cause to plain.°
I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,°

15 **take all** (like the reckless gambler, staking
all he has left)

18 **warrant of my note** strength of what I have
taken note (of you)

19 **Commend ... thing** entrust important
business

22 **that** whom

22-23 **stars/Throned** destinies have throned

23 **seem no less** seem to be so

24-25 **speculations/Intelligent** giving
intelligence

26 **snuffs and packings** quarrels and plots

27 **hard ... borne** close and cruel control they
have exercised

29 **furnishings** excuses

30 **power** army

31 **scattered** disunited

33 **at point** ready

35 **If ... build** if you can trust me, proceed

36 **To** as to

37 **making** for making

37 **just** accurate

38 **bemadding** maddening

39 **plain** complain of

40 **blood and breeding** noble family

And from some knowledge and assurance° offer
This office° to you.

Gentleman. I will talk further with you.

Kent. No, do not.

For confirmation that I am much more
Than my out-wall,° open this purse and take
What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia,
As fear not but you shall, show her this ring,
And she will tell you who that fellow° is
That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!
I will go seek the King.

Gentleman. Give me your hand. Have you no more to say?

Kent. Few words, but, to effect,° more than all yet:

That when we have found the King—in which your
pain°
That way, I'll this—he that first lights on him,
Holla the other. *Exeunt [severally].*

Scene 2. [*Another part of the heath.*] *Storm still.*

Enter Lear and Fool.

Lear. Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks. Rage, blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes,^o spout

Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks.^o

41 **knowledge and assurance** sure and trustworthy information

42 **office** service (i.e., the trip to Dover)

45 **out-wall** superficial appearance

48 **fellow** companion

52 **to effect** in their importance

53 pain labor 3.2.2 **hurricanoes** waterspouts

3 **cocks** weathercocks

You sulph'rous and thought-executing^o fires,
Vaunt-couriers^o of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head. And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity^o o' th' world,
Crack Nature's molds,^o all germains spill^o at once,
That makes ingrateful^o man.

Fool. O Nuncle, court holy-water^o in a dry house is better than this rain water out o' door. Good Nuncle, in; ask thy daughters blessing. Here's a night pities neither wise man nor fools.

Lear. Rumble thy bellyful. Spit, fire. Spout, rain!

Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters.
I tax° not you, you elements, with unkindness.
I never gave you kingdom, called you children,
You owe me no subscription.° Then let fall
Your horrible pleasure.° Here I stand your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.
But yet I call you servile ministers,°
That will with two pernicious daughters join
Your high-engendered battles° 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul.

Fool. He that has a house to put 's head in has a good
headpiece.°

The codpiece° that will house
Before the head has any,
The head and he° shall louse:
So beggars marry many.°
The man that makes his toe

4 **thought-executing** (1) doing execution as
quick as thought (2) executing or carrying out
the thought of him who hurls the lightning

5 **Vaunt-couriers** heralds, scouts who range
before the main body of the army

7 **rotundity** i.e., not only the sphere of the
globe, but the roundness of gestation (Delius)

8 **Nature's molds** the molds or forms in which
men are made

8 **all germains spill** destroy the basic seeds of
life

9 **ingrateful** ungrateful

10 **court holy-water** flattery

16 **tax** accuse

18 **subscription** allegiance, submission

9 **pleasure** will

21 **ministers** agents

23 **high-engendered battles** armies formed in the heavens

26 **headpiece** (1) helmet (2) brain

27 **codpiece** penis (lit., padding worn at the crotch of a man's hose)

29 **he** it

30 **many** i.e., lice

27-30 **The ... many** i.e., the man who gratifies his sexual appetites before he has a roof over his head will end up a lousy beggar

What he his heart should make
Shall of a corn cry woe,
And turn his sleep to wake.°
For there was never yet fair woman but she made
mouths in a glass.°

Enter Kent.

Lear. No, I will be the pattern of all patience, I will say nothing.

Kent. Who's there?

Fool. Marry,° here's grace and a codpiece; that's a wise man and a fool.°

Kent. Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night

Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies
Gallow° the very wanderers of the dark
And make them keep° their caves. Since I was man
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid° thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot

carry°
Th' affliction nor the fear.

Lear. Let the great gods

That keep this dreadful pudder° o'er our heads
Find out their enemies now.° Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes
Unwhipped of justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand,
Thou perjured,° and thou simular° of virtue

31-34 **The ... wake** i.e., the man who, ignoring the fit order of things, elevates what is base above what is noble, will suffer for it as Lear has, in banishing Cordelia and enriching her sisters

35-36 **made mouths** in a glass posed before a mirror (irrelevant nonsense, except that it calls to mind the general theme of vanity and folly)

40 **Marry** by the Virgin Mary

40-41 **here's ... fool** (Kent's question is answered: The King ["grace"] is here, and the Fool—who customarily wears an exaggerated codpiece. But which is which is left ambiguous, since Lear has previously been called a codpiece)

44 **Gallow** frighten

45 **keep** remain inside

46 **horrid** horrible

48 **carry** endure

50 **pudder** turmoil

51 **Find ... now** i.e., discover sinners by the terror they reveal

54 perjured perjurer

54 **simular** counterfeiter

That art incestuous. Caitiff,° to pieces shake,

That under covert and convenient seeming°
Has practiced on° man's life. Close° pent-up guilts,
Rive° your concealing continents° and cry
These dreadful summoners grace.° I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.

Kent. Alack, bareheaded?

Gracious my lord,° hard by here is a hovel;
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the
tempest.
Repose you there, while I to this hard house
(More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised,
Which even but now, demanding after° you,
Denied me to come in) return, and force
Their scanted° courtesy.

Lear. My wits begin to turn.

Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art° of our necessities is strange,
That can make vile things precious. Come, your
hovel.
Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

Fool. [*Singing*]

He that has and a little tiny wit,
With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain,
Must make content with his fortunes fit,°
Though the rain it raineth every day.

Lear. True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this hovel. *Exit*
[*with Kent*].

55 **Caitiff** wretch
56 **seeming** hypocrisy
57 **practiced on** plotted against

57 **Close** hidden
58 **Rive** split open
58 **continents** containers
58-59 **cry ... grace** beg mercy from the vengeful
gods (here figured as officers who summoned a man
charged with immorality before the ecclesiastical
court)
61 **Gracious my lord** my gracious lord
65 **demanding after** asking for
67 **scanted** stinted
70 **art** magic powers of the alchemists, who sought to
transmute base metals into precious
76 **Must ... fit** must be satisfied with a fortune as tiny
as his wit

Fool. This is a brave^o night to cool a courtesan. I'll speak a
prophecy ere I go:

When priests are more in word than matter;
When brewers mar their malt with water;
When nobles are their tailors' tutors,
No heretics burned, but wenches' suitors;^o
When every case in law is right,
No squire in debt nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues;
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;
When usurers tell their gold i' th' field,^o
And bawds and whores do churches build,^o
Then shall the realm of Albion^o
Come to great confusion.
Then comes the time, who lives to see't,
That going shall be used with feet.^o
This prophecy Merlin^o shall make, for I live before
his time. *Exit.*

Scene 3. [Gloucester's castle.]

Enter Gloucester and Edmund.

Gloucester. Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity° him, they took from me the use of mine

79 **brave** fine

81-84 **When ... suitors** (the first four prophecies are fulfilled already, and hence “confusion” has come to England. The priest does not suit his action to his words. The brewer adulterates his beer. The nobleman is subservient to his tailor [i.e., cares only for fashion]. Religious heretics escape, and only those burn [i.e., suffer] who are afflicted with venereal disease)

89 **tell ... field** count their money in the open

85-90 **When ... build** (the last six prophecies, as they are Utopian, are meant ironically. They will never be fulfilled)

91 **Albion** England

94 **going ... feet** people will walk on their feet

95 **Merlin** King Arthur’s great magician who, according to Holinshed’s **Chronicles**, lived later than Lear

3.3.3 **pity** show pity to

own house, charged me on pain of perpetual displeasure neither to speak of him, entreat for him, or any way sustain°. him.

Edmund. Most savage and unnatural.

Gloucester. Go to; say you nothing. There is division° between the Dukes, and a worse° matter than that. I have received a letter this night—’tis dangerous to be spoken°—I have locked the letter in my closet.° These injuries the King now bears will be revenged home;° there is part of a power° already footed;° we must incline to° the King. I will look° him and privily° relieve him. Go you and maintain talk with

the Duke, that my charity be not of° him perceived. If he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. If I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the King my old master must be relieved. There is strange things toward,° Edmund; pray you be careful. *Exit.*

Edmund. This courtesy forbid° thee shall the Duke

Instantly know, and of that letter too.

This seems a fair deserving,° and must draw me

That which my father loses—no less than all.

The younger rises when the old doth fall.

Exit.

3.3.6 **sustain** care for

8 **division** falling out

9 **worse** more serious (i.e., the French invasion)

11 **spoken** spoken of

12 **closet** room

13 **home** to the utmost

13 **power** army

14 **footed** landed

14 **incline** to take the side of

14 **look** search for

15 **privily** secretly

16 of by

20 **toward** impending

22 **courtesy forbid** kindness forbidden (i.e., to Lear)

24 **fair deserving** an action deserving reward

Scene 4. [*The heath. Before a hovel.*]

Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool.

Kent. Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter.

The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure.
Storm still.

Lear. Let me alone.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Wilt break my heart?°

Kent. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

Lear. Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm

Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fixed,°
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear;
But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea,
Thou'dst meet the bear i' th' mouth.° When the
mind's free,°
The body's delicate. The tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude,
Is it not as° this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to't? But I will punish home.°
No, I will weep no more. In such a night
To shut me out! Pour on, I will endure.

3.4.4 **break my heart** i.e., by shutting out the
storm which distracts me from thinking
8 **fixed** lodged (in the mind)
11 i' **th' mouth** in the teeth
11 **free** i.e., from care
15 **as** as if
16 **home** to the utmost

In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril,
Your old kind father, whose frank° heart gave
all—

O, that way madness lies; let me shun that.
No more of that.

Kent. Good my lord, enter here.

Lear. Prithee go in thyself; seek thine own ease.

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more, but I'll go in.

[*To the Fool*] In, boy; go first. You houseless
poverty°—

Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

Exit [*Fool*].

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide° the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed° raggedness, defend
you

From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;°
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux° to them,
And show the heavens more just.

Edgar. [*Within*] Fathom and half, fathom and half!° Poor
Tom!

Enter Fool.

Fool. Come not in here, Nuncle, here's a spirit. Help me,
help me!

Kent. Give me thy hand. Who's there?

Fool. A spirit, a spirit. He says his name's Poor Tom.

Kent. What art thou that dost grumble there i' th' straw?

Come forth.

20 **frank** liberal (magnanimous)

26 **houseless poverty** (the unsheltered poor,
abstracted)
29 **bide** endure
31 **looped and windowed** full of holes
33 **Take physic, pomp** take medicine to cure
yourselves, you great men
35 **superflux** superfluity
37 **Fathom and half** (Edgar, because of the
downpour, pretends to take soundings)

Enter Edgar [disguised as a madman].

Edgar. Away! the foul fiend follows me. Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.° Humh! Go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.°

Lear. Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?

Edgar. Who gives anything to Poor Tom? Whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow and halters in his pew,° set ratsbane° by his porridge,° made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting horse over four-inched bridges,° to course° his own shadow for° a traitor. Bless thy five wits,° Tom's a-cold. O, do, de, do, de, do, de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting,° and taking.° Do Poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now—and there—and there again—and there.

Storm still.

Lear. What, has his daughters brought him to this pass?°

Couldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give 'em all?

Fool. Nay, he reserved a blanket,° else we had been all shamed.

Lear. Now all the plagues that in the pendulous° air

Hang fated o'er° men's faults light on thy daughters!

45-46 **Through ... wind** (a line from the ballad of "The Friar of Orders Gray")

46-47 **go ... thee** (a reminiscence of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, 1.10)

53-54 **knives ... halters ... ratsbane** (the fiend tempts Poor Tom to suicide)

54 **pew** gallery or balcony outside a window

54 **porridge** broth

55-56 **ride ... bridges** i.e., risk his life

56 **course** chase

57 **for** as

57 **five wits** i.e., common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation, memory

59 **star-blasting** the evil caused by malignant stars

59 **taking** pernicious influences

63 **pass** wretched condition

65 **blanket** i.e., to cover his nakedness

67 **pendulous** overhanging

68 **fated o'er** destined to punish

Kent. He hath no daughters, sir.

Lear. Death, traitor; nothing could have subdued° nature

To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.

Is it the fashion that discarded fathers

Should have thus little mercy on° their flesh?

Judicious punishment—'twas this flesh begot

Those pelican° daughters.

Edgar. Pillicock sat on Pillicock Hill.° Alow, alow, loo, loo!°

Fool. This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.

Edgar. Take heed o' th' foul fiend; obey thy parents; keep thy word's justice;° swear not; commit not° with man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array. Tom's a-cold.

Lear. What hast thou been?

Edgar. A servingman, proud in heart and mind; that curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap;° served the lust of my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with her; swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face of heaven. One that slept in the contriving of lust, and waked to do it. Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly; and in woman out-paramoured the Turk.° False of heart, light of ear,° bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey.° Let not the creaking° of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor

70 **subdued** reduced

73 **on** i.e., shown to

75 **pelican** (supposed to feed on its parent's blood)

76 **Pillicock ... Hill** (probably quoted from a nursery rhyme, and suggested by "pelican." **Pillicock** is a term of endearment and the phallus)

76-77 **Alow ... loo** (? a hunting call, or the refrain of the song)

81 **keep ... justice** i.e., do not break thy word

81 **commit not** i.e., adultery

86 **gloves in my cap** i.e., as a pledge from his mistress

92 **out-paramoured the Turk** had more concubines than the Sultan

93 **light of ear** ready to hear flattery and slander

95 prey preying

95 **creaking** (deliberately cultivated, as fashionable)

heart to woman. Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets,° thy pen from lenders' books,° and defy the foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind; says suum, mun, nonny.° Dolphin° my boy, boy, sessa!° let him trot by.

Storm still.

Lear. Thou wert better in a grave than to answer° with thy uncovered body this extremity° of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st° the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat° no perfume. Ha! here's three on's° are sophisticated.° Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated° man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked° animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings!° Come, unbutton here.

[*Tearing off his clothes.*]

Fool. Prithee, Nuncle, be contented, 'tis a naughty° night to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild° field were like an old lecher's heart—a small spark, all the rest on's body, cold. Look, here comes a walking fire.

Enter Gloucester, with a torch.

Edgar. This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet.° He begins at curfew,° and walks till the first cock.° He gives the web and the pin,° squints° the eye, and makes the harelip; mildews the white° wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

98 **plackets** openings in skirts

98-99 **pen ... books** i.e., do not enter your name in the moneylender's account book

100-01 **suum, mun, nonny** the noise of the wind

101 **Dolphin** the French Dauphin (identified by the English with the devil. Poor Tom is presumably quoting from a ballad)

101 sessa an interjection: "Go on!"
103 **answer** confront, bear the brunt of
104 extremity extreme severity
106 **ow'st** have taken from
107 cat civet cat, whose glands yield perfume
108 **on's** of us
108 **sophisticated** adulterated, made artificial
109 **unaccommodated** uncivilized
110 **forked** i.e., two-legged
111 **lendings** borrowed garments
112 **naughty** wicked
113 **wild** barren
117 **Flibbertigibbet** (a figure from Elizabethan demonology) 118 **curfew**: 9 P.M.
118 **first cock** midnight
119 web **and the pin** cataract
119 **squints** crosses
120 **white** ripening.

Swithold footed thrice the old;°
He met the nightmare,° and her nine fold;°
Bid her alight°
And her troth plight,°
And aroint° thee, witch, aroint thee!

Kent. How fares your Grace?

Lear. What's he?

Kent. Who's there? What is't you seek?

Gloucester. What are you there? Your names? *Edgar.* Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the todpole, the wall-newt and the water;° that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets,° swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog,° drinks the green mantle° of the standing° pool; who is whipped from tithing° to tithing, and stocked, punished, and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body,

Horse to ride, and weapon to wear,
But mice and rats, and such small deer,°
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.°
Beware my follower!° Peace, Smulkin,° peace,
thou fiend!

Gloucester. What, hath your Grace no better company?

Edgar. The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Modo° he's called, and Mahu.°

122 **Swithold ... old** Withold (an Anglo-Saxon saint who subdued demons) walked three times across the open country

123 **nightmare** demon

123 **fold** offspring

124 **alight** i.e., from the horse she had possessed

125 **her troth plight** pledge her word

126 **aroint** be gone

132 **todpole ... water** tadpole, wall lizard, water newt

134 **sallets** salads

135 **ditch-dog** dead dog in a ditch

135 **mantle** scum

136 **standing** stagnant

136 **tithing** a district comprising ten families

141-42 **But ... year** (adapted from a popular romance, "Bevis of Hampton")

141 deer game

143 **follower** familiar

143, 147 **Smulkin, Modo, Mahu** (Elizabethan devils, from Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration* of 1603)

Gloucester. Our flesh and blood, my Lord, is grown so vile

That it doth hate what gets° it.

Edgar. Poor Tom's a-cold.

Gloucester. Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer°

T' obey in all your daughters' hard commands.
Though their injunction be to bar my doors
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

Lear. First let me talk with this philosopher. What is the cause of thunder?

Kent. Good my lord, take his offer; go into th' house.

Lear. I'll talk a word with this same learnèd Theban.° What is your study?°

Edgar. How to prevent° the fiend, and to kill vermin.

Lear. Let me ask you one word in private.

Kent. Importune him once more to go, my lord. His wits begin t' unsettle.

Gloucester. Canst thou blame him?

Storm still.

His daughters seek his death. Ah, that good Kent,
He said it would be thus, poor banished man!
Thou say'st the King grows mad—I'll tell thee,
friend,
I am almost mad myself. I had a son,
Now outlawed from my blood;° he sought my life
But lately, very late.° I loved him, friend,
No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!

149 **gets** begets

151 **suffer** permit me

160 **Theban** i.e., Greek philosopher

161 **study** particular scientific study

162 **prevent** balk

170 **outlawed from my blood** disowned and tainted, like a carbuncle in the corrupted blood

171 **late** recently

I do beseech your Grace
Lear. O, cry you mercy, sir.

Noble philosopher, your company.

Edgar. Tom's a-cold.

Gloucester. In, fellow, there, into th' hovel; keep thee warm.

Lear. Come, let's in all.

Kent. This way, my lord.

Lear. With him!

I will keep still with my philosopher.

Kent. Good my lord, soothe° him; let him take the fellow.

Gloucester. Take him you on.°

Kent. Sirrah, come on; go along with us.

Lear. Come, good Athenian.°

Gloucester. No words, no words! Hush.

Edgar. Child Rowland to the dark tower came;°

His word was still,° "Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man."° *Exeunt.*

174 **cry you mercy** I beg your pardon

180 **soothe** humor

181 **you on** with you

183 **Athenian** i.e., philosopher (like "Theban")

185 **Child ... came** (? from a lost ballad;
"child"=a candidate for knighthood; **Rowland**
was Charlemagne's nephew, the hero of *The Song of Roland*)

186 **His ... still** his motto was always

186-87 **Fie ... man** (a deliberately absurd
linking of the chivalric hero with the nursery tale

of Jack the Giant-Killer)

Scene 5. [*Gloucester's castle.*]

Enter Cornwall and Edmund.

Cornwall. I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

Edmund. How, my lord, I may be censured,^o that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears^o me to think of.

Cornwall. I now perceive it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death; but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reprovable badness in himself.^o

Edmund. How malicious is my fortune that I must repent to be just! This is the letter which he spoke of, which approves^o him an intelligent party^o to the advantages^o of France. O heavens, that his treason were not! or not I the detector!

Cornwall. Go with me to the Duchess.

Edmund. If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

Cornwall. True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.^o

Edmund. [Aside] If I find him comforting^o the King, it will stuff his suspicion more fully.—I will persevere^o in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.^o

3.5.8 **censured** judged

4 **something fears** somewhat frightens

8-9 **a provoking ... himself** a stimulating goodness in Edgar, brought into play by a blamable badness in Gloucester

12 **approves** proves

12 **intelligent** party (1) spy (2) well-informed person

13 **to the advantages** on behalf of

20 **apprehension** arrest 21 **comforting** supporting (a legalism)

23 **persever** persevere

24 **blood** natural feelings

Cornwall. I will lay trust upon° thee, and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love. *Exeunt.*

Scene 6. [A chamber in a farmhouse adjoining the castle.]

Enter Kent and Gloucester.

Gloucester. Here is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can. I will not be long from you.

Kent. All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience.° The gods reward your kindness.

Exit [Gloucester].

Enter Lear, Edgar, and Fool.

Edgar. Frateretto° calls me, and tells me Nero° is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent,° and beware the foul fiend.

Fool. Prithee, Nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman.°

Lear. A king, a king.

Fool. No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son; for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.

Lear. To have a thousand with red burning spits Come hissing° in upon 'em—

25 lay trust upon (1) trust (2) advance

3.6.5 **impatience** raging

6 **Frateretto** Elizabethan devil, from Harsnett's *Declaration*

6 **Nero** (who is mentioned by Harsnett, and whose angling is reported by Chaucer in "The Monk's Tale")

7 **innocent** fool

10 **yeoman** farmer (just below a gentleman in rank. The Fool asks what class of man has most indulged his children, and thus been driven mad)

16 **hissing** hissing

Edgar. The foul fiend bites my back.

Fool. He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

Lear. It shall be done; I will arraign° them straight.° [*To Edgar*] Come, sit thou here, most learned justice.°

[*To the Fool*] Thou, sapient° sir, sit here. Now, you she-foxes—

Edgar. Look, where he° stands and glares. Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam?°

Come o'er the bourn,° Bessy, to me.

Fool. Her boat hath a leak,

And she must not speak
Why she dares not come over to thee.°

Edgar. The foul fiend haunts Poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale.° Hoppedance° cries in Tom's belly for two white herring.° Croak° not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

Kent. How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed.° Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

Lear. I'll see their trial first. Bring in their evidence. [*To Edgar*] Thou, robèd man of justice, take thy place.

[*To the Fool*] And thou, his yokefellow of equity,°
Bench° by his side. [*To Kent*] You are o' th'
commission;°
Sit you too.

Edgar. Let us deal justly.

20 **arraign** bring to trial

20 **straight** straightaway

21 **justice** justicer, judge

22 **sapient** wise

23 **he** i.e., a fiend

23-24 **Want'st ... madam** (to Goneril) i.e., do you want eyes to look at you during your trial? The fiend serves that purpose

25 **born** brook (Edgar quotes from a popular ballad)

26-28 **Her ... thee** (the Fool parodies the ballad)

30 **nightingale** i.e., the Fool's singing

30 **Hoppedance** Hoberdidance (another devil from Harsnett's *Declaration*)

31 **white herring** unsmoked (? as against the black and sulfurous devil)

31 **Croak** rumble (because his belly is empty)

33 **amazed** astonished

35 **evidence** the evidence of witnesses against them

37 **yokefellow of equity** partner in justice

38 **Bench** sit on the bench

38 commission those commissioned as king's justices

Steepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
Thy sheep be in the corn;°
And for one blast of thy minikin° mouth
Thy sheep shall take no harm.°
Purr, the cat is gray.°

Lear. Arraign her first. 'Tis Goneril, I here take my oath before this honorable assembly, she kicked the poor King her father.

Fool. Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

Lear. She cannot deny it.

Fool. Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint stool.°

Lear. And here's another, whose warped looks proclaim

What store° her heart is made on. Stop her there!
Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!°
False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?

Edgar. Bless thy five wits!

Kent. O pity! Sir, where is the patience now That you so oft have boasted to retain?

Edgar. [*Aside*] My tears begin to take his part so much

They mar my counterfeiting.°

Lear. The little dogs and all,

Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart—see, they bark at me.

Edgar. Tom will throw his head at them. Avaunt, you curs.

Be thy mouth or black or° white,

41-44 **Sleepest** ... **harm** (probably quoted or adapted from an Elizabethan song)

42 **corn** wheat

43 **minikin** shrill

45 **gray** (devils were thought to assume the shape of a gray cat)

51 **Cry ... joint stool** (proverbial and deliberately impudent apology for overlooking a person. A joint stool was a low stool made by a joiner, perhaps here a stage property to represent Goneril and in line

52, Regan. "Joint stool" can also suggest the judicial bench; hence Goneril may be identified by the Fool, ironically, with those in power, who judge)

53 **store** stuff

54 **Corruption ... place** bribery in the court 60 **counterfeiting** i.e., feigned madness

64 **or ... or** either ... or

Tooth that poisons if it bite;
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,
Hound or spaniel, brach^o or lym,^o
Or bobtail tike, or trundle-tail^o—
Tom will make him weep and wail;
For, with throwing^o thus my head,
Dogs leaped the hatch,^o and all are fled.
Do, de, de, de. Sessa!^o Come, march to wakes^o
and fairs and market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn^o
is dry.

Lear. Then let them anatomize Regan. See what breeds about her heart.^o Is there any cause in nature that make^o these hard hearts? [*To Edgar*] You, sir, I entertain^o for one of my hundred;^o only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will say they are Persian;^o but let them be changed.

Kent. Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.

Lear. Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains.^o

So, so. We'll go to supper i' th' morning.
Fool. And I'll go to bed at noon.°

Enter Gloucester.

Gloucester. Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master?

Kent. Here, sir, but trouble him not; his wits are gone.

Gloucester. Good friend, I prithee take him in thy arms.

67 **brach** bitch

67 **lym** bloodhound (from the liam or leash with which he was led)

68 **bobtail ... trundle-tail** short-tailed or long-tailed cur

70 **throwing** jerking (as a hound lifts its head from the ground, the scent having been lost)

71 **leaped the hatch** leaped over the lower half of a divided door (i.e., left in a hurry)

72 **Sessa** be off

72 **wakes** feasts attending the dedication of a church

73 **horn** horn bottle which the Bedlam used in begging a drink (Edgar is suggesting that he is unable to play his role any longer)

75-76 **Then ... heart** i.e., if the Bedlam's horn is dry, let Regan, whose heart has become as hard as horn, be dissected

77 **make** (subjunctive)

78 **entertain** engage

78 **hundred** i.e., Lear's hundred knights

80 **Persian** gorgeous (ironically of Edgar's rags)

82 **curtains** (Lear imagines himself in bed)

84 **And ... noon** (the Fool's last words)

I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him.
There is a litter ready; lay him in't
And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt
meet
Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.
If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
With thine and all that offer to defend him,
Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up,
And follow me, that will to some provision°
Give thee quick conduct.°

Kent. Oppressed nature sleeps.

This rest might yet have balmed thy broken
sinews,°
Which, if convenience° will not allow,
Stand in hard cure.° [*To the Fool*] Come, help
to bear thy master.
Thou must not stay behind.

Gloucester. Come, come, away!

Exeunt [all but Edgar].

Edgar. When we our betters see bearing our woes,

We scarcely think our miseries our foes.°
Who alone suffers suffers most i' th' mind,
Leaving free° things and happy shows° behind;
But then the mind much sufferance° doth o'erskip
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.°
How light and portable° my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the
King bow.

He childed as I fathered. Tom, away.
Mark the high noises,° and thyself bewray°
When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts° defile
thee,

96 **conduct** direction
97 **balmed thy broken sinews** soothed thy
racked nerves
98 **convenience** fortunate occasion
99 **Stand ... cure** will be hard to cure
102 **our foes** enemies peculiar to ourselves
104 **free** carefree
104 **shows** scenes
105 **sufferance** suffering
106 **bearing fellowship** suffering has company
107 **portable** able to be supported or endured
110 **Mark the high noises** observe the rumors
of strife among those in power
110 **bewray** reveal
111 **wrong thoughts** misconceptions

In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.°
What will hap more° tonight, safe 'scape the King!
Lurk,° lurk. [*Exit.*]

Scene 7. [*Gloucester's castle.*]

***Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Edmund, and
Servants.***

Cornwall. [*To Goneril*] Post speedily to my Lord your husband; show him this letter. The army of France is landed. [*To Servants*] Seek out the traitor Gloucester. [*Exeunt some of the Servants.*] *Regan.* Hang him instantly.
Goneril. Pluck out his eyes.
Cornwall. Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister company. The revenges we are bound° to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding.

Advise the Duke where you are going, to a most festinate^o preparation. We are bound to the like. Our posts^o shall be swift and intelligent^o betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister; farewell, my Lord of Gloucester.^o

Enter Oswald.

How now? Where's the King?

Oswald. My Lord of Gloucester hath conveyed him hence.

112 **In ... thee** on the manifesting of your innocence recalls you from outlawry and restores amity between you and your father

113 **What ... more** whatever else happens

114 **Lurk** hide 3.7.9 **bound** (1) forced (2) purposing to

11 **festinate** speedy

12 **posts** messengers

13 **intelligent** full of information

14 **Lord of Gloucester** i.e., Edmund, now elevated to the title

Some five or six and thirty of his knights,
Hot questrists^o after him, met him at gate;
Who, with some other of the lords dependants,^o
Are gone with him toward Dover, where they
boast

To have well-armèd friends.

Cornwall. Get horses for your mistress. [*Exit Oswald.*]

Goneril. Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

Cornwall. Edmund, farewell.

[*Exeunt Goneril and Edmund.*]

Go seek the traitor Gloucester,
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.

[*Exeunt other Servants.*]

Though well we may not pass upon^o his life

Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall do a court'sy to° our wrath, which men
May blame, but not control.

Enter Gloucester, brought in by two or three.
Who's there, the traitor?

Regan. Ingrateful fox, 'tis he.

Cornwall. Bind fast his corky° arms.

Gloucester. What means your Graces? Good my friends,
consider

You are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends.

Cornwall. Bind him, I say.

[*Servants bind him.*]

Regan. Hard, hard! O filthy traitor.

Gloucester. Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

Cornwall. To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt find—

18 **questrists** searchers

19 **lords dependants** attendant lords (members of
Lear's retinue)

25 **pass upon** pass judgment on

27 **do a court'sy to** indulge

30 **corky** sapless (because old)

[*Regan plucks his beard.* °]

Gloucester. By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done To pluck
me by the beard.

Regan. So white, and such a traitor?

Gloucester. Naughty° lady,

These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin
Will quicken° and accuse thee. I am your host.
With robber's hands my hospitable favors°
You should not ruffle° thus. What will you do?

Cornwall. Come, sir, what letters had you late° from France?

Regan. Be simple-answered,° for we know the truth.

Cornwall. And what confederacy have you with the traitors

Late footed in the kingdom?

Regan. To whose hands you have sent the lunatic King:

Speak.

Gloucester. I have a letter guessingly° set down, Which came from one that's of a neutral heart, And not from one opposed.

Cornwall. Cunning.

Regan. And false.

Cornwall. Where hast thou sent the King?

Gloucester. To Dover.

Regan. Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril°

—

Cornwall. Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

35 s.d. **plucks his beard** (a deadly insult) 38

Naughty wicked

40 **quicken** come to life

41 **hospitable favors** face of your host

42 **ruffle** tear at violently

43 **late** recently

44 **simple-answered** straightforward in answering

48 **guessingly** without certain knowledge

53 **charged at peril** ordered under penalty

Gloucester. I am tied to th' stake, and I must stand the course. °

Regan. Wherefore to Dover?

Gloucester. Because I would not see thy cruel nails

Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed° flesh rash° boarish fangs.

The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
In hell-black night endured, would have buoyed° up
And quenched the stellèd° fires.

Yet, poor old heart, he holp° the heavens to rain.
If wolves had at thy gate howled that dearn° time,
Thou shouldst have said, "Good porter, turn the
key."°

All cruels else subscribe.° But I shall see
The wingèd° vengeance overtake such children.

Cornwall. See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.

Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

Gloucester. He that will think° to live till he be old,

Give me some help.—O cruel! O you gods!

Regan. One side will mock° another. Th' other too.

Cornwall. If you see vengeance—

First Servant. Hold your hand, my lord!

I have served you ever since I was a child;
But better service have I never done you
Than now to bid you hold.

Regan. How now, you dog?

First Servant. If you did wear a beard upon your chin,

55 **course** coursing (in which a relay of dogs baits a
bull or bear tied in the pit)

59 **anointed** holy (because king)

59 **rash** strike with the tusk, like a boar

61 **buoyed** risen

62 **stellèd** (1) fixed (as opposed to the planets or
wandering stars) (2) starry

63 **holp** helped

64 **dearn** dread

65 **turn the key** i.e., unlock the gate

66 **All cruels else subscribe** all cruel creatures but man are compassionate

67 **wingèd** (1) heavenly (2) swift

70 **will think** expects

72 **mock** make ridiculous (because of the contrast)

I'd shake it° on this quarrel. What do you mean!°

Cornwall. My villain!°

Draw and fight.

First Servant. Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.

Regan. Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus?

She takes a sword and runs at him behind, kills him.

First Servant. O, I am slain! my lord, you have one eye left

To see some mischief° on him. O!

Cornwall. Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly. Where is thy luster now?

Gloucester. All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature°

To quit° this horrid act.

Regan. Out, treacherous villain,

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.

Gloucester. O my follies! Then Edgar was abused.°

Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him.

Regan. Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell

His way to Dover. *Exit [one] with Gloucester.*
How is't, my lord? How look you?°

Cornwall. I have received a hurt. Follow me, lady.

Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave
Upon the dunghill. Regan, I bleed apace.

78 **shake it** (an insult comparable to Regan's
plucking of Gloucester's beard)

78 **What ... mean** i.e., what terrible thing are
you doing

79 **villain** serf (with a suggestion of the modern
meaning)

83 **mischief** injury

87 **enkindle ... nature** fan your natural feeling
into flame

88 **quit** requite

90 **overture** disclosure

92 **abused** wronged.

95 **How look you** how are you

Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.
Exeunt.

Second Servant. I'll never care what wickedness I do, If this
man come to good.

Third Servant. If she live long,

And in the end meet the old course of death,^o Women
will all turn monsters.

Second Servant. Let's follow the old Earl, and get the
Bedlam

To lead him where he would. His roguish madness
Allows itself to anything.^o

Third Servant. Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of
eggs

To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him.
[*Exeunt severally.*]

102 **meet ... death** die the customary death of old age

105-6 **His ... anything** his lack of all self-control leaves him open to any suggestion

OceanofPDF.com

ACT 4

Scene 1. [*The heath.*]

Enter Edgar.

Edgar. Yet better thus, and known to be contemned,^o
Than still contemned and flattered. To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected^o thing of fortune,
Stands still in esperance,^o lives not in fear:
The lamentable change is from the best,
The worst returns to laughter.^o Welcome then,
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes^o nothing to thy blasts.

Enter Gloucester, led by an Old Man.

But who comes here?
My father, poorly led?^o World, world, O world!
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
Life would not yield to age.^o

Old Man. O, my good lord, I have been your tenant, and
your father's tenant, these fourscore years.

Gloucester. Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:

4.1.1 **known to be contemned** conscious of being
despised

3 **dejected** abased

4 **esperance** hope

6 **returns to laughter** changes for the better

9 **Owes** is in debt for

10 **poorly** led (1) led like a poor man, with only one
attendant (2) led by a poor man

11-12 **But** ... **age** we should not agree to grow old and hence die, except for the hateful mutability of life

Thy comforts° can do me no good at all;
Thee they may hurt.°

Old Man. You cannot see your way.

Gloucester. I have no way and therefore want° no eyes;

I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen,
Our means secure us, and our mere defects
Prove our commodities.° Oh, dear son Edgar,
The food° of thy abusèd° father's wrath!
Might I but live to see thee in° my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again!

Old Man. How now! Who's there?

Edgar. [Aside] O Gods! Who is 't can say "I am at the worst"?

I am worse than e'er I was.

Old Man. 'Tis poor mad Tom.

Edgar. [Aside] And worse I may be yet: the worst is not

So long as we can say "This is the worst."°

Old Man. Fellow, where goest?

Gloucester. Is it a beggar-man?

Old Man. Madman and beggar too.

Gloucester. He has some reason,° else he could not beg.

I' th' last night's storm I such a fellow saw,
Which made me think a man a worm. My son
Came then into my mind, and yet my mind
Was then scarce friends with him. I have heard
more since.

As flies to wanton° boys, are we to th' gods,

16 **comforts** ministrations

17 **hurt** injure

18 **want** require

20-21 **Our ... commodities** our resources make us overconfident, while our afflictions make for our advantage

22 **food** i.e., the object on which Gloucester's anger fed

22 **abused** deceived

23 **in** i.e., with, by means of

27-28 **the ... worst** so long as a man continues to suffer (i.e., is still alive), even greater suffering may await him

31 **reason** faculty of reasoning

36 **wanton** (1) playful (2) reckless

They kill us for their sport.

Edgar. [Aside] How should this be?°

Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,
Ang'ring° itself and others. Bless thee, master!

Gloucester. Is that the naked fellow?

Old Man. Ay, my lord.

Gloucester. Then, prithee, get thee gone: if for my sake

Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain
I' th' way toward Dover, do it for ancient° love,
And bring some covering for this naked soul,
Which I'll entreat to lead me.

Old Man. Alack, sir, he is mad.

Gloucester. 'Tis the times' plague,° when madmen lead the blind.

Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;°
Above the rest,° be gone.

Old Man. I'll bring him the best 'parel° that I have, Come on 't what will. *Exit.*

Gloucester. Sirrah, naked fellow—

Edgar. Poor Tom's a-cold. [*Aside*] I cannot daub it° further.

Gloucester. Come hither, fellow.

Edgar. [*Aside*] And yet I must.—Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

Gloucester. Know'st thou the way to Dover?

Edgar. Both stile and gate, horse-way and footpath.

Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits.
Bless thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend!
Five fiends have been in Poor Tom at once; of lust,

37 **How should this be** i.e., how can this horror be?

39 **Ang'ring** offending

43 **ancient** (1) the love the Old Man feels, by virtue of his long tenancy (2) the love that formerly obtained between master and man

46 **times' plague** characteristic disorder of this time

47 **thy pleasure** as you like

48 **the rest** all

49 **'parel** apparel

52-53 **daub it** lay it on (figure from plastering mortar)

as Obidicut;° Hobbididence, prince of dumbness;° Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing;° who since possesses chambermaids and waiting-women. So, bless thee, master!

