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King Lear

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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The RSC Shakespeare

William Shakespeare

KING LEAR

Edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen

Introduction by Jonathan Bate



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INTRODUCTION

AN OLD MAN TOTTERING ABOUT THE STAGE?

“King Lear,” wrote the early nineteenth-century Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in his *Defence of Poetry*, “may be judged to be the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world.” For all the Romantics, *Lear* was Shakespeare’s most “sublime” and “universal” play. John Keats wrote a sonnet “On sitting down to read *King Lear* once again”: having burned his way through the play, he would feel somehow purified and regenerated. For Keats’ contemporary Charles Lamb, Shakespeare’s anatomy of the human condition was so profound and tempestuous that the play seemed too vast for the stage. It is the centerpiece of his essay “On the tragedies of Shakspeare, considered with reference to their fitness for stage representation”:

So to see Lear acted,—to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want to take him into shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me. But the Lear of Shakspeare cannot be acted. The contemptible machinery by which they mimic the storm which he goes out in, is not more inadequate to represent the horrors of the real elements, than any actor can be to represent Lear: they might more easily propose to personate the Satan of Milton upon a stage, or one of Michael Angelo’s terrible figures. The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual: the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the

bottom that sea his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. This case of flesh and blood seems too insignificant to be thought on; even as he himself neglects it. On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it, we see not Lear, but we are Lear,—we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms; in the aberrations of his reason, we discover a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodized from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. What have looks, or tones, to do with that sublime identification of his age with that of the *Heavens themselves*, when in his reproaches to them for conniving at the injustice of his children, he reminds them that “they themselves are old.” What gestures shall we appropriate to this? What has the voice or the eye to do with such things?

For Lamb, the technical necessities of the theater—the backstage machinery that creates the storm, the actor’s repertoire of gestures, looks, and vocal variations—are exterior and superficial distractions from the play’s inward and remorseless exploration of reason and madness, humankind and nature, the corruptions and abuses of power. Few theater lovers would agree with Lamb, but few would deny that the role of Lear presents perhaps the greatest of all challenges to the Shakespearean actor. There is a theater saying that by the time you’re old enough to play it, you are too old to play it.

A generation before the Romantics, Dr. Samuel Johnson confessed that even reading the play was almost too much to bear: “I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia’s death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor.” The shock for Johnson was both emotional and moral. The death of Cordelia—Shakespeare’s boldest alteration of his sources, in all of which she survives—was

an extraordinary breach of the principal that Johnson called “poetical justice,” whereby “a play in which the wicked prosper, and the virtuous miscarry, may doubtless be good, because it is a just representation of the common events of human life: but since all reasonable beings naturally love justice, I cannot easily be persuaded, that the observation of justice makes a play worse; or, that if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue.” It had been in order to impose poetical justice on the play that during the 1680s Nahum Tate, author of the hymn “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night,” had rewritten *King Lear* with a happy ending, in which Cordelia was married off to Edgar. Johnson had some sympathy with this alteration, which held the stage for a century and a half, whereas for Lamb it was yet one more indication that the theater was not to be trusted with Shakespeare’s sublime vision of universal despair.

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM

Written soon after King James united the thrones of England and Scotland, and performed in his royal presence at Whitehall, *King Lear* reveals the dire consequences of dividing a united kingdom. In principle, the aged Lear’s decision to take voluntary retirement does not seem a bad thing: he is losing his grip on matters of state, his daughters and sons-in-law are “younger strengths” with more energy for government, and, most important, the division is intended to prevent a future civil war between rival claimants, which would have been a definite possibility in the absence of a son who would automatically inherit the whole kingdom. But can an anointed king abnegate his role at will? If he does, he certainly should not expect to retain the trappings of power. Goneril and Regan have a case for stripping him of his rowdy, extravagant retinue of one hundred knights.

Lear’s mistake is to link the division of the kingdom to a public show of affection. The two older sisters, well versed in the “glib and oily art” of courtly flattery, tell him what he wants to hear, but

Cordelia cannot. She is one of the play's truth tellers and simply lacks the capacity or the experience to dress her love in fine rhetoric. Lear knows that she loves him best, but we may assume that until this moment her love has always been expressed privately. As youngest and unmarried daughter, Cordelia has probably never spoken publicly before the court. Lear's intention for the opening scene is that it will be Cordelia's coming out: she is supposed to give public expression to her great love and in return she will be rewarded with the richest portion of the kingdom and the most prized husband. He does not bargain on her inability to play the role in which he has cast her. Kings and earls do not necessarily have to be blind to true virtue—witness the examples of Kent and France—but Lear, too long used to having his own way and hearing only the words of flatterers, has blinded himself. Only when he has been stripped of the fine clothes and fine words of the court, has heard truth in the mouths of a fool and a (supposed) Bedlam beggar, does he find out what it really means to be human.

Where *Macbeth* and *Othello* are focused tightly upon a single plotline, the action of *Lear* greatly extends the technique of parallel plotting with which Shakespeare had experimented in *Hamlet*, where Laertes and Fortinbras serve as foils to the hero. In *Lear*, the Gloucester family plot is a sustained presence. Gloucester is another father who is blind to the true nature of his children; that blindness leads, in Shakespeare's cruelest literalization of metaphor, to the plucking out of his eyes. Edmund corresponds to the wicked daughters; several of the play's many letters pass between them. It is wholly appropriate that he should end up promised to them both. Like the king's favorite daughter, Cordelia, Edgar (who is the king's godson) is unjustly exiled from home and excluded from parental care. It is fitting to the parallel structure of the twin plots that the play ends in the Folio version with him returning to take the reins of power, just as there is a certain, though very different, logic to Nahum Tate's infamous Restoration-period rewrite.

RIPENESS IS ALL?

Shakespeare never takes one side of a question. In the very opening lines of the play we discover that it is Edmund who has previously been unjustly exiled from home and excluded from parental care. Kent, the play's best judge of character, initially describes Edmund as "proper": he has the bearing of a gentleman, but his illegitimacy has deprived him of the benefits of society. His first soliloquy makes a good case for the unfairness of a social order that practices primogeniture and stigmatizes bastardy; his discovery near the moment of death that "Edmund was beloved" is curiously touching. He is not, then, an uncomplicated stage "Machiavel," an embodiment of pure, unmotivated evil.

Astrology and astronomy were synonymous in the Elizabethan age: the signs of the times were read in the signs of the skies. *King Lear* is a play about bad times. The state drifts rudderless, child turns against parent, the clouds of war gather, the king and all around him totter on the brink of the abyss. So it is that Gloucester blames it all on the stars: "These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us." Edmund, however, disputes this: "an admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star!" He argues that things often regarded as the product of the "natural order" are actually shaped by "custom"—for him, primogeniture and legitimacy would come into this category. The position articulated here is close to that of the sixteenth-century French essayist Michel de Montaigne in the closing section of his *Apology of Raymond Sebond*: any custom abhorred or outlawed by one nation is sure to be praised or practiced by another. But if you have nothing save custom, no divinely sanctioned hierarchy, then where does your value system come from? Montaigne's answer is blind faith in God, whereas Edmund, like an apologist before the letter for the political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes, commits himself to "nature" as a principle of survival and self-seeking.

Gloucester's philosophical orientation, meanwhile, turns toward the classical Stoic idea of finding the right timing for death. After his mock suicide, he says "henceforth I'll bear / Affliction till it do cry out itself / 'Enough, enough' and die." But he cannot sustain this

position: when Lear and Cordelia lose the battle, he is found in “ill thoughts again,” wanting to rot. Edgar responds with more Stoic advice: “Men must endure / Their going hence, even as their coming hither: / Ripeness is all.” But this idea of ripe timing doesn’t work out: by mistiming the revelation of his own identity to Gloucester, Edgar precipitates his father’s death.

The play’s pattern, then, is of Stoic comfort not working. At the beginning of the fourth act Edgar reflects on his own condition and cheers himself up with thoughts about the worst, but then his father comes on blinded and he is instantly confounded—things are worse than before. If the case of Edgar reveals the deficiency of Stoic comfort, that of Albany demonstrates the inadequacy of belief in divine justice. His credo is that the good shall taste “The wages of their virtue” and the bad drink from the poisoned “cup of their deservings.” This scheme works for the bad, but not for the good. In the closing scene, Albany tries to orchestrate events, to make order out of chaos, but each of his resolutions is followed by new disaster: he greets the restored Edgar, then immediately hears the news of Gloucester’s death, then the news of the two queens’ deaths; then Kent comes on, dying; then in response to the news that Cordelia is to be hanged, Albany says “The gods defend her!,” only for Lear to enter with her in his arms already hanged. The gods have not defended her. Then Albany tries to give power back to Lear—and he promptly dies. Then he tries to persuade Kent and Edgar to divide the kingdom, and Kent promptly goes off to die.

The final lines of the play—given to different speakers in the Quarto and Folio versions of the text—suggest that the lesson has been learned that Stoic comfort will not do, that it is better to speak what we feel than what we ought to say. The Folio’s ascription of this speech to Edgar makes more dramatic sense than the Quarto’s to Albany, since Edgar’s stripping down in Act 3 is an exposure to feeling, occurring in conjunction with Lear’s feeling with and for the poor, which makes him the character better prepared to voice this sentiment.

THIS GREAT STAGE OF FOOLS

The Stoic philosopher tries to be ruled by reason rather than passion. But for the great sixteenth-century humanist Desiderius Erasmus in his *Praise of Folly*, there is inhumanity in the notion that to be wise you must suppress the emotions. The most important thing is to “feel”—as Gloucester has to learn, to see the world not rationally but “feelingly.” Erasmus’ personification of Folly points out that friendship is among the highest human values, and it depends on emotion. The people who show friendship to Lear (Fool, Kent disguised as Caius, Edgar disguised as Poor Tom and then as Peasant) and to Gloucester (Servants, Old Man) are not the wise or the rich.

We are ruled by our passions and our bodies; we go through life performing a series of different roles of which we are by no means in control. “All this life of mortal men, what is it else but a certain kind of stage play?” asks Erasmus’ Folly. Lear echoes the sentiment: “When we are born, we cry that we are come / To this great stage of fools.” In the great theater of the world, with the gods as audience, we are the fools on stage. Under the aspect of Folly, we see that a king is no different from any other man. The trappings of monarchy are but a costume: this is both Folly’s and Lear’s discovery.

