

A DRAMATURGICAL PRODUCTION BOOK FOR TEXAS STATE'S 2005

PRODUCTION OF KING LEAR

THESIS

**Presented to the Graduate Council
of Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements**

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

,

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**San Marcos, Texas
May 2005**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking my parents, Mike and Mary Bob Smith, for continuously giving me the love, encouragement, and strength to achieve my goals. I am especially thankful to the members of my thesis committee: Dr. Debra Charlton, Dr. John Fleming, and Melissa Grogan. My deepest appreciation goes to Dr. John Fleming for always taking the time to go out of his way in order to help me. I greatly appreciate his enthusiasm and love for teaching. It is from him that I know the kind of teacher I want to be someday. He has been the greatest influence on my academic career.

This manuscript was submitted on May 25, 2005.

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CHAPTER I

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

William Shakespeare was baptized at the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564. Due to the high infant mortality rates of the time, babies were usually baptized on the Sunday following their birth. Most scholars agree Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564, which ironically is the day he died fifty-two years later in 1616. According to Stanley Wells in his book *Shakespeare for All Time*, the most popular alternative theory on Shakespeare's date of birth has been April 22 because Shakespeare's granddaughter chose that date for her marriage. Wells finds this supposition improbable because he believes "the idea that she was influenced by respect for her ancestor's memory probably reflects an anachronistic enthusiasm for anniversaries" (2).

Shakespeare was the eldest surviving son of John and Mary Arden Shakespeare. John Shakespeare was a leather tanner and small-time farmer. Mary Arden came from a prosperous land owning family. After her father's death Mary inherited her father's land in Wilmcote (Palmer 221). John Shakespeare gained control of this lucrative inheritance from his marriage to Mary. Overall, the Shakespeare family had eight children, but only five survived into adulthood. Joan and Mary were born before Shakespeare, but they both died in infancy; so he was the third born but the first to survive. His younger siblings included his sister, Joan, and

three brothers, Gilbert, Richard, and Edmund. Edmund followed along his older brother's footsteps and was an actor in London.

During Shakespeare's childhood his father moved up quickly in community status. John Shakespeare was first elected as one of the town constables, then alderman, and eventually gained the position of bailiff, which is equal to the rank of mayor today. According to Wells, as Bailiff John Shakespeare "approved payments for the first recorded performances given by professional actors in the town" (Wells 8).

Growing up the son of a bailiff, Shakespeare enjoyed the benefits of a privileged life. Shakespeare's family attended church every Sunday, as required by law. Due to his father's prominence in the community, the Shakespeare family would have been seated in the front row of the Holy Trinity Church (8). Another advantage to privileged life was the opportunity for education. There are no records of Shakespeare's academics, but many scholars conjecture that at the age of seven, Shakespeare was invited to join the Stratford grammar school known as the King's New School.

Due to the rise in humanism during the Renaissance, education was based on rhetoric, Christian ethics, and classical literature. It was here that Shakespeare learned Latin, Greek, and according to the *Riverside* edition, French. Latin instruction was rigorous, and it was "the basic language of Elizabethan grammar school education" (Wells 12). Children were taught at a young age to translate Latin, complete rhetorical analyses of Latin compositions, and were put through strenuous drills on Latin memorization. In Stephen Greenblatt's book *Will in the World*, he

says, “Virtually all school masters agreed that one of the best ways to instill good Latin in their students was to have them read and perform ancient plays, especially the comedies of Plautus and Terrence” (27).

Plautus and Terence were Roman comedy playwrights who became popular in England in the mid-sixteenth century. Many of Shakespeare’s mature comedies are structured like the Roman comedies of Plautus and Terence. Shakespeare’s plays depicted five acts divided into the classical play structure of: exposition, rising action, turning point, falling action, and denouement. His later comedies also echoed Roman comedy by focusing on the question of love.

Other than being influenced by Roman dramatists Shakespeare used his Latin and classical background in the dialogue of his plays. Shakespeare pokes fun at Latin grammar instruction by mixing it with comic sexual innuendos in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* Act 4, scene 1. Shakespeare read classical literature by poets such as Virgil, Horace and Ovid, “as well as philosophic speculation (Montaigne), continental fiction such as Boccaccio’s, [and] earlier English poets like Chaucer and Gower” (*Riverside* 3). These classical influences are clearly reflected in Shakespeare’s plays such as *The Tempest* and *The Winter’s Tale*, influenced by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Outside of the theatre Shakespeare’s “long poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, are Ovidian in tone and subject matter” (Wells 15).

Shakespeare was also inspired by non-academic influences that came from outside of the classroom. As a boy Shakespeare would have spent much time outdoors. In his plays nature often recurs as an important motif. Trees, birds, and animals have played significant roles in his plays by creating complex metaphors and

iconographic imagery patterns. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare uses animal imagery of serpents, wolves, and other carnivorous animals to symbolize the vicious natures of Goneril and Regan. In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare uses nature by setting scenes in The Forest of Arden, which was a forest outside of Stratford that is no longer there today.

There are many assumptions on Shakespeare's amount of agricultural background and knowledge. For example, pastoral scenes, such as the sheep shearing festival in the second half of *The Winter's Tale*, provide evidence of Shakespeare's agricultural knowledge. Steven Greenblatt in his book *Will in the World* speculates that Shakespeare was also influenced by folk celebrations popular during the 16th century that used theatre as part of their reveling. It is assumed that Shakespeare may have attended Hock Tuesday and the Corpus Christi pageant in Coventry, just a few miles out of Stratford. The festivities during these celebrations included theatrical performances, and Shakespeare may have been influenced by the entertainment he witnessed. The Corpus Christi pageant was part of the medieval mystery cycles where events of Jesus's life were performed, and was probably a huge celebration with many out of town travelers. Since John Shakespeare was obviously a man who enjoyed the theatre by recruiting acting troupes to visit Stratford, he may have taken his son to these festivities not far from Stratford.

During Shakespeare's youth there are numerous records of touring acting companies who visited Stratford. Greenblatt notes that the Queen's Men, the Earl of Worcester's Men, the Earl of Leicester's Men, and the Earl of Warwick's Men performed in Stratford during Shakespeare's childhood (28, 30). Morality plays were

popular during this time, and there are obvious influences from these plays in Shakespeare's writings. Morality characters, such as Vice and Lechery, show up in the characterization of Shakespeare's villains and fools.

Unlike most men of his time who waited until at least their twenties to marry, Shakespeare married at the young age of eighteen. He married Anne Hathaway on November 27, 1582. Anne was eight years older than Shakespeare, and some theories allude to a shotgun wedding because Susanna, their first daughter, was born six months after their marriage. Like his father, Shakespeare's marriage helped move him up in the social hierarchy. According to Stanley Wells, "just as Mary Arden brought her husband a legacy of ten marks, so Anne's father left her the same sum to be paid when she married" (Wells 18).

There are conjectural arguments on the nature of Shakespeare's marriage. Some scholars believe Shakespeare was actually engaged to another woman before Anne Hathaway became pregnant. There was a marriage license between a William Shaxpere and a certain Anne Whateley of Temple Grafton, but due to the flexible spelling of names during Renaissance England, the last name Whateley was probably another version of Hathaway. Those who support this theory conjecture that if Shakespeare was in love with another woman but forced to marry another, it would help explain Shakespeare and Anne's unconventional marriage. After Susanna, Anne only bore two more children. In 1585 she gave birth to twins, Judith and Hamnet.

There are many postulations as to why the couple never had anymore children. It has been assumed by scholars that Shakespeare left Stratford and his family around 1587. Even though married, Shakespeare may have swayed from his

marriage bed while abroad. This theory is supported by the sexual nature of his Sonnets. The first half are about the love for a young man and the last are directed towards a “dark lady”. Over the past century critics have dissected Shakespeare’s works searching for hidden sexual innuendoes. Many scholars have concluded that there are homoerotic undertones in the sonnets directed towards the young man, and Shakespeare’s love for his “Master mistress” has led to numerous theories on a homosexual relationship between Shakespeare and this young man. In Wells’s recent book *Looking for Sex in Shakespeare*, he notes that these sonnets were unique in that they were addressed to a man, which was a rare occurrence in Elizabethan literature. Also, the ones addressed to his “dark lady” were shameful and borderline misogynistic. Was Shakespeare involved with another man sexually? Did he sway from his marriage bed? These are questions still unanswered.

Some scholars argue that Shakespeare’s marriage to Anne was unpleasant, but this is only conjecture since there is no proof. Those who support this theory believe that an unhappy marriage could have influenced Shakespeare’s twenty years away from home. Also, throughout his plays Shakespeare makes references to hasty and unhappy marriages which some believe may reflect Shakespeare’s own marriage. Was she jealous and nagging? Themes of lust and jealousy appear in many marital relationships in Shakespeare’s plays. In *The Comedy of Errors*, one of his earliest plays, Adriana is portrayed as a nagging shrew. Some have presumed that the character of Adriana can be compared with Shakespeare’s opinion of his wife. There is no way to prove whether or not Shakespeare had a bad marriage, and these theories are only scholarly guesses.

There have also been assumptions revolving around Shakespeare's will. In his will, all Shakespeare left his wife was his "second best bed." Since the best bed of the house was saved for guests, he may have been referring to their marital bed. According to Greenblatt, many scholars assume Shakespeare did not leave Anne more in his will because "a widow would in any case have been entitled to a life interest in a one-third share of her deceased husband's estate" (144).

The years between 1585 and 1592 are known as Shakespeare's lost years because there are no surviving records of him during these years. There are countless theories about where he was and what he was doing. Some believe he joined a touring comedy troupe known as the Queen's Men. It was not until 1592 that Shakespeare's name re-surfaced in a pamphlet by Robert Greene.

Robert Greene was a contemporary dramatist and novelist. In 1592 Greene produced a moral pamphlet in order to expose the villainies of his world. It was called *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*, and in it he wrote, "there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, ... in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in the country" (Wells 49). In this passage, Greene makes a pun of Shakespeare's name correlating it with theatre and attacks Shakespeare's plagiarisim of other playwrights' fancy words. Due to the fact that there were no copyright laws at the time, Shakespeare borrowed many other writers' stories in the development of his plays. By the time Greene's book was published, Shakespeare was already established in the London scene. He had already written *1 Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and possibly *The Taming of the Shrew*, but just as

his career had begun to take off, plague swept across England, and the theatres were closed in fear of spreading contamination.

Renaissance London was dirty and overpopulated. Housing was cramped; prostitutes stood in dark and furtive alleys, and chamber pots were emptied out of windows onto the ground below. The city streets were infested with rats and fleas that carried the bubonic plague. People infected with the plague coughed up blood, broke out in black and purple buboes and boils, and they were quarantined for fear of spreading the disease. The government thought the plague was an air transmitted disease and closed all public areas, which included the theatres. While the theatres were closed Shakespeare wrote poetry.

During these years of epidemic, Shakespeare focused on poetry. He composed *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Venus and Adonis*, and many of his sonnets. These poems raised Shakespeare's rank as a writer and placed him with popular Elizabethan writers such as Christopher Marlowe, who wrote plays for the Lord Admiral's Men. Marlowe was considered the best playwright of the time until he was murdered in 1593 at Thomas Lodge. Marlowe's death was significant in the rise of Shakespeare's popularity because Marlowe was Shakespeare's rival, and Shakespeare became the leading dramatist. It is also during this time that Shakespeare became acquainted with Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton. Many scholars believe that the Earl of Southampton may have been the young man addressed in Shakespeare's sonnets. Whatever the relationship was between Shakespeare and Henry Wriothesley the Earl's patronage helped progress Shakespeare's popularity.

In 1594, the plague ceased, and the theatres were reopened. Shakespeare joined an acting company called The Lord Chamberlain's Men. In this group that Shakespeare met Will Kempe and Richard Burbage. Shakespeare became a sharer of the company's affairs and acted as the company's chief playwright. Shakespeare made a lucrative living as a company shareholder by benefiting from the shared profits. In 1596, Shakespeare was able to help his father, John, receive a coat of arms. This coat of arms gave the Shakespeare family gentlemanly status.

The new company was off to a brilliant start with The Lord Chamberlain as their patron. They performed at The Theatre, one of the first theatres in London. It was built by James Burbage in 1576. "The Theatre was located on leased land," (Brockett 165) but in 1597 the lease ran out. The new rent was too high for Shakespeare and his company to afford. In 1599, Shakespeare and around fifteen colleagues disassembled The Theater and used its timber to build another theater on the other side of the Thames River. This became what is known as the first Globe theatre.

Shakespeare and his company used the layout of the inn yards they had been accustomed to performing in for their new theatre. In the middle of the Globe was an open yard, which only cost a penny for admittance; therefore this area was usually used by the poor who were willing to stand unprotected from the weather for lengthy productions, not to mention the hours of traffic getting there. Three tiers of seats circled around the yard, which were more expensive and usually occupied by the middle and upper classes. De Bank, in his book *Shakespeare Production*, describes the main part of the acting space as consisting of a platform stage jutting out into the

auditorium and surrounded by three sides of which the audience could gather. David Bevington in his book *English Renaissance Drama* conjectures that by having the actors surrounded by the audience, who were practically at their feet, playwrights were presumably influenced to create personal asides and direct addresses to the audience (1). Sometimes wealthy audience members were allowed to sit in the upstairs gallery behind the stage. The back of the stage as featuring an alcove, possibly used as a discovery space, and the area above the acting space was nicknamed “the heavens.”

New innovations in theatre architecture and staging techniques during the Renaissance influenced the dramaturgy of the time. New theatres, including the Globe, included doors that lead from the mainstage to what Bevington describes as a “so called tiring room (attiring room)” (xlix) where actors could change their costumes and wait for their entrances. This space also provided the actors protection from the weather. Traps were used to raise and lower actors to add spectacle to the performances since the stage itself was usually bare. Bevington notes that these “theaters lacked moveable scenery or elaborate sets...[which] heightened [the] importance of props, which the companies possessed in abundance” (1). Since there was no electric lighting at the time, props were used to signal the audience important information about the scenes. An example would be the use of lanterns; since the lighting in the theatres could not be changed, lanterns were carried on stage by the actors in order to signify to the audience that the scene is taking place at night-time. The theatres were usually packed, and going to the theatre became a communal experience for everyone.

By having stability within a company and a permanent theatre, Shakespeare was able to write characters for the specific actors in his group. Richard Burbage was the leading man and probably played roles such as King Lear; Will Kempe was the fool followed by Robert Armin, and young boys usually played the female characters. As a playwright Shakespeare's dramaturgy shifted. During the early 17th century, Shakespeare moved from writing histories to what some scholars classify as his romantic or mature comedies. These include plays such as *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. From 1600-1606, Shakespeare also completed his four great tragedies *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. Shakespeare's bleak outlook on life may have been influenced by the ubiquitous death that engulfed England in 1603. Not only was 1603 one of the worst plague years in England, but it was the year Queen Elizabeth died. It was the end of the Tudor dynasty and the beginning of the Stuarts with James VI of Scotland who became James I of England following Elizabeth's death. He took Shakespeare's company under his patronage and made them the King's Men. It has been estimated that Shakespeare's company gave one-hundred-and- thirty-eight performances at court from 1603-1613.

In 1608, Shakespeare and his men began performing at a smaller, indoor theatre. This was known as the Blackfriars Theater. This theatre was very different from the Globe. It was "a rectangle, roofed space, particularly useful for winter performances, [and held a] much smaller capacity" (Wells 91). There was no standing room, only rows of seats in front of the stage. Additional seating could be found in the galleries around the sides of the stage, and there were some seats on the stage itself. Another significant difference is the fact that The Blackfriars Theatre

was lit by candles allowing night-time performances. The audience was composed of higher society who expected elaborate entertainment, “and it was located close to the law courts and to upscale neighborhoods with the kind of inhabitants who could pay for its expensive seats” (Bevington liv). During the summer, when the law courts were closed and the nobles were in the country, the King’s Men performed at the Globe and toured around England.

Due to the change in playing spaces, Shakespeare’s dramaturgy shifted. His later plays have been categorized as either his romances or problem plays. These include *The Winter’s Tale*, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*. It is in these plays that Shakespeare synthesized all his thematic styles. According to Stanley Wells, “these plays [made] more use of spectacle, music, and dance than most of their predecessors” (91). These plays exhibit Shakespeare’s flexibility as a dramatist because in these later plays Shakespeare mixed genres, focused more on supernatural elements, and experimented with the traditional composition of meter and verse.

In 1613, The Globe burned down. Some speculate this initiated the end of Shakespeare’s writing. Shakespeare retired to New Place to be with his family in Stratford. In January of 1616 Shakespeare drafted his will. No one knows for sure if Shakespeare knew he was going to die or not. He died on his presumed birthday April 23, 1616. One tale told about Shakespeare’s death surmises that Shakespeare and his buddy Ben Jonson went out drinking late one night, and Shakespeare caught a horrible cold, dying soon after. Wells speculates that Shakespeare probably suffered from typhoid fever (45). There is no name on Shakespeare’s grave, only the epitaph:

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.

Shakespeare's plays were not authorized for publication until the *First Folio* in 1623, seven years after his death. Two of his friends, John Hemings and Henry Condell, took the responsibility of putting the First Folio together. Their effort "was a brave gesture. They were actors with no experience of editorial work, and they carried out their complex task, or at least oversaw its execution by others, with great diligence" (Wells 97).

CHAPTER II

DATE OF COMPOSITION

The date of *King Lear*'s composition has been disputed by scholars over the centuries. Even though the exact date is unknown, it has been generally accepted by scholars that the play must have been written between 1603 and 1606. Theobald, an early 18th century Shakespearean editor, was the first to discover similarities between Edgar's lunatic ravings and Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, published in 1603. Harsnett was the Vicar of Chigwell and wrote his *Declaration* as a retort against the supposed demonic possessions and exorcisms of the time. The goal of this *Declaration* was to prove that the documented miracles were bogus and that the Catholic priests were impostures, but at the same time it gave a detailed account of Elizabethan demonology.

Contemporary critic, Kenneth Muir, supports Theobald's theory that Shakespeare used the demonology terms and accounts from this pamphlet in the dialogue of Poor Tom's feigned madness. According to *The New Variorum Edition of King Lear*, Edgar's reference to a "foul fiend" who has "laid knives under his pillow and halters in his pew" (3.4.58-59), comes from a confession in the *Declaration* pamphlet. In Harsnett's *Declaration* he describes a case of demonic possession in which the devil laid knives and halters under church pews so "that some of those who were possessed, might either hang themselves with the halter, or kill

themselves with the blades” (Variorum 187). If this *Declaration* influenced Poor Tom’s demonic references such as Flibbertigibbet, then *King Lear* could not have been composed before 1603.

It has been documented that the first record of the play appears in the Stationers’ Registers November 26, 1607. The title of this entry was *Master WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE his ‘historye of Kinge LEAR’ as it was played before the kinges maiestie at Whitehall upon Saint Stephens night [Decemeber 26] at Christmas Last by his maiesties servants playing usually at th ‘Globe’ on the Bankside*. Therefore, *King Lear* had to have been composed before the performance on December 26, 1606. Any attempt to further establish a fixed date of composition has been a contentious subject amongst scholars.

Over the years, scholars have found historical, literary, and environmental contexts in the play that establish a 1605-1606 date for the composition. In 1790, Malone assigned 1605 as date of composition for two reasons. The first reason states that Edgar’s use of “Britishman” (3.4.197), references “James’s accession to the English throne...[and] was proclaimed King of Great Britain 24 October, 1604” (Variorum 377). Secondly, Malone comments on the 1605 publication of the 1594 play *King Leir*, whose author remains anonymous. This play’s relationship to Shakespeare’s *King Lear* has also been a topic of much debate in the search for *King Lear*’s date.

Malone argued the theory that the revival of this 1594 play was due to the popularity of Shakespeare’s play. Robert Adger Law, in his article “On the Date of *King Lear*”, agrees with “Malone’s theory that the publication of the anonymous play

by Stafford and Wright in 1605 was for the purpose of deceiving a public that desired to read Shakespeare's tragedy" (472). If this theory is true, then Shakespeare must have completed the play before the piratical publication of *King Leir* in May 1605.

Gary Taylor has further concluded that *King Lear*'s story was influenced by *Eastward Ho* and *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage*. In his article, "A New Source and an Old Date for *King Lear*", he argues that the composition of *King Lear* could not have been completed until after the summer of 1605 due to parallels between *King Lear*, *Eastward Ho*, and *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage*. Taylor notes the similarities between these three plays and says that "The title page of the 1607 edition of *The Miseries of Enforced Marriage* tells us it was played by Shakespeare's company; this means that Shakespeare certainly read it, at some time between June 1605 and May 1606" (412). So, the earliest date *King Lear* could have been written was fall of 1605. There are many theories supporting this idea.

Aldis Wright, a 19th century bibliographer and editor, helped progress the date of composition to late autumn 1605 due to environmental occurrences in the play that reflect events that took place in September and October of 1605. Wright argues that the eclipses referenced by Gloucester in 1.2 relate to actual eclipses that took place in the fall of 1605. He believed that "it can scarcely be doubted that Shakespeare had in his mind the great eclipse, and that *Lear* was written while the recollection of it was still fresh, and while the ephemeral literature of the day abounded with pamphlets foreboding the consequences that were to follow" (Variorum 380).

G.T. Buckley, in "These Late Eclipses Again" notes that the dates of these eclipses, September 27 and October 2, have been documented incorrectly in many

texts. Buckley states that “approximately two weeks must elapse after an eclipse of the moon before an eclipse of the sun is possible” (253). In researching this issue he learned “that there was a partial eclipse of the moon in England on September 17, 1605, and a nearly total eclipse of the sun on October 2, 1605” (255). Buckley states that due to the difference in calendars, these dates would have appeared as September 27 and October 12 on the Gregorian calendar. So even though the dates are not accurate with our contemporary calendar, September 27 and October 12 are the dates accepted for influencing Shakespeare’s astronomical references in *King Lear*.

Last, there are historical references in the play that allude to the Gunpowder Plot of November 1605. Gloucester’s foreshadowing in 1.2 refers to this conspiracy by foreshadowing treason and discord. Also, there have been studies done on the similarities between the composition of ‘Gunpowder Plays’ and *King Lear*. These plays included plots to overthrow a king, loyalty tests, and anonymous letters. A more in depth comparison between *King Lear* and the Gunpowder Plot can be found in Chapter IV: Historical Context.

From these scholarly studies, I believe *King Lear* was composed between fall 1605 and spring 1606. I set spring 1606 as the latest date because *Macbeth* was composed and completed in 1606, and *Lear* does not follow the 1606 Act to Restrain the Abuses of Players. This act included the omission of any blasphemous phrases and unnecessary references to God. I believe *King Lear* was written before this law was passed because it contains many references to demons and demonic possession which were later extruded for the First Folio edition published in 1623.

CHAPTER III

SOURCES

All writers are inspired in some way or other, and sometimes they take, borrow, and rework other authors' stories. Like all Renaissance dramatists, Shakespeare was greatly influenced by his Tudor forerunners, history, mythology, and contemporary events. Volumes of books have been published on the topic of Shakespeare's sources. For *King Lear*, Shakespeare borrowed from both history and legends. The tale of filial ingratitude and the portrayal of good and bad children's treatment of their elderly parents was popular world wide including Oriental folklore, ancient Indian tales such as the Mahabharata, and "in Europe the love-test appeared in Grimm's story of the Goosegirl-Princess who told her father she loved him like salt" (Bullough 271). Shakespeare may not have been familiar with these specific stories, but their universal stories and themes may have influenced Shakespeare's sources.

The legend of King Lear first appeared in England in 1135 in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britannia*. In this historical representation, Monmouth writes the story of King Leir, the tenth king after Brut. In Monmouth's Book IV, Chapter XI, from the 1718 Aaron Thompson translation, Leir divides his kingdom between his daughters Gonorilla, Regan, and Cordeilla. The old king asks his daughters which one of them loves him most. The first two daughters profess

boundless love and are rewarded with husbands and their share of the kingdom. The youngest, Cordeilla, answered:

My Lord, is there any daughter that can love her father more than duty requires? In my opinion whoever pretends to it, must disguise her real sentiments under the veil of flattery. I have always loved you as a father, nor do I yet depart from my purposed duty...[Leir] supposing that she spoke this out of abundance of her heart, was highly provoked, and immediately replied; Since you have so far despised my old age, as not to think me worthy the love that your sisters express for me, you shall have from me the like regard, and shall be excluded from any share with your sisters in my kingdom. (Bullough 311)

This passage may have influenced Shakespeare's dialogue between Cordelia and Lear because Cordelia like Cordeilla stresses her duty and filial love, and Lear like Leir says, "Let it be so. Thy truth, then, be thy dower" (1.1.120). There are also similarities between Shakespeare's King of France and Monmouth's Aganippus. Aganippus's line "Amore virginis inflammatus" has often been compared to France's line "My love should kindle to enflamed respect" (1.1.296). Other similarities between the two stories include the ingratitude shown by the two eldest daughters and Leir's sufferings.

The originality of Shakespeare's *King Lear* comes from the play's ending. In Monmouth's account of Leir, Leir flees to Gaul (France) and with the help of Aganippus and Cordeilla is restored to his throne. After the deaths of Leir and her husband, Cordeilla becomes queen, but in Monmouth's story:

After a peaceable possession of the government for five years, Cordeilla began to meet with disturbances from the two sons of her sisters, being both young men of great spirit... These after the death of their fathers succeeding them in their Dukedoms, were incensed to see Britain subject to the power of a woman, and raised forces in order to make an insurrection against the queen; nor desisted from their hostilities, till after a general waste of her countries, and several battles fought, they at last took her and put her in prison; where for grief at the loss of her kingdom she killed herself.

(Bullough 315-16)

Shakespeare's ending strayed from this historical version by denying Lear's escape to France and having both Lear and Cordelia die. For these variations Shakespeare may have looked to other sources that may have been influenced by Monmouth's Leir.

Monmouth had significant influence on subsequent writers. His portrayal of King Leir initiated multiple legends contiguous with Leir. Historian W. Perret found that there were at least twenty-six variants of the tale of King Lear from Monmouth to Shakespeare's play. Some of these include Caxton's fourteenth century English translation of the French prose *Brut*, Polydore Vergil's *Angelica Historiae* (1534), *The New Chronicles* of Robert Fabyan (1516), John Stow's *Summarie of Englyshe Chronicles* (1563) and *Annales* (1592), Gerard Legh's *Acceders of Armory* (1562), and Camden's *Remaines* (1605). Most of these were not direct influences on Shakespeare's *King Lear*, but they are examples of the weighty influence of Monmouth's Leir in English literature. Three stories of Lear that were obvious

influences on Shakespeare were Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Higgin's additions to *The Mirror for Magistrates*, and Spenser's *The Faerie Queen*.

Many Shakespearean scholars, including Bullough and Muir, support the idea that Shakespeare took very few ideas from Holinshed for the composition of *King Lear*. In Holinshed's *Chronicles* Goneril is married to Cornwall and Regan to Albany, which is the opposite of the marriages in Shakespeare's play. Also, Holinshed follows the original ending from Monmouth. Joseph Satin, in his book *Shakespeare and his Sources*, argues that Shakespeare was probably familiar with Monmouth since Holinshed's version

deals more briefly with the conflict between Gonorilla and Leir's

household knights, and with the meeting between Leir and Crodeilla.

Since both of these incidents loom large in [Shakespeare's] *King Lear*

it seems likely that [he was] familiar with Geoffrey's account. (Satin 446)

There are also many similarities between Shakespeare's *Lear* and *The Mirror for Magistrates*. Kenneth Muir notes that there are obvious references in *King Lear* from two individual editions of *Mirror*, 1574 and 1587. In these accounts "the love-test was made because Leire [(Higgin's spelling)] 'thought to give, where favoure most he fande'" (275). Leire is dividing his kingdom between his daughters Gonerell, Ragan, and Cordila. In the 1574 edition, as recorded by Bullough on page 325, there are many comparisons between Leire and Cordila's dialogue and Lear and Cordelia's conversation in 1.1. In *The Mirror* it says, "How much dost thou (quoth he) Cordile thy father love?/ I will (said I) at one my love declare and tell:/ I loved you ever as my father well,/ No, otherwise" (lines 80-83). Resemblances can be

found in Cordelia's answer; "I love your Majesty/ According to my bond, no more nor less" (1.1.101-102).

Also from *The Mirror*, Shakespeare may have taken the reduction of Lear's train. In the 1586 edition, printed in the Variorum, when Leire is denied his retinue he says:

What more despite could diuellish beasts deuise,
 Then joy their fathers wofull daies to see?
 What vipers vile could do their King despise,
 Or so unkind, so curst, so cruell bee?
 Fro thence again he went to Albany,
 Where they berau'd his seruants all saue one:
 Bad him content himselfe with that, or none. (390)

This idea of one or none is clearly reiterated in Regan's line "What need one?" (2.4.304) The rest of the story of Leire in *The Mirror* follows the traditional plot of Lear's reinstatement as king and Cordelia's suicide.

Another influence on Shakespeare's composition of *King Lear* comes from Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Book II, Canto X) published in 1590. From this "Spenser gave Shakespeare both Cordelia's name and the manner in which she was murdered" (Bullough 276). In Spenser's epic poem, Cordelia "overcommen kept in prison so long,/ Till wearie of that wretched life, herselfe she hong" (334). This may have influenced Shakespeare's decision to have Cordelia be hung rather than stab herself. Although the manner of death is the same in both stories, Shakespeare has Cordelia murdered. Always willing to meet the needs of his audience,

Shakespeare may have changed the original suicide to make Cordelia more like a martyr.

Most scholars agree that Shakespeare's greatest influence for his main plot came from the anonymous play *The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella*. There are records proving that the play was performed by The Queen's Men at the Rose Theatre in 1594, but it was not published until 1605. In looking at Shakespeare's *Lear* and the anonymous *Leir*, one can find major similarities between the two plays including the addition of characters, parallel motifs of letters progressing the plot, and similar structures.

The major influence of this play on Shakespeare's *King Lear* is the addition of characters who act as foils and confidants to Lear's character. The two added characters in *Leir* are Perillus and Skalliger. Perillus is Leir's confidant and correlates to Shakespeare's Kent in *King Lear*. Perillus tries to reason with Leir when he irrationally banishes Cordella; "Oh, heare me speake for her, my gracious Lord,/ Whose deeds have not deserve'd this ruthlesse doome,/ As thus to disinherit her of all" (Bullough 351, 567-569). He embodies the traditions of duty and loyalty as does Kent. Skalliger on the other hand, flatters Leir and manipulates Gonorill much like the foil Oswald in *Lear*.

The structure of the two plots and the language of these two plays are quite similar. According to Muir Shakespeare "condensed no less than eight scenes [from *Leir*] into the second part of his own first scene" (200). Below I have contrasted Lear's introductory monologue and Cordelia's answer with those in Bullough's copy of *Leir* by putting similar lines in bold font.

There are also correspondences between the characters of Goneril and Regan within the two plays because both scripts embody misogynistic language. Muir notes that both Goneril and Regan are repeatedly referred to as monsters, monstrous, ungrateful, and vile. There is also the recurring motif of a letter between the sisters in both plots. In *Leir*, Gonorell sends Ragan a letter stating that “Leir ‘hath detracted’ Ragan and ‘given out slanderous speeches against her’” (Variorum 398). Other semblances between the two plays include the reference to Leir as a shadow of himself, Leir’s kneeling, and the animal imagery used to depict the violent nature of the characters. In the Variorum it states that:

Mr. A.W. Ward, in his admirable *History of English Dramatic Literature*, when speaking of this *King Leir*, says: ‘Yet, with all its defects, the play seems only to await the touch of a powerful hand to be converted into a tragedy of supreme effectiveness; and while Shakespeare’s genius nowhere exerted itself with more transcendent force and marvelous versatility, it nowhere found more promising materials ready to its command. (402)

While *King Leir* provides strong source material, it lacks Shakespeare’s Fool, the storm, the subplot, and Cordelia’s murder.

For the development of *King Lear*’s subplot Shakespeare incorporated elements from Sidney’s *Arcadia* and Harsnett’s *Declaration of egregious Popish impostures*. *Arcadia* is the story of the blind Paphlagonian and his two sons. From this story, published in 1590, Shakespeare draws the characters of Gloucester and his two sons. Other similarities can be found in the environmental setting. The weather is described as:

being (as in the depth of winter) very cold, and as then suddenly grown to so extreme and fouler storm poured hail on the Princes' heads forcing them to seek some shrowding place which a certain hollow rock offering unto them, they made it their shield against the tempests furies.

(Variorum 386)

These references to cold weather, a dreadful storm, and shelter from a hovel, may have influenced Shakespeare's development of 3.2 and 3.4.

Also from this story Shakespeare took the ideas of an evil son leading to the blinding of his father, the blind father being lead by his good son, and the old man's wish to die. The son tells the Princes:

This old man (whom I lead) was lately rightful Prince of this country of Paphlagonia, by the hard-hearted ungratefulness of a sone of his, deprived, not only of his kingdom, but of his sight, the riches which Nature grants to the poorest creatures...now he would have had me to have led him to the top of this rock, thence to cast himself headlong to death. (387)

This speech is reiterated in *King Lear*, when the blinded Gloucester tells Edgar:

"There is a cliff, whose high and bending head/ Looks fearfully in the confined deep./ Bring but to the very brim of it,/ From that place/ I shall no leading need" (4.1.83-88).

It has been speculated that the story, which the old man tells of his evil son, probably influenced the characterization of Shakespeare's Edmund. First, the son was a bastard, like Edmund, and he was raised as a soldier away from home. There are no specific references to the nature of Edmund's rearing, but in 1.1 Gloucester tells Kent, "He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again" (1.1.32-33). Also,

the father in *Arcadia* describes the very nature of Edmund when telling of his son's character: "poisonous hypocrisy, desperate fraud, smooth malice, hidden ambition, and a smiling envy" (Variorum 388). When telling of his bastard son's usurpation, the blind father tells how his evil son tore out his eyes and left him alive to live miserable in horrible suffering. The old man's reference "my blind eyes of naughtiness" (388) echoes in Edgar's lines to Edmund which allude to Gloucester's blinding due to his sin: "The dark and vicious place where thee he got/ Cost him his eyes" (5.3.206-207).

From Sidney's story, it is plausible to contend that this story in *Arcadia* played a significant role in Shakespeare's development of his subplot. The major difference, though, is the feigned madness of Edgar as Poor Tom. The source of Edgar's insanity and dialogue has been a topic of dispute, but most scholars, including Bullough, Muir, and Satin, agree that a large amount of Poor Tom's gibberish and demonic references come from a pamphlet which was published in 1603.

In Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of egregious Popish impostures* "the Chaplain to the Bishop of London attacked belief in witches and 'possession' and exposed the 'wickedness' of lurking Jesuits who had pretended to exorcize demons by the use of relics, fumigation, holy water, and Sacraments" (Bullough 299). In this pamphlet Harsnett clearly describes cases of demonic possession, and these descriptions are rooted in the feigned madness of Edgar's disguise.

The first to realize the association between the *Declaration* and *King Lear* was Theobald, an eighteenth century editor. He pointed out, "The greatest part of

Edgar's dissembled lunacy, the names of his devils, and the descriptive circumstances he alludes to in his own case, are all drawn from this pamphlet, and the confessions of the poor deluded wretches" (Muir 202). Edgar's ravings that refer to specific demons noted by Harsnett include: Flibberdigibett, Fratertto, Hoberdidance, Modo, Mahu, Smulkin, and Purr. Harsnett also describes the term *hysterica passio*, which Lear alludes to when he says, "O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!/ *Hysterica passio*, down, thou climbing sorrow!" (2.4.62-63).

One theory as to Shakespeare's characterization of Edgar and the references to Harsnett supports the belief that Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* with the intent for it to be performed for King James I because the first record of the play, on the title page of Q1, it states that *King Lear* was performed at court in 1607. This theory is plausible due to the fact that during the time *King Lear* was written Shakespeare was a playwright for the King's Men. James I considered himself a self-styled scholar in demonology, and Shakespeare may have incorporated Edgar's portrayal of demonic possession as a way to further please and entertain his patron and King.

Like all playwrights, Shakespeare was greatly influenced by the world around him. In Chapter Four on historical contexts I examine similarities between Shakespeare's time and the world of *King Lear*. These include the death of Queen Elizabeth and the anxiety of succession, the end of the Tudor dynasty and the beginning of a new one under Stuart monarch James I, the Gunpowder plot, and the Brian Annsley case.

In addition to contemporary influences, throughout Shakespeare's career as a dramatist, he continually refers to classical mythology and Greek and Roman gods. It

has been conjectured that Shakespeare's use of classical gods such as Apollo, Jupiter, and Juno may be because Shakespeare set *King Lear* in a time before Christ. Also, the nature of these gods can be associated with the actions presented in the play.

While writing *King Lear* Shakespeare may have turned to mythology when developing the structure of his plot as well as using metaphorical and symbolic references to mythological gods. Shakespeare consolidates the characterization of Lear's folly and punishment with that of Ixion.

Ixion was known for his tyranny and lechery, and his downfall has been symbolized as a "wheel of fortune." In mythology Ixion attempts to seduce Juno (Hera), who creates a cloud in her form to trick Ixion. When Ixion copulates with the cloud, he begets centaurs. Lear describes Goneril and Regan as "Down from the waist they are centaurs, though women all above" (4.6.138-139). In mythology centaurs were associated with violence and greed. In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, he places centaurs as the guards of the seventh circle of Hell. In Hardison's essay "Myth and History in *King Lear*" he notes that there was one centaur known for having the power of healing and being the symbol of innocent suffering, Chiron. Hardison hypothesizes a correlation between Chiron and the characterization of Cordelia's healing nature.

The progression of Lear's actions parallel Ixion's journey. Jove (Zeus or Jupiter) strikes Ixion with a thunderbolt and sends him to Hell. Hardison associates the "oak-cleaving thunderbolts" (3.2.6) which punish Lear with the "Jovian thunderbolts" (Hardison 240) in the myth of Ixion. Once in Hell, Ixion is strapped to a wheel of fire and rolled across Hell. Once Lear awakes from his mental and

physical suffering in the storm, he says, “I am bound/ Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears/ Do scald like molten lead” (4.7.52-54). Not only does Shakespeare create an allegorical association between the two stories, but Lear suffers the same fate as Ixion. Shakespeare was not the only writer of his time to have been influenced by Ixion’s story. Hardison notes that Jonson, Milton, and Bacon referred to the Ixion myth in their writings as well.

Lastly, a more recent addition to scholarly research on *King Lear*’s sources comes from Gary Taylor’s essay “A New Source and an Old Date for King Lear” published in 1982. In this essay Taylor argues that the play *Eastward Ho* was a direct influence on Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. He states that there are similarities between the characters, the storm, and the mock trial. He argues that even though *Eastward Ho* contains elements common in plays of the time, “their accumulation, their interaction at the level of plot and structure, and the recurring similarities of detail (the tripping of the ‘idle servingman’ by the good one)” (403) correspond directly to Shakespeare’s *Lear*. When questioning which play influenced the other, Taylor speculates that *Eastward Ho* could not be a spin off of *Lear* because *King Lear* had not been written yet, and so “it therefore must be Shakespeare who is in this case, indebted to Jonson, Chapman, and Marston” (406) who collaboratively composed this play in 1605.

Shakespeare was influenced by a number of sources in his composition. He has been canonized for illustrating universal ideas amalgamated with contemporary history, myth, and previous writers. Some of the playwrights of his time resented Shakespeare’s ‘borrowing’ of their stories, but it was Shakespeare who took these

tales and created them into the classics of today. Throughout *King Lear* there are specific historical references as well as structural correlations between Lear's plot and stories from classical literature and mythology. Of course there are other influences portrayed in the play, but I have documented what most scholars assume to be its major sources.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

King Lear is a play deeply rooted in the historical context of the time in which it was written. Shakespeare's England was in a state of transition. The political, social, and religious conflicts of the time are reflected in *King Lear*'s transgressing world. The purpose of this chapter is to give insight into the historical events and ideologies of Tudor/Stuart England and their influence on Shakespeare's development of *King Lear*. This chapter includes: a time-line of important events, a chart showing the succession from Henry VII to James I, political context, a social context, a religious context, and geographical maps

A. Time-line

The purpose of this time-line is to briefly give chronological accounts of the Tudor and early Stuart historical events. This time-line does not go into specifics or give a detailed list of all historical events. I have chosen to focus on the succession of English monarchy due to its prevalence in *King Lear*.

1457: Henry Tudor born

1485: Henry defeats Richard III and becomes Henry VII King of England

1486: Henry VII marries Elizabeth of York

7 months later Arthur, Prince of Wales is born

1489: Margaret Tudor born to Henry and Elizabeth

1491: Henry Tudor born to Henry and Elizabeth

1492: Elizabeth Tudor born to Henry and Elizabeth

England invades France

1495: Mary Tudor born to Henry and Elizabeth

Elizabeth dies at the age of 3

1499: Edmund Tudor born to Henry and Elizabeth

1501: Prince Arthur and Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Ferdinand II and

Isabella of Spain are married

1502: Arthur dies

1503: Elizabeth of York dies giving birth to Catherine, who dies days later

1509: Henry VII dies; accession of Henry VIII

Henry VIII marries his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon

1512: Margaret Tudor gives birth to James V of Scotland

1514: Mary Tudor marries Louis XII King of France

1516: Catherine of Aragon gives birth to Mary

1526: Henry VIII begins to court Anne Boleyn

1527: Henry VIII asks for annulment from Pope

1533: Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn are married secretly

Archbishop Cranmer declares Catherine of Aragon's marriage to Henry

invalid

Mary Tudor dies

Pope Clement VII excommunicates Henry VIII

Anne Boleyn gives birth to Elizabeth

1534: Act of Succession giving all inheritance to Anne's children

Henry VIII becomes Supreme Head of the Church

1535: Henry VIII begins courting Jane Seymour

1536: Catherine of Aragon dies

Anne Boleyn is beheaded based on false accusations of adultery

Henry VIII marries Jane Seymour

New Act of Succession created giving all inheritance to Jane's children

1537: Jane gives birth to Prince Edward

Jane dies shortly after childbirth

1540: Henry VIII marries Anne of Cleves

Henry has marriage annulled 6 months later

Henry marries Catherine Howard

1541: Margaret Tudor dies

1542: Act of Attainer condemns Catherine Howard to death

1543: Henry VIII marries Catherine Parr

1544: Catherine appointed Regent of England while Henry is away

1545: Catherine keeps from being executed by stopping the warrant for her arrest

1547: Henry VIII dies; accession of Edward VI

Edmund Seymour, Earl of Hertford, becomes protector of England

Catherine Parr marries Thomas Seymour

1548: Catherine dies

1549: The Act of Uniformity; made Catholic Mass illegal

Thomas Seymour is arrested and executed for plotting to overthrow Edward
VI and marry himself to Elizabeth

1552: Edmund Seymour is executed

1553: Edward VI dies and leaves Lady Jane Grey as his heir

Mary, daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon comes to London

Mary becomes Queen

1554: Lady Jane Grey, her husband and father, are executed

Elizabeth is sent to the Tower of London

Mary marries Phillip II of Spain

1554-1556: Persecution of Protestants; over 300 burned alive

1558: Mary dies

1559: Elizabeth becomes Queen

1563: Mary, Queen of Scots, tries to claim throne

1566: Mary gives birth to James VI; later to be James I of England

1586: Mary is convicted for involvement in a plot to overthrow Elizabeth

1587: Mary, Queen of Scots, is executed

1588: Spanish Armada is defeated

1599: Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, is sent to Ireland

He returns without permission

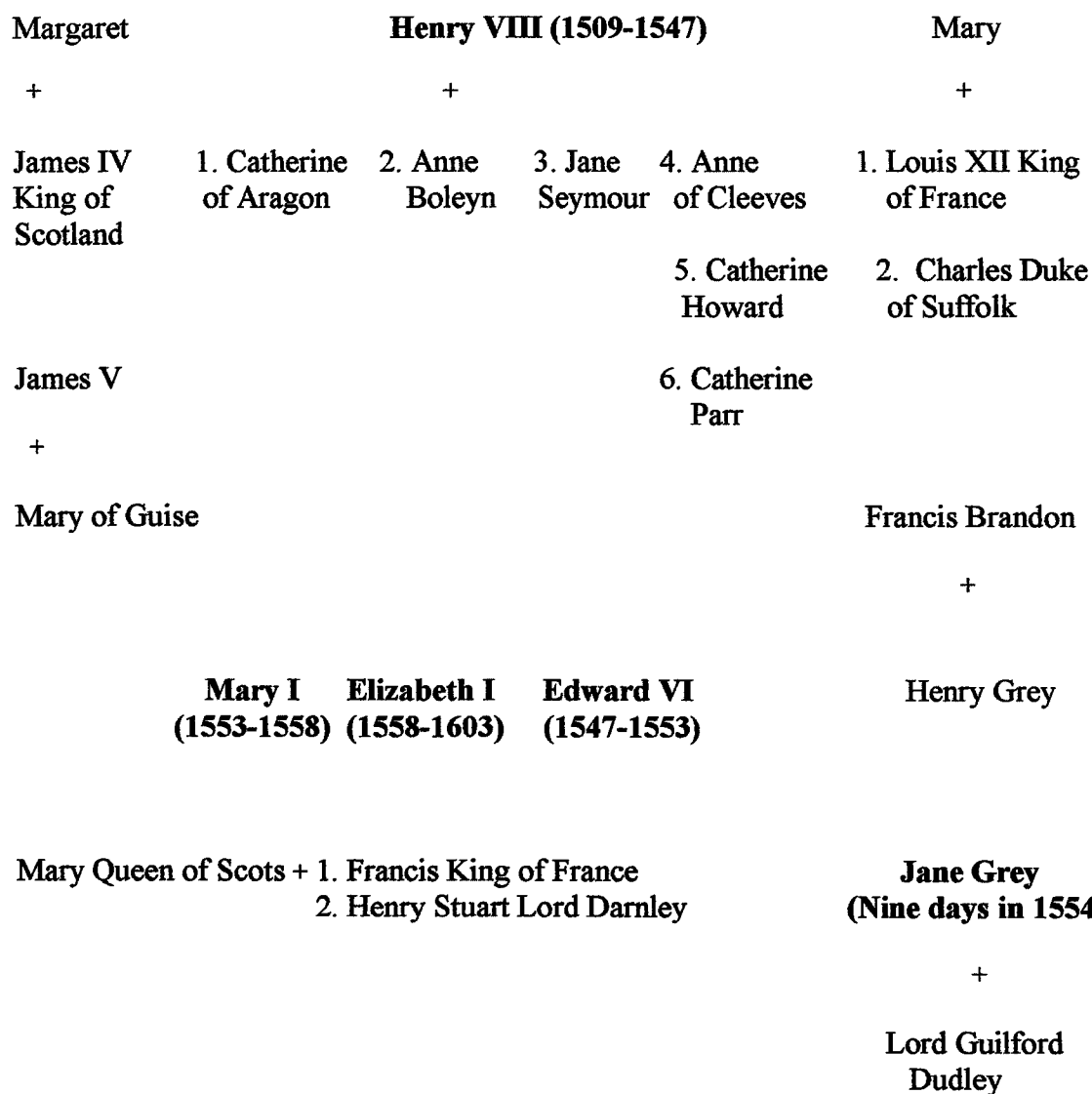
1601: Essex attempts to rally support against Elizabeth and is executed

Poor Law established

1603: Elizabeth dies and James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England

B. Chart of the succession from Tudor to Stuart Dynasty and years of reign

**Henry VII + Elizabeth of York
(1485-1509)**



**James VI of Scotland
I of England
(1603-1625)**

C. Political Context

The politics in *King Lear* are constantly challenged during the play just as they were during Shakespeare's life. The purpose of this section is to look at specific political events that influenced Shakespeare's writing and how the contemporary political anxieties are illuminated in the political themes of *King Lear*.

a. Succession and Anxiety

Shakespeare uses the subject of succession in order to create the dramatic conflict in *King Lear*. In any monarchy, the topic of succession becomes a problem when there is no male heir to inherit the throne. The exposition of *King Lear* alludes to a world in transition representative of historical events in English monarchy. In the first five lines of 1.1, contemporary anxieties are illuminated in Gloucester and Kent's discussion of Lear's abdication and division of sovereign rule. Throughout the Tudor dynasty, succession played an important role in England's politics; "The political anxieties of the middle and later years of the 16th century, [were] in particular [on] the constant uncertainty about the succession of the throne" (Williams 439). Around the time *King Lear* was written England was in a transition from one dynasty to a new one, and the subject of dynastic succession was once again a dangerous topic

In the 1480's Henry Tudor VII finally ended the War of the Roses with his marriage to Elizabeth of York, which merged the two rival aristocratic families. The succession of sovereignty was stabilized with the birth of a son from both Lancaster and Yorkish blood and lead to the hope for civil peace by eliminating any competition for legitimate rule. Henry VII was succeeded by his second son Henry VIII.