Gloucester. Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues

Have humbled to all strokes:° that I am wretched
Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still!
Let the superfluous° and lust-dieted° man,
That slaves° your ordinance,° that will not see
Because he does not feel, feel your pow'r quickly;
So distribution should undo excess,°
And each man have enough. Dost thou know
Dover?

Edgar. Ay, master.

Gloucester. There is a cliff whose high and bending° head

Looks fearfully° in the confinèd deep:°
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
With something rich about me: from that place
I shall no leading need.

Edgar. Give me thy arm:

Poor Tom shall lead thee. *Exeunt.*

61 **Obidicut Hoberdicut**, a devil (like the four that follow, from Harsnett's *Declaration*)

61-62 **dumbness** muteness (like the crimes and afflictions in the next lines, the result of diabolic possession)

63 **mopping and mowing** grimacing and making faces

67 **humbled to all strokes** brought so low as to bear anything humbly

69 **superfluous** possessed of super- fluties

69 **lust-dieted** whose lust is gratified (like Gloucester's)

70 **slaves** (1) tramples, spurns like a slave (2) ? tears, rends (Old English **slaefan**)

70 **ordinance** law

72 **So ... excess** then the man with too much wealth
would distribute it among those with too little
75 **bending** overhanging
76 **fearfully** occasioning fear
76 **confined deep** the sea, hemmed in below

Scene 2. [*Before the Duke of Albany's palace.*]

Enter Goneril and Edmund.

Goneril. Welcome, my lord: I marvel our mild husband
Not met° us on the way.

Enter Oswald.

Now, where's your master? *Oswald.* Madam, within; but
never man so changed.

I told him of the army that was landed:
He smiled at it. I told him you were coming;
His answer was, "The worse." Of Gloucester's
treachery,
And of the loyal service of his son
When I informed him, then he called me sot,°
And told me I had turned the wrong side out:
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;
What like,° offensive.

Goneril. [*To Edmund*] Then shall you go no further.

It is the cowish° terror of his spirit,
That dares not undertake:° he'll not feel wrongs,
Which tie him to an answer.° Our wishes on the
way

May prove effects.° Back, Edmund, to my brother;
Hasten his musters° and conduct his pow'rs.°

4.2.2 **Not met** did not meet

8 sot fool

11 **What like** what he should like

12 **cowish** cowardly

13 **undertake** venture

14 **tie him to an answer** oblige him to retaliate

14-15 **Our ... effects** our desires (that you might be my husband), as we journeyed here, may be fulfilled

16 **musters** collecting of troops

16 **conduct his pow'rs** lead his army

I must change names° at home and give the distaff°

Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
Shall pass between us: ere long you are like to hear,
If you dare venture in your own behalf,
A mistress's° command. Wear this; spare speech;
[*Giving a favor*]

Decline your head.° This kiss, if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air:
Conceive,° and fare thee well.

Edmund. Yours in the ranks of death.

Goneril. My most dear Gloucester! *Exit [Edmund].*

O, the difference of man and man!
To thee a woman's services are due:
My fool usurps my body.°

Oswald. Madam, here comes my lord. *Exit.*

Enter Albany.

Goneril. I have been worth the whistle.°

Albany. O Goneril!

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:°
That nature which contemns° its origin
Cannot be bordered certain in itself;°
She that herself will sliver and disbranch°

17 **change names** i.e., exchange the name of
“mistress” for that of “master”

17 **distaff** spinning stick (wifely symbol)

21 **mistress’s** lover’s (and also, Albany having
been disposed of, lady’s or wife’s)

22 **Decline your head** i.e., that Goneril may
kiss him

24 **Conceive** understand (with a sexual
implication, that includes “stretch thy spirits,” l.
23; and “death,” l. 25: “to die,” meaning “to
experience sexual intercourse”)

28 **My fool usurps my body** my husband
wrongfully enjoys me

29 **I ... whistle** i.e., once you valued me (the
proverb is implied, “It is a poor dog that is not
worth the whistling”)

31 **disposition** nature

32 **contemns** espises

33 **bordered ... itself** kept within its normal
bounds

34 **sliver and disbranch** cut off

From her material sap,° perforce must wither
And come to deadly use.°

Goneril. No more; the text° is foolish.

Albany. Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:

Filths savor but themselves.° What have you done?
Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?
A father, and a gracious agèd man,
Whose reverence even the head-lugged bear°
would lick,
Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you
madded.°
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
A man, a prince, by him so benefited!
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits°
Send quickly down to tame these vile offenses,
It will come,
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.

Goneril. Milk-livered° man!

That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honor from thy suffering;° that not know'st
Fools do those villains pity who are punished
Ere they have done their mischief.° Where's thy
drum?
France spreads his banners in our noiseless°
land,
With plumèd helm° thy state begins to threat,°

35 **material sap** essential and life-giving
sustenance

36 **come to deadly use** i.e., be as a dead
branch for the burning

37 **text** i.e., on which your sermon is based

39 **Filths savor but themselves** the filthy
relish only the taste of filth

42 **head-lugged bear** bear-baited by the dogs,
and hence enraged
43 **maddened** made mad
46 **visible spirits** avenging spirits in material
form
50 **Milk-livered** lily-livered (hence cowardly,
the liver being regarded as the seat of courage)
52-53 **discerning ... suffering** able to
distinguish between insults that ought to be
resented, and ordinary pain that is to be borne
54-55 **Fools ... mischief** only fools are sorry for
criminals whose intended criminality is
prevented by punishment
56 **noiseless** i.e., the drum, signifying
preparation for war, is silent
57 **helm** helmet 7 **thy ... threat** France begins
to threaten Albany's realm

Whilst thou, a moral° fool, sits still and cries
"Alack, why does he so?"

Albany. See thyself, devil!

Proper° deformity seems not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman.

Goneril. O vain fool!

Albany. Thou changed and self covered° thing, for shame,
Be-monster not thy feature.° Were 't my fitness°
To let these hands obey my blood,°
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
Thy flesh and bones: howe'er° thou art a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

Goneril. Marry,° your manhood mew°—

Enter a Messenger.

Albany. What news?

Messenger. O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead,

Slain by his servant, going to° put out
The other eye of Gloucester.

Albany. Gloucester's eyes!

Messenger. A servant that he bred,° thrilled with remorse,°

Opposed against the act, bending his sword
To his great master, who thereat enraged
Flew on him, and amongst them felled° him dead,
But not without that harmful stroke which since

58 **moral** moralizing; but also with the
implication that morality and folly are one

60 **Proper** (1) natural (to a fiend) (2) fair-
appearing

62 **changed and self-covered** i.e.,
transformed, by the contorting of her woman's
face, on which appears the fiendish behavior
she has allowed herself. (Goneril has disguised
nature by wickedness)

63 **Be-monster not thy feature** do not
change your appearance into a fiend's

63 **my fitness** appropriate for me

64 **blood** passion 66 **howe'er** but even if

68 **Marry** by the Virgin Mary

68 **your manhood mew** (1) coop up or confine
your (pretended) manhood (2) molt or shed it, if
that is what is supposed to "shield" me from you

71 **going to** as he was about to

73 **bred** reared

73 **thrilled with remorse** pierced by
compassion

76 **amongst them felled** others assisting, they
felled

Hath plucked him after.°

Albany. This shows you are above,

You justicers,° that these our nether° crimes
So speedily can venge.° But, O poor Gloucester!
Lost he his other eye?

Messenger. Both, both, my lord.

This letter, madam, craves° a speedy answer; 'Tis
from your sister.

Goneril. [*Aside*] One way I like this well;

But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,
May all the building in my fancy pluck
Upon my hateful life.° Another way,°
The news is not so tart.°—I'll read, and answer.
Exit.

Albany. Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

Messenger. Come with my lady hither.

Albany. He is not here.

Messenger. No, my good lord; I met him back° again.

Albany. Knows he the wickedness?

Messenger. Ay, my good lord; 'twas he informed against
him,

And quit the house on purpose, that their punish
ment
Might have the freer course.

Albany. Gloucester, I live

To thank thee for the love thou showed'st the
King,

And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend:
Tell me what more thou know'st. *Exeunt.*

78 **plucked him after** i.e., brought Cornwall to death
with his servant

79 **justicers** judges

79 **nether** committed below (on earth)

80 **venge** avenge

82 **craves** demands

85-86 **May ... life** these things (1.84) may send my
future hopes, my castles in air, crashing down upon
the hateful (married) life I lead now

86 **Another** way looked at another way

87 **tart** sour

90 **back** going back

[Scene 3. *The French camp near Dover.*]

Enter Kent and a Gentleman.

Kent. Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back,
know you no reason?

Gentleman. Something he left imperfect in the state,^o which
since his coming forth is thought of, which imports^o to the
kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return
was most required and necessary.

Kent. Who hath he left behind him general?

Gentleman. The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

Kent. Did your letters pierce^o the queen to any
demonstration of grief?

Gentleman. Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my
presence,

And now and then an ample tear trilled^o down
Her delicate cheek: it seemed she was a queen

Over her passion, who most rebel-like
Sought to be king o'er her.

Kent. O, then it moved her.

Gentleman. Not to a rage: patience and sorrow strove

Who should express her goodliest.° You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears
Were like a better way:° those happy smilets°
That played on her ripe lip seemed not to know
What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence

4.3.3-4 **imperfect in the state** unsettled in his
own kingdom

5 **imports** portends

10 **pierce** impel

13 **trilled** trickled

18 **Who ... goodliest** which should give her the
most becoming expression

20 **Were like a better way** i.e., improved on
that spectacle

20 **smilets** little smiles

As pearls from diamonds dropped. In brief,
Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved,
If all could so become it.°

Kent. Made she no verbal question?

Gentleman. Faith, once or twice she heaved° the name of
"father"

Pantingly forth, as if it pressed her heart;
Cried "Sisters! Sisters! Shame of ladies! Sisters!
Kent! Father! Sisters! What, i' th' storm? i' th'
night?
Let pity not be believed!"° There she shook
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,

And clamor moistened:° then away she started
To deal with grief alone.

Kent. It is the stars,

The stars above us, govern our conditions;°
Else one self mate and make could not beget
Such different issues.° You spoke not with her
since?

Gentleman. No.

Kent. Was this before the King returned?

Gentleman. No, since.

Kent. Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's i' th' town;

Who sometime in his better tune° remembers
What we are come about, and by no means
Will yield to see his daughter.

Gentleman. Why, good sir?

Kent. A sovereign° shame so elbows° him: his own
unkindness

24-25 **Sorrow ... it** sorrow would be a coveted jewel
if it became others as it does her

26 **heaved** expressed with difficulty

30 **Let pity not be believed** let it not be believed for
pity

32 **clamor moistened** moistened clamor, i.e., mixed
(and perhaps assuaged) her outcries with tears

34 **govern our conditions** determine what we are

35-36 **Else ... issues** otherwise the same husband
and wife could not produce such different children

40 **better tune** composed, less jangled intervals

43 **sovereign** overpowering

43 **elbows** jogs his elbow i.e., reminds him

That stripped her from his benediction, turned her
To foreign casualties,° gave her dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters: these things sting

His mind so venomously that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia.

Gentleman. Alack, poor gentleman!

Kent. Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

Gentleman. 'Tis so;° they are afoot.

Kent. Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,

And leave you to attend him: some dear cause°
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile;
When I am known aright, you shall not grieve
Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go
Along with me. [*Exeunt.*]

[Scene 4. *The same. A tent.*]

***Enter, with drum and colors, Cordelia, Doctor, and
Soldiers.***

Cordelia. Alack, 'tis he: why, he was met even now

As mad as the vexed sea; singing aloud;
Crowned with rank femiter and furrow-weeds,
With hardocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flow'rs,
Darnel,° and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn.° A century° send forth;
Search every acre in the high-grown field,

45 **casualties** chances

50 **'Tis so** i.e., I have heard of them

52 **dear cause** important reason

4.4.3-5 **femiter ... Darnel: femiter** fumitory,
whose leaves and juice are bitter; **furrow-
weeds** weeds that grow in the furrow; or plowed
land; **hardocks** ? hoar or white docks, burdocks,

harlocks; **hemlock** a poison; **nettles** plants
which sting and burn; **cuckoo-flow'rs** identified
with a plant employed to remedy diseases of the
brain; **Darnel** tares, noisome weeds
6 **sustaining corn** life-maintaining wheat
6 **century ?** sentry; troop of a hundred soldiers

And bring him to our eye [*Exit an Officer.*] What
can man's wisdom°
In the restoring his bereavèd° sense?
He that helps him take all my outward° worth.

Doctor. There is means, madam:

Our foster-nurse° of nature is repose,
The which he lacks: that to provoke° in him,
Are many simples operative,° whose power
Will close the eye of anguish.

Cordelia. All blest secrets,

All you unpublished virtues° of the earth,
Spring with my tears! be aidant and remediate°
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him,
Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it.°

Enter Messenger.

Messenger. News, madam;

The Brittish pow'rs are marching hitherward.

Cordelia. 'Tis known before. Our preparation stands

In expectation of them. O dear father,
It is thy business that I go about;
Therefore° great France

My mourning and importuned° tears hath pitied.
No blown° ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right:
Soon may I hear and see him! *Exeunt.*

8 **What can man's wisdom** what can science
accomplish

9 **bereaved** impaired

10 **outward** material

12 **foster-nurse** fostering nurse

13 **provoke** induce

14 **simples operative** efficacious medicinal herbs

16 **unpublished virtues** i.e., secret remedial herbs

17 **remediate** remedial

20 **wants ... it** i.e., lacks the reason to control the
rage

25 **Therefore** because of that

26 **importuned** importunate

27 **blown** puffed up

[Scene 5. Gloucester's castle.]

Enter Regan and Oswald.

Regan. But are my brother's pow'rs set forth?

Oswald. Ay, madam.

Regan. Himself in person there?

Oswald. Madam, with much ado:° Your sister is the better
soldier.

Regan. Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

Oswald. No, madam.

Regan. What might import° my sister's letter to him?

Oswald. I know not, lady.

Regan. Faith, he is posted^o hence on serious matter.

It was great ignorance,^o Gloucester's eyes being
out,
To let him live. Where he arrives he moves
All hearts against us: Edmund, I think, is gone,
In pity of his misery, to dispatch
His nighted^o life; moreover, to descry
The strength o' th' enemy.

Oswald. I must needs after him, madam, with my letter.

Regan. Our troops set forth tomorrow: stay with us;

The ways are dangerous.

Oswald. I may not, madam:

My lady charged my duty^o in this business.

4.5.2 **ado** bother and persuasion

6 **import** purport, carry as its message

8 **is posted** has ridden speedily

9 **ignorance** folly

13 **nighted** (1) darkened, because blinded (2)
benighted

18 **charged my duty** ordered me as a solemn duty

Regan. Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you

Transport her purposes^o by word? Belike,^o
Some things I know not what. I'll love thee much,
Let me unseal the letter.

Oswald. Madam, I had rather—

Regan. I know your lady does not love her husband; I am
sure of that: and at her late^o being here

She gave strange eliaids^o and most speaking looks
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.^o

Oswald. I, madam?

Regan. I speak in understanding: y'are; I know 't:

Therefore I do advise you, take this note:°
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talked;
And more convenient° is he for my hand
Than for your lady's: you may gather more.°
If you do find him, pray you, give him this;°
And when your mistress hears thus much from you,
I pray, desire her call° her wisdom to her.
So, fare you well.
If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
Perferment° falls on him that cuts him off.

Oswald. Would I could meet him, madam! I should show
What party I do follow.

Regan. Fare thee well.

Exeunt.

20 **Transport her purposes** convey her intentions
20 **Belike** probably
24 **late** recently 25 **eliads** amorous looks
26 **of her bosom** in her confidence
29 **take this note** take note of this
31 **convenient** fitting
32 **gather more** surmise more yourself
33 **this** this advice 35 **call** recall
38 **Preferment** promotion

[Scene 6. *Fields near Dover.*]

Enter Gloucester and Edgar.

Gloucester. When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?

Edgar. You do climb up it now. Look, how we labor.

Gloucester. Methinks the ground is even.

Edgar. Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

Gloucester. No, truly.

Edgar. Why then your other senses grow imperfect By your eyes' anguish.°

Gloucester. So may it be indeed.

Methinks thy voice is altered, and thou speak'st
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

Edgar. Y'are much deceived: in nothing am I changed But in my garments.

Gloucester. Methinks y'are better spoken.

Edgar. Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful

And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs° that wing the midway air°
Show scarce so gross° as beetles. Half way down
Hangs one that gathers sampire,° dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring° bark
Diminished to her cock;° her cock, a buoy

4.6.6 **anguish** pain

13 **choughs** a kind of crow

13 **midway air** i.e., halfway down the cliff

14 **gross** large

15 **sampire** samphire, an aromatic herb
associated with Dover Cliffs

18 **anchoring** anchored

19 **cock** cock-boat, a small boat usually towed
behind the ship

Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge
That on th' unnumb'ed idle pebble° chafes
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,

Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight
Topple° down headlong.

Gloucester. Set me where you stand.

Edgar. Give me your hand: you are now within a foot
Of th' extreme verge: for all beneath the moon
Would I not leap upright.°

Gloucester. Let go my hand.

Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel
Well worth a poor man's taking. Fairies° and gods
Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off;
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

Edgar. Now fare ye well, good sir.

Gloucester. With all my heart.

Edgar. [Aside] Why I do trifle thus with his despair Is done to
cure it.°

Gloucester. O you mighty gods!

He kneels.

This world I do renounce, and in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off:
If I could bear it longer and not fall
To quarrel° with your great opposeless° wills,
My snuff° and loathèd part of nature should
Burn itself out. If Ed^gar live, O bless him!
Now, fellow, fare thee well.
He falls.

Edgar. Gone, sir, farewell.

21 **unnumb'red idle pebble** innumerable pebbles,
moved to and fro by the waves to no purpose
23-24 **the deficient sight/Topple** my failing sight
topple me

27 **upright** i.e., even up in the air, to say nothing of forward, over the cliff

29 **Fairies** (who are supposed to guard and multiply hidden treasure)

33-34 **Why ... if** I play on his despair in order to cure it

37-38 **fall/To quarrel with** rebel against

38 **opposeless** not to be, and not capable of being, opposed

39 **snuff** the guttering (and stinking) wick of a burnt-out candle

And yet I know not how° conceit° may rob
The treasury of life, when life itself
Yields to° the theft. Had he been where he thought,
By this had thought been past. Alive or dead?
Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! speak!
Thus might he pass° indeed: yet he revives.
What are you, sir?

Gloucester. Away, and let me die.

Edgar. Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,

So many fathom down precipitating,°
Thou'dst shivered like an egg: but thou dost
breathe;
Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art
sound.
Ten masts at each° make not the altitude
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:
Thy life's° a miracle. Speak yet again.

Gloucester. But have I fall'n, or no?

Edgar. From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.°

Look up a-height;° the shrill-gorged° lark so far
Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

Gloucester. Alack, I have no eyes.

Is wretchedness deprived that benefit,
To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,
When misery could beguile° the tyrant's rage
And frustrate his proud will.

Edgar. Give me your arm. Up, so. How is 't? Feel you° your legs? You stand.

Gloucester. Too well, too well.

Edgar. This is above all strangeness.

Upon the crown o' th' cliff, what thing was that

42 **how** but what

42 **conceit** imagination

44 **Yields to** allows

47 **pass** die

50 **precipitating** falling

53 **at each** one on top of the other

55 **life's** survival

57 **bound** boundary

58 **a-height** on high

58 **gorged** throated, voiced

63 **beguile** cheat (i.e., by suicide)

65 **Feel you** have you any feeling in

Which parted from you?

Gloucester. A poor unfortunate beggar.

Edgar. As I stood here below, methought his eyes

Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
Horns whelkèd° and waved like the enridgèd° sea:
It was some fiend; therefore, thou happy father,°
Think that the clearest° gods, who make them
honors

Of men's impossibilities,° have preserved thee.

Gloucester. I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear

Affliction till it do cry out itself
“Enough, enough,” and die. That thing you speak
of,
I took it for a man; often ‘twould say
“The fiend, the fiend”—he led me to that place.

Edgar. Bear free° and patient thoughts.

*Enter Lear [fantastically dressed with wild
flowers].*

But who comes here?
The safer° sense will ne’er accommodate°
His master thus.

Lear. No, they cannot touch me for coining;° I am the King
himself.

Edgar. O thou side-piercing sight!

Lear.- Nature’s above art in that respect.° There’s
your press-money.° That fellow handles his bow

71 **whelked** twisted

71 **enridgèd** i.e., furrowed into waves

72 **happy father** fortunate old man

73 **dearest** purest

73-74 **who ... impossibilities** who cause
themselves to be honored and revered by
performing miracles of which men are incapable

80 **free** i.e., emancipated from grief and
despair, which fetter the soul

81 **safer** sounder, saner

81 **accommodate** dress, adorn

83 **touch me for coining** arrest me for minting
coins (the king’s prerogative)

86 **Nature’s ... respect** i.e., a born king is
superior to legal (and hence artificial) inhibition.
There is also a glance here at the popular
Renaissance debate, concerning the relative

importance of nature (inspiration) and art (training)

87 **press-money** (paid to conscripted soldiers)

like a crow-keeper;° draw me a clothier's yard.° Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will do 't. There's my gauntlet;° I'll prove it on° a giant. Bring up the brown bills.° O, well flown,° bird! i' th' clout, i' th' clout:° hewgh!° Give the word.°

Edgar. Sweet marjoram.°

Lear. Pass.

Gloucester. I know that voice.

Lear. Ha! Goneril, with a white beard! They flattered me like a dog,° and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there.° To say "ay" and "no" to everything that I said! "Ay" and "no" too was no good divinity.° When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter; when the thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague proof.°

Gloucester. The trick° of that voice I do well remember: Is't not the king?

Lear. Ay, every inch a king.

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?°

88 **crow-keeper** a farmer scaring away crows

88 **clothier's yard** (the standard English arrow was a cloth-yard long. Here the injunction is to draw the arrow back, like a powerful archer, a full yard to the car)

90 **gauntlet** armored glove, thrown down as a challenge

91 **prove it on** maintain my challenge even against

91 **brown bills** halberds varnished to prevent rust (here the reference is to the soldiers who carry them)

92 **well flown** (falconer's cry; and perhaps a reference to the flight of the arrow)

92 **clout** the target shot at

92 **hewgh** ? imitating the whizzing of the arrow

93 **word** password

94 **Sweet marjoram** herb, used as a remedy for brain disease

96 **like a dog** as a dog flatters

98-99 **I ... there** I was wise before I had even grown a beard

101 **no good divinity** (bad theology, because contrary to the Biblical, saying [II Corinthians 1:18], "Our word toward you was not yea and nay." See also James 5:12 "But let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation"; and Matthew 5:36-37)

106-07 **ague-proof** secure against fever

108 **trick** intonation

111 **cause** offense

Adultery?

Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No:

The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly

Does lecher° in my sight.

Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son

Was kinder to his father than my daughters

Got° 'tween the lawful sheets.

To 't, luxury,° pell-mell! for I lack soldiers.°

Behold yond simp'ring dame,

Whose face between her forks presages snow,°

That minces° virtue and does shake the head

To hear of pleasure's name.°

The fitchew,° nor the soiled° horse, goes to 't
With a more riotous appetite.
Down from the waist they are Centaurs,°
Though women all above:
But to the girdle° do the gods inherit,°
Beneath is all the fiend's.
There's hell, there's darkness, there is the
sulphurous pit,
Burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie!
pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet;° good apothecary,
sweeten my imagination: there's money for thee.

Gloucester. O, let me kiss that hand!

Lear. Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.°

Gloucester. O ruined piece of nature! This great world Shall
so wear out to nought.° Dost thou know me?

115 **lecher** copulate

118 Got begot

119 **luxury** lechery

119 **for ... soldiers** i.e., ? (1) whom copulation will
supply (2) and am therefore powerless

121 **Whose ... snow** whose cold demeanor seems to
promise chaste behavior ("forks": legs)

122 **minces** squeamishly pretends to

123 **pleasure's name** the very name of sexual
pleasure

124 **fitchew** polecat (and slang for "prostitute")

124 **soiled** put to pasture, and hence wanton with
feeding

126 **Centaurs** lustful creatures, half man and half
horse

128 **girdle** waist

128 **inherit** possess

132 **civet** perfume

135 **mortality** (1) death (2) existence

136-37 **This ... nought** i.e., the universe
(macrocosm) will decay to nothing in the same way as
the little world of man (microcosm)

Lear. I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou squiny°
at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid;° I'll not love. Read
thou this challenge;° mark but the penning of it.

Gloucester. Were all thy letters suns, I could not see.

Edgar. I would not take° this from report: it is, And my heart
breaks at it.

Lear. Read.

Gloucester. What, with the case° of eyes?

Lear. O, ho, are you there with me?° No eyes in your head,
nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case,°
your purse in a light,° yet you see how this world goes.

Gloucester. I see it feelingly.°

Lear. What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes
with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond justice
rails upon yond simple° thief. Hark, in thine ear: change
places, and, handy-dandy,° which is the justice, which is the
thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

Gloucester. Ay, sir.

Lear. And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst
behold the great image of authority:° a dog's obeyed in
office.°

Thou rascal beadle,° hold thy bloody hand!

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own
back;

Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind°

139 **squiny** squint, look sideways, like a
prostitute

139 **blind Cupid** the sign hung before a brothel

140 **challenge** a reminiscence of 11.

89-90

143 **take** believe

146 **case** empty sockets

147 **are ... me** is that what you tell me

149 **heavy case** sad plight (pun on 1. 146)

149 **light** i.e., empty

151 **feelingly** (1) by touch (2) by feeling pain
(3) with emotion

154 **simple** common, of low estate

155 **handy-dandy** i.e., choose, guess (after the
children's game—"Handy-dandy, prickly
prandy"—of choosing the right hand)

160 **image of authority** symbol revealing the
true meaning of authority

160-61 **a ... office** i.e., whoever has power is
obeyed

162 **beadle** parish constable

164 **kind** i.e., sexual act

For which thou whip'st her. The usurer hangs the
cozener.°

Through tattered clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furred gowns° hide all. Plate sin with
gold,

And the strong lance of justice hurtless° breaks;

Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.

None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able°
'em:

Take that° of me, my friend, who have the power

To seal th' accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,°

And, like a scurvy politician,° seem

To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now,
now.

Pull off my boots: harder, harder: so.

Edgar. O, matter and impertinency^o mixed! Reason in madness!

Lear. If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.

I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester:
Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:
Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee: mark.

Gloucester. Alack, alack the day!

Lear. When we are born, we cry that we are come To this great stage of fools. This^{'o} a good block.^o

164-65 **The usurer ... cozener** i.e., the powerful moneylender, in his role as judge, puts to death the petty cheat

167 **Robes and furred gowns** (worn by a judge)

168 **hurtless** i.e., without hurting the sinner

170 **able** vouch for

171 **that** (the immunity just conferred) (l. 170)

172 **glass** eyes spectacles

173 **scurvy politician** vile politic man

176 **matter and impertinency** sense and nonsense

185 **This'** this is

185 **block** (various meanings have been suggested, for example, the stump of a tree, on which Lear is supposed to climb; a mounting-block, which suggests "horse" 1.

187; a hat [which Lear or another must be made to wear], from the block on which a felt hat is molded, and which would suggest a "felt" 1.

187. The proposal here is that "block" be taken to denote the quintain, whose function is to bear blows, "a mere lifeless block" [*As You Like It*, 1.2.263], an object shaped like a man and used for tilting practice. See also *Much Ado*, 2.1.246-7, "she misused me past the endurance of a block!" and, in the same passage,

the associated reference, "I stood like a man at a mark [target]" [1.253])

It were a delicate° stratagem, to shoe
A troop of horse with felt: I'll put 't in proof;°
And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,
Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!
Enter a Gentleman [with Attendants].

Gentleman. O, here he is: lay hand upon him. Sir, Your most dear daughter—

Lear. No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even

The natural fool° of fortune..Use me well;
You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons;
I am cut° to th' brains.

Gentleman. You shall have anything.

Lear. No seconds?° all myself?

Why, this would make a man a man of salt,°
To use his eyes for garden water-pots,
Ay, and laying autumn's dust.

Gentleman. Good sir—

Lear. I will die bravely,° like a smug° bridegroom.° What!

I will be jovial: come, come; I am a king; Masters,
know you that?

Gentleman. You are a royal one, and we obey you.

Lear. Then there's life in 't.° Come, and you get it, you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.°

Exit [running; Attendants follow].

Gentleman. A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,

Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one daughter
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to,°

186 **delicate** subtle

187 **put't in proof** test it
193 **natural fool** born sport (with pun on "natural":
"imbecile")
195 **cut** wounded
196 **seconds** supporters
197 **man of salt** i.e., all (salt) tears
201 **bravely** (1) smartly attired (2) courageously
201 **smug** spick and span
201 **bridegroom** whose "brave" sexual feats are
picked up in the pun on "die"
205 **there's life in't** there's still hope
206 **Sa ... sa** hunting and rallying cry; also an
interjection of defiance
209-10 **general** ... to (1) universal condemnation
which Goneril and Regan have made for (2)
damnation incurred by the original sin of Adam and
Eve

Edgar. Hail, gentle° sir.

Gentleman. Sir, speed° you: what's your will?

Edgar. Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?°

Gentleman. Most sure and vulgar:° every one hears that,

Which can distinguish sound.

Edgar. But, by your favor,

How near's the other army?

Gentleman. Near and on speedy foot; the main descry

Stands on the hourly thought.° °

Edgar. I thank you, sir: that's all.

Gentleman. Though that the Queen on special cause is here,

Her army is moved on.

Edgar. I thank you, sir.

Exit [Gentleman].

Gloucester. You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;

Let not my worser spirit° tempt me again
To die before you please.

Edgar. Well pray you, father.

Gloucester. Now, good sir, what are you?

Edgar. A most poor man, made tame° to fortune's blows;

Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,°
Am pregnant° to good pity. Give me your hand,
I'll lead you to some bidding.°

Gloucester. Hearty thanks;

211 **gentle** noble

211 **speed** God speed

212 **toward** impending

213 **vulgar** common knowledge

216-17 **the ... thought** we expect to see the main
body of the army any hour

221 **worser spirit** bad angel, evil side of my nature

224 **tame** submissive 2

25 **art ... sorrows** instruction of sorrows painfully
experienced

226 **pregnant** disposed

227 **bidding** place of refuge

The bounty and the benison° of heaven
To boot, and boot.°

Enter Oswald.

Oswald. A proclaimed prize°! Most happy!°

That eyeless head of thine was first framed° flesh
To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor,
Briefly thyself reinember:° the sword is out
That must destroy thee.

Gloucester. Now let thy friendly° hand Put strength enough to 't.

[*Edgar interposes.*]

Oswald. Wherefore, bold peasant,

Dar'st thou support a published° traitor? Hence!
Lest that th' infection of his fortune take
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

Edgar. Chill° not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.°

Oswald. Let go, slave, or thou diest!

Edgar. Good gentleman, go your gait,° and let poor volk° pass. And chud ha' bin zwaggered° out of my life, 'twould not ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vort- night. Nay, come not near th' old man; keep out, che vor' ye,° or I'se° try whether your costard° or my ballow° be the harder: chill be plain with you.

Oswald. Out, dunghill!

They fight.

228 **benison** blessing

229 **To boot, and boot** also, and in the highest degree

229 **proclaimed prize** i.e., one with a price on his head

229 **happy** fortunate (for Oswald)

230 **framed** created

232 **thysself remember** i.e., pray, think of your sins

233 **friendly** i.e., because it offers the death
Gloucester covets

235 **published** proclaimed

238 **Chill** ... (Edgar speaks in rustic dialect)

238 **Chill** I will

238 **vurther 'casion** further occasion

240 **gait** way

241 **volk** folk

241 **And chud ha' bin zwaggered** if I could have
been swaggered
244 **Che vor' ye** I warrant you
244 **I'se** I shall
244 **costard** head (literally, "apple")
245 **ballow** cudgel

Edgar. Chill pick your teeth,° zir: come; no matter vor your
foins.°

[*Oswald falls.*]

Oswald. Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse:

If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body,
And give the letters which thou find'st about° me
To Edmund Earl of Gloucester; seek him out
Upon the English party.° O, untimely death!
Death!
He dies.

Edgar. I know thee well. A serviceable° villain,
As duteous° to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire.

Gloucester. What, is he dead?

Edgar. Sit you down, father; rest you.

Let's see these pockets: the letters that he speaks
of
May be my friends. He's dead; I am only sorry
He had no other deathsman.° Let us see:
Leave,° gentle wax;° and, manners, blame us not:
To know our enemies' minds, we rip their hearts;
Their papers° is more lawful.

Reads the letter.

“Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many opportunities to cut him off: if your will want not,° time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done, if he return the conqueror: then am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labor.

“Your—wife, so I would° say—affectionate

248 **Chill pick your teeth** I will knock your teeth out

249 **foins** thrusts

252 **about** upon

254 **party** side

256 **serviceable** ready to be used

257 **duteous** obedient

262 **deathsmen** executioner

263 **Leave** by your leave

263 **wax** (with which the letter is sealed)

265 **Their papers** i.e., to rip their papers

267-68 **if ... not** if your desire (and lust) be not lacking

273 **would** would like to

servant, and for you her own for venture,°

‘Goneril.’ “

O indistinguished space of woman’s will!°

A plot upon her virtuous husband’s life;

And the exchange° my brother! Here in the sands

Thee I’ll rake up,° the post unsanctified°

Of murderous lechers; and in the mature° time,

With this ungracious paper° strike° the sight

Of the death-practiced° Duke: for him ‘tis well

That of thy death and business I can tell.

Gloucester. The King is mad: how stiff° is my vile sense,°

That I stand up, and have ingenious^o feeling
Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract:^o
So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,
And woes by wrong imaginations^o lose
The knowledge of themselves.
Drum afar off.

Edgar. Give me your hand:

Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
Come, father, I'll bestow^o you with a friend.
Exeunt.

Scene 7. [A tent in the French camp.]

Enter Cordelia, Kent, Doctor, and Gentleman.

Cordelia. O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,

274 **and ... venture** i.e., and one who holds you her
own for venturing (Edmund had earlier been promised
union by Goneril, "If you dare venture in your own
behalf," 4.2.20).

276 **indistinguished** ... **will** unlimited range of
woman's lust

278 **exchange** substitute

279 **rake up** cover up, bury

279 **post unsanctified** unholy messenger

280 **mature** ripe

281 **ungracious paper** wicked letter

281 **strike** blast

282 **death-practiced** whose death is plotted

284 **stiff** unbending

284 **vile sense** hateful capacity for feeling

285 **ingenious** conscious

286 **distract** distracted, mad
288 **wrong imaginations** delusions
291 **bestow** lodge

To match thy goodness? My life will be too short, And every measure fail me.

Kent. To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.

All my reports go° with the modest truth, Nor more nor clipped,° but so.

Cordelia, Be better suited:°

These weeds° are memories° of those worser hours:

I prithee, put them off.

Kent. Pardon, dear madam;

Yet to be known shortens my made intent:°

My boon I make it,° that you know me not
Till time and I think meet.°

Cordelia. Then be 't so, my good lord. [*To the Doctor.*] How does the King?

Doctor. Madam, sleeps still.

Cordelia. O you kind gods!

Cure this great breach in his abusèd° nature.
Th' untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up°
Of this child-changèd father.

Doctor. So please your Majesty That we may wake the King:
he hath slept long.

Cordelia. Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed
I' th' sway of° your own will. Is he arrayed?

Enter Lear in a chair carried by Servants.

4.7.5 **go** conform
6 **clipped** curtailed
6 **suited** attired
7 **weeds** clothes
7 **memories** reminders
9 **Yet ... intent** to reveal myself just yet interferes
with the plan I have made
10 **My boon I make it** I ask this reward
11 **meet** fitting
15 **abused** disturbed
16 **wind up** tune
17 **child-changed** changed, deranged (and also,
reduced to a child) by the cruelty of his children
20 **I' th' sway of** according to

Gentleman. Ay, madam; in the heaviness of sleep We put fresh garments on him. *Doctor.* Be by, good madam, when we do awake him; I doubt not of his temperance.° *Cordelia.* Very well. *Doctor.* Please you, draw near. Louder the music there! *Cordelia.* O my dear father, restoration hang Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss Repair those violent harms that my two sisters Have in thy reverence° made. *Kent.* Kind and dear Princess. Cordelia. Had you not been their father, these white flakes° Did challenge° pity of them. Was this a face To be opposed against the warring winds? To stand against the deep dread-bolted° thunder? In the most terrible and nimble stroke Of quick, cross° lightning to watch —poor perdu!°—With this thin helm?° Mine enemy's dog, Though he had bit me, should have stood that night Against my fire; and wast thou fain,° poor father, To hovel thee with swine and rogues° forlorn, In short° and musty straw? Alack, alack! 'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once Had not concluded all.° He wakes; speak to him. *Doctor.* Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

24 **temperance** sanity
29 **reverence** revered person

30 **flakes** hairs (in long strands)
31 **challenge** claim
33 **deep dread-bolted** deep-voiced and furnished
with the dreadful thunderbolt
35 **cross** zigzag
35 **perdu** (1) sentry in a forlorn position (2) lost one
36 **helm** helmet (his scanty hair)
38 **fain** pleased
39 **rogues** vagabonds
40 **short** (when straw is freshly cut, it is long, and
suitable for bedding, given its flexibility and crispness.
As it is used, it becomes musty, shreds into pieces, is
“short.” In contemporary Maine usage, “short
manure” refers to dung mixed with straw that has
been broken up; “long manure” to dung mixed with
coarse new straw)
42 **concluded all** come to a complete end

Cordelia. How does my royal lord? How fares your Majesty?

Lear. You do me wrong to take me out o’ th’ grave:

Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire,^o that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.

Cordelia. Sir, do you know me?

Lear. You are a spirit, I know. Where did you die?

Cordelia. Still, still, far wide.^o

Doctor. He’s scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

Lear. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?

I am mightily abused.^o I should ev’n die with pity,
To see another thus. I know not what to say.
I will not swear these are my hands: let’s see;
I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured
Of my condition.

Cordelia. O, look upon me, sir,

And hold your hand in benediction o'er me. You must not kneel.

Lear. Pray, do not mock me:

I am a very foolish fond° old man,
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
And, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I should know you and know this man,
Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly° ignorant
What place this is, and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments, nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.

Cordelia. And so I am, I am.