Erasmus’ Folly tells us that there are two kinds of madness—one is the thirst for gold, lust, and power. That is the madness of Regan, Cornwall, Edmund, and the rest. Their madness is what Lear rejects. The second madness is the desirable one, the state of folly in which “a certain pleasant raving, or error of the mind, delivereth the heart of that man whom it possesseth from all wonted carefulness, and rendreth it divers ways much recreated with new delectation” (*Praise of Folly*, in the sixteenth-century English translation of Sir Thomas Chaloner). This “error of the mind” is a special gift of the goddess Folly. Thus Lear is happy when his mind is free, when he is running around in his madness like a child on a country holiday: “Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace, this piece of toasted cheese will do’t.” Lines such as that bring a smile to our faces, not least because the mouse isn’t really there. Lear repeats his “look, look” at the end of his life. Cordelia is dead, but he deceives himself into the belief that she lives—that the feather moves, that her breath mists the

looking-glass. His final words are spoken in the delusion that her lips are moving: "Look on her, look, her lips, / Look there, look there!" Her lips are not moving, just as there is no mouse, but it is better for Lear that he should not know this. Philosophers say that it is miserable to be deceived; Folly replies that it is most miserable "not to be deceived," for nothing could be further from the truth than the notion that man's happiness resides in things as they actually are. Lear's Fool says that he would fain "learn to lie." Lying is destructive in the mouths of Goneril, Regan, and Edmund at the beginning of the play, but Cordelia—who has a special bond with the Fool—has to learn to lie. At the beginning, she can only tell the truth (hence her banishment), but later she lies beautifully and generously when Lear says that she has cause to do him wrong, and she replies, "No cause, no cause."

The closing section of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* undertakes a serious praise of Christian "madness." Christ says that the mystery of salvation is hidden from the wise and given to the simple. He delighted in simple people, fishermen and women. He chose to ride an ass when he could have mounted a lion. The language of his parables is steeped in simple, natural things—lilies, mustard seed, sparrows, a language analogous to that of Lear in his madness. The fundamental folly of Christianity is its demand that you throw away your possessions. Lear pretends to do this in Act 1, but actually he wants to keep "The name and all th'addition to a king." Only when he loses his knights, his clothes, and his sanity does he find happiness.

But he also becomes kind. Little things show us this: in Act 1, he's still always giving orders. Even in the storm he continues to make demands: "Come, unbutton here." But in the end he learns to say "please" and "thank you": "Pray you undo this button: thank you, sir." He has begun to learn true manners not at court, but through the love he shows for Poor Tom, the image of unaccommodated man, the image of himself: "Did'st thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?" True wisdom comes not in Gloucester's and Edgar's words of Stoic comfort or Albany's hapless faith in

divine providence, but in moments of folly and love, as in this exchange:

EDGAR Bless thy five wits!

KENT O pity! Sir, where is the patience now That you so oft have
 boasted to retain?

Patience is the boast of the Stoic. It's a retainer like the hundred knights. To achieve true wisdom, you must let it go. You must let even the wits, the sanity, go. What you must keep are the *pity* and the *blessing*. Pity and blessing are at the very heart of *King Lear*. Pity means the performance of certain deeds, such as showing kindness to strangers. Blessing is a performative speech act, an utterance that effects an action by the very act of being spoken. Typically blessing is accompanied by a small but forceful *gesture*, a kind of action that is of vital importance on the bare boards of the Shakespearean theater.

The play ends on a note of apocalypse, millennial doom. A trumpet sounds three times to announce the final showdown. Then when Lear enters with his beloved daughter dead in his arms, loyal Kent asks, "Is this the promised end?" He is thinking of Doomsday, but the line is also a sly allusion on Shakespeare's part: in all previous versions of the Lear story, several of which would have been familiar to members of his audience, Cordelia survives and Lear is restored to the throne. The death of Cordelia is all the more painful because it is not the end "promised" by previous literary and theatrical tradition.

King Lear is a play full of questions. The big ones go unanswered. The biggest of all is Lear's "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, / And thou no breath at all?" In this world, there is no rhyme or reason, no pattern of divine justice. Here again, Shakespeare departs strikingly from his source, the old anonymous play of *King Leir*, in which Christian providence prevails. Shakespeare reimagines his material in a bleak pagan world. In this, he not only looks back to the past, but also anticipates a future that is ours—a time when the

old religious hierarchies and moral certainties have been stripped away.

But in a strange way an answer is to be found in Edgar's reply to Kent's line about the promised end. A question is answered with a question: "Or image of that horror?" It's not *really* the end of the world; it's an *image* of the end. Hamlet said that the player holds up a mirror to nature, but in *King Lear* we are again and again reminded that what you see in a mirror is an image, not the thing itself. Gloucester doesn't really jump off the cliff: it's all an elaborate game, designed by Edgar to teach him a lesson. In uncertain times, we need images, games, and experiments as ways of trying to make sense of our world. We need plays. That is why, four centuries on, we keep going back to Shakespeare and his dazzling mirror world in which everyone is a player.

Looked at in one way, the world of *King Lear*, with its images of doom, its mad king, scheming ugly sisters, its fool and its (pretend) mad Bedlam beggar, could not be further from *ordinary life*. But looked at another way, it is an image of ordinary things, but seen in *extremity*. It is a play that has more time for a language of ordinary things—garden waterpots, wrens, and toasted cheese—than for the "glib and oily art" of courtly speech.

So is the whole play, like the "Dover cliff" scene, an elaborate game designed by Shakespeare to teach us a lesson? Only if we think of it as a lesson in feeling, not in high-minded judgment. To be truly responsive to the play we must, as the final speech has it, "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say." To be human is to *see feelingly*, not to fall back on easy moralizing, the "ought to say" that characterizes people like Albany. And seeing feelingly is to do with our sympathetic response to the images that confront us, both on the stage and in the great theater of the world. Lear becomes human when he stops caring about one kind of *image* (the glorious trappings of monarchy) and instead confronts another: the image of raw human being, of a fool and a Bedlam beggar, of poor naked wretches. Come the last trump, the play tells us, we will be judged by our fellow feeling for the dispossessed, not our status in society.

In this, as in so much else, Shakespeare speaks not only for his own age, but for ours.

LEAR Who is it that can tell me who I am?

FOOL Lear's shadow.



1. Robert Armin took over as company clown after Will Kempe left the Chamberlain's Men in 1599. A playwright as well as the author of joke books, he practiced a more intellectual form of comedy than Kempe, full of witty verbal pyrotechnics: his style was given full rein in such parts as Lear's Fool, Feste in *Twelfth Night*, and the sour Lavatch in *All's Well That Ends Well*.

ABOUT THE TEXT

Shakespeare endures through history. He illuminates later times as well as his own. He helps us to understand the human condition. But he cannot do this without a good text of the plays. Without editions there would be no Shakespeare. That is why every twenty years or so throughout the last three centuries there has been a major new edition of his complete works. One aspect of editing is the process of keeping the texts up to date—modernizing the spelling, punctuation, and typography (though not, of course, the actual words), providing explanatory notes in the light of changing educational practices (a generation ago, most of Shakespeare's classical and biblical allusions could be assumed to be generally understood, but now they can't).

But because Shakespeare did not personally oversee the publication of his plays, editors also have to make decisions about the relative authority of the early printed editions. Half of the sum of his plays only appeared posthumously, in the elaborately produced First Folio text of 1623, the original "Complete Works" prepared for the press by Shakespeare's fellow actors, the people who knew the plays better than anyone else. The other half had appeared in print in his lifetime, in the more compact and cheaper form of "Quarto" editions, some of which reproduced good quality texts, others of which were to a greater or lesser degree garbled and error strewn. In the case of a few plays there are hundreds of differences between the Quarto and Folio editions, some of them far from trivial.

Who is left in charge at the end of *King Lear*? According to the conventions of Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedy, the senior remaining character speaks the final speech. That is the mark of his assumption of power. Thus Fortinbras rules Denmark at the end of

Hamlet, Lodovico speaks for Venice at the end of *Othello*, Malcolm rules Scotland at the end of *Macbeth*, and Octavius rules the world at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra*.

So who rules Britain? The answer used to be something like this. As the husband of the king's eldest daughter, Albany is the obvious candidate, but he seems reluctant to take on the role and, with astonishing stupidity given the chaos brought about by Lear's division of the kingdom at the beginning of the play, he proposes to divide the kingdom at the end of the play, suggesting that Kent and Edgar should share power between them. Kent, wise as ever, sees the foolishness of this and gracefully withdraws, presumably to commit suicide or will on the heart attack that he is already sensing. By implication, Edgar, who was the king's godson and is now Duke of Gloucester, is left in charge. So it is that in the Folio text, which is the most authoritative that we have, Edgar speaks the final speech:

The weight of this sad time we must obey:
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most: we that are young
Shall never see so much nor live so long.

If we were being very scrupulous, we would have added that there is some uncertainty over the matter, since in the Quarto text it is Albany who speaks the final speech, an ascription that has been followed by many editors since Alexander Pope.

Thanks to the textual scholarship of the late twentieth century, the new answer is something like this. Ah: that's a question over which Shakespeare himself seems to have had some uncertainty. In his original version of the play Albany speaks the final speech and thus rules the realm. But then Shakespeare changed his mind. In his revised version of the play Edgar speaks the final speech and thus rules the realm. We must posit two very different stagings. In the first one, Kent's words of refusal of his half-share in the kingdom would have been accompanied by some gesture of refusal, such as a turning away, on Edgar's part. In the second one, Edgar's speaking of the final speech would have been staged so as to betoken

acceptance of Albany's offer. This alteration to the ending marks the climax of Shakespeare's subtle but thoroughgoing revision of the roles of Albany and Edgar in his two versions of *King Lear*. We do not know exactly when the revision took place, but it is a fair assumption that it was as a result of experience in the playhouse and with the collaboration of the company. Presumably there was dissatisfaction on the part of dramatist and/or performers with the way in which the two roles had turned out, so various adjustments were made. Shakespeare's plays were not polished for publication; they were designed as scripts to be worked upon in the theater. To be cut, added to, and altered.

Until recently, editors were remarkably reluctant to admit this. From the eighteenth century until the 1980s, editions attempted to recover an ideal unitary text, to get as close as they could to "what Shakespeare wrote." There was a curious resistance to the idea that Shakespeare wrote one thing, tested it in the theater, and then wrote another. It was assumed that there was a single *King Lear* and that the editorial task was to reconstruct it. Generations of editors adopted a "pick and mix" approach to the text, moving between Quarto and Folio readings, making choices on either aesthetic or bibliographic grounds, and creating a composite text that Shakespeare never actually wrote.

How, then, did editors deal with the following awkward fact? *King Lear* exists in two different texts, the Quarto and the Folio. The Quarto has nearly three hundred lines that are not in the Folio; the Folio has more than a hundred lines that are not in the Quarto; there are more than eight hundred verbal variants in the parts of the play that the two texts share. The standard editorial response to this difficulty was the claim that the Quarto was some kind of "Bad Quarto," that is to say a text based on memorial reconstruction by actors, not on Shakespeare's own script (his "foul papers") or the playhouse script (the "promptbook"). It was, however, a difficult position to maintain because the Quarto text of *Lear*, although corrupt in many places, does not have the usual characteristics of memorial reconstruction, the kind of features so apparent in the Bad Quarto of *Hamlet*, such as the actor remembering "The first verse of

the godly ballad / Will tell you all,” where Shakespeare wrote “the first row of the pious chanson will show you more” (*Hamlet*, Act 2 Scene 2). Getting the structure of a line just about right but the actual words nearly all wrong is typical of texts based on memory, but not typical of the textual anomalies in Quarto *Lear*.