Henry VIII was married to Catherine of Aragon for 24 years, but during this time she bore him a daughter, Mary Tudor, but no surviving sons. Realizing he would have no heir from Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII decided to have their marriage annulled. The Act of Supremacy in 1534 declared the English monarch as Supreme Head of the English Church. Having broken away from the Pope and Roman Catholicism, Henry VIII divorced Catherine of Aragon and married one of her ladies in waiting.

This lady was Anne Boylen. She was already pregnant when they got married, and they were certain that their first child would be the boy Henry so badly wanted. Unfortunately for Anne, Elizabeth was born. After many miscarriages and stillborns, Henry realized Anne would never bear him a son either. Instead of divorcing his wife Henry VIII had Anne tried for adultery and executed on the Tower Green in 1536. There have been numerous conjectures to the fallaciousness of Henry's accusations against Anne.

Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, finally gave Henry an heir, Edward VI, but she died shortly after childbirth. Henry VIII died in 1547. At eleven years old, Edward VI succeeded the throne. He was a weak child, so squabbles over who would be his successor began immediately.

With the death of Henry VIII, his sixth wife, Katherine Parr, became the Dowager Queen. Four months after her husband's death she married Thomas Seymour, Lord Admiral of England. After Katherine's death, Seymour turned his sights toward Elizabeth. In 1549, Thomas Seymour was arrested for trying to kidnap Edward VI and plotting to marry Elizabeth and become King of England. Edward's

death in 1553 created political unrest in England. Once again, the monarchy was without a male heir.

On Edward's deathbed he was manipulated by the Earl of Northumberland into claiming Lady Jane Grey as his heir. "Under the succession Act of 1544, the crown was to pass to Mary and then to Elizabeth if Edward died heirless" (Williams 82). Lady Jane Grey was descendant of Henry VII and was the daughter of Henry VIII's sister, Mary. Northumberland persuaded Edward to legally change the 1544 act and claim Jane Gray, the wife of Northumberland's son, Lord Guilford Dudley. Lady Jane Grey reigned for only nine days, that is until Henry VIII's first daughter and legitimate heir, Mary Tudor, rode into London to claim her place as England's queen.

Mary had the nine-day queen and her husband executed. In fear of further attempts to overthrow her, Mary had her half-sister, Elizabeth, imprisoned in the Tower of London. Mary was an ardent Catholic and sought to reestablish Catholicism in England. To strengthen her religious objectives she married Philip II of Spain, a fervent Spanish Catholic. Under Mary's reign over three hundred men and women were burned at the stake for heresy. During this time, Mary was intent on securing a male heir for England's throne. She wanted a baby so badly that she had a series of ghost pregnancies; she would swell up and experience all the symptoms of pregnancy, yet she never conceived. Mary, like her brother, died heirless. The succession of the crown was to go to Mary's younger half-sister, Elizabeth.

With Mary's death in 1558, Elizabeth finally became Queen of England, and she became the most sought after woman in England for marriage. Succession was

still a fragile topic at this time because many did not think the country should be governed by a woman, hence the previous terror of Bloody Mary's reign. Elizabeth's situation created distress in England's politics due to the position she put her country in. Her refusal to marry eliminated any prospects for a legitimate heir to England's throne.

During her reign, there were numerous attempts to depose Elizabeth. The Babington Plot in 1586 linked Mary Stuart Queen of Scots to a conspiracy to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with a Catholic monarch (Williams 313). Elizabeth had Mary executed for her involvement in this plan. In addition to the numerous plots to usurp the throne, Elizabeth was faced with a new situation.

In 1588, Philip of Spain, Mary Tudor's husband, created an Armada to conquer England. The defeat of his Armada was one of Elizabeth's finest political achievements. Also, one of Elizabeth's favorite noblemen, the Earl of Essex, attempted to gather forces against Elizabeth after an argument with the Queen. He was executed in 1601. One of his fellow conspirators, the Earl of Southampton, was arrested but released after Elizabeth's death in 1603. With no legitimate heir to succeed Elizabeth, the country was in a state of distress. Even though James VI of Scotland became James I of England, immediately after Elizabeth's death, there were still disputes on the nature of succession and conspiracies to overthrow the monarchy.

According to Muir's book *The Politics of King Lear* "Shakespeare lived in that violent period of transition" (7). The political world of *King Lear* echoes Shakespeare's knowledge of the transitions from the old dynasty and his awareness of the new one. The dramatic conflict that initiates the catastrophic events in *King Lear*

expresses the feelings and anxieties of Shakespeare and his audience on the subject of kingship, policy, and succession.

b. The Gunpowder Plot

When James VI of Scotland became James I of England the Catholics hoped he would relieve Catholic repression, but in 1604 he began to enforce the recusancy laws. These strict laws oppressed the Catholics by 1) forcing them to attend the Church of England's services, 2) denying them appearance in court, 3) denying them occupancy within ten miles of London, and 4) allowing the recusants to be searched at anytime.

Throughout England's history, religious uprisings against the monarch in order to change the nation's religion were not uncommon. In 1605, a group of Catholics conspired to overthrow James I. They wanted to replace him with James's eldest daughter, Elizabeth. Robert Catesby and Thomas Percy initiated the plot. They decided to plant gunpowder mines under the Upper House of Parliament "because religion having been unjustly suppressed there, it was fittest that justice and punishment should be executed there" (133-134). James received an anonymous letter that foreshadowed a "blowe." Since his father had been killed by gunpowder, he sent people to search the basements. Guy Fawkes was found there and was tortured until he revealed his fellow conspirators. Robert Catesby died while resisting arrest. The others, including Fawkes, were executed February 1, 1606.

This event prompted a huge response politically and socially. There came a surge of plays known as "Gunpowder Plays." In these plays there are recurring

motifs of kingdoms being destroyed, undermining plots, and the testing of loyalties. Since *King Lear* was probably written around 1605, it is highly probable that the Gunpowder Plot against James I was on Shakespeare's mind. In order to continuously entertain and please his audiences, there are numerous references in *King Lear* that connect it with the Gunpowder Plays of the time. Lear rejects the natural order of things which leads to the downfall of his kingdom, a letter describing a conspiracy is revealed and changes the outcome of the plot, and there is a test of loyalty when Lear tests his daughters' love. I do not think Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* to be a Gunpowder play, but I do think the knowledge of the plot against James I had an impact on the structure of *King Lear*.

A modern perspective of the Gunpowder Plot and its influence on society can be examined by looking at modern political strife. After 9/11 America has been extremely aware of the threats of terrorism. If a terrorist plot to blow up the White House was discovered, it would flood every news station, news paper, and conversation. This hypothetical situation can be compared to the intensity and popularity of the Gunpowder Plot.

c. Annesley Case

In Elizabethan conventions of the social and family hierarchy, it was customary to give absolute reverence to those of nobility as well as to parents and elders. In *King Lear*, Lear and Gloucester suffer at the hands of their children. During Shakespeare's life, there began a decline in children who upheld the old traditions of complete and unquestioned obedience. Likewise, there were cases where

the tradition of taking one's parents in and taking care of their estate began to be challenged. This issue was brought into political light with the Annesley case of 1603.

Sir Brian Annesley's eldest daughter, Lady Wildgoose, and her husband attempted to have Annesley declared insane. During Shakespeare's time, if someone was declared mad or insane, then their title and property would be relinquished. Annesley was a wealthy land owner in Kent, and his eldest daughter was after her inheritance.

Annesley's youngest daughter, Cordell, stood up for her father. She wrote a letter to Robert Cecil, Secretary of State, protesting the case against her father. Annesley died in 1604, and in his will he left most of his possessions to Cordell. Lady Wildgoose contested the will, but she was overruled in court.

This specific case may have been known to Shakespeare. In 1607, Cordell married Sir William Harvey. Harvey was the father of the Earl of Southampton, who was one of Shakespeare's patrons. From the knowledge of Shakespeare's association with Southampton, scholars speculate there are references in *King Lear* that suggest connections between *King Lear*'s relationship with his daughters and that of Brian Annesley.

d. The Plague's Influence on Politics

Plagues and epidemics were prominent in Europe for over 1,000 years. Over 25 million people died from the bubonic plague during Medieval and Renaissance England. Shakespeare would have been familiar with the plague because there were

four during his life: 1582, 1592, 1603, and 1607. During these years the death toll rose 20%. In 1603, an estimated 38,000 people died, and over 25,000 lived in or around London. These numbers are only estimations taken from parish registers and do not include the number of unrecorded deaths.

In *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England*, Paul Slack states that “Mortality crises caused by plague were less common in villages than in towns [because of] their large rodent population” (64). By Shakespeare’s time, scientists and doctors had discovered that rats were carriers of the disease, but they did not know that the disease was transmitted to humans by fleas. London was severely contaminated with the “great” plagues of 1563, 1603, and 1665. By 1600, London had become the largest city in England and was a major world-trade center. This rise in economy caused London’s population to double. “Pestilence seemed to be generated by overcrowding in tenements and subdivided houses. The Recorder of London noted that in 1603 there were 800 cases of plague in one single tenement” (152).

Other contributors to high rates of pestilence contraction were the overflowing sewers and ditches that steamed with human and animal feces. In town, people dumped their chamber pots directly on the street, and the only cleansing of these excrements came from heavy rains. The sewers and streets were infested with rats and fleas. It was common for people to have fleas in their clothing. During the years of epidemics, the graveyards became packed, and bodies were not buried in coffins. These graveyards attracted fleas with their stench, and the disease could be transmitted to humans by fleas that were infected from the dead bodies.

New administrative codes and regulations developed along with new policies for public health. Opinions of the plague varied between the different experiences and exposure to the disease, as well as being divided between the social classes. The governing classes had the ability to leave London, but the working class, yeomen and artisans, were left to suffer the plague. The poor classes had the hardest time due to unsanitary living conditions and nowhere to go. The parishes most impacted by the plague were the poorer ones rather than the wealthy inner city parishes. In Williams's book he includes diagrams depicting the epidemic ratio between wealthy and poor parishes in London. These tables portray the heavy effects of plague on the poor parishes on the outskirts of London.

In order to control the epidemic, the English government decided to stop the spread of the disease by quarantining the victims. Once a person became infected with black and purple buboes, also known as God's Tokens, then that person along with their family and household were cruelly isolated, and their clothing and beddings were burned (Williams 210). They would be locked in their houses for at least six weeks, and their doors were painted with red X's. Watchmen were appointed to bring food and necessities to the households, but they were also guards to keep people from escaping and spreading the infection. In 1604, The Plague Act gave legal authority to the watchmen to use violence in order to keep control (211).

So, by the time Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, he would have been familiar with the effects of plague. The word "plague" is used first in Act I, scene ii, line 3, "plague of custom." The definition of "plague" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* states that plague, when used as a noun, means "infectious disease, epidemic;

pestilence,” and when it is used as a verb, it means “to afflict with calamity; to inflict with disease.” By the time *King Lear* was written, the word plague had become a colloquial term referring to the bubonic plague, which was also known as “The Black Death” or “the poor man’s disease.” In Act I, scene ii, Shakespeare uses the word as an adjective describing “custom,” which refers to “thy law” in line 1. In the Variorum edition, Halliwell says that the use of the word ‘plague’ here refers to the “infectious rule of custom.” The laws during Elizabethan and Jacobean England not only oppressed base-born children, like Edmund, but the government oppressed plague victims as well. This play on words would have caught the attention of the audience with its deadly connotation. Shakespeare uses the word in *Romeo and Juliet* with “A plague on both your houses.” Therefore, the phrase “plague of custom” heightens the intensity of the speech and comments on many repressions of the time.

D. Social Context

Social status and the conventions of nobility were revolutionized during 16th century England. Hierarchy and patriarchy played an important role in aristocratic lives. The purpose of this section is to analyze the hierarchical nature of Elizabethan society and its influence on the aristocracy in *King Lear*.

a. Hierarchy and Patriarchy taken from Burke’s Peerage

List of Noble Ranks

(From highest status to lowest)

The Lords and Noblemen

1. Monarch
2. Prince
3. Duke

4. Marquis
5. Earl
6. Viscount
7. Baronet and Bishop

The Gentlemen

8. Knight
9. Esquire
10. Gentry: Doctors, wealthy land owners w/coat of arms, clergymen, Masters of Art

Lower Class

12. Yeomen
13. Husbandmen
14. Laborers
15. Beggars and Madmen

Patriarchy

1. Father
2. 1st son
3. 2nd son-etc.
4. Wife
5. Daughters 1st –etc.
6. Servants

b. Crisis of the Aristocracy

The conflict in *King Lear* is one about and between its own aristocratic classes, which reflects contemporary struggles in the 16th and 17th centuries. Civil war, conspiracies, and murder, were the results of feuding nobility. Towards the latter part of the 16th century there began a decline in automatic deference to noblemen due to the rise of the gentry and commercial class. Throughout the development of the plot, Shakespeare divides the characters into two opposing views of society which echoes the declining feudal system and the rise of the bourgeoisie or merchant class. According to Rosalie L. Colie, in her article “Reason and Need: King

Lear and the Crisis of Aristocracy,” “The moral weight of the play comes down decisively with the advocates of old values, but not without having hesitated long enough to show how crucially those values fall short” (216).

Even though noblemen and gentlemen were at the top of the social hierarchy, they only made up around 2% of the population. In the beginning of the 17th century, London had become one of the largest European cities and ports for foreign trade. There was a surge in the growth of commercialism that initialized the rise of the merchant class in England. These transitions lead to the development of a middle class, also known as the bourgeoisie. They were the class between the gentry and above the labor class. This rise in a new class and commercialism created a number of problems for the laborers and husbandmen. With the decline of the feudal system, industry, landowning, and agriculture changed drastically. This new class replaced serfdom with hired labor. Many of the new landowners forced the yeomen and peasant farm owners to be tenants, and they began to charge higher rent. From 1550-1600 there were a number of bad harvest years including 1596-1597 when the death rates rose to 31%. During these years there was a surge in poverty. In 1601 Queen Elizabeth instated The Poor Law, which called for a minimum standard of living for all people. Williams states that “a national scheme of taxation for the relief of poverty” (Williams 262) was instated, but there were the harshest laws that supported whipping and execution for vagabonds.

The social reality for the aristocracy was much different. Their struggles lay within their own class. Hierarchy and patriarchy were important in Elizabethan society. Old social customs began to cease due to the fall of feudalism; old nobility

began to lose their authority. The aristocracy wanted to segregate themselves from the bourgeoisies. Colie describes their attempt by saying “The acid test of living nobly was to have the money to spend liberally, to dress elegantly, and to entertain lavishly” (187). Towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign, the younger generation, the bourgeoisies and the Machiavellians, sought personal gain and looked less on loyalty, duty, and obedience. Servants sought to be masters; bourgeoisies sought to gain gentleman status, and children sought to rise above their parents.

In *King Lear*, the younger characters represent the new social ideals by discarding traditional customs such as primogeniture, decorum, and complete obedience in a hierarchical or patriarchal setting. The older characters who represent the declining society are outraged when Goneril and Regan deny Lear his knights. Aristocrats at the time were known to keep retainers as a sign of prestige, so it would have seemed normal to Shakespeare’s audience for Lear to keep one hundred knights. Goneril and Regan, representing to new society, were not altogether wrong in their actions because “the objections of the daughters raised against their father raised against the knights were those of practical, modern, civilizing, rationalizing social orderliness” (Colie 200). This theory upholds the view that Shakespeare intentionally commented on the downfalls of the old aristocracy, yet he continually comments on the destruction of the new ideals.

There are many times in the play that the characters break with decorum set by hierarchical standards. Queen Elizabeth was known for traveling around the country. It was a great honor to house the Queen, but housing her was extremely costly. Some noble families went bankrupt trying to please the queen. “Regan did

what only a few landowners dared do to Elizabeth; she left her house empty, so that the king was unable to rest on his progress” (203). Cornwall breaks with decorum when he stocks Kent. The stocks were never used to punish nobility. Cornwall also breaks decorum by blinding Gloucester. Blinding was a horrible punishment, usually for high treason, and never used as punishment for nobility. This break in tradition motivates the First Servant to stand up to Cornwall. In the end of the play Edgar is left to rule the kingdom since he is the only young character who has no self interest and exemplifies courage, duty, and obedience. He is the only aristocratic character who is aware of the social issues regarding the lower class. Edgar is Shakespeare’s hope for a better future.

E. Religious Context

The religious, i.e. supernatural, beliefs in *King Lear* echo some of the religious outlooks of Shakespeare’s time concerning the discord between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. *King Lear* is divided between two antithetical dogmas, one that supports the old customs and the other supporting a new system of beliefs. King Lear’s character has been compared to Job in the *Old Testament*, but in the language of the play, Shakespeare strays away from Christian themes. The religious references in the play mostly refer to astrological superstitions and pagan legends such as the story of King Arthur.

a. Henrican Reformation

Henry VIII was a devout Catholic for most of his life. He wrote *Fidei Defensor*,

a book that criticized Martin Luther and recognized the authority of the Pope. Henry's opinion changed in 1527. Henry realized Catherine of Aragon would not bear him a son, and he claimed to believe God was punishing him for marrying his brother's widow. Henry asked the Pope, who at the time was head of church and state legislations, for a divorce. The Pope refused to grant Henry the means to annul his marriage. In retaliation, Henry VIII created a policy that separated the English Church from Rome. Henry VIII gained support from Parliament, and so between 1532 and 1534, a series of legal actions took place that aided Henry's break with Rome. Until 1532, legislative policy was overseen by the church. In 1532, Henry VIII was given legal authority to review and veto clerical legislation. In that same year, the English Church stopped sending financial payments to Rome. By 1533, Roman ecclesiastical authority over English legislation was abolished, and in 1534 Henry VIII became the Supreme Head of the Church of England. Due to this break from Rome, England was severed religiously and politically. The rift between Catholics and the English Church was to be a major conflict for the next hundred years. These years were a time of anxiety and reformation.

When Henry's successor, Edward VI, died, Mary I became Queen of England. Mary was a devout Catholic, probably because Henry VIII broke from Catholicism in order to divorce her mother, Catherine of Aragon. Mary immediately restored Roman Catholicism as the national religion. She further advanced her religious plight by marrying a Catholic, Phillip II of Spain. During her reign, she gained the nickname "Bloody Mary" for viciously burning Protestants alive for heresy. According to Williams, in *The Later Tudors*, "The burning of Protestant heretics, which had begun

in February 1555 continued until the last month of Mary's reign: 237 men and 52 women were burned at the stake" (115).

After Mary's death, Elizabeth I reinstated the ideals of her father and brother, and so she instigated the development of the Church of England with the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity. She was declared the Supreme Governor of the Church. She took this title because she felt it would help her with foreign diplomacy. "The church established under Elizabeth thus incorporated a diluted version of Henrican Supremacy, a traditional Episcopal structure of government, a liturgy which was not Roman but was far from pleasing to most reformers, and doctrines which were closer to those of Calvin than any other Continental reformers" (Williams 458). During Elizabeth's reign two more religions emerged; these were Puritanism and Presbyterianism. These added more complexity to the already difficult situation. The clashing controversies of the time lead to questions such as "What is the purpose of spiritual life?" and "Is the role of the church to serve God or the crown?" Those who spoke out against Elizabeth were punished. To the disappointment of the Catholics, the situation did not improve with the accession of James I. Catholics actually found themselves in extreme oppression.

Many developments and legal actions took place in the later years of the 16th century and most of the 17th century, but Shakespeare intentionally stays clear of the religious controversies. The rupture of extreme Christian ideologies and battle between them and the state made religion a delicate topic. This probably influenced the lack of Christian topics and setting.

b. Plague and Mortality

Plague swept across England throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. The conflicting Christian dogmas of the time used the plague as a way to explain the essence of human transience in terms of their religious beliefs. It was this sweeping epidemic that helped progress the Protestant Church. In 1552, Bishops believed that clergymen were supposed to visit and aid the sick in time of infection, but in 1578, the Bishops stopped sending their men to infected houses. Epidemic struck England the hardest in 1582, 1592, and 1603. By 1604, houses that were considered contaminated with the plague were quarantined. These infected houses did not receive any relief from the church. Many people of the time believed the plague was divine intervention and punished sinners.

In 1563, Bishop Grindal of London wrote a specific prayer book that was used to ward off plague. These prayers were read twice a week and were combined with seven- hour sermons, fasting, and abstinence. Bishop Grindal believed that infected people were condemned to die and should be isolated. He considered it a sin for healthy people to help the sick since it would be interfering with God's will. The religious group that supported these opinions became known as Puritans. They were opposed to natural preventative measures, such as shaving the head and anointing it with oils, and preferred spiritual precaution and deliverance. The Puritans believed that each victim was picked out by God, and the victim's fate was part of God's divine plan. In Clapman's 1603 publication of *Epistle Discouraging upon the Present Pestilence*, he wrote "if any true believer died of the pestilence, it was because of his lack of faith, not because he neglected natural remedies" (Slack 234).

Under the reign of James I, the excessive religious strife and the oppressing religious laws provoked stress on the people. Due to the high rate of death and spiritual hopelessness against a vengeful God, many people began to lose faith. In *King Lear*, Gloucester comments on how the Gods kill men for sport. This statement mocks the zealous Puritan view from a victim's point of view. For others less influenced by religion, "Plague was a reminder of the transience of everything connected with life" (Slack 17). Explanations for the plague ranged from theology to humoral theories. Those who did not look to God looked to natural explanations, much like superstitions of today. "Changes in the heavens or in the weather were an omen of plague and astrology [was used to] predict future epidemics" (26). These thoughts are clearly portrayed in *King Lear* with numerous references to astrology by Gloucester and Kent. These references foreshadowed Lear's downfall. Bonds between friends and family fell apart during times of epidemic, so when Gloucester says, "friendship falls off, brothers divide" (1.2.113) he is commenting on actual events relevant for Shakespeare's audience.

Shakespeare uses the word plague in many ways. The religious context of the word associates it to the topic of mortality. In 2.2.85, Kent curses Oswald by saying "A plague upon your epileptic visage!" Here plague is used as a noun to symbolize death and calamity. In 2.4.104, Lear cries, "Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!" Here it is synonymous with the other three words in the sentence. Shakespeare uses "plague-sore" in 2.4.258 to mean literally a boil. Since buboes were a sign of infection, the use of the word "sore" would carry fatal implications. In 3.4.73, Lear says, "Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air/ Hang fated o'er

men's faults light in thy daughters!" Lear wants Regan and Goneril punished. He calls to the gods to bring plague of retribution, on his daughters. Shakespeare uses the word in 4.1.54 with "Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind." Here "plague" represents sickness. If time is sick, then it is a comment on the backwards nature of the world where madmen lead the blind and children become parents to their fathers. Last, in 5.3.205, Edgar calls for the gods to make instruments to "plague" humans. He uses the word to mean punish.

The plague was a very real subject during Shakespeare's life. People died everyday, and London reeked with rotting bodies. The large mortality rates lead people to question their faith and evaluate what the nature of mortality means to them. The differing religious beliefs were heavily influenced by the plague, and Shakespeare uses the word as a sign to the audience of the mortality in *King Lear*.

c. Astrology

During Shakespeare's life the world was in a state of transition. Theology, science, and magic were breaking apart into separate entities. It was an age of Renaissance and Reformation. The Tudor reign came to an end with the death of Elizabeth I, and the beginning of a new era began with the succession of James I and the Stuart régime. Astrology was a major science and common knowledge for most English citizens. People still believed in the practice of white magic, natural science, and alchemy. Queen Elizabeth had a personal astrologer, John Dee, who believed in the power of mystic numbers and claimed to have contact with archangels. He considered himself a Christian, but many thought of him as a magician. Another

reason for astrology's popularity was that one did not have to be an intellectual to believe in it. In "Shakespeare and the Astrology of his Time," Moriz Sondheim comments that, "Francis Bacon numbered astrology among those sciences which have more in common with imagination and faith than with the intellect" (258). Belief in astrology during Shakespeare's time can be compared with modern-day superstitions. People today still read horoscopes and try to predict upcoming events by reading the stars.

In 16th and 17th century England, there were two types of astrology, natural and judicial astrology. "*Astrologia naturalis* was the theory and practice of prophecy relating to the influence of the heavenly bodies on weather, on physical matter, [and] on the birth, growth and decay of all living things" (245). In Act I, scene i, lines 123-124, Lear speaks of this theory when he says, "By all the operation of the orbs/ From whom we do exist and cease to be." In the Folger edition on page 14, the explanation states that these lines refer to planetary influence on life and death, which supports the theory of natural astrology. The second kind of astrology was "*Astrologia Jusicialis*,...the theory and practice of prophecy in relation to the influence of heavenly bodies on human destiny" (245). This theory was more supported by pious people who believed in divine providence. *King Lear* seems to follow natural rather than judicial astrology because "Events and circumstances originate in the characters themselves, even when they think they are acting under the control of the stars" (249). The catastrophe and resolution in *Lear* is motivated by character actions rather than fate.

There are numerous references to astrology in the play including constellations, eclipses, the sun and moon, the planets, predominance, and even zodiac influence on limbs and organs of the human body (250). In the play there is a split between the characters who believe and those who are skeptics. According to Edwin Muir in *The Politics of King Lear*, the world of Lear is set during the transition between two epochs; the dramatic conflict becomes one of old vs. new societies. The old characters, such as Kent and Gloucester, believe in the influence of the stars. Gloucester refers to eclipses in Act I, scene ii, and their negative influence on life. For Shakespeare's audience, these references would have foreshadowed doom and revolution in the play because "Solar and lunar eclipses, comets and meteors were regarded as portents for rulers and nations; they presaged revolutions and the death of princes" (Sondheim 244). Kent, in Act IV, scene iii, comments on the stars and the influence of horoscopes on people's character. These young characters who symbolize the new society and are more skeptical of astrological superstitions. Edmund mocks the superstitious religious beliefs upheld by his father by saying, "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" (1.2.127-130).

King Lear is a play that involves the struggle between nature and law, and the transition of one era to another, which reflects the transitions happening during Shakespeare's life. Sondheim says there is no proof of Shakespeare's personal belief of astrology but believes the world of *Lear* follows *Astrologia naturalis*.

CHAPTER V

GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES

The purpose of this chapter is to give an in-depth look into the contexts of *King Lear*'s world. In reading the text many times, I have attempted explain the framework of this world in order to better understand all the aspects driving and influencing the plot. As a dramaturg this information is critical in order to support the director's overall vision of the play and its world.

A. Time

a. Historical Time

It has been conjectured that Shakespeare probably meant for *King Lear* to be set around 800 B.C. in compliance with Holinshed's view that Lear reigned during the time when Joshua was king of Judah. Following this theory, historically *King Lear* would occur "about halfway between *Troilus and Cressida* and *Timon of Athens*" (Asimov 677). Other theories support the idea that Lear comes from "Ine, a Saxon king, who reigned from 688 to 726 A.D." (678). With the rise of interest in historical accuracy during the 19th century, many directors began setting *King Lear* in an ancient Celtic world rather than Elizabethan England.

While creating this play, Shakespeare focused on juxtaposing universal and individual themes rather than setting a specific historical context. It is obvious when

and where *Richard III* and the other history plays are set because of their historical context. *King Lear*, on the other hand, is more of a legendary figure. There were historical accounts of King Lear by Monmouth and Holinshed, but for *King Lear*, Shakespeare “made heavy use of legendary and mythic material, producing a history that is very largely fictional” (Asimov 677). There are mixed historical references in the context of the play, which have led to scholarly debates on the time period of the play.

In writing *King Lear* Shakespeare used a myriad of contextual terms from variant eras in history. In order to meet the needs of his audience Shakespeare contemporized titles of nobility and specific locations. Renaissance audience’s recognized the social and political contexts of the play by Shakespeare’s titles of nobility. They would have understood the Duke of Cornwall’s power over the Earl of Gloucester from their titles. The title of Duke in actuality was not even used in England until the 14th century. Shakespeare may have chosen these titles rather than archaic ones in order to make *King Lear* applicable to his audience.

Shakespeare also used modern geographic names. If the play is set in a pre-Greek society, then France and Burgundy would not have existed yet. Asimov notes that in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, Cordelia’s suitor’s name was “Aganippus, who was one of the princes of Gallia (which is [now] called France)” (680). Due to the ambiguity of *King Lear*’s specific historical time, many directors choose to focus on the universal nature of the play rather than its history.

The themes of family, politics, and human mortality in the play are relevant worldwide and for all time; therefore the play does not have to be restricted to one

time period. For our production, we decided to create our own time period. Our play is set in an apocalyptic world during the downfall of a beautiful and great kingdom. For this production we created a world in which one civilization is being taken over by a new generation, and instead of being linked with an epoch, we decided to let the time period of our play be abstract and symbolic of a world in transition rather than a specific time in history.

b. Dramatic Time/Time Duration

There are several theories about the duration of time through out the play. Shakespeare not only creates an ambiguous historical time, but the representation of time itself is vague. An entire war occurs in between two lines of text, and characters travel on foot for long distances in less than 24 hours. Due to the ambiguous nature of time many scholars have conjectured over the time duration of the play.

The first to map out the sequence of time was Eccles, who believed the time of the play took place on nine specific days within a period of several months. He states that 1.1 takes place over one day, and 1.2 occurs during the evening of 1.1. Eccles argues that months have to have elapsed between 1.2 and 1.3 because Lear's reference to a "fortnight" would allude to at least one month. He states that "it is 'utterly impossible' that this 'fortnight' can refer to the very first fortnight after the division of the kingdom because this does not allow sufficient time for the tidings of Lear's cruel treatment to reach Cordelia, or for her to undertake that invasive of the kingdom which is already on foot" (Variorum 408). 1.3-1.5 completes the second day. He notes 2.1-3.6 as day three and 3.7 as the morning of day four. Day four

elapses over 3.7 and 4.1, but he documents 4.2-4.4 as day five and 4.5 as a new day (which Eccles places as 4.3) “so as to account for Edmund’s having left Regan... and also to give time for Oswald’s journey to this point with Goneril’s letter to Edmund” (409). The seventh day then occurs over 4.4 and 4.6. For 4.7 “Eccles imagines ‘some part of a new day, viz; the fifth since the night of the storm.’ This makes the Eighth Day” (410). He assigns the rest of the play to day nine.

There have been other theories that support an even longer time duration. One scholar objected to Eccles theory and argued that the time duration of the play occurs over ten days. On page 412 of the Variorum edition there is a tabulated diagram of Mr. P. A. Daniel’s time duration, which was printed in the *Transactions of the New Shakespeare Society*, 1877-9, pg. 217. The diagram is as follows:

Day 1. Act I, sc i.
 Day 2. Act I, sc ii.
 An Interval of something less than a fortnight.
 Day 3. Act I, sc. iii, iv, and v.
 Day 4. Act II, sc. i, and ii.
 Day 5. Act II, sc. iii, and iv; Act III, sc. i-vi.
 Day 6. Act III, sc. vii; Act IV, sc. i.
 Day 7. Act IV, sc. ii.
 Perhaps an Interval of a day or two.
 Day 8. Act IV, sc. iii.
 Day 9. Act IV, sc. iv, v, and vi.
 Day 10. Act IV, sc. vii; Act, V, sc. i-iii.

For our production script the duration of time covers almost 3 weeks. Act 1, scenes 1 and 2, occur during the same day, then from 1.2 to 1.3 the time duration skips two weeks, and the play picks up at Goneril’s house. Scenes 3, 4, and 5 of Act 1 take place in one day. From Act 1 to Act 2, two days pass, and all the actions of Act 2 and Act 3 take place in one long night. Act 4 begins with the morning following Acts 2 and 3. Acts 4 and 5 take place from morning to night of one day.

B. Place

a. Geographic Locale(s)

All of *King Lear* takes place in Britain (England and Scotland). Many of the characters in *King Lear* have no individual name but are referred to by their formal titles including the Earl of Gloucester, the Earl of Kent, the Duke of Albany, and the Duke of Cornwall. These titles represent the region of the kingdom they govern, but they do not necessarily have to live in this area. Even if the palaces of the characters are not located in the specific region assigned by the characters' titles, I believe that Shakespeare used to names to illustrate the geography of the kingdom.

In my research I found that the region of Albany is in the Scotland area, while Cornwall is located in the Southwestern region of England. Asimov states that Albany "is from the Latin word for 'white' and is sometimes given to a district of high mountains, the tops of which are white with snow even in summers" (479). This alludes to the Highland region of Scotland. He also notes that in Holinshed's Chronicles Albania is said to "include not merely the Scottish Highlands, but all the lands north of the Humber River, which would mean that 'Albany' would include northern Scotland and Ireland" (479-480). Cornwall is still a southwestern region of England. Asimov affirms that Kent is in the southeastern most tip of England and is the closest to the Continent. There are also references to the cliffs of Dover, and Dover is along the heaths of South England located near Kent. Asimov believes that having the characters travel to Dover to find aid from France would be probable because it is the region closest to France. I have included a map of early Britain at the end of this chapter (see 5.1).

b. Specific Locale(s)

Shakespeare did not create specific locations for each scene in *King Lear*, and many are left ambiguous. For example there are no references to where Lear's castle is in geographical terms. There are references to Dover, but there are no stage directions that ever note that they are actually in Dover or near any cliffs of any kind. Edgar describes the cliffs to Gloucester, but Gloucester is obviously not on the cliffs when he attempts to plunge to his death and falls on the ground. I believe the specific geographical locations of most scenes can vary between different productions. See 5.2 for the specific locations in our production.

c. Design of the Locale(s)

The design for Texas State University's 2005 production of *King Lear* helps express the abstract nature of the time period in which the production is set. The set is nonrealistic and more functional than representational with monkey bars and exposed ladders instead of steps. The set does not change during the duration of the play, and a minimalist use of props is incorporated for staging this production. The floor of the stage is bare and painted in a marble-esque fashion with a glossy top-coat which reflects the vibrant colors from the lights.

The design of our set reflects the Mannerist iconography for the production by creating unsymmetrical levels. There are times in the play when characters are isolated from the rest of the world. The set reflects this separation by creating spaces in which to isolate or hide characters. There are two platforms, one five feet from the stage and one eleven feet. The stage itself was built in an unsymmetrical manner with

steps leading to a sharp stage left position. The step levels are also used to illustrate the variant levels represented in the governing hierarchical chain in the play.

To show transitions in time or location, three orbs reflecting changing colors move through the air. They also represent the overhanging theme of cosmos. These orbs are contrasted with a huge upstage screen which also reflects bold colors. At times in the play the only lighting came from the screen. This created shadows and added to the darkness of *King Lear*'s world. Color can have a visceral effect upon people, so the intense colors contrast the darkness. When Gloucester's eyes are gouged out, the screen upstage portrayed an intense red. All other lights fade away at the end of the scene leaving only silhouettes of the characters on stage against the violently red screen.

Overall the design for our production enforces and supports the production concept of an abstract and apocalyptic world, while evoking emotions in the audience.

C. Environment I have included a supplementary list of references to season, weather, and plants at the end of this chapter (see 5.3).

a. Seasonal Conditions and Weather

After looking at the myriad of references to weather and seasons, we decided to set our production during the rainy transition between the end of winter and the beginning of spring, probably around late February or early March. In act 2, scene 1, Regan describes the weather as "out of season" for traveling. Edgar disrobes as he

disguises himself as Poor Tom and is left almost naked and exposed to “The winds and persecutions of the sky” (2.3.12). In act 4, there are numerous references to weather with “winter” (2.4.52, 75), and to harsh climate with “enmity of the air” (2.4.242), “high winds” (2.4.344), and “wild night” (2.4.353).

The stage directions in the Folger edition of *King Lear* calls for a storm to begin at the end of act 2. In act 3, scene 2, the stage directions call for the ‘storm still.’ Lear, raging against nature, alludes to hard winds, heavy rain, thunder, and lightning. On line 45 Kent describes the “wrathful skies” with “horrid thunder” (3.2.48) and “roaring wind and rain” (3.2.49). Lear says he is cold on line 75. In scene 4, Lear, his Fool, and Edgar are still out in the storm until Gloucester gives them shelter from the “tyranny of the night” (3.4.2). The Fool comments on the “cold night” (3.4.84), and Edgar chatters “Tom’s a cold” on lines 63 and 89. As Lear’s rage cools, the storm finally ends. In act 5, scene 3 a Gentleman says that the blood of Goneril is fresh because it “smokes” (5.3.265), referring to steam and thus alluding to cold weather.

b. Nature

Nature plays a huge role in illustrating physical nature and human nature in *King Lear*. Marilyn French, in her book *Shakespeare’s Division of Experience*, observes Shakespeare’s use of nature as a motif. She notes that the pervading pattern of “natural imagery and recurrent use of terms like *Nature*, *nature*, *natural*, and *unnatural*...Nature means *natura* and also *human nature*; at times it refers to physical, at times to the psychological dimensions of human nature” (220).

There are copious references to plants, which are used metaphorically in order to create a connection between the world of *Lear* with abstract images of things sharp, poisonous, deadly, and infertile. The plants described by Cordelia in 4.4 symbolize the poisonous and infertile nature of Lear's kingdom; hemlock is fatal and is assumed to have sterilizing effects. Some scholars believe the crown of weeds symbolizes Lear crowning himself king of physical nature since he has lost control of his own nature, i.e., his mind. Other theorists have speculated on the medicinal nature of the plants in Lear's crown, but in F.G. Butler's essay "Lear's crown of weeds" he disagrees with the medicinal assumption because most of the plants referenced in Cordelia's speech are poisonous, are nuisances to farmers, destroy agriculture, or are used rather to create iconographic patterns in the play.

In looking at the botanical classifications of the plants, I have found that some of the plants do have medicinal uses such as fumiter which is used to treat eye disorders, but most other plants have negative connotations such as hemlock and nettles. I have also found that it is not possible to decipher the season in which *King Lear* takes place by the seasonal cultivation of the plants because by referencing the agricultural development of each plant, I found that many of the plants do not grow at the same time of year.

The references to animals are also used metaphorically. "Animals are images of natural amorality, human absurdity, human lowliness, and insignificance" (French 229). The animal iconography of *King Lear* illustrates a world with no morals, no laws, and no justice. The characters in the play are thrust out into this amoral world and learn the extremities of existence. *King Lear* is Shakespeare's most brutal and

violent tragedy depicting the beastly nature of its characters. Albany's lines, "Humanity must perforce prey upon itself, / Like monsters of the deep" (IV, iii 49-50), symbolizes the predatorial nature of humans represented in *King Lear*.

Shakespeare allegorizes his characters with vicious killers in nature; Goneril is compared to a serpent's tooth, Cordelia is called a sea monster, Oswald a mongrel, and even Lear calls himself a dragon. The most terrible creatures epitomize the most malicious characters. Snyder says, "Goneril and Regan are not only vultures and serpents but pelicans, feeding on their parents flesh" (453). In the end they prey upon each other when Goneril murders her sister Regan. In 4.4, Lear smells the stench of vile mortality on his own hand, which represents the vile morality depicted in the play. The recurring animal iconography is used to emphasize the vicious and destructive nature of animals. They also accentuate Lear's statement "Man's life is cheap as beast's" (2.4.307).

Human nature also plays a significant role in characterization. "Natural imagery is used to express the entire gamut of human experience. It describes human feelings, vices, and situations. Nature oppresses humans and animals, and sustains them" (French 229). Edmund is described as a 'natural' boy, and Lear refers to Goneril and Regan as 'unnatural hags.' The Goddess of Nature is worshiped, and characters strive for natural law. In *King Lear*, human nature is exposed and is forced to suffer the inevitable consequences of life.

D. Governing Forces

a. Society

Society in *King Lear* consists of two conflicting groups, the old generation and the new. Social status plays a large role in *King Lear* due to the hierarchical chain of depicted as a governing force in the play. Throughout the plot, traditional social customs and titles are challenged. Like the transitions in England during Shakespeare's life, the customary ways of nobility and gentry are defied during the play. In Ian Johnston's lecture, he compares "the [17th centuries] rising energies of individualism and capitalism" (16) to the competing visions of political and social life in Lear's kingdom.

The world of the play illustrates a society that has a disintegrating feudal system and a rising bourgeoisie. Karl Marx commented on this rising generation by stating, "the bourgeoisie, whenever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all the feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his 'natural superiors,' and left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self interest, than callous cash payment" (Schneider 23). The younger characters in *King Lear* represent the rising bourgeoisie because they are motivated by personal interest, money, flatteries, lust, and revenge. The disconnection of a society between opposing social ideologies is clearly portrayed in *King Lear*.

At the opening of the play, Lear is at the top of the social hierarchy being both King and patriarch of his family, and when the play opens illegitimate Edmund is at

the bottom of the social chain. When Lear abdicates his position of unifier, the links of the hierarchical chain begin to fall apart. This social disjointedness opened the door for characters of lower status to seek to elevate their positions in the world. Base born bastards and women are freed from former constraints and challenge their social statuses.

The older generation including Lear, Gloucester, and Kent uphold the conventional laws and traditions of nobility. They believed in duty and obedience as well as primogeniture, which denied any gentlemanly status to an illegitimate child. The younger generation believes in personal rights. Themes of duty and obedience reoccur continuously. Cordelia refuses to flatter her father's irrational pride, and Goneril chides her youngest sister for scanting her obedience. In this hierarchical society, Lear's actions were thought infallible and unquestioned, and a daughter or subject would not have said "nothing." Lear's madness is ignited by the "monster ingratitude" (1.5.39) of his daughters who do not worship and obey him as he sees fit. Lear is the king of a feudal hierarchy, but he is challenged by the forces of natural law and humanist theories.

The younger characters such as Edmund and Cornwall defy all laws of decorum set by an antiquated society. Edmund defies the laws of primogeniture and conspires to overthrow the traditional customs by framing his brother and reaping his inheritance. From his manipulations and betrayal of Gloucester and Edgar in 1.2, Edmund destroys his father's traditional view of law and society. In 2.1, Gloucester tells Edmund, "Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means/ To make thee capable" (2.1.98-99). This means that even though Edmund is illegitimate and not allowed

land or title by law, Gloucester is going to find a way to make Edmund his heir. This is extremely important because it signifies the deterioration of social hierarchy in the play.

In 3.3, Cornwall disrespects Gloucester by boorishly taking over Gloucester's house without question and denying Gloucester to accommodate Lear and his men. Cornwall is a Duke and Gloucester an Earl; so Gloucester had no power to stop Cornwall's intruding and fiery manner. Gloucester upholds the old traditions of duty and service and helps Lear to safety against Cornwall's command. For doing so, Cornwall rips out Gloucester's eyes. In doing so Cornwall breaches customary decorum because even though he sees the punishment fit for a traitor, blinding was not a punishment used on men of nobility.

Out of all the characters in *King Lear*, Oswald is the epitome of the rising bourgeoisie. His place in the world rests in the thin line between lower and upper class. He is the steward of Goneril's house making him the head servant, but he dresses and speaks like a gentleman. Kent rails on the fashion of Oswald's dress when he says, "a tailor made thee" (2.2.55-56). Also, Oswald's sights are set on moving up the social ladder which are represented through his actions. He denies to address Lear as King calling him "My Lady's father." Another bourgeoisie characteristic is the fact that Oswald is driven by promises of reward. In 4.5, Regan tells Oswald, "if you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,/ Preferment falls on him that cuts him off" (4.5.41-42). This line is his motivations for attempting to murder Gloucester, which is much like Marx's definition of the bourgeoisie.

Edmund is an ideal Machiavellian. When the play begins Edmund is a social outcast due to his illegitimate birth, but by the beginning of act 5 Edmund has climbed his way up the social ladder usurping the title of Earl of Gloucester by betraying his father's trust. By the last act "the base" has "topped the legitimate." In 5.1 Edmund has begun a conquest for the crown, while Lear has lost everything except the shadow of a title he once held. Edmund's folly comes from accepting a trial-by-duel, which was a custom upheld in the old traditions of nobility. By becoming noble, he is tried like one, and dies for that which he wanted.

Edgar is left to rule in the end because he has been cast out of society by Edmund's ploy. Edgar fends for himself disguised as a mad beggar-man. From his experience of the lowest human state he understands "the arbitrariness with in the system of social privilege...He has been Poor Tom long enough to know the pain of dispossession" (Carroll 440). By the end of the play Edgar has experienced a world without any order, one of chaos and anarchy. Through his personal understanding of the converse limits of society, he is the only one who can build a new one.

b. Economy

King Lear illustrates two different economic worlds. First is the world of the nobility and the rich, and second is the world of beggars and madmen. This play encompasses these two opposing economic views because the major characters have to move from one extreme to the other in order to understand themselves. Lear, Gloucester, Edgar, and Kent go from wealth and power to having nothing as peasants and base beggars. Money equals power in this play. When Lear divides his kingdom,

he “refers to a division of wealth, of money, of property, [and] of possessions” (Cohen 73). Lear threatens to take away Cordelia’s promised fortunes when she does not tell him what he wants to hear, but Cordelia is unmotivated by money.

In 1.1 Shakespeare juxtaposes greed with selflessness between Cordelia’s two suitors. The Duke of Burgundy refuses Cordelia’s hand in marriage because Lear refuses to pay the dowry promised. On the other hand, the King of France sees Cordelia as the prize of marriage not the dowry. He says, “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” (1.1.275-278).

Money becomes an important asset to characters seeking to advance socially. The poor characters, or characters not of nobility, see money as a way to climb up the social ladder. They are ruthless and will do anything it takes to get money and power. Oswald and Edmund’s Captain represent those characters motivated by personal gain. In 4.6, when Oswald see Gloucester he says, “A proclaimed prize! Most Happy” (4.6.253). Oswald can only see the rewards he will benefit from by murdering Gloucester rather than a helpless and blind old man. Oswald has no personal feelings towards or against Gloucester but intends to murder him to elevate himself in the world. Also, in 5.1 the Captain follows Edmund’s commands to have Lear and Cordelia executed because Edmund offers to pay him. Edmund manipulates the Captain by bribing him: “If thou dost/ As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way/ To noble fortunes” (5.3.33-35).

Economic status is also significant to the noble characters’ identity. Lear and Gloucester see money as a symbol of their authority, but they let go of this idea when

they are able to give the last of what they have to those they consider like themselves. Lear gives the disguised Kent money for taking his side against Oswald's insolence, and Gloucester gives a purse to Edgar, who is disguised as Poor Tom, for leading him safely to Dover. Lear and Gloucester learn compassion and charity through experiencing what it is like to have nothing. According to Cohen in his chapter on the economics in *King Lear*, the economical world of the play can be summed up by the theory that "not having enough is worse than having nothing" (73).

c. Political

There are many political themes complexly woven together in *King Lear* that create an overall political division in the world of the play. The political opposition in *King Lear* is over the struggle for supremacy between two antithetical political ideologies. This split can be seen in the way characters act from their personal political views and their political relationships with the other characters. The politics in Lear's kingdom reflect a transition from an aristocratic to a bourgeoisie state and society. The political conflict comes from characters' social defiance and the opposing judicial ideologies.

This severance illustrates the struggle between man-made laws and natural laws. "The legitimacy of Lear's rule, in the feudal sense of that term, is shrouded in the mist of the antiquity which surrounds the play" (Jaffa 416). In *King Lear's* world Edmund is a bastard by man-made law not nature. Gloucester jokes with Kent about Edmund's conception and makes these rude remarks in front of his son. At first Edmund seems to accept the social laws laid down for him by exemplifying proper

etiquette when speaking to Kent, but in 1.2 Edmund curses his illegitimate nature and affirms his opposition against the laws which govern the kingdom at the beginning of the play.

In his monologue Edmund binds his services to Nature not man-made laws and casts away “the plague of custom” (1.2.3) that deprives him a place in society. Edmund calls for a revolution against the present laws that make him “illegitimate” with his famous line “Now gods, stand up for bastards!” (1.2.23) Edmund’s character is motivated by the fact that he is denied any gentlemanly status because his mother was not legally wedded to his father. This repression leads him to question the laws segregating him from his legitimate brother, Edgar, when both men are sons of the same man. Edmund believes in natural rights rather than political rights. He rises in political status and leads the English army against France in a Darwin-esque fashion. Edmund uses his cleverness, manipulative influence, and his body (when luring Goneril and Regan) in order to fight for domination and individual supremacy.

There are also numerous theories on the political nature of Lear’s abdication and the love-test in 1.1. When Lear abdicates his throne, without a male heir to take his place, Lear decides to divide his kingdom among his three daughters. In doing so he sets two conflicting views of politics against one another because in abdicating, he severs the body politic of a king. Lear gives Goneril and Regan’s husbands “The sway, revenue, [and] execution of the rest,” while keeping for himself “The name and all th’ addition to a king” (1.1.152-153). Lear intends to retain his title of king while giving all the powers and responsibilities away. He believes in the tradition of having authority from a title, but the younger generation does not uphold the old ideals.