Lear. Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not. If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

47 **wheel** of **fire** (torment associated by the Middle Ages with Hell, where Lear thinks he is)

50 **wide** i.e., of the mark (of sanity)

53 **abused** deluded

60 **fond** in dotage

65 **mainly** entirely

I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.
You have some cause, they have not.

Cordelia. No cause, no cause. *Lear.* Am I in France?

Kent. In your own kingdom, sir.

Lear. Do not abuse° me.

Doctor. Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,°

You see, is killed in him: and yet it is danger
To make him even o'er° the time he has lost.

Desire him to go in; trouble him no more
Till further settling.°

Cordelia. Will 't please your Highness walk?°

Lear. You must bear with me. Pray you now, forget and
forgive. I am old and foolish.

Exeunt. Mane[n]t° Kent and Gentleman.

Gentleman. Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was
so slain?

Kent. Most certain, sir.

Gentleman. Who is conductor of his people?

Kent. As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester. *Gentleman.*
They say Edgar, his banished son, is with the Earl of Kent in
Germany.

Kent. Report is changeable.° 'Tis time to look about; the
powers° of the kingdom approach apace.

Gentleman. The arbitrement° is like to be bloody. Fare you
well, sir. [*Exit.*]

Kent. My point and period will be thoroughly wrought,°

Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought.

Exit.

77 **abuse** deceive

78 **rage** frenzy

80 **even o'er** smooth over by filling in; and hence.
"recollect"

82 **settling** calming

83 **walk** (perhaps in the sense of "withdraw")

85 s.d. **Mane[n]t** remain

93 **Report is changeable** rumors are unreliable

94 **powers** armies

95 **arbitrement** deciding encounter

97 **My ... wrought** the aim and end, the close of my
life would be completely worked out

OceanofPDF.com

ACT 5

Scene 1. [*The British camp near Dover.*]

Enter, with drum and colors, Edmund, Regan, Gentlemen, and Soldiers.

Edmund. Know^o of the Duke if his last purpose hold,^o
Or whether since he is advised^o by aught
To change the course: he's full of alteration
And self-reproving: bring his constant pleasure.^o

[*To a Gentleman, who goes out.*]

Regan. Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.^o

Edmund. 'Tis to be doubted,^o madam.

Regan. Now, sweet lord,

You know the goodness I intend upon you:
Tell me, but truly, but then speak the truth,
Do you not love my sister?

Edmund. In honored^o love.

Regan. But have you never found my brother's way To the
forfended^o place?

Edmund. That thought abuses^o you.

5.1.1 **Know** learn I **last purpose hold** most recent
intention (to fight) be maintained

2 **advised** induced

4 **constant pleasure** fixed (final) decision

5 **miscarried** come to grief 6 **doubted** feared

9 **honored** honorable

11 **forfended** forbidden

11 **abuses** (1) deceives (2) demeans, is unworthy of

Regan. I am doubtful that you have been conjunct And
bosomed with her, as far as we call hers.°

Edmund. No, by mine honor, madam.

Regan. I shall never endure her: dear my lord, Be not
familiar with her.

Edmund. Fear° me not.—She and the Duke her husband!

Enter, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril [and] Soldiers.

Goneril. [*Aside*] I had rather lose the battle than that sister

Should loosen° him and me.

Albany. Our very loving sister, well be-met.°

Sir, this I heard, the King is come to his daughter,

With others whom the rigor of our state°

Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest,°

I never yet was valiant: for this business,

It touches us, as° France invades our land,

Not bolds the King, with others, whom, I fear,

Most just and heavy causes make oppose.°

Edmund. Sir, you speak nobly.

Regan. Why is this reasoned?°

Goneril. Combine together 'gainst the enemy;

For these domestic and particular broils° Are not the
question° here.

Albany. Let's then determine With th' ancient of war° on our
proceeding.

Edmund. I shall attend you presently at your tent.

12-13 **I ... hers** I fear that you have united with her
intimately, in the fullest possible way

16 **Fear** distrust

19 **loosen** separate

20 **be-met** met

22 **rigor ... state** tyranny of our government

23 **honest** honorable

25 **touches us, as** concerns me, only in that

26-27 **Not ... oppose** and not in that France
emboldens the King and others, who have been led,
by real and serious grievances, to take up arms
against us

28 **reasoned** argued

30 **particular broils** private quarrels

31 **question** issue

32 **th' ancient of war** experienced commanders

Regan. Sister, you'll go with us?°

Goneril. No.

Regan. 'Tis most convenient;° pray you, go with us.

Goneril. [*Aside*] O, ho, I know the riddle.°—I will go.

Exeunt both the Armies. Enter Edgar [*disguised*].

Edgar. If e'er your Grace had speech with man so poor,

Hear me one word.

Albany. [*To those going out*] I'll overtake you. [*To Edgar*]
Speak.

Exeunt [*all but Albany and Edgar*].

Edgar. Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.

If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
For° him that brought it: wretched though I seem,
I can produce a champion that will prove°
What is avouchèd° there. If you miscarry,
Your business of° the world hath so an end,
And machination° ceases. Fortune love you.

Albany. Stay till I have read the letter.

Edgar. I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry, And I'll
appear again.

Albany. Why, fare thee well: I will o'erlook° thy paper. *Exit* [Edgar].

Enter Edmund.

Edmund. The enemy's *in* view: draw up your powers.

Here is the guess° of their true strength and forces

By diligent discovery;° but your haste

34 **us me** (rather than Edmund)

36 **convenient** fitting, desirable

37 **riddle** real reason (for Regan's curious request)

41-42 **sound/For** summon

43 **prove** i.e., by trial of combat

44 **avouchèd** maintained

45 **of** in

46 **machination** plotting

50 **o'erlook** read over

52 **guess** estimate

53 **By diligent discovery** obtained by careful reconnoitering

Is now urged on you.

Albany. We will greet° the time. *Exit.*

Edmund. To both these sisters have I sworn my love;

Each jealous° of the other, as the stung

Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?

Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed,

If both remain alive: to take the widow

Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;

And hardly° shall I carry out my side,°

Her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use

His countenance° for the battle; which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
The battle done, and they within our power,
Shall never see his pardon; for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.° *Exit.*

Scene 2. [A field between the two camps.]

Alarum° within. Enter, with drum and colors, Lear, Cordelia, and Soldiers, over the stage; and exeunt.

Enter Edgar and Gloucester.

Edgar. Here, father,° take the shadow of this tree
For your good host; pray that the right may thrive.
If ever I return to you again,
I'll bring you comfort.

Gloucester. Grace go with you, sir. *Exit [Edgar].*

54 **greet** i.e., meet the demands of
56 **jealous** suspicious
61 **hardly** with difficulty
61 **carry ... side** (1) satisfy my ambition (2) fulfill my bargain (with Goneril)
63 **countenance** authority
68-69 **for ... debate** my position requires me to act, not to reason about right and wrong 5.2. s.d. **Alarum** a trumpet call to battle I **father** i.e., venerable old man (Edgar has not yet revealed his identity)

Alarum and retreat° within. [Re-]enter Edgar.

Edgar. Away, old man; give me thy hand; away!

King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en:° Give me thy hand; come on.

Gloucester. No further, sir; a man may rot even here.

Edgar. What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure

Their going hence, even as their coming hither:
Ripeness° is all. Come on.

Gloucester. And that's true too.

Exeunt.

Scene 3. [*The British camp near Dover.*]

Enter, in conquest, with drum and colors, Edmund; Lear and Cordelia, as prisoners; Soldiers, Captain.

Edmund. Some officers take them away: good guard,°

Until their greater pleasures° first be known That are to censure° them.

Cordelia. We are not the first

Who with best meaning° have incurred the worst.
For thee, oppressèd King, I am cast down;
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

Lear. No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:

We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh

4 s.d. **retreat** (signaled by a trumpet)

6 **ta'en** captured
11 **Ripeness** maturity, as of fruit that is ready
to fall
5.3.1 **good guard** let there be good guard
2 **their greater pleasures** the will of those in
command, the great ones
3 **censure** pass judgment on
4 **meaning** intentions

At gilded butterflies,° and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out;
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies:° and we'll wear out,°
In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by th' moon.°

Edmund. Take them away.

Lear. Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,

The gods themselves throw incense.° Have I caught
thee?

He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
And fire us hence like foxes.° Wipe thine eyes;
The good years° shall devour them,° flesh and fell,°
Ere they shall make us weep. We'll see 'em starved
first.

Come. [*Exeunt Lear and Cordelia, guarded.*]

Edmund. Come hither, captain; hark.

Take thou this note: go follow them to prison:
One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
To noble fortunes: know thou this, that men
Are as the time is:° to be tender-minded
Does not become a sword:° thy great employment

Will not bear question;° either say thou'lt do 't,
Or thrive by other means.

Captain. I'll do 't, my lord.

13 gilded butterflies i.e., gorgeously attired courtiers, fluttering after nothing

16-17 **take ... spies** profess to read the riddle of existence, as if endowed with divine omniscience

17 **wear out** outlast

18-19 **packs ... moon** intriguing and partisan cliques of those in high station, whose fortunes change every month

20-21 **Upon... incense** i.e., the gods approve our renunciation of the world

22-23 **He... foxes** no human agency can separate us, but only divine interposition, as of a heavenly torch parting us like foxes who are driven from their place of refuge by fire and smoke

24 **good years** plague and pestilence ("undefined malefic power or agency," *N.E.D.*)

24 them i.e., the enemies of Lear and Cordelia

24 **fell skin** 32 **as the time is** i.e., absolutely determined by the exigencies of the moment

33 **become a sword** befit a soldier

34 **bear** question admit of discussion

Edmund. About it; and write happy° when th' hast done.

Mark; I say, instantly, and carry it so° As I have set it down.

Captain. I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats;

If it be man's work, I'll do 't. *Exit Captain.*

Flourish. Enter Albany, Goneril, Regan [another

Captain, and] Soldiers.

Albany. Sir, you have showed today your valiant strain,°

And fortune led you well: you have the captives
Who were the opposites of° this day's strife:
I do require them of you, so to use them
As we shall find their merits° and our safety
May equally determine.

Edmund. Sir, I thought it fit

To send the old and miserable King
To some retention and appointed guard;°
Whose° age had charms in it, whose title more,
To pluck the common bosom on his side,°
And turn our impressed lances in our eyes°
Which do command them. With him I sent the
Queen:
My reason all the same; and they are ready
Tomorrow, or at further space,° t' appear
Where you shall hold your session.° At this time
We sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;
And the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed
By those that feel their sharpness.°
The question of Cordelia and her father

36 **write happy** style yourself fortunate
37 **carry it** so manage the affair in exactly that
manner (as if Cordelia had taken her own life)
41 **strain** (1) stock (2) character
43 **opposites** of opponents in
45 **merits** deserts 48 **retention** ... **guard**
confinement under duly appointed guard 49
Whose i.e., Lear's
50 **pluck** ... **side** win the sympathy of the
people to himself
51 **turn...** eyes turn our conscripted lancers
against us
54 **further space** a later time

55 **session** trial

57-58 **the ... sharpness** the worthiest causes
may be judged badly by those who have been
affected painfully by them, and whose passion
has not yet cooled

Requires a fitter place.

Albany. Sir, by your patience,

I hold you but a subject of° this war, Not as a brother.

Regan. That's as we list to grace° him.

Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,
Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,
Bore the commission of my place and person;
The which immediacy may well stand up
And call itself your brother.°

Goneril. Not so hot:

In his own grace he doth exalt himself More than in
your addition.°

Regan. In my rights,

By me invested, he compeers° the best.

Goneril. That were the most,° if he should husband you.°

Regan. Jesters do oft prove prophets.

Goneril. Holla, holla!

That eye that told you so looked but a-squint.°

Regan. Lady, I am not well; else I should answer

From a full-flowing stomach.° General,
Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony;°
Dispose of them, of me; the walls is thine:°
Witness the world, that I create thee here
My lord, and master.

Goneril. Mean you to enjoy him?

Albany. The let-alone^o lies not in your good will.

61 **subject of** subordinate in

62 **list to grace** wish to honor

65-67 **Bore ... brother** was authorized, as my deputy, to take command; his present status, as my immediate representative, entitles him to be considered your equal

69 your **addition** honors you have bestowed on him

70 **compeers** equals

71 most most complete investing in your rights

71 **husband** you become your husband

73 **a-squint** cross-eyed

75 **From ... stomach** angrily

76 **patrimony** inheritance

77 **walls** is **thine** i.e., Regan's person, which Edmund has stormed and won

80 **let-alone** power to prevent

Edmund. Nor in thine, lord.

Albany. Half-blooded^o fellow, yes.

Regan. [To *Edmund*] Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine.^o

Albany. Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee

On capital treason; and in thy attaint^o

This gilded serpent [*pointing to Coneril*]. For your claim, fair sister,

I bar it in the interest of my wife.

'Tis she is subcontracted^o to this lord,

And I, her husband, contradict your banes.^o

If you will marry, make your loves^o to me;

My Lady is bespoke.^o

Goneril. An interlude!^o

Albany. Thou art armed, Gloucester: let the trumpet sound:

If none appear to prove upon thy person
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
There is my pledge° [*throwing down a glove*]:
I'll make° it on thy heart,
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaimed thee.

Regan. Sick, O, sick! *Goneril.* [*Aside*] If not, I'll ne'er trust
medicine.°

Edmund. [*Throwing down a glove*] There's my exchange:°
what in the world he is

That names me traitor, villain-like he lies:°
Call by the trumpet:° he that dares approach,

81 **Half blooded** bastard, and so only half
noble

82 **prove ... thine** prove by combat your
entitlement to my rights

84 **in thy attaint** as a sharer in the treason for
which you are impeached

87 **subcontracted** pledged by a contract which
is called into question by the existence of a
previous contract (Goneril's marriage)

88 **contradict your banes** forbid your
announced intention to marry (by citing the
precontract)

89 **loves** love-suits

90 **bespoke** already pledged

90 **interlude** play

94 **pledge** gage

94 **make** prove

97 **medicine** poison

98 **exchange** (technical term, denoting the
glove Edmund throws down)

99 **villain-like he lies** (the lie **direct**, a
challenge to **mortal** combat)

100 trumpet trumpeter

On him, on you—who not?—I will maintain
My truth and honor firmly.

Albany. A herald, ho!

Edmund. A herald, ho, a herald!

Albany. Trust to thy single virtue;° for thy soldiers,

All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge.

Regan. My sickness grows upon me.

Albany. She is not well; convey her to my tent.

[Exit Regan, led.]

Enter a Herald.

Come hither, herald. Let the trumpet sound—And read
out this.

Captain. Sound, trumpet!

A trumpet sounds.

Herald. (Reads.) “If any man of quality or degree° within the
lists° of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl
of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear
by the third sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defense.”

Edmund. Sound!

First trumpet.

Herald. Again!

Second trumpet.

Herald. Again!

Third trumpet.

Trumpet answers within. Enter Edgar, at the third sound, armed, a trumpet before him.°

Albany. Ask him his purposes, why he appears

Upon this call o' th' trumpet.

Herald. What are you?

104 **single virtue** unaided valor

III **quality or degree** rank or position

112 **lists** rolls

118 s.d. **trumpet before him** trumpeter preceding him

Your name, your quality,° and why you answer This present summons?

Edgar. Know, my name is lost;

By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit:°

Yet am I noble as the adversary

I come to cope.°

Albany. Which is that adversary?

Edgar. What's he that speaks for Edmund, Earl of Gloucester?

Edmund. Himself: what say'st thou to him?

Edgar. Draw thy sword,

That if my speech offend a noble heart,
Thy arm may do thee justice: here is mine.

Behold it is my privilege,

The privilege of mine honors,

My oath, and my profession.° I protest,

Maugre° thy strength, place, youth, and eminence,

Despite thy victor sword and fire-new° fortune,

Thy valor and thy heart,° thou art a traitor,

False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,

Conspirant° 'gainst this high illustrious prince,
And from th' extremest upward° of thy head
To the descent and dust below thy foot,°
A most toad-spotted traitor.° Say thou "No,"
This sword, this arm and my best spirits are bent°
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,°
Thou liest.

Edmund. In wisdom° I should ask thy name,

But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,

121 **quality** rank

123 **canker-bit** eaten by the caterpillar

125 cope encounter

130-32 it ... **profession** my knighthood entitles
me to challenge you, and to have my challenge
accepted

133 Maugre despite **134 fire**-new fresh from
the forge or mint

135 **heart** courage

137 **Conspirant** conspiring, a conspirator

138 **extremest** upward the very top

139 the ... **foot** your lowest part (sole) and the
dust beneath it

140 **toad-spotted** traitor spotted with treason
(and hence venomous, as the toad is allegedly
marked with spots that exude venom)

141 **bent** directed

142 whereto I speak (Edgar speaks from the
heart, and speaks to the heart of Edmund)

143 **wisdom** prudence (since he is not obliged
to fight with one of lesser rank)

And that thy tongue some say° of breeding
breathes,

What safe and nicely° I might well delay°

By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn:
Back do I toss these treasons° to thy head;
With the hell-hated° lie o'erwhelm thy heart;
Which for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise,
This sword of mine shall give them instant way,
Where they shall rest for ever.° Trumpets, speak!

Alarums. [They] fight. [Edmund falls.]

Albany. Save° him, save him!

Goneril. This is practice,° Gloucester:

By th' law of war thou wast not bound to answer
An unknown opposite;° thou are not vanquished,
But cozened and beguiled.

Albany. Shut your mouth, dame,

Or with this paper shall I stop it. Hold, sir;°
Thou° worse than any name, read thine own evil.
No tearing, lady; I perceive you know it.

Goneril. Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine:

Who can arraign me for 't?

Albany. Most monstrous! O!

Know'st thou this paper?

Goneril. Ask me not what I know.

Exit.

Albany. Go after her; she's desperate; govern° her.

Edmund. What you have charged me with, that have I done;

And more, much more; the time will bring it out.

'Tis past, and so am I. But what art thou

146 **safe and nicely** cautiously and
punctiliously 146 **delay** i.e., avoid
148 **treasons** accusations of treason 149 **hell-
bated** hated like hell
150-52 **Which...** ever which accusations of
treason, since as yet they do no harm, even
though I have hurled them back, I now thrust
upon you still more forcibly, with my sword, so
that they may remain with you permanently
153 Save spare
153 **practice** trickery
155 **opposite** opponent
157 **Hold, sir** (to Edmund: "Just a moment!")
158 **Thou** (probably Goneril)
163 **govern** control

That hast this fortune on° me? If thou 'rt noble,
I do forgive thee.

Edgar. Let's exchange charity.°

I am no less in blood° than thou art, Edmund;
If more,° the more th' hast wronged me.
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
The gods are just, and of our pleasant° vices
Make instruments to plague us:
The dark and vicious place° where thee he got°
Cost him his eyes.

Edmund. Th' hast spoken right, 'tis true;

The wheel is come full circle; I am here.°

Albany. Methought thy very gait did prophesy°

A royal nobleness: I must embrace thee:
Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I
Did hate thee or thy father!

Edgar. Worthy° Prince, I know 't.

Albany. Where have you hid yourself? How have you known the miseries of your father?

Edgar. By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale;

And when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst!
The bloody proclamation to escape°
That followed me so near—O, our lives' sweetness,
That we the pain of death would hourly die
Rather than die at once!°—taught me to shift
Into a madman's rags, t' assume a semblance
That very dogs disdained: and in this habit°
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,°
Their precious stones new lost; became his guide,
Led him, begged for him, saved him from despair;

167 **fortune on** victory over

168 **charity** forgiveness and love

169 **blood** lineage

170 If **more** if I am more noble (since legitimate)

172 of our **pleasant** out of our pleasurable

174 **place** i.e.. the adulterous bed

174 got begot

176 **Wheel** ... **here** i.e., Fortune's wheel, on which Edmund ascended, has now, in its downward turning, deposited him at the bottom, whence he began

177 **gait did prophesy** carriage did promise

180 **Worthy** honorable

185 **to escape** (my wish) to escape the sentence of death

186-88 O ... **once** how sweet is life, that we choose to suffer death every hour rather than make an end at once

190 **habit** attire

191 **rings** sockets

Never—O fault!—revealed myself unto him,
Until some half-hour past, when I was armed,
Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,
I asked his blessing, and from first to last
Told him our pilgrimage.° But his flawed° heart—
Alack, too weak the conflict to support—
'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
Burst smilingly.

Edmund. This speech of yours hath moved me,

And shall perchance do good: but speak you on; You
look as you had something more to say.

Albany. If there be more, more woeful, hold it in; For I am
almost ready to dissolve,°

Hearing of this.

Edgar. This would have seemed a period°

To such as love not sorrow; but another,
To amplify too much, would make much more,
And top extremity. °
Whilst I was big in clamor,° came there in a man,
Who, having seen me in my worst estate, °
Shunned my abhorred° society; but then, finding
Who 'twas that so endured, with his strong arms
He fastened on my neck, and bellowed out
As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father;
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
That ever ear received: which in recounting
His grief grew puissant,° and the strings of life
Began to crack: twice then the trumpets sounded,
And there I left him tranced.°

Albany. But who was this?

Edgar. Kent, sir, the banished Kent; who in disguise Followed
his enemy° king, and did him service Improper for a slave.

198 our pilgrimage of our (purgatorial) journey
198 flawed cracked
05 dissolve i.e., into tears
206 **period** limit
207-09 **but ... extremity** just one woe more,
described too fully, would go beyond the extreme limit
210 **big** in **clamor** loud in lamentation
211 estate condition
212 **abhorred** abhorrent
218 **puissant** overmastering
220 **tranced** insensible
222 **enemy** hostile

Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife.

Gentleman. Help, help, O, help!

Edgar. What kind of help?

Albany. Speak, man.

Edgar. What means this bloody knife?

Gentleman. 'Tis hot, it smokes;°

It came even from the heart of—O, she's dead!

Albany. Who dead? Speak, man.

Gentleman. Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister

By her is poisoned; she confesses it.

Edmund. I was contracted° to them both: all three Now marry° in an instant.

Edgar. Here comes Kent.

Albany. Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead. [*Exit Gentleman.*]

This judgment of the heavens, that makes us
tremble,
Touches us not with pity.

Enter Kent.

O, is this he?

The time will not allow the compliment°

Which very manners° urges.

Kent. I am come

To bid my king and master aye° good night: Is he not here?

Albany. Great thing of° us forgot!

Speak, Edmund, where's the King? and where's Cordelia?

Seest thou this object,° Kent?

The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in.

Kent. Alack, why thus?

225 **smokes** steams 230 **contracted** betrothed 231
marry i.e., unite in death 235 **compliment** ceremony
236 very **manners** ordinary civility 237 aye forever
238 **thing of** matter by 240 **object** sight (the bodies
of Goneril and Regan)

Edmund. Yet° Edmund was beloved:

The one the other poisoned for my sake, And after
slew herself.

Albany: Even so. Cover their faces.

Edmund. I pant for life:° some good I mean to do,

Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,
Be brief in it, to th' castle; for my writ°
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:
Nay, send in time.

Albany. Run, run, O, run!

Edgar. To who, my lord? Who has the office?° Send Thy
token of reprieve.°

Edmund. Well thought on: take my sword, Give it the captain.

Edgar. Haste thee, for thy life.

[Exit Messenger.]

Edmund. He hath commission from thy wife and me

To hang Cordelia in the prison, and
To lay the blame upon her own despair,
That she fordid^o herself.

Albany. The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.

[Edmund is borne off.]

Enter Lear, with Cordelia in his arms [Gentleman, and others following].

Lear. Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:

Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for
ever.

I know when one is dead and when one lives;
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,^o
Why, then she lives.

241 **Yet** in spite of all

245 **pant for life** gasp for breath

247 **writ** command (ordering the execution)

250 **office** commission

251 **token of reprieve** sign that they are reprieved

257 **fordid** destroyed

264 **stone** i.e., the surface of the crystal looking glass

Kent. Is this the promised end?^o

Edgar. Or image^o of that horror?

Albany. Fall and cease.^o

Lear. This feather stirs; she lives. If it be so,

It is a chance which does redeem° all sorrows
That ever I have felt.

Kent. O my good master.

Lear. Prithee, away.

Edgar. 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

Lear. A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!

I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever.
Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha,
What is 't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.
I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.

Gentleman: 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

Lear. Did I not, fellow?

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion°
I would have made them skip: I am old now,
And these same crosses° spoil me.° Who are you?
Mine eyes are not o' th' best: I'll tell you straight.°

Kent. If Fortune brag of two° she loved and hated, One of
them we behold.

Lear. This is a dull sight.° Are you not Kent?

Kent. The same,

Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?°

Lear. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;

He'll strike, and quickly too: he's dead and rotten.

Kent. No, my good lord; I am the very man.

265 **promised end** Doomsday

266 image exact likeness

266 **Fall and** cease i.e., let the heavens fall, and all
things finish

268 redeem make good 278 **falchion** small curved
sword

280 **crosses** troubles

280 spoil me i.e., my prowess as a swordsman

281 **tell you straight** recognize you straightway

282 **two** i.e., Lear, and some hypothetical second, who is also a prime example of Fortune's inconstancy ("loved and hated")

284 dull sight (I) melancholy spectacle (2) faulty eyesight (Lear's own, clouded by weeping)

285 **Caius** (Kent's name, in disguise)

Lear. I'll see that straight.°

Kent. That from your first of difference and decay° Have followed your sad steps.

Lear. You are welcome hither.

Kent. Nor no man else:° all's cheerless, dark and deadly

Your eldest daughters have fordone° themselves, And desperately° are dead.

Lear. Ay, so I think.

Albany. He knows not what he says, and vain is it That we present us to him.

Edgar. Very bootless.°

Enter a Messenger.

Messenger. Edmund is dead, my lord.

Albany. That's but a trifle here.

You lords and noble friends, know our intent.
What comfort to this great decay may come°
Shall be applied. For us, we° will resign,
During the life of this old majesty,
To him our absolute power: [*To Edgar and Kent*]
you, to your rights;
With boot,° and such addition° as your honors
Have more than merited. All friends shall taste

The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings. O, see, see!

Lear. And my poor fool^o is hanged: no, no, no life?

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,

289 see that **straight** attend to that in a
moment

290 **your** ... **decay** beginning of your decline in
fortune

292 **Nor no man else** no, I am not wel- . come,
nor is anyone else

293 **fordone** destroyed

294 **desperately** in despair

296 **bootless** fruitless

299 **What** ... **come** whatever aid may present
itself to this great ruined man

300 **us, we** (the royal “we”)

303 **boot** good measure 303 **addition**
additional titles and rights

307 **fool** Cordelia (“fool” being a term of
endearment. But it is perfectly possible to take
the word as referring also to the Fool)

And thou no breath at all? Thou’lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never.

Pray you, undo this button.^o Thank you, sir.

Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips,
Look there, look there.

He dies.

Edgar. He faints. My lord, my lord!

Kent. Break, heart; I prithee, break.

Edgar. Look up, my lord.

Kent. Vex not his ghost:^o O, let him pass! He hates him

That would upon the rack° of this tough world Stretch
him out longer.°

Edgar. He is gone indeed.

Kent. The wonder is he hath endured so long: He but
usurped° his life.

Albany. Bear them from hence. Our present business

Is general woe. [*To Kent and Edgar*] Friends of
my soul, you twain,
Rule in this realm and the gored state sustain.

Kent. I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;

My master calls me, I must not say no.

Edgar. The weight of this sad time we must obey,°

Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

Exeunt, with a dead march.

FINIS

311 **undo this button** i.e., to ease the suffocation
Lear feels

315 **Vex** ... **ghost** do not trouble his departing spirit

316 **rack** instrument of torture, stretching the victim's
joints to dislocation

317 **longer** (1) in time (2) in bodily length

319 9 **usurped** possessed beyond the allotted term

325 **obey** submit to

OceanofPDF.com

Textual Note

The earliest extant version of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is the First Quarto of 1608. This premier edition is known as the Pied Bull Quarto, after the sign which hung before the establishment of the printer. The title page reads as follows: "M. William Shak-speare: / HIS / True Chronicle Historie of the life and / death of King Lear and his three / Daughters. / *With the vnfortunate life of Edgar, sonne / and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his / sullen and assumed humor of / Tom of Bedlam: / As it was played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall vpon / S. Stephans night in 'Christmas Hollidayes. / By his Maiesties seruants playing vsually at the Gloabe / on the Bancke-side. / LONDON, / Printed for Nathaniel Butter, and are to be sold at his shop in Pauls / Church-yard at the signe of the Pide Bull neere / S^r. Austin's Gate. 1608."*

Twelve copies of the First Quarto survive. They are, however, in ten different states, because proofreading, and hence correcting, took place as the play was being printed. The instances (167 in all) in which these copies of Q1 differ from one another have been enumerated by contemporary scholarship.¹ Various theories account for the origin of Q1. Perhaps it is a "reported" text, depending on memorial reconstruction by actors who had performed it, or on a shorthand transcription, or on a conventional but poor transcription of Shakespeare's "foul papers" (rough draft). In *Shakespeare's Revision of "King Lear"* (1980), Steven Urkowitz, disputing suggestions of memorial contaminating, concluded that Q was printed directly from the foul papers, not from a transcript of them.

In 1619 appeared the Second Quarto, known as the N. Butter Quarto, and falsely dated in the same year as the first (the title page reads: "Printed for Nathaniel Butter.

1608"). Actually Q2 was printed by William Jaggard as part of an intended collection of plays by or ascribed to Shakespeare, to be published by Jaggard's friend Thomas Pavier. The source of Q2 was apparently a copy of Q1 in which a number of sheets had been corrected.

Four years later *King Lear* was reprinted once more, this time in the first collection of Shakespeare's works, the First Folio of 1623. The source of the Folio text has been much debated. Some propose a corrected copy of Q1, perhaps collated with the theater's promptbook, a shorter, acting version of the play. Comparative study indicates that Q2 with its corrections was also important for the printing of F, and may have been its principal source. Gary Taylor, analyzing the work of the compositors who set the Folio text, suggested this; others suggested that F's compositors used an MS copy, probably derived from the promptbook, plus a version of Q2. Between the Q and F texts, variations, both accidental and substantive, are frequent. Accidental changes, those of orthography and punctuation, mean little for a modernized edition like this one. Substantive changes, those of words, may alter the sense. F lacks 285 lines that appear in Q1, and adds 115 lines not in Q1, also supplying many different readings and different punctuation and lineation.

Here are some examples of the way the texts differ. In Q's version of Act 1, Scene 2, Gloucester thinks his son Edgar cannot be the monster suggested by Edmund's forged letter. This follows:

Edmund. Nor is not, sure.

Gloucester. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him.

Heaven and earth!

(103-5)

F cuts these two brief speeches, speeding up the pace but losing aspects of devious, credulous, and paternal behavior.

A little earlier (Act 1, Scene 1), Lear enters for the first time, and Q has him expressing his purpose to divide the kingdom, transferring its ruler's obligations to younger hands. F's version of this passage is more circumstantial. Lear's age is emphasized, also his unbecoming self-indulgence. He will "Unburdened crawl toward death." Highlighting a filial relationship, he addresses "Our son of Cornwall" and "our no less loving son of Albany." Still vigorous, hardly the doting old man of some productions, he stresses his "constant will," and is provident in publicizing his daughters' dowries in order "that future strife may be prevented now." All this Q omits. To the present editor it seems reasonable to conflate the lines omitted in one text and added by the other text, a practice followed by all editors until recently, beginning with Alexander Pope in his edition of 1723-25.

The F text is seldom abridged simply to shorten the play. Its cuts are likely to change our sense of things, and this is true also of its amplifications. To many scholars, that looks like evidence of authorial intervention. Some propose two different versions of the play, each with its own integrity. They think the First Quarto of 1608 represents Shakespeare's initial version, satisfactory to him when he wrote it. He didn't remain satisfied, however, and before his death in 1616 revised this version substantially. His revision is preserved in the First Folio. Editors who think this, like the new *Oxford Shakespeare's* (Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 1986), will offer separate texts of the play. The most forceful statement that *Lear* exists in two separate but equal versions is presented in *The Division of the Kingdom: Shakespeare's Two Versions of "King Lear"* (1983), edited by Gary Taylor and Michael Warren. This collection of essays by eleven scholars argues that Q is more or less the play as Shakespeare wrote it in 1605-06, and that F—with its additions and reassignment of some speeches—is based on a promptbook which represents Shakespeare's own

reshaping of the play, perhaps around 1610-11. There is, however, at least one great difficulty with this theory: Even if we grant that F represents a revision, how can we be certain that Shakespeare was the reviser? When the Globe burned in 1613, presumably the promptbook was lost, and the company had to construct a new one, probably without Shakespeare's help, since he had retired to Stratford around 1611. The authors of *The Division of the Kingdom* argue that the omissions in F improve the play, but it is hard, for instance, to see F's omission of the mock trial scene in 3.6 as an improvement, even though one writer in the book assures us that this omission "strengthens the dramatic structure."

John Russell Brown, whose theater criticism is fortified by long experience as a director, is useful on the matter of textual priority. Arguing that the later date of F is no guarantee of Shakespeare's approval, he points out that playwrights, "even the most willful and the most gentle," are often bullied into making expedient changes by the theater people who put the play on stage. When the American poet-turned-playwright Archibald MacLeish gave the director Elia Kazan the text of his new drama, *J.B.*, he thought, said Kazan with amusement, that he had written a play. The director, knowing better, went on to stamp it with his own ideas. Sometimes the actor, especially a star actor, takes over the play, forcing the playwright to build up his part. Sir Henry Irving wouldn't have cared for a bit part. References to France and the French king's invasion of England drop from F, perhaps reflecting the censor's disapproval of allusions to state business in the reign of King James (beginning 1603). Other cuts, though they may be editorial, may as plausibly come from the scribe, or the book-keeper seeking to clarify performance, or may represent a compositor's error. And so on.

There seems no reason, accordingly, to deprive readers of anything Shakespeare wrote at any time. The present text

of *King Lear* is therefore an amalgamation of Q and F. It relies chiefly on the Folio, but it turns to the Quarto when the Folio is guilty of an obvious misprinting, or when it omits pertinent material found in the Quarto, or when its version seems to the editor so inferior to the Quarto version as to demand precedence for the latter, or when an emendation, even though perhaps unnecessary (like Edwards' "top th' legitimate"), has been canonized by use and wont.

In the preparation of this text, the spelling of Folio and Quarto has been modernized; punctuation and capitalization have been altered, when alteration seemed suitable; character designations have been expanded or clarified (F "Cor." becomes "Cordelia," F "Bastard" and "Steward" become "Edmund" and "Oswald"); contractions not affecting pronunciation have been eliminated (F "banish'd" becomes "banished"); necessary quotation marks (as in the reading of a letter) have been supplied; as have diacritical marks whenever a syllable that is normally unemphasized must be stressed (as in "oppressed"). These changes are not recorded.

All other departures from the Folio appearing in this text are recorded here in italic type. Unless specifically noted, these departures derive in every case from the First Quarto [Q]. If some other source is levied on, such as the Second Quarto [Q2] or Second Folio [F2] or the conjecture of an editor (for example, [Theobald]), that source is given, within brackets, immediately after the reading. There follows next, in roman type, the Folio reading which has been superseded. If an editor's emendation has been preferred to both Folio and Quarto readings, the emendation, with its provenance, is followed by the Folio and Quarto readings it replaces.

Stage directions are not given lineation. Reference to them in these notes is determined, therefore, by the line of text they follow. If a stage direction occurs at the beginning of a scene, reference is to the line of text it precedes. On

occasion, the stage direction in the present text represents a conflation of Folio and Quarto. In that case, both Folio and Quarto readings are set down in the notes. Stage directions and notations of place, printed within brackets, are, unless otherwise noted, substantially from the Globe edition. The list of Dramatis Personae, first given by Rowe, is taken also from the Globe edition.