In the 1970s the scholar Peter Blayney proved decisively by means of meticulous and highly technical bibliographic investigation that Quarto *King Lear* was not a bad text based on actors’ memories but an authoritative one, almost certainly deriving from Shakespeare’s own holograph (*The Texts of “King Lear” and their Origins: vol. 1 Nicholas Okes and the First Quarto*, published 1982). The poor quality of the text was the result of the personnel in the printing shop being unused to setting drama. Thus the fact that much of Shakespeare’s verse was set as prose was due to the printer running out of the blocks that were needed to fill in the margins where text was set as verse—Okes’ shop didn’t have the proper equipment, so the compositors resorted to prose.

Both Quarto and Folio texts are authentically Shakespearean, yet they differ substantially. Logic suggests that Quarto was his first version of the play, Folio his second. The textual variants give us a unique opportunity to see the plays as working scripts.

In the received editorial tradition, there is a very puzzling moment in Act 3 Scene 1 where Kent reports to the Gentleman on the division between Albany and Cornwall (3.1.13–23). The syntax halfway through the speech is incomprehensible and the content is contradictory: are there merely French spies in the households of great ones or has a French army actually landed in Dover? The confusion comes from editors having conflated alternative scenarios: in Quarto the French army has landed, whereas in Folio there are only spies reporting to France (thus lines 30–42 in conflated texts are Quarto only, 22–29 are Folio only: in the RSC text, compare and contrast 3.1.13–23 and Quarto Passages, 46–59).

The alteration seems to be part of a wider process of diminishing the French connection. In the Quarto we have a scene in which Shakespeare feels compelled to explain away the absence of the King of France—why isn’t he leading his own army?

KENT Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back, know
 you no reason?

GENTLEMAN Something he left imperfect in the state, which since
 his coming forth is thought of, which imports to the kingdom so
 much fear and danger that his personal return was most
 required and necessary. (Quarto Passages, 168–73)

It is, to say the least, a halting explanation, which is perhaps one reason why Shakespeare cut the whole of this scene, Act 4 Scene 3 in the received editorial tradition, from the Folio text. Theater audiences tend to think most about the things that are mentioned: by drawing attention to the king's absence, the dramatist in a curious way establishes his presence. Better just to keep quiet about him, which is what happens in Folio—since he's not mentioned, the audience forgets him.

Who, then, is to lead the French army? In Quarto, the Gentleman informs Kent that the Marshall of France, Monsieur La Far, has been left in charge. By omitting the scene in question, Folio obliterates Monsieur La Far; it compensates by altering the staging of the next scene (Act 4 scene 4 in the received editorial tradition, Act 4 Scene 3 in ours). In Quarto, the scene begins "*Enter Cordelia, Doctor and others,*" whereas in Folio it begins "*Enter with Drum and Colours Cordelia, Gentleman and Soldiers.*" Where in Quarto Cordelia is a daughter seeking medical attention for her father, in Folio she is a general leading an army. She has replaced Monsieur La Far. This alteration is part of a broad shift of emphasis from family to state in the revision—Folio makes less of the familial love trial and more of the fractured internal politics of the divided kingdom. So it is that the later version adds some crucial lines in the opening scene, giving a stronger political justification for the division of the kingdom:

We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now.... (1.1.41–43)

Furthermore, Folio cuts the so-called arraignment of Goneril, the mock trial in the hovel scene that is the quid pro quo for the show trial of love in the opening scene. This has the effect of retrospectively rendering the opening more political and less personal.

Other Folio cuts include the passage at the end of the blinding scene when loyal servants promise to apply flax and whites of egg to Gloucester's bleeding eye sockets. When Peter Brook cut this from his famous 1962 RSC production, critics rebuked him for imposing on the play his own theater of cruelty. But now we know that Brook's cut was made in Shakespeare's own theater.

A further intensification of the play's moral bleakness is brought about by a series of cuts to Albany's role: his castigations of Goneril in Act 4 Scene 2 are severely trimmed back, considerably reducing his moral force. Quarto Albany is a well-developed character who closes the play as a mature and victorious duke assuming responsibility for the kingdom. In Folio he is weaker, he stands by as his wife walks all over both him and the moral order, he avoids responsibility. His ultimate vacation of power is such that the revision ends at the point where my discussion began: with Edgar having no choice but to take over as sustainer of the gored state.

If you look at printers' handbooks from the age of Shakespeare, you quickly discover that one of the first rules was that, whenever possible, compositors were recommended to set their type from existing printed books rather than manuscripts. This was the age before mechanical typesetting, where each individual letter had to be picked out by hand from the compositor's case and placed on a stick (upside down and back to front) before being laid on the press. It was an age of murky rushlight and of manuscripts written in a secretary hand that had dozens of different, hard-to-decipher forms. Printers' lives were a lot easier when they were reprinting existing books rather than struggling with handwritten copy. Easily the quickest way to have created the First Folio would have been simply to reprint those eighteen plays that had already appeared in Quarto and only work from manuscript on the other eighteen.

But that is not what happened. Whenever Quartos were used, playhouse “promptbooks” were also consulted and stage directions copied in from them. And in the case of several major plays where a reasonably well-printed Quarto was available, *Lear* notable among them, the Folio printers were instructed to work from an alternative, playhouse-derived manuscript. This meant that the whole process of producing the first complete Shakespeare took months, even years, longer than it might have done. But for the men overseeing the project, John Hemings and Henry Condell, friends and fellow actors who had been remembered in Shakespeare’s will, the additional labor and cost were worth the effort for the sake of producing an edition that was close to the practice of the theater. They wanted all the plays in print so that people could, as they wrote in their prefatory address to the reader, “read him and again and again,” but they also wanted “the great variety of readers” to work from texts that were close to the theater-life for which Shakespeare originally intended them. For this reason, the *RSC Shakespeare*, in both *Complete Works* and individual volumes, uses the Folio as base text wherever possible. Significant Quarto variants are, however, noted in the Textual Notes and Quarto-only passages are appended after the text of *King Lear*.

The following notes highlight various aspects of the editorial process and indicate conventions used in the text of this edition:

Lists of Parts are supplied in the First Folio for only six plays, not including *Lear*, so the list at the beginning of the play is provided by the editors, arranged by groups of character. Capitals indicate that part of the name which is used for speech headings in the script (thus “LEAR, King of Britain”).

Locations are provided by the Folio for only two plays. Eighteenth-century editors, working in an age of elaborately realistic stage sets, were the first to provide detailed locations. Given that Shakespeare wrote for a bare stage and often an imprecise sense of place, we have relegated locations to the explanatory notes, where they are given at the beginning of each scene where the imaginary location is

different from the one before. We have emphasized broad geographical settings rather than specifics of the kind that suggest anachronistically realistic staging. We have therefore avoided such niceties as “another room in the palace.”

Act and Scene Divisions were provided in the Folio in a much more thoroughgoing way than in the Quartos. Sometimes, however, they were erroneous or omitted; corrections and additions supplied by editorial tradition are indicated by square brackets. Five-act division is based on a classical model, and act breaks provided the opportunity to replace the candles in the indoor Blackfriars playhouse, which the King’s Men used after 1608, but Shakespeare did not necessarily think in terms of a five-part structure of dramatic composition. The Folio convention is that a scene ends when the stage is empty. Nowadays, partly under the influence of film, we tend to consider a scene to be a dramatic unit that ends with either a change of imaginary location or a significant passage of time within the narrative. Shakespeare’s fluidity of composition accords well with this convention, so in addition to act and scene numbers we provide a *running scene* count in the right margin at the beginning of each new scene, in the typeface used for editorial directions. Where there is a scene break caused by a momentary bare stage, but the location does not change and extra time does not pass, we use the convention *running scene continues*. There is inevitably a degree of editorial judgment in making such calls, but the system is very valuable in suggesting the pace of the plays.

Speakers’ Names are often inconsistent in Folio. We have regularized speech headings, but retained an element of deliberate inconsistency in entry directions, in order to give the flavor of Folio.

Verse is indicated by lines that do not run to the right margin and by capitalization of each line. The Folio printers sometimes set verse as prose, and vice versa (either out of misunderstanding or for reasons of space). We have silently corrected in such cases, although in some instances there is ambiguity, in which case we have leaned

toward the preservation of Folio layout. Folio sometimes uses contraction (“turnd” rather than “turned”) to indicate whether or not the final “-ed” of a past participle is sounded, an area where there is variation for the sake of the five-beat iambic pentameter rhythm. We use the convention of a grave accent to indicate sounding (thus “turnèd” would be two syllables), but would urge actors not to overstress. In cases where one speaker ends with a verse half-line and the next begins with the other half of the pentameter, editors since the late eighteenth century have indented the second line. We have abandoned this convention, since the Folio does not use it, and nor did actors’ cues in the Shakespearean theater. An exception is made when the second speaker actively interrupts or completes the first speaker’s sentence.

Spelling is modernized, but older forms are occasionally maintained where necessary for rhythm or aural effect.

Punctuation in Shakespeare’s time was as much rhetorical as grammatical. “Colon” was originally a term for a unit of thought in an argument. The semicolon was a new unit of punctuation (some of the Quartos lack them altogether). We have modernized punctuation throughout but have given more weight to Folio punctuation than many editors, since, though not Shakespearean, it reflects the usage of his period. In particular, we have used the colon far more than many editors: it is exceptionally useful as a way of indicating how many Shakespearean speeches unfold clause by clause in a developing argument that gives the illusion of enacting the process of thinking in the moment. We have also kept in mind the origin of punctuation in classical times as a way of assisting the actor and orator: the comma suggests the briefest of pauses for breath, the colon a middling one, and a full stop or period a longer pause. Semicolons, by contrast, belong to an era of punctuation that was only just coming in during Shakespeare’s time and that is coming to an end now: we have accordingly only used them where they occur in our copy texts (and not always then). Dashes are sometimes used for parenthetical interjections where the Folio has brackets. They

are also used for interruptions and changes in train of thought. Where a change of addressee occurs within a speech, we have used a dash preceded by a full stop (or occasionally another form of punctuation). Often the identity of the respective addressees is obvious from the context. When it is not, this has been indicated in a marginal stage direction.

Entrances and Exits are fairly thorough in Folio, which has accordingly been followed as faithfully as possible. Where characters are omitted or corrections are necessary, this is indicated by square brackets (e.g. “[and *Attendants*]”). Exit is sometimes silently normalized to *Exeunt* and *Manet* anglicized to “remains.” We trust Folio positioning of entrances and exits to a greater degree than most editors.

Editorial Stage Directions such as stage business, asides, indications of addressee and of characters’ position on the gallery stage are only used sparingly in Folio. Other editions mingle directions of this kind with original Folio and Quarto directions, sometimes marking them by means of square brackets. We have sought to distinguish what could be described as *director*ial interventions of this kind from Folio-style directions (either original or supplied) by placing in the right margin in a smaller typeface. There is a degree of subjectivity about which directions are of which kind, but the procedure is intended as a reminder to the reader and the actor that Shakespearean stage directions are often dependent upon editorial inference alone and are not set in stone. We also depart from editorial tradition in sometimes admitting uncertainty and thus printing permissive stage directions, such as an ***Aside?*** (often a line may be equally effective as an aside or a direct address—it is for each production or reading to make its own decision) or a ***may exit*** or a piece of business placed between arrows to indicate that it may occur at various moments within a scene.