The younger generation of characters does not agree that authority is embodied in the titles of old men. They see power as authority. Lear separates the sovereign body politic by separating the perpetual corporation of a king from the human being holding the title of king. By this Lear abdicates his authority and retains only a meaningless title. Lear gives the younger generation not only kingly responsibilities but supreme authority, and without knowing, he gives them the power to legally strive for his sovereign title.

Another political conflict is represented in 1.1. Lear creates discord between natural and social law with the love test. He challenges “nature” with “merit” in 1.1.58 when he creates a contest between his daughters in which the amount of their inheritance, merit due by social law, will be decided on by competing for Lear’s natural affection. With this contest, Lear creates a separation between the two political ideologies governing the play.

The first two sisters, Goneril and Regan, adhere to the political and social customs with their complete obedience, but their flatteries and professions of love are false. This may represent the idea that following orders is not always the right thing. Cordelia answers her father truthfully by saying she loves Lear according to her bond, as a father and as a king, but due to the lack of erroneous fluff in her answer, she is punished. Lear, blinded by his feelings, goes against his own political ideologies and banishes his only daughter who truly upholds his political principles. Many scholars have rebuked *King Lear* for its improbable politics in 1.1. Shakespeare shows Lear crack the political ideologies to define the limits of kingly virtue.

Another political situation is the war between Britain and France. Lear having abdicated leaves his kingdom without a supreme ruler and therefore political conflicts begin to arise. The actual war in *King Lear* plays a small role. All the actions of war take place off stage and happen very quickly. In 5.2, the entire battle between Britain and France takes place between two lines of text. There are scenes set in the French camp, but they focus on Cordelia and Lear's reunion; the actual political nature of the war is never discussed. The King of France is not even involved with the war because he had to return to France. This also allows for Cordelia to be executed for treason since she led the French army against Britain.

It is interesting to note that usually a foreign invasion would be seen as negative, but Shakespeare skews traditional beliefs and makes the good characters on the French side. The French are the ones who uphold traditional political customs. Lear's knights join Cordelia in her plight to save Lear, who has gone mad because Goneril and Regan threw him out into the storm. The war is used more as a tool to motivate the catastrophe at the end of the play when Cordelia is killed. In a political sense, from England's point of view, Cordelia's execution would be legal, but many scholars see her death as a horrifically unmoral act against humanity, i.e. natural law.

d. Supernatural

Supernatural forces cast a shadow over the world of *King Lear*. Shakespeare creates a world lost in a metaphysical mist leading to religious ambiguity.

Shakespeare's use of supernatural iconography foreshadows the dreadful upcoming

events as well as creates an overhanging atmosphere of disconnected spiritual beliefs. There are an assortment of supernatural references to astrology, mythological gods, pagan gods, and demonic possession, yet there are no specific references to the Christian God. Supernatural forces are repeatedly referred to, but they do not motivate the progression of the plot and are used more metaphorically.

King Lear's belief in supernatural forces is apparent, yet he orders, questions and challenges these gods. When Lear banishes Cordelia, he calls to Hecate, goddess of witchcraft and the sun and stars that govern human existence between birth and death. He not only breaks his paternal bond, but his spiritual bond as well. Some critics have suggested that Lear's breach from his daughter is in a larger context, a separation from the gods, who eventually punish him for this sin. Lear sees his daughters as devils when they disobey him. Once Lear realizes he does not incorporate divine power, he finds out that he is merely human and fallible. In 4.6, Lear no longer questions the gods, but realizes he is nothing more than a "natural fool of fortune" (4.6.210).

The plot of *King Lear* is motivated by the characters' actions, while ironically they believe they are acting in accordance with supernatural predominance. In Gloucester's monologue in 1.2, he comments on the bad omen which the eclipses bring. Gloucester is superstitious and believes the eclipses influenced his betrayal by Edgar. He says, "These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us... This villain of mine comes under the prediction" (1.2.109-110; 115-116). In this speech, Gloucester foreshadows the entire play and its outcome when he says, "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” (1.2.117-121). This speech’s foreshadowing essence is reiterated by Edmund’s mock prediction to his brother after Gloucester leaves. Edmund’s speech to Edgar reinforces the dreadful events, previously suggested by Gloucester, that occur later in the play.

Astrology also plays a large role in *King Lear* by dividing the characters into those who believe blindly and those who are skeptical. While Gloucester believes in astrological predominance, his faith is contrasted with Edmund’s disbelief. Edmund calls for Nature to be his Goddess, and he mocks the zodiac superstitions of the older characters. “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” (1.2.135-138). Once Gloucester is blind, he sees the true nature of his gods; “As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;/ They kill us for their sport” (4.1.41-42). This line enforces Lear’s recognition in 4.6 as well as Edgar’s last lines. Ambivalence overtakes faith by the end of the play.

Through his madness during the storm, Shakespeare connects the unpredictable macrocosms with the disordered microcosms. The storm symbolizes the violent and irrational world Lear lives in. “The failure in humanity parallels the failure in the heavens; the storm occurs on all levels at once, cosmic, familial, and personal” (Elton 47). Shakespeare uses the storm to illustrate the supernatural and internal nature of destruction that looms over Lear’s world. Lear tries to challenge the gods by challenging the weather in 3.2, but in doing so Lear finds that natural catastrophe as well as supernatural chaos, is not for humans to try and control.

According to Colie, “with his customary mastery of ambiguities of human experience, Shakespeare works through the storm scene to present the simultaneous weakness of unaccommodated man and his indomitable self-assertion against impossible odds” (130).

There are also numerous references to mythological gods throughout the play. Lear swears by Apollo, Jupiter, and Juno. These references associate the gods with the fractured nature of the world because “when Jupiter and Juno are in accord, when justice and power are harmonized, men experience the fine weather of proper rule. When they quarrel, the kingdom suffers the destructive storms of civil war and anarchy” (Hardison 240). Lear’s division of his kingdom can be portrayed as a division between authority (the Jovian element of rule) and power (the means of government ruled by Juno). This leads to the lack of justice (governed by Jupiter).

These mythological references also create a parallel between Lear and Ixion. In mythology Ixion attempted to seduce Juno, but she turned herself into a cloud, a shadow of herself, and when he copulated with this cloud, he beget centaurs. Jupiter struck Ixion with lightning and sent him to hell where he was strapped to a burning wheel of fire. Another reason Shakespeare may have used these references was to help set Lear’s world in a pre-Christian era of mythological gods and paganism. Pagans also believed in thunder as a symbol of the gods’ wrath, and all the references to wheels and circular objects allude to paganist spiritual ideologies.

There have been many disputes over the religious nature of the play. Some critics such as Samuel Johnson do not believe there are gods in the play because Cordelia’s death defies moral justice. Other’s such as A.C. Bradley, Hardin Craig,

Ribner, and many others believe *King Lear* is a moral example of divine punishment. They see Lear as an allegorical figure, one who suffers and repents. They believe the ending of the play illustrates the apocalypse in Revelations. Lear is punished for breaking away from God, and Gloucester is punished for his sin. Edgar comments on this by saying, "The dark and vicious place where thee he got/ Cost him his eyes" (5.3.206-207). There are also many theories that Lear's crown of weeds symbolizes Christ's crown of thorns. Lear becomes an allegorical figure for many scholars.

Other modern theorist such as Elton and Schoff, see Lear as a tragic protagonist in a pagan world. Schoff believes there are too many theories on the morality in *King Lear* and that Lear has become too much thought of as a moral example who teaches right from wrong. He agrees with Johnson that there is no moral justice portrayed in *King Lear*; both the good and the bad characters suffer the gods' wrath.

Ripeness is the end all of this play. The gods do not make the fruit shrivel up and die; it is a natural process, just as human existence is. The supernatural forces are mentioned, but never act upon the characters as they did in Greek and Roman plays, nor is Lear an allegorical figure upholding Christian belief in moral justice. *King Lear* is a play rooted in the extreme excruciations of man's free will and personal actions, while the gods in the play simply watch the folly of mankind. The supernatural references are for foreshadowing upcoming events and symbolize the unpredictability of fate and chance.

5.1: Fig. 1. Map of Great Britain



*This map was copied from <http://www.bardware.com/bardware/eng-big.jpg>

5.2 Time duration and Specific locale

1.1 Night; Lear's Palace

1.2 Same night (later); outside Lear's Palace

1.3 Two weeks later (night, 8pm); Goneril's home

1.4 Immediately following above; same

1.5 Immediately following above; outside Goneril's home

2.1 Two days later (7pm); outside Gloucester's home

2.2 Same night; same

2.3 Same night; woods outside Gloucester's home

2.4 Same night (11pm); outside Gloucester's home

3.2 Same night (12am); outside on a heath

3.3 Same night (12:30am); Gloucester's home

3.4 Same night (1am); hovel

3.5 Same night (2am); Gloucester's home

3.6 Same night (3am); a farmhouse

3.7 Same night (4am); Gloucester's home

4.4 Morning of next day; French camp near Dover

4.1 Same morning; heath

4.2 Same morning (later); Goneril's home

4.6 Afternoon; Dover

4.7 Evening (5pm); French camp

5.1 Evening (6pm); English camp

5.2 Night (8pm); field near battlefield

5.3 Same night (9pm); near the English camp

5.3 References to weather, seasons, and plants

Act I

Scene I

Lines 69-71: "Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,
With *shadowy forests* and with *champains riched*,
With plenteous rivers and *wide-skirted meads*,"
(These illustrate rich and fertile iconography; probably summer)

Scene II

Lines 109-110: "These late *eclipses in the sun and moon*,
portend no good to us."
(The actual eclipses occurred in September and October 1605)

Scene IV

Line 104: "Nay, an thou canst not smile as the
wind sits, thou'lt *catch cold* shortly"
(Alludes to cold weather)
Line 205: "That's a shelled *peascod*"
(Image used metaphorically as a sexual pun)

Act II

Scene I

Line 140: "Thus *out of season*, threading dark-eyed night."
(not traveling weather)

Scene III

Lines 11-12: "And with presented nakedness outface
The *winds and persecutions of the sky*."
(Image of violent weather)

Scene IV

Line 52: "*Winter's* not gone yet if the geese fly that way."
(Gives reference to late winter, early spring, but it is also foreshadows the dreadful upcoming events)
Lines 74-75: "We'll set thee to school to an ant to teach thee
there's no laboring I' th' *winter*."
(Reference to the season)
Lines 122-3: "When *nature being oppressed*, commands the mind
To suffer with the body."
(nature causes body to suffer; harsh weather)
Lines 187-188: "You nimble *lightning*, dart your *blinding flames*
Into her scornful eyes!"
(Iconography to illustrate the storm and Lear's mind)

Line 241-242: "I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage against the *enmity o'th'air*"
(hostility of the weather)
Lines 310-311: "Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee *warm*."
(Reference to being cold as compared to warm)
Line 329: "Let us withdraw. 'Twill be a *storm*."
(Reference to physical nature as well as foreshadowing the storm
brewing in Lear's fractured psychosis)
Line 344-345: "Alack, the night comes in, and the *high winds*
Do sorely ruffle."
(Image of winds that come with great storms)
Lines 353-4: "Shut up your doors, my lord. 'Tis a *wild night*,
My Regan counsels well. Come out o' th' *storm*."
(Reference to physical nature in the world but still foreshadow Lear's
tempest in his mind)

Act III

Stage directions: "*Storm still*"

Scene I

Line 1: "Who's there, besides *foul weather*?"
Line 4-6: "Contending with the *fretful elements*;
(elements of nature: earth, air, fire and water, which are irritable)
Bids the *wind blow* the earth into the sea
Or swell the *curled waters* 'bove the main"
(waves caused by high winds)
Line 55: "Fie on this *storm*!"

Scene II

Line 1-9: "Blow *winds*, and crack your cheeks! Rage, *blow*!
(raging winds)
You *cataracts* and *hurricanes*, *spout*
(waterspouts; tornadoes over water)
Till you have *drenched* our steeples, *drowned* the
cocks
You sulph'rous and thought-*executing fires*,
(lightning)
Vaunt-couriers of *oak-cleaving thunderbolts*,
(image of lightning compared with huge oak limbs)
Singe my white head. And thou, all-shaking
thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world."
Line 13: "better than this *rainwater* out o' door."
Lines 16-17: "Rumble thy bellyful! Spit *fire*! Spout *rain*,
Nor *rain, wind, thunder, fire*"
(elements of nature that are associated with great storms)
Lines 44-50: "Things that love night

Love not such nights as these. The *wrathful skies*
 (referencing the weather of the storm)
 Gallow the very wanders of the dark
 And make them keep their caves. Since I was a man,
 Such *sheets of fire*, such bursts of *horrid thunder*,
 Such groans of *roaring wind and rain* I never
 Remember to have heard."

Line 53: "That keep this dreadful *pudder* o'er our heads"
 (pudder means confusion, but it is onomatopoeic of rain drops)

Line 67: "Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the *tempest*"
 (Kent is trying to get Lear out of the storm; tempest)

Line 74: "Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art *cold*?"
 (Lear knows the Fool is cold because he is cold, alluding to cold weather)

Scene IV

Line 2-3: "The *tyranny of the open night's* too rough
 For nature to endure."

(the storm is so bad human survival is slim)

Line 8-9: "Thou think'st tis much that this *contentious storm*
 Invades us to the skin."

(battling storm)

Line 15: "This *tempest* in my mind"

Line 28: "This *tempest* will not give me leave to ponder"

Lines 32-37: "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?"

(Lear's clothes can't keep him warm in seasons of such bad weather)

Lines 50-51: "Through the
 sharp *hawthorn* blows the *cold wind*."

(Image of sharp cold wind that stings)

Line 63: "Tom's a *cold*"

Line 73: "Now all the plagues that in the *pendulous air*"
 (overhanging air)

Line 84-85: "This *cold* night will turn us all to fools and
 madmen."

Line 89: "Tom's a-*cold*."

Line 105: "Still through the *hawthorns* blows the *cold wind*,"

Lines 108-109: "Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with
 thy uncovered body this *extremity of the skies*."

(it is deadly to expose oneself to the extreme nature of the storm)

Lines 116-120: "'Tis a naughty
night to swim in. Now, a little fire in a wild filed

were like and old lecher's heart—a small spark, all
the rest on's body *cold*."

Line 163: "What is the cause of *thunder*?"

(this is a question about the gods in the play; since the classical gods ruled thunder, Lear may be asking what is causing the gods' wrath upon him)

Line 180: "What a *night's* this!"

Line 185: "In fellow, there, into th' hovel. Keep thee *warm*."

Scene VI

Line 1: "Here is better than the open *air*."

Act IV

Scene I

Line 36: "I' th' last night's *storm*"

Line 60: "Poor Tom's a *cold*"

Scene IV

Lines 3-6: "Crowned with rank *fumiter* and *furrow-weeds*,
With *hardocks*, *hemlock*, *nettles*, *cuckoo-flowers*,
Darnel, and all the *idle weeds* that grow
In our sustaining *corn*. A *century* send forth."

(Fumiter grows in fields of wheat and corn; furrow-weeds grow in ditches and are known as nuisances to farmers; hardocks are coarse and rank, Shakespeare gives these to his wondering minded characters like Ophelia; hemlock is a poisonous furrow weed known to stop sexual growth; nettles grow everywhere in England and are known for their stinging effect; cuckoo-flowers have the opposite effect on the sex organs as hemlock; darnel is the enemy of corn; and corn is the sustenance of life. In mythology, Ceres, the goddess of cultivation, is depicted as wearing a garland over the ears of corn. In Lear's madness he has traded corn for idle weeds. This could possibly symbolize the fruitlessness of his world.)

Scene VI

Line 20: "Hangs one that gather *sampire*-- dreadful trade;"

(sea fennel, gathered in May; here it is used to create imagery because to gather sampire, one had to dangle upside-down from the cliff it was growing on, and Edgar uses the term to create a picture in blind Gloucester's mind of the huge cliffs of Dover)

Line 112: "Sweet *marjoram*."

(in the oregano family, crops from July-November)

Act V

Scene III

Line 265: "Tis hot, it *smokes*! It came from the heart"

(smoke refers to steam, and to steam something extremely hot is placed in something cold; reference to cold weather)

CHAPTER VI

IDEA FOR THE PLAY

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the ideas surrounding the methodological development of the play. In this chapter I focus on the foundation of thematic elements of the play that create a frame for *King Lear*. I have also included a description of the actions before the play begins and a summary of each act.

A. Title

In the First Quarto, published in 1608, the title appeared as: *M. William Shake-speare: His True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three Daughters. With the unfortunante life of Edgar, sonne and heire to the Earl of Gloster, and his sullen and assumed humor of Tom of Bedlam*. When it was published in the First Folio, 1623, the title was simply: *The Tragedie of King Lear*.

The title of the Q1 states that the play is a history. The title may have been influenced by an earlier play, the *Chronicle Historie of King Leir*. The Q1's title is brief a summary of the play. It includes both Lear and Gloucester's plots, the death of King Lear, and it also introduces Edgar's unfortunate situation and disguise as a Bedlam beggar. This title also introduces Edgar because he is the one who becomes heir to the throne. In *Invention of the Human* Harold Bloom supports this theory by saying the "subtitle of the play foreshadows Edgar as king" (480).

When the play appeared in the 1623 First Folio, *King Lear* was grouped with the Tragedies. The title is significantly shorter than the first because the Q1 had a title page, where the First Folio's title was part of the first page of the play, see 5.1 and 5.2. This also may have been done to save paper and printing costs. There are contemporary arguments supporting the idea that the Q1 and the F version are completely individual texts. Q1 and F are significantly different from one another in many ways other than the titles. In the F, Shakespeare reduces the significance of Edgar's disguise as Poor Tom, and this may have influenced the elimination of his name and disguise in the title.

Overall, Shakespeare chose *King Lear* as his focus for both titles. The emphasis on the tragic hero is represented in all of his tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*. This focus on character reveals that the plot structure revolves around the downfall of the tragic hero who is named in the title.

B. Style

King Lear is written in a mixture of verse and prose. Most of the play is written in blank verse and follows iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's use of language corresponds to what is happening in the action of the plot and the internal nature of the characters. Language is also used to contrast the noble characters from the lower characters as well as to signal when characters are in disguise. Prose is used to show the relationship between characters such as the filial conversations between Gloucester and Edmund. Since Gloucester is Edmund's father, they speak in prose in order to identify to the audience the personal and informal relationship between the characters. Characters such as Edmund and Oswald, who are the lowest ranking

characters, speak in blank verse when they are striving to climb the social ladder, while Kent and Edgar speak in prose while in their disguises. As Lear's mind becomes fragmented, his language switches from blank verse to prose in order to signal a decline of his psychological capacities. The Fool always speaks in prose except for his songs which are usually in rhyming verse. Since he is an entertainer, his speech is more poetic and simple rather than rhetorical.

C. Form

The word tragedy is fluid, and it continuously evolves with new cultures and eras which bring new theories as to its meaning. The first knowledge we have of tragic theory was written in a chapter of Aristotle's *Poetics* in 335 B.C. In chapter IV of his *Poetics*, Aristotle defines tragedy as "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude" (Aristotle 36). Tragic theory progressed through the years from Greek and Roman theory, through the stringent rules of French Neoclassicism, through the restoration and its domestic tragedies, and is still progressing today. A modern definition that closely resembles Aristotle's can be found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

tragedy is a drama in verse or prose and of serious and dignified character that typically describes the development of a conflict between the protagonist and a superior force and reaches a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion that excites pity or terror.

Shakespearean tragedy has become a genre of its own. According to Bradley's views on the substance of Shakespearean tragedy, Shakespeare "set himself

to reflect on the tragic aspects of life...he had a theory of the kind of poetry called tragedy” (Bradley 5). All of Shakespeare’s tragedies consist of three main qualities: insanity/psychology, the supernatural, and a chance/accident. Within these tragedies are tragic heroes who, through suffering, defeat some external or internal force before dying. Shakespeare’s tragic structure is comparable to the first tragic structures utilized by the Greek and Roman playwrights.

There are speculations on whether or not *King Lear* should be considered a tragedy or not. Some critics, such as Jan Kott, do not believe the play upholds the tragic standards which are portrayed in Shakespeare’s other tragedies. Kott believes *King Lear* is a dark comedy. Other theories against *Lear* as a tragedy include G. Wilson Knight’s thought that Lear is a figure in the comedy of the grotesque (Knight 160) and modern perspectives of Lear as an Everyman character rather than a tragic hero. I believe the structure and characterization of *King Lear* maintain Aristotle’s guidelines for dramatic tragedy, and it may in fact have the greatest tragic effect upon the audience due to the double catastrophe with both Lear and Cordelia dead at the end. *King Lear* is not a story which teaches a moral example, as suggested by some critics, but it is the tale of a tragic hero who falls from wealth and power due to an unconscious tragic flaw. I firmly believe that the form and genre of *King Lear* is that of a dramatic tragedy.

D. Major Dramatic Question

Can King Lear abdicate sovereign responsibility and power yet still retain personal authority and reverence?

E. Spine

When King Lear divides his kingdom between his daughters, he upturns the hierarchical order of the play's world, initializes civil war, and is forced to see the man behind the title. Many scholars have disputed the play's linear actions due to the double plot and dialectic nature of the structure, but the foundation for the play is embodied within the Lear story. When searching for the spine of the play, most theorists focus on the downfall of King Lear and his relationship with his three daughters. Lear and Cordelia's "relationship is the emotional as well as structural spine of the play" (Kirsch 164).

F. Subject

King Lear embodies the excruciating limits of human mortality and the dichotomous nature of existence. Contemporary scholars such as Jan Kott, Edward Bond, William R. Elton, and Arthur Kirsch support the theory that the subject of Shakespeare's *King Lear* revolves around the dark yet inescapable essence of death. Jan Kott sees *King Lear* as apocalyptic and somewhat nihilistic. Bond states that the resolution of 5.3 depicts a world in which "we prove real by dying in it" (Bloom 49), and Elton states that the play is "motivated by an inconsolable view that death, excluding resurrection, ends all" (48). Kirsch states that the subject of the play "is the focus on death as the universal event in human existence that not only ends life but calls its whole meaning into question" (158).

G. Theme

Only by suffering can one strip the illusions of human mortality and open one's eyes to the dichotomous nature of existence and the necessity of death. Harold Bloom looks to Nietzsche when deciphering the theme of suffering in *King Lear*; he states that "it is not that the pain is meaningful but that meaning itself becomes painful in this play" (484). In *King Lear* all the characters suffer, both good and evil. Lear, Gloucester, and Edgar go through a series of emotional, mental, and physical suffering in order for recognition and reversal. Lear is stripped of his illusionary authority by Goneril and Regan. Lear is left out to face the "pelting" and "pitiless storm." In his madness Lear finds recognition and acknowledges his folly in banishing Cordelia. When Gloucester asks for Lear's hand, he replies, "Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality" (4.6.48)

Gloucester is deceived by his bastard son and loses his eyes, and only through terrible suffering does he see his deception and find his true son, Edgar. After his eyes have been torn out, Gloucester cries, "Then Edgar was abused" (3.7.111). Edgar, can only become king by taking "the basest and most poorest shape/ That ever penury in contempt of man/ Brought near to beast" (2.3.7-9). He reflects on the dark theme of the play when he says "Ripeness is all" (5.2.12). This line illustrates fruit that becomes ripe, then shrivels up and falls from the tree to rot. Men come and go, life and death, but humanity is forever. Referring back to Kirsch, he states that "the sympathetic experience of pain establishes a human community in a play that otherwise seems to represent its apocalyptic dissolution, and it informs our sense of Lear's heroic stature" (162).

H. Predominant Element

King Lear is a play dominated by its characters. It is through the character's actions, mistakes, and lack of action that inevitably turn the wheel of fortune destroying a kingdom and two families. The focus of the play is not on the actions of the characters but on the effects the actions have on the characters. This is a play concerned with human nature and the emotional, mental, and physical anguish of life. Samuel Johnson believes "there is no scene which does not contribute to the aggravation of the distress or conduct of the action" (Bloom 14). The action of the play is suffering; therefore it is through the characters distress and disorderly conduct that the play progresses.

I. Previous Action

a. Exposition

When 1.1 opens, Gloucester, Kent, and Edmund are onstage. In the first 20 lines exposition is given explaining the previous events. Kent's first lines reveal Lear's affection towards the Duke of Albany rather than the Duke of Cornwall when he says "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall" (1.1.1-2). This reference also gives insight into the importance of natural affection to King Lear. Gloucester's response reveals that Lear is dividing his kingdom but not between the dukes. The secret nature of this conversation alludes to Gloucester and Kent possibly knowing how Lear is planning to decide on how to divide the kingdom.

There are many scholarly theories on the motivation behind the division of the kingdom and the love test Lear creates in order to give his three daughters their

portion of their inheritance. Many former scholars see this action as improbable and have reproached 1.1, yet modern theorists, such as Jaffa, have concluded that the love test was carefully thought out by Lear as a way to give land to his youngest and favorite daughter.

This initial conversation between Gloucester and Kent is important to the development of the play's structure because it is a foreword and raises the audience's anticipation towards what is going to happen when Lear enters. Kent and Gloucester are also secretive about the conversation because it was unusual for kings to abdicate just because they are old and want to retire, and therefore it would have been a fragile subject for conversation. This revelation of Lear's succession foreshadows future dissension in the kingdom even though Lear believes his division of the kingdom will prevent future strife (1.1.47-48).

Another reason for the importance of this conversation is that during the discourse between Gloucester and Kent exposition is given on Gloucester's sons. Edmund is present while his father, Gloucester, jokes with Kent about the illegitimate nature of Edmund's breeding. Gloucester also mentions that he has a "legal" son, Edgar:

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 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. (1.1.19-24)

Even though Gloucester claims to love both his sons equally, the bawdy language used to describe Edmund's conception leads one to assume Gloucester feels

differently for his legal son rather than his bastard son. Gloucester mentions that Edmund has been away and will be going away again. This exposition foreshadows conflict between Edmund and Edgar.

There is also exposition given on why Lear has decided to conduct the division of the kingdom ceremony on this specific day. It is the day Lear is planning on giving Cordelia's hand in marriage. Lear speaks of Cordelia's suitors and their extended stay in Lear's kingdom contending for Cordelia's hand (and dowry). "The <two great> 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" (1.1.49-52). Information on Lear's motivation is also given when he says, "I loved her most and thought to set my rest/ On her kind nursery" (1.1.137-138). This reference gives insight into Lear's future plans and contrast them with the end of the play when Lear is nursed back to health by Cordelia.

b. Actions immediately before the opening of the play

- Lear has divided his kingdom into three parts and is planning on announcing the partitions.
- Lear's daughters and their husbands have traveled to his palace to receive their share of the kingdom.
- The King of France and the Duke of Burgundy have come to contend for Cordelia's hand in marriage, which will be announced at the ceremony.
- The whole kingdom is in anticipation. Gloucester, Kent, and Edmund are waiting for Lear and his family to enter and begin the ceremony.

J. Specific Action-Summary of Each Act:

Act I: An old king decides to retire in peace by dividing his kingdom between his daughters, but enraged with hurt pride, he banishes his favorite daughter and friend. Gloucester's bastard son seeks his brother's inheritance and frames Edgar. Two weeks pass while Lear and his hundred knights stay with Goneril. Goneril chides her father for his riotous knights, and Lear outraged at her disobedience, curses her with infertility. Lear and his men leave to go stay with his other daughter, Regan.

Act II: Edmund convinces Edgar that he should run away; then he cuts himself and tells Gloucester Edgar tried to kill him. Cornwall and Regan travel to Gloucester's. When Kent, in disguise, sees Oswald, he beats Oswald up and is put in the stocks for punishment. Lear arrives at Gloucester's since no one was home at Regan's. He is outraged when he sees his messenger in the stocks. Goneril and Regan pluck away Lear's authority by denying him his retainers. This insolence drives Lear mad, and he runs out into the storm. Regan and Cornwall refuse to let Gloucester help the king, and they lock Lear out in the rain.

Act III: Lear goes mad out in the storm and meets Edgar, who is disguised as Poor Tom. Gloucester finds Lear, Edgar, Kent, and the Fool, and then he helps them to shelter. Edmund betrays his father by giving Cornwall a letter Gloucester received from the French. Cornwall announces Gloucester is a traitor and gives Edmund the title Earl of Gloucester. Cornwall gouges out Gloucester's eyes and is slain by one of Gloucester's servants.

Act IV: The French army lands in England and is lead by Cordelia who sends her men to find her father. Edgar finds Gloucester, blind, and offers to lead

Gloucester to the Cliffs of Dover. Gloucester tries to commit suicide, but Edgar tricks him. Lear, insane, enters and is found by French soldiers. Oswald enters and tries to kill Gloucester. Edgar steps in between them and kills Oswald. Edgar finds a letter from Goneril to Edmund in Oswald's jacket. Cordelia and Lear are reunited.

Act V: Edmund and Cornwall gather their armies and prepare for battle.

Edgar enters, dressed as a peasant, and gives the letter he found to Albany. After the English win the war, Edmund sends Lear and Cordelia to be executed. Albany charges Edmund with treason, and Edgar enters as a knight to fight Edmund. Edgar slays his brother. Goneril poisons Regan, and Goneril kills herself. Lear enters with Cordelia dead in his arms and dies. Edgar is left to rule the kingdom.

CHAPTER VII

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

In this chapter I plan to focus on Shakespeare's structural development of *King Lear*. I have included a structural analysis, a chart showing which characters are in which scene, a chart that breaks down all the entrances and exits in each scene, and diagrams illustrating the levels of tension throughout the play. These things are important for dramaturgs because it is important to understand the flow of the characters on and off stage.

Shakespeare's development of *King Lear* resembles the classical dramatic structure of Greek and Roman tragedies with their similar themes of blindness to human limitation and presumptuous self-will. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare fully develops two parallel plots which each echo the structure of classical tragedies such as *Oedipus Rex*. So, to discuss the basic structure of a tragedy, I refer to Aristotle and his *Poetics*. There are six elements of tragedy: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and song, but Aristotle focuses the most attention on plot which he calls "the soul of a tragedy" (Aristotle 37). Since the plot is the most important factor in a tragedy, what if two tragic plots were weaved together supporting one another? I believe that in a way, this produces a doubly cathartic effect for the audience. Dual action doubles the pain, which in turn doubles the terror and pity purged by the spectators.

The spine of the play follows Lear's actions and his relationships with his daughters. The major conflict in the play revolves around the character King Lear, whose mind is clouded by an excessive ego or hubris. Lear feels he is met with outrageous ingratitude, and his distended self-esteem leads him to banish his favorite daughter. Lear's unlimited will and blind rage lead to his suffering and death. The subplot also revolves around a conflict between a parent and a child. The Earl of Gloucester is dubiously tricked by his evil son Edmund into hating his true son Edgar. Both Lear and Gloucester are "blind" and foolish old men, both become irrationally angry when their egos are hurt, and both are driven to pain, suffering, and death due to their inability to recognize the truth.

These two plots are structurally intertwined and influence one another. This dialectic structure, according to Bradley "provides a most effective contrast between its personages and those of the main plot, the tragic strength and stature of the latter being heightened by comparison with the slighter build of the former" (262). I believe the structure of *King Lear* to be dialectic because the two plots portray opposing forces. Edmund is the antithesis of Lear, and so when they both die, all the truths of existence synthesize in Edgar. The dual plot structure of *King Lear* emphasizes Lear and Gloucester's transition from blindness to sight and works to form an ultimate synthesis or tragic effect.

When *King Lear* begins, Lear is the sovereign monarch of his kingdom and family. The stasis of the play is one of civil and political harmony unified under a hierarchical chain of being. Jaffa states that "the first scene in *King Lear* shows the old monarch at the head of a united Britain (not only England), and at peace not only

with all domestic factions, but with the outside world as well” (405). Some scholars believe that in the opening of 1.1, Lear’s kingdom is the most unified and peaceful of all of Shakespeare’s tragedies. For our production we created a world already in ruin and in a state of anxiety. Lear has no male heir, and the subject of succession alludes to a world already in transition.

The inciting incident of the play happens in the opening scene. Lear’s decision to abdicate authority and divide his kingdom into three parts sets up the inciting action. It is obvious from the exposition given by Gloucester and Kent in the opening lines that this division is going to break the peaceful stasis of *Lear’s* world. Their anticipation of Lear’s announcement signals the audience that this decision is going to be the motivating factor for the plot.

Lear’s goal is to prevent future strife in his kingdom and spend the rest of his old age in peace with his daughter Cordelia, but Lear’s hasty actions lead to the events that eventually end in the destruction of Lear’s kingdom and family. Fredson Bowers speculates in his essay “The Structure of *King Lear*” that Shakespeare structurally developed this play to depict the entire process of annihilation by structurally developing a plot in which the play’s world crumbles due to Lear’s flaw in 1.1.

Lear creates a ceremonial love test between his daughters, which some scholars have conjectured to be motivated by his want to give the best share to his youngest daughter as a wedding present; yet this is only speculation, and there are numerous theories stating otherwise. Lear’s plan unfolds beautifully at first with the

rich and stylistic monologues given by Goneril and Regan, but Cordelia's "Nothing, my lord" (1.1.96) intrudes the stasis of the hierarchically structured world.

Cordelia's reply to her father's request leads Lear to commit his ultimate folly, banishing honest Cordelia. In immense anger Lear tells Cornwall and Albany "with my two daughters' dowers digest the third" (1.1.144). In Lear's initial plan, a division between three parts strategically is plausible for keeping unity, but by dividing his kingdom between the two Dukes, Lear initiates civil unrest. It is generally agreed upon that the initial break in the stasis of Lear's world takes place with Cordelia's "noting," her banishment, and the division of authority in the kingdom.

The events that follow the inciting incident come from Lear's anger and inability to see the truth. After Cordelia has broken the patriarchal stasis, Kent violates his position by questioning Lear's actions. He asks, "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?" (1.1.162-165) These lines clearly articulate Lear's flaw, and they foreshadow Lear's treatment from Goneril and Regan. The last line alludes to the fact that Goneril and Regan's speeches were not acclamations of their true feelings, and Kent's onomatopoeia of power bowing foretells of Lear's power being striped from him.

Coleridge believes the entire first scene of act one can be eliminated without severing the plot structure, yet others such as A.C. Bradley consider the actions in this first scene as essential for "Lear's contribution to the action of the drama...[to be] be remembered; not at all that we may feel he 'deserved' what he suffered, but because

otherwise his fate would appear to us at best pathetic, at worst shocking, but certainly not tragic” (Jaffa 408). I agree that 1.1 is significant to the structural development of the play because without seeing or reading the events that occur, the inciting incident would take place offstage limiting the audience’s sympathy for Lear and Cordelia.

If 1.1 was cut, Cordelia would not appear until after the first three acts. The spine of *King Lear* follows the relationship between Lear and Cordelia; therefore without 1.1, could an audience emotionally empathize with the catastrophe in 5.3? The play begins with the filial bond broken between Lear and Cordelia, and the play ends with their reconciliation and a double break from nature’s bond, into death. Shakespeare allows “almost the full length of the play to work out the far reaching and complex results of Lear’s tragic decision” (Bowers 14).

Another important quality of the opening scene is that it establishes the characters’ relationships with one another. The scene introduces: Goneril and Albany as husband and wife, Regan and Cornwall as husband and wife, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia are Lear’s daughters, Cordelia is Lear’s favorite, Goneril and Regan side against Lear and Cordelia, France and Burgundy have been in the kingdom courting Cordelia, Kent is Lear’s loyal friend, and Gloucester follows Lear’s commands. There are two major forwards at the end of the scene. Lear lays out his plan to retain one hundred knights and stay first with Goneril. Also, when Goneril and Regan are left alone they comment on Lear’s irrational behavior and hint at making plans to stand up for one another in challenging their father.

In 1.2 the stasis of the subplot is broken. Edmund enters with a letter he plans to use in deceiving his father and getting rid of his brother, Edgar. When Gloucester

enters, Edmund pretends to hide the letter knowing that it will get his father's attention. The more Edmund refuses the letter, the more curious Gloucester becomes. Gloucester demands the letter from Edmund and is hasty to believe its contents. This is the first of several letters that Shakespeare uses to progress the actions of the plot.

Right after Gloucester exits Edmund again strikes with his clever and manipulative power. He convinces Edgar to flee for his life because Gloucester wants to kill him. Edmund's actions lead to the broken relationship between Gloucester and Edgar and thus lead to Gloucester's death and Edgar's survival. This scene is important because it exposes Edmund's villainy and foreshadows his place as Lear's antagonist.

The intensity of the play rises through a series of complications which hinder Lear's ultimate goal. Lear wants to do as he wishes, answer to no one, and retain the title and reverence of a king, but other characters become obstacles for Lear when they do not follow along with his plan. Oswald's character is a foil to Lear and symbolic of the rising middle class that does not follow the old traditions of deference. He obeys Goneril, not Lear. In 1.4, when Lear asks Oswald, "Who am I sir?" Oswald answers "My lady's father" (1.4.78-79). This insubordinate answer conflicts with Lear's view of himself as king.

The action of disobedience is reiterated in the conflict between Lear and his two daughters, Goneril and Regan, in 2.4. This scene is structurally the point of attack. The actions of Goneril and Regan ultimately lead to Lear's madness and recognition. These daughters strip their father's authority, thus reducing Lear from the heightened vision of himself. They deny Lear his train of soldiers, which defies

his authority as father and as king, and further complicate Lear's super-objective. In one hundred lines, Lear is reduced to nothing more than a beast and is cast out of society to face the extremities of nature.

The storm scene in 3.2 has been considered by many to be the climatic point of *King Lear's* structure since it is the turning point in the play. The structural utilization of the storm is its influence on Lear's recognition and reversal. Through suffering Lear is finally able to see his follies and empathize with other characters. Lear says, "Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?/ I am cold myself" (3.2.74-75). It is this reversal that allows Lear to ask Cordelia for forgiveness; without this character reversal Lear and Cordelia's reconciliation and their deaths would be as Bradley says "pathetic."

Shakespeare reinforces the recognition of Lear by structurally overlaying it with the blinding of Gloucester in 3.7. Gloucester's blinding is like a mini-climax because this physical blinding leads to Gloucester's recognition. I do not think it leads to a significant reversal in his character, but it does emphasize Gloucester's transition from deception to understanding. Shakespeare creates a horrific and violent act which happens onstage, and I believe it reinforces the apocalyptic imagery of the play as well as aiding the audience's response to 5.3.

Also in 3.7, Cornwall sends Goneril and Edmund away to inform Albany of the French army's arrival. This allows Goneril and Edmund time alone together, which leads to Goneril's death in 5.3. It also sets up a conflict between the two sisters. As Cornwall dies, Regan gives him no loving words of remorse. His death allows Regan to openly pursue Edmund for herself.

The falling action of the play includes a series of events toppling over one another like dominoes. The levels of anticipation are heightened by the references of war. By act four the French army and Cordelia have arrived in Britain, and there are references in 4.5 that the British are preparing for battle. Regan tells Oswald, “Our troops set forth tomorrow” (4.5.18). The major crisis, which instigates the actions that cause the tragic ending of the play, occurs during the battle between Britain and France in 5.2.

In 4.3 the King of France’s departure is revealed: “Something he left imperfect in the state...which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return was most required and necessary” (4.3.3-7). There is reference to a French Marshal, but the addition of this character is irrelevant to the plot because he is never mentioned again. Many productions eliminate this scene so that it can be assumed that Cordelia leads the French army against Edmund and her sisters since her husband has returned to France.

When the French lose the battle, Edgar, trying to care for his father’s safety, exclaims, “Away, old man. Give me thy hand. Away./ King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta’en” (5.2.6-7). Gloucester is burdened with self pity, and his heart breaks when Edgar reveals himself to his father offstage. Edgar orally illustrates Gloucester’s death in 5.3 by personifying Gloucester’s heart, which “Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,/ Burst smilingly” (5.3.234-235). I believe his death occurs offstage so as to allow the catastrophic deaths of Lear and Cordelia to reach their summit of tragic spirit later in the scene, yet even Gloucester’s death

parallels that of Lear's. Lear's heart also breaks apart from overwhelming emotions of hope and despair.

Cordelia and Lear are taken as prisoners, and at the top of 5.3 Edmund sends his prisoners of war away to prison. Edmund, having changed authoritative positions with Lear, is in control, and he gives a letter commanding the execution of Lear and Cordelia to the Captain of his army. This letter inevitably leads to Cordelia's death even though Edmund briefly attempts to redeem himself and save Lear and Cordelia.

Shakespeare loves to keep his audience in suspense. As Edmund lay dying he tells Edgar and Albany that "my writ/ Is on the life of Lear, and on Cordelia" (5.3.293-294). Shakespeare develops Edmund's lines to foreshadow Cordelia's demise, but Edmund's confession gives the characters on stage, and possibly the audience, a sense of hope. Maybe Lear and Cordelia can be saved in time. Edmund also alludes to how Cordelia dies: "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 herself" (5.3.303-306).

In reading and watching *King Lear*, I felt the highest point of emotional tension when Lear enters (5.3.308) 'howling.' Shakespeare's audience may have been expecting Cordelia and Lear to be saved, as in the precursor *King Leir*, but Shakespeare creates a world of complete annihilation where both good and evil perish. The catastrophe of the play occurs when Lear enters with Cordelia dead in his arms. The wheel of fortune has come full circle. The break from the pre-existing stasis in 1.1 comes from Lear's inability to hear or recognize Cordelia's honesty, and the play ends with his intense need to hear her and see her speak again. Cordelia's

death has been a subject for much debate by scholars, especially Christian theorists who see her death as immoral and in defiance of the laws of natural justice. *King Lear* is not a moral play, and therefore needs no moral ending. Copulation thrives, evil devours itself, and no one is free from the reality of existence and the necessity of death. Once Cordelia is dead, Lear is able to accept his own death and dies in a hallucination of ecstasy.

Shakespeare carefully structured this play to portray the complete collapse of one world and the small hope for a new one. The structure follows two reverse wheels of fate; as Lear is reduced to nothing, Edmund's status is raised, and they both die when the wheel completes its duration. This wheel of fate is symbolic of the cyclic nature of existence beginning with birth and ending with death. I would like to conclude with a quote from Bradley:

Lear's 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. (279)

Action Charts**Act I scene**

Lines	1-33	34-213	214-309	310-328	329-355
Gloucester	E	√ X(36)	R X		
Edmund	E	√	√	√	√ X
Kent	E	√ X			
Lear		E	√ X		
Cornwall		E	√ X		
Albany		E	√ X		
Goneril		E	√	√	√ X
Regan		E	√	√	√ X
Cordelia		E	√	√ X	
France			E	√ X	
Burgundy			E X		
Knight #3		E X(142)	R X		
Knight #4		E	√ X		

French Scenes 1 2 3 4 5
 P BV P BV P

Act I scene ii

Lines	1-22	24-123	124-140	141-186	187-192
Edmund	E	√	√	√	√ X
Gloucester		E X			
Edgar				E X	

French Scenes 1 2 3 4 5
 BV P P P BV

Act I scene iii

Lines	1-29
Goneril	√ X
Oswald	√ X

French Scenes 1 Blank Verse

= Enter X = Exit R = Re-enter √ = on stage D = Dies P = Prose BV = Blank Verse

Act I scene iv

Lines	1-8	9-44	45-77	78-95	96-193	194-266	267-307	308-339	340-354	355-371
Kent	E	√	√	√	√	√	√ X(304)			
Lear		E	√	√	√	√	√ X(304)	R X(327)		
K 1		E	√ X R	√	√	√ X(262)				
K 2		E	√	√	√	√	√ X(269)			
K 3		E	√	√	√	√	√ X(285)			
K 4		E	√ X							
K 5		E	√ X							
Oswald			E X(46) R X(93)							R X(361)
Fool					E	√	√ X(304)	R X		
Goneril						E	√	√	√	√ X
Albany							E	√	√	√ X
Knight		E X(9)								
	1 BV	2 P	3 P	4 P	5 P	6 BV	7 BV	8 BV	9 BV	10 BV

Act I scene v.

Lines	1-53
Lear	E X
Knight #1 (Gent)	E X(33) R(46) X
Kent	E X(7)
Fool	E
Knights #2-5	E X

1 Prose

Act II scene i

Lines	19	20-40	41-99	100-151
Edmund	E	√	√	√ X
Edgar		E X(35)		
Gloucester			E	√ X
Servant #1			E	√ X
Servant #2			E	√ X
Cornwall				E X
Regan				E X
(Kent)				
(Oswald)				
	1 BV	2 BV	3 BV	4 BV

= Enter X = Exit R = Re-enter √ = on stage D = Dies P = Prose BV = Blank Verse

Act II scene ii

Lines	1-44	45-165	166-174
Kent	E	√	√ X
Oswald	E	√ X	
Edmund		E X	
Cornwall		E X	
Regan		E X	
Gloucester		E	√ X
Servant #1		E X	
Servant #2		E X	

1

P

2

BV

3

BV

Act II scene iii

Lines	1-21
Edgar	E X

1 Blank Verse

Act II scene iv

Lines	1-67	68-94	95-135	136-141	142-210	211-328	329-337	338-354
Lear	E X		R	√	√	√ X		
Fool	E	√	√	√	√	√ X		
Knight #1 (Gent)	E	√	√	√	√	√ X		
Kent	E	√	√	√	√	√ X		
Cornwall					E	√	√	√ X
Goneril						E(217)	√	√ X
Regan					E	√	√	√ X
Gloucester			E X		R	√ X		R X
Servant #1					E	√	√	√ X
Servant #2					E	√	√	√ X

1
BV2
BV3
BV4
BV5
BV6
BV7
BV8
BV

= Enter X = Exit R = Re-enter √ = on stage D = Dies P = Prose BV = Blank Verse

Act III scene ii

Lines	1-40	41-85	
Lear	E	√	X
Fool	E	√	X
Kent		E	X

1
BV

2
BV

Act III scene iii

Lines	1-20	
Gloucester	E	X
Edmund	E	X

1
P

Act III scene iv

Lines	1-43	44-49	50-120	121-197	
Lear	E	√	√	√	X
Kent	E	√	√	√	X
Fool	E X(31)	R	√	√	X
Edgar			E	√	X
Gloucester				E	X

1
BV

2
P

3
P

4
P(121-150) BV

Act III scene v.