1.1. *Act 1 Scene 1* Actus Primus. Scena Prima 5 *equalities* qualities 34 s.d. *Sound...* **Attendants** Sennet. Enter King Lear, **Cornwall**, Albany, **Gonerill**, Regan, Cordelia, and attendants [F] Sound a Sennet, Enter one bearing a Coronet, then Lear, then the Dukes of Albany, and Cornwall, next Gonerill, Regan, Cordelia, with followers [Q] 70 *speak* [F omits] 98 *loved me. / loved me* 99 **Return** I return 106 *To love my father* **all** [F omits] 112 **mysteries** [F2] miseries [F] mistress [Q] 157 as a pawn as pawn 158 *nor* nere [i.e., “ne’er”] 165 the thy 172 **sentences** sentences 176 *diseases* disasters 190 **Gloucester Cor[delia]** 208 *on* in 216 *best object* object 227 *well will* 235 Better *thou* Better thou hadst 250 *respects of fortune* respect and Fortunes 268 s.d. *Lear...* **Attendants** [Capell] Exit Lear and Burgundy [Q] 283 *shame them derides* with shame derides 291 *hath not been* hath been 299-300 *ingrafted* ingraffed 306 *let’s hit* let us sit

1.2. *Scene 2* Scena Secunda 21 *top th’* [Edwards] to’ th’ [F] tooth’ [Q] 103-05 **Edmund** ... *earth* [F omits] 142 **Fut** [F omits] 144 *Edgar* [F omits] 145 *and pat* [Steevens] Pat [F] and out [Q] 156-64 *as... come* [F omits] 165 Why, *the* The 178 *brother* [F omits] 185 *Go armed* [F omits] 191 s.d. *Exit Edgar* Exit

1.3. *Scene 3* Scena Tertia 17-21 **Not** ... *abused* [F omits] 25-26 **I would** ... *speak* [F omits] 27 *Go, prepare* prepare

1.4. *Scene 4* Scena Quarta 1 *well will* 51 *daughter* Daughters 100 **Fool** my Boy 115 **Lady the** Brach [Steevens] the Lady Brach [F] *Ladie oth’e brach* [Q] 144-59 **That** ... *snatching* [F omits] **158 on’t** [Q2] [F omits] an’t [Q] 158 *ladies* [Q corrected] [F omits] *lodes* [Q uncorrected] 167 *crown* Crownes **182 fools** **Foole** 195 **Methinks** [F omits] 222 *it had* it’s had 225

Come, Sir [F omits] 234 *or his his* 237-41 *I... father* [F omits] 264 **O** ... *come* [F omits] 298 *the cause* more of it **311 Yea** ... *this* [F omits] 350 *You are* [F2] *Your are* [F] *Y'are* [Q] 350 **attasked for** [Q corrected: "attaskt"] at task for [F] alapt [Q uncorrected]

1.5. *Scene 5* *Scena Quinta* 1 s.d. *Enter...* *Fool* [Q2] Enter **Lear**, Kent, Gentleman, and Foole 17 **Why** ... **boy** What can't tell Boy 2.1. Act 2. *Scene 1 Actus* Secundus. *Scena Prima* 21 s.d. Enter Edgar [placed by Theobald] [F prints after 1. 20] 55 But And 72 **I should** should I 73 *ay* [F omits] 80 *I ... him* [F omits] 80 s.d. **Tucket** *within* [placed by Malone] [F prints after 1. 79] 81 why wher 89 *strange news* **strangenesse** 2.2. *Scene 2* *Scena Secunda* 23 *clamorous* [Q corrected] clamours [F] clamarous [Q uncorrected] 44 s.d. *Enter ... drawn* Enter Bastard, Cornwall, Regan, Gloster, Servants [F] Enter Edmund with his rapier drawne, Gloster the Duke and Dutchesse [Q] **77 too** t' 80 **Reneg** Revenge **81 gale gall 110 flick'ring** [Pope: "flickering"] flicking [F] flitkering [Q] 125 *dread* dead 132 respect respects 141 s.d. *Stocks brought out* [placed by Dyce] [F prints after 1. 139] [Q omits] 143-47 His ... *with* [F omits] 145 *contemnèd' st* [Capell] [F omits] contaned [Q uncorrected] temnest [Q corrected] 153 For ... *legs* [F omits] 154 *Come... away* [F assigns to Cornwall] 154 *my good Lord* my Lord 154 s.d. *Exeunt ... Kent* Exit [F] [Q omits] 155 *Duke's* Duke 176 s.d. *Sleeps* [F omits]

2.3. *Scene 3* [Steevens] [F, Q omit] 4 *unusual* unusall 15 *mortified bare arms* mortified Armes 18 *sheepcotes* Sheeps-Cotes 2.4.1 s.d. *Scene 4* [Steevens] [F, Q omit] 2 *messenger* Messengers 6 *thy* ahy 9 *man's* man 18-19 *No ... have* [F omits] 30 *panting* painting 33 *whose* those 61 *the* the the 75 *have* hause 86 s.d. *Enter... Gloucester* [F prints after 1. 84] 130 *mother's* Mother 167 *her pride* [F omits] 183 s.d. Enter *Oswald* [placed by Dyce] [F and Q print after 1. 181] 185 *fickle* fickly 188 s.d. Enter *Goneril* [placed by Johnson] [F and Q print after 1. 186] 282 s.d. *Storm and tempest* [F

prints after 1. 283] [Q omits] 285 s.d. *Exeunt ... Fool* [Q2]
Exeunt [F] *Exeunt* Lear, Leister, Kent, and Foole [Q] 294 s.d.
Enter Gloucester [F and Q print after 1. 293]

3.1. *Act 3. Scene 1* Actus Tertius. Scena Prima 7-14 *tears ... all* [F omits] 30-42 *But... you* [F omits] 3.2. *Scene 2* Scena Secunda 3 *drowned* drown 71 *That* And 78 *True...boy* True boy 3.3. *Scene 3* Scaena Terda 3.4. *Scene 4* Scena Quarta 7 *skin: so* [Rowe] *skinso* [F] *skin, so* [Q] 10 *thy* they 27 s.d. *Exit* [placed by Johnson][F prints after 1. 26] [Q omits] 38 s.d. *Enter Fool* [Duthie] *Enter* Edgar, and *Foole* [F, which prints after 1. 36] [Q omits] 44 s.d. *Enter Edgar* *Enter* Edgar, and *Foole* [F, which prints after 1. 36] [Q omits] 46 *blows ... wind* blow the windes 47 *thy cold bed* thy bed 52 *ford* Sword 57 *Bless* Blisse 58 *Bless* blisse 63 *What, has* Ha's 91 *deeply deerely* 101 *sessa* [Malone] *Sesey* [F] *caese* [Q] *cease* [Q2] 116 s.d. *Enter ... torch* [F prints after 1. 111] *Enter* Gloster [Q, which prints after 1. 116] 117 *foul fiend* *Flibbertigibbet* foule *Flibbertigibbet* 118 *till... cock* at first *Cocke* 138 *hath had* hath 3.5. *Scene 5* Scena Quinta 13 *his* this 25 *dearer deere* 3.6. *Scene 6* Scena Sexta 5 s.d. *Exit* [placed by Capell] [F prints after 1. 3] 17-55 *The ... 'scape* [F omits] 22 *Now* [Q2] [F omits] *no* [Q] 25 *ourn* [Capell] [F omits] *broome* [Q] 34 *cushions* [F omits] *cushings* (Q) 47 *she kicked* [Q2] [F omits] *kicked* [Q] 53 *made on* [Capell] [F omits] *made an* [Q] 67 **lym** [Hammer] *Hym* [F] *him* [Q] 68 *tike, or trundle* tight, or *Troudle* 72 *Sessa!* [Malone] *sese* [F] [Q omits] 84 s.d. *Enter Gloucester* [placed by Capell] [F prints after 1. 80] 97-100 *Oppressèd... behind* [F omits] 101-14 *When ... lurk* [F omits] 3.7. *Scene 7* Scena Septima 21 s.d. *Exit Oswald* [Staunton] [F and Q omit] 23 s.d. *Exeunt... Edmund* [Staunton] [F (Exit) and Q (Exit Gon. and Bast.) print after 1. 22] 28 s.d. *Enter... three* [Q, which prints after "traitor"] *Enter Gloucester, and Servants* [F, which prints as here after "control"] 59 *rash* sticke 64 *dearn* sterne 79 s.d. *Draw and fight* [F omits] 81 s.d. *She ... him* *Killes* him [F] *Shee ... behind* [Q] 100-108 *I'll... him* [F omits] 100 *Second* *Servant*

[Capell] [F omits] Servant [Q] 101 *Third Servant* [Capell] [F omits] 2 Servant [Q] 104 *Second Servant* [Capell] [F omits] 1 Ser. [Q] 105 *roguish* [Q2] [Q omits] 107 *Third Servant* [Capell] [F omits] 2 Ser. [Q] 108 s.d. *Exeunt severally* [F omits] Exit [Q]

4.1. *Act 4 Scene 1* Actus Quartus. Scena Prima 9 s.d. led by an *Old Man* [Q, which prints after 1. 12] and an Old man [F, which places after 1. 9, as here] 41 *Then, prithee, get thee gone* Get thee away 60-65 *Five ... master* [F omits] 62-63 *Flibbertigibbet* [Pope] Stiberdigebit [Q] 63 *mopping and mowing* [Theobald] Mobing, & Mohing [Q]

4.2. *Scene 2* Scena Secunda 1 s.d. Enter *Goneril and Edmund* Enter Gonerill, Bastard, and Steward 2 s.d. [after "way"] Enter *Oswald* [placed by Theobald] [Q prints after "master," 1.2] [F omits] 25 s.d. Exit *Edmund* [placed by Rowe] Exit [F, which prints after "death"] [Q omits] 28 s.d. Exit [F omits] Exit Stew. [Q] 31-50 *I... deep* [F omits] 32 *its* ith [Q] 45 *benefited* [Q corrected] beniflicted [Q uncorrected] 47 *these* [Jennens; Heath conj.] the [Q uncorrected] this [Q corrected] 49 *Humanity* [Q corrected] Humanly [Q uncorrected] 53-59 *that ... so* [F omits] 56 *noiseless* [Q corrected] noystles [Q uncorrected] 57 *thy state begins to threat* [Jennens] thy slayer begin threats [Q uncorrected] *thy state begins thereat* [Q corrected] thy slaier begins threats [Q2] 58 *Whilst* [Q corrected] Whil's [Q uncorrected] 62-69 *Thou ... news* [F omits] 65 *dislocate* [Q3] dislecate [Q2.1,2] 68 *mew* [Q corrected] now [Q uncorrected] 68 s.d. Enter a *Messenger* [F prints after 1. 61] Enter a Gentleman [Q, which prints after 1. 69; and Q2, which prints after 1. 68, as here] 75 *thereat enraged* threat-enrag'd 79 *justicers* [Q corrected] lustices [F, Q] 87 s.d. Exit [F omits]

4.3. *Scene 3* Scena Tertia [for Scene IV] 1 s.d. Enter... *Gentleman* [F omits the entire scene] 12 *sir* [Theobald] say 17 *strove* [Pope] streme 21 *seemed* [Pope: "seem'd"] seeme

30 *believed* [Q2] beleeft 32 *moistened* [Capell] moystened
her 56 *Exeunt* [Pope] Exit

4.4. *Scene* 4 [Pope] *Scena Tertia* [F] [Q omits] 1 s.d.
Cordelia, Doctor, and Soldiers Cordelia, Gentlemen, and
Souldiours [F] Cordelia, Doctor and others [Q] 3 *femiter*
Fenitar 6 century Centery 18 *distress* desires 28 *right* Rite

4.5. *Scene* 5 [pope] *Scena Quarta* [F] [Q omits] 39 *meet him*
meet 4.6. *Scene* 6 [Pope] *Scena Quinta* [Q omits] 17 *walk*
walk'd 34 s.d. He *kneels* [F omits] 41 s.d. He *falls* [F omits]
71 *whelked* weak'd 71 *enridgèd* enraged 83 *coinin*, crying
97 *had white* had the white 166 *Through* Thorough *small*
great 167 *Plate sin* [Theobald] Place sinnes [Q omits] 199
Ay... dust [F omits] 200 *Good sir* [Q2] [F and Q omit] 206 s.d.
Exit ... *follow* Exit [F] Exit King running [Q] 208 *one a* 244
I'se [Johnson: "Ise"] ice [F] ile [Q] 247 s.d. *They fight* [F
omits] 255 s.d. He *dies* [F omits] 274 *and ... venture* [Q
reads "Venter"] [F omits] [This line, from the First Quarto, is
almost universally omitted from editions of the play] 276
indistinguished indinguish'd 289 s.d. **Drum** afar off [F prints
after 1. 287] A drum a farre off [Q, which prints as here]

4.7.. *Scene* 7 *Scena Septima* 1 s.d. *Enter ... Gentleman*
Enter Cordelia, Kent, and Gentleman [F] Enter Cordelia,
Kent, and Doctor [Q] 24 *doubt* not doubt 24-25 *Very ... there*
[F omits] 32 *warring* iarring 33-36 To ... *helm* [F omits] 79-80
and ... lost [F omits] 85 s.d. *Exeunt ... Gentleman* Exeunt 86-
98 *Holds... fought* [F omits]

5.1. *Act* 5 *Scene* 1 *Actus Quintus. Scena Prima* 11-13 *That ...*
hers [F omits] 16 *Fear me not* Feare not 18-19 *I ... me* [F
omits] 23-28 *Where ... nobly* [F omits] 33 *I ... tent* [F omits]
36 *pray you* pray 39 s.d. *To those going out* [F and Q omit]
To Edgar [F and Q omit] *Exeunt* placed by Cambridge
edition] [Q prints after "word," 1. 39] [F omits] 46 *love* loues
50 s.d. **Exit** [placed by Dyce] [F and Q print after 1. 49]

5.2. *Scene* 2 *Scena Secunda*

5.3. *Scene* 3 *Scena Tertia* 13 *hear poor rogues* heere (poore
Rogues) [reference in F is to Lear and Cordelia] 26 s.d.

Exeunt... guarded Exit [F] [Q omits] 39-40 *I... do't* [F omits]
 40 s.d. Exit *Captain* [F prints after 1.38] [Q omits] 48 *and*
appointed guard [Q corrected, and Q2] [F and Q omit] 55-60
At ... place [F omits] 56 *We* [Q corrected, and Q2] *mee* [Q]
 58 *sharpness* [Q corrected, and Q2] *sharpes* [Q] 84 *attaint*
arrest 85 *sister* Sisters 98 *he is* hes 103 *Edmund ... ho, a*
herald [F omits] 108 s.d. *Enter a Herald* [placed by Hanmer]
 [F prints after 1. 102] [Q omits] 110 *Sound, trumpet* [F
 omits] 110 s.d. *A trumpet sounds* [F prints after 1. 109] [Q
 omits] *trumpet* [F2] *Tumpet* 116 *Sound* [F omits] 116 s.d.
First trumpet [F prints after 1. 115] [Q omits] 118 s.d. *Enter*
... him Enter Edgar armed [F] Enter Edgar at the third sound,
 a trumpet before him [Q] 137 *illustrious* illustrious 145 *some*
say (some say) 152 s.d. *fight* *Fights* [F, which prints after 1.
 153, "him"] [Q omits] 162 *Ask... know* [F gives to Edmund]
 162 s.d. *Exit* [placed here by Q: "Exit Gonerill"] [F prints
 after 1. 161, "for't"] 206-23 *This...slave* [F omits] 215 *him*
 [Theobald] *me* [Q] [F omits] 223 s.d. *Enter ... knife* Enter a
 Gentleman [F] Enter one with a bloudie knife [Q] 234 s.d.
 Enter *Kent* [placed by Q2] [F prints after 1. 231, "Kent"] [Q
 prints after "allow" in 1. 235] 240 s.d. *The... in* Gonerill and
 Regans bodies brought out [F, which prints after 1. 232] 253
 s.d. *Exit Messenger* [Theobald] [F and Q omit] 259 *Howl.*
howl. howl. howl Howle, howle, **howle** *you are* your are 279
them him 291 *You are* [Q2] *Your are* [F] *You* [Q] 296 s.d.
Enter a Messenger [F, which prints after "him"] Enter
 Captaine [Q, placed as here]

The Date and Sources of King Lear

King Lear was probably written between 1603 and 1606. The evidence is as follows. Under the date of November 26, 1607, the printers Nathaniel Butter and John Busby entered the play in the Stationers' Register, thereby asserting their right to print it. That right was exercised in the following year, with the appearance of the First Quarto of 1608. The title page of that quarto (Q1) announces a performance of the play as having taken place before the King on St. Stephen's Night (December 26) in the Christmas holidays. The entry in the Stationers' Register (1607), since it refers to the Court performance as occurring on "Christmas Last," fixes the date of that performance as December 26, 1606. This date is therefore the *terminus ad quem* for the composition of the play. The earliest date, that of 1603, is more difficult to establish. Probably it is fixed by the entry in the Stationers' Register, on March 16, 1603, of Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures*. Harsnett's work, a treatise on diabolism and an attack on the Jesuits, was written in 1602-03. It is utilized by Shakespeare in his play, chiefly for the names of the demons who lurk about Poor Tom. Assume—and it is reasonable to do so—that Shakespeare did not have access to Harsnett's *Declaration* before the date of publication, and 1603 becomes the *terminus a quo* for the writing of *King Lear*.

Astrological reference furnishes another clue. Gloucester, citing as portentous "These late eclipses in the sun and moon" (1.2.112), is commonly thought to be speaking of a contemporary event. There were in fact eclipses in 1601 and, more pertinently, in September (the moon) and October (the sun) of 1605. It has been suggested, moreover, that a publication of 1606, telling of "The Earth's and Moone

s late and horrible obscurations," lies directly behind Gloucester's superstitious mutterings. The pamphlet in question, translated from the High Dutch and edited by the almanac writer Edward Gresham, is entitled *Strange fearful & true news which happened at Carlstadt, in the Kingdome of Croatia*. Its preface is dated February 11, 1606.

Finally, there is the re-emergence, in the period just before the first recorded performance of Shakespeare's play, of the older dramatic version of his story, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*. Though this play was probably written about 1590, and was on the boards in 1594, it was published and perhaps acted again in 1605: on May 8, 1605, it is entered in the Stationers' Register. Presumably Shakespeare used the edition appearing in that year, in writing his own play.

The publication, then, of the old chronicle history in 1605, the notable eclipses occurring in the fall of the same year, and the appearance of Gresham's pamphlet early in 1606 seem to point to the winter of 1605-06 as the period in which Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*.

The ultimate source of the play is an ancient folk tale existing in many versions. It first appears as literature in the twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae* (ii, 11-15), by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Throughout the Middle Ages and on into the Renaissance, the Lear story retained its popularity, appearing in some fifty different accounts. Shakespeare was familiar with it from the retelling in what is perhaps his most important source book, the second edition (1587) of *The Chronicles of England Scotlande, and Ire-lande* by Raphael Holinshed, first compiled in 1577. From Edmund Spenser, in *The Faerie Queene* (1590), Shakespeare derived the name of Cordelia in its present form, and also the detail of her death by hanging (II.x.27-32). Other suggestions were furnished by John Higgins, in *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), that immensely popular collection of stories of the falls of princes; and of course, by *The True Chronicle History of King*

Leir and his three daughters. John Marston, in *The Malcontent* (1604), dramatizes a feigned suicide (4.3) that seems to parallel Gloucester's, at the Cliffs of Dover (4.6). The author of *The London Prodigal* (1605), a play once attributed to Shakespeare and performed by his company, anticipates the rustic dialogue affected by Edgar in his combat with Oswald (4.6). As previously noted, Harsnett and, possibly, Gresham were also of use to Shakespeare. So, in less tangible ways, was his great French contemporary, Montaigne, whose *Essais* were translated into English by John Florio in 1603. Numerous words and passages in Florio's translation (which Shakespeare may have read in manuscript) are echoed in *King Lear*. More impressive, however, is the impact on Shakespeare of Montaigne's skeptical thought, as expressed particularly in the *Apology for Raymond Sebonde*.

None of these sources of *Lear* includes the analogous story of Gloucester and his two sons. That story Shakespeare adapted from Sir Philip Sidney's account of the unhappy King of Paphlagonia, in his famous romantic narrative *Arcadia* (ii, 10), written early in the 1580s but not published until 1590. The tying of the subplot to the old and sufficiently horrid tale of King Lear and his daughters has, of course, the effect of engrossing the horror, until the audience is almost persuaded that ferocious cruelty is not so much an aberration as the norm. Certainly, if Lear is childed as Edgar is fathered it is no longer possible to see as merely sensational or idiosyncratic the evil that Shakespeare anatomizes in the play. Earlier writers, handling one or the other story, allow of that view. Shakespeare, in fusing the two stories, is at pains to controvert it. What is more, he darkens consistently, in manipulating his sources, whatever dark suggestion is latent in them. In the old Leir, in Holinshed, in Spenser, in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, the travails of the King are intermitted at last. Vice is punished and virtue rewarded:

Cordelia triumphs over her wicked sisters; her father, restored to the throne, dies at the apogee, and in peace. It is true that, in some sources, Cordelia ends a suicide. But that is an irrelevant epilogue: the chief business of the tale is happily resolved.

It is left to Shakespeare to cancel that happy resolution. He is the first to educe tragedy from what is essentially a melodramatic romance. The madness of Lear is altogether his own contribution. So is the pathetic figure of the Fool. So is the murder of Cordelia, that cruelest stroke of all, which is made to fall just as the good are preparing to taste the wages of their virtue. Some sense of Shakespeare's lack of ruth, of his invention, and not least, of his tact may be gathered from a perusal of the source material on which he worked.

RAPHAEL HOLINSHED

Selections from The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland

Leir the son of Baldud was admitted ruler over the Britains, in the year of the world 3105, at what time Joas reigned in Juda. This Leir was a prince of right noble demeanor, governing his land and subjects in great wealth. He made the town of Caerleir now called Leicester, which standeth upon the river of Sore. It is written that he had by his wife three daughters without other issue, whose names were Gonorilla, Regan, and Cordeilla, which daughters he greatly loved, but specially Cordeilla the youngest far above the two elder. When this Leir therefore was come to great years, & began to wax unwieldy through age, he thought to understand the affections of his daughters towards him, and

prefer her whom he best loved, to the succession over the kingdom. Whereupon he first asked Gonorilla the eldest, how well she loved him: who calling her gods to record, protested that she loved him more than her own life, which by right and reason should be most dear unto her. With which answer the father, being well pleased, turned to the second, and demanded of her how well she loved him: who answered (confirming her sayings with great oaths) that she loved him more than tongue could express, and far above all other creatures of the world.

Then called he his youngest daughter Cordeilla before him, and asked of her what account she made of him, unto whom she made this answer as followeth: "Knowing the great love and fatherly zeal that you have always borne towards me (for the which I may not answer you otherwise than I think, and as my conscience leadeth me) I protest unto you, that I have loved you ever, and will continually (while I live) love you as my natural father. And if you would more understand of the love that I bear you, ascertain yourself, that so much as you have, so much you are worth, and so much I love you, and no more." The father being nothing content with this answer, married his two eldest daughters, the one unto Henninus, the duke of Cornwall, and the other unto Maglanus, the duke of Albania, betwixt whom he willed and ordained that his land should be divided after his death, and the one half thereof immediately should be assigned to them in hand: but for the third daughter Cordeilla he reserved nothing.

Nevertheless it fortun'd that one of the princes of Gallia (which now is called France), whose name was Aganippus, hearing of the beauty, womanhood, and good conditions of the said Cordeilla, desired to have her in marriage, and sent over to her father, requiring that he might have her to wife; to whom answer was made, that he might have his daughter, but as for any dower he could have none, for all was promised and assured to her other sisters already.

Aganippus notwithstanding this answer of denial to receive anything by way of dower with Cordeilla, took her to wife, only moved thereto (I say) for respect of her person and amiable virtues. This Aganippus was one of the twelve kings that ruled Gallia in those days, as in British history it is recorded. But to proceed.

After that Leir was fallen into age, the two dukes that had married his two eldest daughters, thinking it long ere the government of the land did come to their hands, arose against him in armor, and reft from him the governance of the land, upon conditions to be continued for term of life: by the which he was put to his portion, that is, to live after a rate assigned to him for the maintenance of his estate, which in process of time was diminished as well by Maglanus as by Henninus. But the greatest grief that Leir took was to see the unkindness of his daughters, which seemed to think that all was too much which their father had, the same being never so little: in so much that going from the one to the other, he was brought to that misery, that scarcely they would allow him one servant to wait upon him.

In the end, such was the unkindness, or (as I may say) the unnaturalness which he found in his two daughters, notwithstanding their fair and pleasant words uttered in time past, that being constrained of necessity, he fled the land, & sailed into Gallia, there to seek some comfort of his youngest daughter Cordeilla, whom beforetime he hated. The lady Cordeilla hearing that he was arrived in poor estate, she first sent to him privily a certain sum of money to apparel himself withal, and to retain a certain number of servants that might attend upon him in honorable wise, as appertained to the estate which he had borne: and then so accompanied, she appointed him to come to the court, which he did, and was so joyfully, honorably, and lovingly received, both by his son-in-law Aganippus, and also by his daughter Cordeilla, that his heart was greatly comforted: for

he was no less honored, than if he had been king of the whole country himself.

Now when he had informed his son-in-law and his daughter in what sort he had been used by his other daughters, Aganippus caused a mighty army to be put in a readiness, and likewise a great navy of ships to be rigged, to pass over into Britain with Leir his father-in-law, to see him again restored to his kingdom. It was accorded, that Cordeilla should also go with him to take possession of the land, the which he promised to leave unto her, as the rightful inheritor after his decease, notwithstanding any former grant made to her sisters or to their husbands in any manner of wise.

Hereupon, when this army and navy of ships were ready, Leir and his daughter Cordeilla with her husband took the sea, and arriving in Britain, fought with their enemies, and discomfited them in battle, in the which Maglanus and Henninus were slain; and then was Leir restored to his kingdom, which he ruled after this by the space of two years, and then died, forty years after he first began to reign.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

From Arcadia

The pitiful state, and story of the Paphlagonian unkind King, and his kind son, first related by the son, then by the blind father.

It was in the kingdom of Galacia, the season being (as in the depth of winter) very cold, and as then suddenly grown to so extreme and foul a storm, that never any winter (I

think) brought forth a fouler child: so that the Princes were even compelled by the hail, that the pride of the wind blew into their faces, to seek some shrouding place within a certain hollow rock offering it unto them, they made it their shield against the tempest's fury. And so staying there, till the violence thereof was passed, they heard the speech of a couple, who not perceiving them (being hid within that rude canopy) held a strange and pitiful disputation which made them step out; yet in such sort, as they might see unseen. There they perceived an aged man, and a young, scarcely come to the age of a man, both poorly arrayed, extremely weatherbeaten; the old man blind, the young man leading him: and yet through all those miseries, in both these seemed to appear a kind of nobleness, not suitable to that affliction. But the first words they heard were these of the old man. Well Leonatus (said he) since I cannot persuade thee to lead me to that which should end my grief, & thy trouble, let me now entreat thee to leave me: fear not, my misery cannot be greater than it is, & nothing doth become me but misery; fear not the danger of my blind steps. I cannot fall worse than I am. And do not, I pray thee, do not obstinately continue to infect thee with my wretchedness. But fly, fly from this region, only worthy of me. Dear father (answered he) do not take away from me the only remnant of my happiness: while I have power to do you service, I am not wholly miserable. Ah my son (said he, and with that he groaned, as if sorrow strove to break his heart), how evil fits it me to have such a son, and how much doth thy kindness upbraid my wickedness? These doleful speeches, and some others to like purpose (well showing they had not been borne to the fortune they were in), moved the Princes to go out unto them, and ask the younger what they were? Sirs (answered he, with a good grace, and made the more agreeable by a certain noble kind of piteousness) I see well you are strangers, that know not our misery so well here known, that no man dare know, but that we must be

miserable. Indeed our state is such, as though nothing is so needful unto us as pity, yet nothing is more dangerous unto us, than to make ourselves so known as may stir pity. But your presence promiseth, that cruelty shall not overrun hate. And if it did, in truth our state is sunk below the degree of fear.

This old man (whom I lead) was lately rightful Prince of this country of Paphlagonia, by the hard-hearted ungratefulness of a son of his, deprived, not only of his kingdom (whereof no foreign forces were ever able to spoil him) but of his sight, the riches which Nature grants to the poorest creatures. Whereby, & by other his unnatural dealings, he hath been driven to such grief, as even now he would have had me to have led him to the top of this rock, thence to cast himself headlong to death: and so would have made me (who received my life of him) to be the worker of his destruction. But noble Gentlemen (said he) if either of you have a father, and feel what dutiful affection is engrafted in a son's heart, let me entreat you to convey this afflicted Prince to some place of rest & security. Amongst your worthy acts it shall be none of the least, that a King, of such might and fame, and so unjustly oppressed, is in any sort by you relieved.

But before they could make him answer, his father began to speak, Ah my son (said he) how evil an historian are you, that leave out the chief knot of all the discourse? my wickedness, my wickedness. And if thou doest it to spare my ears, (the only sense now left me proper for knowledge) assure thy self thou dost mistake me. And I take witness of that sun which you see (with that he cast up his blind eyes, as if he would hunt for light), and wish myself in worse case than I do wish myself, which is as evil as may be, if I speak untruly; that nothing is so welcome to my thoughts, as the publishing of my shame. Therefore know you Gentlemen (to whom from my heart I wish that it may not prove ominous foretoken of misfortune to have met with such a miser as I

am) that whatsoever my son (O God, that truth binds me to reproach him with the name of my son) hath said, is true. But besides those truths this also is true, that having had in lawful marriage, of a mother fit to bear royal children, this son (such one as partly you see, and better shall know by my short declaration) and so enjoyed the expectations in the world of him, till he was grown to justify their expectations (so as I needed envy no father for the chief comfort of mortality, to leave another oneself after me) I was carried by a bastard son of mine (if at least I be bound to believe the words of that base woman my concubine, his mother) first to dislike, then to hate, lastly to destroy, to do my best to destroy, this son (I think you think) undeserving destruction. What ways he used to bring me to it, if I should tell you, I should tediously trouble you with as much poisonous hypocrisy, desperate fraud, smooth malice, hidden ambition, & smiling envy, as in any living person could be harbored. But I list it not, no remembrance, (no, of naughtiness) delights me, but mine own; & me thinks, the accusing his trains might in some manner excuse my fault, which certainly I loathe to do. But the conclusion is, that I gave order to some servants of mine, whom I thought as apt for such charities as myself, to lead him out into a forest, & there to kill him.

But those thieves (better natured to my son than myself) spared his life, letting him go, to learn to live poorly: which he did, giving himself to be a private soldier, in a country hereby. But as he was ready to be greatly advanced for some noble pieces of service which he did, he heard news of me: who (drunk in my affection to that unlawful and unnatural son of mine) suffered myself so to be governed by him, that all favors and punishments passed by him, all offices, and places of importance, distributed to his favorites; so that ere I was aware, I had left myself nothing but the name of a King: which he shortly weary of too, with many indignities (if anything may be called an indignity,

which was laid upon me) threw me out of my seat, and put out my eyes; and then (proud in his tyranny) let me go, neither imprisoning, nor killing me: but rather delighting to make me feel my misery; misery indeed, if ever there were any: full of wretchedness, fuller of disgrace, and fullest of guiltiness. And as he came to the crown by so unjust means, as unjustly he kept it, by force of stranger soldiers in citadels, the nests of tyranny, & murderers of liberty; disarming all his own countrymen, that no man durst show himself a well-willer of mine: to say the truth (I think) few of them being so (considering my cruel folly to my good son, and foolish kindness to my unkind bastard): but if there were any who fell to pity of so great a fall, and had yet any sparks of unstained duty left in them towards me, yet durst they not show it, scarcely with giving me alms at their doors; which yet was the only sustenance of my distressed life, nobody daring to show so much charity, as to lend me a hand to guide my dark steps: Till this son of mine (God knows, worthy of a more virtuous, and more fortunate father) forgetting my abominable wrongs, not recking danger, & neglecting the present good way he was in doing himself good, came hither to do this kind office you see him perform towards me, to my unspeakable grief; not only because his kindness is a glass even to my blind eyes, of my naughtiness, but that above all griefs, it grieves me he should desperately adventure the loss of his soul-deserving life for mine, that yet owe more to fortune for my deserts, as if he would carry mud in a chest of crystal. For well I know, he that now reigneth, how much soever (and with good reason) he despiseth me, of all men despised; yet he will not let slip any advantage to make away him, whose just title (ennobled by courage and goodness) may one day shake the seat of a never secure tyranny. And for this cause I craved of him to lead me to the top of this rock, indeed I must confess, with meaning to free him from so serpentine a companion as I am. But he finding what I purposed only

therein since he was born, showed himself disobedient unto me. And now Gentlemen, you have the true story, which I pray you publish to the world, that my mischievous proceedings may be the glory of his filial piety, the only reward now left for so great a merit. And if it may be, let me obtain that of you, which my son denies me: for never was there more pity in saving any, than in ending me; both because therein my agonies shall end, and so shall you preserve this excellent young man, who else willfully follows his own ruin.

The matter in itself lamentable, lamentably expressed by the old Prince (which needed not take to himself the gestures of pity, since his face could not put off the marks thereof) greatly moved the two Princes to compassion, which could not stay in such hearts as theirs without seeking remedy. But by and by the occasion was presented: for Plexirtus (so was the bastard called) came thither with forty horse, only of purpose to murder this brother; of whose coming he had soon advertisement, and thought no eyes of sufficient credit in such a matter, but his own; and therefore came himself to be actor, and spectator. And as soon as he came, not regarding the weak (as he thought) guard of but two men, commanded some of his followers to set their hands to his, in the killing of Leonatus. But the young Prince (though not otherwise armed but with a sword) how falsely soever he was dealt with by others, would not betray himself: but bravely drawing it out, made the death of the first that assaulted him, warn his fellows to come more warily after him. But then Pyrocles and Musidorus were quickly become parties (so just a defense deserving as much as old friendship) and so did behave them among that company (more injurious, than valiant) that many of them lost their lives for their wicked master.

Yet perhaps had the number of them at last prevailed, if the King of Pontus (lately by them made so) had not come unlooked for to their succor. Who (having had a dream

which had fixed his imagination vehemently upon some great danger, presently to follow those two Princes whom he most dearly loved) was come in all haste, following as well as he could their track with a hundred horses in that country, which he thought (considering who then reigned) a fit place enough to make the stage of any tragedy.

But then the match had been so ill made for Plexirtus, that his ill-led life, & worse-gotten honor should have tumbled together to destruction; had there not come in Tydeus & Telenor, with forty or fifty in their suit, to the defense of Plexirtus. These two were brothers, of the noblest house of that country, brought up from their infancy with Plexirtus: men of such prowess, as not to know fear in themselves, and yet to teach it others that should deal with them: for they had often made their lives triumph over most terrible dangers; never dismayed and ever fortunate; and truly no more settled in their valor, than disposed to goodness and justice, if either they had lighted on a better friend, or could have learned to make friendship a child, and not the father of virtue. But bringing up (rather than choice) having first knit their minds unto him, (indeed crafty enough, either to hide his faults, or never to show them, but when they might pay home) they willingly held out the course, rather to satisfy him, than all the world; and rather to be good friends, than good men: so as though they did not like the evil he did, yet they liked him that did the evil; and though not councilors of the offense, yet protectors of the offender. Now they having heard of this sudden going out, with so small a company, in a country full of evil-wishing minds toward him (though they knew not the cause) followed him; till they found him in such case as they were to venture their lives, or else he to lose his: which they did with such force of mind and body, that truly I may justly say, Pyrocles & Musidorus had never till then found any, that could make them so well repeat their hardest lesson in the feats of arms. And briefly so they did, that if they overcame not; yet

were they not overcome, but carried away that ungrateful master of theirs to a place of security; howsoever the Princes labored to the contrary. But this matter being thus far begun, it became not the constancy of the Princes so to leave it; but in all haste making forces both in Pontus and Phrygia, they had in few days, left him but only that one strong place where he was. For fear having been the only knot that had fastened his people unto him, that once untied by a greater force, they all scattered from him; like so many birds, whose cage had been broken.

In which season the blind King (having in the chief city of his realm, set the crown upon his son Leonatus' head) with many tears (both of joy and sorrow) setting forth to the whole people, his own fault & his son's virtue, after he had kissed him, and forced his son to accept honor of him (as of his new-become subject) even in a moment died, as it should seem: his heart broken with unkindness & affliction, stretched so far beyond his limits with this excess of comfort, as it was able no longer to keep safe his royal spirits. But the new King (having no less lovingly performed all duties to him dead, than alive) pursued on the siege of his unnatural brother, as much for the revenge of his father, as for the establishing of his own quiet. In which siege truly I cannot but acknowledge the prowess of those two brothers, than whom the Princes never found in all their travel two men of greater ability to perform, nor of abler skill for conduct.

But Plexirtus finding, that if nothing else, famine would at last bring him to destruction, thought better by humbleness to creep, where by pride he could not march. For certainly so had nature formed him, & the exercise of craft conformed him to all turnings of sleights, that though no man had less goodness in his soul than he, no man could better find the places whence arguments might grow of goodness to another: though no man felt less pity, no man could tell better how to stir pity: no man more impudent to deny,

where proofs were not manifest; no man more ready to confess with a repenting manner of aggravating his own evil, where denial would but make the fault fouler. Now he took this way, that having gotten a passport for one (that pretended he would put Plexirtus alive into his hands) to speak with the King his brother, he himself (though much against the minds of the valiant brothers, who rather wished to die in brave defense) with a rope about his neck, barefooted, came to offer himself to the discretion of Leonatus. Where what submission he used, how cunningly in making greater the fault he made the faultiness the less, how artificially he could set out the torments of his own conscience, with the burdensome cumber he had found of his ambitious desires, how finely seeming to desire nothing but death, as ashamed to live, he begged life, in the refusing it, I am not cunning enough to be able to express: but so fell out of it, that though at first sight Leonatus saw him with no other eye, than as the murderer of his father; & anger already began to paint revenge in many colors, ere long he had not only gotten pity, but pardon, and if not an excuse of the fault past, yet an opinion of future amendment: while the poor villains (chief ministers of his wickedness, now betrayed by the author thereof) were delivered to many cruel sorts of death; he so handling it, that it rather seemed, he had rather come into the defense of an unremediable mischief already committed, than that they had done it at first by his consent.

From **The True Chronicle History of King Leir**

Scene XXIV

*Enter the **Gallian** King and Queen, and Mumford, with a basket, disguised like country folk.*

King. This tedious journey all on foot, sweet Love,
Cannot be pleasing to your tender joints, Which ne'er
were used to these toilsome walks.

Cordella. I never in my life took more delight
In any journey, than I do in this:
It did me good, when as we hapt to light
Amongst the merry crew of country folk,
To see what industry and pains they took,
To win them commendations 'mongst their friends.
Lord, how they labor to bestir themselves,
And in their quirks to go beyond the moon,
And so take on them with such antic fits,
That one would think they were beside their wits!
Come away, Roger, with your basket.

Mumford. Soft, Dame, here comes a couple of old youths,
I must needs make myself fat with jesting at them.

Cordella. Nay, prithy do not, they do seem to be Men much
o'ergone with grief and misery.

Let's stand aside, and harken what they say. [*Enter
Leir and Perillus very faintly.*]

Leir. Ah, my Perillus, now I see we both
Shall end our days in this unfruitful soil.
Oh, I do faint for want of sustenance:

And thou, I know, in little better case.
No gentle tree affords one taste of fruit,
To comfort us, until we meet with men:
No lucky path conducts our luckless steps
Unto a place where any comfort dwells.
Sweet rest betide unto our happy souls;
For here I see our bodies must have end.

Perillus. Ah, my dear Lord, how doth my heart lament,

To see you brought to this extremity!
O, if you love me, as you do profess,
Or ever thought well of me in my life,
[He strips up his arm.]
Feed on this flesh, whose veins are not so dry
But there is 'virtue left to comfort you.
O, feed on this, if this will do you good,
I'll smile for joy, to see you suck my blood.

Leir. I am no Cannibal, that I should delight

To slake my hungry jaws with human flesh:
I am no devil, or ten times worse than so,
To suck the blood of such a peerless friend.
O, do not think that I respect my life
So dearly, as I do thy loyal love.
Ah, Britain, I shall never see thee more,
That hast unkindly banished thy King:
And yet thou dost not make me to complain,
But they which were more near to me than thou.

Cordella. What do I hear? this lamentable voice, Me thinks,
ere now I oftentimes have heard.

Leir. Ah, Gonorill, was half my kingdom's gift

The cause that thou didst seek to have my life?
Ah, cruel Ragan, did I give thee all,
And all could not suffice without my blood?
Ah, poor Cordella, did I give thee nought,

Nor never shall be able for to give?
O, let me warn all ages that ensueth,
How they trust flattery, and reject the truth.
Well, unkind girls, I here forgive you both,
Yet the just heavens will hardly do the like;
And only crave forgiveness at the end
Of good Cordella, and of thee, my friend;
Of God, whose maiesty I have offended,
By my transgression many thousand ways:
Of her, dear heart, whom I for no occasion
Turned out of all, through flatterers' persuasion:
Of thee, kind friend, who but for me, I know,
Hadst never come unto this place of woe.