Line Numbers are editorial, for reference and to key the explanatory and textual notes.

Explanatory Notes explain allusions and gloss obsolete and difficult words, confusing phraseology, occasional major textual cruces, and so on. Particular attention is given to nonstandard usage, bawdy innuendo, and technical terms (e.g. legal and military language). Where more than one sense is given, commas indicate shades of related meaning, slashes alternative or double meanings.

Textual Notes at the end of the play indicate major departures from the Folio. They take the following form: the reading of our text is given in bold and its source given after an equals sign, with “Q” indicating one that derives from the principal Quarto, “F2” one that derives from the Second Folio of 1632, and “Ed” one that derives from the editorial tradition. The rejected Folio (“F”) reading is then given. A selection of Quarto variants and plausible unadopted editorial readings are also included. Thus, for example, at Act 1 Scene 1 line 299, “**plighted** = F. Q = pleated.” This indicates that we have retained the Folio reading “plighted” and that “pleated” is an interestingly different reading in the Quarto.

KEY FACTS

MAJOR PARTS: (*with percentage of lines/number of speeches/scenes on stage*) Lear (22%/188/10), Edgar (11%/98/10), Earl of Kent (11%/127/12), Earl of Gloucester (10%/118/12), Edmund (9%/79/9), Fool (7%/58/6), Goneril (6%/53/8), Regan (5%/73/8), Duke of Albany (5%/58/5), Cordelia (3%/31/4), Duke of Cornwall (3%/63/5), Oswald (2%/38/7).

LINGUISTIC MEDIUM: 75% verse, 25% prose.

DATE: 1605–6. Performed at court December 1606; draws on old *Leir* play (published 1605); seems to refer to eclipses of September and October 1605; borrows from books by Samuel Harsnett and John Florio that were published in 1603.

SOURCES: Based on *The True Chronicle Historie of King Leir and his Three Daughters*, an old play of unknown authorship that was in the London theatrical repertoire in the early 1590s, but makes many changes, including alteration of providential Christian to pagan language and the introduction of a tragic ending. The Lear story also appeared in other sources familiar to Shakespeare: *The Mirrour for Magistrates* (edition of 1574), Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), and book 2 canto 10 of Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590). In all versions of the story before Shakespeare's, there is a "romance" ending whereby the old king is restored to his daughter Cordelia and to the throne. The Gloucester subplot is derived from the story of the Paphlagonian king in book 2 chapter 10 of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* by Sir Philip Sidney (1590): a blind old man is led to the top of a cliff from where he contemplates suicide because he has been deceived by his bastard son; the good

son returns and encounters the bad one in a chivalric duel. The story was intended to exemplify both “true natural goodness” and “wretched ungratefulness”; a few chapters later (2.15), Sidney tells of a different credulous king who is tricked into mistrusting his virtuous son. The characters of “Poor Tom” and the Fool are entirely Shakespearean creations, though some of the language of demonic possession feigned by Edgar is borrowed from Samuel Harsnett’s *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures* (1603), a work of propaganda about Catholic plots and faked exorcisms that Shakespeare probably read because of the Stratford origins of one of the exorcizing priests, Robert Debdale. The language of the play and some of its philosophical ideas reveal that Shakespeare had also been reading *The Essayes of Montaigne* in John Florio’s English translation (1603).

TEXT: Published in Quarto in 1608 under the title *M. William Shakspeare: HIS True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King LEAR and his three Daughters. With the vnfortunate life of Edgar, sonne and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his sullen and assumed humor of TOM of Bedlam: As it was played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall vpon S. Stephans night in Christmas Hollidayes. By his Maiesties seruants playing vsually at the Gloabe on the Bancke-side*. This text was very poorly printed, partly because its printer (Nicholas Okes) was unaccustomed to setting plays and also because it seems to derive from Shakespeare’s own working manuscript, which would have been difficult to read. Quarto includes about 300 lines that are not in the 1623 Folio text, which was entitled “The Tragedy of King Lear,” and has clear signs of derivation from the theatrical playbook (though, to complicate matters, the Folio printing was also influenced by a reprint of the Quarto that appeared in 1619 as one of the ten plays published by Thomas Pavier in an attempt to produce a collected Shakespeare). The Folio in turn has about 100 lines that are not in the Quarto, and nearly 1,000 lines have variations of word or phrase. The two early texts thus represent two different stages in the life of the play, with extensive revision having been carried out, either systematically or incrementally. Revisions

include diminution of the prominence given to the invading French army (perhaps for political reasons), clarification of Lear's motives for dividing his kingdom, and weakening of the role of Albany (including reassignment from him to Edgar of the play's closing speech, and thus by implication—since it was a convention of Shakespearean tragedy that the new man in power always has the last word—of the right to rule Britain). Among the more striking cuts are the mock trial of Goneril in the hovel and the moment of compassion when loyal servants apply a palliative to Gloucester's bleeding eyes. For centuries, editors have conflated the Quarto and Folio texts, creating a play that Shakespeare never wrote. We endorse the body of scholarship since the 1980s and the new editorial tradition in which Folio and Quarto are regarded as discrete entities. We have edited the more theatrical Folio text but have corrected its errors (which are plentiful, since much of it was set in type by "Compositor E," the apprentice who was by far the worst printer in Isaac Jaggard's shop). The influence of Quarto copy on the Folio is of great assistance in making these corrections. Textual notes are perforce more numerous than for any other work by Shakespeare; several hundred Quarto variants are listed. All the most significant Quarto-only passages are printed at the end of the play.

THE TRAGEDY
OF KING LEAR

LIST OF PARTS

LEAR, King of Britain

CONERIL, Lear's eldest daughter

REGAN, Lear's middle daughter

CORDELIA, Lear's youngest daughter

Duke of ALBANY, Goneril's husband

Duke of CORNWALL, Regan's husband

King of FRANCE, suitor and later husband to Cordelia

Duke of BURGUNDY, suitor to Cordelia

Earl of KENT, later disguised as Caius

Earl of GLOUCESTER

EDGAR, Gloucester's son, later disguised as Poor Tom

EDMUND, Gloucester's illegitimate son

OLD MAN, Gloucester's tenant

FLURAN, Gloucester's retainer

Lear's FOOL

SWALD, Goneril's steward

KNIGHT, a Knight serving Lear

ATTENDANT, attendant on Cordelia

SERVANT of Cornwall

HERALD

CAPTAIN

Nights attendant upon Lear, other Attendants, Messengers, Soldiers, Servants, and Trumpeters

Act 1 Scene 1

running scene 1

Enter Kent, Gloucester and Edmund

ENT I thought the king had more **affected**¹ the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

LOUCESTER It did always seem so to us: but now in the division of the kingdom it appears not which of the dukes he values most, for **qualities are so weighed that curiosity in neither**⁵ can make choice of either's moiety.

ENT Is not this your son, my lord?

LOUCESTER His **breeding**⁸, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am **brazed**⁹ to't.

ENT I cannot **conceive**¹⁰ you.

LOUCESTER Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-wombed and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle **ere**¹³ she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a **fault**¹⁴?

ENT I cannot wish the fault **undone**¹⁵, the issue of it being so **proper**¹⁶.

LOUCESTER But I have a son, sir, **by order of law**, **some**¹⁷ year elder than this, who yet is no **dearer** in my **account**¹⁸, though this have came something saucily to the world before he was sent for: yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making and the **whoreson**²¹ must be acknowledged.— Do you now this noble gentleman, Edmund?

DMUND No, my lord.

LOUCESTER My lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my
onourable friend.

DMUND My services to your lordship.

ENT I must love you, and [sue](#)²⁷ to know you better.

DMUND Sir, I shall study [deserving](#)²⁸.

LOUCESTER He hath been [out](#)²⁹ nine years, and away he shall
gain. The king is coming.

*Sennet. Enter [one [bearing a coronet](#), then] King Lear, Cornwall,
Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia and Attendants*

EAR [Attend](#)³¹ the lords of France and Burgundy,
loucester.

LOUCESTER I shall, my lord.

Exit

EAR Meantime we shall express our [darker](#)³⁴ purpose.
ive me the map there.

Kent or an Attendant gives Lear a map

Know that we have divided

1 three our kingdom, and 'tis our [fast intent](#)³⁶
o shake all cares and [business](#)³⁷ from our age,
onferring them on younger strengths while we
nburdened crawl toward death. Our [son](#)³⁹ of Cornwall,
nd you our no less loving son of Albany,
/e have this hour a [constant will](#) to [publish](#)⁴¹
ur daughters' [several dowers](#), [that](#)⁴² future strife
lay be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy,
reat rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
ong in our court have made their amorous [sojourn](#)⁴⁵

nd here are to be answered. Tell me, my daughters —
ince now we will divest us both of rule,
interest⁴⁸ of territory, cares of state —
hich of you shall we say doth love us most,
hat we our largest bounty⁵⁰ may extend
here nature doth with merit challenge⁵¹? Goneril,
ur eldest born, speak first.

ONERIL Sir, I love you more than word can wield⁵³ the matter,
earer than eyesight, space and liberty,
eyond what can be valued rich or rare,
o less than life, with grace⁵⁶, health, beauty, honour:
s much as child e'er loved or father found:
love that makes breath poor and speech unable⁵⁸:
eyond all manner of so much⁵⁹ I love you.

Aside

ORDELIA What shall Cordelia speak? Love and be silent.
oints to the map

EAR Of all these bounds⁶¹, even from this line to this,
with shadowy forests and with champaigns riched⁶²,
with plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads⁶³,
e make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issues
e this perpetual.— What says our second daughter?
ur dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall?

EGAN I am made of that self-mettle⁶⁷ as my sister,
nd prize me at her worth⁶⁸. In my true heart,
find she names my very deed⁶⁹ of love:
nly she comes too short, that⁷⁰ I profess
lyself an enemy to all other joys

Which the most precious [square of sense](#)⁷² professes,
And find I am [alone felicitate](#)⁷³
In your dear highness' love.

Aside

CORDELIA Then poor Cordelia:
And yet not so, since I am sure my love's
More [ponderous](#)⁷⁷ than my tongue.

KING To thee and thine [hereditary](#)⁷⁸ ever
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,
No less in space, [validity](#)⁸⁰ and pleasure

To Cordelia

Than that conferred on Goneril.— Now, our joy,
Although our last and least, to whose young love
The [vines of France and milk of Burgundy](#)⁸³
Strive to be [interested](#), what can you say to [draw](#)⁸⁴
A third more opulent than your sisters'? Speak.

CORDELIA Nothing, my lord.

KING Nothing?

CORDELIA Nothing.

KING Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

CORDELIA Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my [bond](#)⁹², no more nor less.

KING How, how, Cordelia? [Mend](#)⁹³ your speech a little,
Least you may [mar](#)⁹⁴ your fortunes.