Lines	1-26	
Cornwall	E	X
Edmund	E	X

1 P

Act III scene vi

Lines	1-5	6-90	91-126
Gloucester	E X		R X
Kent	E	√	√ X
Lear		E	√ X
Edgar		E	√ X
Fool		E	√ X

1
P2
P3
BV

Lear BV(15-50, 56-59)

Kent BV

Act III scene vii

Lines	1-24	29-119
Cornwall	E	√ X
Regan	E	√ X
Goneril	E X	
Edmund	E X	
G's Servant #1	E	√ D(100)
G's Servant #2	E X(4)	R X(114)
Oswald	E(14) X(22)	
Gloucester		E X(114)

1
Prose(1-14) BV2
BV

Act IV scene iv (moved to top of Act IV)

Lines	23-32
Cordelia	E X
Knight #1	E X
French Soldier #1	E X
French Soldier #2 (Messenger)	E X

1 BV

E = Enter X = Exit R = Re-enter √ = on stage D = Dies P = Prose BV = Blank Verse

Act IV scene i

Lines	15-90
Old Man	E X(58)
Gloucester	E X
Edgar	E X

1 BV

Act IV scene ii

Lines	18-36	37-83	84-118
Goneril	E	√	√ X
Edmund	E X(30)		
Oswald	E X		
Albany		E	√ X
E Soldier #2 (Messenger)			E X

1
BV2
BV3
BV

Act IV scene vi

Lines	1-98	99-223	241-252	253-316
Gloucester	E	√	√	√ X
Edgar	E	√	√	√ X
Lear		E X		
French Soldier #1		E(205) X		
French Soldier #2		E(205) X		
Oswald				E D(279)

1
BV2
BV
Prose (102-124,
130-146, 151-174)3
BV4
BV
Prose (Edgar 280-216)

Act IV scene vii

Lines	1-99
Cordelia	E X
Kent	E X
Doctor	E X
French Soldier #1	E(24) X
French Soldier #2	E(24) X
Lear	E(24) X

1 Blank Verse

Act V scene i

Lines	1-20	21-45	46-57	58-77
Edmund	E	√ X		R X
Regan	E	√ X		
English Soldier #1	E	√ X		
English Soldier #2	E	√ X		
Albany		E	√	√ X(62)
Goneril		E X		
Edgar		E(43)	√ X(55)	
	1 BV	2 BV	3 BV	4 BV

Act V scene ii

Lines	1-5	6-13
Edgar	E X	R X
Gloucester	E	√ X
	1 BV	2 BV

Act V scene iii

Lines	1-45	46-129	130-260	261-307	308-395
Edmund	E	√	√	√ X	
Lear	E X(30)				R D(175)
Cordelia	E X(30)				RD
E Soldier #1 (Herald)	E X(30)		R (as Herald)	X(302)	
E Soldier #2 (Gentleman)	E	√	X(194)	R (Gentleman) X(273)	
Captain	E X		R X(194)		
Albany		E	√	√	√ The
Goneril		E	√ X(193)		
Regan		E X			
Edgar			E(139)	√	√ The
Kent				E(272)	√ The
	1 BV	2 BV	3 BV	4 BV	5 BV

E = Enter X = Exit R = Re-enter √ = on stage D = Dies P = Prose BV = Blank Verse

	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.6	4.7	5.1	5.2	5.3
Lear	X			X	X				X	X		X		X					X	X			X
Cordelia	X															X				X			X
Goneril	X		X	X					X						X			X			X		X
Regan	X					X	X		X						X						X		X
Cornwall	X					X	X		X				X		X								
Albany	X			X														X			X		X
Kent	X			X	X		X		X	X		X		X						X			X
Oswald			X	X			X								X			X	X				
Fool				X	X				X	X		X		X									
Gloucester	X	X				X	X		X		X	X		X	X		X		X			X	
Edgar		X				X		X				X		X			X		X		X	X	X
Edmund	X	X				X	X				X		X		X			X			X		X
France	X																						
Burgundy	X																						
Old Man																	X						
Doctor																				X			
Captain																							X

	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	4.4	4.1	4.2	4.6	4.7	5.1	5.2	5.3
English Soldier #1																					X		X
English Soldier #2																					X		X
Gloucester's Servant #1						X	X		X						X								
Gloucester's Servant #2						X	X		X						X			X					
French Soldier #1																X			X	X			
French Soldier #2																X			X	X			
Lear's Knight #1				X	X																		
Lear's Knight #2				X	X																		
Lear's Knight #3	X			X	X																		
Lear's Knight #4	X			X	X																		
Lear's Knight #5				X	X																		

Color Key for actors playing multiple characters

X Matthew McBride

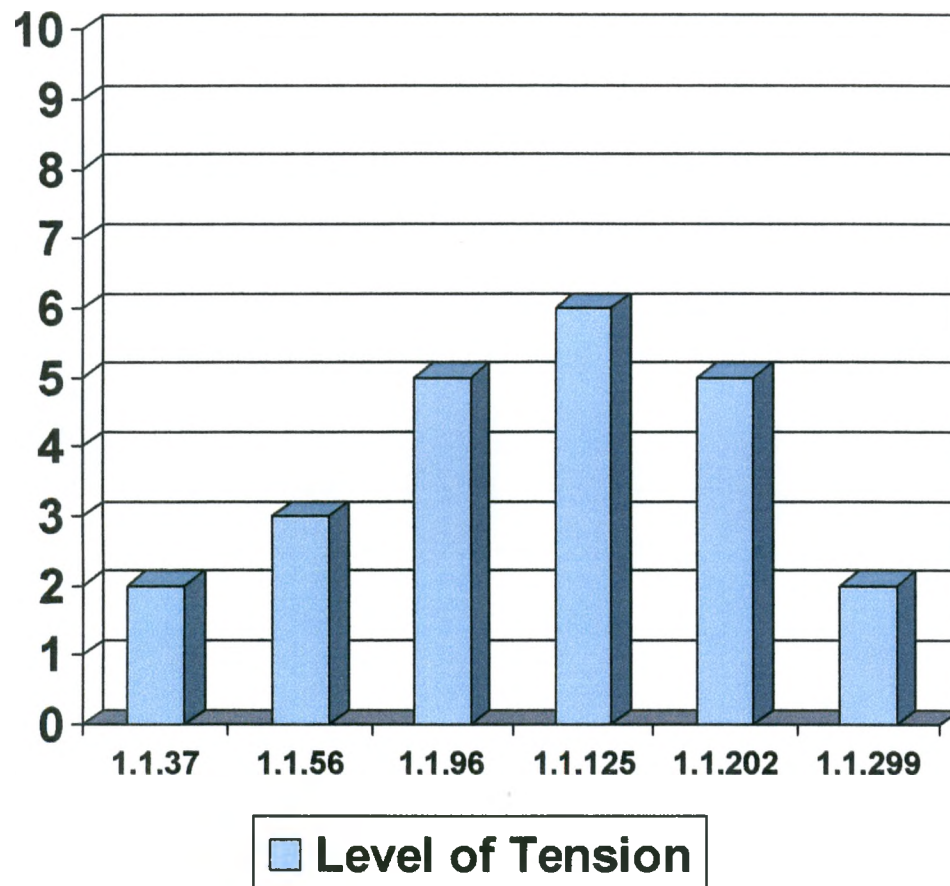
X Micah Suddith

X David Boswell

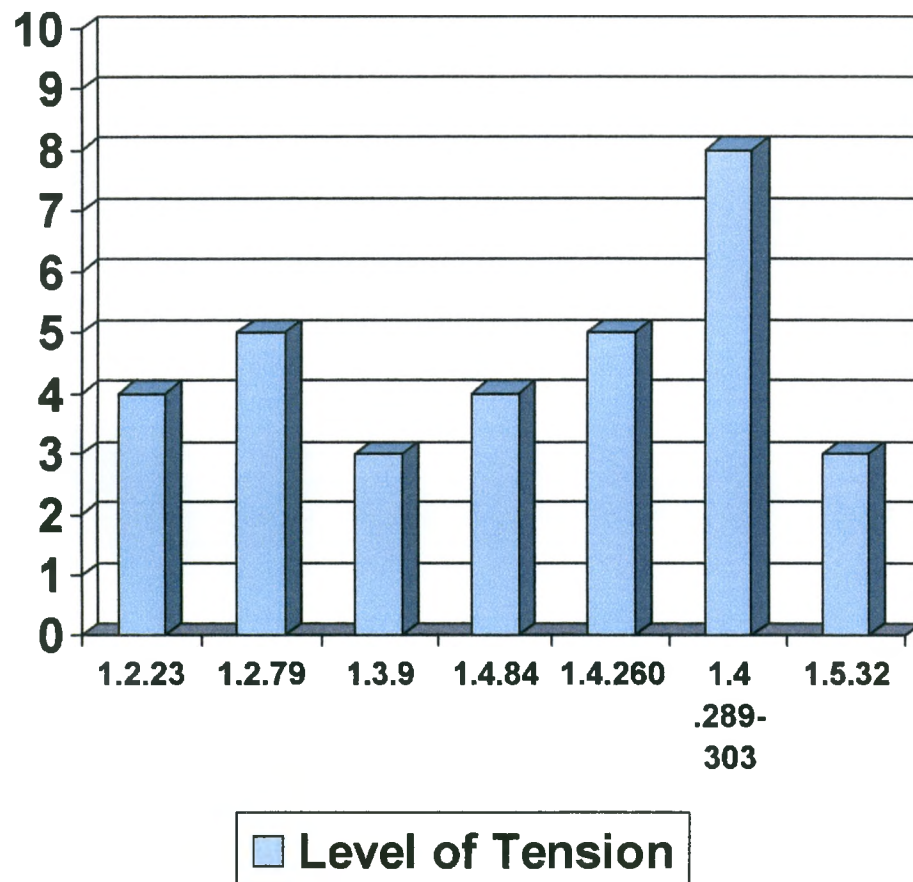
X Chris Cornwell

X Steve Harmon

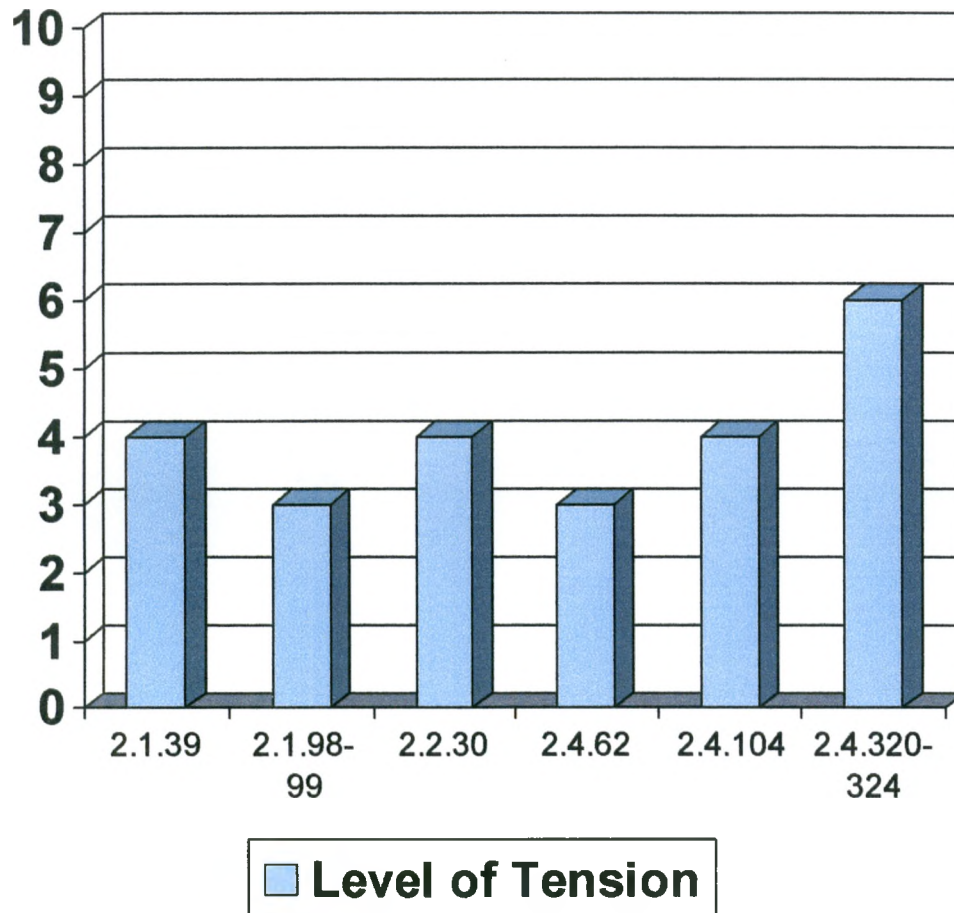
X Chris Climer



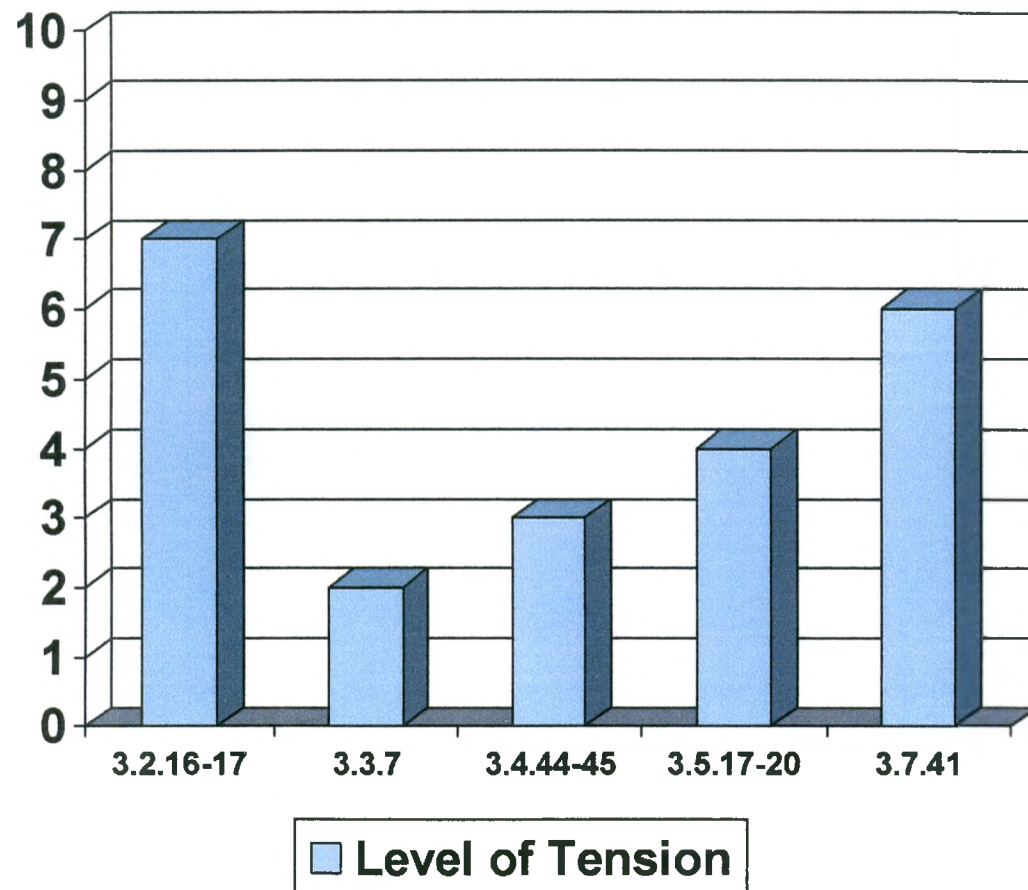
- 1.1.37 “darker purpose”
- 1.1.56 love test
- 1.1.96 “Nothing”
- 1.1.125 “Here I disclaim all my parental care!”
- 1.1.202 “Away!”
- 1.1.299 “is queen of ours”



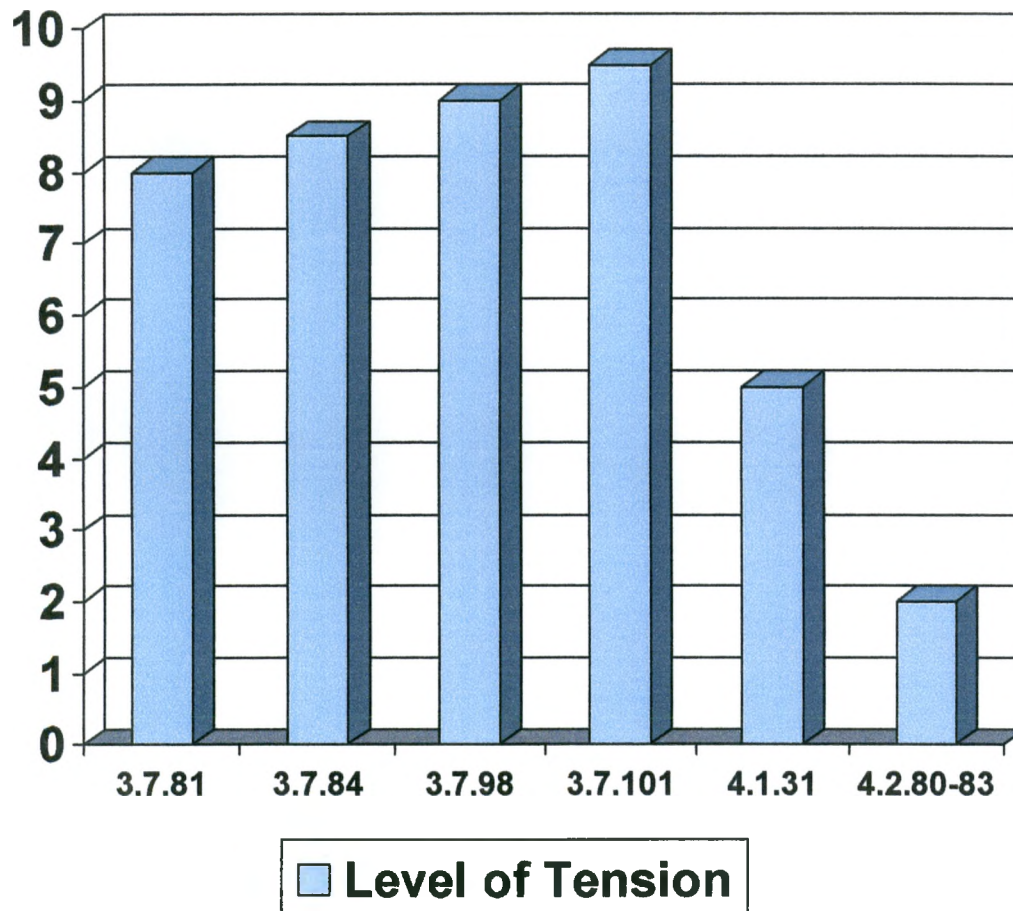
- 1.2.23 “Now, gods, stand up for bastards!”
- 1.2.79 “O villain!”
- 1.3.9 “Say I am sick.”
- 1.4.84 Lear strikes Oswald
- 1.4.260 “Darkness and devils!”
- 1.4.289-303 Lear curses Goneril
- 1.5.32 “I will forget my nature.”



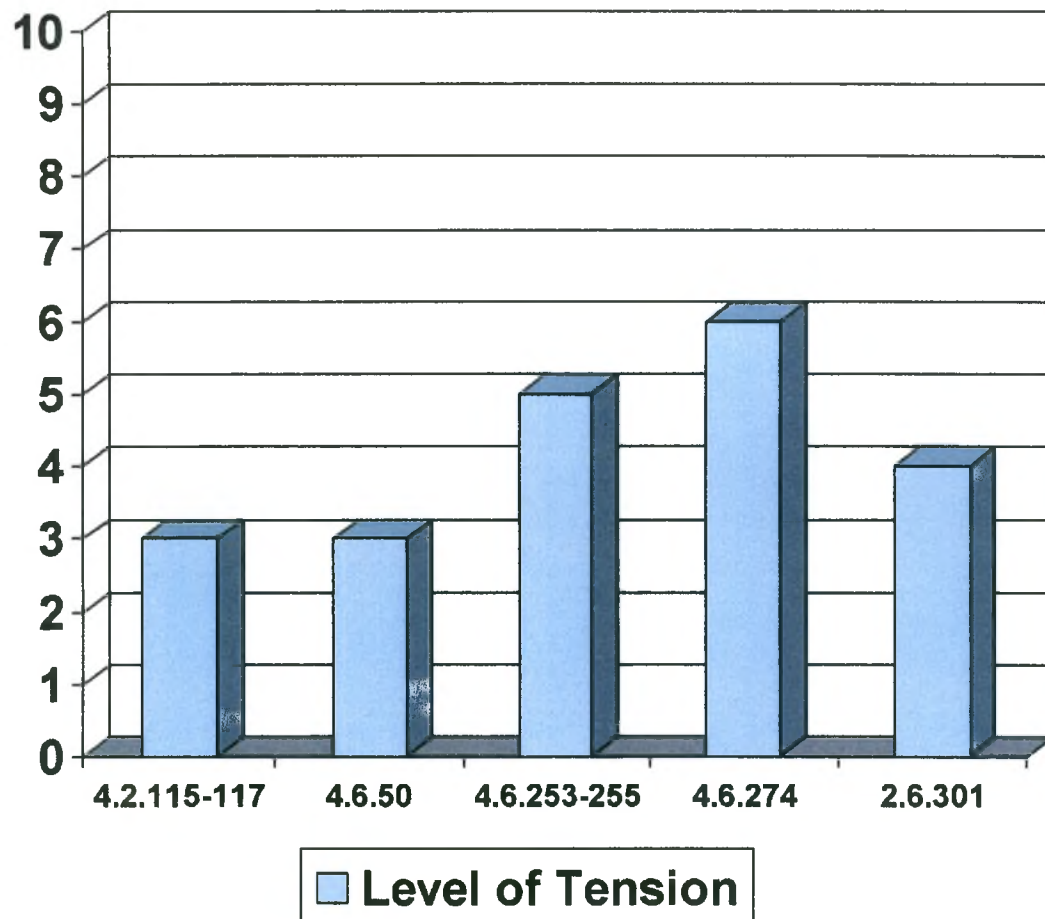
- 2.1.39 "Father!"
- 2.1.98-99 "I'll work the means to make thee capable."
- 2.2.30 Kent draws his sword
- 2.4.62 "...swells up towards my heart!"
- 2.4.104 "Vengeance, plague, death, confusion!"
- 2.4.320-324 the storm



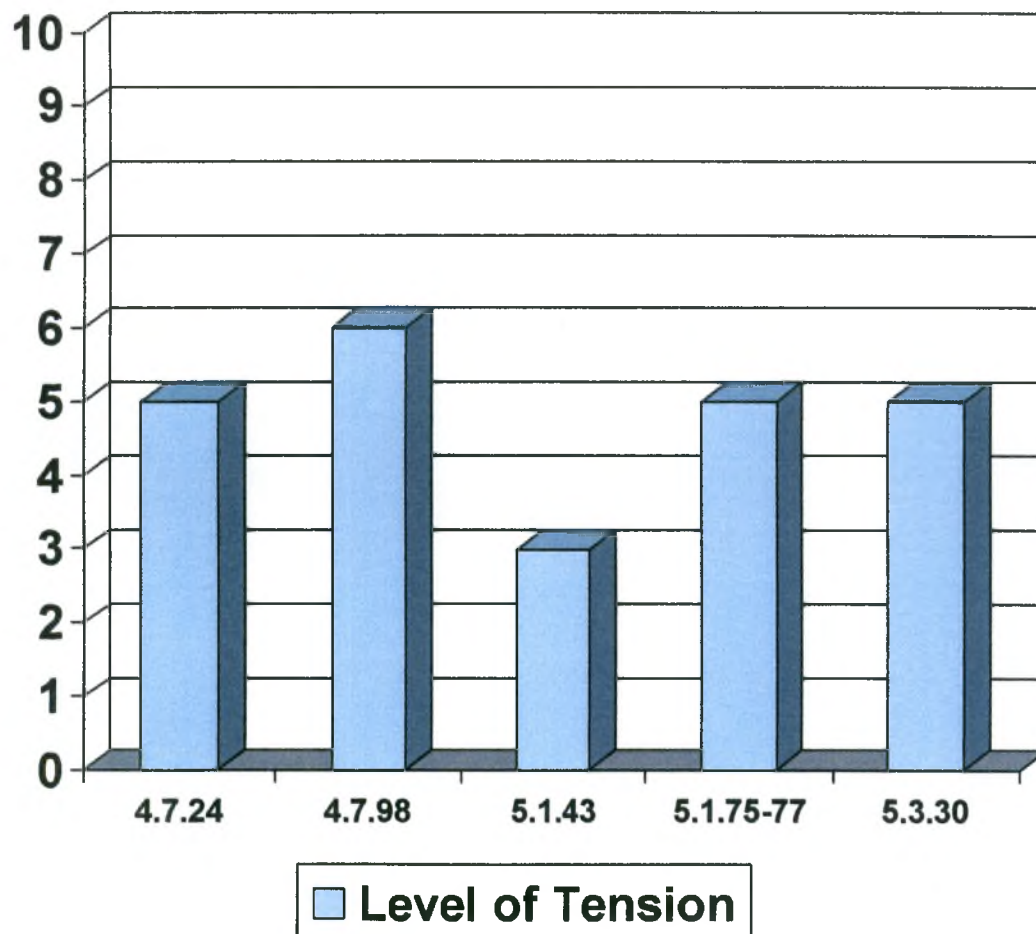
- 3.2.16-22 “Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout rain!”
- 3.3.7 “Most savage and unnatural”
- 3.4.44-45 The Fool is scared out of the hovel
- 3.5.17-20 “Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.”
- 3.7.41 Servants bind Gloucester



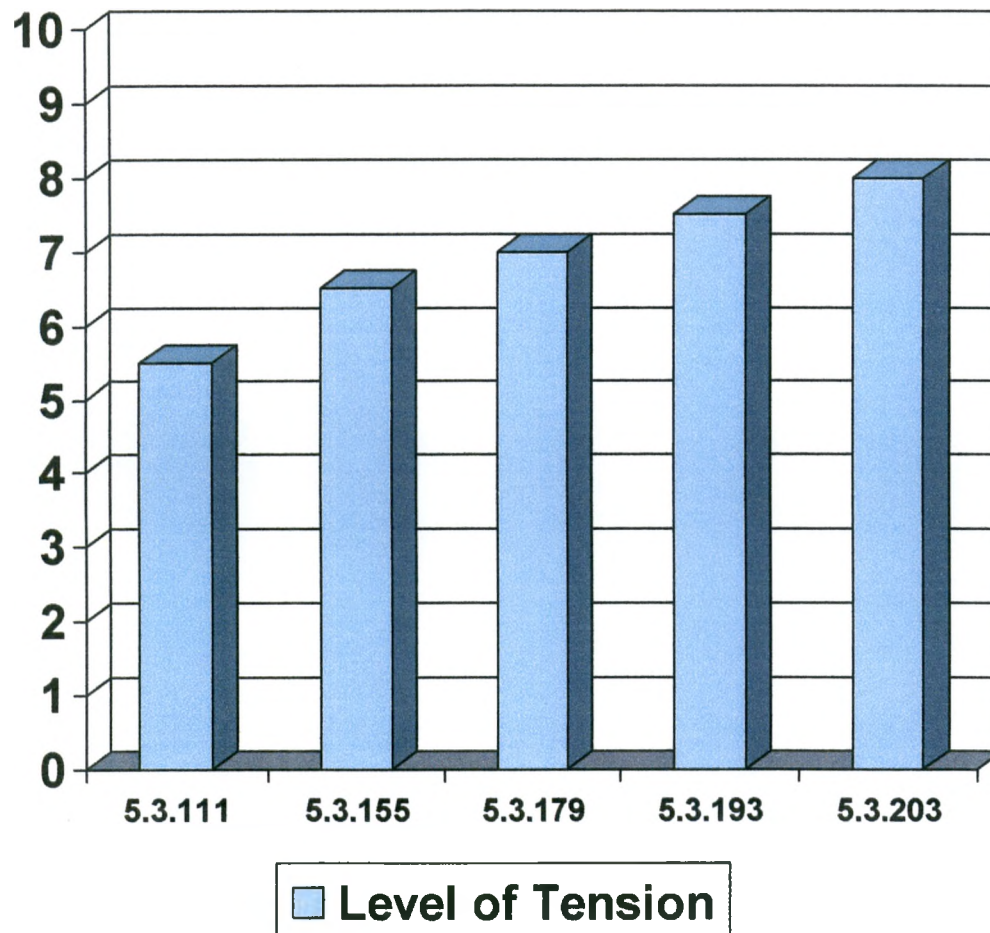
- 3.7.81 "See't shalt thou never."
- 3.7.84 Cornwall forces out one of Gloucester's eyes
- 3.7.98 Regan kills Servant #1
- 3.7.101 Cornwall forces out the other of Gloucester's eyes
- 4.1.31 "This is the worst."
- 4.2.80-83 "Marry, your manhood, mew—"



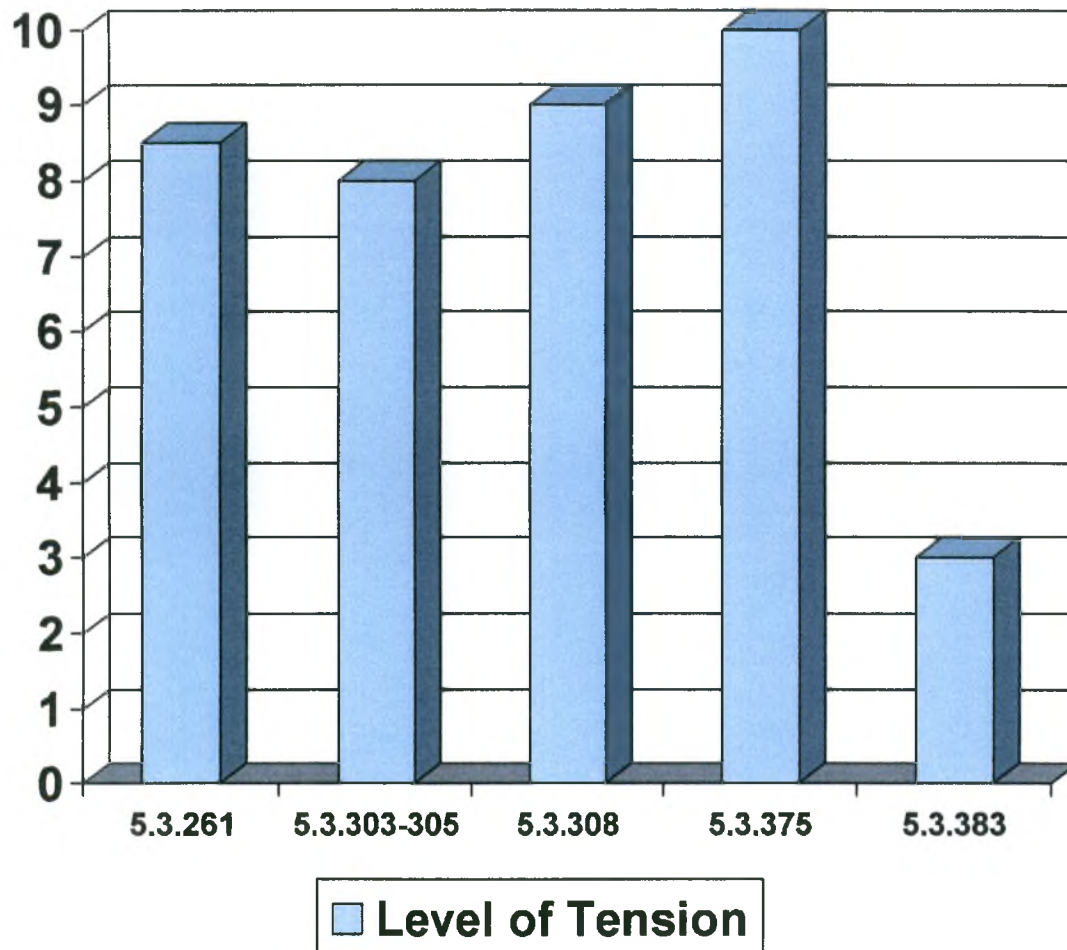
- 4.2.115-117 Albany swears to revenge Gloucester's blinding
- 4.6.50 "If Edgar live, O, bless him!"
- 4.6.253-255 Oswald tries to kill Gloucester
- 4.6.274 Edgar and Oswald fight, and Edgar slays Oswald
- 4.6.301 "A plot upon her virtuous husband's life"



- 4.7.24 Enter Lear carried by Servants
- 4.7.98 "...forgive. I am old and foolish."
- 5.1.43 Enter Edgar
- 5.1.75-77 "Shall never see his pardon..."
- 5.3.30 Exit Lear and Cordelia



- 5.3.111 Albany's challenge
- 5.3.155 Edgar draws his sword
- 5.3.179 Edmund falls, wounded
- 5.3.193 "Ask me not what I know."
- 5.3.203 "My name is Edgar and thy father's son."



- 5.3.261 Enter Gentleman with a bloody knife
- 5.3.303-305 Revelation of Edmund's plot and the fate of Cordelia
- 5.3.308 "Howl, howl, howl!"
- 5.3.375 Lear dies
- 5.3.383 "He is gone indeed."

CHAPTER VIII

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

1. King Lear

When the play opens in 1.1 Lear is at the top of the governing hierarchy; he is both the supreme monarch of his kingdom and patriarch of his family. It is through Lear's character that the world of the play is united politically and socially. Lear's authority is unquestionable and as Harold Bloom describes, Lear is "a kind of mortal god" (478) when the play first begins. Kings are not made; men are born kings. Lear has held an incredible weight of sovereign responsibility and authority probably his whole life. According to critic Ivor Morris, "Lear presumes upon a greatness of soul that is at one with his station: he makes his kingship his divinity, and asserts what he conceives to be transcendently true about his own nature" (150).

King Lear is our tragic hero of the play. There are conjectures on this idea which argue that he is actually an allegorical or morality character. They see Lear's fate as wrath of God, but I find Lear's character to fit Aristotle's guidelines for what a tragic hero is in dramatic literature. Like other great tragic heroes, he is the most noble and revered character when the play opens, but as a tragic hero, he must fall from this height and suffer. Lear goes from having and being everything to having and being nothing; Lear the man is only a shadow of Lear the king.

When commenting on the topic of tragic heroes, Oscar Brockett in *The Theatre and Introduction* suggests:

Normally, the protagonist is ethically superior but not perfect: he is sufficiently above the average to inspire approval, but he has certain imperfections which make him enough like ourselves to be understandable and human (Brockett 39).

The terror that the same thing could happen to one of us produces the pity we feel for Lear. This pity is defined by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* as “a sort of pain occasioned by an evil capable of hurting or destroying, appearing to befall one who does not deserve it” (Aristotle 60). This is where the arguments begin which deny Lear as a heroic character. Does he deserve what he gets? Lear sees himself as “a man more sinned against than sinning,” but some scholars as view Lear as choleric and wrathful, deserving his fate. On the contrary, Harold Bloom believes “Lear’s magnificent generosity of spirit, which makes him love too much, also prompts him demand too much love” (Bloom 512). Therefore Lear’s flaw is not from a choleric personality, not from being a senile old man or from being a selfish tyrant, but from too much feeling. His character acts when stimulated by emotional feelings that blur his process of reasoning.

From uncontrollable feelings of love and hate Lear is unable to see the folly of his decisions and actions. He is blind to the false flattery given by Goneril and Regan, and due to his overwhelming love for Cordelia and himself, Lear spins the wheel of fortune to his own demise. Lear, feeling publicly humiliated by Cordelia’s lack of adulation, becomes irrationally angry. Anger comes from the psychological

pain of hurt self-esteem. Jeffrey Stern in his article “*King Lear*: The Transference of the Kingdom” argues

that Lear’s proneness to rage and shame, his inability to tolerate the division of Cordelia’s affection, and his fragmentation in the face of her perceived betrayal are evidence of what Heinz Kohut would call deficit in the self, or what literary critics, also thinking of pathological narcissism, of pride, have traditionally been called a flaw. (Stern 307)

This flaw correlates with the classical dramatic element of *hamartia* required for tragic heroes. Lear’s flaw is his pride, or *hubris*. “Instead of placing royal trust in the devotion it knows Cordelia to bear...Lear proceeds upon the estimate of what he seem to himself to be, and thereby destroys what is of ultimate worth and truth” (Morris 156). For the tragic hero to evoke pity and fear, according to Aristotle, there must be recognition of this unconscious ‘flaw.’ This element of recognition is important because it is a reversal from ignorance to knowledge which must occur for the audience to create a connection of empathy for the tragic hero.

Lear’s world view is eschewed by the fact that he a king. Lear believes his actions to be absolute, from divine authority, and unquestionable. He is unable to see himself as anything other than a king and expects others to see him in the same way. Lear gives away his power because he wants to be himself, but he is horrified to find that he is nothing more than a man. Once Lear realizes the truth of his existence and fallibility of human nature, Lear’s character begins to see the folly of his ways through physically suffering in 3.2.

When Lear asks the Fool if he is cold or not, this is the first time Lear has offered sympathy or concern for another character. “The sympathetic experience of pain establishes a human community in the play that otherwise seems to represent its apocalyptic dissolution and it informs our sense of Lear’s heroic stature” (Kirsch 162). This human connection that Lear makes with his Fool enables him to create emotional connections with other characters. His recognition of his mistake in 1.1 helps prepare Lear for his reunion with Cordelia. When Lear is reunited with Cordelia he is able to ask for forgiveness and claims to be a foolish old man. This character reversal of the tragic hero allows the audience to purge their pity and fear when Lear and Cordelia die in 5.3.

There many contentious theories by Shakespearean scholars over the meaning or reasoning behind Lear and Cordelia’s deaths. A. C. Bradley sees Lear as dying with complete joy and hope that Cordelia lives, while G.W. Knight sees Cordelia’s death as Lear’s finally agony in life and represents a future triumph of love. Susan Snyder says Cordelia’s death causes Lear to become exhausted with life, and Rackin says the double death is the reconciliation of opposites according to the dialectical process of life. Foakes answers the question of Cordelia’s death with his own question; why would Cordelia want to continue living in the spiteful universe Shakespeare created for King Lear? In a synthesized form of these ideas one can see that Cordelia must die for Lear to die. That is the final catastrophe that breaks Lear’s heart. The wheel of his life duration has come full circle, and his death is the opposite of living, therefore he truly becomes ‘nothing.’

Plot of Actions:

Lear enters with Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia 1.1.33.
 Lear sends Gloucester to get France and Burgundy.
 He takes a map of the already divided kingdom to reveal his "darker purpose."
 He creates a contest between his daughters. Whoever 'loves' him most shall receive the most land.
 He asks Goneril to speak first since she is the eldest.
 He gives her and Albany their share of the kingdom.
 He asks Regan, the second eldest to speak.
 He gives her and Cornwall their share of the kingdom.
 He asks Cordelia, his cherished youngest to speak.
 He asks her to speak again out of disbelief of her answer.
 He warns her to "mend" her speech or be punished.
 Lear gives up his parental ties to Cordelia and banishes her from his sight.
 Lear threatens Kent not to intrude on the subject.
 Lear gives Cordelia's land to Goneril and Regan.
 Lear tells Kent to stay quiet.
 Lear banishes Kent too.
 Lear still offers Cordelia to Burgundy but without any dowry.
 Lear gives Cordelia to France who will take her penniless.
 Lear sends Cordelia away.
 Lear exits with Burgundy 1.1.309.

Lear enters with his Knights 1.4.8.
 He sends an attendant to get dinner ready.
 He meets Kent, who is disguised as Caius.
 Lear sends a knight to get his Fool.
 Lear asks Oswald where Goneril is.
 Lear sends a knight to get Oswald when he is ignored.
 Lear sends Knights to get Goneril and his Fool.
 Lear strikes Oswald (1.4.84) when Oswald refuses to acknowledge Lear as king.
 Lear gives Kent a purse for tripping Oswald.
 He asks Goneril what has her so moody.
 Lear becomes alarmed at the insolence his daughter shows him.
 Lear sends attendants to get the horses ready so he can go to Regan's house.
 Lear curses Goneril with infertility.
 He exits with Knights.
 Lear reenters and exits followed by the Fool 1.4.327.

Lear enters with Kent, Gentleman, and the Fool 1.5.
 Lear sends Kent with a letter to (Regan).
 Lear sends the Gentleman for the horses.
 Lear exits.

Lear enters with Fool and Gentleman 2.4.
 Lear sees Kent in the stocks.

Lear exits to find out who has put his messenger in the stocks.
 Lear reenters with Gloucester.
 Lear commands Gloucester to get Regan and Cornwall.
 Lear curses Goneril to Regan.
 He kneels to Regan and asks her to take him in.
 He becomes enraged when Goneril shows up and Regan takes her side.
 Lear is stripped of his retinue and authority by his daughters and starts to go mad.
 Lear exits out into the storm 2.4.328.
 Lear enters with Fool 3.2.
 Lear calls out to the storm allowing physical as well as mental abuse.
 He begins to realize there are other people in the world suffering when he asks the Fool if he is cold 3.2.74.
 Lear exits to find shelter.
 Lear enters with Kent (in disguise) and the Fool 3.4.
 Lear sends the Fool into the hovel first.
 Lear compares Edgar's situation to his own.
 Lear replaces his Fool for the philosophy of Poor Tom.
 They exit.

Lear enters with the Fool and Edgar 3.6.52.
 Lear places Fool and Edgar for the mock trial.
 Lear addresses imaginary Goneril and Regan.
 Lear lies down.
 Lear is carried off 3.6.110.

Lear enters with 4.6.98.
 Lear talks with Gloucester.
 Lear switches to prose 4.6.222.
 Lear exits running 4.6.223.

Lear is carried onstage 4.7.24.
 Lear awakes and is confused.
 Lear kneels to Cordelia but she won't let him.
 Lear recognizes Cordelia.
 Lear asks forgiveness.
 He exits with Cordelia 4.7.99.

Lear enters with Cordelia (as prisoners) and with Edmund and his Captain 5.3.
 Lear sees prison with Cordelia as freedom.
 They are taken away by Soldiers 5.3.31.
 Lear enters with Cordelia dead in his arms 5.3.307.
 Lear imagines Cordelia is still alive.
 Lear asks for his button to be undone for him.
 Lear looks at Cordelia and dies 5.3.375.

2. The Fool

The Fool in *King Lear* is one of Shakespeare's most unique and original characters. Through his archaic riddles that teeter on the brink of bitterness, Lear's Fool is a truth sayer. "The Fool holds up before Lear the mirror of his follies that he might clearly see his actions and their consequences" (Rosen 138). He has no past and is free of time and "though trapped in Lear's endgame, the Fool is also free of time, and presumably drifts out of the play and into another era" (Bloom 499). Unlike the other fools in Shakespeare such as Feste who is fully developed with a character history and specific role.

Lear's Fool has no fixed place in the hierarchical world. The character of the Fool stays static and has no motivating influence on the plot's action. The Fool seems to exist outside of time; as though he "has been freed from the wheel" (Seiden 199) of Fate governing human existence. So, what makes this character so intriguing, and what was Shakespeare's purpose for writing him?

The Fool is interwoven between the characters of Lear and Cordelia while playing an antithesis to Edmund's character. His relationship with these characters is the association they all have with 'foolery.' Lear is unnaturally foolish; when Lear is holding Cordelia he calls her "fool," and Edmund is a natural fool by being illegitimate. Lear's Fool sees the world in its irrationality and does not seek consolation for his existence as do Lear and Edmund. Seiden believes that the Fool's foolishness is "only the foolishness of his unreasoned love for his King" (205).

Many scholars have correlated the Fool in *King Lear* with the structure and purpose of Greek choruses. The function of the Fool is to speak the voice of reason when mad men lead the blind. He constantly mocks Lear by commenting on the king's foolish actions in 1.1. According to W.H Auden the Fool's character does function as a chorus but not a Greek one.

In a Shakespearean tragedy, where characters are not victims of fate but of their own passion, the function of the chorus is to make you protest, not accept, and it is deliberately antipoetic...

The fool protests against the violence of individual manias by stating the larger general case. (227)

The paradoxical nature of his characterization is reflective of the conflicting extremities in the world of the play. He is a fool yet wise, old yet young, virginal yet bawdy. The Fool's place in the world of *King Lear* is found in his relationship to King Lear.

The Fool, who is naturally foolish, contrasts Lear's unnatural foolishness. The Fool's super-objective is to force Lear to see the absurdity of his actions and that something does in fact come from nothing. His purpose is to illustrate to Lear that 'nothing' does matter. The relationship between Lear and his Fool is a semiotic dependency. Charles Dickens once said, "the picture of his quick and pregnant sarcasm, of his loving devotion, of his acute sensibility, of his despairing mirth, of his heart broken silence-contrast[s] the sublimity of Lear's suffering...and the huge desolation of Lear's sorrow" (Bloom 22). The Fool is the voice of truth when Lear is mad. This is the Fool's only power in the play, his

ability to tell Lear the truth when everyone else is punished for it. Truth is the Fool's burden of which he cannot escape. "I would fain learn to lie" (1.4.184) he tells Lear.

Throughout the duration of the play the Fool illustrates Lear's follies by metaphorical riddles and songs. Many of the Fool's jokes have hidden obscenities which emphasizes the theory that "human folly is rooted in geniality" (201). In 1.4 the Fool makes fun of Lear for making his daughters his mothers. The Fool uses the imagery of a "rod" being given away to symbolize the emasculating consequences of Lear's decisions. Soon after this line, Goneril forces her authority on her father.

Some critics have suggested that the Fool's mockery actually fuels the fire of Lear's insanity. He calls Lear a fool, and he tells Lear that he should be beaten for being old before he had been wise. After the Fool bitterly chastises Lear, Lear cries, "O, let me be not mad, not mad sweet heaven!" Never does the Fool force his reasoning on Lear, but as Lear's madness progresses, he usurps the Fool's place in the play. Lear becomes the bawdy riddling fool, and so the Fool having nothing more to say, fades away. There are also theories that Lear breaks their bond and replaces the Fool with Poor Tom. The Fool is left alone to face the absurdity and nothingness of existence in the world of *King Lear*.

3. Cordelia

When the play begins Cordelia is Lear's most cherished daughter. She is his youngest and favorite, and there are many theories supporting the idea that Lear

intends for Cordelia to be his successor. She sees the hypocrisy of the world and refuses to be succumbed by it. According to Auden “Cordelia wants to love freely, without compulsion, and paradoxically describes love as a duty” (225).

She describes her love according to her bond, and she does so because she is asked to choose between love and duty. Her answer juxtaposes her with her fallacious sisters. Bloom states “without Cordelia’s initial recalcitrance, there would have been no tragedy, but then Cordelia would not have been Cordelia” (485). Cordelia’s super-objective is to prove to her father that she is true to the love he knows she has for him. In doing so, her ultimate goal in answering Lear with “nothing” may be to contrast her true love against her sisters’ false proclamations of love.

Cordelia’s major function in the play is to guide Lear to accept his death. When Lear divides his kingdom in 1.1, he announces that he ‘retiring’ so that he can “Unburdened crawl toward death.” According to Kirsch, Cordelia’s “particular gravity in this scene, the austerity of her insistence on the word bond ads well as her reiteration of nothing, reflects more than her temperament. It also suggests...the sense of human vanity that comes with the awareness of the ultimate bond with death” (165). Cordelia dies so as to complete her function. Lear is able to accept his death, and dies holding her body in his arms.

Plot of Actions

Cordelia enters with Lear, Goneril, Regan, Cornwall, Albany, and Knights
1.1.33.

She answers her father’s question with “nothing.”

She is disowned and banished.

France takes her as his bride even though Lear will give her no dowry.

She exits with France 1.1.328.

Cordelia enters with Doctor and Messenger 4.4.

They exit to find Lear.

Cordelia enters with Kent (in disguise), the Doctor, and a Gentleman 4.7.

She kisses her father while he sleeps.

Lear wakes, and they are reunited.

She exits with Lear 4.7.99.

Cordelia enters with Lear (as prisoners) with Edmund and his Captain 5.3.

She and Lear are taken away by Soldiers. (She is hung.)

Cordelia's dead body is carried on stage by Lear 5.3.307.

4. Goneril

Goneril is Lear's eldest daughter. Her place in the world is split; socially she has very high status being the daughter of a king and Duchess of Albany, but as a woman she is ruled by the patriarchal structure of Lear's world. She rebels against the customs of male domination by challenging her father and husband's authority. She also challenges her place as a woman in the world. She, like Lady Macbeth, unsexes herself to get what she wants.

Goneril wants what is lawfully hers. She is the eldest and does not feel that she should come second to her youngest sister. She has probably dreamed of becoming queen one day, and with her father's division of the kingdom in 1.1, she has the opportunity to fight her way to the top. Goneril sides with her sister, Regan, and Edmund. The three of them represent the new generation who is ruled by the ideologies of *realpolitik* and defy the traditional rules and customs of Lear's society. "Their world is one in which nature is not fundamentally good, and evil is not a mere

aberration, the result of misguided reason” (Bloom 145). Goneril is motivated by her natural desires for power and as Rosen adds: “sexual pleasure.”

When one divides *King Lear* into allegorical characters of good and evil, Goneril’s character is grouped with the ‘evil’ characters. I do not see her as ‘evil’ but more as an instigator of conspiracy. Her character is a foil to Lear, and her actions prompt most of Lear’s internal anguish during the first two acts of the play. Goneril works as a mediator with other characters in order to gain power over her father. In 1.1 she notices Lear’s choleric nature and tells Regan that he is bound to do the same to them. She and Regan comment on talking further, which leads to the assumption that they are plotting against Lear. In 1.3, Goneril works through her servant Oswald to defy her father. She gives Oswald freedom to ignore Lear and his men. William Rosen describes Goneril’s orders to Oswald as a triple felony: “she is disrespectful to kingship, fatherhood, and old age” (Bloom 139). Scholars question her motivation behind these actions. Is she evil, or does she have legitimate fears and motivation behind her actions in 1.4?

In 1.3 Goneril explains the conflict between her and Lear. She complains about the riotous behavior of her father’s nights. This short scene raises the level of anticipation for the audience because they know she plans to force her authority upon the wrathful but old and weak king. When she enters in 1.4 she chastises her old father for his men’s behavior and is harshly cursed by her father for it. Many critics such as Bradley and David Farley Hills find her behavior unruly and deliberately disrespectful.

Bradley believes the accusations Goneril gives against Lear's knights is probably false, and Farley-Hills finds them to be improbable because when the knights speak their diction "exhibits those qualities of courtly decorum that show a proper respect for rank and order" (Bloom 259). She asks her father to disquantity' his retinue of soldiers and tells him if he will not, then she will without his permission. Since Lear wants to be nurtured and taken care of like a baby, Goneril thinks he should ruled as one as well. She knows she cannot stand against Lear alone and sends a letter to her sister about what has happened. In 2.4 Goneril and Regan combine their powers and strip their father of all of his authority. They become scolding and domineering mothers, and Lear is left out in the storm to fend for himself against nature's power.