Cordella. Alack, that ever I should live to see My noble
father in this misery.

King. Sweet Love, reveal not what thou art as yet, Until we
know the ground of all this ill.

Cordella. O but some meat, some meat: do you not see,
How near they are to death for want of food?

Perillus. Lord, which didst help thy servants at their need.

Or now or never send us help with speed.
Oh comfort, comfort! yonder is a banquet,
And men and women, my Lord: be of good cheer;
For I see comfort coming very near.
O my Lord, a banquet, and men and women!

Leir. O, let kind pity mollify their hearts,
That-they may help us in our great extremes.

Perillus. God save you, friends; & if this blessed banquet
Affordeth any food or sustenance,
Even for his sake that saved us all from death,
Vouchsafe to save us from the grip of famine.

[*She bringeth him to the table.*]

Cordella. Here father, sit and eat, here sit and drink: And would it were far better for your sakes.

Perillus takes Leir by the hand to the table.

Perillus. I'll give you thanks anon: my friend doth faint,
And needeth present comfort.

[*Leir drinks.*]

Mumford. I warrant, he ne'er stays to say grace:

O, there's no sauce to a good stomach.

Perillus. The blessed God of heaven hath thought upon us.

Leir. The thanks be his, and these kind courteous folk,
By whose humanity we are preserved.

They eat hungrily, Leir drinks.

Cordella. And may that draught be unto him, as was
That which old Eson drank, which did renew
His withered age, and made him young again.
And may that meat be unto him, as was
That which Elias ate, in strength whereof
He walkèd forty days, and never fainted.
Shall I conceal me longer from my father?
Or shall I manifest myself to him?

King. Forbear a while, until his strength return,

Lest being overjoyed with seeing thee,
His poor weak senses should forsake their office,
And so our cause of joy be turned to sorrow.

Perillus. What cheer, my Lord? how do you feel yourself?

Leir. Me thinks, I never ate such savory meat:

It is as pleasant as the blessed manna,
That rained from heaven amongst the Israelites:
It hath recalled my spirits home again,
And made me fresh, as erst I was before.
But how shall we congratulate their kindness?

Perillus. In faith, I know not how sufficiently;

But the best mean that I can think on, is this:
I'll offer them my doublet in requital;
For we have nothing else to spare.

Leir. Nay, stay, *Perillus*, for they shall have mine.

Perillus. Pardon, my Lord, I swear they shall have mine.

Perillus proffers his doublet: they will not take it.

Leir. Ah, who would think such kindness should remain

Among such strange and unacquainted men:
And that such hate should harbor in the breast
Of those, which have occasion to be best?

Cordella. Ah, good old father, tell to me thy grief, I'll sorrow
with thee, if not add relief.

Leir. Ah, good young daughter, I may call thee so; For thou
art like a daughter I did owe.

Cordella. Do you not owe her still? what, is she dead?

Leir. No, God forbid: but all my interest's gone,

By showing myself too much unnatural:
So have I lost the title of a father,
And may be called a stranger to her rather.

Cordella Your title's good still; for 'tis always known,

A man may do as him list with his own.
But have you but one daughter then in all?

Leir. Yes, I have more by two, than would I had.

Cordella. O, say not so, but rather see the end:

They that are bad, may have the grace to mend: But
how have they offended you so much?

Leir. If from the first I should relate the cause,

'Twould make a heart of adamant to weep;
And thou, poor soule, kindhearted as thou art,
Dost weep already, ere I do begin.

Cordella. For God's love tell it, and when you have done,

I'll tell the reason why I weep so soon.

Leir. Then know this first, I am a Briton born,

And had three daughters by one loving wife;
And though I say it, of beauty they were sped;
Especially the youngest of the three,
For her perfections hardly matched could be:
On these I doted with a jealous love,
And thought to try which of them loved me best,
By asking them, which would do most for me?
The first and second flattered me with words,
And vowed they loved me better than their lives:
The youngest said, she loved me as a child
Might do: her answer I esteemed most vile,
And presently in an outrageous mood,
I turned her from me to go sink or swim:
And all I had, even to the very clothes,
I gave in dowry with the other two:
And she that best deserved the greatest share,
I gave her nothing, but disgrace and care.
Now mark the sequel: When I had done thus,
I sojourned in my eldest daughter's house,

Where for a time I was entreated well,
And lived in state sufficing my content:
But every day her kindness did grow cold,
Which I with patience put up well enough,
And seemed not to see the things I saw:
But at the last she grew so far incensed
With moody fury, and with causeless hate,
That in most vile and contumelious terms,
She bade me pack, and harbor somewhere else.
Then was I fain for refuge to repair
Unto my other daughter for relief,
Who gave me pleasing and most courteous words;
But in her actions showed herself so sore,
As never any daughter did before:
She prayed me in a morning out betime,
To go to a thicket two miles from the court,
Pointing that there she would come talk with me:
There she had set a shag-haired murdering wretch,
To massacre my honest friend and me.
Then judge yourself, although my tale be brief,
If ever man had greater cause of grief.

King. Nor never like impiety was done,
Since the creation of the world begun.

Leir. And now I am constrained to seek relief

Of her, to whom I have been so unkind;
Whose censure, if it do award me death,
I must confess she pays me but my due:
But if she show a loving daughter's part,
It comes of God and her, not my desert.

Cordella. No doubt she will, I dare be sworn she will. *Leir.*
How know you that, not knowing what she is?

Cordella. Myself a father have a great way hence,

Used me as ill as ever you did her;
Yet, that his reverend age I once might see,
I'd creep along, to meet him on my knee.

Leir. O, no men's children are unkind but mine.

Cordella. Condemn not all, because of other's crime:

But look, dear father, look, behold and see
Thy loving daughter speaketh unto thee.

[*She kneels.*]

Leir. O, stand thou up, it is my part to kneel, And ask
forgiveness for my former faults.

[*He kneels.*]

Cordella. O, if you wish I should enjoy my breath, Dear
father rise, or I receive my death.

[*He riseth.*]

Leir. Then I will rise, to satisfy your mind, But kneel again,
till pardon be resigned.

[*He kneels.*]

Cordella I pardon you: the word beseems not me:

But I do say so, for to ease your knee.
You gave me life, you were the cause that I
Am what I am, who else had never been.

Leir. But you gave life to me and to my friend,

Whose days had else, had an untimely end.

Cordella. You brought me up, when as I was but young,

And far unable for to help myself.

Leir. I cast thee forth, when as thou wast but young,

And far unable for to help thyself.

Cordella. God, world and nature say I do you wrong,

That can endure to see you kneel so long.

King. Let me break off this loving controversy,

Which doth rejoice my very soul to see.

Good father, rise, she is your loving daughter,

[*He riseth.*]

And honors you with as respective duty.

As if you were the monarch of the world. *Cordella.* But I will never rise from off my knee,

Until I have your blessing, and your pardon
Of all my faults committed any way,
From my first birth unto this present day.

Leir. The blessing, which the God of Abraham gave

Unto the tribe of Juda, light on thee,
And multiply thy days, that thou mayst see
Thy children's children prosper after thee.
Thy faults, which are just none that I do know,
God pardon on high, and I forgive below.

[*She riseth.*]

Cordella. Now is my heart at quiet, and doth leap

Within my breast, for joy of this good hap:
And now (dear father) welcome to our court,
And welcome (kind Perillus) unto me,
Mirror of virtue and true honesty.

Leir. O, he hath been the kindest friend to me,
That ever man had in adversity.

Perillus. My tongue doth fail, to say what heart doth think,
I am so ravished with exceeding joy.

King. All you have spoke: now let me speak my mind, And in
few words much matter here conclude:

[He kneels.]

If ere my heart do harbor any joy,
Or true content repose within my breast,
Till I have rooted out this viperous sect,
And repossessed my father of his crown,
Let me be counted for the perjuredest man,
That ever spoke word since the world began.

[Rise.]

Mumford. Let me pray too, that never prayed before;

[Mumford kneels.]

If ere I resalute the British earth,
(As [ere't be long] I do presume I shall)
And do return from thence without my wench,
Let me gelded from my recompense.

[Rise.]

King. Come, let's to arms for to redress this wrong: Till I am there, me thinks, the time seems long.

[Exeunt.]

OceanofPDF.com

Commentaries

SAMUEL JOHNSON

*From **Preface to Shakespeare** and “King Lear”*

PREFACE TO SHAKESPEARE

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. The irregular combinations of fanciful invention may delight awhile, by that novelty of which the common satiety of life sends us all in quest; but the pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.

Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpracticed by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.

It is from this wide extension of design that so much instruction is derived. It is this which fills the plays of Shakespeare with practical axioms and domestic wisdom. It was said of Euripides, that every verse was a precept; and

From *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, London, 1765.

it may be said of Shakespeare, that from his works may be collected a system of civil and economical prudence. Yet his real power is not shown in the splendor of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable, and, the tenor of his dialogue; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations, will succeed like the pedant in *Hierocles*, who, when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen....

Other dramatists can only gain attention by hyperbolical or aggravated characters, by fabulous and unexampled excellence or depravity, as the writers of barbarous romances invigorated the reader by a giant and a dwarf; and he that should form his expectations of human affairs from the play, or from the tale, would be equally deceived. Shakespeare has no heroes; his scenes are occupied only by men, who act and speak as the reader thinks that he should himself have spoken or acted on the same occasion: Even where the agency is supernatural the dialogue is level with life. Other writers disguise the most natural passions and most frequent incidents; so that he who contemplates them in the book will not know them in the world: Shakespeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful; the event which he represents will not happen, but if it were possible, its effects would be probably such as he has assigned; and it may be said, that he has not only shown human nature as it acts in real exigencies, but as it would be found in trials, to which it cannot be exposed.

This therefore is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up

before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions....

The censure which he has incurred by mixing comic and tragic scenes, as it extends to all his works, deserves more consideration. Let the fact be first stated, and then examined.

Shakespeare's plays are not in the rigorous and critical sense either tragedies or comedies, but compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination; and expressing the course of the world, in which the loss of one is the gain of another; in which, at the same time, the reveler is hasting to his wine, and the mourner burying his friend; in which the malignity of one is sometimes defeated by the frolic of another; and many mischiefs and many benefits are done and hindered without design.

Out of this chaos of mingled purposes and casualties the ancient poets, according to the laws which custom had prescribed, selected some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; some the momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some the terrors of distress, and some the gaieties of prosperity. Thus rose the two modes of imitation, known by the names of *tragedy* and *comedy*, compositions intended to promote different ends by contrary means, and considered as so little allied, that I do not recollect among the Greeks or Romans a single writer who attempted both.

Shakespeare has united the powers of exciting laughter and sorrow not only in one mind but in one composition.

Almost all his plays are divided between serious and ludicrous characters, and, in the successive evolutions of the design, sometimes produce seriousness and sorrow, and sometimes levity and laughter.

That this is a practice contrary to the rules of criticism will be readily allowed; but there is always an appeal open from criticism to nature. The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing. That the mingled drama may convey all the instruction of tragedy or comedy cannot be denied, because it includes both in its alternations of exhibition, and approaches nearer than either to the appearance of life, by showing how great machinations and slender designs may promote or obviate one another, and the high and the low cooperate in the general system by unavoidable concatenation.

It is objected, that by this change of scenes the passions are interrupted in their progression, and that the principal event, being not advanced by a due gradation of preparatory incidents, wants at last the power to move, which constitutes the perfection of dramatic poetry. This reasoning is so specious, that it is received as true even by those who in daily experience feel it to be false. The interchanges of mingled scenes seldom fail to produce the intended vicissitudes of passion. Fiction cannot move so much, but that the attention may be easily transferred; and though it must be allowed that pleasing melancholy be sometimes interrupted by unwelcome levity, yet let it be considered likewise, that melancholy is often not pleasing, and that the disturbance of one man may be the relief of another; that different auditors have different habitudes; and that, upon the whole, all pleasure consists in variety...

Shakespeare engaged in dramatic poetry with the world open before him; the rules of the ancients were yet known to few; the public judgment was unformed; he had no example of such fame as might force him upon imitation, nor critics of such authority as might restrain his

extravagance: He therefore indulged his natural disposition, and his disposition, as Rymer has remarked, led him to comedy. In tragedy he often writes with great appearance of toil and study, what is written at last with little felicity; but in his comic scenes, he seems to produce without labor, what no labor can improve. In tragedy he is always struggling after some occasion to be comic, but in comedy he seems to repose, or to luxuriate, as in a mode of thinking congenial to his nature. In his tragic scenes there is always something wanting, but his comedy often surpasses expectation or desire. His comedy pleases by the thoughts and the language, and his tragedy for the greater part by incident and action. His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.

The force of his comic scenes has suffered little diminution from the changes made by a century and a half, in manners or in words. As his personages act upon principles arising from genuine passion, very little modified by particular forms, their pleasures and vexations are communicable to all times and to all places; they are natural, and therefore durable; the adventitious peculiarities of personal habits are only superficial dyes, bright and pleasing for a little while, yet soon fading to a dim tinct, without any remains of former luster; but the discriminations of true passion are the colors of nature; they pervade the whole mass, and can only perish with the body that exhibits them. The accidental compositions of heterogeneous modes are dissolved by the chance which combined them; but the uniform simplicity of primitive qualities neither admits increase, nor suffers decay. The sand heaped by one flood is scattered by another, but the rock always continues in its place. The stream of time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakespeare.

If there be, what I believe there is, in every nation, a style which never becomes obsolete, a certain mode of

phraseology so consonant and congenial to the analogy and principles of its respective language as to remain settled and unaltered; this style is probably to be sought in the common intercourse of life, among those who speak only to be understood, without ambition of elegance. The polite are always catching modish innovations, and the learned depart from established forms of speech, in hope of finding or making better, those who wish for distinction forsake the vulgar, when the vulgar is right; but there is a conversation above grossness and below refinement, where propriety resides, and where this poet seems to have gathered his comic dialogue. He is therefore more agreeable to the ears of the present age than any other author equally remote, and among his other excellencies deserves to be studied as one of the original masters of our language....

Shakespeare with his excellencies has likewise faults, and faults sufficient to obscure and overwhelm any other merit. I shall show them in the proportion in which they appear to me, without envious malignity or superstitious veneration. No question can be more innocently discussed than a dead poet's pretensions to renown; and little regard is due to that bigotry which sets candor higher than truth.

His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose. From his writings indeed a system of social duty may be selected, for he that thinks reasonably must think morally; but his precepts and axioms drop casually from him; he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot extenuate; for it is

always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place.

The plots are often so loosely formed, that a very slight consideration may improve them, and so carelessly pursued, that he seems not always fully to comprehend his own design. He omits opportunities of instructing or delighting which the train of his story seems to force upon him, and apparently rejects those exhibitions which would be more affecting, for the sake of those which are more easy.

It may be observed, that in many of his plays the latter part is evidently neglected. When he found himself near the end of his work, and in view of his reward, he shortened the labor, to snatch the profit. He therefore remits his efforts where he should most vigorously exert them, and his catastrophe is improbably produced or imperfectly represented.

He had no regard to distinction of time or place, but gives to one age or nation, without scruple, the customs, institutions, and opinions of another, at the expense not only of likelihood, but of possibility....

In tragedy his performance seems constantly to be worse, as his labor is more. The effusions of passion which exigence forces out are for the most part striking and energetic; but whenever he solicits his invention, or strains his faculties, the offspring of his throes is tumor, meanness, tediousness, and obscurity.

In narration he affects a disproportionate pomp of diction and a wearisome train of circumlocution, and tells the incident imperfectly in many words, which might have been more plainly delivered in few. Narration in dramatic poetry is naturally tedious, as it is unanimated and inactive, and obstructs the progress of the action; it should therefore always be rapid, and enlivened by frequent interruption. Shakespeare found it an encumbrance, and instead of

lightening it by brevity, endeavored to recommend it by dignity and splendor.

His declamations or set speeches are commonly cold and weak, for his power was the power of nature; when he endeavored, like other tragic writers, to catch opportunities of amplification, and instead of inquiring what the occasion demanded, to show how much his stores of knowledge could supply, he seldom escapes without the pity or resentment of his reader.

It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled and evolved by those who have more leisure to bestow upon it.

Not that always where the language is intricate the thought is subtle, or the image always great where the line is bulky; the equality of words to things is very often neglected, and trivial sentiments and vulgar ideas disappoint the attention, to which they are recommended by sonorous epithets and swelling figures.

But the admirers of this great poet have never less reason to indulge their hopes of supreme excellence, than when he seems fully resolved to sink them in dejection, and mollify them with tender emotions by the fall of greatness, the danger of innocence, or the crosses of love. He is not long soft and pathetic without some idle conceit, or contemptible equivocation. He no sooner begins to move, than he counteracts himself; and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity.

A quibble is to Shakespeare, what luminous vapors are to the traveler; he follows it at all adventures, it is sure to lead him out of his way, and sure to engulf him in the mire. It has some malignant power over his mind, and its fascinations are irresistible. Whatever be the dignity or profundity of his disquisition, whether he be enlarging knowledge or exalting

affection, whether he be amusing attention with incidents, or enchaining it in suspense, let but a quibble spring up before him, and he leaves his work unfinished. A quibble is the golden apple for which he will always turn aside from his career, or stoop from his elevation. A quibble, poor and barren as it is, gave him such delight, that he was content to purchase it, by the sacrifice of reason, propriety and truth. A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world, and was content to lose it.

It will be thought strange, that, in enumerating the defects of this writer, I have not yet mentioned his neglect of the unities; his violation of those laws which have been instituted and established by the joint authority of poets and critics.

For his other deviations from the art of writing I resign him to critical justice, without making any other demand in his favor, than that which must be indulged to all human excellence; that his virtues be rated with his failings: But, from the censure which this irregularity may bring upon him, I shall, with due reverence to that learning which I must oppose, adventure to try how I can defend him.

His histories, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws; nothing more is necessary to all the praise which they expect, than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is to be sought.

In his other works he has well enough preserved the unity of action. He has not, indeed, an intrigue regularly perplexed and regularly unraveled; he does not endeavor to hide his design only to discover it, for this is seldom the order of real events, and Shakespeare is the poet of nature: But his plan has commonly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end; one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy

consequence. There are perhaps some incidents that might be spared, as in other poets there is much talk that only fills up time upon the stage; but the general system makes gradual advances, and the end of the play is the end of expectation.

To the unities of time and place he has shown no regard, and perhaps a nearer view of the principles on which they stand will diminish their value, and withdraw from them the veneration which, from the time of Corneille, they have very generally received by discovering that they have given more trouble to the poet, than pleasure to the auditor.

The necessity of observing the unities of time and place arises from the supposed necessity of making the drama credible. The critics hold it impossible, that an action of months or years can be possibly believed to pass in three hours; or that the spectator can suppose himself to sit in the theater, while ambassadors go and return between distant kings, while armies are levied and towns besieged, while an exile wanders and returns, or till he whom they saw courting his mistress, shall lament the untimely fall of his son. The mind revolts from evident falsehood, and fiction loses its force when it departs from the resemblance of reality.

From the narrow limitation of time necessarily arises the contraction of place. The spectator, who knows that he saw the first act at Alexandria, cannot suppose that he sees the next at Rome, at a distance to which not the dragons of Medea could, in so short a time, have transported him; he knows with certainty that he has not changed his place; and he knows that place cannot change itself; that what was a house cannot become a plain; that what was Thebes can never be Persepolis.

Such is the triumphant language with which a critic exults over the misery of an irregular poet, and exults commonly without resistance or reply. It is time therefore to tell him by the authority of Shakespeare, that he assumes, as an unquestionable principle, a position, which, while his breath

is forming it into words, his understanding pronounces to be false....

There is no reason why a mind thus wandering in ecstasy should count the clock, or why an hour should not be a century in that calenture of the brains that can make the stage a field.

The truth is, that the spectators are always in their senses, and know, from the first act to the last, that the stage is only a stage, and that the players are only players. They came to hear a certain number of lines recited with just gesture and elegant modulation. The lines relate to some action, and an action must be in some place; but the different actions that complete a story may be in places very remote from each other....

Time is, of all modes of existence, most obsequious to the imagination; a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours. In contemplation we easily contract the time of real actions, and therefore willingly permit it to be contracted when we only see their imitation.

It will be asked, how the drama moves, if it is not credited. It is credited with all the credit due to a drama. It is credited, whenever it moves, as a just picture of a real original; as representing to the auditor what he would himself feel, if he were to do or suffer what is there feigned to be suffered or to be done. The reflection that strikes the heart is not, that the evils before us are real evils, but that they are evils to which we ourselves may be exposed. If there be any fallacy, it is not that we fancy the players, but that we fancy ourselves unhappy for a moment; but we rather lament the possibility than suppose the presence of misery, as a mother weeps over her babe, when she remembers that death may take it from her. The delight of tragedy proceeds from our consciousness of fiction; if we thought murders and treasons real, they would please no more....

[Shakespeare's] plots, whether historical or fabulous, are always crowded with incidents, by which the attention of a rude people was more easily caught than by sentiment or argumentation; and such is the power of the marvelous even over those who despise it, that every man finds his mind more strongly seized by the tragedies of Shakespeare than of any other writer, others please us by particular speeches, but he always makes us anxious for the event, and has perhaps excelled all but Homer in securing the first purpose of a writer, by exciting restless and unquenchable curiosity and compelling him that reads his work to read it through.

The shows and bustle with which his plays abound have the same original. As knowledge advances, pleasure passes from the eye to the ear, but returns, as it declines, from the ear to the eye. Those to whom our author's labors were exhibited had more skill in pomps or processions than in poetical language, and perhaps wanted some visible and discriminated events, as comments on the dialogue. He knew how he should most please; and whether his practice is more agreeable to nature, or whether his example has prejudiced the nation, we still find that on our stage something must be done as well as said, and inactive declamation is very coldly heard, however musical or elegant, passionate or sublime....

"KING LEAR"

The Tragedy of Lear is deservedly celebrated among the dramas of Shakespeare. There is perhaps no play which keeps the attention so strongly fixed; which so much agitates our passions and interests our curiosity. The artful involutions of distinct interests, the striking opposition of contrary characters, the sudden changes of fortune, and the quick succession of events, fill the mind with a perpetual

tumult of indignation, pity, and hope. There is no scene which does not contribute to the aggravation of the distress or conduct of the action, and scarce a line which does not conduce to the progress of the scene. So powerful is the current of the poet's imagination, that the mind, which once ventures within it, is hurried irresistibly along.

On the seeming improbability of Lear's conduct, it may be observed that he is represented according to histories at that time vulgarly received as true. And perhaps if we turn our thoughts upon the barbarity and ignorance of the age to which this story is referred, it will appear not so unlikely as while we estimate Lear's manners by our own. Such preference of one daughter to another, or resignation of dominion on such conditions, would be yet credible, if told of a petty prince of Guinea or Madagascar. Shakespeare, indeed, by the mention of his Earls and Dukes, has given us the idea of times more civilized, and of life regulated by softer manners; and the truth is, that though he so nicely discriminates, and so minutely describes the characters of men, he commonly neglects and confounds the characters of age, by mingling customs ancient and modern, English and foreign.

My learned friend Mr. Warton, who has in the *Adventurer* very minutely criticized this play, remarks, that the instances of cruelty are too savage and shocking, and that the intervention of Edmund destroys the simplicity of the story. These objections may, I think, be answered, by repeating, that the cruelty of the daughters is an historical fact, to which the poet has added little, having only drawn it into a series by dialogue and action. But I am not able to apologize with equal plausibility for the extrusion of Gloucester's eyes, which seems an act too horrid to be endured in dramatic exhibition, and such as must always compel the mind to relieve its distress by incredulity. Yet let it be remembered that our author well knew what would please the audience for which he wrote.

The injury done by Edmund to the simplicity of the action is abundantly recompensed by the addition of variety, by the art with which he is made to cooperate with the chief design, and the opportunity which he gives the poet of combining perfidy with perfidy, and connecting the wicked son with the wicked daughters, to impress this important moral, that villainy is never at a stop, that crimes lead to crimes, and at last terminate in ruin.

But though this moral be incidentally enforced, Shakespeare has suffered the virtue of Cordelia to perish in a just cause, contrary to the natural ideas of justice, to the hope of the reader, and what is yet more strange, to the faith of chronicles. Yet this conduct is justified by the Spectator, who blames Tate for giving Cordelia success and happiness in his alteration, and declares, that in his opinion, *the tragedy has lost half its beauty*. Dennis has remarked, whether justly or not, that, to secure the favorable reception of *Cato*, *the town was poisoned with much false and abominable criticism*, and that endeavors had been used to discredit and decry poetical justice. A play in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of human life: 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.

In the present case the public has decided. Cordelia, from the time of Tate, has always retired with victory and felicity. And, if my sensations could add anything to the general suffrage, I might relate, that I was many years ago shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor.

OceanofPDF.com

A. C. BRADLEY

From Shakespearean Tragedy

... [The] chief value [of the double action in *King Lear*] is not merely dramatic. It lies in the fact—in Shakespeare without a parallel—that the subplot simply repeats the theme of the main story. Here, as there, we see an old man “with a white beard.” He, like Lear, is affectionate, unsuspecting, foolish, and self-willed. He, too, wrongs deeply a child who loves him not less for the wrong. He, too, meets with monstrous ingratitude from the child whom he favors, and is tortured and driven to death. This repetition does not simply double the pain with which the tragedy is witnessed: it startles and terrifies by suggesting that the folly of Lear and the ingratitude of his daughters are no accidents or merely individual aberrations, but that in that dark cold world some fateful malignant influence is abroad, turning the hearts of the fathers against their children and of the children against their fathers, smiting the earth with a curse, so that the brother gives the brother to death and the father the son, blinding the eyes, maddening the brain, freezing the springs of pity, numbing all powers except the nerves of anguish and the dull lust of life.

Hence too, as well as from other sources, comes that feeling which haunts us in *King Lear*, as though we were

From *Shakespearean Tragedy* by A. C. Bradley. (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1904). Reprinted by permission of Macmillan & Co., Ltd. (London), St Martin's Press, Inc. (New York), and the Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd.

witnessing something universal—a conflict not so much of particular persons as of the powers of good and evil in the world. And the treatment of many of the characters confirms this feeling. Considered simply as psychological studies few of them, surely, are of the highest interest. Fine and subtle touches could not be absent from a work of Shakespeare's maturity; but, with the possible exception of Lear himself, no one of the characters strikes us as psychologically a *wonderful* creation, like Hamlet or Iago or even Macbeth; one or two seem even to be somewhat faint and thin. And, what is more significant, it is not quite natural to us to regard them from this point of view at all. Rather we observe a most unusual circumstance. If Lear, Gloucester and Albany are set apart, the rest fall into two distinct groups, which are strongly, even violently, contrasted: Cordelia, Kent, Edgar, the Fool on one side, Goneril, Regan, Edmund, Cornwall, Oswald on the other. These characters are in various degrees individualized, most of them completely so; but still in each group there is a quality common to all the members, or one spirit breathing through them all. Here we have unselfish and devoted love, there hard self-seeking. On both sides, further, the common quality takes an extreme form; the love is incapable of being chilled by injury, the selfishness of being softened by pity; and, it may be added, this tendency to extremes is found again in the characters of Lear and Gloucester, and is the main source of the accusations of improbability directed against their conduct at certain points. Hence the members of each group tend to appear, at least in part, as varieties of one species; the radical differences of the two species are emphasized in broad hard strokes; and the two are set in conflict, almost as if Shakespeare, like Empedocles, were regarding Love and Hate as the two ultimate forces of the universe.

The presence in King Lear of so large a number of characters in whom love or self-seeking is so extreme, has another effect. They do not merely inspire in us emotions of

unusual strength, but they also stir the intellect to wonder and speculation. How can there be such men and women? we ask ourselves. How comes it that humanity can take such absolutely opposite forms? And, in particular, to what omission of elements which should be present in human nature, or, if there is no omission, to what distortion of these elements is it due that such beings as some of these come to exist? This is a question which Iago (and perhaps no previous creation of Shakespeare's) forces us to ask, but in *King Lear* it is provoked again and again. And more, it seems to us that the author himself is asking this question: "Then let them anatomize Regan, see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?"—the strain of thought which appears here seems to be present in some degree throughout the play. We seem to trace the tendency which, a few years later, produced Ariel and Caliban, the tendency of imagination to analyze and abstract, to decompose human nature into its constituent factors, and then to construct beings in whom one or more of these factors is absent or atrophied or only incipient. This, of course, is a tendency which produces symbols, allegories, personifications of qualities and abstract ideas; and we are accustomed to think it quite foreign to Shakespeare's genius, which was in the highest degree concrete. No doubt in the main we are right here; but it is hazardous to set limits to that genius. The Sonnets, if nothing else, may show us how easy it was to Shakespeare's mind to move in a world of "Platonic" ideas; and, while it would be going too far to suggest that he was employing conscious symbolism or allegory in *King Lear*, it does appear to disclose a mode of imagination not so very far removed from the mode with which, we must remember, Shakespeare was perfectly familiar in Morality plays and in the *Fairy Queen*.

This same tendency shows itself in *King Lear* in other forms. To it is due the idea of monstrosity—of beings,

actions, states of mind, which appear not only abnormal but absolutely contrary to nature; an idea, which, of course, is common enough in Shakespeare, but appears with unusual frequency in King Lear, for instance in the lines:

Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
Than the sea-monster! (1.4.267-68)

or in the exclamation,

Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to't? (3.4.14-16)

It appears in another shape in that most vivid passage where Albany, as he looks at the face which had bewitched him, now distorted with dreadful passions, suddenly sees it in a new light and exclaims in horror:

Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,
Bemonster not thy feature. Were't my fitness
To let these hands obey my blood,
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
Thy flesh and bones: howe'er thou art a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee. (4.3.62-67)

It appears once more in that exclamation of Kent's, as he listens to the description of Cordelia's grief:

It is the stars,
The stars above us, govern our conditions;
Else one self mate and mate could not beget
Such different issues. (3.3.33-36)

(This is not the only sign that Shakespeare had been musing over heredity, and wondering how it comes about that the composition of two strains of blood or two parent souls can produce such astonishingly different products.)

This mode of thought is responsible, lastly, for a very striking characteristic of *King Lear*—one in which it has no parallel except *Timon*—the incessant references to the lower animals and man's likeness to them. These references are scattered broadcast through the whole play as though Shakespeare's mind were so busy with the subject that he could hardly write a page without some allusion to it. The dog, the horse, the cow, the sheep, the hog, the lion, the bear, the wolf, the fox, the monkey, the polecat, the civet cat, the pelican, the owl, the crow, the chough, the wren, the fly, the butterfly, the rat, the mouse, the frog, the tadpole, the wall newt, the water newt, the worm—I am sure I cannot have completed the list, and some of them are mentioned again and again. Often, of course, and especially in the talk of Edgar as the Bedlam, they have no symbolical meaning; but not seldom, even in his talk, they are expressly referred to for their typical qualities—"hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey," "The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't with a more riotous appetite." Sometimes a person in the drama is compared, openly or implicitly, with one of them. Goneril is a kite: her ingratitude has a serpent's tooth: she has struck her father most serpentlike upon the very heart: her visage is wolfish: she has tied sharp-toothed unkindness like a vulture on her father's breast: for her husband she is a gilded serpent: to Gloster her cruelty seems to have the fangs of a boar. She and Regan are dog-hearted: they are tigers, not daughters: each is an adder to the other: the flesh of each is covered with the fell of a beast. Oswald is a mongrel, and the son and heir of a mongrel: ducking to everyone in power, he is a wagtail: white with fear, he is a goose. Gloster, for Regan, is an ingrateful fox: Albany, for his wife, has a cowish spirit and is milk-liver'd: when Edgar as the Bedlam first appeared to Lear he made him think a man a worm. As we read, the souls of all the beasts in turn seem to us to have entered the bodies of these mortals;

horrible in their venom, savagery, lust, deceitfulness, sloth, cruelty, filthiness; miserable in their feebleness, nakedness, defenselessness, blindness; and man, “consider him well,” is even what they are. Shakespeare, to whom the idea of the transmigration of souls was familiar and had once been material for jest,¹ seems to have been brooding on humanity, in the light of it. It is remarkable, and somewhat sad, that he seems to find none of man’s better qualities in the world of the brutes (though he might well have found the prototype of the selfless love of Kent and Cordelia in the dog whom he so habitually maligns); but he seems to have been asking himself whether that which he loathes in man may not be due to some strange wrenching of this frame of things, through which the lower animal souls have found a lodgment in human forms, and there found—to the horror and confusion of the thinking mind—brains to forge, tongues to speak, and hands to act, enormities which no mere brute can conceive or execute. He shows us in *King Lear* these terrible forces bursting into monstrous life and flinging themselves upon those human beings who are weak and defenseless, partly from old age, but partly because they *are* human and lack the dreadful undivided energy of the beast. And the only comfort he might seem to hold out to us is the prospect that at least this bestial race, strong only where it is vile, cannot endure: though stars and gods are powerless, or careless, or empty dreams, yet there must be an end of this horrible world:

¹*E.g.* in *As You Like It*, 3.2.187, “I was never so berhymed since Pythagoras’ time, that I was an Irish rat, which I can hardly remember”; *Twelfth Night*, 4.2.55, “*Clown*. What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl? *Mal*. That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird. *Clown*. What thinkest thou of his opinion? *Mal*. I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion,” etc. But earlier

comes a passage which reminds us of *King Lear*, *Merchant of Venice*, 4.1.128:

O be thou damn'd, execrable dog!
And for thy life let justice be accused.
Thou almost makest me waver in my faith
To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men: thy currish spirit
Govern'd a wolf, who, hang'd for human slaughter,
Even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet,
And, whilst thou lay'st in thy unhallow'd dam,
Infused itself in thee; for thy desires
Are wolvis, bloody, starv'd and ravenous.
It will come;
Humanity must perforce prey on itself
Like monsters of the deep. (4.2.48-50)

The influence of all this on imagination as we read *King Lear* is very great; and it combines with other influences to convey to us, not in the form of distinct ideas but in the manner proper to poetry, the wider or universal significance of the spectacle presented to the inward eye. But the effect of theatrical exhibition is precisely the reverse. There the poetic atmosphere is dissipated; the meaning of the very words which create it passes half-realized; in obedience to the tyranny of the eye we conceive the characters as mere particular men and women; and all that mass of vague suggestion, if it enters the mind at all, appears in the shape of an allegory which we immediately reject. A similar conflict between imagination and sense will be found if we consider the dramatic center of the whole tragedy, the Storm-scenes. The temptation of Othello and the scene of Duncan's murder may lose upon the stage, but they do not lose their essence, and they gain as well as lose. The Storm-scenes in *King Lear* gain nothing and their very essence is destroyed. It is comparatively a small thing that the theatrical storm,

not to drown the dialogue, must be silent whenever a human being wishes to speak, and is wretchedly inferior to many a storm we have witnessed. Nor is it simply that, as Lamb observed, the corporal presence of Lear, “an old man tottering about the stage with a walking stick,” disturbs and depresses that sense of the greatness of his mind which fills the imagination. There is a further reason, which is not expressed, but still emerges, in these words of Lamb’s: “the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches.” Yes, “they are *storms*.” For imagination, that is to say, the explosions of Lear’s passion, and the bursts of rain and thunder, are not, what for the senses they must be, two things, but manifestations of one thing. It is the powers of the tormented soul that we hear and see in the “groans of roaring wind and rain” and the “sheets of fire”; and they that, at intervals almost more overwhelming, sink back into darkness and silence. Nor yet is even this all; but, as those incessant references to wolf and tiger made us see humanity “reeling back into the beast” and ravaging against itself, so in the storm we seem to see Nature herself convulsed by the same horrible passions; the “common mother,”

Whose womb unmeasurable and infinite breast Teems
and feeds all;

(*Timon of Athens*, 4.3.179-80)

turning on her children, to complete the ruin they have wrought upon themselves. Surely something not less, but much more, than these helpless words convey, is what comes to us in these astounding scenes; and if, translated thus into the language of prose, it becomes confused and inconsistent, the reason is simply that it itself is poetry, and such poetry as cannot be transferred to the space behind the footlights, but has its being only in imagination. Here

then is Shakespeare at his very greatest, but not the mere dramatist Shakespeare.

And now we may say this also of the catastrophe, which we found questionable from the strictly dramatic point of view. Its purpose is not merely dramatic. This sudden blow out of the darkness, which seems so far from inevitable, and which strikes down our reviving hopes for the victims of so much cruelty, seems now only what we might have expected in a world so wild and monstrous. It is as if Shakespeare said to us: "Did you think weakness and innocence have any chance here? Were you beginning to dream that? I will show you it is not so."

I come to a last point. As we contemplate this world, the question presses on us, What can be the ultimate power that moves it, that excites this gigantic war and waste, or, perhaps, that suffers them and overrules them? And in *King Lear* this question is not left to *us* to ask, it is raised by the characters themselves. References to religious or irreligious beliefs and feelings are more frequent than is usual in Shakespeare's tragedies, as frequent perhaps as in his final plays. He introduces characteristic differences in the language of the different persons about fortune or the stars or the gods, and shows how the question, What rules the world? is forced upon their minds. They answer it in their turn: Kent, for instance:

It is the stars,
The stars above us, govern our condition:
(4.3.33-34)

Edmund:

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound: (1.2.1-2)

and again,

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeits of our own behavior—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, ... and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on: (128-36)

Gloster:

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,
They kill us for their sport; (4.1.36-37)

Edgar:

Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours
Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.
(4.6.73-74)

Here we have four distinct theories of the nature of the ruling power. And besides this, in such of the characters as have any belief in gods who love good and hate evil, the spectacle of triumphant injustice or cruelty provokes questionings like those of Job, or else the thought, often repeated, of divine retribution. To Lear at one moment the storm seems the messenger of heaven:

Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes....
(3.2.49-52)

At another moment those habitual miseries of the poor, of which he has taken too little account, seem to him to accuse the gods of injustice:

Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just;

(3.4.33-35)

and Gloster has almost the same thought (4.1.67 ff.).
Gloster again, thinking of the cruelty of Lear's daughters,
breaks out,

but I shall see
The winged vengeance overtake such children.
(3.7.66-67)

The servants who have witnessed the blinding of Gloster by
Cornwall and Regan, cannot believe that cruelty so atrocious
will pass unpunished. One cries,

I'll never care what wickedness I do,
If this man come to good;
(100-1)

and another,

if she live long, And in the end meet the old course of
death, Women will all turn monsters.
(101-3)

Albany greets the news of Cornwall's death with the
exclamation,

This shows you are above,
You justicers, that these our nether crimes
So speedily can venge; (4.2.78-80)

and the news of the deaths of the sisters with the words,

This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
Touches us not with pity. (5.3.233-34)

Edgar, speaking to Edmund of their father, declares

The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us, (173-74)

and Edmund himself assents. Almost throughout the latter
half of the drama we note in most of the better characters a

preoccupation with the question of the ultimate power, and a passionate need to explain by reference to it what otherwise would drive them to despair. And the influence of this preoccupation and need joins with other influences in affecting the imagination, and in causing it to receive from *King Lear* an impression which is at least as near of kin to the *Divine Comedy* as to *Othello*.