CORDELIA Good my lord,
You have [begot](#) me, [bred](#)⁹⁶ me, loved me:
Return those duties back as are right fit,

bey you, love you and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands if they say
they love you all? Happily when I shall wed,
that lord whose hand must take my [plight](#)¹⁰¹ shall carry
half my love with him, half my care and duty:
sure I shall never marry like my sisters.

LEAR But goes thy heart with this?

CORDELIA Ay, my good lord.

LEAR So young and so [untender](#)¹⁰⁶?

CORDELIA So young, my lord, and true.

LEAR Let it be so: thy truth then be thy dower,
or by the sacred radiance of the sun,
the mysteries of [Hecate](#)¹¹⁰ and the night,
by all the [operation](#) of the [orbs](#)¹¹¹
from whom we do exist and cease to be,
where I disclaim all my paternal care,
[propinquity and property of blood](#)¹¹⁴,
and as a stranger to my heart and me
hold thee from [this](#) for ever. The barbarous [Scythian](#)¹¹⁶,
or he that makes his [generation messes](#)¹¹⁷
to gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
be as well [neighboured](#)¹¹⁹, pitied and relieved
as thou my [sometime](#)¹²⁰ daughter.

KENT Good my [liege](#)¹²¹—

LEAR Peace, Kent:

come not between the dragon and his wrath.
I loved her most, and thought to [set my rest](#)¹²⁴

To Cordelia

n her kind nursery.— Hence, and avoid¹²⁵ my sight!—
o be my grave my peace, as here I give
er father's heart from her. Call France. Who stirs?¹²⁷
all Burgundy.— Cornwall and Albany,

[Exit Attendant]

With my two daughters' dowers digest¹²⁹ the third.
et pride, which she calls plainness, marry her¹³⁰.
do invest you jointly with my power,
re-eminence, and all the large effects¹³²
hat troop with¹³³ majesty. Ourselves by monthly course,
With reservation of¹³⁴ an hundred knights
y you to be sustained¹³⁵, shall our abode
lake with you by due turn: only we shall retain
he name and all th'addition to a king: the sway¹³⁷,
evenue, execution of the rest,
elovèd sons, be yours, which to confirm,
his coronet part between you.

Gives them coronet to break in half

ENT Royal Lear,

Whom I have ever honoured as my king,
loved as my father, as my master followed,
s my great patron thought on in my prayers—

LEAR The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft¹⁴⁵.

ENT Let it fall rather, though the fork¹⁴⁶ invade

he region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly

When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou¹⁴⁸ do, old man?

hink'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak

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

When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state¹⁵¹,
and in thy best consideration¹⁵² check
his hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgement¹⁵³:
thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,
nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
everb no hollowness¹⁵⁶.

LEAR Kent, on thy life, no more.

ENT My life I never held but as pawn¹⁵⁸
on wage¹⁵⁹ against thine enemies, ne'er fear to lose it,
thy safety being motive.

LEAR Out of my sight!

ENT See better, Lear, and let me still remain
thy true blank¹⁶³ of thine eye.

LEAR Now, by Apollo¹⁶⁴—

ENT Now, by Apollo, king,
thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

LEAR O, vassal! Miscreant¹⁶⁷!

Puts his hand on his sword or attacks Kent

LBANY AND CORDELIA Dear sir, forbear¹⁶⁸.

ENT Kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow¹⁶⁹
upon the foul disease¹⁷⁰. Revoke thy gift,
nor whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

LEAR Hear me, recreant¹⁷³, on thine allegiance hear me!
That¹⁷⁴ thou hast sought to make us break our vows,
Which we durst never yet, and with strained¹⁷⁵ pride
to come betwixt our sentences¹⁷⁶ and our power,
Which nor our nature nor our place¹⁷⁷ can bear,

ur **potency made good**¹⁷⁸, take thy reward:
ive days we do allot thee for provision
o shield thee from **disasters**¹⁸⁰ of the world,
nd on the sixth to turn thy hated back
pon our kingdom: if on the next day following
hy banished **trunk**¹⁸³ be found in our dominions,
he moment is thy death. Away! By **Jupiter**¹⁸⁴,
his shall not be revoked.

ENT Fare thee well, king: **sith**¹⁸⁶ thus thou wilt appear,
reedom lives hence and banishment is here.—

To Cordelia

he gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
hat justly think'st, and hast most rightly said.—

To Goneril and Regan

nd **your large speeches may your deeds approve**¹⁹⁰,
hat good effects may spring from words of love.
hus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu.
e'll **shape his old course**¹⁹³ in a country new.

Exit

Flourish. Enter Gloucester with France and Burgundy, Attendants

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

EAR My lord of Burgundy,
/e first address toward you, who with this king
ath **rivalled** for our daughter: what **in the least**¹⁹⁷
/ill you require in **present dower**¹⁹⁸ with her,
r cease your quest of love?

URGUNDY Most royal majesty,
crave no more than hath your highness offered,

or will you [tender](#)²⁰² less.

EAR Right noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us, we did [hold her so](#)²⁰⁴,
but now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands:
['aught](#) within that [little seeming substance](#)²⁰⁶,
or all of it, with our displeasure [pieced](#)²⁰⁷,
and nothing more, may [fitly like](#)²⁰⁸ your grace,
he's there, and she is yours.

BURGUNDY I know no answer.

EAR Will you, with those [infirmities](#) she [owes](#)²¹¹,
infriended, new-adopted to our hate,
[owered with](#) our curse and [strangered](#)²¹³ with our oath,
take her or leave her?

BURGUNDY Pardon me, royal sir:
[lection makes not up](#)²¹⁶ in such conditions.

EAR Then leave her, sir, for by the power that made me,

To France

[tell you](#)²¹⁸ all her wealth.— For you, great king,
would not [from your love make such a stray](#)²¹⁹
to match you where I hate, therefore beseech you
'avert your liking a more worthier way
than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed
almost t'acknowledge hers.

FRANCE This is most strange,
that she whom even but now was [your object](#)²²⁵,
the [argument](#) of your praise, [balm](#)²²⁶ of your age,
the best, the dearest, should in this [trice](#)²²⁷ of time
commit a thing so [monstrous](#) to [dismantle](#)²²⁸

o many folds of favour. Sure her offence
must be of such unnatural degree
that **monsters it**, or your **fore-vouched**²³¹ affection
all into taint, which to believe of her²³²
must be a faith that reason without miracle
should never plant in me.

ORDELIA I yet beseech your majesty —
'for I **want**²³⁶ that glib and oily art
to speak and **purpose not**²³⁷, since what I will intend
I'll do't before I speak — that you make known
is no vicious blot, murder, or **foulness**²³⁹,
no unchaste action or dishonoured step
that hath deprived me of your grace and favour,
but even for want of that **for which**²⁴² I am richer:
still-soliciting²⁴³ eye and such a tongue
that I am glad I have not, though not to have it
hath lost me in your liking.

LEAR Better thou hadst
not been born than not t'have pleased me better.

CORINUS Is it but this? A **tardiness in nature**²⁴⁸,
which often leaves the **history**²⁴⁹ unspoke
that it intends to do? My lord of Burgundy,
what say you to the lady? Love's not love
when it is mingled with **regards that stands**²⁵²
aloof from th'entire point. Will you have her?
She is herself a dowry.

BURGUNDY Royal king,

To Lear

ive but that portion which yourself proposed,
nd here I take Cordelia by the hand,
uchess of Burgundy.

EAR Nothing: I have sworn: I am firm.

To Cordelia

BURGUNDY I am sorry, then, you have so lost a father
hat you must lose a husband.

CORDELIA Peace be with Burgundy.

ince that [respect and fortunes](#)²⁶³ are his love,
shall not be his wife.

RANCE Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being poor,
[lost choice forsaken](#)²⁶⁶, and most loved despised,
hee and thy virtues here I [seize upon](#)²⁶⁷:

Takes her hand

[e it lawful](#)²⁶⁸, I take up what's cast away.
ods, gods! 'Tis strange that from [their](#)²⁶⁹ cold'st neglect
ly love should kindle to [inflamed](#)²⁷⁰ respect.—
hy dowerless daughter, king, [thrown to my chance](#)²⁷¹,
queen of us, of ours and our fair France:
ot all the dukes of [wat'rish](#)²⁷³ Burgundy
an buy this [unprized](#)²⁷⁴ precious maid of me.—
id them farewell, Cordelia, [though unkind](#)²⁷⁵.
hou lovest here, a better [where](#)²⁷⁶ to find.

EAR Thou hast her, France: let her be thine, for we
ave no such daughter, nor shall ever see
hat face of hers again. Therefore be gone
ithout our [grace](#), our love, our [benison](#)²⁸⁰.
ome, noble Burgundy.

Flourish. Exeunt. [France and the sisters remain]

FRANCE Bid farewell to your sisters.

CORDELIA The jewels of our father, with washèd²⁸³ eyes
ordelia leaves you. I know you what you are,
and like a sister am most loath to call
our faults as they are named²⁸⁶. Love well our father:
o your professèd bosoms I commit²⁸⁷ him,
but yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
would prefer²⁸⁹ him to a better place.
o farewell to you both.

REGAN Prescribe not us our duty.

CONRIL Let your study²⁹²
be to content your lord who hath received you
of fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted²⁹⁴,
and well are worth the want that you have wanted²⁹⁵.

CORDELIA Time shall unfold what plighted cunning²⁹⁶ hides:
/who covers faults, at last with shame derides²⁹⁷.

/ell may you prosper.

FRANCE Come, my fair Cordelia.

Exit France and Cordelia

CONRIL Sister, it is not little I have to say of what most nearly³⁰⁰
appertains to us both. I think our father will hence tonight.

REGAN That's most certain, and with you: next month with
s.

CONRIL You see how full of changes his age is: the
observation we have made of it hath not been little. He
always loved our sister most, and with what poor judgement
he hath now cast her off appears too grossly³⁰⁷.

EGAN 'Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath **ever**³⁰⁸ but **enderly**³⁰⁹ known himself.

ONERIL The **best and soundest** of his time hath been but³¹⁰ ish. Then must we **look**³¹¹ from his age to receive not alone the nperfections of **long-engrafted condition**, but **therewithal**³¹² ie unruly waywardness that infirm and **choleric**³¹³ years ring with them.

EGAN Such **unconstant starts**³¹⁵ are we like to have from him s this of Kent's banishment.

ONERIL There is further **compliment**³¹⁷ of leave-taking etween France and him. Pray you let us **sit together**³¹⁸: if our ither **carry** authority with such **disposition**³¹⁹ as he bears, this **st surrender** of his will but **offend**³²⁰ us.

EGAN We shall further think of it.

ONERIL We must do something, and **i'th'heat**³²².