Goneril is seen by her father and husband in a misogynistic view. Through the descriptions of Goneril's character critics such as Coppelia Kahn have theorized that Shakespeare "explores the unconscious attitudes behind cultural definitions of manliness and womanliness" (McLuskie 25). The depiction of women in *King Lear* is illustrated from a male point of view. Lear and Albany fear Goneril's sexual power. Their feelings for Goneril are "constructed out of an ascetic tradition which presents women as the source of the primal sin of lust, combining with concerns about the threat to the family posed by female insubordination" (McLuskie 44). She is described by her father in imagery that depicts her wildish insubordination and violent attempt for authority. He calls her a "bastard," a "marble-hearted fiend," a "kite," and his curse of sterility brings his fears of female sexuality to the surface.

When Albany finds out about Gloucester's eyes and his wife's knowledge of the plan he illustrates her as a devil and a fiend. He foreshadows the conflict between Goneril and Regan and the nature of their deaths when he says, "Humanity must perforce prey on itself" (4.2.60). Both Lear and Albany fear the usurpation of their man-hood by feminine power, and Goneril is the goddess of this power. She is able to control her father, her husband, and eventually murders her sister so as to take Edmund for herself.

Plot of actions

Goneril enter with Lear, Cordelia, Regan, Albany, Cornwall, and Knights
1.1.33.

Goneril gives a false profession of love to her father.

Goneril and Regan decide to create a bond between them and help one another out if Lear becomes irrational with them.

Goneril enters with her steward, Oswald 1.3.

She tells Oswald to ignore Lear's demands.

She reveals a letter she wants to send to Regan.

They exit.

Goneril enters 1.4.

Goneril demands her father slacken his train and act his age or she will throw them out.

Goneril is cursed for her insubordinance.

She sends Oswald with a letter to her sister informing Regan of the situation.

They exit.

Goneril enters Gloucester's to meet her sister 2.4.217.

She takes Regan's hand, and they strip Lear of his social and parental power.

They drive Lear out into the storm.

They exit.

Goneril enters with Cornwall, Regan, Edmund, and Servants 3.7.

She is to take a letter informing Albany of the French invasion.

She and Edmund leave for her home 3.7.29.

Goneril and Edmund enter 4.2 and are met by Oswald.

Goneril, hearing of her husband's displeasure, sends Edmund back to Gloucester's to tell Cornwall. She gives Edmund "a favor."
 She kisses Edmund farewell.
 Goneril trades places with her husband and takes authority when they argue.
 They exit.

Goneril enters with Albany 5.1
 They meet up with Regan and Edmund before going to war.
 Goneril exits with Edmund and Regan 5.1.45.

Goneril enters with Albany, Regan, Soldiers 5.3.45.
 Goneril tries to stop Albany's charge of treason against Edmund.
 Goneril exits (to kill herself) when Albany reveals her letter to Edmund
 5.3.193.

5. Regan

Regan is Lear's middle child. She has neither the status of her elder sister nor the filial love from her father that is given to her youngest sister. Regan has been cast aside by most characters in the play. She shows no love for her father, sister, or husband. She, like her older sister, is representative of the new generation. I believe her ultimate goal in the play is vengeance. She has probably been mistreated by her father and elder sister before and seems to get sadistic pleasure from their misfortunes. When Lear exclaims that Regan would have no part of kingdom at all if he had not been so generous to give it to her, she cries "And in good time you gave it" (2.4.288). She is the character who represents true villainy and immorality.

Regan is the character who will always take the last step and fight for the last word. When she and Goneril strip Lear of everything he has, it is Regan who maliciously asks, "What need one?" (2.4.304) I believe she is motivated by violent jealousy and passion.

When Lear abdicates his sovereign authority Regan begins to turn towards *realpolitik*. Her actions during the blinding of Gloucester would have been seen as legal in the eyes of the new generation because Gloucester had been declared a traitor. The policy of following action without moral considerations or emotions is her path in this play. She kills the servant who slays her husband, but there are no words of remorse or help from her for Cornwall. After her husband's death Regan moves quickly and sets her sights on Edmund. Now that she is a widow, Regan feels she has more 'claim' to Edmund than Goneril. She is the opposite of her sisters; she does not love Edmund but is fueled by lust.

Regan represent the "brute tooth-and-claw" (Bloom 147) world of Darwin's natural selection. Regan's views and actions depict the violent nature of survival of the fittest. Without a moral conscious she tears apart Lear's identity, kills in vengeance, and turns against her sister. I believe Regan's character is most like a wild beast than any of the others. The other characters feel remorse. Lear and Gloucester repent their mistakes, Edmund tries to stop the death of Cordelia, and even Goneril dies full of feelings for Edmund and shame for what she did to Albany. The only feeling Regan feels when she dies is physical sickness.

Plot of Actions

Regan enters with Lear, Goneril, Cordelia, Cornwall, Albany, and Knights
1.1.33.

She gives her father a false acclamation of love.

She makes a pact with Goneril to stand up for one another against Lear.

They exit.

Regan enters with Cornwall at Gloucester's 2.1.99.

She reveals she relieved a letter from Goneril that said Lear was on his way to Cornwall, so she and her husband left an empty house.

They exit.

Regan enters with Cornwall, Gloucester, and Servants 2.2.44.

She takes her sister's hand against her father.

She throws him out in the storm.

They exit.

Regan enters with Cornwall, Goneril, and Servants 3.7.

After hearing of Gloucester's "treason," she plucks at his beard, which was an insult to one's manhood during Shakespeare's time.

She takes one servant's sword and kills the one who has stabbed her husband.

They throw the blind Gloucester out.

They exit.

Regan enters with Edmund and Soldiers 5.1.

Regan is jealous of Goneril and doesn't want Edmund alone with her sister.

She exits 5.1.45.

Regan enters with Albany, Goneril, and Soldiers 5.3.45.

She becomes ill.

Regan exits 5.3.129. (to die.)

6. Gloucester

Shakespeare sets up the motivation for the subplot in the opening scene of 1.1.

Gloucester introduces his son Edmund as a 'whoreson' who must be acknowledged.

After crudely depicting the nature of Edmund's conception, Gloucester mentions that

he has another son "by order of law." These lines introduce the conflict that arises

out of the subplot and give the audience their first impression of Gloucester's

character. Shakespeare introduces these characters and their relationships so early

because they are parallel with the major dramatic conflict in the play. Just as Lear's

actions in 1.1 lead ultimately to death, Gloucester's actions in 1.2 break his family

stasis, lead to his death, and contribute to the catastrophe in 5.3. Gloucester's

gullibility is due to his overwhelming love for his son Edgar, just as Lear's flaw

comes from his feelings for Cordelia.

Auden states that “Gloucester begins by wanting to be an average man, looked up to, conventional, a courtier” (226). He is subservient to King Lear and follows the king’s commands freely. As an Earl, he would have welcomed to his home his Duke, on whose land he probably lived, but Gloucester is outraged when the Duke of Cornwall takes over his household. Gloucester and Lear are the two archetypal characters of the old society of nobility.

Also, like Lear, Gloucester is outraged at the insolence of his children. First he mistakenly accuses Edgar as a villain, and then he later finds that it was Edmund who betrayed him. Gloucester is unable to see the true nature of his children because he is unable to understand the nature of the changing times. His place in the world of the play and his world view symbolize the deteriorating society in the play. As the play progresses Gloucester transitions from being an Earl and a father to a blind beggar, and his faith begins to dwindle when he says “As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;/ They kill us for their sport” (4.1.41-42). Harold Bloom comments that both “Lear and Gloucester are slain by their paternal care, by the intensity and authenticity of that love” (486). Gloucester’s character is a mini-tragic hero. He has a tragic flaw that leads to recognition and finally to his death.

Ironically Gloucester’s actions to subdue the harsh treatment of his king are precisely the actions which lead to his blinding. William Rosen contributes to this idea by stating that “the two plots become more intimately connected when Gloucester’s efforts to mitigate Lear’s suffering bring about his own misery” (Bloom 150). Gloucester, still upholding the customs of duty, feels impelled to help his king, but in doing so, he is proclaimed a traitor by Cornwall, who legally has authority over

Gloucester. Gloucester tries to reason with Cornwall and Regan when he says “You are my guests...I am your host”(3.7.37, 47). These are things the new generation has no consideration for. These Machiavellian characters force Gloucester to see the extremities of existence and the brutal nature of men with no one ruling them.

It is only through his physical blinding that Gloucester finally ‘sees’ the true nature of his sons. After finding out that it was Edmund, his trusted son, who betrayed him, Gloucester cries “O my follies! Then Edgar was abused./ Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!” (3.7.111-112) Since one of the major themes of *King Lear* is the tearing apart of preconceived conceptions of human existence, and as Lear in his madness is forced to the brink of mental anguish, so Gloucester falls victim to the most physically painful and horrific threshold of human life. According to W.F. Blisset in his chapter on Recognition in *King Lear*, he sees Gloucester’s blinding as the turning point for his character. “Gloucester thus begins to learn the art of dying, and with recognition comes mitigation of pain” (Colie 110). He also believes that this action gives plausibility for the tragic consequences to come.

Gloucester’s relationship with his son Edgar is as tragic as Lear’s relationship with Cordelia. Gloucester is found by his son Edgar, who like Cordelia, nurtures his father becoming Gloucester’s care taker. Gloucester has seen the follies of his existence, understands the wheel of fate overhanging and crushing life, and begs for death to take him away. His tragedy began with the birth of Edmund, and he believes he should die from this. Edgar leads his mutilated father to Dover and aids in his mock attempt at suicide. Even though Gloucester sees the truth behind his deception from Edmund, he is once again deceived. Gloucester actually believes that he is on

the high cliffs of Dover from Edgar's use of imagery that describe the cliffs and their terrible heights.

Many recent scholars such as Kott and Knight see the mock suicide attempt of Gloucester as comically grotesque rather than tragic. They see 4.6 a pathetic attempt of a human to rule his own destiny. Gloucester's character constantly believes he is in control, acting in accordance to "spherical predominance." When he realizes that like Lear and Edmund, his fate is consequence to nothing other than his own actions, he loses the will to live. Gloucester falls flat on his face in a grotesquely humorous manner when he tries to kill himself. When Edgar tells Gloucester that his life is a miracle, and Gloucester recognizes that he must endure life.

Once again Gloucester's character is parallel to Lear, who asks why he was taken out of the grave when he wakes from his madness. Gloucester's death, like Lear's, is one torn between joy and despair. I believe Shakespeare created Gloucester in order to reinforce the story of Lear. Gloucester's character is at the opposite end of the spectrum from Lear, yet still part of the continuum of mortal extremities portrayed in *King Lear*.

Plot of actions

Gloucester enters with Kent and Edmund 1.1.1
 He introduces his son to Kent 1.1.27
 Gloucester exits to attend to France and Burgundy 1.1.36
 He re-enters with France and Burgundy 1.1.214
 Exits with Lear, Cornwall, Albany, and Burgundy
 Enters 1.2.23
 Gloucester reads the letter supposedly from Edgar 1.2.49
 Gloucester predicts the bad omens the eclipses bring 1.2.109-124
 Gloucester exits 1.2.124
 Gloucester enters with his servants 2.1.40
 He offers to make Edmund his legal heir 2.1.98-99

He welcomes Cornwall and Regan and exits 2.1.151
 Enters with Edmund, Cornwall, Regan, and servants 2.2.43
 Gloucester asks Cornwall not to stock Kent 2.2.153
 He offers to help Kent 2.2.169
 Foreshadows Lear's reaction to Kent and exits 2.2.174
 Enters with Lear 2.4.94
 He exits to get Cornwall and Regan 2.4.135
 Re-enters with Cornwall and Regan 2.4.142
 Exit with Lear, Fool, and Kent 2.4.328
 Re-enter 2.4.338
 Is told to lock his doors against Lear and exits 2.4.354
 Enters with Edmund 3.3.1
 Tells Edmund of the letter he has received 3.3.10
 Exits 3.3.20
 Enters looking for Lear 3.4.120
 Exits taking Lear to shelter 3.4.197

 Enters 3.7.30
 He is tied to a chair 3.7.41
 Has one of his eyes gouged out by Cornwall 3.7.84
 Has his other eye torn out 3.7.101
 He is thrown out to smell his way to Dover 3.7.114

 Enters led by an Old Man 4.1.09
 He gives Edgar (who he thinks is a mad beggar man) money to lead him to Dover 4.1.73
 Exits led by Edgar 4.1.90

 Enters with Edgar 4.6.1
 He gives Edgar a purse for leading him to the cliffs 4.6.36
 Kneels and prays to the gods 4.6.44-51
 He tries to jump off the cliffs 4.6.51
 He recognizes Lear's voice 4.6.114
 His son saves him from Oswald's attempt to murder him 4.6.259
 He exits 4.6.316

 Enters with Edgar 5.2.1
 Gloucester is left alone to hear the cries and fire of war 5.2.5
 He is lead away by Edgar (and dies offstage) 5.2.13

7. Edgar

Edgar is a very peculiar character. I believe he is the only innocent character in the play. Many scholars see Cordelia as the innocent victim, yet she is the one who

refuses to follow her father's commands and it is the result from this answer that initiates Lear's spiraling decent into madness. Edgar's place in the world is somewhat ambivalent at the beginning of the play. He is the son of an Earl, but there is nothing more said about his history. Edgar's tragic fate comes from both Lear and Edmund's instigations and decisions; basically Edgar is caught between the conflicting ideologies in the play and therefore is forced to experience both extremities of existence. He becomes a beggar, and takes "the basest and most poorest shape/ That ever penury in contempt of man/ Brought near to beast," (2.3.7-9) but in the end, at least in the Folio and most staged performances, he becomes the King of Britain. Edgar's succession to the throne is not an original idea because it follows along with the historical account of *King Lear's* story. According to Harold Bloom "legend, still current in Shakespeare's time, assigned to King Edgar the melancholy distinction that he rid Britain of wolves, who overran the island after the death of Lear" (479).

Edgar's super-objective is survival. Throughout the duration of the play Edgar refuses his own identity in order to survive; he strips himself of human ideologies and titles and becomes the closest thing to a wild animal that he can while still remaining human. While other characters fight for some ideal goal or struggle with preconceived ideas of civilization, Edgar accepts the true nature of humanity. Lear still imagines he is king, and Edmund sees himself as a nobleman. Edgar's descriptions of himself are selfless and include: "Edgar I nothing am" and "Know my name is lost". He is the only character who is totally selfless, and therefore he is the only character left to rule the kingdom in the end. His actions have no artificial

motivation, only the natural impulse to stay alive drives the progression of his character.

As the hierarchical society crumbles Edgar knows he can no longer be Edgar. What Edgar was before the play opened is not the Edgar who is left when the play ends. Who he becomes, ironically, is the product of Edmund's will, not his own. When he is cast out of his family and society, Edgar chooses the most extreme and humiliating form for his disguise. William C. Carroll states that Edgar's character becomes the antithesis of who he really is. In 1.1 Gloucester speaks of Edgar's lawful place in the world, and Edgar's disguise is the opposite of this initial impression of him. "What seems to be the basest shape of nature is also seen by the audience to be a social construct: a stereotypical beggar's role fantastically performed by Edgar who far out-tops even his brother's histrionic genius" (Carroll 435).

The nature of Edgar's role as Poor Tom has been debated by scholars. They look at the dark comedy in the mock trial scene, his feigned demonic possession, and the natural turmoil he puts his body through. I see Edgar's disguise as a way to contrast the opposing forces in the play. He endures the true pain of madness even though he is sane, well most critics believe he is in control of his disguise and not the other way around, and he pretends to be a beggar while he is really the one who is charitable and helps both Lear and Gloucester. "To be Poor Tom is Edgar's trial" (Carroll 436).

There are characters such as the Fool, Kent, and Cordelia who speak truthfully, yet Edgar is the only character who understands the truth. His triumph of survival is not one to celebrate; he knows the bleak and nihilistic world in which he

lives. When he says “the worst is not/ So long as we can say ‘This is the worst’” (4.1.30-31) it alludes to his ultimate understanding of human suffering and extremities of existence which ultimately end with death. When Edgar tells his father “ripeness is all” Shakespeare creates the image of rotting fruit, shriveling up, stinking, and about to die. Edgar sees human bodies and their frailty to life itself. When our bodies become ripe, we die, and that is all.

In a way, Edgar’s character is forced to trudge through an existential continuation. In James V. Barker’s essay “An Existential Examination of *King Lear*” he describes the virtues of existential humanity, which I find Edgar’s character to embody. He states that “The great existential virtue is authenticity. To be an authentic person is to be one who faces the human condition, resolutely accepts his finitude and his death, creatively responds to life, [and] manfully assumes responsibility for all of his decisions”(Barker 547).

Edgar does not resent what has happened to him but focuses on moving forwards. He has no great wails of remorse and repentance as do Lear and Gloucester nor does he have any illusions of hope for a better world. His lines “men must endure/ Their going hence, even as their coming hither” and “Never see so much nor live so long” do not offer the audience a solution or reason for the world’s destruction in *King Lear*.

In many ways the character of Edgar echoes a stoic outlook on life. Harold Bloom describes Lear as ‘all feeling’ but he is referring to Lear’s emotional feelings. Edgar’s sufferings are physical, and according to <http://www.iep.utm.edu/s/stoicism.htm>:

Nothing is true save sense impressions, and therefore the criterion of truth must lie in sensation itself. It cannot be in thought, but must be in feeling. Real objects, said the Stoics, produce in us an intense feeling, or conviction, of their reality. The strength and vividness of the image distinguish these real perceptions from a dream or fancy. Hence the sole criterion of truth is this striking conviction, whereby the real forces itself upon our consciousness, and will not be denied. There is, thus, no universally grounded criterion of truth. It is based, not on reason, but on feeling.

All the fixed conceptions of the world fall apart in *King Lear* except that of suffering at the margins of mortality. Edgar has no inspirational lines at the end because he knows no words could describe the horrific truths he found throughout his transformations. Edgar calls for people to “feel” not “say” the truths they know.

Carroll states that the role of Poor Tom “is an escape for Edgar, because it saves his life...[but] it is a torment to him, as much the cause as the relief of his suffering” (441). Edgar finds that the truth of existence is suffering, and it is through his acceptance of this suffering that he is able to survive. Many critics have asked why Edgar does not reveal himself to his father sooner. If Edgar had revealed who he was to Gloucester he would have been giving his suffering to his father. It is clear from Edgar’s asides to the audience that inside his heart breaks when he sees his father blind, but he also knows the only way to help Gloucester is to keep his identity concealed.

Edgar openly exposes himself to suffering so that he can understand the suffering of others. “Edgar, whose pilgrimage of abnegation culminates in

vengeance, ends overwhelmed by the helplessness of his love, a love growing in range and intensity, with the pragmatic effect of yielding him, as the new king, only greater suffering” (Bloom 483).

Plot of Actions

Edgar enters 1.2.140.

Edmund convinces Edgar that Gloucester is angry and persuades Edgar to hide.

Edgar exits 1.1.186.

Edgar enters 2.1.

Edgar is persuaded to flee by Edmund, and they pretend to fight.

Edgar exits 2.1.35.

Edgar enters 2.3.

He strips himself of who he was and disguises himself as Poor Tom.

He exits.

Edgar enters (as Poor Tom) 3.4.49.

Edgar jumps out of his hovel and meets Lear, Kent (in disguise) and the Fool.

Edgar speaks nonsense to Lear.

They exit.

Edgar enters with Lear and the Fool 3.6.5.

Edgar sits where Lear wants him too.

He gets everyone ready for the “trial.”

He plays along in the mock trial.

They exit.

Edgar enters 4.1.

Edgar sees Gloucester coming.

When Gloucester enters with the Old Man, Edgar sees what has happened to his father, but he pretends to be Poor Tom.

He takes Gloucester by the arm and offers to lead Gloucester.

He leads the blind Gloucester off stage. (to Dover)

Edgar enters with Gloucester 4.6.

He pretends to lead Gloucester to the cliffs of Dover.

He describes the cliffs to Gloucester.

He takes a purse that Gloucester gives him.

Edgar walks away pretending to leave.

After Gloucester has tried to jump off the cliffs but just falls on the ground,

Edgar pretends to be a spirit, and he tells Gloucester by miracle he survived.

He helps Gloucester up.

Edgar sees Lear enter.

Here Edgar switches back to Blank Verse from Prose.
 He calls a Gentleman and asks for information on the armies.
 He takes his father's hand to console him.
 Edgar steps between Oswald and Gloucester.
 Edgar fights and kills Oswald.
 He goes through Oswald's pockets.
 He reads a letter he finds.
 They exit.

Edgar enters (dressed as a peasant) 5.1.42.
 He gives Albany the letter he found in Oswald's pocket.
 He exits 5.1.56.
 Edgar enters with Gloucester 5.2.
 He sits Gloucester in a safe place and exits 5.2.5.
 He reenters 5.2.5.
 He takes Gloucester, and they retreat.

Edgar enters (armed) 5.3.139.
 He refuses to give his name.
 Edgar challenges Edmund.
 Edgar draws his sword.
 Edgar fights and mortally wound Edmund.
 He reveals himself to his brother.
 He tells them of Gloucester's death.
 He announces Kent.
 He takes Edmund's sword and gives it to a Soldier to take to the Captain.
 He catches Lear, and he tries to get Lear to look up.
 Edgar is left to rule the kingdom.

8. Edmund

In the beginning of the play, Edmund embodies the lowest place in Lear's world. By law he is a bastard, and therefore he is denied social, political, or family status. Edmund's character is the antithesis of Lear's; Edmund has no feelings while Lear has too many. Edmund is not loved nor does he love anyone at the beginning of the play. Shakespeare portrays Edmund and Lear in a dialectical character structure in which the two character switch places throughout the play's duration of action. As a whole, synthesis, they represent two opposing forces in the play. Both Lear and

Edmund mistake social law for natural law, and Edmund also spins the wheel of Fortune that leads to his destruction.

His view of the world is juxtaposed with that of Lear's world ideologies. Edmund is the Machiavellian prince who leads the new generation against the old. He is Lear's antagonist and orders Cordelia's execution, which in turn leads to Lear's tragic catastrophe. Shakespeare gives Edmund his famous soliloquy in 1.2 so as to emphasize the clashing world views between him and the other characters. Nature is Edmund's goddess. Edmund finds the world in which he lives as one of restrictions and hypocrisy. He sees himself just as intelligent and fit as his brother to hold status in this hierarchical world and challenges the governing laws.

Edmund usurps the other characters social, political, and filial laws, and he sees his new world as one of natural free will, yet in the end, he falls victim to the very conventions which he despises. He sees himself a gentleman and accepts a trial-by-combat, which was one of the social customs of the world he hated. In this trial Edmund is killed by his brother Edgar. In the end he dies a traitor, but he does finally get what he wanted, status, and for this he dies a death saved for nobility.

Edmund's relationship with his father, Gloucester, is illustrated in the opening scene of the play. Gloucester laughs at him and jokes with Kent about the fun sport of Edmund's conception. His father calls him a 'whoreson,' and it is obvious that he is a burden to his father. Gloucester mentions that Edmund has been away for nine years and soon will be gone again. Even though Gloucester says he loves Edmund as much as his brother Edgar, Gloucester's treatment of Edmund in 1.1 portrays a very different relationship between the two characters.

According to W.H. Auden in his book *Lectures on Shakespeare*, he states that “Edmund begins by simply wanting to be Edgar” (226). He wants to be loved as Edgar is as well as have rightful claim to his father’s land and title. I believe Edmund’s super-objective is the need for love and compassion that as a bastard he has never been given.

Edmund never has his eye fixed on any one goal, and as he advances in the world of the play, so do his objectives. Once he has tricked his father into hating his brother, thus gaining Edgar’s inheritance, Edmund sets his sights against his father. Edmund becomes the Earl of Gloucester while his father has his eyes ripped out. Even this is not enough for him. Now that he has social and political power, he seeks to highest aspiration, kingship.

Edmund’s relationship between Goneril and Regan is not one of love. He loves neither of them and finds their jealousy for one another fun to watch. At the end of 5.1, Edmund laughs at the game he has created and illustrates his lack of feelings. He does not care for the girls, but he hopes that one of them will kill Albany and make him king. He also reveals his plan to have Lear and Cordelia’s lives unspared if they are captured in battle. Bloom states that “his insouciance is sublime” (502).

In the end, Edmund does something quite out of the ordinary for a Shakespearean antagonist. When Goneril and Regan die for their love and jealousy, Edmund finally realizes he was in fact loved. According to Richard Matthews in “Edmund’s Redemption in *King Lear*” Edmund feels compassion for another’s suffering when Edgar describes the nature of his father’s death, and Edmund finally

“finds that he is loveable. It is a pathetic recognition of a perverse thing, but it is apparently just enough to tip the scale in the direction of goodness” (Matthews 28). It is through this act that Edmund finally ceases to be Edmund and can be associated with goodness, like his brother, which was his goal in the first place.

Plot of Actions

Enters with Gloucester and Kent 1.1.1
 Reveals his true nature and plot to take his brother's land 2.1.1-23
 He pretends to hide a letter from Gloucester 1.2.28
 He gives Gloucester the letter 1.2.46
 Edmund convinces Edgar to hide himself 1.2.145
 Exits 1.2.192
 Enters 2.1.1
 Tells Edgar to run for his life 2.1.20
 Convinces his brother to pretend to fight him and draws his sword 2.1.32
 After Edgar flees, Edmund wounds himself 2.1.43
 He tells Gloucester that Edgar tried to kill him 2.1.151

Enters with Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, and servants 2.2.44
 He stops Kent and Oswald's fight 2.2.45
 Exits 2.2.165

Enters with Gloucester 3.3.1
 Finds out about the letter and exits 3.3.25

Enters with Cornwall 3.5.1
 Tells Cornwall of the letter Gloucester has 3.5.11
 Exits 3.5.26
 Enters with Cornwall, Regan, Goneril and servants 3.7.1
 Exits with Goneril 3.7.24
 Enters with Goneril 4.2.1
 He is given a favor from Goneril 4.2.25
 He and Goneril kiss 4.2.26
 Exits 4.2.30

Enters with Regan 5.1.1
 Exits 5.1.45
 Re-enters 5.1.57
 He gives the papers drawn out for the battle to Albany 5.1.58
 Monologue revealing his feelings (or lack of feelings) towards Goneril and Regan, and he reveals his plan to have Lear and Cordelia murdered if the British win the war 5.1.63-77

Enters with a Captain, Lear and Cordelia (as prisoners) 5.3.1
 Edmund gives the Captain a letter which gives the order to have Lear
 and Cordelia executed 5.3.31
 He is charged with treason by Albany 5.3.99
 He accepts Albany's challenge 5.3.117
 Edmund draws his sword and fights Edgar (he does not know it is Edgar) and
 he falls fatally wounded 5.3.179
 Edmund reveals the letter he sent to have Lear and Cordelia die 5.3.302-306
 Edmund is carried off to die 5.3.307

9. Cornwall

This character has no other name than his title, Duke of Cornwall. He is the epitome of the new generation and breaks all the rules of decorum in order to force his authority on the other characters. He, like his wife, probably has been considered last by the King. In 1.1 the opening lines are "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall" (1.1.1-2). These lines portray Lear's affection towards Albany rather than Cornwall. Lear, having no male heir, would probably leave his kingdom to one of the Dukes, and the Duke of Cornwall is last in the succession race. Even though there are allusions to an equal division of Lear's kingdom, according to Holinshed, Albany would have gotten all of Scotland and northern England, while Cornwall would have received the southwestern most corner of the land. When Lear divides the kingdom between Albany and Cornwall, Cornwall finally has the power to fight his way up the succession ladder.

Cornwall's super-objective is to enforce the new laws he has created. He usurps judicial power and authority and becomes the quintessence of *realpolitik*. He and his wife follow the new policies rather than considering morale. In 2.2 Cornwall puts Kent in the stocks. Stocking the king's messenger would have been unheard of in the world that opened the play in 1.1. Cornwall sides with Oswald, a servant, over

one of the king's men. He finds the authority to break away from customs due to Lear's abdication of authority and responsibility in 1.1. Legally Lear is not the King of Britain, and Cornwall sees himself as having judicial authority over Lear. He, like his wife, purposely insults Lear and enjoys stripping away Lear's identity.

Cornwall's actions in 3.7 are the most horrific and violent of all the other characters. His "fiery" and "fixed" nature described by Gloucester in 2.4 foreshadows his sadistic and forceful actions against Gloucester in 3.7. Gloucester knows how choleric and wrathful Cornwall can be, and Gloucester understands Cornwall's legal authority over him which cannot be budged. Cornwall sees Lear as a social outcast. He denies Gloucester's appeal to help Lear, and so when Gloucester goes against his authority, Cornwall proclaims Gloucester as a traitor. He takes Machiavellian Edmund under his wing and gives Edmund the title of Earl of Gloucester. This title brings Edmund into the world of nobility and noble power which leads to his actions in act five.

By ripping out Gloucester's eyes Cornwall challenges his place in the world, rebels against the old customs of reverence, and oversteps his legal authority. Ironically, he is slain by one of Gloucester's servants. His break from decorum allows the servant to rise from his status as well. Cornwall had no right to blind Gloucester and dies by the hand of one who had no right to stand against him.

10. Albany

Shakespeare strays from the original story of *King Lear* by making Albany one of the 'good guys.' In Holinshed's account both Albany and Cornwall were evil.

There are many theories that debate the reasoning behind Shakespeare's intent when creating the character of Albany. Most scholars believe that Shakespeare changed the story to flatter James I. It has been recorded that James I, before he became king of Scotland, held the title of Duke of Albany. Also, in the Quarto edition of the play Albany has the closing lines of the play not Edgar. There are documents which state that *King Lear* was performed at court, and during the time the play was written James I was the patron of Shakespeare's company, the King's Men. From this knowledge it is plausible to assume Shakespeare created the character of Albany as a compliment to his king.

Albany's place in the world of *King Lear* is one of high status, yet he is a character of little action. He cannot control his wife, vows to revenge Gloucester's eyes but does nothing, and in the end he charges Edmund with treason, but he is not the one who fights him. At the end of the play Albany gives his right to kingship away to Edgar instead of taking the responsibilities of his status.

Albany's character and actions are continuously held back by his love for his wife. W.H. Auden states that "Albany wants a quiet life...[and] he is forced to change to an authoritative role by the horror of what he's seen" (226). To me, Albany is all talk and no action. He tells Goneril "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" (4.2.78-82). Even though he wants to rip her apart for her vile nature, he cannot harm his wife no matter what she does. Albany has no pity for his wife when she dies but believes it is divine justice that punishes her.

CHAPTER IX

THEMES, MOTIFS, AND SYMBOLISM

Ben Jonson once wrote that Shakespeare is “not of an age, but for all time.” Shakespeare’s use of universal themes relates the world of his plays with his audiences. Language embodies the true life of Shakespeare’s plays. *King Lear* is a story of collective human suffering, and the characters are torn between the antithetical extremities of human existence. The major themes of the play illustrate the clashing polarities of human nature and ideologies. Shakespeare’s art of rhetoric in *King Lear* creates not only elaborate dialogue and characterization but an ingenious exploration of mortality and suffering. Shakespeare exposes the severed world of *King Lear* by juxtaposing universal themes. Through the utilization of complex metaphors, recurring motifs, and patterns of imagery found in layers of symbolic iconography, Shakespeare created the antithetical world of *King Lear*.

Throughout the dramatic development of the text, the internal and external stasis of Lear’s world crumbles into chaos, disorder, and madness. The play closes with a sense of ubiquitous death and hopelessness. Shakespeare juxtaposes order and chaos by developing a parallel relationship between the dissipating world and the language of the text.

In 1.1, Shakespeare's language portrays elevated discourse and follows along with the Renaissance ideas of decorum. Goneril and Regan's monologues adhere to acceptable speech and behavior and are written in iambic pentameter. Their speeches emphasize the formal nature of the ceremony and their noble positions. For their elaborate professions of love, they are given rich rewards. When Cordelia answers, she breaks from the meter and verse saying "Nothing, my lord" (1.1.96). Cordelia's informal answer foreshadows the unraveling of order of the world and language of the text.

As the systematic foundation of the play's world begins to fall, decorum becomes antiquated. Shakespeare illustrates the transitioning world by freeing his characters of decorous speech. In 2.2, Oswald's fancy speech is ironically contrasted with Kent's use of prose. Since Kent is in disguise he cannot reveal himself, and so his use of prose is part of his disguise. Oswald, a servant striving to elevate himself in the social hierarchy and appear noble, speaks in formal blank verse to Cornwall. These revolts against decorum of speech signify a shift not only in the text but in the ruling hierarchical order.

Shakespeare further uses this "uncreation" of language to represent internal and psychological disorder. After having been stripped of his sense of identity and authority in 2.4, Shakespeare parallels Lear's internal disintegration with the broken structure of the language. The fragmented and incomplete thoughts in Lear's dialogue represent the deterioration of his mind. Lear tries to threaten Goneril and Regan saying, "No, you unnatural hags,/ I will have such revenges on you both/ That all the world shall-- I will do such things--" (2.4.320-322).

James L. Calderwood in “Creative Uncreation in *King Lear*” notes that Lear is at first “caught up in the supposed naturalness of speech when he honors the apparent bond between signifier and signified in the flattery of Goneril and Regan,” but as Lear discovers there is no bond between what is said and what is meant, Shakespeare breaks down “all familiar meaning and expectation” of language (13). As Lear reaches the point of no return, the text itself is stripped to its basest and most simple form. Lear’s speech becomes sharp and repetitive with: “Never, never, never, never, never,” “Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill,” and “Howl, howl, howl!” Shakespeare’s use of grammar and diction symbolizes the world’s descent into chaos, into nothingness. Calderwood states that “words are shorn of meaning and become again merely savage cries, the wild phonic stuff of which we suppose speech to have been originally formed” (7). The last two lines in the play are in rhyming iambic pentameter. Even though it was conventional to end a play with a rhyming couplet, this recreation of composition may signify hope for restored order.

Throughout *King Lear* Shakespeare reiterates the word “nothing” in order to enforce the themes of order and chaos. The repetition of the word signifies the nothingness that is left after destruction. This theory is supported by Calderwood who says the word “ ‘nothing’ is a kind of vortex that draws the ordered world of *King Lear* downward reducing Lear to nakedness and madness and Gloucester to blindness” (6-7). As Lear’s world collapses he loses his kingdom and his children. Not only is the order of the world destroyed but Lear’s blood line. Harold Bloom believes that “nothing comes from nothing” could be the motto for Lear’s fatherhood (515).

The Fool, who is allowed to continuously mock Lear's folly, tells Lear, "I am better than thou art now. I am a Fool. Thou art nothing" (1.4.198-199). At Gloucester's house in 2.4 Lear's knights are reduced to zero when Regan asks, "What need one?" (2.4.304) In the end, nothing does come from nothing. It is Cordelia's "nothing" that sparks the decline into chaos, and when Lear cradles Cordelia, dead, in his arms he searches for life in her lips, but Cordelia says nothing. This silence is juxtaposed with the image of silence from Cordelia when she tells Lear, "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave/ My heart into my mouth" (1.1.100-101).

"Nothing" also plays a significant role in the subplot. When Edmund is questioned by Gloucester he answers "Nothing, my lord" (1.2.33). Ironically, Gloucester replies, "Let's see. Come if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles" (1.2.34-35). The image of needing glasses correlates with Gloucester's physical blinding and Lear's imagery when he says, "Get thee glass eyes," (4.6.187). Edmund's "nothing" is also reiterated by its effect on his brother, who when transformed into a base beggar says "'Edgar' I nothing am" (2.3.21). Robert F. Fleissner in article "The 'Nothing' Element in King Lear," correlates Edmund's "nothing like the image and horror of it" (1.2.183) with Cordelia's "nothing" and their influence on the final tragedy. He states that "the cataclysmic image and horror of the tragedy has indeed arisen out of 'nothing', from the seemingly innocent replies given by Cordelia and [Edmund]" (70).

Another motif used in *King Lear* to emphasize the spiraling downfall of the world is Shakespeare's dialectic portrayal of madness between Lear's genuine insanity and Edgar's feigned madness while he is disguised as Poor Tom, a Bedlam

beggar. Both men are cast out of family and society to face the harsh elements of nature where they suffer the extremities of human existence mentally and physically. Even though psychology was not a concept yet, the characters' madness reflects the Renaissance theories on the attributes and origins of madness.

Edgar is forced to assume the disguise of Poor Tom in order to survive. Shakespeare cleverly chose this disguise for Edgar to emphasize themes of madness embedded in the language of the play. According to William C. Carroll in his article "The Base Shall Top the Legitimate: The Bedlam Beggar and the Role of Edgar in *King Lear*," "Poor Tom is, of course, a lunatic beggar, an escaped or released inmate of Bethlehem (or Bedlam) Hospital" (431). Bedlam beggars had become a symbol of madness during the Renaissance, and they were known for mutilating their bodies and having no clothing. Shakespeare's emphasis on the body shows man in his truest form, and when Edgar takes on the role of Poor Tom he becomes the icon of insanity and bodily suffering. He must seem mad in order to survive in a mad world.

Edgar mutilates his arms with "Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary" (2.3.16) and exposes his body to the extremities of nature. Carroll believes that "Poor Tom of Bedlam is, after all, allegedly someone who had lost his mind, and so has only his body left, his language fractured into disordered fragments. The mutilations of his body reflect this disorder and monstrosity" (434). Shakespeare creates a relationship between Edgar's fake madness and Lear's genuine madness to further stress the turmoil of existence. Through suffering true insanity, Lear's body must die with his mind. Edgar is left in the end because by pretending to be mad, he endured the extremities of human nature.

The nature of Lear's madness has been theorized by many scholars. Some believe Lear's mind was already failing before the play even began. A. Bringham, in *Shakespeare's Illustrations of Insanity* (1844), speculates that Lear is senile and his mental capacities and reasoning had been failing before he received the abuses from his daughters. They believe Lear is hot-headed and irrational from the start, which were considered symptoms of old age. In Goneril and Regan's conversation at the end of 1.1, Goneril comments on her father's old age and "choleric" nature. This word correlates to the imbalance of humors, which during Shakespeare's time people thought caused insanity and depression.

In "Renaissance Views of Madness: *King Lear*," Adrian Ingham references Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De Proprietatibus Rerum* and describes the book's references to madness and humors. He says, "In Bartholomeus' model madness caused by an excess of choler is called 'the frenesie'" (1). He also notes that the cure for this madness is sleep. Lear, mentally and physically exhausted, goes to sleep in 3.6. When he awakes in 4.7, his mind is clear and calm enough for him to recognize Cordelia.

Some theorists believe that Lear is not insane but emotionally disturbed. According to Bucknill in the *Variorum* edition, "Disorders of the intellectual faculties ...are often...recognized as the morbid emotions transformed into perverted action of the reason; but in no cases are they primary and essential. How completely is this theory supported by the development of insanity, as it is portrayed in *King Lear*!" (416) I agree that Lear's madness is initialized by his hurt pride, which usually leads to anger. He may be an old man known for his choleric temperament, but when

looking closely to the references of madness in the play, Lear's madness follows as he loses his authority but still imagines he is king. Lear expects to be treated with the reverence he is accustomed to. In *The Masks of King Lear*, Marvin Rosenberg states that "When Lear is ejected from the womb of kingship, he must confront and test reality; when reality becomes unbearable his mind evades, doubles back, encounters his self, [and] flees" (207). As Goneril chastises her father he begins to see her true nature and realize the situation he is in. Instead of working things out with his daughter he retreats to his other daughter's house.

After Lear has left Goneril's house in a fiery disposition he cries, "O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! Keep me in temper. I would not be mad!" (1.5.45-46). There are also references to Lear's heart rising in the play. Twice in 2.4 Lear illustrates a swelling from "Thy elements below-" (2.4.64). In the Folger edition it describes Lear's lines from 62-64 as a reference to a medical term *hysterica passio*, which was a disease "thought to be caused by a wondering womb (hystera), which belonged below, not up near the heart" (100). Later in the scene Lear exclaims "O me, my heart, my rising heart! But down!" (2.4.136). Both of these references come from some sort of insolent treatment towards Lear. As Lear loses his grip on his emotions, the storm outside begins to brew as well. Lear's insanity is symbolized by the insanity and impulsiveness of physical nature. Shakespeare correlates the tempest in Lear's mind, with a natural storm in order to emphasize the chaotic uncreation of Lear's world.

The storm in *King Lear* symbolizes Lear's own mental and emotional condition, as well as the chaotic dissection of his kingdom. According to George W.

Williams, in “The Poetry of the Storm”, “the reversion and madness of the elements are equated with the chaotic condition of the king at odds with himself and are described in terms of human physiology to heighten the identification” (59).

Shakespeare creates a way for Lear’s internal conditions to be projected into physical turmoil in order to heighten the intensity of the scene for the audience. Since Shakespeare puts his most important information in the places of high intensity, he uses the storm as a sign to the audience that something important is happening internally as well as externally. It is the storm which motivates Lear’s reversal and recognition.

The storm begins at the same time Lear begins to lose his mind. E. A. J. Honigmann notes that “As Lear’s ‘rage’ gathers within him it suggests a storm to his imagination: “You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames” (2.4.187)” (79). This imagery of lightning symbolizes the conjuring storm in Lear’s mind. Having been defied by his daughters Lear exclaims, “O Fool, I shall go mad!” (2.4.328) Right after this remark the stage directions in the Folger edition of *King Lear* state that a storm begins. On the next line, Cornwall comments on the storm saying, “Twill be a storm” (2.4.329). This line not only refers to the physical storm but foreshadows what is going to happen to Lear.

In his madness Lear wills the storm to “Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! blow!” (3.2.1). Shakespeare’s use of diction in this scene helps unite Lear and the storm symbolically. This speech portrays all the elements of nature at their most violent. “The first line refers to air; the second and third to water; the fourth and fifth to fire; and the remainder to earth” (Williams 64). In this speech, Shakespeare chose

monosyllabic words to symbolize the deterioration of Lear's mental condition.

Williams suggest that "the frequency of fricatives and stops in clusters of onomatopoeic vernacular words [were] chosen to suggest the roughness and harshness of the weather" (60). Therefore Shakespeare binds the internal, external, and metaphysical plains through the image of the storm in Lear's speech and in the physical world around him. "Bolts of thunder and lightning are to flatten out the roundness of the earth, Nature's moulds are to be cracked and shattered until they are useless, all germinations are to be spilled. Such imagery can indicate only eschatological destruction." (67).

As the storm passes, so does the tempest in Lear's mind. Lear begins to feel empathy for others and realizes his wrong against Cordelia. When he is reunited with Cordelia the Doctor says, "The great rage/You see, is killed in him" (4.7.91-92). The storm outside and Lear's madness have ceased, but there are still repercussions to pay. The storm physically and mentally has exhausted Lear, and when he is reunited with Cordelia he says, "I am a very foolish fond old man, ... I fear I am not in my perfect mind" (4.7.69-72). The storm symbolizes the supernatural, physical, and mental destruction of Lear's world. Lear's mind, clouded by a tempest, cannot 'see' how his actions affect his kingdom, friends, and family until suffering the boundaries of madness. Ingham states that "Through his madness Lear breaks down the false illusions of his courtly world" (2).

Themes of reality and illusion are juxtaposed throughout *King Lear*. As order is stripped from the structure of the world, so are the veils embodying illusionary concepts of humanity. Shakespeare sets up conflicts between genuineness and

fallaciousness. Characters are deceived because they cannot 'see' the truth.

Therefore recurring images of eyes, sight, and blindness are used to create an iconographic pattern accentuating the fact that things are not always as they seem. In the beginning, Lear demands his daughters to speak false proclamations and punishes those who speak the truth, but in the end, Edgar's last lines "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (5.3.393) symbolize the inverted nature of reality.

Goneril and Regan's speeches are structured in a fixed order of blank verse and iambic pentameter. The stylized composition of their monologues represents their artificial contexts. Lear is blind to their false flattery and banishes anyone who tries to speak any other reason than his own to him. Sight reoccurs in Lear's banishment of Cordelia and Kent. "Hence and avoid my sight" (1.1.138-139) and "Out of my sight" (1.1.179). Kent recognizes Lear's lack of 'sight' when he says, "See better Lear" (1.1.180). These references to sight signify Lear's inability to 'see' and foreshadow his false impressions of reality and self identity.

In reality Lear's division of his kingdom and sovereign abdication would mean that he is no longer a king and has freely given up his absolute authority. However, Lear cannot see this reality, and so he behaves as if he still has absolute power and expects to be treated with the same reverence demanded of a king. In the opening scene Lear gives "The sway, revenue, execution of the rest" (1.1.153) to Albany and Cornwall, while retaining "The name and all th' addition to a king" (1.1.152) for himself. According to Ian Johnston's lecture titled "Speak What We Feel: An Introduction to King Lear," "Lear clearly believes that his identity as king is something separable from the actions, duties, and responsibilities which are required

of a king (i.e., from his social actions), just as he thinks his authority as a father is something separable from the duties of a father” (4).

The Fool in *King Lear* is the only character who is allowed by Lear to speak the truth, and he continually comments on Lear’s blindness to what is really happening. The Fool’s riddled insight into Lear’s actions and consequences is contrasted with Lear’s blunt foolishness. The Fool mocks Lear for foolishly dividing his kingdom by metaphorically comparing an empty egg with the results from Lear’s actions in 1.1. The Fool compares the two crowns of an eggshell to the split coronet between Albany and Cornwall, and he compares Cordelia to the yoke saying, “Thou hadst’t little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav’st thy golden one away” (2.4.166-167).

Under the illusion that he is still King, Lear becomes angry when reality opposes his conviction. When Lear asks Oswald “Who am I sir”, Oswald frankly replies, “My lady’s father” (1.4.79-80). Lear becomes outraged at the insolence of Oswald’s answer. When Goneril chides Lear for keeping a riotous train, he is distraught by her inability to see him as a king and as a father. Struggling with the perception of himself, Lear asks, “Does any here know me? This is not Lear./ Does Lear walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes?” (1.4.231-233) The Fool answers, “Lear’s shadow” (1.4.234). By using the image of a shadow, the Fool is commenting on Lear’s delusion and fascination with who he once was. Now Lear is only a shadow of the man who was King Lear.

In Frank Kermode’s book *Shakespeare’s Language*, he states that “The king, accustomed to being the agent of justice [and authority], now finds he is human”

(195). By dividing his sovereignty, Lear divides the body politic of kingship. He severs the man from the divine right. When he is treated as a man and not as a king, Lear threatens to “resume the shape which thou dost think/ I have cast off forever” (1.4.325-327). Lear realizes he is losing his authority as well as his sense of personal identity, and so he imagines that he can take back what has been undone in 1.1. As Lear loses his grip on reality, he descends into madness where he attempts to force his imaginative authority on nature in 3.2. Lear loses all identification with the real world, and Shakespeare illustrates the gap between reality and illusion in 3.6. The mock trial scene is a gross hallucination of authority and justice. According to Johnston, “The real cause of the sequence of events which leads ultimately to Lear’s death is Lear’s inability to tolerate any view of himself except the one he himself has” (5).

The reality of Lear’s character is the fact that he is dying, and he constantly denies the necessity of death. In 5.3.374-375 Lear utters, “Do you see this? Look on her, look her lips,/ Look there, look there!” right before he accepts reality and dies. This reiteration of the word “look” correlates to Kent’s “See better Lear” in 1.1. Still searching for truth, Lear hallucinates that Cordelia may still be alive. After the division of the kingdom Lear is never fully capable of distinguishing what is real and what is not. The only thing real to Lear is his suffering and death.

These motifs of sight and blindness also play an important role in the subplot of *King Lear*. Gloucester’s moral blindness eventually leads to his physical blinding. Gloucester is deceived by his bastard son, Edmund, in 1.2. When Gloucester asks to see what Edmund is reading, he says, “Let’s see. Come, if it be noting, I shall not

need spectacles” (1.2.36-37). Maybe he should have put on his glasses because as he reads the counterfeit letter, he is unable to ‘see’ its true context. Gloucester cannot tell if the handwriting is Edgar’s but believes the letter without question.

Edmund betrays his father again in 3.5. This time Gloucester pays for his inability to see the true nature of his natural son, and so he has his eyeballs torn out by Cornwall. Gloucester is then thrust out into the wild night to “smell/ His way to Dover” (3.7.113-114). Only by physically suffering does Gloucester see his folly and recognize his betrayal of his true son, Edgar. In 4.1.19-20 Gloucester says, “I have no way and therefore want no eyes./ I stumbled when I saw.” It is at this time that Edgar, disguised as Poor Tom, becomes Gloucester’s caretaker. Gloucester is still unable to recognize his son, and he dies when he finally does “see” Edgar.