For Dante that which is recorded in the *Divine Comedy* was the justice and love of God. What did *King Lear* record for Shakespeare? Something, it would seem, very different. This is certainly the most terrible picture that Shakespeare painted of the world. In no other of his tragedies does humanity appear more pitiably infirm or more hopelessly bad. What is Iago's malignity against an envied stranger compared with the cruelty of the son of Gloucester and the daughters of Lear? What are the sufferings of a strong man like Othello to those of helpless age? Much too that we have already observed—the repetition of the main theme in that of the underplot, the comparisons of man with the most wretched and the most horrible of the beasts, the impression of Nature's hostility to him, the irony of the unexpected catastrophe—these, with much else, seem even to indicate an intention to show things at their worst, and to return the sternest of replies to that question of the ultimate power and those appeals for retribution. Is it an accident, for example, that Lear's first appeal to something beyond the earth,

O heavens,
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,
Make it your cause: (2.4.188-91)

is immediately answered by the iron voices of his daughters, raising by turns the conditions on which they will give him a

humiliating harborage; or that his second appeal, heart-rending in its piteousness,

You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both: (271-72)

is immediately answered from the heavens by the sound of the breaking storm? Albany and Edgar may moralize on the divine justice as they will, but how, in the face of all that we see, shall we believe that they speak Shakespeare's mind? Is not his mind rather expressed in the bitter contrast between their faith and the events we witness, or in the scornful rebuke of those who take upon them the mystery of things as if they were God's spies? Is it not Shakespeare's judgment on his kind that we hear in Lear's appeal,

And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once,
That make ingrateful man! (3.2.6-9)

and Shakespeare's judgment on the worth of existence that we hear in Lear's agonized cry, "No, no, no life!"?

Beyond doubt, I think, some such feelings as these possess us, and, if we follow Shakespeare, ought to possess us, from time to time as we read *King Lear*. And some readers will go further and maintain that this is also the ultimate and total impression left by the tragedy. *King Lear* has been held to be profoundly "pessimistic" in the full meaning of that word—the record of a time when contempt and loathing for his kind had over-mastered the poet's soul, and in despair he pronounced man's life to be simply hateful and hideous. And if we exclude the biographical part of this view, the rest may claim some support even from the greatest of Shakespearean critics since the days of Coleridge, Hazlitt and Lamb. Mr. Swinburne, after observing that *King Lear* is "by far the most Aeschylean" of Shakespeare's works, proceeds thus:

“But in one main point it differs radically from the work and the spirit of Aeschylus. Its fatalism is of a darker and harder nature. To Prometheus the fetters of the lord and enemy of mankind were bitter; upon Orestes the hand of heaven was laid too heavily to bear; yet in the not utterly infinite or everlasting distance we see beyond them the promise of the morning on which mystery and justice shall be made one; when righteousness and omnipotence at last shall kiss each other. But on the horizon of Shakespeare’s tragic fatalism we see no such twilight of atonement, such pledge of reconciliation as this. Requital, redemption, amends, equity, explanation, pity and mercy, are words without a meaning here.

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport. (4.1.36-37)

Here is no need of the Eumenides, children of Night everlasting; for here is very Night herself.

“The words just cited are not casual or episodical; they strike the keynote of the whole poem, lay the keystone of the whole arch of thought. There is no contest of conflicting forces, no judgment so much as by casting of lots: far less is there any light of heavenly harmony or of heavenly wisdom, of Apollo or Athene from above. We have heard much and often from theologians of the light of revelation: and some such thing indeed we find in Aeschylus; but the darkness of revelation is here.”²

It is hard to refuse assent to these eloquent words, for they express in the language of a poet what we feel at times in reading *King Lear* but cannot express. But do they represent the total and final impression produced by the play? If they do, this impression, so far as the substance of the drama is concerned (and nothing else is in question here), must, it would seem, be one composed almost wholly of painful feelings—utter depression, or indignant rebellion, or

appalled despair. And that would surely be strange. For *King Lear* is admittedly one of the world's greatest poems, and yet there is surely no other of these poems which produces on the whole this effect, and we regard it as a very serious flaw in any considerable work of art that this should be its ultimate effect. So that Mr. Swinburne's description, if taken as final, and any description of *King Lear* as "pessimistic" in the proper sense of that word, would imply a criticism which is not intended, and which would make it difficult to leave the work in the position almost universally assigned to it.

But in fact these descriptions, like most of the remarks made on *King Lear* in the present lecture, emphasize only certain aspects of the play and certain elements in the total impression; and in that impression the effect of these aspects, though far from being lost, is modified by that of others. I do not mean that the final effect resembles that of the *Divine Comedy* or the *Oresteia*: how should it, when the first of these can be called by its author a "Comedy," and when the second, ending (as doubtless the *Prometheus* trilogy also ended) with a solution, is not in the Shakespearean sense a tragedy at all? Nor do I mean that *King Lear* contains a revelation of righteous omnipotence or heavenly harmony, or even a promise of the reconciliation of mystery and justice. But then, as we saw, neither do Shakespeare's other tragedies contain these things. Any theological interpretation of the world on the author's part is excluded from them, and their effect would be disordered or destroyed equally by the ideas of righteous or of unrighteous omnipotence. Nor, in reading them, do we think of "justice" or "equity" in the sense of a strict requital or such an adjustment of merit and prosperity as our moral sense is said to demand; and there never was vainer labor than that of critics who try to make out that the persons in these dramas meet with "justice" or their "deserts." But, on the other hand, man is not represented in these tragedies as the mere plaything of a blind or capricious power,

suffering woes which have no relation to his character and actions; nor is' the world represented as given over to darkness. And in these respects *King Lear*, though the most terrible of these works, does not differ in essence from the rest. Its keynote is surely to be heard neither in the words wrung from Gloster in his anguish, nor in Edgar's words "the gods are just." Its final and total result is one in which pity and terror, carried perhaps to the extreme limits of art, are so blended with a sense of law and beauty that we feel at last, not depression and much less despair, but a consciousness of greatness in pain, and of solemnity in the mystery we cannot fathom....

But there is another aspect of Lear's story, the influence of which modifies, in a way quite different and more peculiar to this tragedy, the impressions called pessimistic and even this impression of law. There is nothing more noble and beautiful in literature than Shakespeare's exposition of the effect of suffering in reviving the greatness and eliciting the sweetness of Lear's nature. The occasional recurrence, during his madness, of autocratic impatience or of desire for revenge serves only to heighten this effect, and the moments when his insanity becomes merely infinitely piteous do not weaken it. The old King who in pleading with his daughters feels so intensely his own humiliation and their horrible ingratitude, and who yet, at fourscore and upward, constrains himself to practice a self-control and patience so many years disused; who out of old affection for his Fool, and in repentance for his injustice to the Fool's beloved mistress, tolerates incessant and cutting reminders of his own folly and wrong; in whom the rage of the storm awakes a power and a poetic grandeur surpassing even that of Othello's anguish; who comes in his affliction to think of others first, and to seek, in tender solicitude for his poor boy, the shelter he scorns for his own bare head; who learns to feel and to pray for the miserable and houseless poor, to discern the falseness of flattery and the brutality of

authority, and to pierce below the differences of rank and raiment to the common humanity beneath; whose sight is so purged by scalding tears that it sees at last how power and place and all things in the world are vanity except love; who tastes in his last hours the extremes both of love's rapture and of its agony, but could never, if he lived on or lived again, care a jot for aught beside—there is no figure, surely, in the world of poetry at once so grand, so pathetic, and so beautiful as his. Well, but Lear owes the whole of this to those sufferings which made us doubt whether life were not simply evil, and men like the flies which wanton boys torture for their sport. Should we not be at least as near the truth if we called this poem *The Redemption of King Lear*, and declared that the business of “the gods” with him was neither to torment him, nor to teach him a “noble anger,” but to lead him to attain through apparently hopeless failure the very end and aim of life? One can believe that Shakespeare had been tempted at times to feel misanthropy and despair, but it is quite impossible that he can have been mastered by such feelings at the time when he produced this conception....

... Lear's insanity, which destroys the coherence, also reduces the poetry of his imagination. What it stimulates is that power of moral perception and reflection which had already been quickened by his sufferings. This, however partial and however disconnectedly used, first appears, quite soon after the insanity has declared itself, in the idea that the naked beggar represents truth and reality, in contrast with those conventions, flatteries, and corruptions of the great world, by which Lear has so long been deceived and will never be deceived again....

... *King Lear* ... is the tragedy in which evil is shown in the greatest abundance; and the evil characters are peculiarly repellent from their hard savagery, and because so little good is mingled with their evil. The effect is therefore more

startling than elsewhere; it is even appalling. But in substance it is the same as elsewhere....

On the one hand we see a world which generates terrible evil in profusion. Further, the beings in whom this evil appears at its strongest are able, to a certain extent, to thrive. They are not unhappy, and they have power to spread misery and destruction around them. All this is undeniable fact.

On the other hand this evil is *merely* destructive: it founds nothing, and seems capable of existing only on foundations laid by its opposite. It is also self-destructive.... These ... are undeniable facts; and, in face of them, it seems odd to describe *King Lear* as “a play in which the wicked prosper” (Johnson).

Thus the world in which evil appears seems to be at heart unfriendly to it. And this impression is confirmed by the fact that the convulsion of this world is due to evil, mainly in the worst forms here considered, partly in the milder forms which we call the errors or defects of the better characters. Good, in the widest sense, seems thus to be the principle of life and health in the world; evil, at least in these worst forms, to be a poison. The world reacts against it violently, and, in the struggle to expel it, is driven to devastate itself.

If we ask why the world should generate that which convulses and wastes it, the tragedy gives no answer, and we are trying to go beyond tragedy in seeking one. But the world, in this tragic picture, *is* convulsed by evil, and rejects it.

... I might almost say that the “moral” of *King Lear* is presented in the irony of this collocation:

Albany. The gods defend her!

Enter Lear with Cordelia dead in his arms. (5.3.258)

The “gods,” it seems, do *not* show their approval by “defending” their own from adversity or death, or by giving them power and prosperity. These, on the contrary, are

worthless, or worse; it is not on them, but on the renunciation of them, that the gods throw incense. They breed lust, pride, hardness of heart, the insolence of office, cruelty, scorn, hypocrisy, contention, war, murder, self-destruction. The whole story beats this indictment of prosperity into the brain. Lear's great speeches in his madness proclaim it like the curses of Timon on life and man. But here, as in *Timon*, the poor and humble are, almost without exception, sound and sweet at heart, faithful and pitiful. And here adversity, to the blessed in spirit, is blessed. It wins fragrance from the crushed flower. It melts in aged hearts sympathies which prosperity had frozen. It purges the soul's sight by blinding that of the eyes.³ Throughout that stupendous Third Act the good are seen growing better through suffering, and the bad worse through success. The warm castle is a room in hell, the storm-swept heath a sanctuary. The judgment of this world is a lie; its goods, which we covet, corrupt us; its ills, which break our bodies, set our souls free;

Our means secure us, and our mere defects
Prove our commodities. (4.1.20-21)

Let us renounce the world, hate it, and lose it gladly. The only real thing in it is the soul, with its courage, patience, devotion. And nothing outward can touch that.

This, if we like to use the word, is Shakespeare's "pessimism" in *King Lear*....

OceanofPDF.com

HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER

From Prefaces to Shakespeare

THE MAIN LINES OF CONSTRUCTION

King Lear, alone among the great tragedies, adds to its plot a subplot fully developed. And it suffers somewhat under the burden. After a few preliminary lines—Shakespeare had come to prefer this to the grand opening, and in this instance they are made introductory to plot and subplot too—we have a full and almost formal statement of the play's main theme and a show of the characters that are to develop it, followed by a scene which sets out the subplot as fully. The two scenes together form a sort of double dramatic prologue: and they might, by modern custom, count as a first act, for after them falls the only clearly indicated time-division in the play. The Folio, however, adds the quarrel with Goneril before an act-pause is allowed: then—whatever its authority, but according to its usual plan—sets out four more acts, the second allotted to the parallel quarrel with Regan, the third to the climax of the main theme; the fourth we may call a picture of the wreck of both Lear and Gloucester, and in it subplot and main plot are blended, and the fifth act is given to the final and rather complex catastrophe. This division, then, has thus much dramatic validity, and a producer may legitimately choose to abide by it. On the other hand, one may contend, the play's action flows unchecked throughout (but for the one check which does not coincide with the act-division of the Folio). Still it is not to be supposed that a Jacobean audience did, or a modern audience would, sit through a per-

Reprinted from *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, I, by Hadey Granville-Barker. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press. Copyright 1946 by Princeton University Press.

formance without pause. Yet again, it does not follow that the Folio's act-divisions were observed as intervals in which the audience dispersed and by which the continuity of dramatic effect was altogether broken. A producer must, I think, exercise his own judgment. There may be something to be said for more "breathing-spaces," but I should myself incline to one definite interval only, to fall after Act 3....

The scene in which Lear divides his kingdom is a magnificent statement of a magnificent theme. It has a proper formality, and there is a certain megalithic grandeur about it, Lear dominating it, that we associate with Greek tragedy. Its probabilities are neither here nor there. A dramatist may postulate any situation he has the means to interpret, if he will abide by the logic of it after.⁴ The producer should observe and even see stressed the scene's characteristics; Lear's two or three passages of such an eloquence as we rather expect at a play's climax than its opening, the strength of such single lines as

The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft
(1.1.145)

with its hammering monosyllables; and the hard-bitten

Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm (247)

together with the loosening of the tension in changes to rhymed couplets, and the final drop into prose by that businesslike couple, Goneril and Regan. Then follows, with a lift into lively verse for a start, as a contrast and as the right medium for Edmund's sanguine conceit, the development of the Gloucester theme. Shakespeare does this at his ease,

allows himself diversion and time. He has now both the plot of the ungrateful daughters and the subplot of the treacherous son under way.

But the phenomenon for which Shakespeareans learn to look has not yet occurred, that inexplicable “springing to life”—a springing, it almost seems, into a life of its own—of character or theme. Very soon it does occur; Lear’s entrance, disburdened from the care of state, is its natural signal. On his throne, rightly enough, he showed formal and self-contained. Now he springs away; and now the whole play in its relation to him takes on a liveliness and variety; nor will the energy be checked or weakened, or, if checked, only that the next stroke may be intenser, till the climax is past, till his riven and exhausted nature is granted the oblivion of sleep. This is the master movement of the play, which enshrines the very soul of the play—and in the acting, as I have suggested, there should be no break allowed. To read and give full imaginative value to those fifteen hundred lines at a stretch is certainly exhausting; if they were written at one stretch of inspiration the marvel is that Shakespeare, with his Lear, did not collapse under the strain, yet the exactions of his performance he tempers with all his skill. Lear is surrounded by characters, which each in a different way take a share of the burden from him. Kent, the Fool, and Edgar as Poor Tom are a complement of dramatic strength; and the interweaving of the scenes concerning Oswald, Edmund, and Gloucester saves the actor’s energy for the scenes of the rejection and the storm.

As the Lear theme expanded under his hand Shakespeare had begun, and perforce, to economize his treatment of the Gloucester-Edgar-Edmund story. Edgar himself is indeed dismissed from the second scene upon no more allowance of speech than

I’m sure on’t, not a word. (2.1.29)

—with which the best of actors may find it hard to make his presence felt; and at our one view of him before he had been left negative enough. Edmund is then brought rapidly into relation with the main plot, and the blending of main plot and subplot begins. Edgar also is drawn into Lear's orbit; and, for the time, to the complete sacrifice of his own interests in the play. "Poor Tom" is in effect an embodiment of Lear's frenzy, the disguise no part of Edgar's own development.

As we have seen, while Act 3 is at the height of its argument, Shakespeare is careful to keep alive the lower-pitched theme of Edmund's treachery, his new turn to the betrayal of his father. He affords it two scenes, of twenty-five lines each, wedged between the three dominant scenes of the storm and Lear's refuge from it. They are sufficient and no more for their own purpose; in their sordidness they stand as valuable contrast to the spiritual exaltation of the others. The supreme moment for Lear himself, the turning point, therefore, of the play's main theme, is reached in the second of the three storm-scenes, when the proud old king kneels humbly and alone in his wretchedness to pray. This is the argument's absolute height; and from now on we may feel (as far as Lear is concerned) the tension relax, through the first grim passage of his madness, slackening still through the fantastic scene of the arraignment of the joint-stools before that queer bench of justices, to the moment of his falling asleep and his conveyance away—his conveyance, we find it to be, out of the main stream of the play's action. Shakespeare then deals the dreadful blow to Gloucester. The very violence and horror of this finds its dramatic justification in the need to match in another sort—since he could not hope to match it in spiritual intensity—the catastrophe to Lear. And now we may imagine him, if we please, stopping to consider where he was. Anticlimax, after this, is all but inevitable. Let the producer take careful note how Shakespeare sets out to avoid the worst dangers of it.

Had the play been written upon the single subject of Lear and his daughters, we should now be in sight of its end. But the wealth of material Shakespeare has posited asks for use, and his own imagination, we may suppose, is still teeming. But by the very nature of the material (save Cordelia) left for development the rest of the play must be pitched in a lower key. Shakespeare marshals the action by which the wheel of Gloucester's weakness and Edmund's treachery is brought full circle with extraordinary skill and even more extraordinary economy. Yet for all this, except in a fine flash or two, the thing stays by comparison pedestrian. He is only on the wing again when Lear and Cordelia are his concern; in the scenes of their reconciliation and of the detached tragedy of Lear's death with the dead Cordelia in his arms, as in the still more detached and—as far as the mere march of the action is concerned—wholly unjustifiable scene of Lear mad and fantastically crowned with wild flowers. We must add, though, to the inspired passages the immediately preceding fantasy of Gloucester's imaginary suicide, an apt offset to the realistic horror of his blinding, and occasion for some inimitable verse. The chief fact to face, then, is that for the rest of the play, the best will be incidental and not a necessary part of the story. The producer therefore must give his own best attention to Albany, Goneril, and Regan and their close-packed contests, and to the nice means by which Edgar is shaped into a hero; and in general must see that this purposeful disciplined necessary stuff is given fullness and, as far as may be, spontaneity of life in its interpretation. If he will take care of this the marvelous moments will tend to take care of him.

Shakespeare strengthens the action at once with the fresh interest of the Edmund-Goneril-Regan intrigue, daring as it is to launch into this with the short time left him for its development and resolving. He is, indeed, driven to heroic compressions, to implications, effects by "business," action "off," almost to "love-making by reference only." Goneril's

first approach to Edmund (or his to her; but we may credit the lady, I think, with the throwing of the handkerchief) is only clearly marked out for the actors by Regan's reference to it five scenes later, when she tells us that at Goneril's

late being here

She gave strange oeilliads and most speaking looks
To noble Edmund. (4.5.24-26)

(Regan credits her with what, if we prefer our Shakespeare modernized, we might literally translate into "giving the glad eye.") But this silent business of the earlier scene is important and must be duly marked if the arrival of the two together and Edmund's turning back to avoid meeting Albany, the "mild husband," is to have its full effect. For the first and last of their spoken love-making, excellently characteristic as it is, consists of Goneril's

Our wishes on the way

May prove effects....

This trusty servant

Shall pass between us: ere long you are like to hear,

If you dare venture in your own behalf,

A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech;

Decline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak,

Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.

Conceive, and fare thee well. (4.2.14-24)

and Edmund's ("Spare speech," indeed!)

Yours in the ranks of death! (25)

—all spoken in Oswald's presence too. It is, of course, not only excellent but sufficient. The regal impudency of the woman, the falsely chivalrous flourish of the man's response—pages of dialogue might not tell us more of their relations; and, of these relations, is there much more that is dramatically worth knowing? The point for the producer is that no jot of such a constricted dramatic opportunity must be missed.

For the whole working-out of this lower issue of the play the same warning stands true; an exact and unblurred value must be given to each significant thing. The interaction of circumstance and character is close-knit and complex, but it is clear. Keep it clear and it can be made effective to any audience that will listen, and is not distracted from listening. Let us underline this last phrase and now make the warning twofold. In working out a theme so full of incident and of contending characters Shakespeare allows for no distraction of attention at all, certainly not for the breaking of continuity which the constant shifting of realistically localized scenery must involve. The action, moreover, of these later scenes is exceptionally dependent upon to-ings and fro-ings. Given continuity of performance and no more insistence upon whereabouts than the action itself will indicate, the impression produced by the constant busy movement into our sight and out again of purposeful, passionate or distracted figures, is in itself of great dramatic value, and most congruous to the plot and counterplot of the play's ending. The order for Lear's and Cordelia's murder, the quarrel over Edmund's precedence, Albany's sudden self-assertion, Regan's sickness, Edgar's appearance, the fight, his discovery of himself, Goneril's discomfiture, the telling of Kent's secret, Regan's and Goneril's death, the alarm to save Lear and Cordelia—Shakespeare, by the Folio text, gets all this into less than two hundred lines, with a fair amount of rhetoric and incidental narrative besides. He needs no more, though bareness does nearly turn to banality sometimes. But unless we can be held in an unrelaxed grip we may not submit to the spell.

He has kept a technical master stroke for his ending:

Enter Lear with Cordelia in his arms.

There should be a long, still pause, while Lear passes slowly in with his burden, while they all stand respectful as of old to his majesty. We may have wondered a little that Shakespeare should be content to let Cordelia pass from the play as casually as she seems to in the earlier scene. But this is the last of her, not that. Dumb and dead, she that was never apt of speech—what fitter finish for her could there be? What fitter ending to the history of the two of them, which began for us with Lear on his throne, conscious of all eyes on him, while she shamed and angered him by her silence? The same company are here, or all but the same, and they await his pleasure. Even Regan and Goneril are here to pay him a ghastly homage. But he knows none of them—save for a blurred moment Kent whom he banished—none but Cordelia. And again he reproaches her silence; for

Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.
(5.3.274-75)

Then his heart breaks....

THE CHARACTERS AND THEIR INTERPLAY LEAR

But it is upon Lear's own progress that all now centers, upon his passing from that royal defiance of the storm to the welcomed shelter of the hovel. He passes by the road of patience:

No, I will be the pattern of all patience;
I will say nothing, (3.2.37-38)

of—be it noted—a thankfulness that he is at last simply

a man
More sinn'd against than sinning ... (59-60)

to the humility of

My wits begin to turn.

Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?

I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?

The art of our necessities is strange

That can make vile things precious. Come, your
hovel... (67-71)

and, a little later yet, mind and body still further strained
towards breaking point, to the gentle dignity, when Kent
would make way for him—to the more than kingly dignity of

Prithee, go in thyself: seek thine own ease.

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder

On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in:

In, boy; go first. (3.4.22-25)

Now comes the crowning touch of all:

I'll pray, and then I'll sleep. (27)

In the night's bleak exposure he kneels down, like a child at
bedtime, to pray.

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,

That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,

How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,

Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you

From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en

Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;

Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,

That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,

And show the heavens more just. (28-36)

To this heaven of the spirit has he come, the Lear of
unbridled power and pride. And how many dramatists, could
they have achieved so much, would have been content to
leave him here! Those who like their drama rounded and
trim might approve of such a finish, which would leave us a

play more compassable in performance no doubt. But the wind of a harsher doctrine is blowing through Shakespeare. Criticism, as we have seen, is apt to fix upon the episode of the storm as the height of his attempt and the point of his dramatic defeat; but it is this storm of the mind here beginning upon which he expends skill and imagination most recklessly till inspiration has had its will of him; and the drama of desperate vision ensuing it is hard indeed for actors to reduce to the positive medium of their art—without reducing it to ridicule. The three coming scenes of Lear's madness show us Shakespeare's art at its boldest. They pass beyond the needs of the plot, they belong to a larger synthesis. Yet the means they employ are simple enough; of a kind of absolute simplicity, indeed.

The boldest and simplest is the provision of Poor Tom, that living instance of all rejection. Here, under our eyes, is Lear's new vision of himself.

What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?
Could'st thou save nothing? Did'st thou give them all?
(63-64)

Side by side stand the noble old man, and the naked, scarce human wretch.

Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou
ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep
no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! here's three on's are
sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself;
unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor,
bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings!
Come, unbutton here.
(105-111)

Here is a volume of argument epitomized as only drama can epitomize it, flashed on us by word and action combined. And into this, one might add, has Shakespeare meta-

morphosed the didactics of those old Moralities which were the infancy of his art.

What, hath your grace no better company? (145)

gasps poor Gloucester, bewailing at once the King's wrongs and his own, as he offers shelter from the storm. But Lear, calmness itself now, will only pace up and down, arm in arm with this refuse of humanity:—nor will he seek shelter without him. So they reach the outhouse, all of his own castle that Gloucester dare offer. What a group! Kent, sturdy and thrifty of words; Gloucester, tremulous; the bedraggled and exhausted Fool; and Lear, magnificently courteous and deliberate, keeping close company with his gibbering fellow-man.

They are in shelter. Lear is silent; till the Fool—himself never overfitted, we may suppose, in body or mind for the rough and tumble of the world—rallies, as if to celebrate their safety, to a semblance of his old task. Edgar, for his own safety's sake, must play Poor Tom to the life now. Kent has his eyes on his master, watching him—at what new fantastic trick? The old king is setting two joint-stools side by side; they are Regan and Goneril, and the Fool and the beggar are to pass judgment upon them.

The lunatic mummery of the trial comes near to something we might call pure drama—as one speaks of pure mathematics or pure music—since it cannot be rendered into other terms than its own. Its effect depends upon the combination of the sound and meaning of the words and the sight of it being brought to bear as a whole directly upon our sensibility. The sound of the dialogue matters almost more than its meaning. Poor Tom and the Fool chant antiphonally; Kent's deep and kindly tones tell against the higher, agonized, weakening voice of Lear. But the chief significance is in the show. Where Lear, such a short while since, sat in his majesty, there sit the Fool and the outcast, with Kent whom he banished beside them; and he, witless, musters

his failing strength to beg justice upon a joint-stool. Was better justice done, the picture ironically asks, when he presided in majesty and sanity and power?

But what, as far as Lear is concerned, is to follow? You cannot continue the development of a character in terms of lunacy—in darkness, illuminated by whatever brilliant flashes of lightning. Nor can a madman well dominate a play's action. From this moment Lear no longer is a motive force; and the needs of the story—the absolute needs of the character—would be fulfilled if, from this exhausted sleep upon the poor bed in the outhouse, he only woke to find Cordelia at his side. But Shakespeare contrives another scene of madness for him, and one which lifts the play's argument to a yet rarer height. It is delayed; and the sense of redundancy is avoided partly by keeping Lear from the stage altogether for a while, a short scene interposed sufficiently reminding us of him.

His reappearance is preluded—with what consonance! — by the fantastically imaginative episode of Gloucester's fall from the cliff. There also is Edgar, the aura of Poor Tom about him still. Suddenly Lear breaks in upon them. The larger dramatic value of the ensuing scene can hardly be overrated. For in it, in this encounter between mad Lear and blind Gloucester, the sensual man robbed of his eyes, and the despot, the light of his mind put out, Shakespeare's sublimation of the two old stories is consummated. No moral is preached to us. It is presented as it was when king and beggar fraternized in the storm and beggar and Fool were set on the bench of justice, and we are primarily to feel the significance. Yet this does not lack interpretation; less explicit than when Lear, still sane, could read the lesson of the storm, clearer than was the commentary on the mock trial. It is Edgar here that sets us an example of sympathetic listening. His asides enforce it, and the last one:

O! matter and impertinency mixed,
Reason in madness! (4.6.176-77)

will reproach us if we have not understood. The train of
fancies fired by the first sight of Gloucester, with its
tragically comic

Ha! Goneril with a white beard! (97)

(Goneril, disguised, pursuing him still!) asks little gloss.

They flattered me like a dog.... To say 'Ay' and 'No' to
everything I said! ... When the rain came to wet me
once and the wind to make me chatter; when the
thunder would not peace at my bidding; there I found
'em, there I smelt 'em out Go to, they are not men o'
their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I
am not agueproof.
(97-107)

Gloucester's dutiful

Is't not the king? (109)

begins to transform him in those mad eyes. And madness
sees a Gloucester there that sanity had known and ignored.

I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?
Adultery?
Thou shalt not die: die for adultery! No:
The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight.
Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters
Got 'tween the lawful sheets. (111-18)

Gloucester knows better; but how protest so to the mere
erratic voice? Besides which there is only the kindly
stranger-peasant near. A slight unconscious turn of the
sightless eyes toward him, a simple gesture—unseen—in

response from Edgar, patiently biding his time, will illuminate the irony and the pathos.

Does the mad mind pass logically from this to some uncanny prevision of the ripening of new evil in Regan and Goneril? Had it in its sanity secretly surmised what lay beneath the moral surface of their lives, so ready to emerge?

Behold yon simp'ring dame,
Whose face between her forks presages snow,
That minces virtue and does shake the head
To hear of pleasure's name.
The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to't
With a more riotous appetite. (120-25)

But a man—so lunatic logic runs—must free himself from the tyrannies of the flesh if he is to see the world clearly:

Give me an ounce of civet; good apothecary,
sweeten my imagination. (132-33)

And then a blind man may see the truth of it, so he tells the ruined Gloucester:

Look with thine ears: see how yond justice rails
upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear change
places, and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which
is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a
beggar? ... And the creature run from the cur? There
thou might'st behold the great image of authority: a
dog's obeyed in office. (153-57, 159-61)

It is the picture of the mock trial given words. But with
a difference! There is no cry now for vengeance on the
wicked. For what are we that we should smite them?

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
That hotly lusts to use her in that kind

For which thou whip'st her. The usurer hangs the
cozener.
Through tattered clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw doth pierce it. (162-69)

Shakespeare has led Lear to compassion for sin as well as suffering, has led him mad to where he could not hope to lead him sane—to where sound common sense will hardly let us follow him:

None does offend, none, I say, none. (170)

To a deep compassion for mankind itself.

I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester:
Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:
Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee: mark....
When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools. (179-82, 184-85)

This afterpart of Lear's madness may be redundant, then, to the strict action of the play, but to its larger issues it is most germane. It is perhaps no part of the play that Shakespeare set out to write. The play that he found himself writing would be how much the poorer without it!

The simple perfection of the scene that restores Lear to Cordelia one can leave unsullied by comment. What need of any? Let the producer only note that there is reason in the Folio's stage direction:

Enter Lear in a chair carried by servants.

For when he comes to himself it is to find that he is royally attired and as if seated on his throne again. It is from this

throne that he totters to kneel at Cordelia's feet. Note, too, the pain of his response to Kent's

In your own kingdom, sir.
Do not abuse me. (4.7.76-77)

Finally, Lear must pass from the scene with all the ceremony due to royalty; not mothered—please!—by Cordelia.

Cordelia found again and again lost, what is left for Lear but to die? But for her loss, however, his own death might seem to us an arbitrary stroke; since the old Lear, we may say, is already dead. Shakespeare, moreover, has transported him beyond all worldly issues. This is, perhaps, why the action of the battle which will seemingly defeat his fortunes is minimized. What does defeat matter to him—or even victory? It is certainly the key to the meaning of the scene which follows. Cordelia, who would “out-frown false fortune's frown,” is ready to face her sisters and to shame them—were there a chance of it!—with the sight of her father's wrongs. But Lear himself has no interest in anything of the sort.

No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news. (5.3.8-14)

He has passed beyond care for revenge or success, beyond even the questioning of rights and wrongs. Better indeed to be oppressed, if so you can be safe from contention. Prison will bring him freedom.

Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught
thee?

He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,
And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;
The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell,
Ere they shall make us weep. We'll see 'em starved
first. (20-25)

Lear's death, upon one ground or another, is artistically inevitable. Try to imagine his survival; no further argument will be needed. The death of Cordelia has been condemned as a wanton outrage upon our feelings and so as an aesthetic blot upon the play. But the dramatic mind that was working to the tune of

As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods,
They kill us for their sport, (4.1.36-37)

was not likely to be swayed by sentiment. The tragic truth about life, to the Shakespeare that wrote *King Lear*, included its capricious cruelty. And what meeter sacrifice to this than Cordelia? Besides, as we have seen, he must provide this new Lear with a tragic determinant, since "the great rage ... is kill'd in him," which precipitated catastrophe for the old Lear. And what but Cordelia's loss would suffice?

We have already set Lear's last scene in comparison with his first; it will be worth while to note a little more particularly the likeness and the difference. The same commanding figure; he bears the body of Cordelia as lightly as ever he carried robe, crown and scepter before. All he had undergone has not so bated his colossal strength but that he could kill her murderer with his bare hands.

I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.
'Tis true, my lords, he did, (5.3.276-77)

says the officer in answer to their amazed looks. Albany, Edgar, Kent and the rest stand silent and intent around him; Regan and Goneril are there, silent too. He stands, with the limp body close clasped, glaring blankly at them for a

moment. When speech is torn from him, in place of the old kingly rhetoric we have only the horrible, half human

Howl, howl, howl, howl! (259)

Who these are, for all their dignity and martial splendor, for all the respect they show him, he neither knows nor cares. They are men of stone and murderous traitors; though, after a little, through the mist of his suffering, comes a word for Kent. All his world, of power and passion and will, and the wider world of thought over which his mind in its ecstasy had ranged, is narrowed now to Cordelia; and she is dead in his arms.

Here is the clue to the scene; this terrible concentration upon the dead, and upon the unconquerable fact of death. This thing was Cordelia; she was alive, she is dead. Here is human tragedy brought to its simplest terms, fit ending to a tragic play that has seemed to out-leap human experience. From power of intellect and will, from the imaginative sweep of madness, Shakespeare brings Lear to this; to no moralizing nor high thoughts, but just to

She's gone for ever.

I know when one is dead and when one lives;

She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;

If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,

Why, then she lives. (261-65)

Lacking a glass, he catches at a floating feather. That stirs on her lips; a last mockery. Kent kneels by him to share his grief. Then to the bystanders comes the news of Edmund's death; the business of life goes forward, as it will, and draws attention from him for a moment. But what does he heed? When they turn back to him he has her broken body in his arms again.

MAYNARD MACK

From King Lear in Our Time

I turn now to a closer scrutiny of the play. In the remarks that follow I shall address myself primarily to three topics, which I believe to be both interesting in themselves and well suited to bring before us other qualities of this tragedy which stir the twentieth-century imagination. The first topic is the externality of Shakespeare's treatment of action in *King Lear*, the second is the profoundly social orientation of the world in which he has placed this action; and the third is what I take to be the play's dominant tragic theme, summed up best in Lear's words to Gloucester in Dover fields: "We came crying hither."

As we watch it in the theatre, the action of *King Lear* comes to us first of all as an experience of violence and pain. No other Shakespearean tragedy, not even *Titus*, contains more levels of raw ferocity, physical as well as moral. In the action, the exquisite cruelties of Goneril and Regan to their father are capped by Gloucester's blinding onstage, and this in turn by the wanton indignity of Cordelia's murder. In the language, as Miss Caroline Spurgeon has pointed out, allusions to violence multiply and accumulate into a pervasive image as of "a human body in anguished movement—tugged, wrenched, beaten, pierced, stung, scourged, dislocated, flayed, gashed, scalded, tortured, and finally broken on the rack."¹

Miss Spurgeon's comment tends to formulate the play

From *King Lear in Our Time*, by Maynard Mack, ©
1965 The Regents of the University of California.

Used by permission of the University of California Press, Berkeley, California.

'Shakespeare's Iterative Imagery (1935), p. 342.

in terms of passiveness and suffering. But the whole truth is not seen unless it is formulated also in terms of agency and aggression. If the *Lear* world is exceptionally anguished, it is chiefly because it is exceptionally contentious. Tempers in *King Lear* heat so fast that some critics are content to see in it simply a tragedy of wrath. Unquestionably, it does contain a remarkable number of remarkably passionate collisions. Lear facing Cordelia, and Kent facing Lear, in the opening scene; Lear confronting Goneril at her house with his terrifying curse; Kent tangling with Oswald outside Gloucester's castle; Cornwall run through by his own servant, who warns Regan that if she had a beard he'd "shake it on this quarrel"; Edgar and Edmund simulating a scuffle in the first act, and later, in the last act, hurling charge and countercharge in the scene of their duel; the old king himself defying the storm: these are only the more vivid instances of a pattern of pugnacity which pervades this tragedy from beginning to end, shrilling the voices that come to us from the stage and coloring their language even in the tenderest scenes. The pattern gives rise to at least one locution which in frequency of occurrence is peculiar to *King Lear*— to "outface the winds and persecutions of the sky," to "outscorn the to-and-fro contending wind and rain," to "outjest his heart-struck injuries," to "outfrown false Fortune's frown." And it appears as a motif even in that pitiful scene at Dover, where the old king, at first alone, throws down his glove before an imaginary opponent—"There's my gauntlet, I'll prove it on a giant"—and, afterward, when the blind Gloucester enters, defies him, too: "No, do thy worst, blind Cupid, I'll not love." So powerful is this vein of belligerence in the linguistic texture of the play that pity itself is made, in Cordelia's words,

something that her father's white hair must "challenge." Even "had you not been their father," she says in an apostrophe to the sleeping king, referring to the suffering he has been caused by his other daughters, "these white flakes did challenge pity of them."