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 2

running scene 2

Enter Bastard [Edmund]

With a letter

DMUND Thou, nature, art my goddess: to thy law ly services are bound. **Wherefore**² should I **tand in**³ the plague of custom and permit he **curiosity** of **nations**⁴ to deprive me or that I am some twelve or fourteen **moonshines**⁵ **ag of** a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore **base**⁶? /hen my **dimensions** are as well **compact**⁷, ly mind as **generous**, and my shape as **true**⁸,

s [honest madam's issue](#)⁹? Why brand they us
/ith base? With baseness? Bastardy? Base, base?
/ho in the lusty stealth of nature [take](#)¹¹
[lore composition and fierce quality](#)¹²
han doth within a dull, stale, tirèd bed,
o to th'creating a whole tribe of [fops](#)¹⁴
[ot](#)¹⁵ 'tween a sleep and wake? Well then,
egitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
ur father's love is to the bastard Edmund
[s](#)¹⁸ to th'legitimate — fine word, 'legitimate' —
/ell, my legitimate, if this letter [speed](#)¹⁹
nd my [invention](#)²⁰ thrive, Edmund the base
hall [to th'legitimate](#)²¹. I grow, I prosper:
ow, gods, stand up for bastards!

Enter Gloucester

LOUCESTER Kent banished thus? And France in [choler parted](#)²³?
nd the king gone tonight? [Prescribed](#)²⁴ his power,
onfined to [exhibition](#)²⁵? All this done
pon the [gad](#)²⁶? Edmund, how now? What news?

Hides the letter

DMUND So please your lordship, none.

LOUCESTER Why so earnestly seek you to put [up](#)²⁸ that letter?

DMUND I know no news, my lord.

LOUCESTER What paper were you reading?

DMUND Nothing, my lord.

LOUCESTER No? What needed, then, that [terrible dispatch](#)³² of it
ito your pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need
o hide itself. Let's see: come, if it be nothing I shall not need

spectacles.

EDMUND I beseech you, sir, pardon me: it is a letter from my brother that I have not all o'er-read; and [for](#)³⁷ so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your [o'erlooking](#)³⁸.

LOUCESTER Give me the letter, sir.

EDMUND I shall offend either to detain or give it: the contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

Edmund gives the letter

LOUCESTER Let's see, let's see.

EDMUND I hope for my brother's justification he wrote this out as an [essay or taste](#)⁴⁴ of my virtue.

LOUCESTER Reads 'This [policy and reverence of age](#)⁴⁵ makes the world bitter to [the best of our times](#), keeps our [fortunes](#)⁴⁶ from us till our oldness cannot [relish](#) them. I begin to find an [idle](#)⁴⁷ and [fond](#)⁴⁸ bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who [saves](#), not [as it hath power, but as it is suffered](#)⁴⁹. Come to me, what of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever and have the beloved of your brother, Edgar.'

Hum! Conspiracy! 'Sleep till I wake him, you should enjoy half his revenue.' My son Edgar? Had he a hand to write this? heart and brain to breed it in? When came you to this? Who brought it?

EDMUND It was not brought me, my lord; there's the cunning of it: I found it thrown in at the [casement](#) of my [closet](#)⁵⁸.

LOUCESTER You know the [character](#)⁵⁹ to be your brother's?

EDMUND If the [matter](#)⁶⁰ were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his, but [in respect of that](#) I would [fain](#)⁶¹ think it were not.

LOUCESTER It is his.

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

LOUCESTER Has he never before sounded you in this business?

EDMUND Never, my lord: but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age and fathers declined⁶⁷, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

LOUCESTER O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! Worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him: I'll apprehend⁷² him. A bominable⁷³ villain, where is he?

EDMUND I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should in a certain course, where, if you violently proceed⁷⁷ against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in our own honour and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down⁸⁰ my life for him, that he hath writ this to feel⁸¹ my affection to your honour, and to no other retence⁸² of danger.

LOUCESTER Think you so?

EDMUND If your honour judge it meet⁸⁴, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular⁸⁵ assurance have your satisfaction⁸⁶, and that without any further delay than this very evening.

LOUCESTER He cannot be such a monster. Edmund, seek him out: wind me into him, I pray you: frame⁸⁹ the business after

our own wisdom. I would [unstate myself to be in a due](#)⁹⁰
solution.

EDMUND I will seek him, sir, [presently: convey](#)⁹² the business as
shall find means and acquaint you [withal](#)⁹³.

LOUCESTER These [late](#)⁹⁴ eclipses in the sun and moon portend no
good to us: though the [wisdom of nature](#)⁹⁵ can reason it thus
and thus, yet nature finds itself [scourged](#) by the [sequent](#)⁹⁶
effects: love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in
cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason;
and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of
mine comes under the prediction: there's son against father.
The king falls from [bias of nature](#)¹⁰¹: there's father against
child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations,
followness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us
insidiously to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund: [it](#)¹⁰⁴
shall lose thee nothing. Do it carefully.— And the noble and
true-hearted Kent banished! His offence, honesty! 'Tis
range.

Exit

EDMUND This is the [excellent foppery](#)¹⁰⁸ of the world, that when
we are sick in fortune — often the [surfeits](#)¹⁰⁹ of our own
behaviour — we make guilty of our [disasters](#)¹¹⁰ the sun, the
moon¹¹¹ and stars, as if we were villains on necessity, fools by
heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves and [treachers](#)¹¹² by
[spherical predominance](#)¹¹³, drunkards, liars and adulterers
by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that
we are evil in, by a [divine](#) thrusting on: an admirable [evasion](#)¹¹⁵
of [whoremaster](#) man, to lay his [goatish](#)¹¹⁶ disposition on the

large of a star! My father compounded¹¹⁷ with my mother
under the dragon's tail and my nativity was under Ursa¹¹⁸
major, so that it follows I am rough¹¹⁹ and lecherous. I should
have been that I am had the maidenliest¹²⁰ star in the
firmament twinkled on my bastardizing¹²¹.

Enter Edgar

that he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue¹²²
villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'Bedlam¹²³.—
O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! Fa, sol, la, mi¹²⁴.

EDGAR How now, brother Edmund, what serious
contemplation are you in?

EDMUND I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this¹²⁷
other day, what should follow these eclipses.

EDGAR Do you busy yourself with that?

EDMUND I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed¹³⁰
unhappily¹³¹. When saw you my father last?

EDGAR The night gone by.

EDMUND Spake you with him?

EDGAR Ay, two hours together.

EDMUND Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure
in him by word nor countenance¹³⁶?

EDGAR None at all.

EDMUND Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended
him, and at my entreaty forbear¹³⁹ his presence until some little
time hath qualified¹⁴⁰ the heat of his displeasure, which at this
instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your¹⁴¹
person it would scarcely allay¹⁴².

EDGAR Some villain hath done me wrong.

DMUND That's my fear. I pray you **have a continent**¹⁴⁴
rbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower: and, as I
ay, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will **fitly**¹⁴⁶
ring you to hear my lord speak. Pray ye go.

Gives a key

here's my key: if you do stir **abroad**¹⁴⁸, go armed.

DGAR Armed, brother?

DMUND Brother, I advise you to the best: I am no honest
ian if there be any good **meaning**¹⁵¹ toward you: I have told
ou what I have seen and heard, but faintly, nothing like the
nage and horror¹⁵³ of it. Pray you away.

DGAR Shall I hear from you **anon**¹⁵⁴?

Exit

DMUND I do **serve**¹⁵⁵ you in this business.—
credulous father and a brother noble,
/hose nature is so far from doing harms
hat he suspects none: on whose foolish honesty
ly **practices**¹⁵⁹ ride easy. I see the business.
et me, if not by birth, have lands by **wit**¹⁶⁰:
ll with me's **meet** that I can **fashion fit**¹⁶¹.

Exit

Act 1 Scene 3

running scene 3

Enter Goneril and Steward [Oswald]

ONERIL Did my father strike my **gentleman** for **chiding**¹ of his
ol?

SWALD Ay, madam.

ONERIL By day and night he wrongs me: every hour

he [flashes](#)⁵ into one gross crime or other
that sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it.
his knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
in every trifle. When he returns from hunting
will not speak with him: say I am sick.
'you [come slack](#)¹⁰ of former services
you shall do well: the fault of it I'll [answer](#)¹¹.

Horns within

SWALD He's coming, madam: I hear him.
ONERIL Put on what weary negligence you please,
you and your [fellows](#): I'd have it come to [question](#)¹⁴:
'he [distaste](#)¹⁵ it, let him to my sister,
whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one.
remember what I have said.

SWALD Well, madam.

ONERIL And let his knights have colder looks among you:
that grows of it, no matter: advise your fellows so. I'll write
[straight to](#)²¹ my sister, to hold my course. Prepare for dinner.

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 4

running scene 3 continues

Enter Kent

Disguised

KENT If but [as will I](#)¹ other accents borrow,
that can my speech [defuse](#)², my good intent
may carry through itself to that [full issue](#)³
for which I [razed my likeness](#)⁴. Now, banished Kent,
'thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned,

o may it come thy master whom thou lov'st,
hall find thee full of labours.

Horns within. Enter Lear and Attendants [his Knights]

LEAR Let me not [stay](#)⁸ a jot for dinner: go get it ready.—

[Exit a Knight]

To Kent

ow now, what art thou?

ENT A man, sir.

LEAR [What dost thou profess?](#) What [wouldst thou](#)¹¹ with
[s](#)¹²?

ENT I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him
uly that will put me in trust, to love him that is honest, to
onverse with him that is wise and says little, to fear
[idgement](#), to fight when I [cannot choose](#) and [to eat no fish](#)¹⁶.

LEAR What art thou?

ENT A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the
ing.

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

ENT Service.

LEAR Who wouldst thou serve?

ENT You.

LEAR Dost thou know me, fellow?

ENT No, sir, but you have that in your countenance
hich I would fain call master.

LEAR What's that?

ENT Authority.

LEAR What services canst thou do?

ENT I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious³¹ tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the best of me is diligence.

EAR How old art thou?

ENT Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for anything³⁷: I have years on my back forty-eight.

EAR Follow me, thou shalt serve me: if I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet.— Dinner, no, dinner! Where's my knave⁴¹? My fool? Go you and call my fool hither.

[Exit another Knight]

Enter Steward [Oswald]

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

SWALD So⁴⁴ please you—

Exit

EAR What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll⁴⁵ back.—

[Exit another Knight]

Where's my fool? Ho, I think the world's asleep.—

[Enter a Knight]

How now? Where's that mongrel?

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

EAR Why came not the slave⁴⁹ back to me when I called him?

NIGHT Sir, he answered me in the roundest⁵¹ manner, he would not.

EAR He would not?

NIGHT My lord, I know not what the matter is, but to my judgement your highness is not entertained⁵⁵ with that ceremonious affection as you were wont⁵⁶: there's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general⁵⁷ dependants as in the duke himself also and your daughter.

EAR Ha? Say'st thou so?

NIGHT I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken, or my duty cannot be silent when I think your highness wronged.

EAR Thou but rememb'rest me of mine own conception⁶³: have perceived a most faint⁶⁴ neglect of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very⁶⁵ retence and purpose of unkindness. I will look further into't. But where's my fool? I have not seen him this two days.

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

EAR No more of that, I have noted it well.— Go you and tell my daughter I would speak with her.—

[Exit a Knight]

Go you, call hither my fool.—

[Exit another Knight]

Enter Steward [Oswald]

O, you sir, you, come you hither, sir. Who am I, sir?