As Edmund lay dying, Edgar describes to him the nature of Gloucester’s death. Shakespeare uses beautiful language, full of antitheses and personification. Edgar says, “But his flawed heart/ Alack, too weak the conflict to support/ ‘Twixt two extremities of passion, joy and grief,/ Burst smilingly” (5.3.232-235) Both Gloucester and Lear die for the things they could not see and the anguish of reality.

Shakespeare also juxtaposes the universal themes of man-made law and natural law. By structurally contrasting these ideologies, Shakespeare explores the dichotomous nature of law and authority. The politics of the play are split between these two principles. To show these themes’ polarities, Shakespeare reverses the customary roles of hierarchy, patriarchy, and gender.

According to Paul M. Shupak in his article “Natural Justice in King Lear”, the political themes of the play are between positivism and natural law (67). The older

generation of characters support positivism, which means they define policy by man-made traditions. The younger generation follows the conception of realpolitik. In *Politics in King Lear*, Muir defines realpolitik as being the policy of political action without moral consideration. He also describes Edmund as “a consummate politician in the new style” (16).

In regards to the opening of the play, Harold Bloom describes Lear’s absoluteness by saying, “Lear is at once father, king, and a kind of mortal god” (478). Lear is a symbol of the fixed order in which he lives. Lear’s world is defined by a hierarchical structure where everything is unified under the rule of a king (Calderwood 6). In this hierarchical world, society and family are governed under a chain of authority; society ruled by the king and the family under the father’s rule. Both kingship and patriarchy are dogmas supporting absolute authority and deference. As Lear’s world crumbles, so do the artificial customs ruling the world’s order. Shakespeare contrasts opposing views of law and authority in order to illustrate the revolutionary aspect of the play.

Lear chooses natural law over the traditional customs in 1.1. He challenges merit (i.e. what is due by law) with nature (human emotions) when he creates the love test between his daughters. When Cordelia refuses to flatter Lear, she answers “I love your Majesty/ According to my bond, no more nor less” (1.1.101-102). This “bond” she speaks of represents the bond between a subject and a king as well as the relationship between a father and a child. Cordelia’s answer embodies the ideals of monarchy and patriarchy, whereas Goneril and Regan’s answers are false professions of natural emotions. When his feelings are hurt, Lear follows his emotions not policy

and irrationally banishes Cordelia and Kent. From these actions we find that “authority has both personal and official aspects; here echoing the idea of the king’s two bodies” (Shupack 86). By defying the customary laws governing his kingdom, Lear breaks the chain of order in the entire universe of the play. The fixed institution of hierarchy and patriarchy begin to dissipate under the power of natural law. To show the world’s inverted characteristics, Shakespeare reverses traditional roles of decorum in *King Lear*.

With Lear no longer king, “The new order, in its turn, once self-assertive individualism has room to maneuver, breaks all customary ties, creates temporary alliances for power, and ends up with everyone pursuing his or her own agenda” (Johnston 17). Lear pursues his own agenda by dividing his kingdom and his sovereignty, which leads to conflict and usurpation. Lear, Gloucester, and Edgar are thrown into the impulsive disorder of nature, and since “nature opposes custom” (Shupak 80), they are stripped of their fixed place in the world. Lear comments on this concept when he says Cordelia “wrenched my frame of nature/ From the fixed place” (1.4.280-282). Gloucester describes this break in custom too and foreshadows the kingdom and his own downfall in 1.2. As Lear falls down the hierarchical chain, other characters climb their way to the top.

Edmund, who is described as a ‘natural boy’ for being a bastard, supports natural law. He prays to his goddess Nature and says, “Edmund the base/ Shall top th’ legitimate” (1.2.21-22). Edmund wants to be recognized for himself, a man, not for his father’s “goatish disposition”. He says, “I should have been that I am” (1.2.138-139) which leads to a somewhat Darwinian theory of humanity; i.e. survival

of the fittest. By act 5 the entire order of the universe has been turned upside down. Bastards and women lead armies; fathers are parented by their children, and wives usurp their husband's authority. Edmund the "base" does top the legitimate. He becomes the Earl of Gloucester and the leader of the English army. Lear becomes a child again raving about "gilded butterflies" (5.3.14) and is nurtured by Cordelia. Describing Lear's disposition Edgar says, "He childed as I fathered" (3.6.120). Edgar also becomes his father's caretaker and in the end is left the caretaker of the destroyed world.

To further show the struggle between antithetical views of authority, Shakespeare reverses the roles of men and women. Cordelia becomes the leader of the French army. Goneril unsexes herself in her marital relationship. She tells Edmund "I must change names at home and give the distaff/ Into my husband's hands" (4.2.20-21). She defies the roles of men and women, and when Albany questions her adultery she cries, "the laws are mine, not thine" (5.3.189). Shakespeare uses the most extreme and grotesque image of castration to symbolize both Lear and Gloucester. The Fool mocks Lear when he jokes that Lear "mad'st thy daughters thy mothers." The Fool completes the joke with a sexual pun, "For when thou gav'st them the rod and put'st down thine own breeches" (1.4.176-178). This "rod" can be associated with the "manhood" Lear has lost. In the article "Gloucester's Blinding," Halio quotes from Norman Holland's *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* where he notes that "Blinding, particularly the tearing out of eyes, is, as many analysts have pointed out, a symbol for the destruction of ones manhood—castration" (222). Gloucester pays for his sexual deviance by having his eyes ripped

out. Edgar comments on the sexual nature of Gloucester's blinding as well when he tells Edmund "The dark and vicious place where thee he got/ Cost him his eyes" (5.3.206-207).

Through expert rhetoric Shakespeare correlates all of these themes and motifs and images into the main idea of human nature and human suffering. All characters in this play suffer both good and evil. Harold Bloom believes that suffering is the true action of *King Lear* and "Apocalypse is the image of human dealings in their extremity, an image of the state to which humanity can reduce itself" (184). Shakespeare's use of antithetical themes that he juxtaposed in creative metaphors and language emphasized the limits of humanity and the dichotomous nature of life. The wealthy become poor. The base born become noblemen. The foolish are wise, and the wise become foolish. Overall, Shakespeare's language connects the metaphysical, physical, and psychological planes of existence.

CHAPTER X

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the critical arguments revolving around Shakespeare's composition of *King Lear*. For dramaturgical purposes I decided to focus on the theoretical arguments revolving around the problems in *King Lear*. Historically, many scholars have found *King Lear* unfit for the stage due to the text's improbable actions, ambiguous characters, and the corruptions and differences between the Quarto and the Folio. William Hazlitt once said:

We wish that we could pass this play over, and say nothing about it. All that we can say may fall short of the subject; or even of what we ourselves conceive of it. To attempt to give a description of the play itself or its effects upon the mind, is mere impertinence: Yet we must say something. (Bloom 18)

A. Improbabilities and Ambiguities in *King Lear*

There is an entire world of critics and scholars out there dedicated solely to Shakespearean dramaturgy and analysis. Shakespeare's *King Lear* has been considered one of Shakespeare's greatest works, yet there are a handful of scholars who do not agree with its theatrical capabilities. Those who cannot find the tragic merits in *King Lear* usually find it too big for the stage. Literary critics find the storm scene, the mock trial, and Gloucester's blinding unbelievable on stage.

Highly acclaimed Shakespearean critics such as Samuel Johnson, Charles Lamb, Coleridge, and A.C. Bradley have all commented on critical improbabilities found in the text that make the play inadequate for the stage, yet they all support its literary grandeur. In the eighteenth century Samuel Johnson commented that *King Lear* was improbable to a modern audience, Coleridge observed the gross improbabilities in the development of the text, and towards the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century Charles Lamb stated that “Lear is essentially impossible to present on stage” (Bloom 18). A.C. Bradley finds *King Lear* to be inferior to Shakespeare’s other tragedies and classifies the play with epic poems such as Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (Bradley 247).

Modern 20th century critics who agree *King Lear*, like the closet dramas of Seneca, should be kept off stage and on the book-shelf include Carolyn French and Margaret Webster. French in her essay “Shakespeare’s “Folly:” King Lear” finds “something about the dramatic framework of the play itself which makes it rationally incomprehensible and even ridiculous to the modern play goer” (523). She sees the play as a domestic melodrama which eliminates the sublimity of the catastrophe.

Even though *King Lear* has been attacked by scholars over the years, there are still those who support the integrity of *Lear* on stage. One of the most admired directors during the early 20th century was Harvey Granville Barker. Barker argued against the assumption that *King Lear* is unfit for the stage. In his *Prefaces* Barker tackles this critical tradition by challenging the views of Lamb and Bradley. He “points out how distant Bradley’s viewpoint is from the dramatic one that should apply to a theatrical work” (Dymkowski 131).

Lear has also been rebuked for its dark comedy such as the bitter mirth of the Fool and the mad hallucinations of King Lear. G. Wilson Knight in his book *Wheel of Fire* finds the mock trial scene in *King Lear* a comically grotesque depiction of madness, yet he does comment on Shakespeare's genius for consistently maintaining the universal theme of justice "up to the last terrible moment of the tragedy" (35).

Of course there have been no agreements upon the theme of justice in *King Lear*. Other theorists who find *King Lear* corrupt are usually Christian moralists who are outraged at the injustice of the play due to the horrific death of innocent Cordelia in 5.3. These theorists, such as Hardin Craig, find *King Lear* a moral example to warn against sinning. The character of Lear has been repeatedly denounced for failing to fulfill the journey of a tragic hero because his actions in 1.1 are a sin not a tragic flaw. One of the most disputed topics has been this motivation behind Lear's division of the kingdom and banishment of his beloved Cordelia in the opening scene.

Many scholars have conjectured over the improbable actions in the opening scene of *King Lear*. Is Lear creating a magnificent break of monarchical policy by dividing his kingdom? Is the "love test" an irrational impulse to satiate his ego? Why would such a good daughter defy her father, and why does Lear go so far as to banish her? These questions and many more have filled literary journals for centuries.

Those who question Lear's motivation behind the opening scene usually examine Lear's mental capacities prior to the opening of the play. Some see Lear's actions in 1.1 as childish and selfish attributes of senility. Scholars have even gone so far as to speculate that Lear is already "mad" when the play begins. Is Lear already

crazy or just misguided? In Michael Rosen's opinion "Lear's abdication is thus the occasion for a pageant of flattery...it is obvious that Lear already has in mind the kind of answer he expects from his daughter[s]" (Bloom 134). Rosen speculates that the conflicts, which arise from this love test, are "the result of misguided intellect [because any other reason would] reduce his stature and worth, and turn him into a pathetic figure, as Lamb's version of a "painful and disgusting" spectacle...or Lily B. Campbell's version of Lear as "the slave of habitual wrath""(136).

Coleridge theorizes the entire first scene could be cut and the play would maintain its stature. Yet most critics agree this would be impossible because for *King Lear* to assume the role of tragic hero, the audience must feel sympathy for him. William Hazlitt, Coleridge's mentor, had a much different opinion of 1.1. Lear's character is immediately developed for the audience through the actions in 1.1. "It is his rash haste, his violent impetuosity, his blindness to every thing but the dictates of them that enforces our pity for him" (Bloom 19). I agree with Hazlitt. How could audience members find a way to feel empathy for Lear or understand the effect of Cordelia's reply on Lear without 1.1? Lear would become a pathetic example of injustice and Cordelia an insubordinate daughter.

The necessity of 1.1 is the revelation of Lear's tragic flaw or in Greek terms, his hubris. But where does this flaw lie? Is Lear's pride a moral downfall rather than a tragic flaw? A.C. Bradley conjectures that "Lear's long life of absolute power, in which he has been flattered to the top of his bent, has produced in him that blindness to human limitations, and that presumptuous self-will, which in Greek tragedy we have so often seen stumbling against the altar of Nemesis" (90). Critic Ivan Morris

augments this theory by stating that as king “Lear is as eminent among men as the sun among planets, and it is no fault in his that he should aspire to be true to what his place and his nature have made him” (Morris 152). Lear’s image of sovereign authority and power is illustrated when he says, “Ay, every inch a king./ When I do stare, see how the subject quakes” (4.6.127-128). The absolute reverence which kings were accustomed to contributes to the theory that Lear’s command for flattery was not foolish nor improbable. Still there are critics who question the motivation behind Lear’s love test in 1.1. Is Lear’s tragic flaw, as Bradley believes, an excessive hubris?

Harry V. Jaffa assumes that Lear’s motivation behind the love test between his daughters is not for flattery at all but rather intended as a sham hiding his “darker purpose.” Jaffa notes that there are references in the opening lines of the play that support the theory that Lear has already divided his kingdom. He speculates that Kent and Gloucester already know about the plan. The very first lines of the play are Kent’s: “I had thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.” Gloucester replies, “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” (1.1.1-5). This may allude to the assumption that Kent and Gloucester have prior knowledge of how Lear is planning on dividing his kingdom. Jaffa supports that from these opening lines one can see that Kent and Gloucester must know of and agree with Lear’s plan. Therefore, the division of the kingdom is not as improbable as some critics seem to suppose. This theory is supported by Ivan Morris who also comments on the

plausibility of Kent and Gloucester's prior knowledge of the division and possibly the mock test.

Jaffa notes that Lear's decision to divide his kingdom reflects a feudalistic government and society. The political and social stasis of the world at the beginning of 1.1 is unified under the feudal system of hierarchical rule. Feudalism began in England during the Norman Conquest, during which William the Conqueror divided land in much the same way as Lear. One monarch could not completely control all their land by themselves; so many of the ancient feudal monarchs divided portions of their land between individuals who would govern their given area. Many times these partitions were given as rewards for service. It would have been plausible for a king, having no sons to inherit the kingdom, to give land as dowries for his daughters. In the beginning of the play exposition is given revealing that this specific day is to be that day Lear is going to give Cordelia's hand away in marriage.

So why does Lear create a love test in the first place? If the kingdom is already equally divided, then why does Lear publicly challenge "nature" with "merit"? Many scholars see this love test as Lear's flaw, and they believe Lear's blind obsessions with adulation intrinsically lead to his demise. Modern critics, such as Jaffa, argue the opposite.

Jaffa theorizes that it is not the test itself but Lear's divergence from the original plan that creates the conflict in the play. "Bradley's statement that Lear has been corrupted by flattery, and has a foolish craving for it, is contrasted by the fact that Lear prefers above all others the two people in the play who are represented as absolutely incapable of flattery or hypocrisy" (Jaffa 409). Lear never planned on

living with Goneril and Regan, but “thought to set [his] rest/ On [Cordelia’s] kind nursery” (1.1.137-138). Could the test have been Lear’s way of giving the best part of his kingdom to his youngest and favorite daughter on her nuptial day?

By giving a portion of the kingdom as Cordelia’s dowry, Lear is striving to secure the safety of his kingdom by uniting England’s land with another country. Jaffa believes this unification would also aid in Cordelia’s defense against her sisters for her inheritance (416). It is inevitable that someone must succeed Lear, and Jaffa surmises that Lear wants Cordelia as his heir. The love test is Lear’s way of covering up his true “darker purpose,” which is finding a way to legally secure the safety of his kingdom and the succession of Cordelia. Jaffa’s theory supports that it is not Lear’s plan to divide his kingdom nor the challenge set forth between his daughters but his banishment of Cordelia that breaks the stasis of the play’s world.

When Cordelia does not respond in the manner Lear has expected, he becomes violently angry, disclaiming all his parental care, and he banishes Cordelia as a subject and as a daughter. From where do these violent emotions come from? Ivan Morris believes that as a king, Lear was unable to show natural affection, but with his abdication, Lear plans to “use the last few minutes of his power to reward his children’s love” (152). Cordelia’s answer hurts Lear as a king and as a father. Claire McEacher in her essay “Fathering Herself: A source study of Shakespeare’s *Feminism*” connects Lear’s hierarchical image of himself with the humanity of his emotions. “At the heart of patriarchy is the conflict between the emotional integrity of the family and the demands of a political order that requires the serving of filial

bonds in order to perpetuate itself" (117). So, when Cordelia challenges her father, Lear's patriarchal position is contested.

As a king Lear cannot tolerate insubordination. He cannot allow for himself to be publicly humiliated and questioned. The nature of kingship calls for severe measures at all costs to assert regality and "to be prepared if occasion arose ruthlessly to destroy those who threatened his authority" (Morris 149). Therefore, Lear must suppress his fatherly love for Cordelia in order to act like a king. Lear's violent emotions do not come from an irrational state of mind but from what Lear considers to be policy. This policy is that of absolute and divine authority; Lear's decisions have probably never been challenged before. His anger is not improbable because he has always gotten what he wants, and Cordelia's defiance of absolute obedience naturally enrages him. I believe Lear's flaw to be his inability to recognize to recognize the nature of Cordelia's honest answer. It is from this mistake that he banishes Cordelia and gives the kingdom to two feuding Dukes.

Another problem in *King Lear* revolves around the catastrophic ending comprised of both Cordelia and Lear's deaths. Many critics ask the question, why must Cordelia die? Does she die at all? Until Rowe's edition in the early eighteenth century, the stage direction "Enter Lear, with Cordelia dead in his arms" (5.3) did not include the word "dead." Also in this last scene there is a faint hope in Lear's last speech before he dies: "Do you see this? Look on her,- look, her lips,-/ Look there, look there!" (5.3. 316-317). Does Lear die hallucinating that his daughter lives, or does Cordelia's death finally allow Lear to accept death?

Cordelia's death completes what Albany calls "the Wheel of Fortune." In the beginning, when Lear is asking for her flattery, Cordelia says "nothing", but in this final act Lear cries out for her speak saying, "Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha,/ What is't thou say'st" (V, iii, 272-273). This time Cordelia really says nothing since she is dead. The nature of her death is reminiscent of act I when she says, "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave/ My heart into my mouth" (I, i, 88-89). This alludes to the imagery of suffocation, which is how Cordelia dies when she is hung.

Rackin states that "if Cordelia did live, the contingency of [Lear's] faith upon a fortuitous occurrence would surely lessen, in [the audience's] eyes, the triumph of his death" (34). The wheel of fortune also turns for Lear. After act I, his life is left in the hands of Goneril and Regan, but "For all their protested devotion, Goneril and Regan end up offering him only their own ugly version of what Cordelia in her honesty offered at the beginning- that is "nothing"" (Snyder 458). In the end, ironically Lear is left a king with no kingdom and dies.

There are many contentious views about the double death. Bradley sees Lear as dying with complete joy and hopes that Cordelia lives, while G.W. Knight views Cordelia's death as Lear's finally agony in life and represents a future triumph of love. Susan Snyder says Cordelia's death causes Lear to become exhausted with life, and Rackin states the double death is the reconciliation of opposites according to the dialectical process. Foakes answers the question of Cordelia's death with another question: why would Cordelia want to continue living in the spiteful universe Shakespeare created for *King Lear*?

I believe that Cordelia's death can be one of the most tragic of all Shakespearean deaths presented on stage. The bond between a parent and a child is different than the bonds between lovers or marriages. Love can be blind, hurtful, and can fade away between two people, but the love a parent has for a child is forever. Even though in a fit of rage Lear tells Cordelia she is no longer his daughter, he still loves her best, and as we see when they are reunited, she always continued being his loyal daughter. Also, no parents want to see their children die. We all expect to grow up, watch our parents become old and finally pass away, not the other way around. In my opinion, there is nothing more heart wrenching than a father holding his dead little girl in his arms. The audience's hearts feel this pain because they can imagine if death came upon one of their children, thus purging more pity and fear than any other Shakespearean tragedy. This tragic effect pushes the audience past their own limits and endurance for tragedy. Stephen Booth, in his book *King Lear, Macbeth, Identification and Tragedy*, comments that the audience is

not shocked by the fact of Cordelia's death but by its situation and that [they] grieve not for Cordelia's physical vulnerability, but for their own- our own- mental vulnerability, a vulnerability made absolutely inescapable when the play pushes inexorably beyond its own identity, rolling across and crushing the very framework that enables its audience to endure the otherwise terrifying explosion of all manner of ordinarily indispensable mental contrivances for isolating, limiting, and comprehending. (Booth 11)

It is through this terrifying pity for Lear and the pain of enduring such a tragic catastrophe that *Lear* becomes an ultimate tragedy.

There are other ambiguities and possible improbabilities that have racked scholars' minds. One is the role of the Fool and his abrupt departure from the play. Why did Shakespeare create such a unique character just to banish him from the stage in the middle of the play? Did Shakespeare forget about him, or was his character's function over? There are endless theories, but the most popular conjectures question the relationship between the Fool and Cordelia.

In 1.4 Lear calls for his Fool, who has been away mourning Cordelia's banishment. An intricate relationship between the Fool and Cordelia has been widely accepted by scholars. First, Cordelia and the Fool are never on the stage together. Secondly, both of them tell Lear the truth. Could the connection between the Fool and Cordelia have an influence on the nature of the Fool's departure? When Lear clutches his dead daughter in 5.3 he cries out "And my poor fool is hang'd" (5.3.396). Many scholars have argued over who Lear is referring to in this statement. Since "fool" was used during the Renaissance as a term of endearment, Lear could merely be referring to Cordelia, but what happened to the Fool? Is he dead?

One theory supports the idea that the Fool and Cordelia were played by the same actor. This theory was first hypothesized by Alios Brandl in 1894. In his book *Shakespeare*, Brandl looks at the tradition of "doubling" in Renaissance theatre. Doubling was the act of one actor playing multiple roles, and according to Brandl, it is highly possible that Cordelia and the Fool were performed by the same actor. Others who support the plausibility of this contention include critics Brander

Matthews, Janet Spens, and Alvin Thaler. This hypothesis leads to a logical explanation for the Fool's final exit. If the characters were played by the same actor, then the Fool would have to leave the stage and story to become Cordelia again.

Some scholars have taken this idea further by stating that the Fool in *King Lear* is none other than Cordelia in disguise. Thomas Stroup in his article "Cordelia and the Fool" surmises that the two characters are actually one; they are both ambiguously portrayed yet have fully developed relationships with Lear. Troupe suggests that the Fool "continues [Cordelia's] speeches, or what might have been her speeches" (129). He supports the opinion that the Fool takes Cordelia's place when she is gone and vice versa. I do not agree with this because if Shakespeare intended for Cordelia to take on a disguise, then he would have made it known like the disguises of Kent and Edgar.

There have been retorts against the doubling theory. One scholar who contends this view is W.H. Lawrence. He believes the character of the Fool was played by Robert Armin. Armin was the King's Men's comic actor who succeeded Will Kempe. Armin was not only an actor but a writer as well. Armin's book *Foole upon Foole*, later reissued as *A Nest of Ninnies*, was a "quasi-historical" account of court jesters and fools. He studied the nature of fools, especially 'natural' fools. Why would Shakespeare write a role of a Fool for anyone other than the company's comic actor who specialized in the knowledge of foolery?

I believe Shakespeare intended purposeful ambiguity in the Fool's departure to signify the morbid absurdity of life in the world of *King Lear*. The Fool's exit goes unnoticed by the characters on stage and probably by audience members as well, but

when Lear cries out “My poor fool is hang’d” in 5.3, the absence of the Fool is present. Fool’s disappearance, or assumed death, adds to the heap of meaningless death depicted in the play. Many critics who see Lear’s world as nihilistic and absurd have commented on the association between the Fool and the figure of death. In Melvin Seiden’s “The Fool and Edmund: Kin and Kind” he correlates Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis to this topic. Freud theorized that hiding or the theme of disappearing is a “symbol for death in dreams” (210). Therefore, the Fool’s abrupt and questionable exit may reflect Lear’s defeat and foreshadow his death.

Throughout the play’s duration, the Fool acts as a mirror to Lear. He bitterly mocks Lear for his unnatural foolishness, and as Lear slips into insanity, the Fool’s archaic riddles become prophecies. According to Seiden, “the Fool accomplishes precisely what the principle of Absurdity must inevitably accomplish: the destruction of our most comforting and valued cognitive distinctions” (213). It is only after Lear recognizes his own folly that the Fool’s riddles are no longer needed. Lear and the Fool switch places. Lear becomes the “Fool of Fortune,” and the Fool becomes nothing.

Another possible reason for the Fool’s departure is the entrance of Poor Tom. Lear breaks his semiotic relationship with the Fool taking Poor Tom as his new parasite. In the depths of Lear’s madness, he associates himself with the mad beggarman. At the end of 3.6, Lear exits with Poor Tom, his “learned Theban,” without the slightest notion that he is leaving his Fool behind.

After the Fool is left behind, no one knows exactly what Shakespeare intended. Does the Fool return to the nothingness from whence he came? Does he

die? Does he come back as Cordelia? What happens to the Fool is open for directorial interpretation. No solid agreement has been reached on the strange disappearance of the Fool, and I find the ambiguity of his departure a fun void for theatrical purposes. In Adrian Noble's 1982 production of *King Lear* the Fool was accidentally stabbed to death by Lear during the mock trial.

B. Quarto vs. Folio

One of the most debated topics in the world of Shakespearean criticism on problems with *King Lear* revolves around the variances between the Quarto and the Folio. Which edition is the most authentic? Strenuous examinations of the texts' relationships with one another have flooded literary journals over the years by Shakespearean scholars and editors such as Nicholas Rowe, Samuel Johnson, Madeleine Doran, Alice Walker, W.W. Greg, Michael Warren, Gary Taylor, Stanley Wells, and Sidney Thomas, only to name a few.

These editors, intellectuals, and critics have continually dissected and hypothesized over the variations between the two editions. The reason for interest in this subject is due to the significant differences and similarities between the Quarto and Folio versions of *King Lear*. There are also variations between the Q1 and the Q2, and the Folio exhibits a relationship to both of the texts. These divergences have led scholars to contemplate the authenticity of the texts. Since all editions are in some degree corrupt, it is hard to decipher which text holds the most authority. What role did the compositor and copy editor play in the varying mistakes, omissions, and

emendations? Which text has the most authenticity, or should the Q and F be conflated?

Most scholars agree that the 1623 First Folio edition carries the more authentic text because “its two editors, John Heminges and Henry Condell, were actors in Shakespeare’s company and therefore in a very good position to know the plays as they were performed on stage” (RSC.com). The source of the Quarto is unknown, and out of the twelve surviving copies, no two are exactly alike. Q1 was printed in 1608 and Q2 in 1619.

It has been agreed upon that the Q2 is a corrected copy of Q1, or at least it was an attempt to correct Q1. I use the word attempt because there are many mistakes from Q1 untouched in Q2’s text as well as new errors not in Q1. In W.W. Greg’s book on the variations between the Quartos, he states that Q1 and Q2 “present us with widely divergent texts, and whatever theories may be advanced as to their origin, editors and critics agreed that the text of the Folio is generally very much better than that of the Quarto” (Greg 137). The errors in Q1 and Q2 are significantly detrimental to the performance script because verse is set in prose, prose in verse, and there is a minimal use of punctuation in the Q which effects the cognitive understanding of the text.

Why is the Q such a corrupt edition? What was the source of the Q? For years the Quarto was believed to have been created from a short hand transcription of a performance. In 1953, with *Textual Problems in the First Folio*, Dr. Alice Walker introduced the idea that the Quarto came from a memorial reconstruction by the actors who played Goneril and Regan. This theory was contested in 1961 by George

Ian Duthie, editor of the new Cambridge edition. Duthie argued that the Quarto versions of *King Lear* were unlike other “bad quartos.” There are no patterns of consistency that would support the theory that the Quarto was from two actors’ recollections. Duthie argued that it could have come from dictation of the entire company. Modern critics seem to think the Q was taken from Shakespeare’s foul papers, and it may have been a “first draft” of an entirely revised edition of the F.

Many scholars believe the F derives from the corrected copy of Q. The divergences between the two editions could come from faults made by the compositors and printers. It is obvious that the F is a better text; it is “more regular and consistent in spelling and punctuation, more accurate in distinguishing verse and prose, better in its alignment of verse, and fuller in its stage directions. It [also] divides the play carefully into acts and scenes” (Wells 6). So, if the F is a more carefully composed copy of Q2, why are the Q and F so different, and why does the F show resemblances of both Q1 and Q2?

W.W. Greg completed an extensive examination of this question by documenting all the differences between the Q1 and Q2 and then comparing them to the F. Greg found that many pages in the Q2 show no significant variants from Q1 and continued to depict the uncorrected pages. Only sheet D of the Q2 is a corrected version of Q1.

Q2’s corrected sheet D is duplicated in the Folio, yet many of the uncorrected Q1 pages remain as well. Greg furthers his analysis of the Folio’s source and its relationship to the Quartos by documenting possible emendations in the F edition. Of course there are clearly defined corrections in spelling and punctuation in the Folio,

but what about the ones that are not corrected? Greg notes that the F contains partially corrected emendations which may have been amended by the copy editor but then corrupted by the printer. Some of the F revisions do not follow Q1 or Q2 but portray corrections, but at other times the F is corrupt while the Q2 version holds the authoritative source and is usually adopted by scholars.

From this, Greg speculates that the Folio's text is dependent on Q, but he argues it was not transcribed from a specific copy of Q. He speculates that the F text came from a manuscript of *King Lear* rather than a printed quarto version. He concludes that "the folio has in some instances inadvertently reproduced errors of the quarto in place of what we must assume to have been the readings of the playhouse manuscript" (187).

Phillip Williams in his essay "Two problems in the Folio text of *King Lear*" agrees with Greg that the F is not from a corrected version of Q but from manuscript. In deciphering this opinion, Williams looks at the role of compositor during publication. He notes that there are semblances in spelling between the two editions. This leads him to believe that compositor B worked on both the Q2 and FF, but he finds different techniques between the two versions. He states that "what compositor B did when he sat directly from a copy of Q1" (485) was entirely different than what can be deciphered from F. From this Williams concludes "compositor B was not setting directly from a corrected copy of Q1" (485) when working on the Folio. This theory supports Greg's idea that the F text comes from a manuscript, and Williams hypothesized that the F may have come directly from a transcribed promptbook.

New theories revolving around the Q vs. F debate arose in the 1980 Shakespeare Association of America's annual meeting. The topic of this conference was 'The Textual Problems in *King Lear*.' A compilation of these essays were compiled by Gary Taylor and Michael Warren into a book titled *The Division of the Kingdoms*. In the preface they state that "our aim commissioning contributions was to produce a comprehensive study of several outstanding issues pertinent to the hypothesis that both texts represent independent versions of *King Lear*" (v.) They chose the title of the book from the Q version of "kingdoms" to represent the two "kingdoms" of *King Lear*'s texts.

In Stanley Wells' essay "The Once and Future King Lear," he states that in production, the performance text is decided upon by directors and or actors, not an editor. In the process of creating a text for the stage, one must first understand that text in all of its variances.

It is an amateurish critic who writes of a Shakespeare play without knowing something about the static of the text: which words are suspected of corruption, which are emendations, which stage directions are editorial, which passages differ significantly in collateral texts, or are omitted from one or the other of them. (2)

Wells, along with many other critics, has created extensive research on the alterations between the two texts and how they should be used in production.

Editors have struggled with the composition of the Q and F and their relationship to one another. Which one should be used? Nicholas Rowe in 1709 conflated the two editions because he believed the Q and F were both "imperfect" and

dependent on one another. This theory has been followed by numerous editors and is still practiced today. Modern editors usually put brackets around the parts of the text varying between Q and F. It is this theory that Taylor and Warren argue against in *The Division of the Kingdoms*.

The new theories conjecture that the F was actually a revised copy that represents the way *King Lear* was originally performed on stage. They support the belief that the mistakes in the F text are due to “anonymous compositors, scribes, and actors rather than Shakespeare himself” (Wells 10). Gary Taylor argued that *King Lear* was revised by Shakespeare between 1609 and 1610. To support his theory he looked at the differences between the French/British war and the new developments in Albany’s character. The realization of these variances between the two editions has led scholars to assume the F is a totally independent text from Q.

In 1984, Sidney Thomas challenged this theory in his article “Shakespeare’s Supposed Revision of *King Lear*.” In this essay Thomas theorizes that the corruptions from the Q versions which are still apparent in the F disclaim the idea that the texts were independent plays. Why would Shakespeare take the time to revise his play into a new and corrected *King Lear* while leaving major uncorrected textual problems? Three “dramatic inconsistencies and ambiguities in *Lear*...are present in both the Q and F” (508).

The first are the references of strife between Albany and Cornwall. This subject of discord between the dukes is never developed and ends abruptly when Cornwall dies. If Shakespeare were revising the play into a tighter and more efficient text, why would he leave these irrelevancies in his new play? Second, in both the Q

and F there are stage directions for Regan to kill Gloucester's servant, but in 4.2. a "Gentleman reports to Albany that the servant was slain by Cornwall" (508). This mistake is present in both versions of the text. The last example Thomas gives to support his argument is the character of Curan. This character is only present in 2.1 and then is never seen nor mentioned again. In a revision, why would Shakespeare leave an irrelevant character in the play? From these questions, Thomas concluded that the theories from the Shakespeare Association of America's 1980 convention "have inclusively demonstrated the integrity of the Folio text, though they have failed to make an equally convincing case for the excellence and independence of the Q text" (511). He does not think that the Q was a first edition and the F a second. He conjectures that due to the nature of the Q, the F reflects dependence on the Q.

I support that both the Q and F are somewhat imperfect and conflation is necessary when one text is superior to the other. I agree that the F text has more authority over Q and that it is better suited for a performance text. When editing *King Lear* for our production, we began by cutting the three hundred lines found only in the Q. Most of these involve extra dialogue by Poor Tom and scenes that are not needed to progress the action of the plot such as the mock trial scene and extended scenes between Albany and Goneril.

Renaissance dramatists were different from what we conceive a playwright to be today. Their scripts were not fixed and varied depending on the performance. Their copies were revised and adapted to suit the needs of their audiences; therefore, I believe in modern productions of Shakespeare it is necessary to develop a performance text using all sources available. Our goal for our production was to keep

the pace moving and get the play's performance under three hours. In doing so, we cut entire scenes. The role of a dramaturg as text advisor is to supervise the continuity of these cuts and alterations.

CHAPTER XI

PRODUCTION HISTORY

There is a lack of information concerning the early productions of *King Lear*. The first recorded performance of Shakespeare's *King Lear* states that it was performed at before James I at Whitehall in 1606. With the emerging Restoration, Shakespeare's texts were cut and adapted for the next two hundred years. The Restoration was an age of heroic tragedies involving idealist love passions and happy endings. According to *A History of English Drama*, "The tragedy of the heroic sort cannot be dissociated from its age: it must be explained not as an isolated phenomenon, as a dramatic species out of touch with its time, but as an integral part of Restoration theatrical endeavor" (Nicoll 87). Therefore, these heroic and domestic tragedies cannot be examined separate from the time period in which they were written. To us today, they might seem silly, but they fulfilled the expectations of their time.

King Lear was not the only Shakespeare play mutilated during the Restoration; "*Romeo and Juliet* was made into a tragic-comedy...[and] *Macbeth* was made into an opera" (Nicoll 172). Other changes to texts include alterations in the language, making them more simple, characters become heroic, and the texts are cut, adapted, and conflated to unify productions.

King Lear became popular with Nahum Tate's adaptation in 1681. Tate did not like Shakespeare's version of *King Lear*. He thought Shakespeare's *Lear* was a "Heap of Jewels, unstrung and unpolisht" (Hughes 118). To understand these arguments against Shakespeare's text, one must first understand the Restoration time period. During this time there was a necessity for unities of time, scene, action, and the characters were supposed to be believable. Tate's version of *Lear* incorporated all of the Restoration ideals. He added a romantic relationship between Cordelia and Edgar. The character of the Fool is eliminated completely, Kent retires to a monastic cell, and Tate leaves Lear and Cordelia alive in the end, much like the historical account of Lear rather than Shakespeare's plot. There are no first hand reports of the first performance using Tate's edition other than "sketchy reports of [Thomas] Betterton's hot-tempered, choleric delivery of the curse of Goneril" (Williamson 1).

The most notable performances of the eighteenth century were based on Tate's rendition of *King Lear*. One of the most memorable productions was David Garrick's production at Drury Lane in 1756. He kept most of Tate's alterations and emendations, cut over two hundred lines, but he restored some of Shakespeare's original verse. In this 1756 performance Garrick was celebrated for his delivery of Goneril's curse in 1.4 in which he "discarded the crutch he kept at hand, moved to the front of the stage, and knelt close to the audience, clasping his hands together and lifting his eyes toward heaven" (1). Many critics believe this choice for his performance was obviously a conscious decision made to contrast the less popular 1747 production. In 1747, Garrick was criticized for crying during this scene because it was very unmanly.

On the last night for Garrick to perform *Lear* in 1773, George Stevens, an English scholar known for working with Samuel Johnson, gave a lauding critique of Garrick's famous curse scene. He said, "Shakespeare, indeed, has written the curse exquisitely; Garrick, however, gives it additional energy, and it is impossible to hear him deliver it without an equal mixture of horror and admiration" (7).

During this time, there were other productions of *King Lear* including the less popular Spranger Barry production in 1756, and George Colman's production in 1768 which lacked popularity for restoring Shakespeare's language.

In 1788, Philip John Kemble gave his performance as *Lear* at Drury Lane. Kemble has been remembered for his "stateliness and formality" (9). He would arrive at an interpretation and then fix that character absolutely for the rest of his career. William Hazlitt commented "that Kemble minds only the conduct of his own person, and leaves the piece to shift for itself" (Rostran 158).

In reference to his 1795 production, Kemble attracted attention to himself with strategic drums and trumpets playing every time he entered the stage. When *Lear* left the stage at the end of 3.1, there was a huge clap of thunder, and flash of lightning hit him in the face (158). A description of Kemble's *Lear* in 1801 by Thomas Dutton states that:

Kemble gave a masterly portraiture of the old, feeble, broken hearted monarch, assuming all the decrepitude of a man, who, as he himself tells is turned fourscore. His plaintive tones [echo] a heart oppressed with woe; and even in his assumption of madness, there was a kind of solemnity, mixed with

the wildness of frenzy, perfectly congenial with the nature and complexion of Lear's despair. (Williamson 71-72)

Even though most reviews were positive, there were the occasional not-so-great ones. One of these more negative critiques of the performance came from Leigh Hunt in 1808. She was not disappointed in the performance as a whole, but she felt that Kemble "personated the King's majesty perfectly well [hence the attention he drew to himself], but not the King's madness" (Williamson 10). She did give good reviews to Edgar because of his fluidity and ease through the Poor Tom character.

King Lear was banished from the stage for a short duration due to the state of King George III's mind. It was speculated that the king was insane; so *King Lear* could not be performed with its depiction of a mad king. After the death of King George III in 1820, the bans were lifted from *King Lear*'s restriction and it immediately returned to the stage.

The first to revive *King Lear* was Edmund Kean in 1820. Kean was the complete opposite of Kemble; instead of emphasizing the majesty of Lear, Kean focused on the fervor and vitality of Lear's character. This production became well known for its realistic storm sequence "complete with realistic sounds of thunder and magic lantern projections" (Williamson 10).

In an unsigned review in *The Times*, London, on April 25, 1820, an anonymous reviewer praised the production and Kean's portrayal of Lear's descent into madness. Goneril and Kent's characters are both applauded for their beautiful developments as well. The critic found Lear's address to Regan one of the finest

passages. He felt that Kean truthfully and feelingly united sarcasm and sorrow in Lear's lines:

Dear daughter; I must confess that I am old

Age is unnecessary; on my knees I beg

That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food. (2.4.154-156)

On the other hand, the force of the storm scene did not impress the reviewer; "the tempest [was] exhibited with so much accuracy that the performer could scarcely be heard amidst the confusion" (11). This continues to be an issue today when producing *King Lear*.

Other reviews include Henry Crabb Robinson's on April 26, 1820. In this review he lauded Kean's portrayal of madness. William Hazlitt saw Kean's Lear as a ranting old man, and he said that audiences swore to never see Garrick's performance of Lear again because it was too terrific and overwhelming. Hazlitt felt that the audiences who never wanted to see Kean's production again did not want to see it because of a lack of interest.

The nineteenth century audiences were expecting a Garrick or Kemble rendition and were disappointed with Kean's production. Hazlitt said, "We had thought that Mr. Kean would take the possessions of this time-worn, venerable figure,... but he failed; either from insurmountable difficulties, or from his own sense of the magnitude of the undertaking" (13). In the end, Hazlitt does add a positive note in his review commending Kean for the reconciliation scene between Lear and Cordelia.

William Charles Macready, one of the most distinguished actor-managers of the nineteenth century, witnessed Kean's production. In 1820 Macready wrote in his diary that he saw moments of brilliance in Kean's performance, but he did not think Kean lived up to his previous standards. He did not think Lear should be played as a feeble old man but one full of energy so that the decay of Lear's life would be more noticeable and tragic, and he did not feel that Kean's performance incorporated this power. These were things he took into consideration before producing his own production of *King Lear* in 1838.

In 1837, Macready began the preparations for his production of *Lear* at Covent Garden. Macready's 1838 production was famous for the restoration of Shakespeare's original ending and the return of the Fool. Macready eliminated Tate's romantic relationship between Edgar and Cordelia, but he still permitted many of the cuts and adaptations of an un-restored edition. In his performance script the acts closed on high dramatic moments, the blinding of Gloucester was only suggested, not seen, and Gloucester's attempted suicide at Dover was completely eliminated.

In a review by John Forster on February 4, 1838, Forster commends Macready for bringing the Fool back to the stage. Though it was a small part and played by a woman, Forster described "Miss P. Horton's Fool as exquisite a performance as the stage has ever boasted" (17). Forster was a fan of the Fool's quick wit and sarcasm, and he described the contrast between the Fool's "loving devotion, acute sensibility, despairing mirth, [and] heartbroken silence" with "the rigid sublimity of Lear's suffering, with the huge desolation of Lear's sorrow, with

the vast and outspread image of Lear's madness—[as] the noblest thought that ever entered into the mind and heart of man" (17).

Henry Crabb Robinson, who liked Kean's previous version, believed that Macready gave a "satisfactory performance" (18), but he did not like the reinstatement of Shakespeare's Fool. This proves that even though the Restoration was over, the effects it had still lingered in the theatrical world.

Over the latter half of the nineteenth century, there were many attempts to slowly bring back more of Shakespeare's original text. In 1845, Samuel Phelps produced *King Lear* in an almost authentic form. It was widely accepted, but there were still too many people who would rather see Tate's version of *Lear*. Due to the lack of grandeur and spectacle, which were the most popular theatrical elements of the time, preferred Charles Kean's Macready-esque production.

Charles Kean's production at the Princess's Theater in 1858, kept the Fool, and restored even more of Shakespeare's language, but to simplify the plot, Kean cut the mock trial and the blinding of Gloucester completely. The reduction of Shakespeare's plot was described in a review saying, "As Kean simplified the plot, he also reduced the scale, scope, and resonance of the tragedy" (Halio 234). Yet, the production was not considered a failure considering the time period: "While Kean may have failed to grasp the true nature of Shakespearean tragedy, . . . he understood clearly the tastes and expectations of his audiences. His reduction of *King Lear* to a domestic tragedy met those expectations" (235). Kean adapted Shakespeare into a melodrama in order to meet the popular demands of the nineteenth century audiences.

The last production of *King Lear* in the nineteenth century was Henry Irving's 1892 production. Henry Irving was the actor-manager of the Lyceum and had contemplated the role of Lear for several years before accepting it. He was known for his elaborate settings including *Lear's* set with Roman and Druid ruins. Even though the setting was grand, and beautiful Ellen Terry played Cordelia, Irving's version drastically cut up Shakespeare's text, and the elaborate scene changes made the production over four hours long. He reduced the original twenty-six scenes of the play into sixteen, cutting almost half of the play. Even though Irving received mixed reviews, his portrayal of Lear has become legendary.

Since Irving had been considering the role for many years, his Lear was very intellectual. In an article from *The Saturday Review* on November 19, 1892, it commended Irving saying, "There is no moment of weakness, no moment when the subtle study does not impress its full effect from every conceivable point of view" (Williamson 33). Though his understanding of Lear's character was impressive, he was critiqued for his use of strange mannerisms. Frederick Wedmore, commenting on the same production, described Irving's performance by saying:

—those tricks of voice and of delivery of voice, of walk, of gesture, of a restlessness not free from the suggestion of mechanism...and along with the mannerisms there seemed less than usual of powerful interpretation of significance and happy invention, of the material of thought. (33)

In *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, on December 10, 1892, it commented on Irving's strange mannerisms, but it insinuated that the mannerisms fit into the character of Lear. During the reconciliation scene between Lear and

Cordelia, which most critics said was the high point of the performance, Irving actually licked Cordelia's tears.

Over the centuries *Lear* has been a feared role for its level of difficulty. Most productions were both loved and hated, but each one was significant in influencing future generations. It has been a slow but steady struggle to restore Shakespeare's *King Lear* from Tate's defacement in the seventeenth century. Even though the text and plots were not the *King Lear* we think of today, performances and productions, such as David Garrick's and Henry Irving's, remain momentous productions in the history of *King Lear* in performance.

With the restoration of Shakespeare's text, instead of Tate's happy adaptation, and the spectacular productions of *King Lear* in the nineteenth century, *King Lear* regained its popularity on the stage. Shakespeare's text became standardized at the beginning of the twentieth century, but the text is still cut and adapted for performances. Over the last century, the world's greatest directors and actors have tackled the tragically epic *King Lear*. In addition to traditional theatrical productions, *King Lear* has been adapted for film and television as well.

The first modern director to produce *King Lear* was Harley Granville-Barker. In his *Prefaces*, published in 1927, Barker argued that "for theatre to be expressive it must be, above all, simple and unaffected: a distillation of language, of gesture, of action, of design, where meaning is the essence" (Eyre 29). In 1940 Harley Granville-Barker directed John Gielgud, at thirty-five years old, as Lear at the Old Vic. For his Shakespearean productions he aimed for fluidity and rhythm on stage. He kept the action flowing from one scene to the next. Barker told Gielgud, "There is

no off-stage time in Shakespeare... Shakespeare knew how to convey an effect of time passing without realism" (Gielgud 111). Barker opted for "heroic naturalism" setting *Lear* in a pagan Britain. The production elements included fantastic costumes, naturalistic acting, intense lighting, and realistic sound. In Gielgud's *Stage Directions* he reveres Barker's directing methods. "He encouraged grand entrances and exits centre-stage, a declamatory style, [and] imposing gestures. Only under his subtle hand these theatrical devices became classic, tragic, noble, not merely histrionic or melodramatic" (111). Barker saw Shakespeare's texts as scripts waiting to come alive, and he supported a Brechtian collaborative process.

Also in 1940, *King Lear* was making waves in America. German director, Erwin Piscator's first American production was Shakespeare's *King Lear*. He dramatized the contemporary political controversies in Germany as part of his Dramatic Workshop at the Studio Theatre in New York.

Peter Brook's 1962 production of *King Lear* at the Royal Shakespeare Company has become legendary in Shakespearean production history. In Jan Kott's essay "*King Lear* or Endgame" he comments that:

The scene of tragedy has mostly been a natural landscape. Raging nature witnessed man's downfall, or—as in *King Lear*—played an active part in the action. Modern grotesque usually takes place in the midst of civilization. Nature has evaporated from it almost completely.

(Kernan 346)

Kott notes that *King Lear* is grotesque because the tragedy of the grotesque is its inevitability, and the characters are victims of their own actions which they cannot

escape. This heavily influenced Brook's ideas for his production of *King Lear*. "The play was revealed in all its elemental force in a production that refused the audience the comfort of making judgments on the characters. Their universe was without moral absolutes, a permanent condition of fallibility, moral ambiguity and frailty: Shakespeare as Beckett's contemporary" (Eyre 50).

Brook saw the play as the "thing itself" and focused on the text not spectacle. He destroyed the original set and opted for a bare stage with minimal props and non-period costumes. Three sheets of metal were lowered for the storm scene in 3.2. In Kott's book *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, he discusses his work with Brook.

In my conversations with Peter Brook I once tried to persuade him to show how all the characters of this drama descended lower and lower. I wanted the early acts to be performed on a large platform placed high up on the stage and to demonstrate physically, materially, visibly as it were, the disintegration and descent. Brook did not need any of these naïve metaphors. The disintegrated world does not grow together in this production just as it does not grow together in Shakespeare's play.
(Ioppolo 57)

This production received mixed reviews. Stanley Wells lauds Brook, and his production influenced Peter Hall's *The War of the Roses*. Others criticized Brook for cutting the humanity out of the text, such as eliminating Edmund's repentance in 5.3. Dennis Kennedy, in his article "*King Lear* and the Theatre," remarks that "the characters in general tended to be dehumanized, [and] were often treated as puppets or automatons" (42).