It goes without saying that in a world of such contentiousness most of the *dramatis personae* will be outrageously self-assured. The contrast with the situation in *Hamlet*, in this respect, is striking and instructive. There, as I have argued in another place, the prevailing mood tends to be interrogative.⁵ Doubt is real in *Hamlet*, and omnipresent. Minds, even villainous minds, are inquiet and uncertain. Action does not come readily to anyone except Laertes and Fortinbras, who are themselves easily deflected by the stratagems of the king, and there is accordingly much emphasis on the fragility of the human will. All this is changed in *King Lear*. Its mood, I would suggest (if it may be caught in a single word at all), is imperative. The play asks questions, to be sure, as *Hamlet* does, and far more painful questions because they are so like a child's, so simple and unmediated by the compromises to which much experience usually impels us: "Is man no more than this?" "Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?" "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life And thou no breath at all?" Such questionings in *King Lear* stick deep, like Macbeth's fears in Banquo.

Yet it is not, I think, the play's questions that establish its distinctive coloring onstage. (Some of its questions we shall return to later.) It is rather its commands, its invocations and appeals that have the quality of commands, its flat-footed defiances and refusals: "Come not between the dragon and his wrath." "You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames into her scornful eyes!" "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!" "Thou shalt not die; die for adultery, no!" "A plague upon you, murderers, traitors, all! I might

have sav'd her ...” In the psychological climate that forms round a protagonist like this, there is little room for doubt, as we may see from both Lear’s and Goneril’s scorn of Albany. No villain’s mind is inquiet. Action comes as naturally as breathing and twice as quick. And, what is particularly unlike the situation in the earlier tragedies, the hero’s destiny is self-made. Lear does not inherit his predicament like Hamlet; he is not duped by an antagonist like Othello. He walks into disaster head on.

This difference is of the first importance. *King Lear*, to follow R. W. Chambers in applying Keats’s memorable phrase, is a vale of soul-making,⁶ where to all appearances the will is agonizingly free. As if to force the point on our attention, almost every character in the play, including such humble figures as Cornwall’s servant and the old tenant who befriends Gloucester, is impelled soon or late to take some sort of stand—to show, in Oswald’s words, “what party I do follow.” One cannot but be struck by how much positioning and repositioning of this kind the play contains. Lear at first takes up his position with Goneril and Regan, France and Kent take theirs with Cordelia, Albany takes his with Goneril, and Gloucester (back at his own house), with Cornwall and Regan. But then all reposition. Kent elects to come back as his master’s humblest servant. The Fool elects to stay with the great wheel, even though it runs downhill. Lear elects to become a comrade of the wolf and owl rather than return to his elder daughters. Gloucester likewise has second thoughts and comes to Lear’s rescue, gaining his sight though he loses his eyes. Albany, too, has second thoughts, and lives, he says, only to revenge those eyes. In the actions of the old king himself, the taking of yet a third position is possibly implied. For after the battle, when Cordelia asks, “Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?” Lear replies (with the vehemence characteristic of him even in defeat), “No, no, no, no!” and goes on to build,

in his famous following lines, that world entirely free of pugnacity and contentiousness in which he and Cordelia will dwell: "We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage."

Movements of the will, then, have a featured place in *King Lear*. But what is more characteristic of the play than their number is the fact that no one of them is ever exhibited to us in its inward origins or evolution. Instead of scenes recording the genesis or gestation of an action—scenes of introspection or persuasion or temptation like those which occupy the heart of the drama in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*—*King Lear* offers us the moment at which will converts into its outward expressions of action and consequence; and this fact, I suspect, helps account for the special kind of painfulness that the play always communicates to its audiences. In *King Lear* we are not permitted to experience violence as an externalization of a psychological drama which has priority in both time and significance, and which therefore partly palliates the violence when it comes. This is how we do experience, I think, Hamlet's vindictiveness to his mother, Macbeth's massacres, Othello's murder: the act in the outer world is relieved of at least part of its savagery by our understanding of the inner act behind it. The violences in *King Lear* are thrust upon us quite otherwise—with the shock that comes from evil which has nowhere been inwardly accounted for, and which, from what looks like a studiedly uninward point of view on the playwright's part, must remain unaccountable, to characters and audience alike: "Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?"

The relatively slight attention given in *King Lear* to the psychological processes that ordinarily precede and determine human action suggests that here we are meant to look for meaning in a different quarter from that in which we find it in the earlier tragedies. In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare

had explored action in its aspect of dilemma. Whether or not we accept the traditional notion that Hamlet is a man who cannot make up his mind, his problem is clearly conditioned by the unsatisfactory nature of the alternatives he faces. Any action involves him in a kind of guilt, the more so because he feels an already existing corruption in himself and in his surroundings which contaminates all action at the source. "Virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it." Hence the focus of the play is on those processes of consciousness that can explain and justify suspension of the will. In *Othello*, by contrast, Shakespeare seems to be exploring action in its aspect of error. Othello faces two ways of understanding love: Iago's and Desdemona's—which is almost to say, in the play's terms, two systems of valuing and two ways of being—but we are left in no doubt that one of the ways is wrong. Even if we take Iago and Desdemona, as some critics do, to be dramatic emblems of conflicting aspects in Othello's own nature, the play remains a tragedy of error, not a tragedy of dilemma. "The pity of it, Iago" is that Othello makes the wrong choice when the right one is open to him and keeps clamoring to be known for what it is even to the very moment of the murder. The playwright's focus in this play is therefore on the corruptions of mind by which a man may be led into error, and he surrounds Iago and Desdemona with such overtones of damnation and salvation as ultimately must attend any genuine option between evil and good.

King Lear, as I see it, confronts the perplexity and mystery of human action at a later point. Choice remains in the forefront of the argument, but its psychic antecedents have been so effectively shrunk down in this primitivized world that action seems to spring directly out of the bedrock of personality. We feel sure no imaginable psychological process could make Kent other than loyal, Goneril other than cruel, Edgar other than "a brother noble." Such

characters, as we saw earlier, are qualities as well as persons: their acts have consequences but little history. The meaning of action here, therefore, appears to lie rather in effects than in antecedents, and particularly in its capacity, as with Lear's in the opening scene, to generate energies that will hurl themselves in unforeseen and unforeseeable reverberations of disorder from end to end of the world.

The elements of that opening scene are worth pausing over, because they seem to have been selected to bring before us precisely such an impression of unpredictable effects lying coiled and waiting in an apparently innocuous posture of affairs. The atmosphere of the first episode in the scene, as many a commentator has remarked, is casual, urbane, even relaxed. In the amenities, exchanged by Kent and Gloucester, Shakespeare allows no hint to penetrate of Gloucester's later agitation about "these late eclipses," or about the folly of a king's abdicating his responsibilities and dividing up his power. We are momentarily lulled into a security that is not immediately broken even when the court assembles and Lear informs us that he will shake off all business and "unburthen'd crawl toward death." I suspect we are invited to sense, as Lear speaks, that this is a kingdom too deeply swaddled in forms of all kinds—too comfortable and secure in its "robes and furr'd gowns"; in its rituals of authority and deference (of which we have just heard and witnessed samples as Gloucester is dispatched offstage, the map demanded, and a "fast intent" and "constant will" thrust on our notice by the king's imperious personality); and in its childish charades, like the one about to be enacted when the daughters speak. Possibly we are invited to sense, too, that this is in some sort an emblematic kingdom—almost a paradigm of hierarchy and rule, as indeed the scene before us seems to be suggesting, with its wide display of ranks in both family and state. Yet perhaps too schematized, too regular—a place where complex realities have been too much reduced to formulas, as they

are on a map: as they are on that visible map, for instance, on which Lear three times lays his finger in this scene ("as if he were marking the land itself," says Granville-Barker), while he describes with an obvious pride its tidy catalogue of "shadowy forests" and "champains," "plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads." Can it be that here, as on that map, is a realm where everything is presumed to have been charted, where all boundaries are believed known, including those of nature and human nature; but where no account has been taken of the heath which lies in all countries and in all men and women just beyond the boundaries they think they know?

However this may be, into this emblematic, almost dream-like situation erupts the mysterious thrust of psychic energy that we call a choice, an act; and the waiting coil of consequences leaps into threatening life, bringing with it, as every act considered absolutely must, the inscrutable where we had supposed all was clear, the unexpected though we thought we had envisaged all contingencies and could never be surprised. Perhaps it is to help us see this that the consequences in the play are made so spectacular. The first consequence is Lear's totally unlooked-for redistribution of his kingdom into two parts instead of three, and his rejection of Cordelia. The second is his totally unlooked-for banishment of his most trusted friend and counselor. The third is the equally unlooked-for rescue of his now beggared child to be the Queen of France; and what the unlooked-for fourth and fifth will be, we already guess from the agreement between Goneril and Regan, as the scene ends, that something must be done, "and i' th' heat." Thereafter the play seems to illustrate, with an almost diagrammatic relentlessness and thoroughness, the unforeseen potentials that lie waiting to be hatched from a single choice and act: nakedness issues out of opulence, madness out of sanity and reason out of madness, blindness out of seeing and insight out of blindness, salvation out of ruin. The pattern of

the unexpected is so completely worked out, in fact, that, as we noticed in the preceding chapter, it appears to embrace even such minor devices of the plot as the fact that Edmund, his fortune made by two letters, is undone by a third.

Meantime, as we look back over the first scene, we may wonder whether the gist of the whole matter has not been placed before us, in the play's own emblematic terms, by Gloucester, Kent, and Edmund in that brief conversation with which the tragedy begins. This conversation touches on two actions, we now observe, each loaded with menacing possibilities, but treated with a casualness at this point that resembles Lear's in opening his trial of love. The first action alluded to is the old king's action in dividing his kingdom, the dire effects of which we are almost instantly to see. The other action is Gloucester's action in begetting a bastard son, and the dire effects of this will also speedily be known. What is particularly striking, however, is that in the latter instance the principal effect is already on the stage before us, though its nature is undisclosed, in the person of the bastard son himself. Edmund, like other "consequences," looks tolerable enough till revealed in full: "I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper," says Kent, meaning by proper "handsome"; yet there is a further dimension of meaning in the word that we will only later understand, when Edgar relates the darkness of Edmund to the darkness wherein he was got and the darkness he has brought to his father's eyes. Like other consequences, too, Edmund looks to be predictable and manageable—in advance. "He hath been out nine years," says Gloucester, who has never had any trouble holding consequences at arm's length before, "and away he shall again." Had Shakespeare reflected on the problem consciously—and it would be rash, I think, to be entirely sure he did not—he could hardly have chosen a more vivid way of giving dramatic substance to the unpredictable relationships of act

and consequence than by this confrontation of a father with his unknown natural son—or to the idea of consequences come home to roost, than by this quiet youthful figure, studying “deserving” as he prophetically calls it, while he waits upon his elders.

In *King Lear* then, I believe it is fair to say, the inscrutability of the energies that the human will has power to release is one of Shakespeare’s paramount interests. By the inevitable laws of drama, this power receives a degree of emphasis in all his plays, especially the tragedies. The difference in *King Lear* is that it is assigned the whole canvas. The crucial option, which elsewhere comes toward the middle of the plot, is here presented at the very outset. Once taken, everything that happens after is made to seem, in some sense, to have been set in motion by it, not excluding Gloucester’s recapitulation of it in the subplot. Significantly, too, the act that creates the crisis, the act on which Shakespeare focuses our dramatic attention, is not (like Lear’s abdication) one which could have been expected to germinate into such a harvest of disaster. The old king’s longing for public testimony of affection seems in itself a harmless folly: it is not an outrage, not a crime, only a foolish whim. No more could Cordelia’s death have been expected to follow from her truthfulness or Gloucester’s salvation to be encompassed by a son whom he disowns and seeks to kill.

All this, one is driven to conclude, is part of Shakespeare’s point. In the action he creates for Lear, the act of choice is cut loose not simply from the ties that normally bind it to prior psychic causes, but from the ties that usually limit its workings to commensurate effects. In this respect the bent of the play is mythic: it abandons verisimilitude to find out truth, like the story of Oedipus; or like the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, with which, in fact, it has interesting affinities. Both works are intensely emblematic. Both treat of crime and punishment and reconciliation in poetic, not

realistic, terms. In both the fall is sudden and unaccountable, the penalty enormous and patently exemplary. The willful act of the mariner in shooting down the albatross has a nightmarish inscrutability like Lear's angry rejection of the daughter he loves best; springs from a similar upsurge of egoistic willfulness; hurls itself against what was until that moment a natural "bond," and shatters the universe. Nor do the analogies end with this. When the mariner shoots the albatross, the dark forces inside him that prompted his deed project themselves and become the landscape, so to speak, in which he suffers his own nature: it is his own alienation, his own waste land of terror and sterility that he meets. Something similar takes place in Shakespeare's play. Lear, too, as we saw earlier, suffers his own nature, encounters his own heath, his own storm, his own nakedness and defenselessness, and by this experience, like the mariner, is made another man.

OceanofPDF.com

LINDA BAMBER

The Woman Reader in *King Lear*

When adults show children how to read a map, they say, "Here is *your* street (or state or nation)," and the habit of finding ourselves on the map persists when we are grown up. When travelers return with pictures of Cairo or Barcelona, they say, "That's the hotel we stayed in, there," as if it explained the picture. If a work of fiction is a map of its own world, the first question we ask of it is, "Where am I in here?" or "Who is like me?" This question is unsophisticated but important, because it shapes our most basic responses. Only when we have answered it do we know whom to love and hate and what to hope for.

For women the problem of locating ourselves in literature is complicated by the fact that so much of the literature of the past is written by men. Who is "like me" when the character offered as a version of the self is a man? When I began to read the great literature of the past I never thought to ask this question. My (excellent) teachers were almost all men, and I read stories and poems and plays by men without noticing the difference. In the end you could say I imprinted to a different species. I thought I was a man, just as Tarzan thought he was an ape. Of course, I also knew I wasn't. But my responses to literature were confused by an identity problem generated for me by literature itself.

In *King Lear*, the character who is "like me" is of course King Lear. Lear is passionate, articulate, capable of growth, capable of catastrophic error, important to himself and to everyone else in the play. He claims he is "more sinned against than sinning," and that's how I feel,

Copyright © 1986 by Linda Bamber, used by permission of Linda Bamber.

too. But King Lear is a man while I am a woman. When I identify with him, an important part of my identity, my femininity, is homeless. If the *King Lear* world is organized around a man, what is the status of women in it? Are women important in this world, or are they (fictionally) second-class citizens? If I can find satisfactory answers to these questions I am free to identify with Lear as much as I can; otherwise, identifying with Lear means denigrating a part of myself.

The best solution would be finding an alternative, female home in the play. Is there a woman character who represents us as well as Lear himself? If so, we could breathe a sigh of relief and simply graph the play as an ellipse (which has two focal points) instead of a circle. But authors—women as well as men—tend to represent “us” much more fully in characters of their own sex than in characters of the opposite sex, and Shakespeare is no exception. In *King Lear* the women are either more or less than human. Goneril and Regan are too bad to live, much less to represent us, and Cordelia is perfect. The evil sisters present no temptations to the woman reader, but it is worth dealing in some detail with the problems of identifying with perfection.

Cordelia is never selfish or aggressive; when she hurts her father it is only because she is separate from him, not because of a failure of love:

Good my lord,
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.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.

Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all. (1.1.97-106)

This is the only moment in the play in which Cordelia asserts herself, and even here she is not so much asserting herself as mediating between the claims of her father and the claims of her future husband. Her characteristic gestures are of selfless love. No matter how well I think of myself, I would never go so far as to say that she is “like me.”

Cordelia’s perfection is maintained in this play by her silence. First she refuses to speak the self-serving language of flattery; next she listens in silence when her father disinherits her. “The barbarous Scythian,” he tells her,

Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved,
As thou my sometime daughter. (118-22)

The next voice to speak is not Cordelia’s but Kent’s. It is Kent who protests the injustice and craziness of Lear’s behavior, Kent who is angry and blunt in Cordelia’s defense:

Be Kent unmannerly
When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?
Think’st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor’s
bound
When majesty falls to folly. (147-51)

Why is it Kent who speaks aggressively to Lear rather than Cordelia? Possibly because in the world of King Lear an angry woman risks losing our sympathy, even when anger is so clearly required that another character must be enlisted to supply it. Nor is it only anger that Cordelia notably fails to express. Later in the play, when she receives the news of Lear’s misery, she feels a great deal but says very little. The

whole description of her behavior turns Cordelia into a kind of icon of grief, precious as a jewel but inarticulate. She controls her emotions, reigns “queen / Over her passion,” cries a few silent tears, which part from her eyes “as pearls from diamonds.” “Made she no verbal question?” Kent asks the Gentleman, who replies,

Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of “father”
Pantingly forth, as if it pressed her heart;
Cried, “Sisters! Sisters! Shame of ladies! Sisters!
Kent! Father! Sisters What, i’ th’ storm? i’ th’ night?
Let pity not be believed” There she shook
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
And clamor moistened: then away she started
To deal with grief alone. (4.3.26-33)

Cordelia’s inarticulateness, the fewness and brokenness of her words at times of great emotion, is her glory. Lear’s glory, by contrast, is to express his feelings fully, variously, and without restraint. The price of Cordelia’s perfection seems to be her renunciation of language, and in the medium of poetic drama, this is a heavy price to pay. Cordelia may be as valuable, even as lovable as Lear, but there is simply not enough of her to balance the enormous pull of our sympathy to him. She doesn’t represent me because often she isn’t even there.

There is no single woman character, then, who represents me in the play. But if we group the three sisters together and call them something like “the feminine” or “the Other” (as opposed to Lear, who represents “the Self”), we can find a kind of rough sexual justice in King Lear. Women are important here not as I am important to myself but as the outside world is important to me. They are like the rock on which the hero is broken and remade; they are the thing outside the Self that cannot be controlled and cannot be renounced. “The Other” is equal to the tragic hero as the second term in a dialectic is equal to the first. Women play

the role of “the Other” not only in *King Lear* but in all Shakespeare’s plays. In all four genres—comedy, history, tragedy, and romance—the nature of the feminine reflects the nature of the world outside the Self. Before returning to *King Lear* it is worth pausing to consider how this works.

In the comedies, the world outside us is manifestly reliable and orderly, a source of pleasure rather than a threat—and so is the nature of the feminine. In *As They Liked It*, Alfred Harbage has made a statistical survey of Shakespeare’s characters, dividing them by groups into good and bad. The highest percentage of good characters in any group is the percentage of good women in the comedies: 96 percent good, 4 percent bad. The possibility of betrayal in this world is very slight. The women will not betray the men, the comic world will not betray its central characters, the playwright will not betray our expectations of a happy ending. The world of Shakespearean comedy is fundamentally safe and its women are fundamentally good. We are free in this world to play, to court danger in sport. Sometimes it seems as though the games have gotten out of hand: Oberon’s cruel love games in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shylock’s murderous bond in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Orsino’s threat to Cesario’s life in *Twelfth Night*—all these give us some bad moments. But an invisible hand unravels everything and we enjoy the thrill of danger without its deadly consequences. Similarly, the women problem is raised only to be dismissed. We are titillated with reminders that women might be unfaithful; the cuckoldry jokes of *Much Ado About Nothing* and Portia’s ring trick in *The Merchant of Venice* remind us of what could happen. But it never does. The women are as transparently faithful as the plot is transparently comic. We are always on our way to the happy ending, to marriage, to the love of good women.

In the romances, the world is a much more serious place—not, as in the tragedies, because it may betray us—but because it may be lost altogether. The protagonist of a

Shakespearean romance loses his whole world; Pericles, Leontes, and Prospero live for a time in the absence of everything they care for. But although the world may be lost, it may also be found; and of course the most obvious property of the feminine in this genre is also its tendency to come and go. It is notable that in *The Winter's Tale* the two male characters who disappear from Sicilia, Mamillius and Antigonus, disappear for good. It is the women characters, Perdita and Hermione, who return. In Shakespearean romance, the feminine is infinitely valuable, capable of being utterly lost but capable also of miraculous self-renewal. Again, the nature of the feminine is congruent with the nature of the world outside the Self.

The feminine in the history plays is more difficult to characterize briefly than it is in the comedies and romances; perhaps it is best described as unproblematic. The feminine Other may be unambiguously hated, as Joan is in *1 Henry VI*; cheerfully courted, as Katherine is in *Henry V*; or cleverly used to further a career, as Queen Elizabeth is in *Richard III*. But whatever role she plays, she never offers any metaphysical complications, never raises issues of identity for the masculine Self. Emotions toward women are unconfused; the feminine Other does not call the masculine Self into question. Similarly, the world outside the Self in the histories is simple compared to the world of the tragedies. Because it is almost wholly a political world, it, too, offers few metaphysical or psychological problems. The world divides up smartly into friends and enemies; everyone is playing the same game, however nastily. In tragedy, by contrast, the world becomes murkier, the masculine-historical enterprise loses its centrality, friends and enemies become hard to distinguish from each other, and the feminine becomes a problem.

In Shakespearean tragedy, the world outside the Self seems to thicken. It becomes hard to make out. It is not necessarily evil, although it may be evil; in any case, it

causes so much suffering that it will at certain moments at least *appear* evil. It is a world that is separate from us who inhabit it; it will not yield to our desires and fantasies no matter how desperately we need it to do so. This means that in tragedy, recognition—*anagnorisis*, the banishing of ignorance—is a major goal. We question the tragic universe to discover its laws, since they are what we must live by. The worlds of comedy and romance, by contrast, are shaped by our hearts' desires; and in history, we are busily remaking the world to suit ourselves.

The feminine in the tragedies can be similarly defined in terms of evil, obduracy, and the problem of anagnorisis. First of all, women in the tragedies constitute the single group in which Harbage finds more bad than good: 58 percent bad and only 42 percent good. Like the world outside the Self, the feminine causes suffering, appears evil, and may actually be evil. And like the world outside the Self, women in the tragedies are notably separate from us, governed by their own laws whether their natures are good or evil. The hero can only recognize them for what they are or fail to do so. The effort to control them is useless; neither the feminine Other nor the world outside the Self is within our power in Shakespeare's tragedy.

The idea of a congruence between women and the world can be taken even further. In King *Lear*, as in *Othello*, the world outside the hero is starkly divided between good and evil, and so are the principal women characters—Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and Desdemona. In *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, by contrast, the outside world is a mixture of good and bad; it is hard to tell manly strength from mindless ambition, and restraint may be confused with weakness. The women in these two plays are similarly a confusing mixture of good and evil, and finally may be neither. We never know the extent of Gertrude's guilt, or whether Cleopatra, if offered better terms, would have sold out to Caesar. But we know all along that Desdemona and Cordelia

are perfectly good and Goneril and Regan vile beasts. In *Lear* and *Othello*, kindness and constancy are to be found in their purest forms, as are their opposites, cruelty and malice.

It is time to return to my original question. Am I content with the role played in *King Lear* by the wandering portion of my identity, the part I cannot invest in King Lear? On the whole, I think I should be. For one thing, I am flattered to think that I may be capable of such thrilling modulations between good and evil as exist in the world of *King Lear*. It makes me interesting to myself. Identifying with the intensely problematic world outside the hero gives me another way of participating in the major questions of the play, questions about the violent extremes we find within ourselves and in our experience. More importantly, I am content to identify with the world outside the hero because the dialectic between King Lear and the outside world is what creates the satisfactions of tragedy. It is when Lear cannot get what he wants from the outside world that he becomes interesting. We do not really want the tragic world to yield to the hero's desires; we want to see what happens to him when his suffering cracks him open, and he goes out on the heath to become something new. There, thanks to the resistance offered by the tragic world, we are in the presence of exciting possibilities. The hero may triumph over his losses; naked, he may be more splendid than he appeared when he was clothed. Or, like Coriolanus, the hero of one of the Roman plays, he may collapse. Both the risk and the possibility of Shakespearean tragedy depend on the Otherness of the tragic universe to the masculine Self. In identifying with the world outside the hero, I am identifying with something as powerful in creating the drama as the hero himself.

What is the nature of the resistance offered by the feminine Other in *King Lear*? On the one hand, it is a matter of malice: Goneril and Regan are selfish beasts who wish

their father ill. On the other hand, it is a matter of pure separateness. Cordelia, as we have seen, is guilty of nothing but being a separate person from her father, of having her own social role to play. In many ways the resistance Cordelia offers is more interesting. Cordelia simply resists Lear's claim to be the sun around which everything revolves. The mere presence of another inviolable person is enough to shatter Lear's identity. The tragic hero wants to be the only star in the sky.

The feminine Other creates drama by resisting the hero, but also by being endlessly desirable to him. The desire of the hero for women and the world keeps him both alive and vulnerable; it keeps open the possibility of both suffering and fulfillment. A comparison between Lear and Gloucester will illustrate the point. Gloucester, who has sons instead of daughters, loses his capacity for desire and with it both his vulnerability to his experience and his chance of happiness. He tries to kill himself, is rescued by Edgar, feels suicidal again when he witnesses Lear's madness, urges Oswald to kill him, and finally is parked by Edgar in "the shadow of this tree" (5.2.1). "A man may rot even here" (8), he tells Edgar when Edgar returns. Since Edgar and Gloucester are in the middle of a battle there is no time for an elaborate response. "Men must endure / Their going hence, even as their coming hither," Edgar tells his father briefly. "Ripeness is all. Come on." Gloucester gets up and plods on. "And that's true, too," he says. (9-11) Nothing makes much difference to him anymore. Lear, by contrast, dies upon a wish. "Do you see this?" he asks urgently, bent over the dead Cordelia's head. "Look on her," he cries, tortured by hope. "Look, her lips, / Look there, look there." (5.3.312-13) Lear's feelings stay alive to the end of the play.

As many people have noticed, there is a sexual component to Lear's desire for his daughters. When Lear is hurt by Goneril and Regan, he denounces them as if he were their lover, not their father:

The fitchew, nor the soilèd horse, goes to 't
With a more riotous appetite.
Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
Though women all above:
But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiend's.
There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous
pit,
Burning, scalding, stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie!
(4.6.124-131)

Why does Lear blast women for their sexual appetites rather than for their cruelty? Goneril and Regan are in fact unfaithful wives, but Lear doesn't know that, and anyway they haven't betrayed *him* sexually. But in Shakespeare's mind any wound that really matters is felt as a sexual wound. Sexual vulnerability, like sexual desire, is archetypal for Shakespeare. Lear's connection to his daughters is like a sexual connection in that it keeps sending him back for more. Finally Gloucester has had enough of life itself, but Lear can always think of something else to want from his daughters. First he wants flattery, then revenge, then recognition, kindness, forgiveness, companionship—whatever he can get. Beaten and cornered by his enemies, he comes up with yet another fantasy of being sustained by his daughter's love:

Come, let's away to prison:
We two alone will sing like birds i'th'cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out,
And take upon's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies. (5.3.8-17)

Lear is sometimes taken to task for this speech. It shows, according to a certain school of literary criticism, that Lear still hasn't learned his lesson, still thinks his desires are all-important, still can't face reality. But is it a tragic hero's job to learn his lesson, or is it his job to stay alive and kicking to the end of the play? Gloucester learns his lesson, but who cares what happens to him? Only Edgar. *We* lose interest in Gloucester when *he* loses interest in the world.

Women in *King Lear* are congruent with the tie that binds us to life itself. As the feminine Other, women are inviolably separate from the masculine Self, and they are as active and aggressive in creating the plot as the hero himself. Taken together, the three sisters range from one end to the other on the scale of human moral behavior; and if the feminine is, as so often in fiction by men, schizophrenically split up into good and evil, it must be admitted that so is everything else in the play. Edgar and Edmund are almost as deeply divided as Cordelia and her sisters. It is a play *about* extremes—of wealth and poverty, wisdom and folly, heights and depths. As individual characters the women in this play are very partial portraits; but as components of the feminine Other they do add up. Only when I refuse the role of Other altogether, only when nothing will satisfy but a female version of the Self, do I refuse to shelter the female portion of my identity with Shakespeare's women. At that point, if I'm smart, I take a break from Shakespeare and pick up *Middlemarch*.

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN

Staging Violence in *King Lear*

Incoherent and physical reaction to violence is almost the rule in *King Lear*. The suffering of Gloucester is prolonged, unremitting, and often silent. His interrogation and blinding are carried out by Regan and Cornwall with a precise verbal marking of physical brutality which is reminiscent of the much earlier *Titus Andronicus*: “Upon these eyes of thine, I’ll set my foot” and “Out vile jelly! / Where is thy lustre now?” (3.7.69, 84—85). They provoke Gloucester’s defiance and condemnation, but when he is finally thrust out of doors the blinded man is silent. Finding Edgar to guide him to Dover, he does not recognize his son’s voice and so stumbles forward uncertainly, even when supported and shown the way; he is at anyone’s mercy, and when he meets Lear, whom he recognizes by his voice, he cannot communicate with him. Eventually, after crying out “Alack, alack the day!” (4.6.183), he briefly begs to be killed by Oswald. When this crisis is over he does speak at greater length, envying the king for being mad:

... how stiff is my vile sense,
That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling
Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract:

From John Russell Brown, British Academy Annual Shakespeare Lecture, “Violence and Sensationalism in the Plays of Shakespeare and Other Dramatists,” 21 April 1994, published in *Proceedings of the British Academy* 87 (1995): 101-18, used by permission of the author and of the British Academy.

So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,
And woes by wrong imaginations lose
The knowledge of themselves. (284-89)

When drums foretell battle he submits without words to being led away, and we can only guess at his feelings and “imagination.” When first brought before Regan and Cornwall, Gloucester had seen himself as “tied to the stake” like a bear which has to “stand the course” of being baited by fierce dogs trained for the job (3.7.55): now, in the last battle, he is like one of the blind bears who were kept as more special attractions, to be tied to a stake and then whipped—only Gloucester remains motionless of his own free will by the tree or shrub to which he has been led. Edgar tells him to “pray that the right may thrive” (5.2.2) and then leaves. Now all that happens is “*Alarm and retreat within*,” and even that will be in sound only if the noise of battle is heard from off stage as the Folio text directs. As the action of the entire play hangs in the balance, all that the audience is shown is a worn-out old man, who can see nothing and do nothing, and does not even understand who has brought him to where he is. Does Gloucester react at all as the sound of battle rises and dies away? We do not know, because Shakespeare has withheld all further words and stage-directions. All we are shown is the long-suffering body and sightless eyes.

This reliance on physical action was extraordinary and risky, as three considerations show. First, we know that the whipping of a blind bear in Paris Garden, not far from the Globe Theatre, was:

performed by five or six men standing circularly with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy, as he cannot escape because of his chain; he defends himself with all his force and skill, throwing down all that come within his reach and are not active

enough to get out of it, and tearing the whips out of their hands, and breaking them.⁷

No one approaches to whip Gloucester and this blind victim provides no entertainment. So what does this audience think, or do?

Secondly, consider productions of *King Lear* in present-day theatres where the hunched figure of Gloucester sits in a carefully chosen place, carefully cross-lit. Lights dim progressively, and a vast backcloth may redden to represent the off-stage battle; or perhaps carefully drilled soldiers with implements of war cross and recross in front of Gloucester; and all this time, appropriate music and semi-realistic sound will work on our minds with changing rhythm, pitch, and volume. The audience will sit in the dark, their eyes and ears controlled completely by the play's director working with a team of highly trained technicians. Then consider in contrast a performance at the Globe Theatre where the light on stage could not be changed or the sounds of battle orchestrated for maximum effect and meaning, and where all was what it happened to be as the play was revived for that one day only. The audience members, in the same light as the stage, were free to withdraw attention, move around (many were standing), and talk among themselves. The actor playing Gloucester had nothing to help him attract attention and not a word to say, as he sat alone with his eyes shut; he could have had only the vaguest idea of how long it would be before Edgar returned. The elaborate speeches of *Titus Andronicus*, holding the sufferer still and controlling the audience's thoughts, and the pyrotechnics of Pyrrhus's speech in *Hamlet*, are both missing. So too are the searching words of Romeo or Juliet, which simultaneously presented and veiled the horror of teenage suicide. Gloucester gains or loses attention because he is there, victim of violence and of his son's inability to speak to him of his presence and his love. The audience would have paid

attention to Gloucester or not as they chose, and would have understood for themselves, or not. One might come to feel very alone, sitting in an audience which did not see what you saw, or did not care; then suffering would seem to exist in a disregarding world. If one sat in audience equally moved by what was silent on stage, then you might wonder if some words had been forgotten or if no words were the only possible response. Shakespeare has presented the consequences of violence so that the audience has to shoulder responsibility for its own reactions.

Thirdly, we should remember how mutilated old men are shown on television or film. Briefly they fill the screen in arresting and horrific images, and then disappear before attention can flag, leaving no trace behind; and that effect is created, not as part of the continuous performance of a play, but as something cunningly arranged, for that moment, by makeup artist, costume designer and fitter, the people in charge of set, lights, and sound, and, most significantly, by cameramen and editor. The result is no more than a few seconds of overwhelming horror or pathos, instead of being one part of a sustained performance by an actor who in some real ways has been living in the role. In the theatre, an actor represents the lived experience of violence, rather than achieving, with other people's help or hindrance, a moment or two of sensational effect.

SYLVAN BARNET

King Lear on Stage and Screen

In 1808 Charles Lamb wrote an essay that has become infamous, "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation." The most controversial portion runs as follows:

To see Lear acted—to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me. But the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear.... The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual: the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano; they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare.... On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage.

Many play readers and theatergoers have tested Lamb's response against their own; those who believe that even the best production of a play (if the play is great literature) is reductive have sided with Lamb; others, who believe that a play—even the greatest play—is essentially a script that achieves its fullest life only in performance, have dismissed

him. The view of this second group is summed up in Ezra Pound's assertion: "The medium of drama is not words, but persons moving about on a stage using words." But those who hold this view, and censure Lamb, should remember that Lamb never saw enacted a version of Shakespeare's *King Lear* that we would call acceptable. This statement requires some explanation, but first we should glance at the little that is known of productions in Shakespeare's day.

Although *King Lear* almost surely originally was performed at the Globe Theatre, the earliest recorded performance is at the court of King James I in Whitehall Palace, London, on December 26, 1606. A few references to the play during the first seventy-five years of its existence assure us that it was occasionally acted, but tell us nothing about how it was performed or how it was received. Performances of *Lear* ceased when civil war broke out in England in 1642 (the theaters were soon closed by Act of Parliament), but after Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660 the theaters were reopened, and we know that *Lear* was among the plays acted in the 1660s. If it evoked comment, however, the comment is lost; Samuel Pepys, the English diarist and the source for some of our sharpest glimpses of the theater in that period, does not mention *Lear*. In any case, in 1681 Nahum Tate presented his adaptation of the play in London, an adaptation that was to hold the stage for more than a century and a half.

In his dedication, Tate says that he found in Shakespeare's *Lear*

a heap of jewels unstrung and unpolished, yet so dazzling in their disorder that I soon perceived I had seized a treasure. 'Twas my good fortune to light on one expedient to rectify what was wanting in the regularity and probability of the tale, which was to run through the whole a love betwixt Edgar and Cordelia....

And so, as Shakespeare had freely rewritten the old anonymous play of *King Leir*, Tate now rewrote Shakespeare's play. He made changes throughout, for example modifications in Lear's curses, but the verbal changes seem small when compared with structural changes:

- 1) Tate manufactured a love interest for Edgar and Cordelia (Edgar, by the way, in this version saves Cordelia from an attempted rape by Edmund) and therefore eliminated the King of France;
- 2) he deleted the Fool;
- 3) he added a happy ending, keeping Lear, Cordelia, and Gloucester alive, and marrying Cordelia and Edgar.

This version persisted on the stage throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth. Thus, even when David Garrick played Lear in 1756 with "restorations from Shakespeare," i.e. with the restoration of some of Shakespeare's lines, he nevertheless followed Tate in dropping the Fool, and in retaining not only Tate's love affair between Cordelia and Edgar but also Tate's happy ending. (For a detailed yet readable study of Garrick's version of *Lear*, see Kalman A. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director*.) From 1768 to 1773 George Colman's more faithful version was performed at Covent Garden, but this version, too, though adhering fairly closely to Shakespeare's first four acts, omitted the Fool and apparently made some sort of alteration in the ending. In 1823 Edmund Kean used much of Shakespeare's fifth act—but only for two performances, after which he returned to Tate's happy ending. In 1826 Kean and Robert W. Elliston restored the tragic ending—but they nevertheless kept the love story and omitted the Fool.

Not until 1838, in William Macready's production, were all three of Tate's basic changes eliminated. That is, Macready eliminated the love story, restored the Fool (though he assigned the role to a woman) and restored the tragic ending. But it should be mentioned that even though Macready restored most of Shakespeare's lines, his version was still in some ways indebted to Tate; for example, he kept Gloucester alive at the end, and he retained Tate's telescoping of the scene in the hovel (3.4) with a corrupted version of the scene in the farmhouse (3.6).

With this background, then, perhaps we can better appreciate Lamb's position, expressed, one recalls, in 1808. Here is Lamb surveying the revisions—that is, the play in the form in which it was acted in his day:

The play is beyond all art, as the tamperings with it show: it is too hard and stony; it must have love-scenes, and a happy ending. It is not enough that Cordelia is a daughter; she must shine as a lover too. Tate has put his hook in the nostrils of this Leviathan, for Garrick and his followers, the show-men of the scene, to draw the mighty beast about more easily. A happy ending—as if the living martyrdoms that Lear had gone through—the flaying of his feelings alive, did not make a fair dismissal from the stage of life the only decorous thing for him.

Although Macready's production, and the productions of his successors in the nineteenth century, continued to show traces of Tate (for instance, in keeping Gloucester alive at the end), if we speak broadly we can say that Macready restored the play to more or less its original form—"more or less" because even today almost all productions are somewhat abridged, and as the Textual Note suggests (page 146ff.), there is a good deal of uncertainty about what the original form of the play was. (For instance, the First Folio omits about three hundred lines that are found in the

second Quarto.) Productions of Lear in the middle and later nineteenth century were given to emphasizing lavish spectacle that was said to be historically accurate. The aim (again, speaking roughly) was theatrical illusionism: the viewer looked, through the proscenium, at a highly detailed scene that was alleged to be an authentic reproduction of the past. Thus, Charles Kean's production in 1858 was said to be set in eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England. Architecture (a great raftered hall for the palace), decor (skins and heads of animals on the walls, gigantic crimson banners with pictures of animals on them) and costumes (for instance, Lear in a floor-length robe of gold, blue and purple, and France in a blue and red robe decorated with gold fleur-de-lys) were based on historical research—though today it is recognized that the sources Kean drew on range from the sixth through the eleventh centuries. Because it could take ten or fifteen minutes to erect on the stage a highly illusionistic set, scenes employing the same set were grouped together, intervening scenes with a different locale were either transposed or completely omitted, thus seriously distorting the rhythm of the play.