SWALD My lady's father.

EAR 'My lady's father'? My lord's knave: you whoreson dog, you slave, you cur⁷⁷!

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

EAR Do you **bandy**⁷⁹ looks with me, you rascal?

Strikes him

SWALD I'll not be **strucken**⁸⁰, my lord.

ENT Nor tripped neither, you base **football**⁸¹ player.

Trips him

EAR I thank thee, fellow: thou serv'st me and I'll love
 thee.

ENT Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you **differences**⁸⁴:
 way, away! If you will **measure your lubber's**⁸⁵ length again,
 urry: but away, **go to**⁸⁶. Have you wisdom? So.

Pushes Oswald out

EAR Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee.

Gives money

here's **earnest**⁸⁸ of thy service.

Enter Fool

DOL Let me hire him too: here's my
 coxcomb⁹⁰.

Offers Kent his cap

EAR How now, my **pretty**⁹¹ knave, how dost thou?

To Kent

DOL Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

EAR Why, my boy?

DOL Why? For taking one's part that's out of favour: nay,
 n thou canst not smile as the wind sits⁹⁵, thou'lt catch cold
 shortly. There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has
 anished two **on's**⁹⁷ daughters and did the third a blessing
 gainst his will: if thou follow him, thou must **needs**⁹⁸ wear
 y coxcomb.— How now, **nuncle**? **Would**⁹⁹ I had two

coxcombs and two daughters.

EAR Why, my boy?

DOL If I gave them all my [living](#)¹⁰², I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine: beg another of thy daughters.

EAR Take heed, sirrah: the whip.

DOL Truth's a dog must to kennel: he must be whipped out when the Lady [Brach](#)¹⁰⁶ may stand by th'fire and stink.

EAR A [pestilent gall](#)¹⁰⁷ to me!

DOL Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

EAR Do.

DOL [Mark](#)¹¹⁰ it, nuncle:

Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou [owest](#)¹¹³,
Ride more than thou [goest](#)¹¹⁴,
Learn more than thou [trowest](#)¹¹⁵,
[Set less than thou throwest](#)¹¹⁶;
Leave thy drink and thy whore,
And keep in-a-door,
And thou shalt [have more](#)¹¹⁹
Than two tens to a [score](#)¹²⁰.

ENT This is nothing, fool.

To Lear

DOL Then 'tis like the breath of an [unfee'd](#)¹²²

lawyer: you gave me nothing for't.— Can you make no [use](#)¹²³ of nothing, nuncle?

EAR Why, no, boy: nothing can be made out of nothing.

To Kent

DOL Prithee tell him, so much the rent of his land
comes to: he will not believe a fool.

EAR A bitter fool!

DOL Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a
bitter fool and a sweet one?

EAR No, lad, teach me.

DOL Nuncle, give me an egg and I'll give thee two
crowns.

EAR What two crowns¹³⁴ shall they be?

DOL Why, after I have cut the egg i'th'middle and eat up
the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest¹³⁶ thy
crowns i'th'middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st
thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt: thou hadst little wit in thy
old crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away. If I speak
like myself¹⁴⁰ in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so:

Sings

Fools had ne'er less grace¹⁴¹ in a year,
For wise men are grown foppish¹⁴²
And know not how their wits to wear,
Their manners are so apish¹⁴⁴.

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

DOL I have used it¹⁴⁶, nuncle, e'er since thou mad'st thy
daughters thy mothers: for when thou gav'st them the rod¹⁴⁷
and put'st down thine own breeches,

Sings

When they for sudden joy did weep,
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep¹⁵¹

nd go [the fool among](#)¹⁵².

rithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool
o lie: I would [fain](#)¹⁵⁴ learn to lie.

EAR [An](#)¹⁵⁵ you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped.

DOL I [marvel](#)¹⁵⁶ what kin thou and thy daughters are:
ey'll have me whipped for speaking true, thou'lt have me
hipped for lying, and sometimes I am whipped for holding
y peace. I had rather be any kind o'thing than a fool. And
et I would not be thee, nuncle: thou hast [pared](#)¹⁶⁰ thy wit
'both sides and left nothing i'th'middle. Here comes one
'the parings.

Enter Goneril

EAR How now, daughter? What makes that [frontlet](#)¹⁶³ on?
ou are too much of late i'th'frown.

DOL Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need
o care for her frowning: now thou art an O without a [figure](#)¹⁶⁶.
am better than thou art now: I am a fool, thou art

To Goneril

othing.— Yes, [forsooth](#)¹⁶⁸, I will hold my tongue, so
our face bids me, though you say nothing.

Sings

lum, mum,
e that keeps [nor crust nor crumb](#)¹⁷¹,
eary of all, shall [want some](#)¹⁷².

Points to Lear

hat's a shelled [peascod](#)¹⁷³.

ONERIL Not only, sir, this your [all-licensed](#)¹⁷⁴ fool,
ut other of your insolent retinue

o hourly [carp](#)¹⁷⁶ and quarrel, breaking forth
i [rank](#)¹⁷⁷ and not-to-be endured riots, sir.
had thought by making this well known unto you
o have found a [safe](#)¹⁷⁹ redress, but now grow fearful,
y what yourself [too late](#)¹⁸⁰ have spoke and done.
hat you protect this [course](#) and [put it on](#)¹⁸¹
y your allowance, which if you should, the fault
ould not [scape](#) censure, nor the [redresses sleep](#)¹⁸³
hich [in the tender of a wholesome weal](#)¹⁸⁴
light in their working do you that offence,
hich else were shame, that then necessity
ill call discreet proceeding.
DOL For you know, nuncle,
he hedge-sparrow fed the [cuckoo](#)¹⁸⁹ so long,
hat [it's had it](#) head bit off by [it young](#)¹⁹⁰.
o, out went the candle, and we were left [darkling](#)¹⁹¹.

To Goneril

LEAR Are you our daughter?

ONERIL I would you would make use of your good wisdom —
hereof I know you are [fraught](#)¹⁹⁴ — and put away
hese [dispositions](#)¹⁹⁵ which of late transport you
rom what you rightly are.

DOL May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?
hoop, [Jug](#)¹⁹⁸! I love thee.

LEAR Does any here know me? This is not Lear.
oes Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?
ither his [notion](#) weakens, his [discernings](#)²⁰¹
re lethargied — Ha! [Waking?](#)²⁰² 'Tis not so?

Who is it that can tell me who I am?

DOL Lear's [shadow](#)²⁰⁴.

LEAR Your name, fair gentlewoman?

ONERIL This [admiration](#), sir, is much [o'th'savour](#)²⁰⁶

of other your new pranks. I do beseech you

to understand my purposes aright:

as you are old and reverend, [should](#)²⁰⁹ be wise.

Where do you keep a hundred knights and squires,

then so disordered, so debauched and [bold](#)²¹¹,

that this our court, infected with their manners,

shows like a riotous inn: [epicurism](#)²¹³ and lust

makes it more like a tavern or a brothel

than a [graced](#) palace. The shame itself doth [speak](#)²¹⁵

for instant remedy. Be then [desired](#)²¹⁶

by her, that else will take the thing she begs,

little to [disquantity your train](#)²¹⁸,

and the remainders, that shall still [depend](#)²¹⁹

on be such men as may [besort](#)²²⁰ your age,

which [know themselves and you](#)²²¹.

LEAR Darkness and devils!—

To a Servant

addle my horses, call my train together.—

To Goneril

[degenerate](#)²²⁴ bastard! I'll not trouble thee.

Let have I left a daughter.

ONERIL You strike my people, and your disordered rabble

make servants of their betters.

Enter Albany

To Albany

LEAR Woe [that](#)²²⁸ too late repents!— Is it your will?

To a Servant

peak, sir.— Prepare my horses.
ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
fore hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
han the sea-monster!

LBANY Pray, sir, be patient.

To Goneril

LEAR Detested [kite](#)²³⁴, thou liest.
ly train are men of choice and [rarest parts](#)²³⁵,
hat all particulars of duty know
nd [in the most exact regard support](#)²³⁷
he worships of their name. O, most small fault,
ow ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
hich, like an [engine](#)²⁴⁰, wrenched my frame of nature
rom the fixed place, drew from my heart all love,
nd added to the [gall](#)²⁴². O Lear, Lear, Lear!

Hits his head

eat at this gate, that let thy folly in,
nd thy dear judgement out!— Go, go, my people.

LBANY My lord, I am guiltless as I am ignorant
f what hath [moved](#)²⁴⁶ you.

LEAR It may be so, my lord.—
ear, nature, hear, dear goddess, hear!
uspend thy purpose if thou didst intend
o make this creature fruitful:
ito her womb convey sterility,

ry up in her the organs of [increase](#)²⁵²,
nd from her [derogate](#)²⁵³ body never spring
babe to honour her: if she must [teem](#)²⁵⁴,
reate her child of [spleen](#)²⁵⁵, that it may live
nd be a [thwart disnatured](#)²⁵⁶ torment to her:
et it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
/ith [cadent](#) tears [fret](#)²⁵⁸ channels in her cheeks,
urn all her mother's [pains](#) and [benefits](#)²⁵⁹
o laughter and contempt, that she may feel
ow sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
o have a thankless child!— Away, away!

Exit

Perhaps with Kent and Knights

LBANY Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

ONERIL Never afflict yourself to know more of it,
ut let his disposition have that scope
s [dotage](#)²⁶⁶ gives it.

Enter Lear

LEAR What, fifty of my followers [at a clap](#)²⁶⁷?
/ithin a fortnight?

LBANY What's the matter, sir?

To Goneril

LEAR I'll tell thee:— Life and death! I am ashamed
hat thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,
hat these hot tears, which break from me [perforce](#)²⁷²,
ould make thee worth them. [Blasts](#)²⁷³ and fogs upon thee!
[h'untented](#)²⁷⁴ woundings of a father's curse
ierce every sense about thee! Old [fond](#)²⁷⁵ eyes,

eweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out
nd cast you, with the [waters that you loose](#)²⁷⁷,
o [temper clay](#)²⁷⁸. Ha? Let it be so.
have another daughter,
/ho, I am sure, is [kind](#) and [comfortable](#)²⁸⁰:
/hen she shall hear this of thee, with her nails
he'll flay thy wolvish [visage](#)²⁸². Thou shalt find
hat I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
have cast off for ever.

Exeunt [Lear, perhaps with Kent and Knights]

ONERIL Do you mark that?

LBANY I cannot be so [partial](#)²⁸⁶, Goneril,
o the great love I bear you—

ONERIL Pray you, [content](#)²⁸⁸.— What, Oswald, ho!—

To Fool

ou, sir, more knave than fool, after your master.

COL Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry, take the fool with
ee.

Sings

A fox, when one has caught her,
And such a daughter
Should sure to the slaughter,
If my cap would buy a [halter](#)²⁹⁵:
So the fool follows after.