Trevor Nunn revived *King Lear* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in 1968 with Eric Porter as King Lear. Nunn's production created a pagan world for the play. His production has been remembered for its costumes and the relationship between Lear and the Fool. Milton Shulman says, "Trevor Nunn's impressive production at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon relentlessly drives home the philosophical message of this massive, almost intractable, masterpiece" (London Evening Standard 11.4.68).

In 1982, Adrian Noble followed in Nunn's footsteps and directed *Lear* at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Michael Gambon played the role of King Lear, and Anthony Sher was the Fool. Sher's Fool has become one of the most famous in all of history. For the Fool, Sher and Noble created a simple-minded Beckett-esque clown. In his *Beside Myself: An Autobiography*, Sher says, "my research into court jesters had revealed that they were often cripples or freaks, their disability regarded as funny. I scrunched up the fool and gave him inward-twisting legs" (Ioppolo 91). Sher wore a white face and a red clown nose too. Another memorable aspect of this production, is that Noble had Lear accidentally kill the Fool in 3.6.

Female director, Deborah Warner, presented *King Lear* at the National Theatre in London in 1990. Brian Cox played Lear, and acclaimed actor Ian McKellen played Kent. She used the red nose idea from Noble and gave the Fool, Lear, and dead Cordelia red noses. Ian McKellen on the production:

Brian Cox as the king was allowed a wheel chair and I as Kent got to sit down in the stocks. Otherwise it was a long evening of standing around on an empty stage... Out of difficulties can come

success and Cox's *Lear* was properly energized and very moving and much praised wherever the production toured.

(www.hollywoodbyline.homestead.com/playerIanMcKellen.html)

In 1994, a Japanese rendition of *Lear* called *The Tale of Lear* was directed by Suzuki Tadashi at the Barbican Theatre in London. Suzuki's theory stated that theatre is like a hospital; so the hero is an old man who, left all alone in a hospital after the disintegrating family ties, has nothing to do but wait for death. Critics called Suzuki's *Tale of Lear* a masterpiece.

Three significant productions of *King Lear* came out of England in 1997. Richard Eyre directed *King Lear* at the National Theatre which was adapted for the BBC in 1998. Ian Holm played King Lear. Critics found the play dark yet deeply moving. John Peter from the *Sunday Times* noted, "Ian Holm has entered a special hall of greatness...He portrays a truculent little man who watches people, not so much to find out what they think or feel, as to see what effect he is having on them."

Also that year, Peter Hall directed Alan Howard as Lear at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. For this production Hall followed the Folio version of the text. In an article in *The Independent* on March 9, 1997, it states that "what Hall is putting on stage is a reflection not just of his own theatrical instincts, but of the most advanced academic thinking about this tragedy and about Shakespeare's text in general." Hall chose the Folio for its "clearer, harder, tougher, richer, and more compulsive" text that creates a more theatrically exciting version for performance. Sheridan Morley from the *Spectator* on April 4, 1997, states:

Hall and Howard's *Lear* is heroic, mainstream, heartbreaking

and dazzling in its confidence; unlike many other recent revivals, there is never a moment when the production, on a brilliantly jagged set by John Gunter, seems in conflict with the text. The fidelity is all, and it is more than enough.

Another not so applauded production was produced at the Haymarket Theatre in Leicester, two women attempted to conquer *King Lear* in performance. Helena-Kaut-Howson directed Kathryn Hunter as Lear.

The impression is that Kaut-Howson has approached the production largely from the angle of practical problem-solving, firstly in finding a dramatic basis for a cross-cast *Lear* and then in dealing with the resultant ramifications of the devices she uses. Structure takes primacy over either individual performers or distinctive collective tone, leaving Hunter, Magri, and occasionally one or two more swaying uncertainly at the summit of an unsteady edifice of performance.

(www.cix.co.uk/~shutters/reviews/97015.htm)

In 1999, another Japanese *Lear* came to the stage at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. This production was directed by Yukio Ninagawa with Nigel Hawthorn as Lear and Hiroyuki Sanada as an acrobatic Fool. This production received abusive reviews due to the cultural clash which alienated cultural aspects in the play. Richard Chilvers in the *Stratford Herald* said, “the concepts seem neither fully Japanese nor Elizabethan nor modern, but a dissonant clash of all three and all the technical mastery of sound and light cannot disguise it.” Sheridan Morley in the *International Herald Tribune* stated:

it seems largely based on the amazed discovery that Nigel Hawthorne is not a heroic actor and that the priorities here appear to be somewhat Japanese...Ninagawa has approached the play from curious angles, sometimes emphasizing the unimportant and missing the crucial, but it is never less than interesting, and we have a lot to learn by simply seeing a familiar classic in these very unfamiliar ways.

Recently in 2004, an extremely popular Noh production of *King Lear*—*His Shadow (King Lear kage boushi)* was produced by the Ryutopia Company at the Umewaka Noh Gakuin Kaikan, Tokyo. This production consisted of an all female cast with actress Kayoko Shiraishi as King Lear. In a review by Nobuko Tanaka in *The Japanese Times*, stated:

As odd as it may seem to have an actress playing Lear, from the moment Shiraishi's rich and expressive voice first filled the auditorium, it is unlikely that anybody in the audience gave it another thought as she lorded it magnificently over the entire production. It seemed quite fitting, especially in this "edited" *Lear*, for a woman to be showing us the profound emotional changes the king toils through on his tragic way to attaining a state of selflessness—here linked to a Zen state of nothingness—the revelation is the nub of this interpretation of the drama.

King Lear has also been reproduced on the big screen and adapted to modern films. Below is a filmography of *King Lear*.

1909 *King Lear* silent adaptation Directed by William Ranous

1948 *King Lear* Directed by Royston Morley

1949 *Gunsundari Katha* (India) Directed by Kadri Venkata Reddy

1953 *King Lear* Directed by Peter Brook with Orson Wells as Lear

1970 *King Lear* Directed by Grigor Kozintsev with Yuri Yarvet as Lear

1971 *King Lear* Directed by Peter Brook with Paul Scofield as Lear

1982 *King Lear* Directed by Jonathan Miller with Michael Hordern as Lear

1983 *King Lear* Directed by Micheal Eliot with Lawrence Olivier as Lear

1984 *King Lear* Directed by Alan Cooke with Mike Kellan as Lear

1985 *RAN* Directed by Akira Kurosawa

1988 *King Lear* Directed by Tony Davenall with Patrick Magee as Lear

1997 *A Thousand Acres* Directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse

1998 *King Lear* Directed by Richard Eyre with Ian Holm as Lear

2000 *The King Is Alive* Directed by Kristian Levring

2001 *King of Texas* Directed by Uli Edel with Patrick Stewart as John Lear

Production Photos of *King Lear*



Fig. 2. David Garrick as King Lear Copyright © RSC



Fig. 3. Macready as King Lear © Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Archives



Fig. 4. Henry Irving as King Lear and Ellen Terry as Cordelia (1892) © RSC



Fig. 5. Henry Irving as King Lear © RSC



Fig. 6. A souvenir booklet from the Lyceum Theatre performance of King Lear starring Henry Irving, 10/11/1892 © RSC



Fig. 7. A Playbill from a Japanese performance of King Lear sent to Henry Irving by R. F. Walsh



Fig. 8. John Gielgud as King Lear and Jessica Tandy as Cordelia (1940) © RSC



Fig. 9. John Gielgud (1940) © RSC



Fig. 10. John Gielgud as King Lear (1950) © RSC



Fig. 11. James Booth as Edmund and Irene Worth as Goneril, Dir: Peter Brook 1962

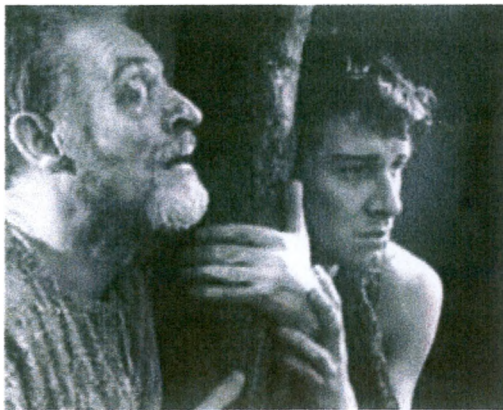


Fig. 12. Alan Webb as Gloucester, Brian Murray as Edgar, Dir: Peter Brook, RST, 1962 © RSC



Fig. 13. Eric Porter as King Lear (1978) Dir: Trevor Nunn © RSC

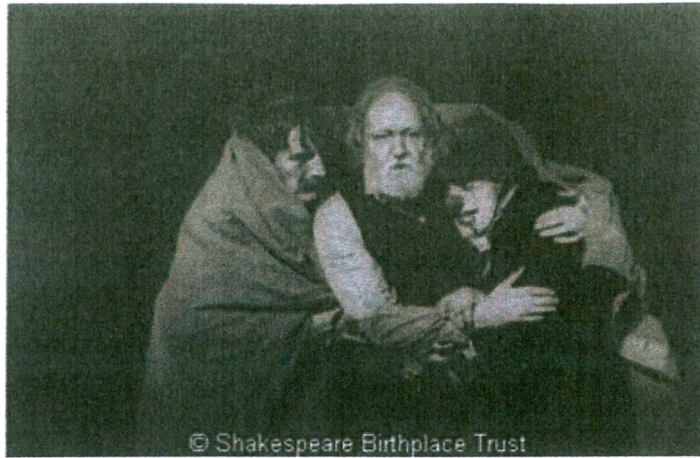


Fig. 14. *King Lear*, 1982, directed by Adrian Noble, designed by Bob Crowley. The photograph shows, from left to right, Kent (Malcolm Storry), King Lear (Michael Gambon) and the Fool (Antony Sher) huddled together in the storm, Act 3 Scene 2. © Shakespeare Birthplace Trust



Fig. 15. Iam Holms as *King Lear* (1997) Dir: Richard Eyre
Taken from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/bookcase/lear/eyre.shtml>



Fig. 16. Kathryn Hunter as *King Lear* (1997) Dir: Helena Kuat-Howson
Taken from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/bookcase/lear/hunter.shtml>



Fig. 17. Anna Chancellor as Regan, Sian Thomas as Goneril, Dir: Yukio Ninagawa, RST, 1999 © RSC



Fig. 18. Copyright 2000 © Shizuoka Performing Arts Center



Fig. 19. Kayoko Shiraishi as King Lear with daughters



Fig. 20. Taken from: <http://202.221.217.59/print/features/theatre2004/ft20041222al.htm>



Fig. 21. King Lear (2004) © RSC

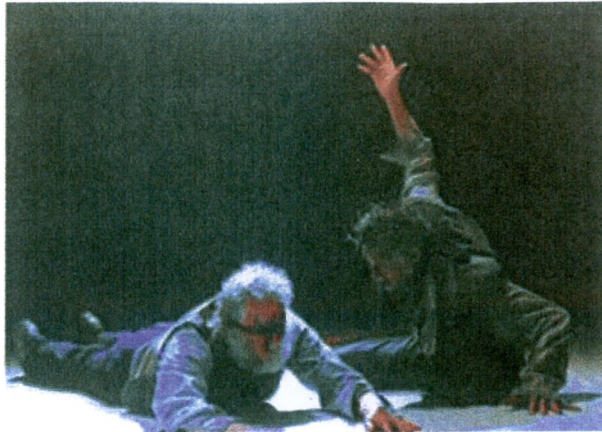


Fig. 22. King Lear (2004) © RSC



Fig. 23. King Lear (2004) © RSC



Fig. 25. King Lear (2004)

Taken from: <http://www.rsc.org.uk/lear/current/gallery.html>

CHAPTER XII

SELF EVALUATION AND PRODUCTION CONCEPTS

In this self evaluation I plan to discuss the continuous process of a production dramaturg, my personal operation and utilization as dramaturg for Texas State's 2005 production of *King Lear*, and what I have learned from this experience. The trials which dramaturgs are faced with can only be overcome with the knowledge of dramaturgical experience. There are no concrete rules, and this experience has been a journey for me over the past year. It has been a learning experience, and I hope others found me as a useful and educational resource. The major goal of a dramaturg is to help establish and support the mission of the production in which he or she is working on but be flexible enough to mediate and aid in the collaboration of ideas.

I have found that the role of the dramaturg is to ask why. Why this show? Why now? What do we want to get out of this production? These are the first steps a dramaturg must take when initially preparing to work on a production. I found that we decided on this show because it was the right time for both the director and lead actor in their careers; it was time for a Shakespearean tragedy on our mainstage, and we had the production resources to pull off such a huge production. The themes in *King Lear* are universal and pertain to all ages, which is suitable for an educational setting. Watching *King Lear* as a young adult is different than seeing it at the age of

seventy, or as a single father, or as an older sister whose little sister gets everything she wants. Shakespeare dug deep into human nature and the dialectics of human experience when creating this play. Our goal was to uncover these extremities for our audience and engage them on an apocalyptic journey through human suffering.

In order to bridge the emotional experience of the characters with the audience, one must begin with the text itself. I never knew there was so much to editing! Shakespeare's art of discourse is layered with extended metaphors, hidden similes, and detailed imagery. The job of a dramaturg is to know the text and its meanings better than anyone else on the production. I sometimes felt that this was an endless battle for me because there was no way I could possibly know *King Lear* better than my teacher and director.

The editing process was amazing to watch and help with. It took me over a month to edit one scene, and I could not fathom cutting the entire script by over twenty percent. I feel that over the course of the process I have become much more familiar with the text, its different versions, and the continuity between the scenes than I was when we first began. I think the process would have been easier for me had I been as comfortable with the text as I am today, but that is part of the learning experience.

Another preliminary role of a dramaturg is to collect iconography. I began by looking at Mannerism. We picked mannerism because its movement was around the same time period of the Renaissance in which Shakespeare lived. According to Giancarlo Mairino's book *The Portrait of Eccentricity*, mannerist art depicted a mix of extravagance and caprice. The parallel between the stylized Mannerist art and

realistic Baroque art “suggests that the evolution of culture can thrive on progress and stagnation at the same time” (89). Mannerist art portrays the juxtaposition between man-made forms and natural images. The Mannerist artists over stylized their images with muscular and elongated bodies, and they moved the focal point of the pictures or sculptures away from a center point of focus. I chose to focus my iconography on this type of art because the world depicted in *King Lear* is a world in transition. We used ideas from their techniques especially in the set design. Examples of Mannerist paintings, sculpture, and architecture can be seen in chapter XIII on iconography.

One of the hardest tasks for me was learning how to ask the right questions. I am a very opinionated person, and I sometimes force my opinions instead of asking questions. I know that in America many directors feel like dramaturgs undermine directorial authority. Oscar Brockett goes in to a lengthy discussion of this topic in his essay “Dramaturgy in Education.” As a dramaturg I feel impelled to constantly question concepts and interpretations, yet the fine line between ideas and directorial decisions is easy to cross. I found that many of my questions would sound like biased questioning of decisions being made, and I had to find a way to mitigate my personal feelings and refocus on my role as supporting the production concepts, not challenging them.

A dramaturg should be the nucleus of a production, and in order to be in this position, it is imperative that a dramaturg attend the preliminary production meetings. It is in these meetings that a dramaturg will establish a working relationship with all of the production team, not merely the director and actors. I missed quite a few of the meeting which eventually alienated me from my job. As a dramaturg I had to find a

way to get back in and keep going. I worked closely with the costume designer and had some conversations with the set designer over concepts, goals, and tactics to meet these goals. It was really interesting to watch all of our ideas synthesize into a solid production concept. In the beginning the costume designer looked at haute couture and modern designs, but as the production concept evolved, we chose a military and very masculine world for the play, and the costumes represented this idea. The set designer began with images of shattered glass and ended up creating a fractured set with jutting poles that go nowhere, unsymmetrical steps, and uneven levels.

If I had the process to do over again, I would try to collaborate more with the lighting and sound designers. These are the aspects of theatre I know the least about. I would like to know what words in the text or actions lead to the different colors of light chosen or what process the sound designer goes through when looking for music.

Once the rehearsal process began it was a rocky start. I did not receive new cuts that had been made to the text, and so on our first read-through I did not have the correct edits and was very embarrassed. I also found myself as that person actors go to when they want to complain. From *The Artist's Way*, my character archetype is the nurturer, and so it feels natural for me to try and help. I learned this is not a good idea as a production dramaturg. The role of the dramaturg is not to be a buddy but a mediator. From this I learned to be more authoritative as a dramaturg. When an actor asks "why was my line cut," I tell them in an unbiased way the scholarly decisions behind the editing of the text. Every single alteration to our production script was deliberate and supported by scholarly research and upheld the continuity of text.

I felt my dramaturgical skills were best utilized when after rehearsal one night we decided to dramatically cut the text. The show was running over three hours, and college students, especially the ones forced to be there, do not want to sit through anything that long. Our goal was to chop off around twenty minutes. My job in this process was to go through the text, considering both the folio and the quarto editions, and find the most plausible places for editing. I was so proud when the next day many of my ideas were also the ideas of my director. I felt I was finally catching on to the editorial process of Shakespearean dramaturgy.

I also enjoyed working with the actors. As a dramaturg I wanted to be an accessible historical and textual resource for them. For our first rehearsal I created a worksheet that gave the fundamentals of meter and scansion. I wanted them to look at the text as a tool for creating their character. I loved it when actors would bring their scripts to me, and we would sit down and go over each line. I worked on meter, explained the language, and I would discuss concepts with them in relation to historical context. For instance I talked with the actor playing Kent about his place in the social hierarchy, the laws and customs of the time, and what it would have meant for a nobleman to be put in the stocks.

I constantly asked the actors questions. If you last exited 2.4 and you do not return until 3.7, where has your character been, what has he or she been doing? I also tried to keep them pumped up and excited. I know getting notes from the director, vocal coach, and dramaturg can be a bit frustrating and overwhelming for actors, so I always tried to end with a positive critique and constant encouragement.

The only dramaturgical job that I felt I could have done more in would be the educational outreach role of a dramaturg. I am very pleased with my handout, and I hope it sparked some curiosity in the students. My goal was to make something easy, simple, informational, and visually inviting. I chose to create a newspaper that gave historical, biographical, and textual information. I decided to create a Tabloid because everyone notices the papers with the big picture of a half baby half bat on the cover. Our generation's attention is drawn towards the shocking. For this reason I chose headlines such as "300 Burned at the Stake!" I can only hope that at least one student saw that title and was interested enough to read the brief account of Bloody Mary's reign in England.

I also brought an actor to the Intro to Fine Arts class to do a monologue. When given this opportunity I immediately knew what I wanted to have performed for the class. I chose Edmund's 'Stand up for Bastards' monologue, first because it has a cuss word. I know this can not be the right reason, but these students will hear that word even if they do not hear anything else. The second reason was because the actor playing Edmund was saucy and could be extremely entertaining to watch. I heard that his performance sparked conversation after we left. That makes me feel like my mission was accomplished.

Other than working on outreach for college students, I wish I had worked with a high school program as well. Next time I work on a Shakespeare play I would like to collaborate with either a high school Drama or English teacher so as to help their students learn how fun Shakespeare can be after they get over their fears of Shakespeare's language. Shakespeare's plays are stories of love, violence, murder,

revenge, jealousy, lust, and just about everything else kids watch in movies. I feel that if they could get past their preconceptions of 'Shakespeare' that they could really enjoy Shakespearean plays. This is my goal for next time.

Overall, I feel that I learned as much as I helped. I found where my strengths are and where my weaknesses are. There were times, especially because it was to be my thesis, I found myself emotionally attached to the show; I felt it was my baby, and it was hard to let go of this. I had to separate myself as a student from my job as a dramaturg. As a student I am opinionated, I do not always know what I am doing or how to go about things, but as a dramaturg I learned to be supportive and always have scholarly material to back up my opinions.

CHAPTER XIII

ICONOGRAPHY

The purpose of this chapter is to compile the iconographic research I utilized in my dramaturgical process. I have included a couple of paintings of *King Lear* in art, but the bulk of this chapter focuses on Mannerist art, sculpture, and architecture. I felt drawn to the paintings of El Greco because they seemed to illustrate a nightmarish world. These pictures, especially *The Opening of the Fifth Seal of the Apocalypse* to me portrayed the world created in *King Lear*. I chose to look at human figures and their curves juxtaposed with the rigid lines of man-made objects especially in architecture. The goal for my iconography was to give visual images that depicted imagery that created a connection with internal emotions towards the pictures.

King Lear and Cordelia in Art



Fig. 26. William Blake (1779)

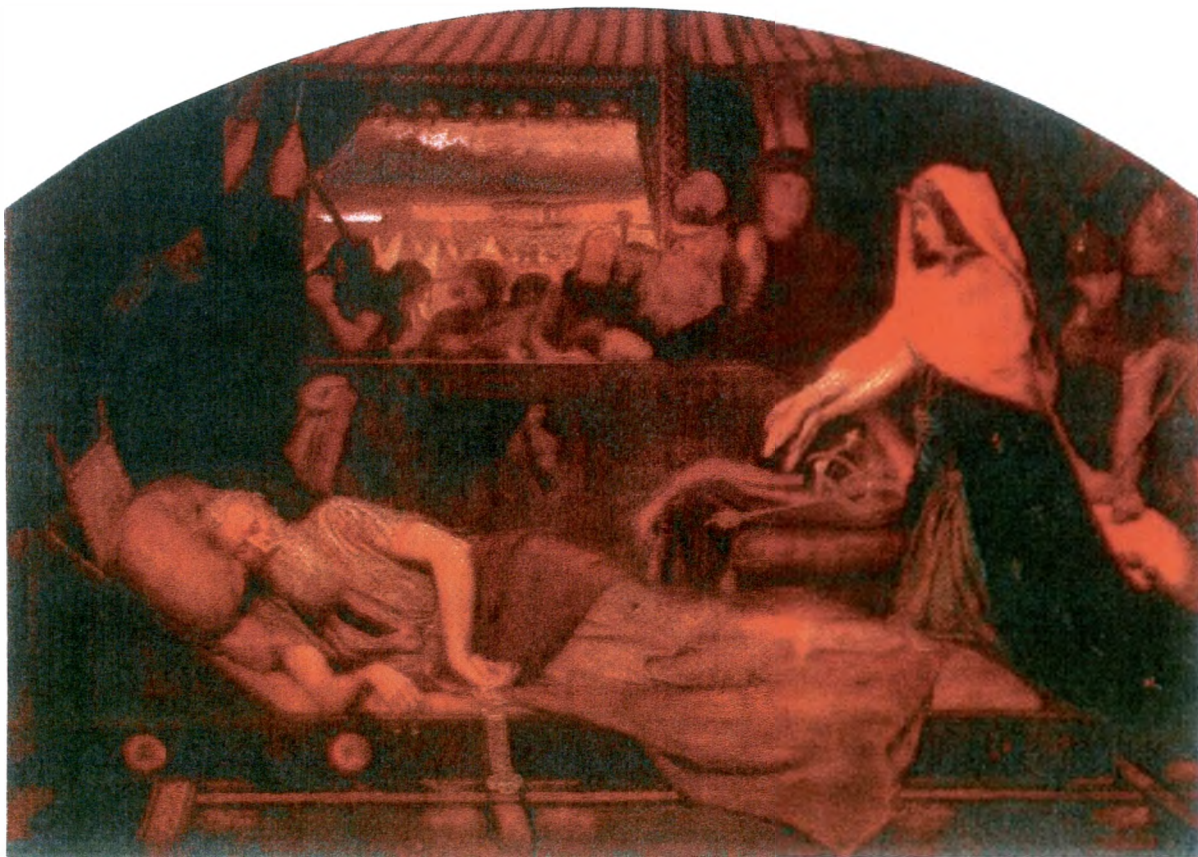


Fig. 27. Lear and Cordelia, Ford Madox Brown (1849-54)

Fig. 27. Lear and Cordelia, Ford Madox Brown (1849-54)
Iconography

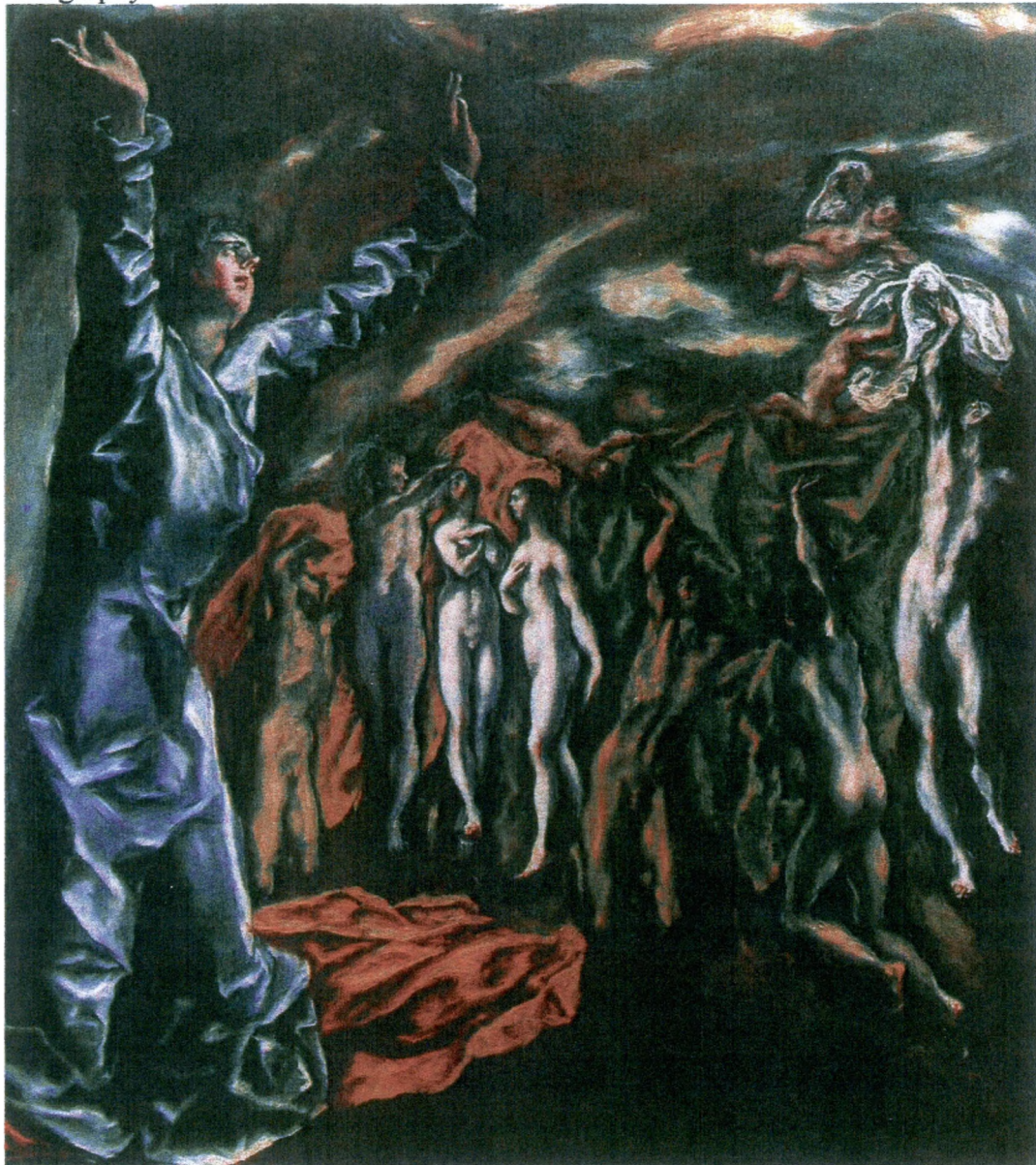


Fig. 28. The Opening of the Fifth Seal of the Apocalypse, El Greco (1610-1614)
http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/g/greco_el/

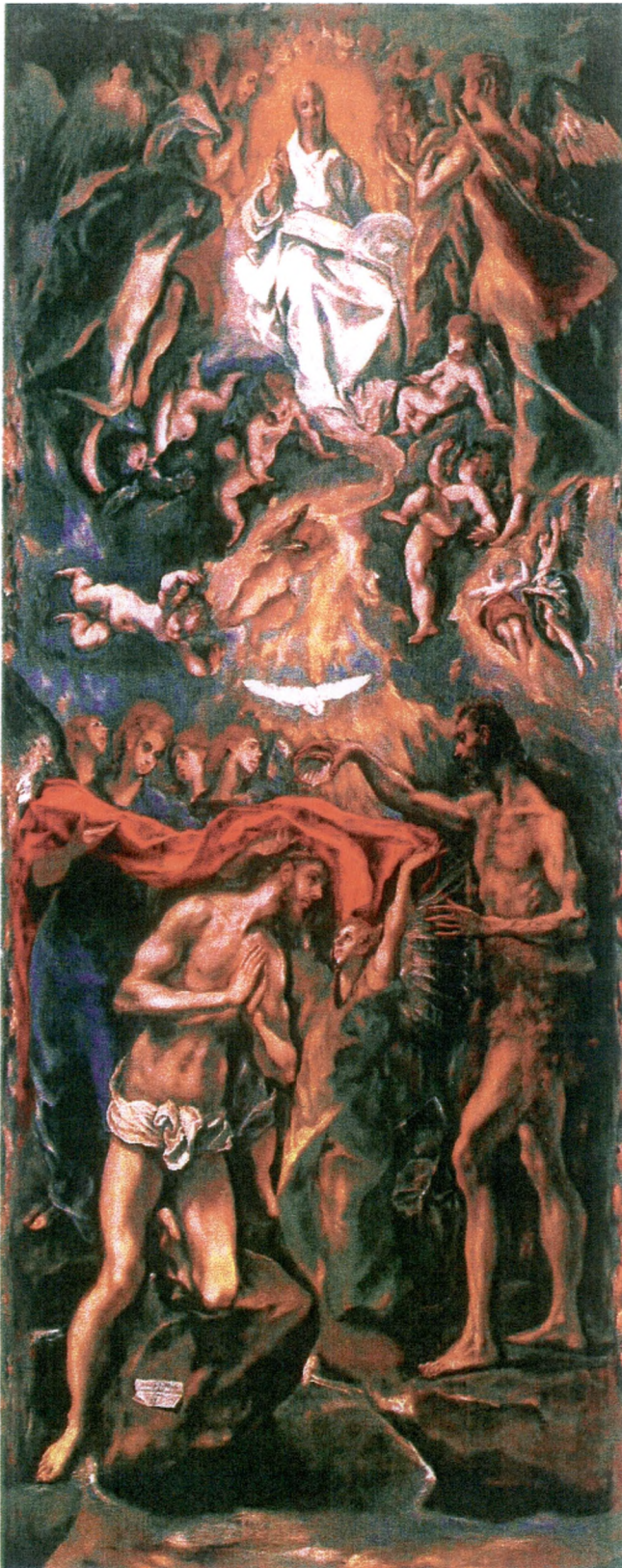


Fig. 29. Baptism, El Greco (1597)

www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/greco/baptism-1597.jpg



Fig. 30. Toledo, El Greco (1604-14)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/g/greco_el/



Fig. 31. Laocoön, El Greco

<http://itech.pic.cc.fl.us/cschuler/clt1500/review/grecolaocoon.html>



Fig. 32. Winter, Giuseppe Archimboldo
<http://www.illumin.co.uk/svank/biog/arcim/winter.html>

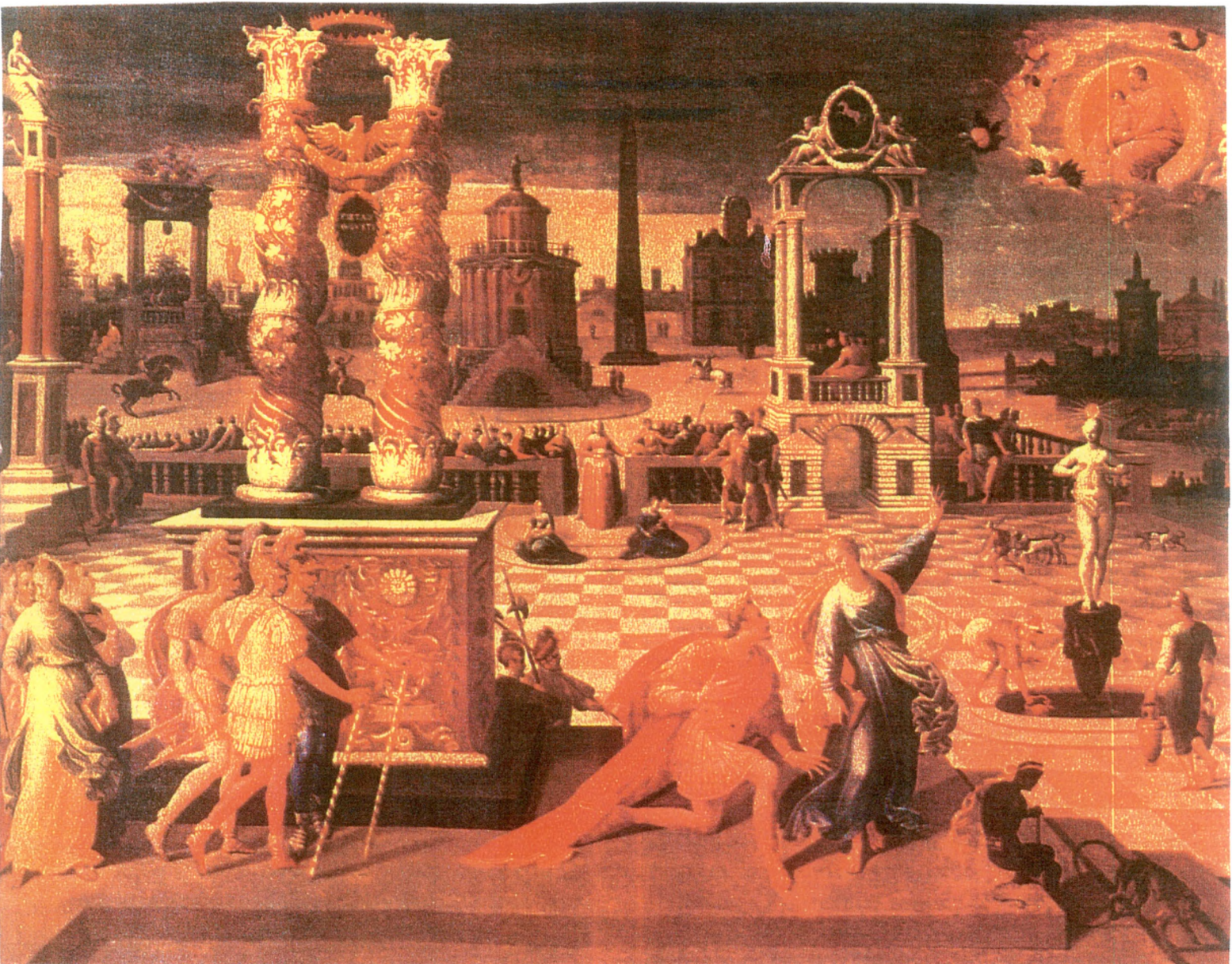


Fig. 33. The Emperor Augustus and the Tribune Sibyl, Antoine Caron (1580)
The Louvre, Paris



Fig. 34. The Birth of the Virgin, Fra Carnevale (1467)



Fig. 35. Melancholia I, Albert Durer (1514)
www.metmuseum.org/toah/images

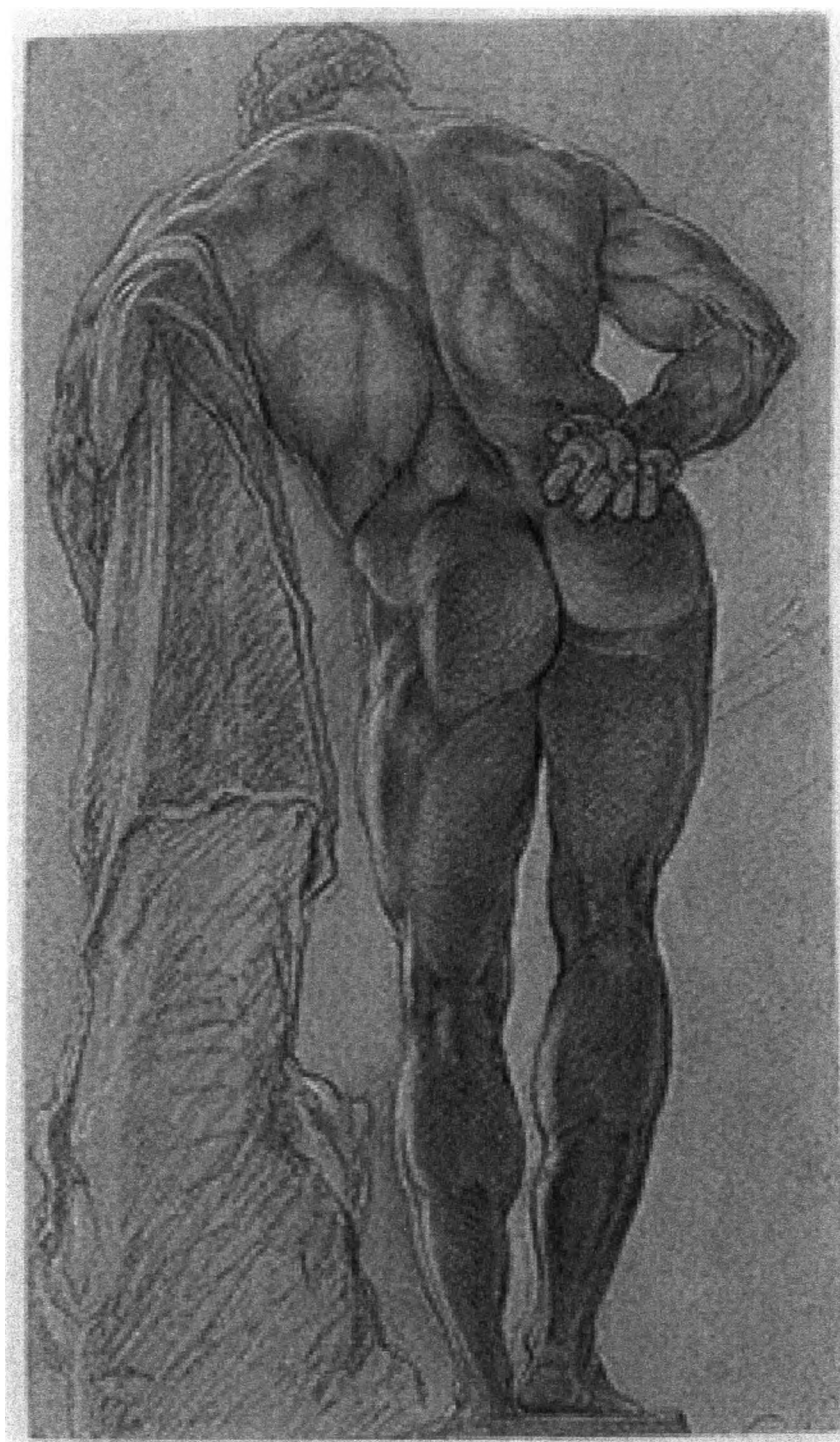


Fig. 36. Farnese Hercules, Hendrick Goltzius (1592)
www.metmuseum.org/toah/images

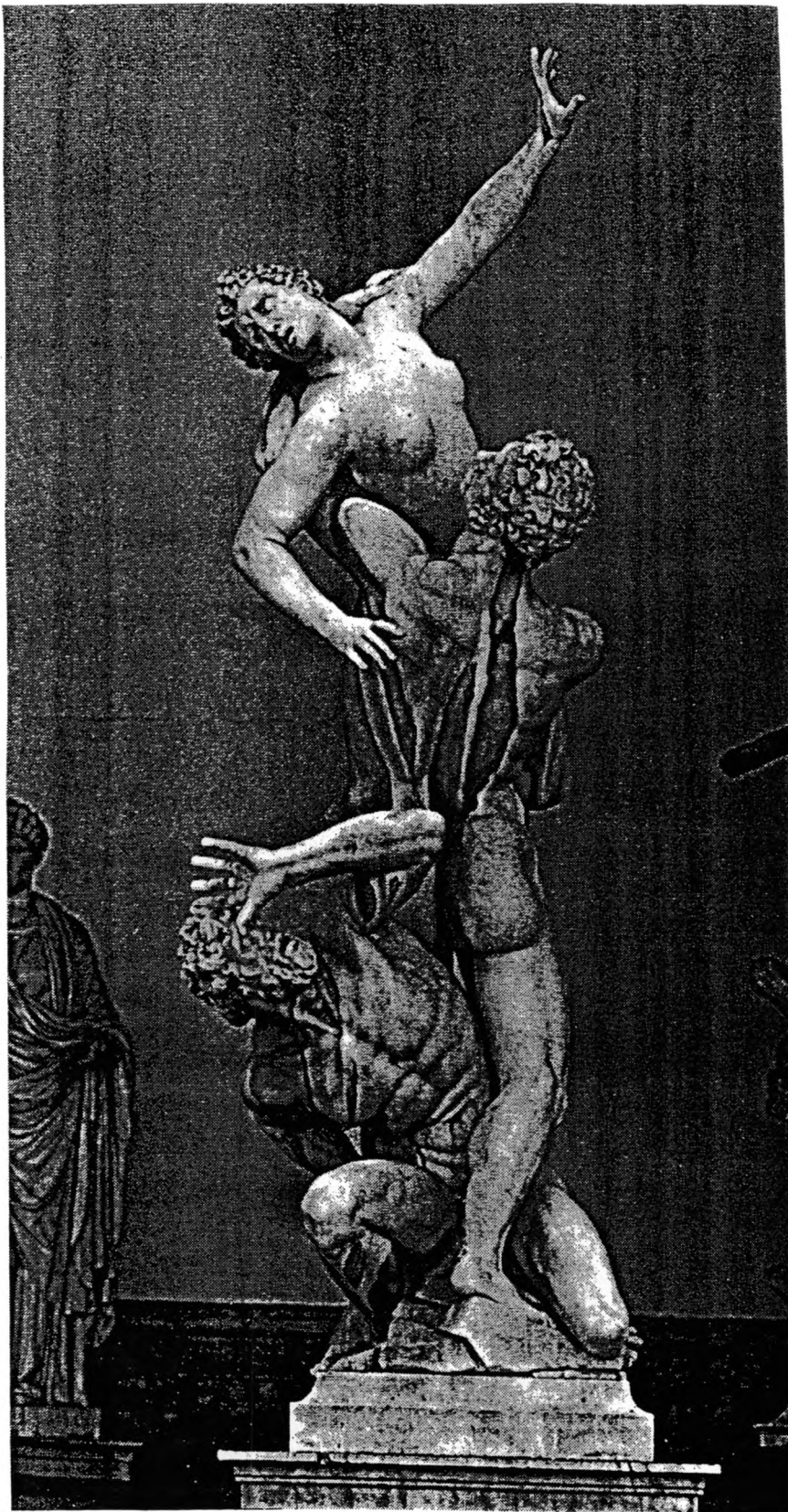


Fig. 37. Rape of a Sabine, Giambologna (1582)
Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence



Fig. 38. The Tempietto, Donato Bramante (1502)
Rome



Fig. 39. Façade of a garden pavilion, Giorgio Vasari, Bartolomeo Ammannati, and Jacopo Vignola (1551-55)
Villa Giulia, Rome



Fig. 40. Varsari's staircase, Michelangelo (1555-1568)
Vestibule of the Laurentian Library

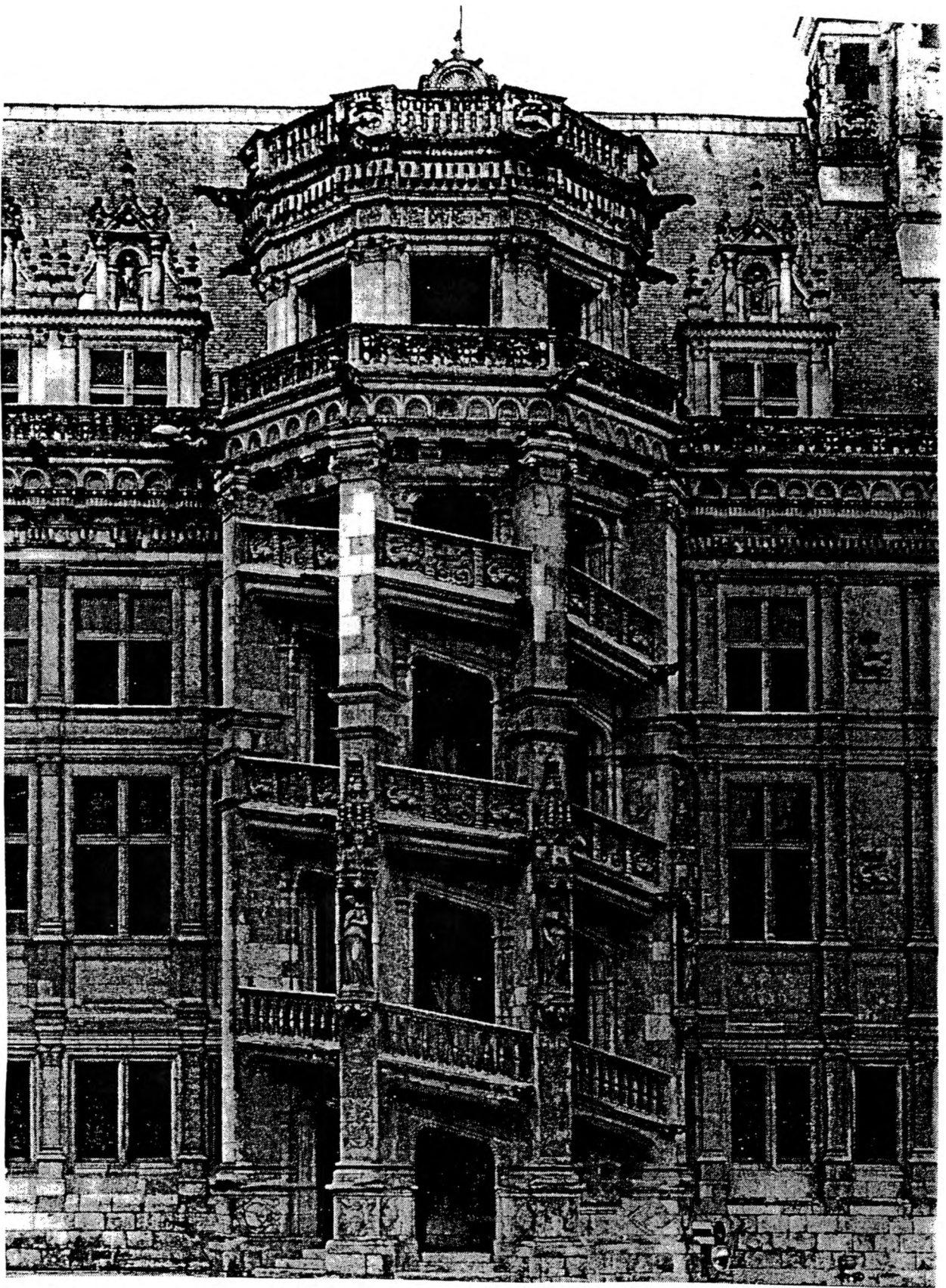


Fig. 42. Staircase Francois I Wing, Chateau of Blois (1515-1524)

CHAPTER XIV

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

I have included in this chapter supplementary material including:

1. Press Release
2. Program Notes
3. Program
4. Reviews
5. Educational Worksheet for 2111
6. Text Handout for Actors
7. Production Photos

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For Immediate Release

Shakespeare's Classic Tragedy *King Lear* On Stage at Texas State University
Texas State University's Department of Theatre & Dance presents *King Lear* by William Shakespeare. This apocalyptic play is an epic portrayal of two families' destruction in a world of love, exile, murder, and madness. When Lear decides to abdicate his throne, he sets into motion a chain of events that eventually destroy him and his kingdom. Directed by Dr. Deborah Charlton, and with faculty member, Michael Costello playing the title role of Lear, this performance promises to be a theatrical evening to remember.

King Lear will be performed on the Theatre Department's Mainstage from April 7-9, 14-16 at 7:30pm and April 10 and 17 at 2:00pm. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$5 for students and can be purchased at the University Box Office in the Theatre Centre Building located at the corner of Moon Street and University Drive, San Marcos. Tickets will go on sale March 31st. For reservations please call 245-2204. Warning: this performance contains graphic violence and may not be suitable for children.

For more information please call Victoria Alvarez at 245-2147 or Winzer Smith at 245-286.