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth, *King Lear* was rarely played, perhaps because Lamb's essay was held to be authoritative, perhaps because the tragedy seemed too bleak, too savage—too resistant to any sort of moral interpretation. Henry Irving gave it a try in 1892, but his production was unsuccessful and he never revived it. Since 1920, however, Lear has often been staged, for instance by such major actors as Frank Benson, Ben Greet, John Gielgud, William Devlin, Donald Wolfit, Louis Calhern, Charles Laughton, Michael Redgrave, Orson Welles, Morris Camovsky, Paul Scofield, and Laurence Olivier. For these actors, as well as for some in the nineteenth century, we often have rather full reports of performances. Thus, we know that Irving, confronted with deciding whether the Lear who banishes

Cordelia is tyrannical or is mentally failing, decided on the second option. In an immensely informative book, *The Masks of "King Lear,"* Marvin Rosenberg lets us know how actors have interpreted the play, almost line by line. Here, for instance, is a tiny specimen (page 319). Rosenberg is talking about Lear's final gestures:

The possible modes of Lear's dying, from ecstasy through dread, must be expressed solely in visual imagery; words fail now. A wide variety of possibilities has been suggested by actors as well as critics: so Gielgud, dying grandly in joy at his perception of apotheosis in Cordelia; Forrest, frankly hallucinating her reviving, staring vacantly into space; Camovsky, shocked to death at the horror of Cordelia's stillness.

Obviously it is impossible in this short essay even to touch on all of the chief Lears, which range from conceptions of Lear as heroic to Lear as enfeebled and fretful (Gielgud and Wolfit, by the way, each did four Lears); rather, the rest of this space will be used, first, briefly to raise the question about how the play should be costumed and set, and second, at greater length, to discuss what probably are the two most praised recent efforts—the performances by Paul Scofield and Laurence Olivier.

In Shakespeare's day the setting was the bare stage, or, rather, the stage was adorned chiefly by the costumed players, banners, etc., and whatever portable furniture (chairs, a table, a throne) might be necessary for a scene. Although a play set in Rome would require some tokens of classical garb, most plays were performed by actors wearing contemporary clothing, i.e. Elizabethan or Jacobean clothing, not the clothing of the time of the action. The use of contemporary clothing persisted in the late seventeenth century and in the eighteenth. Garrick's 1756 production of *Lear* was said to be somewhat unusual because the characters were "judiciously habited" in "old English

dresses,” but the illustrations of the period suggest that only the smallest gesture was made in the direction of departing from modern dress. Some three-quarters of a century after Garrick, as we have seen, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the emphasis was on historical accuracy; and the illusionism this accuracy or realism aimed at could now be reinforced by spectacular effects (dawn, a storm, or whatever) made possible with gaslight and later with electric light. Henry Irving, in the preface to his acting edition for his version of 1892, reveals something of this concern for historical truth:

As the period of *King Lear*, I have chosen ... a time shortly after the departure of the Romans, when the Britons would naturally inhabit the houses left vacant.

The souvenir program shows courtiers wearing suggestions of Roman armor, sometimes combined with horned helmets that one associates with Germanic peoples. The women wear elaborate gowns, and Lear wears a highly ornamented robe, all allegedly derived from medieval pictures.

Most productions of *King Lear* continue to evoke some vaguely medieval setting, usually by means of furs and leather, but one difficulty with this approach is that Lear's society may seem so primitive to begin with that as the play progresses there is little sense of a stripping away of conventional codes of behavior, with a descent into the depths. Partly to avoid a sense of primitiveness or remoteness that a medieval setting may be thought to convey, an occasional production uses modern dress or something close to it. For instance, Trevor Nunn's production for the Royal Shakespeare Company, in 1976, with Donald Sinden as Lear, was set in Victorian or Edwardian times: the King (smoking a cigar, to indicate that the division of the kingdom was a rather informal, private affair) wore a military uniform, with medals; Kent wore a frock coat, and others wore tweeds and riding boots. What is remarkable,

and even paradoxical, is that this production was noted for its realism; real water poured from above onto the stage in the heath scenes. The idea behind the use of modern dress (in *King Lear* or in any other early play) commonly is that the play will become more real to the audience (presumably this means that the audience can more fully experience the play, can get more out of it) if the action is set in a real (easily identifiable) period. In practice, however, spectators often are distracted by the novelty of the costumes and occasionally by the incongruity between the action (say, a duel) and the later setting (say, 1900). If a detailed medieval setting (offered in the name of realism or authenticity) obscures what Maynard Mack calls “the archetypal character” of the play, so too—perhaps more so—does a modern setting.

At the other extreme, the *Lear* produced by George Devine in 1955, with John Gielgud as Lear, and with settings and costumes by the Japanese-American sculptor Isamu Noguchi, sought to avoid any indication of a specific time or place. The producer and the designer wrote that their

object in this production has been to find a setting and costumes which would be free of historical or decorative associations, so that the timeless, universal and mythical quality of the story may be clear.

The set consisted of blocks of contrasting colors and shapes, which on occasion seemed to move on their own power. There were also symbolic forms: thus, an arch represented Lear’s world, and a black shape stood for doom. The costumes were more troublesome. Noguchi had not previously designed costumes, and because of a misunderstanding he was forced to design these in a hurry. He settled on a style that has usually been described as “surrealistic,” though some of the costumes show (as one can see by looking at Plate 5 in *Stage Directions*, one of John

Gielgud's autobiographies) a considerable debt to the robes of Japanese Noh drama. Gielgud once remarked that the costumes looked like shower curtains. They were not only strange looking, but they also proved difficult to wear, and the performance was widely regarded as a disaster. If the costumes and the set freed the play from any specific historical time and place, the strange shapes nevertheless evoked the world of science fiction, fixing the play in an unreal world, an atmosphereless world utterly remote from the spectators. This is not what tragedy is about.

A similar charge—that the production was remote from tragedy—might be made against the version performed in 1962 at Stratford-upon-Avon, starring Paul Scofield and directed by Peter Brook. Later the company went to London, and then toured the United States. (The production became the basis for a film, but the film was not identical with the stage performance.) Brook's version, and Scofield's acting, were widely hailed by audiences and by reviewers in the popular press, though they evoked grumblings among academic critics. Because Brook was influenced by the discussion of the play in Jan Kott's book, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, we may begin with a glance at Kott's book. Kott's chapter on *King Lear*, called "King Lear or Endgame," begins by juxtaposing a quotation from *Lear* with a quotation from *Waiting for Godot*. Briefly, Kott sees Lear as an anticipation of the work of Ionesco, Durrenmatt, and Beckett. Lear is kin, in various ways, to Beckett's Vladimir, Estragon, Hamm, and Clov; Shakespeare's play is assimilated to the Theater of the Absurd and the Theater of Cruelty. Kott does say that "of the twelve principal characters [in *King Lear*], half are just, the other half unjust," but perhaps because in his forty-page chapter he never explicitly mentions Cordelia or Kent, and never mentions Edgar's devotion to Gloucester, he says nothing about love or voluntary sacrifice in *King Lear*.

The set that Brook designed for his production was almost bare. The audience saw a grayish-white cyclorama, two movable white flats angled to the sides, three wooden benches, and a table with a few utensils. Over the table was a rusted bronze sheet, later used as a thunder sheet. The characters were dressed in leather. Charles Marowitz, Brook's assistant director, comments on the set in "Lear Log," *Encore* 10 (1963), reprinted in *Tulane Drama Review* 8 (1963). "Apart from the rust, the leather and the old wood, there is nothing but space—giant white flats opening on to a blank cyclorama." Was attention being paid to the supposedly bare stage that many scholars have argued for? No. Rather, we were getting the angst-ridden stage of the Theater of the Absurd. At the opening of the play, Scofield's voice was rasping, imperious—there was nothing in it to gain any sympathy for him, nothing to suggest that Lear had ever known what it is to express affection. To speak more generally: Brook took as his text Gloucester's words:

As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods,
They kill us for their sport. (4.1.36-37)

To this end, he tailored the play, apparently with no less confidence than Nahum Tate showed when he tailored the play to a different pattern. Thus, after the terrible scene in which Gloucester is blinded (3.7), Shakespeare shows us two servants who denounce the monstrosity of the action, commiserate with Gloucester, and do what little they can to alleviate his terrible pain: "I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs / T'apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him." (107-8) These lines were cut, as were the lines in which Edmund, repenting his wickedness, goes so far as to say:

Some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,
Be brief in it, to th' castle; for my writ

Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:
Nay, send in time. (5.3.245-49)

Some actors interpret Lear's last words, "Look there, look there," as words of joy (however deluded a joyous Lear must be), but, not surprisingly, Scofield spoke the lines flatly, looked blankly into the auditorium, and died with his eyes remaining open. (The end of the film version differed.) The critic Kenneth Tynan, who hailed the production, offered an apt summary of the interpretation:

Lay him to rest, the royal Lear with whom generations of star actors have made us reverently familiar, the majestic ancient, wronged and maddened by his vicious daughters; the felled giant, beside whose bulk the other characters crouch like pygmies. Lay also to rest the archaic notion that Lear is automatically entitled to our sympathy because he is a king who suffers.

Lay also to rest, Tynan might have added, the old idea that an audience is supposed to be moved to woe and wonder at the sight of the suffering humanity that it sees on the stage. This production aimed not at moving the viewers, but at alienating them.

In his film version (1969), Brook retained his overall interpretation, but the film in some ways is more satisfying than was the stage version. Some of the landscape scenes (shot on location chiefly in North Jutland, Denmark) possess great beauty, though here too every effort was made to depict an inhospitable world, an effort reinforced by using a film stock that was grainy and that sometimes showed washed-out images. At the end of the film, Lear's head, in slow motion, falls back, out of the frame, and we are confronted with bright white light—that is, with nothing. And yet at least one scene in this film was overpoweringly beautiful, the scene on the beach with Lear and the blind

Gloucester. Perhaps in this scene alone one felt moved; during the rest of the film one merely felt (as with the play) interested, and perhaps distressed that Shakespeare's play was so diminished. (A Russian film version of *King Lear*, made in 1970 by Grigori Kozintsev, is also fairly free with Shakespeare's play, but its emphasis is different from Brook's, for it concludes with shots of peasants setting about the task of rebuilding the civilization that the aristocrats have ravaged. Kozintsev has said that *King Lear* belongs not only to the Theater of Cruelty but to the Theater of Mercy.)

The version of *Lear* produced by the British Broadcasting Corporation and *Tinte-Life* Films in 1982 takes account of both Cruelty and Mercy, and is in this respect nearly an ideal presentation of the play. Jonathan Miller's intelligent direction keeps the director off stage, giving precedence to the playwright Michael Hordern makes a comprehensive hero, running the gamut in his own emotions and attitudes and in those excited in the audience. Dictatorial at first and every inch a king, he is at last humbled to Fortune's blows and becomes "pregnant to good pity." Very little of the play is altered or omitted. The actors, not engaging in verbal pyrotechnics—if anything, they understate—still less in bizarre readings of character, speak the lines, one feels, as Shakespeare meant them to be spoken. There is one exception to this, the mad speeches of Poor Tom, which ought to suggest madness but make the mistake of imitating the real thing, degenerate to "wild and whirling words." But the play recovers strongly from this lapsing into merely imitative form. Woe and wonder mark its conclusion, on the one hand almost too dreadful for report; on the other exhilarating in the rendering of human beings living their lives at full stretch.

Finally, something should be said about the televised production, made in 1982, with Laurence Olivier as Lear, Dorothy Tutin as Goneril, and Diana Rigg as Regan. In 1946,

when Olivier at the age of thirty-nine had played Lear for the Old Vic, his performance evoked chiefly polite reviews, most of the high praise being reserved for Alec Guinness's performance as the Fool. Now, at the age of seventy-five, Olivier again took on Lear. He made some cuts—several on the authority of the First Folio—but the film nevertheless runs to two hours and forty minutes, and is far more faithful to Shakespeare's play than was Brook's production or film. But it is not a theater spectator's view of a theatrical performance recorded on film; rather, it is a version created for television cameras. Thus, when at the start of the play Lear's courtiers prostrate themselves, we get an overhead shot, a bird's-eye view. The set evokes Stonehenge, as did the sets of Henry Irving, Donald Wolfit, and Charles Laughton, but some viewers have found Olivier's studio Stonehenge—well, to come out with it—tacky. The director, Michael Elliott, has explained that he and Olivier decided not to make the film on location because the camera can dwell too lovingly on surfaces, on the real and perhaps irrelevant. The camera, that is, has a way of reminding viewers of limitless space, and of the rich abundance of life, and can be thought to be fundamentally inimical to the concentration and finiteness associated with tragedy. But in this television version the sets are essentially realistic (illusionistic), and so instead of the set helping us to concentrate on the tragic figures it distracts us by its imitation of the details of the real world.

What of Olivier's depiction of Lear? Perhaps one can say fairly that this television performance is touching rather than harrowing. Olivier had undergone a decade of severe illness (gout, cancer of the prostate, thrombosis of the leg, and a deteriorating muscular disease), and apparently lacked the strength that the role requires. There is much in the performance that is admirable, but on the whole this Lear lacks tragic stature. To use Aristotle's terms, Olivier evokes pity but not terror. In the beginning, in his dealings

with his daughters at the love contest, he plays Lear as slightly eccentric, faintly senile, and even here one feels that Olivier the actor is drawing on his bag of tricks. Intimate scenes, notably the meeting with Gloucester and the reconciliation with Cordelia, are touching, but in the scenes calling for majestic anger it is evident that Olivier (whose voice has become shrill) no longer has the physical resources necessary for the role. One admires the skill, wishes that Olivier had attempted Lear a decade earlier, recognizes that this Lear (like many other productions) reveals qualities in the play that the reader otherwise might miss, but one also finds oneself wondering if, perhaps, when all is said and done, Charles Lamb may not have been right when he said that Shakespeare's Lear is diminished in performance.

Bibliographic Note: For wide-ranging discussions, see in Suggested References, the material listed under Shakespeare on Stage and Screen (page 265). Specialized discussions include: Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of "King Lear"* (1972); Gamini Salgado's book in the Text and Performance series, *King Lear* (1984); Alexander Leggatt's book in the Shakespeare in Performance series, *King Lear* (1991); James P. Lusardi and June Schlueter, *Reading Shakespeare in Performance* (1991); John Russell Brown's edition (1996) of *King Lear* ("a theatrical edition, ... designed to help readers see and hear the plays in action"). On three films of King Lear (versions by Peter Brook, Grigori Kozintsev, and Akira Kurosawa), see R. B. Parker in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991): 75-90.

Suggested References

The number of possible references is vast and grows alarmingly. (The *Shakespeare Quarterly* devotes one issue each year to a list of the previous year's work, and *Shakespeare Survey*—an annual publication—includes a substantial review of biographical, critical, and textual studies, as well as a survey of performances.) The vast bibliography is best approached through James Harner, *The World Shakespeare Bibliography on CD-Rom: 1900—Present*. The first release, in 1996, included more than 12,000 annotated items from 1990-93, plus references to several thousand book reviews, productions, films, and audio recordings. The plan is to update the publication annually, moving forward one year and backward three years. Thus, the second issue (1997), with 24,700 entries, and another 35,000 or so references to reviews, newspaper pieces, and so on, covered 1987-94.

Though no works are indispensable, those listed below have been found especially helpful. The arrangement is as follows:

1. Shakespeare's Times
2. Shakespeare's Life
3. Shakespeare's Theater
4. Shakespeare on Stage and Screen
5. Miscellaneous Reference Works
6. Shakespeare's Plays: General Studies
7. The Comedies
8. The Romances
9. The Tragedies
10. The Histories
11. *King Lear*

The titles in the first five sections are accompanied by brief explanatory annotations.

1. Shakespeare's Times

Andrews, John F., ed. *William Shakespeare: His World, His Work, His Influence*, 3 vols. (1985). Sixty articles, dealing not only with such subjects as "The State," "The Church," "Law," "Science, Magic, and Folklore," but also with the plays and poems themselves and Shakespeare's influence (e.g., translations, films, reputation)

Byrne, Muriel St. Clare. *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country* (8th ed., 1970). Chapters on manners, beliefs, education, etc., with illustrations.

Dollimore, John, and Alan Sinfield, eds. *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* (1985). Essays on such topics as the subordination of women and colonialism, presented in connection with some of Shakespeare's plays.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Representing the English Renaissance* (1988). New Historicist essays, especially on connections between political and aesthetic matters, statecraft and stagecraft.

Joseph, B. L. *Shakespeare's Eden: the Commonwealth of England 1558—1629* (1971). An account of the social, political, economic, and cultural life of England.

Kernan, Alvin. *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court 1603-1613* (1995). The social setting and the politics of the court of James I, in relation to *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, and *The Tempest*.

Montrose, Louis. *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (1996). A poststructuralist view, discussing the professional theater "within the ideological and material frameworks of Elizabethan culture and society," with an extended analysis of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (1988). New Historicist analysis, arguing that popular drama became a cultural institution “only by ... taking up a place on the margins of society.”

Schoenbaum, S. *Shakespeare: The Globe and the World* (1979). A readable, abundantly illustrated introductory book on the world of the Elizabethans.

Shakespeare's England, 2 vols. (1916). A large collection of scholarly essays on a wide variety of topics, e.g., astrology, costume, gardening, horsemanship, with special attention to Shakespeare's references to these topics.

2. Shakespeare's Life

Andrews, John F., ed. *William Shakespeare: His World, His Work, His Influence*, 3 vols. (1985). See the description above.

Bentley, Gerald E. *Shakespeare: A Biographical Handbook* (1961). The facts about Shakespeare, with virtually no conjecture intermingled.

Chambers, E. K. *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols. (1930). The fullest collection of data.

Fraser, Russell. *Young Shakespeare* (1988). A highly readable account that simultaneously considers Shakespeare's life and Shakespeare's art.

. *Shakespeare: The Later Years* (1992).

Schoenbaum, S. *Shakespeare's Lives* (1970). A review of the evidence and an examination of many biographies, including those of Baconians and other heretics.

—. *William Shakespeare: A Compact Documentary Life* (1977). An abbreviated version, in a smaller format, of the next title. The compact version reproduces some fifty documents in reduced form. A readable presentation of all that the documents tell us about Shakespeare.

—. *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (1975). A large-format book setting forth the biography with facsimiles of more than two hundred documents, and with transcriptions and commentaries.

3. Shakespeare's Theater

Astington, John H., ed. *The Development of Shakespeare's Theater* (1992). Eight specialized essays on theatrical companies, playing spaces, and performance.

Beckerman, Bernard. *Shakespeare at the Globe, 1599-1609* (1962). On the playhouse and on Elizabethan dramaturgy, acting, and staging.

Bentley, Gerald E. *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time* (1971). An account of the dramatist's status in the Elizabethan period.

—. *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time, 1590-1642* (1984). An account of the status of members of London companies (sharers, hired men, apprentices, managers) and a discussion of conditions when they toured.

Berry, Herbert. *Shakespeare's Playhouses* (1987). Usefully emphasizes how little we know about the construction of Elizabethan theaters.

Brown, John Russell. *Shakespeare's Plays in Performance* (1966). A speculative and practical analysis relevant to all of the plays, but with emphasis on *The Merchant of Venice*, *Richard II*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Twelfth Night*.

—. *William Shakespeare: Writing for Performance* (1996). A discussion aimed at helping readers to develop theatrically conscious habits of reading.

Chambers, E. K. *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (1945). A major reference work on theaters, theatrical companies, and staging at court.

Cook, Ann Jennalie. *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* (1981). Sees

Shakespeare's audience as wealthier, more middle-class, and more intellectual than Harbage (below) does.

Dessen, Alan C. *Elizabethan Drama and the Viewer's Eye* (1977). On how certain scenes may have looked to spectators in an Elizabethan theater.

Gurr, Andrew. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (1987). Something of a middle ground between Cook (above) and Harbage (below).

—. *The Shakespearean Stage, 1579-1642* (2nd ed., 1980). On the acting companies, the actors, the playhouses, the stages, and the audiences.

Harbage, Alfred. *Shakespeare's Audience* (1941). A study of the size and nature of the theatrical public, emphasizing the representativeness of its working class and middle-class audience.

Hodges, C. Walter. *The Globe Restored* (1968). A conjectural restoration, with lucid drawings.

Hosley, Richard. "The Playhouses," in *The Revels History of Drama in English*, vol. 3, general editors Clifford Leech and T. W. Craik (1975). An essay of a hundred pages on the physical aspects of the playhouses.

Howard, Jane E. "Crossdressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39 (1988): 418-40. Judicious comments on the effects of boys playing female roles.

Orrell, John. *The Human Stage: English Theatre Design, 1567-1640* (1988). Argues that the public, private, and court playhouses are less indebted to popular structures (e.g., innyards and bear-baiting pits) than to banqueting halls and to Renaissance conceptions of Roman amphitheaters.

Slater, Ann Pasternak. *Shakespeare the Director* (1982). An analysis of theatrical effects (e.g., kissing, kneeling) in stage directions and dialogue.

Styan, J. L. *Shakespeare's Stagecraft* (1967). An introduction to Shakespeare's visual and aural stagecraft, with chapters

on such topics as acting conventions, stage groupings, and speech.

Thompson, Peter. *Shakespeare's Professional Career* (1992). An examination of patronage and related theatrical conditions.

—. *Shakespeare's Theatre* (1983). A discussion of how plays were staged in Shakespeare's time.

4. Shakespeare on Stage and Screen

Bate, Jonathan, and Russell Jackson, eds. *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Stage History* (1996). Highly readable essays on stage productions from the Renaissance to the present.

Berry, Ralph. *Changing Styles in Shakespeare* (1981). Discusses productions of six plays (*Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *Twelfth Night*) on the English stage, chiefly 1950-1980.

—. *On Directing Shakespeare: Interviews with Contemporary Directors* (1989). An enlarged edition of a book first published in 1977, this version includes the seven interviews from the early 1970s and adds five interviews conducted in 1988.

Brockbank, Philip, ed. *Players of Shakespeare: Essays in Shakespearean Performance* (1985). Comments by twelve actors, reporting their experiences with roles. See also the entry for Russell Jackson (below).

Bulman, J. C., and H. R. Coursen, eds. *Shakespeare on Television* (1988). An anthology of general and theoretical essays, essays on individual productions, and shorter reviews, with a bibliography and a videography listing cassettes that may be rented.

Coursen, H. P. *Watching Shakespeare on Television* (1993). Analyses not only of TV versions but also of films and videotapes of stage presentations that are shown on television.

Davies, Anthony, and Stanley Wells, eds. *Shakespeare and the Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television* (1994). General essays (e.g., on the comedies) as well as essays devoted entirely to *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*.

Dawson, Anthony B. *Watching Shakespeare: A Playgoer's Guide* (1988). About half of the plays are discussed, chiefly in terms of decisions that actors and directors make in putting the works onto the stage.

Dessen, Alan. *Elizabethan Stage Conventions and Modern Interpretations* (1984). On interpreting conventions such as the representation of light and darkness and stage violence (duels, battles).

Donaldson, Peter. *Shakespearean Films/Shakespearean Directors* (1990). Postmodernist analyses, drawing on Freudianism, Feminism, Deconstruction, and Queer Theory.

Jackson, Russell, and Robert Smallwood, eds. *Players of Shakespeare 2: Further Essays in Shakespearean Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company* (1988). Fourteen actors discuss their roles in productions between 1982 and 1987.

—. *Players of Shakespeare 3: Further Essays in Shakespearean Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company* (1993). Comments by thirteen performers.

Jorgens, Jack. *Shakespeare on Film* (1977). Fairly detailed studies of eighteen films, preceded by an introductory chapter addressing such issues as music, and whether to "open" the play by including scenes of landscape.

Kennedy, Dennis. *Looking at Shakespeare: A Visual History of Twentieth-Century Performance* (1993). Lucid descriptions (with 170 photographs) of European, British, and American performances.

Leiter, Samuel L. *Shakespeare Around the Globe: A Guide to Notable Postwar Revivals* (1986). For each play there are about two pages of introductory comments, then

discussions (about five hundred words per production) of ten or so productions, and finally bibliographic references.

McMurty, Jo. *Shakespeare Films in the Classroom* (1994). Useful evaluations of the chief films most likely to be shown in undergraduate courses.

Rothwell, Kenneth, and Annabelle Henkin Melzer. *Shakespeare on Screen: An International Filmography and Videography* (1990). A reference guide to several hundred films and videos produced between 1899 and 1989, including spinoffs such as musicals and dance versions.

Sprague, Arthur Colby. *Shakespeare and the Actors* (1944). Detailed discussions of stage business (gestures, etc.) over the years.

Willis, Susan. *The BBC Shakespeare Plays: Making the Televised Canon* (1991). A history of the series, with interviews and production diaries for some plays.

5. Miscellaneous Reference Works

Abbott, E. A. *A Shakespearean Grammar* (new edition, 1877). An examination of differences between Elizabethan and modern grammar.

Allen, Michael J. B., and Kenneth Muir, eds. *Shakespeare's Plays in Quarto* (1981). One volume containing facsimiles of the plays issued in small format before they were collected in the First Folio of 1623.

Bevington, David. *Shakespeare* (1978). A short guide to hundreds of important writings on the subject.

Blake, Norman. *Shakespeare's Language: An Introduction* (1983). On vocabulary, parts of speech, and word order.

Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (1957-75). A collection of many of the books Shakespeare drew on, with judicious comments.

Campbell, Oscar James, and Edward G. Quinn, eds. *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare* (1966). Old, but still

the most useful single reference work on Shakespeare.

Cercignani, Fausto. *Shakespeare's Works and Elizabethan Pronunciation* (1981). Considered the best work on the topic, but remains controversial.

Dent, R. W. *Shakespeare's Proverbial Language: An Index* (1981). An index of proverbs, with an introduction concerning a form Shakespeare frequently drew on.

Greg, W. W. *The Shakespeare First Folio* (1955). A detailed yet readable history of the first collection (1623) of Shakespeare's plays.

Harner, James. *The World Shakespeare Bibliography*. See headnote to Suggested References.

Hosley, Richard. *Shakespeare's Holinshed* (1968). Valuable presentation of one of Shakespeare's major sources.

Kökeritz, Helge. *Shakespeare's Names* (1959). A guide to pronouncing some 1,800 names appearing in Shakespeare.

—. *Shakespeare's Pronunciation* (1953). Contains much information about puns and rhymes, but see Cercignani (above).

Muir, Kenneth. *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays* (1978). An account of Shakespeare's use of his reading. It covers all the plays, in chronological order.

Miriam Joseph, Sister. *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (1947). A study of Shakespeare's use of rhetorical devices, reprinted in part as *Rhetoric in Shakespeare's Time* (1962).

The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare's Plays (1968). A handsome and accurate facsimile of the first collection (1623) of Shakespeare's plays, with a valuable introduction by Charlton Hinman.

Onions, C. T. A *Shakespeare Glossary*, rev. and enlarged by R. D. Eagleson (1986). Definitions of words (or senses of words) now obsolete.

Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, rev. ed. (1955). Relatively brief dictionary of bawdy words; useful, but see Williams, below.

Shakespeare Quarterly. See headnote to Suggested References.

Shakespeare Survey. See headnote to Suggested References.

Spevack, Marvin. *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* (1973). An index to Shakespeare's words.

Vickers, Brian. *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels* (1993). A survey—chiefly hostile—of recent schools of criticism.

Wells, Stanley, ed. *Shakespeare: A Bibliographical Guide* (new edition, 1990). Nineteen chapters (some devoted to single plays, others devoted to groups of related plays) on recent scholarship on the life and all of the works.

Williams, Gordon. *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, 3 vols. (1994). Extended discussions of words and passages; much fuller than Partridge, cited above.

6. Shakespeare's Plays: General Studies

Bamber, Linda. *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (1982).

Barnet, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Shakespeare* (1974).

Callaghan, Dymphna, Lorraine Helms, and Jyotsna Singh. *The Weyward Sisters: Shakespeare and Feminist Politics* (1994).

Clemen, Wolfgang H. *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (1951).

Cook, Ann Jennalie. *Making a Match: Courtship in Shakespeare and His Society* (1991).

Dollimore, Jonathan, and Alan Sinfield. *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism* (1985).

Dusinberre, Juliet. *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (1975).

Granville-Barker, Harley. *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (1946-47; volume 1 contains essays on *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Cymbeline*; volume 2 contains essays on *Othello*, *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Love's Labor's Lost*).

—. *More Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1974; essays on *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Macbeth*).

Harbage, Alfred. *William Shakespeare: A Reader's Guide* (1963).

Howard, Jean E. *Shakespeare's Art of Orchestration: Stage Technique and Audience Response* (1984).

Jones, Emrys. *Scenic Form in Shakespeare* (1971).

Lenz, Carolyn Ruth Swift, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely, eds. *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (1980).

Novy, Marianne. *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (1984).

Rose, Mark. *Shakespearean Design* (1972).

Scragg, Leah. *Discovering Shakespeare's Meaning* (1994).

—. *Shakespeare's "Mouldy Tales": Recurrent Plot Motifs in Shakespearean Drama* (1992).

Traub, Valerie. *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (1992).

Traversi, D. A. *An Approach to Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (3rd rev. ed, 1968-69).

Vickers, Brian. *The Artistry of Shakespeare's Prose* (1968).

Wells, Stanley. *Shakespeare: A Dramatic Life* (1994).

Wright, George T. *Shakespeare's Metrical Art* (1988).

7. The Comedies

Barber, C. L. *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959; discusses *Love's Labor's Lost*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*).

Barton, Anne. *The Names of Comedy* (1990).

Berry, Ralph. *Shakespeare's Comedy: Explorations in Form* (1972).

Bradbury, Malcolm, and David Palmer, eds. *Shakespearean Comedy* (1972).

Bryant, J. A., Jr. *Shakespeare and the Uses of Comedy* (1986).

Carroll, William. *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy* (1985).

Champion, Larry S. *The Evolution of Shakespeare's Comedy* (1970).

Evans, Bertrand. *Shakespeare's Comedies* (1960).

Frye, Northrop. *Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (1965).

Leggatt, Alexander. *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (1974).

Miola, Robert S. *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy: The Influence of Plautus and Terence* (1994).

Nevo, Ruth. *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare* (1980).

Ornstein, Robert. *Shakespeare's Comedies: From Roman Farce to Romantic Mystery* (1986).

Richman, David. *Laughter, Pain, and Wonder: Shakespeare's Comedies and the Audience in the Theater* (1990).

Salingar, Leo. *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (1974).

Slights, Camille Wells. *Shakespeare's Comic Commonwealths* (1993).

Waller, Gary, ed. *Shakespeare's Comedies* (1991).

Westlund, Joseph. *Shakespeare's Reparative Comedies: A Psychoanalytic View of the Middle Plays* (1984).

Williamson, Marilyn. *The Patriarchy of Shakespeare's Comedies* (1986).

8. The Romances (*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, *The Two Noble*

Kinsmen)

- Adams, Robert M. *Shakespeare: The Four Romances* (1989).
Felperin, Howard. *Shakespearean Romance* (1972).
Frye, Northrop. *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (1965).
Mowat, Barbara. *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* (1976).
Warren, Roger. *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays* (1990).
Young, David. *The Heart's Forest: A Study of Shakespeare's Pastoral Plays* (1972).

9. The Tragedies

- Bradley, A. C. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904).
Brooke, Nicholas. *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (1968).
Champion, Larry. *Shakespeare's Tragic Perspective* (1976).
Drakakis, John, ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1992).
Evans, Bertrand. *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice* (1979).
Everett, Barbara. *Young Hamlet: Essays on Shakespeare's Tragedies* (1989).
Foakes, R. A. *Hamlet versus Lear: Cultural Politics and Shakespeare's Art* (1993).
Frye, Northrop. *Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespearean Tragedy* (1967).
Harbage, Alfred, ed. *Shakespeare: The Tragedies* (1964).
Mack, Maynard. *Everybody's Shakespeare: Reflections Chiefly on the Tragedies* (1993).
McAlindon, T. *Shakespeare's Tragic Cosmos* (1991).
Miola, Robert S. *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca* (1992).
—. *Shakespeare's Rome* (1983).
Nevo, Ruth. *Tragic Form in Shakespeare* (1972).
Rackin, Phyllis. *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (1978).

Rose, Mark, ed. *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1995).

Rosen, William. *Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy* (1960).

Snyder, Susan. *The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (1979).

Wofford, Susanne. *Shakespeare's Late Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1996).

Young, David. *The Action to the Word: Structure and Style in Shakespearean Tragedy* (1990).

—. *Shakespeare's Middle Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1993).

10. The Histories

Blanpied, John W. *Time and the Artist in Shakespeare's English Histories* (1983).

Campbell, Lily B. *Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (1947).

Champion, Larry S. *Perspective in Shakespeare's English Histories* (1980).

Hodgdon, Barbara. *The End Crowns All: Closure and Contradiction in Shakespeare's History* (1991).

Holderness, Graham. *Shakespeare Recycled: The Making of Historical Drama* (1992).

, ed. *Shakespeare's History Plays: "Richard II" to "Henry V"* (1992).

Leggatt, Alexander. *Shakespeare's Political Drama: The History Plays and the Roman Plays* (1988).

Ornstein, Robert. *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays* (1972).

Rackin, Phyllis. *Stages of History: Shakespeare's English Chronicles* (1990).

Saccio, Peter. *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle, and Drama* (1977).

Tillyard, E. M. W. *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944).
Velz, John W., ed. *Shakespeare's English Histories: A Quest for Form and Genre* (1996).

11. *King Lear*

In addition to the readings listed above in Section 9, The Tragedies, see the following: for material concerning the play on the stage and screen, see page 260; for material concerning the texts of the play, see (in addition to the items by Peter Blaney, Michael Warren, and Rene Weis) page 146.

Armstrong, Philip. "Uncanny Spectacles: Psychoanalysis and the texts of *King Lear*." *Textual Practice* 8 (1994): 414-34.

Blaney, Peter. *The Texts of "King Lear" and Their Origins* (1982).

Bonheim, Helmut, ed. *The Lear Perplex* (1960).

Bradley, A. C. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904).

Campbell, Lily B. *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* (1930).

Colie, Rosalie, and F. T. Flahiff, eds. *Some Facets of "King Lear"* (1974).

Cunningham, J. V. *Woe and Wonder* (1951).

Danby, John F. *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (1949).

Fraser, Russell A. *Shakespeare's Poetics in Relation to "King Lear"* (1962).

Granville-Barker, Harley. *Prefaces to Shakespeare*. 2 vols. (1946-47); part of the material is reprinted above.

Halio, Jay, ed. *The Tragedy of King Lear* (1992).

Heilman, Robert B. *This Great Stage: Image and Structure in "King Lear"* (1948).

Holland, Norman N., and Sidney Homan and Bernard J. Paris, eds. *Shakespeare's Personality* (1989).

Kahn, Coppélia. "The Absent Mother in *King Lear*." *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (1986); pp. 33-49.

Lamb, Charles. "On Shakespeare's Tragedies" (1808); rptd. in *Lamb's Criticism*, ed. E. M. W. Tillyard (1923), pp. 43-48.

Lothian, John Maule. "*King Lear*": *A Tragic Reading of Life* (1950).

Mack, Maynard. "*King Lear*" in *Our Time* (1965); part of the material is reprinted above.

Moulton, Richard G. *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (1897).

Novy, Marianne. *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (1984).

. *Women's Re-Visions of Shakespeare: On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others* (1990):

Perrett, Wilfred. *The Story of King Lear from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Shakespeare* (1904).

Rosen, William. *Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy* (1960).

Sewall, Richard B. *The Vision of Tragedy* (1959).

Shakespeare Studies 13 (1960; devoted to *King Lear*).

Stoll, E. E. *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare* (1933).

Taylor, Gary, and Michael Warren, eds. *The Division of the Kingdom: Shakespeare's Two Versions of "King Lear"* (1983).

Thompson, Ann. "Are There Any Women in *King Lear*?" *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*. Ed. Valerie Wayne (1991), pp. 117-28.

Warren, Michael. *The Complete "King Lear" 1608-1623* (1989); unbound photographic facsimiles of Q1, Q2, and F, as well as a bound version of the next title listed.

. *The Parallel "King Lear" 1608-23* (1989); photographic facsimiles of Q1 and F, in parallel columns, and, in the outer margins, reproductions of corrected states of Q and F.

Weis, René, ed. *"King Lear": A Parallel Text Edition* (1993); prints Q on the left-hand page, F on the right, both in modernized spelling.

Wilson, Richard. *Will Power* (1993).

OceanofPDF.com

SIGNET CLASSICS

The Signet Classics Shakespeare Series:

The Tragedies
extensively revised and updated expert commentary
provides more enjoyment through a greater
understanding of the texts

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA, Barbara Everett, ed.

CORIOLANUS, Ruben Brower, ed.

HAMLET, Sylvan Barnet, ed.

JULIUS CAESAR, William and Barbara Rosen, ed.

KING LEAR, Russell Faser, ed.

MACBETH, Sylvan Barnet, ed.

OTHELLO, Alvin Kernan, ed.

ROMEO AND JULIET, J.A. Bryant, Jr., ed.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA, Daniel Seltzer, ed.

Available wherever books are sold or at

signetclassics.com

S363

OceanofPDF.com

1

W. W. Greg, *The Variants in the First Quarto of "King Lear,"* London, 1940 (for 1939).

2

A Study of Shakespeare (1880), pp. 171, 172.

3

"I stumbled when I saw," says Gloster.

4

Later, on p. 313 of his volume, Barker says: "We must not... [moreover], appraise either ... [Gloucester's initial] simplicity or Edgar's ... with detachment—for by that light, no human being, it would seem, between infancy and dotage, could be so gullible. Shakespeare asks us to allow him the fact of the deception, even as we have allowed him Lear's partition of the kingdom. It is his starting point, the dramatist's let's pretend, which is as essential to the beginning of a play as a "let it be granted" to a proposition of Euclid. And, within bounds, the degree of pretence makes surprisingly little difference. It is what the assumption will commit him to that counts."

5

"The World of Hamlet." *The Yale Review* XLI (1952): 502-23.

6

King Lear (W. P. Ker Memorial Lecture), p. 48.

7

See Hentzner's *Itinerary* (1598); quoted, translated from the Latin, in Joseph Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (London, 1801), ed. J. C. Cox (1903), p. 206.