San Marcos Daily Record

2nd Year No. 244

Subscribe: 392-6143

Wednesday, March 9, 2005

www.sanmarcosrecord.com

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Love, betrayal and madness

Michael Costello, playing the mad King Lear, and Susan Lynch, his betrayed daughter Cordelia, are part of Texas State University theatre department's production which opens April 7. The classic Shakespearean tragedy will play at 7:30 p.m. April 7-9 and 14-16 and 2 p.m. April 10 and 17 on the Theatre Center's main stage. (Photo by Don Anders).

Program Notes

King Lear and Renaissance England

King Lear was written around 1605 during a time of anxiety and transition in England. The Tudor dynasty had ended with the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. Following months of anxiety over who would succeed the queen, there was a brief period of stability when King James I became the first Stuart monarch of England. This stability quickly ended in 1605, when a group of religious zealots attempted to blow up James I with dynamite. It was an anonymous letter that saved James's life. Shakespeare used these events to set up the foundation for *King Lear's* plot. Lear abdicates his throne, and characters, such as Edmund, attempt to overthrow the little authority Lear has left in order to gain power.

People in Renaissance England had an acute awareness of mortality due to the large number of casualties caused by epidemics. The Bubonic Plague, also known as the Black Plague, swept across England in 1582, 1592, and 1603. During these years the death toll rose 20%, and an estimated 38,000 people died in 1603. The violence, mutilation, and numerous deaths in *King Lear* echo the morbid reality of 17th century England.

As England's government and society changed, so did the value of family traditions. In 1603, Sir Brian Annesley's eldest daughter attempted to have him declared insane in order to claim his estates. It was his youngest daughter, Cordell, who stood up for her father. This parallels Lear's relationship with his daughters. Shakespeare may have known about this specific event because Cordell married the father of Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton.

The world of *King Lear* is set in the debris between the fall of one kingdom and the beginning of a new one. Shakespeare used historical events and anxieties to help create an emotional connection with his audiences. Universal themes of death, destruction, and regeneration continue to shape audience responses to *King Lear*.

Winzer Smith

Production Dramaturg

Theatre Faculty

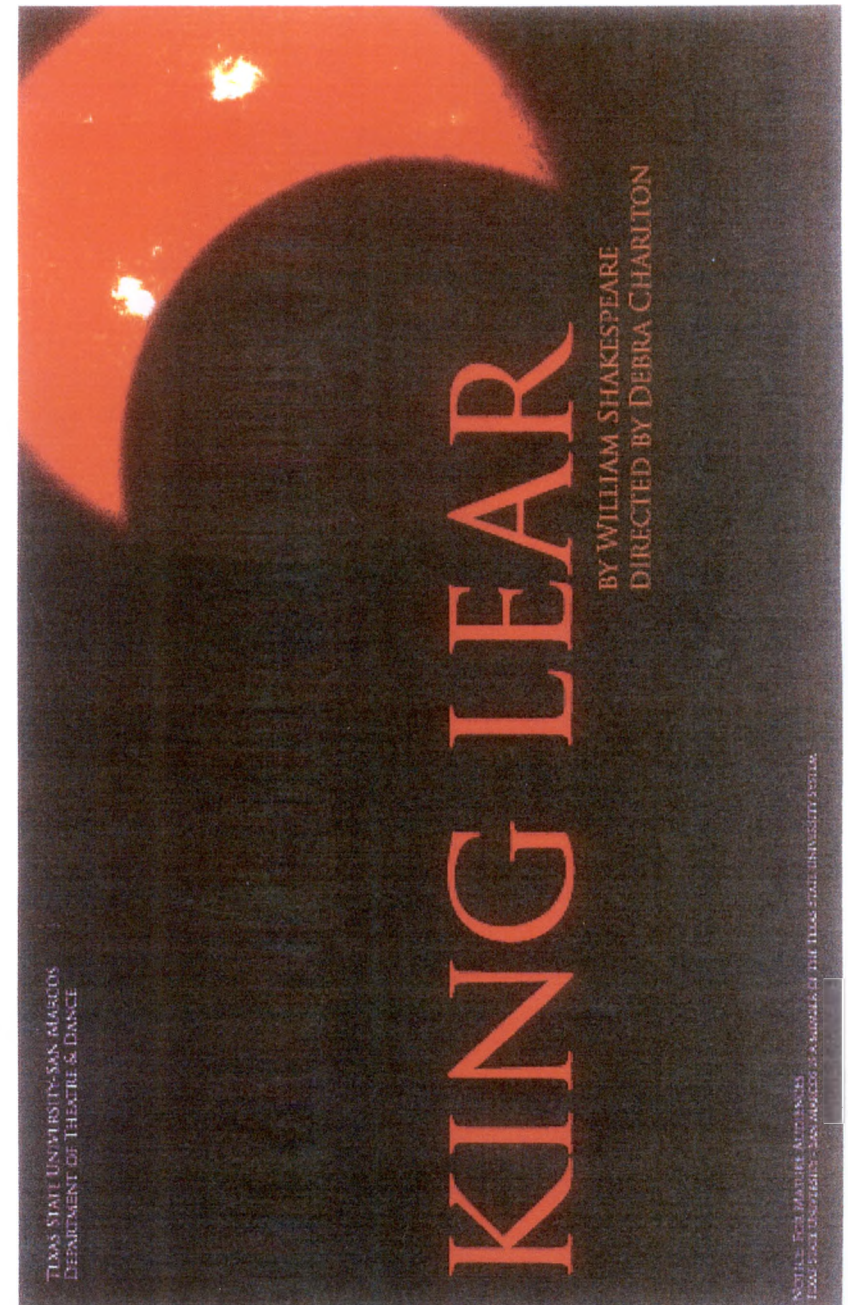
Jamie Paige Bishop, M.F.A.	Acting for Stage and Film
Peggy Brunner, M.M.	Singing for the Actor
Debra Charlton, Ph.D.	Theatre History, Acting for Stage
Michael Costello, M.F.A.	Directing, Acting for Stage
Diana Duecker, M.F.A.	Lighting Design
John Fleming, Ph.D.	Director of Graduate Studies, Theatre History
Melissa Grogan, M.F.A.	Vocal Coach
Sherla Hargett, M.F.A.	Costume Design
John Hood, M.F.A.	Theatre Management
E. Jay Jennings, M.A.	Movement, Acting for Stage
Jodi Jinks, M.F.A.	Acting for Stage
Jerry Knight, M.A.	Supervisor for Student Teacher
Laura Lane, M.F.A.	Acting for Stage
Frederick J. March, M.A.	Academic Advisor
Sandra Mayo, Ph.D.	Ethnic Theatre, Director Multicultural & Gender Studies
Monica Mitchell, M.F.A.	Head of Teacher Ed., Child Drama
Modrea Mitchell-Reichert, M.A.	Introduction to Fine Arts
Charles Ney, Ph.D.	Head of Acting, Directing for Stage
Michelle Ney, M.F.A.	Head of Design & Technology
Charles Pascoe, Ph.D.	Head of Child Drama
William R. Peeler, M.F.A.	Lighting Design
Paul Schimelman, B.F.A.	Stage Combat
Shane Smith, M.F.A.	Technical Theatre, Scene Shop Supervisor
Richard Sodders, Ph.D.	Chair, Directing for Stage & Film
Christin Yannacri, M.A.	Introduction to Fine Arts

Dance Faculty

Karen Earl, M.Ed.	Ballet, Modern Dance, Jazz
Fanny Fife, M.S.	Beginning Ballet, Jazz Dance Pedagogy
Shay Ishii, B.S.	Modern Dance, Performance Workshop
Jennifer Moore, B.A.	Ballet
Michelle Nance, M.F.A.	Dance as an Art Form, History of Dance
	Advanced Ballet
Caroline Sutton, M.F.A.	Ballet, Introduction to Fine Arts
L. Anne Stedman, M.F.A.	Director of Dance, Dance Performance
	Advanced Modern Dance
Pat Stone, M.A.	Dance Composition, Dance Improvisation
Olivia Whinner, M.A.	Dance Improvisation

Staff

Annie Patton	Administrative Assistant
Sandra Foglia	Dance Administrative Assistant
Shane K. Smith	Scene Shop Supervisor
Homa Khosh-Khui	Costume Cutter/Draper
Costume Shop Manager	Lindsey Jones
Matthew Harrington	Box Office Manager
Victoria Alvarez & Liz Watts	Publicists
Paul Billington	House Manager



KING LEAR

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DIRECTED BY DEBRA CHARLTON

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY-SAN MARCOS
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DANCE

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY-SAN MARCOS
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DANCE
KING LEAR, 2003

King Lear and Renaissance England

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Winzer Smith
Production Dramaturg

Texas State University-San Marcos
Department of Theatre & Dance
Presents

KING LEAR

By William Shakespeare

Directed By
Dr. Debra Charlton

Costume Design
Sheila Hargett

Lighting Design
Dr. David Nancarrow

Scene Design
Paige Moore

Sound Design
Brian White

Production Stage Manager
Laura Marshall

Fight Choreographer
Paul Schimelman

Production Dramaturg
Winzer Smith

For Mature Audiences

There will be a 15-minute intermission.
Please turn off all cell phones, pagers & electronic watches.
Please no flash photography.

Cast List

King Lear.....	Michael Costello
Cordelia.....	Susan Lynch
Goneril.....	Yvonne Ybarra
Regan.....	Kristi Turner
Edgar.....	Aaron Weilsinger
Edmund.....	J Hernandez
Fool.....	Blake Hamman
Earl of Gloucester.....	John Carroll
Earl of Kent.....	Tyson Rinehart
Lear's Knight #1.....	John Flores
Old Man/Lear's Knight #2.....	Steve Harmon
Oswald.....	Daniel Aston
Duke of Cornwall.....	Bobby Moreno
Doctor/Lear's Knight #3.....	Chris Climer
Duke of Albany.....	Harlan Short
King of France.....	Andrew McMennamy
Duke of Burgundy/English Soldier #1.....	Matthew McBride
Servant/French Soldier #1.....	David Boswell
Gloucester's Servant/English Soldier #2.....	Micah Sudduth
Lear's Knight #4/French Soldier #2.....	Chris Cornwell
Lear's Knight #5.....	Clark Reed
Captain of the Guard.....	Ben Shaw

Artistic Staff

Assistant Director.....	Rich Martinez
Dramaturg.....	Winzer Smith
Fight Captain.....	Ben Shaw
Vocal Coach.....	Melissa Grogan
Poster Design.....	Christina Arnold

Production Staff

Stage Managers

Stage Manager.....	Laura Marshall
Assistant Stage Managers.....	Claire Sappington Liz Watts

Costume Staff

Head of Costume Design & Technology.....	Sheila Hargett
Head Cutter/Draper.....	Homa Khosh-Khui
Costume Shop Manager.....	Lindsey Jones
Assistant to the Costume Designer.....	Jillan Hanel
Graduate Student Assistant.....	Winzer Smith
Makeup Special Effects.....	Glenda Barnes & Kyle Mohr
Wardrobe Supervisor.....	Andrea Hood
Costume Shop Assistants.....	Amanda Staudt, Eric Mund, Andrea Hood, Molly McKee, Katie Owens, Rick Moreno, Katie McCullough, Sara Salas, Jessica Allen, Jonathan Blackwell, Crystal Schaffer
Costume Construction Crew.....	Costume Construction Classes
Costume Running Crew.....	Rachel Brown, Kyle Mohr, Heather Capello, Kevin De Vos, Kaela Jocher, Veronica Esparza

Technical Staff

Lighting

Lighting Design Faculty Supervisor.....	Diana Duecker
Lighting Design.....	David Nancarrow
Master Electrician & Assistant Lighting Designer.....	Sarah Lazorwitz
Assistant Master Electrician.....	Amanda Harris
Lighting Assistant.....	Sarah Lazorwitz, Dylan Henderson
	Stage Lighting Class

Scenery

Scene Design Faculty Supervisor.....	Michelle Ney
Scenic Designer.....	Paige Moore
Shop Supervisor.....	Shane K. Smith
Head Carpenter.....	Rafael Padilla
Scene Shop Assistants.....	Todd Deaver, Paige Moore, Sarah Lazowitz, Brian White, Alex McDonald, Bohb Nelson, Rafael Padilla, Truman Phelps, Don Roose III
Scene Shop Crew.....	Stagecraft Classes
Scenic Artists.....	Paige Moore, Michelle Ney & Truman Phelps
Set Running Crew.....	2111 Class
Graduate Assistant.....	Zach Stecklein

Props

Properties Supervisor.....	Vlasta Silhavy
Properties Construction.....	Vlasta Silhavy & John Boulanger

Front of House Staff

Publicity.....	Victoria Alvarez, Liz Watts & Rory Roberts
Box Office Manager.....	Matthew Harrington
Box Office Staff.....	Blake Hamman & Amber Lackey
House Manager.....	Paul Fillingim

Special Thanks

Tina Packer
Dennis Krausnick
Jay Jennings

About the Company

Debra Charlton (Director) received her Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin with a specialization in Shakespearean theatre. She joined the faculty of Texas State University in 1999 and currently teaches courses in Classical Performance, Dramaturgy, and Dramatic Theatre and Criticism. At Texas State, she supervises the production dramaturgy program and the Texas at Stratford Shakespeare Study Abroad program. Dr. Charlton began her career as a professional actor at Houston's Alley Theatre. She has since directed many productions, including *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Agnes of God*, *The Ruby*, and *Hay Fever*. She has also worked as a production dramaturg on numerous plays, including *Measure for Measure*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Little Night Music*, and *The Learned Ladies*. Dr. Charlton is currently at work on a book, *Holistic Shakespeare*, which explores classical performance pedagogy.

Winzer Smith (Dramaturg) is in her final year as a graduate student working towards her M.A. in Theatre History and Criticism. She received her B.F.A. in Directing from Texas State University. She has worked as production dramaturg on *Zing! Ding! Ding! Ring! Ring! Ring!* for Troupe Texas and on *Furious*, *The Two Lives of Nathaniel Dupree*, and *The Winter's Tale* for Texas State University. She is a member of the Shakespeare Association of America, Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America, Austin Script Works and Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society.

Paige Moore (Scene Design) is a senior B.F.A. Design & Technology student from Fort Worth. She has worked as Scenic Artist and Scene Shop Assistant for *A Little Night Music* and *The Learned Ladies*. She also worked as head carpenter for *Metamorphoses* and as a puppeneier for *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Sheila Hargett (Costume Design) has been Head of Costume Design/Technology at Texas State University for thirty-three years, and has designed costumes for more than one hundred productions and supervised student designs for over seventy-five. She has also designed regionally for The Dallas Shakespeare Festival, Southern Methodist University, Eastfield College, Texas Playwrights Theatre Company, Live Oak Theatre, and Zilker Theatrical Productions. She has received three AMOCCO American College Theatre Awards for her work and her designs have been seen in several theatrical exhibits—DESIGNFEST at the Texas Educational Theatre Association Conference, Design Southwest Showcase, several National USITT Expo Exhibitions, and the 2003 International Prague Quadrennial Exhibit. In the spring, her work will be included in the World Stage Design Exhibit in Canada. While primarily a costume designer, Sheila began her career as an actress and still occasionally “crosses the boards”—her favorite roles have been Mary Tyrone in *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Fraulein Schneider in *Cabaret* with Larry Hovis, and Linda in *Death of a Salesman*, also with our beloved Larry Hovis.

David Nancarrow (Lighting Design) was born and raised in England. As a young man, he came to the United States to attend college. He earned degrees from the University of Virginia, Yale University, and the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Birmingham (England). For forty-seven years, David Nancarrow has worked as a theatrical designer. He recently retired after serving on the faculty of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Texas at Austin since 1963. During the past five decades, he has designed lighting and scenery for many plays, dance works, musicals, and operas. He has been the resident Lighting Designer for the Austin Lyric Opera since 1987, and has designed forty-six of their productions; most recently, productions of Puccini's *Tosca* and Strauss' *Elektra*. He has designed for Ballet Austin, the Vancouver Opera Company, the Actor's Repertory of Texas, the State Theatre, and the Austin Theatre Alliance.

Brian White (Sound Design) is a junior in the B.F.A. Design & Technology program, and this is his first year at Texas State University. He received his Associate of Arts degree from San Jacinto College Central, and plans to pursue an M.F.A. in scene design. This January, Brian was given the top award for undergraduate scene design at the T.E.T.A. Designfest in Dallas.

Paul Schimelman (Fight Choreographer) is the Stage Combat Instructor for the Texas State Theatre Department where he has served as the resident fight choreographer since 2000. In addition, he is a faculty member at the University of Texas and Head Coach of the University of Texas Fencing Team. Mr. Schimelman has worked on local, regional, and national productions since 1986; beginning in New York where he started his foray into theatrical combat as a natural extension of his martial arts training. Although he has worked with children's groups, secondary schools, professional theatrical companies, and seminars of all ages, he considers his involvement with collegiate theatre to be his most challenging and fulfilling experience to date.

Melissa Grogan (Vocal Coach) is certified as an Associate Teacher of Fitzmaurice Voicework and holds an M.F.A. in Acting from University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She combines her expertise in acting with her training and in-depth knowledge of the voice to help her students or clients achieve their most expressive and flexible voice. In the past she has helped private clients that include actors, lawyers, teachers, and aspiring politicians (to name a few) sharpen their vocal skills.

Rich E. Martinez (Assistant Director) is a graduate of Texas State University. He received his B.F.A. in Acting in 2004. He has worked as director for the At-Random productions of *Waiting for Lefty*, *ME*, and as Assistant Director for *Echoes*. He is the co-founder of Bootleg She“r”bert Productions.

Michael Costello (King Lear) teaches acting and directing at Texas State where he has directed *Metamorphoses*, the musical *Chicago*, and *Death of a Salesman* with Larry Hovis and Shelia Hargett in the leading roles. Locally, he directed *All's Well That Ends Well* at Southwestern University in Georgetown, and has been a regular director at St. Edward's University, where he staged *Romeo & Juliet*, *Equus*, *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Hedda Gabler*. Michael has also taught acting at the Florida State University Asolo Conservatory, where he directed *The Homecoming*, *Tartuffe*, and *Our Country's Good*. As a film and TV actor, Michael has been seen in numerous films, made for TV movies, and television series; most notably, he was a regular on the NBC series *seaQuest*, playing Secretary General McGath for two seasons. On stage, Michael has appeared in productions in New York and in regional theatres. In Austin, he has most recently been seen as Julius Reiter in *Rememberance Through the Performing Arts* production of *The Flame Keeper*, The State Theatre's production of *Wit*, and Willy Loman in St. Edwards' production of *Death of a Salesman*.

Susan Lynch (Cordelia) is a junior B.F.A. Acting major from Fort Hood. Susan has appeared in *Tales of the Lost Formicans* (Cathy), *Equus* (Jill), *Ubu Rex* (Ma Ubu), and *Oracle of the Balcones* as Blossom Possum. She is also an active member and Vice President of Alpha Psi Omega.

Yvonne Ybarra (Goneril) is a junior B.F.A. transfer student from Austin Community College. She was cast as the Young Wife in the Austin Shakespeare Company's production of *La Ronde*, and as Celestina in *Cloud Tectonics* at ACC. Yvonne played The Bride in the Texas State graduate final production of *Blood Wedding* in the Studio Theatre and was last seen on the Main Stage as a dancer in *A Little Night Music*.

Kristi Turner (Regan) is a senior who came from Deer Park. She will graduate with a B.F.A. degree with an emphasis in Acting. You may have seen her in our Main Stage productions of *The Learned Ladies* as Armande, *Metamorphoses* as Eurydice. She portrayed Mrs. Bradman in *Blithe Spirit* and *Lysistrata* in *Lysistrata*.

Aaron Weilsinger (Edgar) is a transfer student from McClennan Community College in Waco. He is a senior B.F.A. Pre-Directing student and has his Associates Degree in Theatre and Dance. He has been in productions of *Macbeth* as Macbeth, *Gallows Humor* (Phillip), *Dracula* (Seward), and Merlin in *The Sword in the Stone*. He is an active member in Austin Circle of Theatres and is currently working with the Jo Sears Dance Company.

J. Hernandez (Edmund) J. is a graduate student from San Juan, Texas. He received his M.A. in Theatre (Directing) this past December. He received his B.F.A. in Acting at The College of Santa Fe in New Mexico. His credits at Texas State include *Blood Wedding* (Leonardo) and *Dark Root of the Scream* (Conejo/Actor). He played David earlier this semester in our production of *Con Mis Manos*, and directed *Marisol* last fall.

Blake Hamman (Fool) is a senior B.F.A. Acting major from El Campo. His past credits include Chrysale in *The Learned Ladies*, for which he recieved an Irene Ryan nomination, various roles in *The Laramie Project*, *Woody Guthrie's An American Song*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*.

John Carroll (Earl of Gloucester) is a senior and will graduate with a B.F.A. this August. He was last seen as Fredrick in *A Little Night Music* last fall, for which he recieved an Irene Ryan nomination. Elsewhere, John has performed in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *Batboy: The Musical*, *Measure for Measure*, and can be seen in the upcoming PBS documentary *The War That Made America*. John is a candidate for Actor's Equity Association and was founder and artistic director of Cargo Theatre Company in Dallas.

Tyson Rinehart (Kent) is a senior in the B.F.A. program with an emphasis in Acting. He is a transfer student who comes to us from the University of Oklahoma, where he played Frank in *The Memory of Water*. Tyson worked with the Artemisia Theatre Group in their production of *Suburbia* as Buff. His Texas State credits include *Midas* in *Metamorphoses*, and Eric in *Transposing Shakespeare*, for which he recieved an Irene Ryan Nomination.

John Flores (Lear's Knight 1) is a senior B.F.A. student from Houston. His credits include Jesus Costazuela in the Wimberley Players production of *The Odd Couple* (Female Version) and as Jimmy Curry in *110 in the Shade*. He also worked on *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead* (Polonius) and *Richard III* (Tyrrell).

Steve Harmon (Old Man/Lear's Knight) is a musical theatre transfer student from Lamar University. He worked as a company member of the Festival Players Guild in Michigan City, Indiana; where he was involved with productions of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Schreoder) and *Clue: The Musical* (Mr. Boddy). His credits also include *Sacrilege* and *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Bobby Moreno (Cornwall) Bobby comes to us from Elmont, New York. He is a Senior B.F.A. Acting major. He has previously been seen in *Lord Hear Our Voices*, *The Few Are Mighty*, *West Upton*, *The Avenues* Nina Grew.

Daniel Aston (Oswald) is a junior Pre-Directing student from Deer Park. His credits include *Equus* (Alan Strang), *Kaspar* (Interpreter), *The Bald Soprano* (Mr. Smith), and *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom* (Danny/Dancer).

Christopher Climer (Doctor/Lear's Knight) is a sophomore from Little Elm. He will be auditioning for the B.F.A. Acting program this spring. He has previously been seen in *Foxtales* (Sunny the Fox), *The Serpent*, *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Michael Evans), and *Wit* (Michael Posner).

Harlan E. Short Jr. (Albany) is a junior Pre-Directing student who will audition for the B.F.A. Acting program this spring. He recieved his A.A. in Theatre from McClennan Community College. He was involved with MCC's productions of *Macbeth*, *Oklahoma*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Pajama Game*.

Andrew J. McMennamy (France) is a B.F.A. Acting and Directing senior from Houston. He has received the NASA Award for Excellence in Engineering and is Co-founder of Bootleg She"r"bert Productions. He has been seen in *Metamorphoses* and *The Winter's Tale*. He also directed *Sacrilege*.

Matthew McBride (Burgundy) is a senior transfer student from Hockley. He played Stanley in West Texas A&M University's production of *The Birthday Party* and Lord Rivers in McLennan Community College's production of *Richard III*. He also recieved the Liberace Foundation Scholarship in 1999-2000.

David Boswell (Servant/French Soldier) is a sophomore B.F.A. Acting student from Pflugerville. His credits include *A Werewolf Play* (Hyde), *Waiting for Lefty* (Clayton), *Equus* (Nugget), and *Alice in Wonderland* (Mad Hatter).

Micah Sudduth (Gloucester's Servant) is a sophomore from Palestine, Texas. He is majoring in Theatre with an emphasis in Acting.

Christopher L. Cornwell (Lear's Knight) is a junior from Austin who will be auditioning for the B.F.A. Acting program. His credits include *Marisol* (Man with Ice Cream), *Ubu Rex* (Pal. Gyron), *Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead* (Horatio). He also worked sound for *The Learned Ladies*.

Clark Reed (Lear's Knight) is a sophomore hoping to be accepted into the B.F.A. Acting program. He is a member of Alpha Psi Omega and he has been seen in *Little Shop of Horrors* (Wino), *Foxtales* (Rooster) and *Marisol* (Man with Golf Club).

Ben Shaw (Captain of the Guard) is a senior B.F.A. Directing student from San Antonio. He served as fight choreographer for *Marisol* and *Richard III*. His acting credits include *The Man with the Flower in His Mouth* (Man) and *Sex Lives of Superheroes* (Michael).

Don't Miss Our Upcoming Production!!

Candlestein

Written and Directed by Charles Pascoe
April 26- 30 at 7:30 PM & May 1 at 2:00 PM
Main Stage, Theatre Center

For More Information call the Box Office at 512.245.2204

Shaking up Shakespeare

Lear reaches great heights at Texas State

Tiffany Hamilton / Entertainment Writer

Friday evening, the Texas State theatre department performed William Shakespeare's *King Lear* at a caliber worthy of any professional company. Despite being plagued by the occasional bad lighting choice and the degree of language difficulty, the actors and actresses of the cast all performed with great promise.

Shakespeare's *Lear* was written toward the end of his career and, according to the program, "during a time of anxiety and transition in England." In Texas State's performance, the play reflects the anxiety of a nation and also a family at odds with one another. It is a play filled with angry speeches and crazed characters, requiring cast members to completely commit themselves emotionally. The Texas State theatre department performance maintained that emotional energy despite the overzealous nature of many of the actors and actresses. However, there were a few exceptional performances.

Aaron Weilsinger, a transfer student from McLennan Community College in Waco, played Edgar with a genuine emotion and warmth that was absent from many of his fellow performers. Weilsinger's interaction as Edgar with the Earl of Gloucester (John Carroll), who is Edgar's father, was laced with heartfelt sentiments of fear, devotion, love and desperation as Gloucester comes to him blind in sight but able to see the betrayal of his bastard son, Edmund (J. Hernandez).

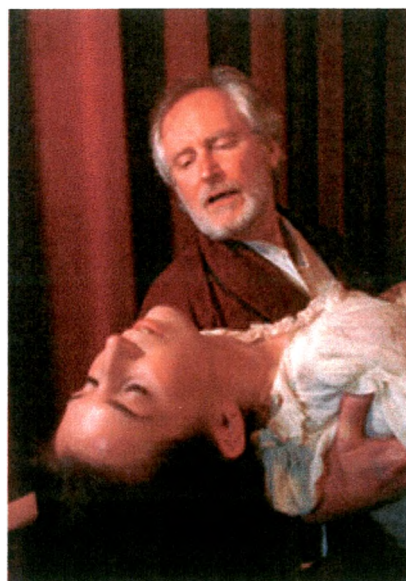


Photo by Don Anders, courtesy of Currents

Michael Costello portrays Lear, and Susan Lynch plays Cordelia in *King Lear*.

Another notable performance was Tyson Rinehart's portrayal of Kent. The theatre senior managed to seamlessly transition from nobleman to beggar and back again without leaving the world of the play. This is in sharp contrast to J. Hernandez's Edmund, who stepped often out of the fourth wall and distractingly spoke directly to the audience.

Above it all, Michael Costello, a professional actor who now teaches at Texas State, was one of the main sources of the high energy. Costello's performance was a highlight among the other actors and often brought the more nuanced aspects of *Lear*'s character out into the forefront.

Such instances are the subtle lines between *Lear*'s madness and his reason, his desire to maintain his masculinity even in his old age and his defiance toward nature in his role as father and as an aging man.

Costello, who previously taught at Florida State University's Asolo Conservatory, is enthusiastic about his work at Texas State. After taking a break from teaching at Florida State to do some professional acting, the university called Costello and offered him a teaching position.

"I really like the people I'm teaching with and the students. I'm able to teach the courses I am best at."

So far, the audience has responded well to him, both as *Lear* and as an instructor.

"The response to *Lear* has been really good; people have stayed after, and they are very enthusiastic. Students will pass by and say they liked it."

Costello feels the director, Debra Charlton, intended the story of *Lear* to be the focus, namely the falling apart of the family.

“Even though it’s a king and a country, at the core, it’s about family dysfunction and what happens when families are not listening to each other, and it causes pain and suffering,” Costello said.

Costello approaches Lear with the same mentality, and he said that he feels Lear is about the human suffering and journey of discovery that the title character goes through.

“It’s a spiritual journey about a man who doesn’t know himself; even though he has had all the material things, he doesn’t know really who he is. It’s only when he loses everything — after spitting up his kingdom, he needs to rest and he’s getting older — it’s only until he absolutely becomes homeless that he discovers, on any level, who he is,” Costello said.

To accomplish all of this in Lear’s character, Costello finds his motivation from Shakespeare’s own words.

“I trust Shakespeare. He had one of the greatest commands of the English language, and when he wrote something, he wrote exactly what he wanted to write. His language is so specific; it reveals the character’s emotional and physical state,” Costello said.

Overall, Costello’s trust worked out; his execution of his craft on Friday night was a spectacle to behold. His words were nuanced and velvety but also harsh and cracked when needed. The total performance of the character of Lear was incredibly well done.

The minimalist sets and outstanding lighting highlighted all of the performances. Although there were occasions when the lighting fell into the audience’s eyes or didn’t quite reach its mark, it was excellent in its overall execution. Charlton seemed to use the lighting as both a scene transitional effect to create atmosphere but also as symbolic markers to show the emotional and physical state of the characters.

Kudos goes to the Texas State department of theatre and dance. King Lear is a complex and emotionally driven play that has the capability to be done either extremely well or extremely poorly. Friday night’s performance was an outstanding example of the former.

STUDENTS PRESENT A RESPECTABLE 'KING LEAR'

Shakespeare's "**King Lear**" commenced quietly at Texas State University-San Marcos on Sunday. A sparse matinee crowd heard pensive music from sound designer Brian White and saw spare sets from scene designer Paige Moore — scaffolding and tiers that looked like a minimalist Japanese installation and were illuminated by David Nancarrow's mood-setting colorations. Costume designer Sheila Hargett's romantically inclined uniforms and formal wear — their indeterminate style was not explained — included dresses for Goneril and Regan that aptly recalled Nancy Reagan inaugural gowns.

But once director Debra Charlton's actors started speaking — in volumes more appropriate for a theater thrice the size — they rarely produced anything less than an intense, often overwrought version of Lear's story, as he unwisely divested himself of his kingdom and suffered the consequences of ungrateful offspring. We understood the words and their meanings — no small feat for student actors — but the register rarely changed, leaving us without dramatic modulation or character insight.

Taking on the mammoth title role, gifted teacher Michael Costello was properly proud, then outraged, then frustrated, then gently mad and finally authoritative again. His playful nurturing of the blind Gloucester and his carriage of Cordelia in the final scene proved quite moving highlights. As half-brothers Edgar and Edmund, Aaron Weilsinger and J. Hernandez contributed some terrific moments — especially when calm — while Yvonne Ybarra and Kristi Turner were regally chilly as bad seeds Goneril and Regan.

A few student actors flew completely off the track, but overall, Charlton's "Lear" was eminently respectable, if almost uniformly overstated.

— *Michael Barnes*

Austin American Statesman XL April 11, 2005

Shakespeare's Times



THE BARD ARRIVES!

- Shakespeare born April 23, 1564 in Stratford, England
- Shakespeare attended the Stratford grammar school
- Shakespeare learned:
 - Greek and Latin
 - Roman and Greek Classics
 - Mythology
 - Logic and Rhetoric

Was It A Shotgun Wedding?



- Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18
- They had their first daughter, Susanna, 6 months later
- Later they had twins, Hamnet and Judith

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! The Theater moves across the river!

- The Theater was one of the first theatre in London
- In one night, Shakespeare and his patrons disassembled The Theater and rebuilt it on the other side of the Thames River
- This new theatre was known as The Globe

ISN'T IT IRONIC...

- Shakespeare died on his 52nd birthday (April 23, 1616)
- His plays were not legally published until 1623, 7 years after his death

Divorced,
Beheaded,
Died.
Divorced,
Beheaded,
Survived.



- Henry VIII was King of England from 1509-1547 during which time he had 6 wives!
- His children were Mary, Elizabeth, and Edward VI

300 Burned Alive!

- Under the rule of Mary I from 1553-1558 around 300 Protestants were burned alive

THE VIRGIN QUEEN DIED MARCH 24, 1603



© NPG 5175

James VI of Scotland becomes
James I of England

PLOT TO BLOWE UP THE KING REVEALED

- In 1605 a group of men planted dynamite under the Upper House of Parliament
- James I received an anonymous letter warning him of the conspiracy
- The conspirators were caught and executed

Shakespeare's Times

TOP STORY: *KING LEAR*

- King Lear has decided to retire and divide his kingdom between his three daughters
- He is having a ceremony where he will announce the division of the kingdom, and all are invited.
- It will be held at Texas State's Department of Theatre and Dance's mainstage from April 7-9 and 14-16 @ 7:30pm and April 10 and 17 @ 2:00pm

Who's Who in *King Lear*?

- King Lear: old and mad King
- Cordelia: Lear's youngest and favorite daughter
- Goneril: Lear's oldest daughter; married to Duke of Albany
- Regan: Lear's middle and meanest daughter; married to Duke of Cornwall
- Earl of Gloucester: friend to King Lear
- Edgar: Gloucester's son and heir
- Edmund: Gloucester's bastard son who plots against Edgar
- Earl of Kent: loyal subject and friend to King Lear
- The Fool: Lear's Fool who speaks the truth to Lear



KING LEAR GOES MAD!!!

- Thrust out into a horrible storm and full of rage, Lear crazily calls to the storm-

"Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!"
(Act 3, scene 2, line 1)

Themes:

- love
- legitimacy
- blindness
- the word "nothing"
- lust
- murder and mutilation
- forgiveness

Shakespeare did not write in Old English!

He wrote in Early Modern English using **METER**

Shakespeare uses
Iambic pentameter

Iamb: Two syllables, one soft then one hard.
- (soft), / (hard)

These make up a **foot**.

- / = one foot

Iambic pentameter has **five feet**.

- / - / - / - /



Shakespeare Resources:

www.pathguy.com/KingLear.html
<http://absoluteshakespeare.com>
www.allshakespeare.com
www.rsc.org.uk

Pictures from:
www.npg.org.uk
www.marileecody.com/images.html

This page was Created by:
Winzer Smith
Production Dramaturg

Worksheet: Scanning and Scoring 101

Shakespeare's texts are in Prose, Verse, and Blank Verse.

Prose is like everyday speech. (Without rhyme or meter)

Verse is rhyming speech set to meter.

Blank Verse does not rhyme but is still set to meter.

Scanning Verse and Blank Verse

Devices used to Scan meter:

Iamb	- / (soft, hard)
Trochee	/ - (hard, soft)
Anapest	- - / (soft, soft, hard)
Dactylic	/ - - (hard, soft, soft)
Spondee	// (hard, hard)
Pyrrhic	- - (soft, soft)

Alternatives to pentameter:

- Feminine ending**—extra syllable
- Alexandrine ending**—extra foot

METER

Shakespeare uses
Iambic pentameter:

Iamb: Two syllables,
one soft then one
hard.
- (soft), / (hard)

These make up a **foot**.
- / = one foot

Iambic pentameter
has **five feet**.
- / - / - / - /

Rhetorical devices used to Score Verse and Blank Verse

Shakespeare uses these devices to give insight into character and to put emphasis on words or phrases he wanted his audience to hear. Remember, Shakespeare's plays are meant to be heard as well as seen!

Alliteration: repetition of consonants

"That such a slave as this should wear a sword,
Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as
these." (Act 2, scene 2, lines 74-76)

Antithesis: contrasting two ideas by parallel arrangement

"Than praised for harmful mildness." (Act 1, scene 4, line 367)

Assonance: repetition of vowel sounds

"Who is too good to pity thee." (Act 3, scene 7, line 110)

Caesura: slight pause indicated by a comma in the middle of a verse line

"Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear." (Act 4, scene 1, line 4)

Elision: scanning a two syllable word into one syllable
 “But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands.”
 (Act 1, scene 1, line 225)

Enjambment: lines of verse with no end stop at end of verse lines
 “I heard myself proclaimed,
 And by the happy hollow of a tree
 Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place
 That guard and most unusual vigilance
 Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may ‘scape
 I will preserve myself, and am bethought
 To take the basest and most poorest shape
 That ever penury in contempt of man
 Brought near to beast...” (Act 2, scene 3, lines 1-9)

Epistrophe: the repetition of last words on lines of verse
 Kent “Where learned you this, Fool?
 Fool Not in the stocks, fool.” (Act 2, scene 4, lines 93-94)

Metaphor: substituting one idea for another; comparison of two unlike things
 “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
 To have a thankless child...” (Act 1, scene 4, lines 302-303)

Personification: a figure of speech where a thing or idea is given human qualities
 “Opressed nature sleeps.” (Act 3, scene 6, line 104)

Onomatopoeia: sounds like what it is
 “Howl, howl, howl!” (Act 5, scene 3, line 308)

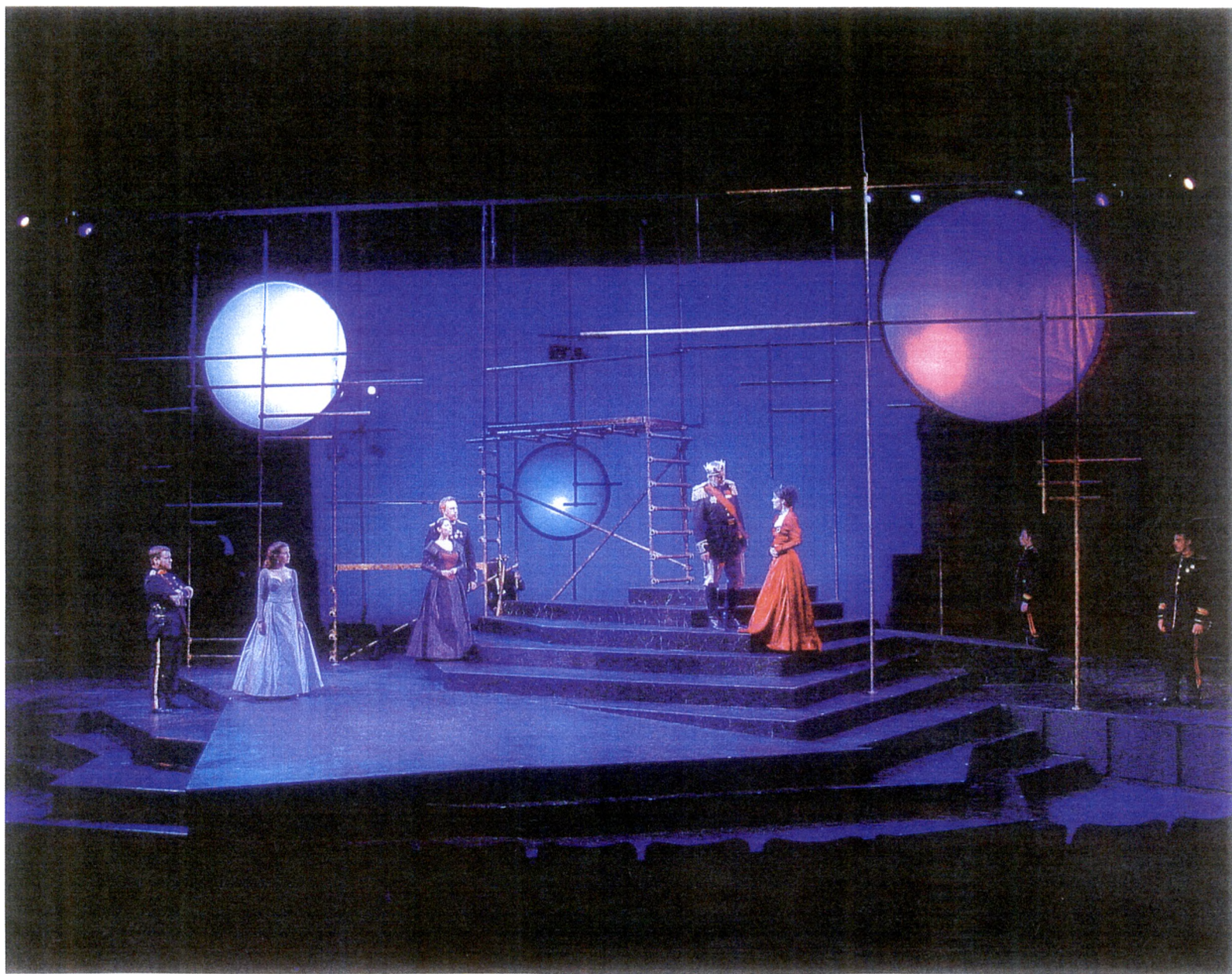
Simile: comparison using like or as
 “Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
 Do scald like molten lead.” (Act 4, scene 7, lines 53-54)

Questions to ponder while scoring your text

What do these devices say about my character?

What words in my lines hold more weight than the others? Are there repeated words? How does this influence scanning?

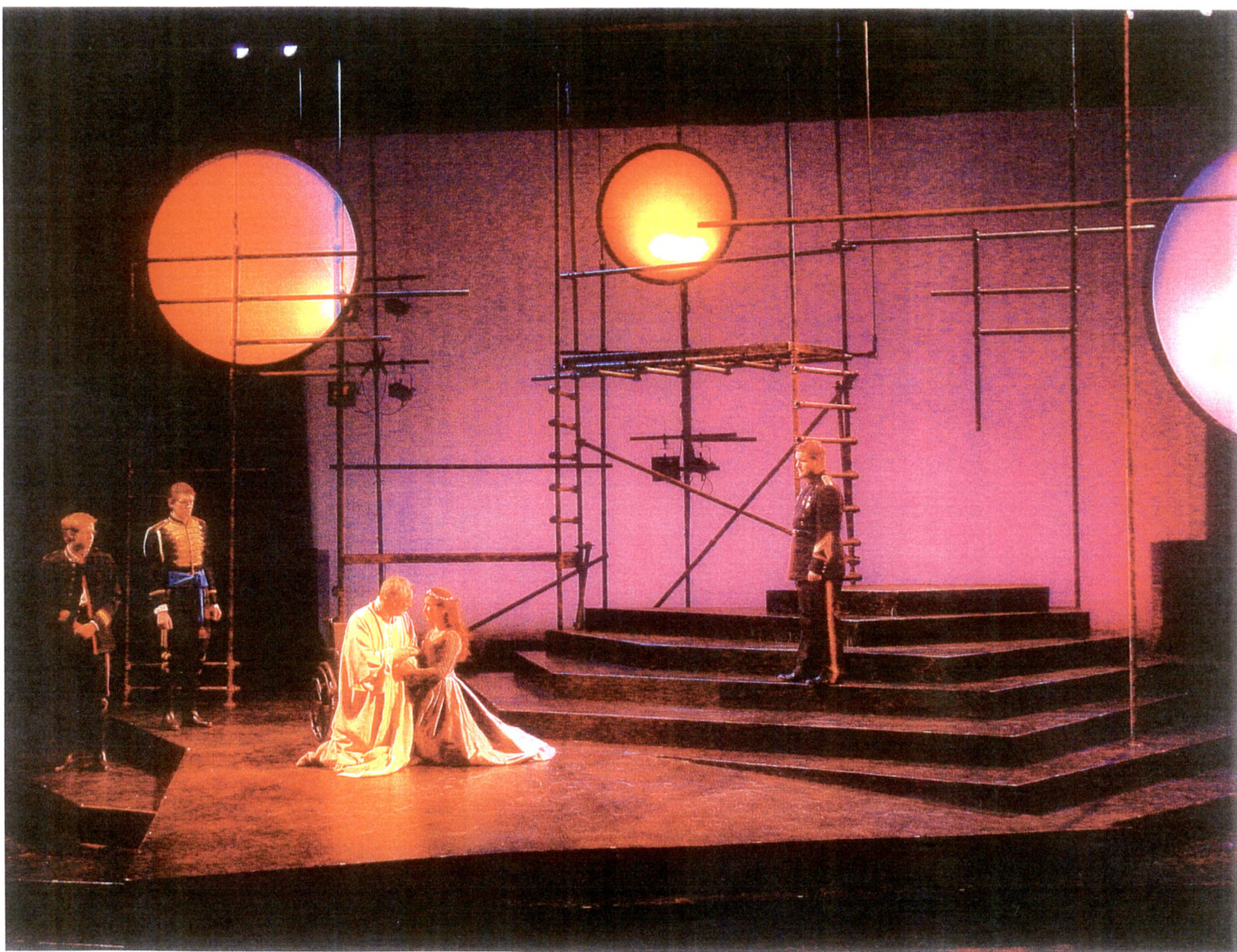
Look at the last words of each verse line, do they create a pattern? Can they be juxtaposed?
 Do this with the first words as well.

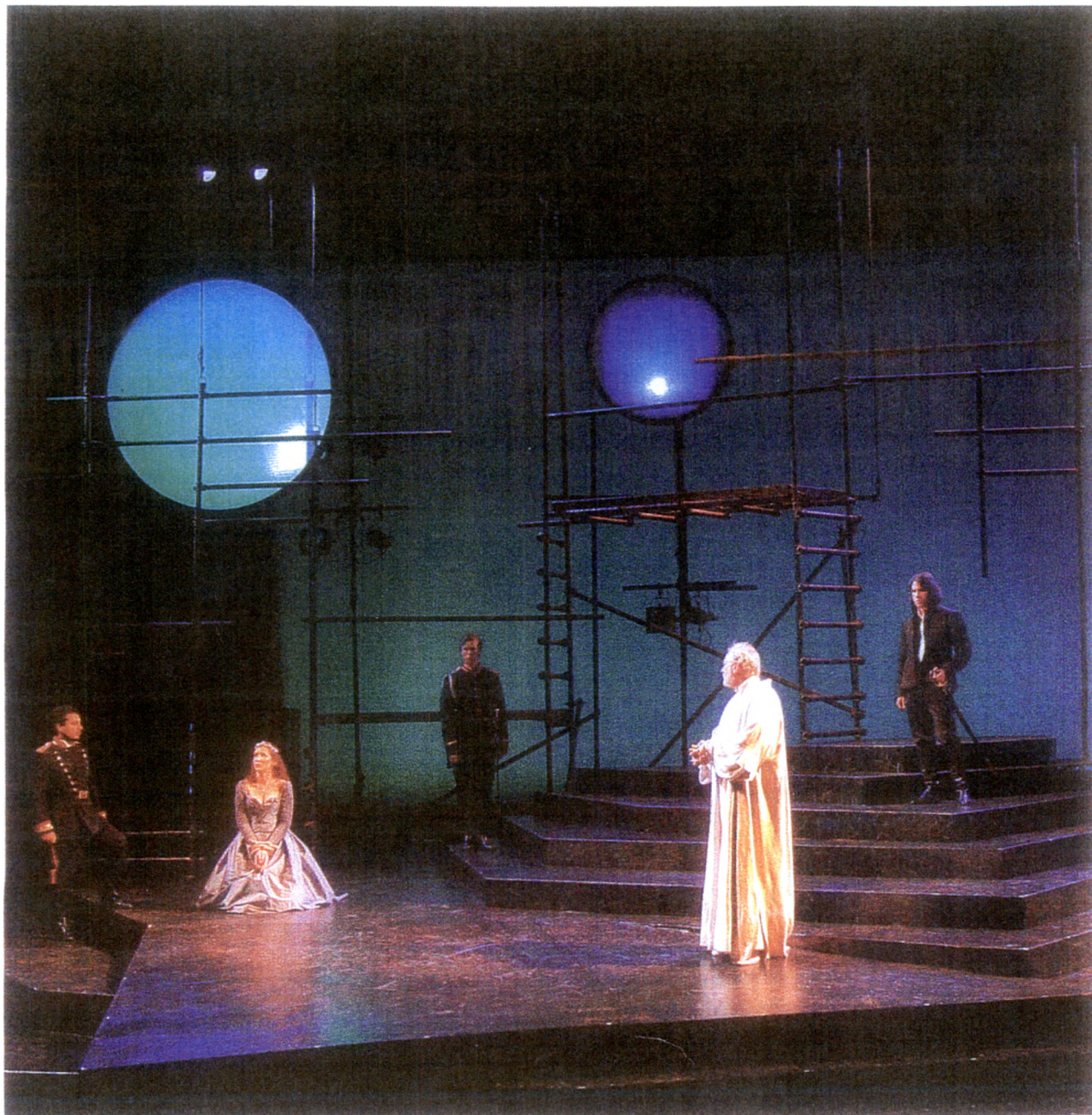












CHAPTER XV

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