Exit

ONERIL This man hath had good counsel. A hundred knights?
'is [politic](#)²⁹⁸ and safe to let him keep
[t point](#) a hundred knights: yes, [that](#)²⁹⁹ on every dream,

ach buzz, each fancy³⁰⁰, each complaint, dislike,
e may enguard³⁰¹ his dotage with their powers
nd hold our lives in³⁰² mercy.— Oswald, I say!

LBANY Well, you may fear too far.

ONERIL Safer than trust too far:

et me still³⁰⁵ take away the harms I fear,
ot fear still to be taken³⁰⁶. I know his heart.

hat he hath uttered I have writ my sister:

she sustain him and his hundred knights

hen I have showed th'unfitness—

Enter Steward [Oswald]

How now, Oswald?

hat, have you writ that letter to my sister?

SWALD Ay, madam.

ONERIL Take you some company and away to horse:

iform her full of my particular fear,
nd thereto add such reasons of your own
s may compact³¹⁵ it more. Get you gone,
nd hasten your return.—

[Exit Oswald]

No, no, my lord,

his milky gentleness and course of yours
hough I condemn not, yet, under pardon³¹⁸,
ou are much more at task³¹⁹ for want of wisdom
han praised for harmful mildness.

LBANY How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell:
triving to better, oft we mar what's well.

ONERIL Nay, then—

LBANY Well, well, *th'event*³²⁴.

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 5

running scene 3 continues

Kent disguised as Caius

Enter Lear, Kent, Gentleman and Fool

To Kent

LEAR Go you *before*¹ to Gloucester with these letters.
acquaint my daughter no further with anything you know
than comes from her *demand out of*³ the letter. If your
diligence be not speedy, I shall be there afore you.

KENT I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your
letter.

Exit

DOL If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not in
anger of *kibes*⁸?

LEAR Ay, boy.

DOL Then, I prithee be merry: thy *wit* shall not go *slip*-¹⁰
nod.

LEAR Ha, ha, ha!

DOL *Shalt*¹³ see thy other daughter will use thee kindly, for
though she's as like this as a *crab's*¹⁴ like an apple, yet I can tell
that I can tell.

LEAR What canst tell, boy?

DOL She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab.
How canst tell why one's nose stands i'th'middle *on's*¹⁸ face?

LEAR No.

DOL Why, to keep one's eyes of either *side's*²⁰ nose, that

that a man cannot smell out he may spy into.

EAR I did [her](#)²² wrong—

DOL Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

EAR No.

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

EAR Why?

DOL Why, to put's head in, not to give it away to his
aughters and leave his horns without a case.

EAR I will forget my nature. So kind a father!— Be my
orses ready?

DOL Thy [asses](#) are gone about 'em. The reason why [the](#)³¹
even stars are no more than seven is a [pretty](#)³² reason.

EAR Because they are not eight.

DOL Yes, indeed: thou wouldst make a good fool.

EAR To take't [again](#)³⁵ perforce. Monster ingratitude!

DOL If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten
or being old before thy time.

EAR How's that?

DOL Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst
een wise.

EAR O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!
eep me in [temper](#)⁴²: I would not be mad!—

To Gentleman

ow now, are the horses ready?

ENTLEMAN Ready, my lord.

EAR Come, boy.

DOL She that's a [maid](#)⁴⁶ now, and laughs at my departure,
hall not be a maid long, unless [things](#)⁴⁷ be cut shorter.

Exeunt

Act 2 Scene 1

running scene 4

Enter Bastard [Edmund] and Curan, severally

DMUND *Save thee*¹, Curan.

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

DMUND How comes that?

URAN Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news *broad*: I mean the whispered *ones*, for they are yet but *ear-*⁷issing arguments?

DMUND Not I: pray you, what are they?

URAN Have you heard of no likely wars *toward*¹⁰ 'twixt the dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

DMUND Not a word.

URAN You may do then in time. Fare you well, sir.

Exit

DMUND The duke be here tonight? The better — best! His weaves itself *perforce*¹⁵ into my business. My father hath set guard to *take*¹⁶ my brother, and I have one thing, of a *queasy question*¹⁷, which I must act. Briefness and fortune, work!—

Enter Edgar

Appears above and then enters below

brother, a word: descend, brother, I say!
My father *watches*²⁰: O sir, fly this place.
*Intelligence*²¹ is given where you are hid;

ou have now the good advantage of the night.
ave you not spoken gainst the Duke of Cornwall?
e's coming hither, now, i'th'night, i'th'haste²⁴,
nd Regan with him: have you nothing said²⁵
pon his party gainst the Duke of Albany?
dvice yourself²⁷.

DGAR I am sure on't, not a word.

DMUND I hear my father coming, pardon me:

Draws

i cunning³⁰ I must draw my sword upon you:

Edgar draws

raw, seem to defend yourself. Now quit you³¹ well.
ield: come before my father.— Light, ho, here!—
ly, brother.— Torches, torches!— So, farewell.

Exit Edgar

Wounds his arm

ome blood drawn on me would beget opinion³⁴
f my more fierce³⁵ endeavour: I have seen drunkards
o more than this in sport.— Father, father!
top, stop! No help?

Enter Gloucester and Servants with torches

LOUCESTER Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

DMUND Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,
lumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon⁴⁰
o stand auspicious mistress⁴¹—

LOUCESTER But where is he?

DMUND Look, sir, I bleed.

LOUCESTER Where is the villain, Edmund?

DMUND Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could—

LOUCESTER Pursue him, ho! Go after.

[Exeunt Servants]

y no means what?

DMUND Persuade me to the murder of your lordship,
ut that I told him the revenging gods
ainst parricides did all the thunder **bend**⁵⁰,
poke with how manifold and strong a bond
he child was bound to th'father; sir, in **fine**⁵²,
eeing how **loathly opposite**⁵³ I stood
o his unnatural purpose, in **fell**⁵⁴ motion
/ith his **prepared** sword, he **charges home**⁵⁵
ly **unprovided** body, **latched**⁵⁶ mine arm;
nd when he saw my best **alarumed**⁵⁷ spirits,
old in the **quarrel's right**, roused to **th'encounter**⁵⁸,
r whether **ghasted**⁵⁹ by the noise I made,
ull⁶⁰ suddenly he fled.

LOUCESTER Let him fly far:

ot in this land shall he remain uncaught,
nd **found — dispatch**⁶³. The noble duke my master,
ly worthy **arch and patron**⁶⁴, comes tonight:
y his authority I will proclaim it,
hat he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,
ringing the murderous coward to the **stake**⁶⁷:
e that conceals him, death.

DMUND When I dissuaded him from his intent
nd found him **pight** to do it, with **curst**⁷⁰ speech
threatened to **discover**⁷¹ him: he replied,

Thou [unpossessing](#)⁷² bastard, dost thou think,
'I [would stand against](#) thee, would the [reposal](#)⁷³
f any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
Take thy words [faithed](#)⁷⁵? No: what should I deny —
s this I would, though thou didst produce
ly very [character](#)⁷⁷ — I'd turn it all
o thy [suggestion](#), plot, and damnèd [practice](#)⁷⁸,
nd thou must [make a dullard of the world](#)⁷⁹,
'they [not thought](#) the [profits](#)⁸⁰ of my death
ere very [pregnant and potential spirits](#)⁸¹

Tucket within

o make thee seek it.'

LOUCESTER O, [strange](#) and [fastened](#)⁸³ villain!

ould he deny his letter, said he?

ark, the duke's trumpets! I know not [where](#)⁸⁵ he comes.

ll [ports](#)⁸⁶ I'll bar: the villain shall not scape:

he duke must grant me that. Besides, his [picture](#)⁸⁷

will send far and near, that all the kingdom

lay have due note of him, and of my land,

oyal and [natural](#) boy, I'll [work the means](#)⁹⁰

o make thee [capable](#)⁹¹.

Enter Cornwall, Regan and Attendants

CORNWALL How now, my noble friend? Since I came hither —

hich I can call but now — I have heard strangeness.

EGAN If it be true, all vengeance comes too short

hich can pursue th'offender. How dost, my lord?

LOUCESTER O, madam, my old heart is cracked, it's cracked!

EGAN What, did my father's godson seek your life?

ie whom my father named? Your Edgar?

LOUCESTER O, lady, lady, shame would have it hid!

EGAN Was he not companion with the riotous knights
that **tended upon**¹⁰¹ my father?

LOUCESTER I know not, madam: 'tis too bad, too bad.

EDMUND Yes, madam, he was of that **consort**¹⁰³.

EGAN No marvel, then, **though he were ill affected**¹⁰⁴:

'tis they have **put him on**¹⁰⁵ the old man's death,

to have **th'expense**¹⁰⁶ and waste of his revenues.

have this present evening from my sister

been well informed of them, and with such cautions

that if they come to sojourn at my house,

they will not be there.

CORNWALL Nor I, assure thee, Regan.—

Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father

child-like office¹¹³.

EDMUND It was my duty, sir.

To Cornwall

LOUCESTER He did **bewray his practice**¹¹⁵ and received
his hurt you see striving to apprehend him.

CORNWALL Is he pursued?

LOUCESTER Ay, my good lord.

CORNWALL If he be taken, he shall never more

be feared of doing harm: **make your own purpose**,¹²⁰

show in my strength you please. **For**¹²¹ you, Edmund,

whose virtue and obedience doth this instant

so much commend itself, you shall **be ours**¹²³:

natures of such deep trust we shall much need:

ou we first [seize on](#)¹²⁵.

DMUND I shall serve you, sir, truly, however else.

LOUCESTER For him I thank your grace.

ORNWALL You know not why we came to visit you?

EGAN Thus [out of season, threading dark-eyed](#)¹²⁹ night:

[ccasions](#), noble Gloucester, of some [prize](#)¹³⁰,

/herein we must have use of your advice:

ur father he hath writ, so hath our sister,

f [differences](#)¹³³, which I best thought it fit

o answer [from](#)¹³⁴ our home: the several messengers

rom hence [attend dispatch](#)¹³⁵. Our good old friend,

ay comforts to your bosom, and bestow

our needful counsel to our businesses,

/hich [craves the instant use](#)¹³⁸

LOUCESTER I serve you, madam:

our graces are right welcome.

Exeunt. Flourish

[Act 2 Scene 2](#)

running scene 5

Enter Kent and Steward [Oswald], [severally](#)

Kent disguised as Caius

SWALD Good [dawning](#)¹ to thee, friend: art of this house?

ENT [Ay](#)².

SWALD Where may we [set](#)³ our horses?

ENT I'th'[mire](#)⁴.

SWALD Prithee, [if thou lov'st me, tell me](#)⁵.

ENT I love thee not.

SWALD Why then, I care not for thee.

ENT If I had thee in [Lipsbury pinfold](#)⁸, I would make thee are for me.

SWALD Why dost thou [use](#)¹⁰ me thus? I know thee not.

ENT Fellow, I know thee.

SWALD What dost thou know me [for](#)¹²?

ENT A [knave](#), a rascal, an eater of [broken meats](#)¹³, a base, roud, shallow, beggarly, [three-suited](#), [hundred-pound](#)¹⁴, lthy, [worsted-stocking](#) knave, a [lily-livered](#), [action-taking](#)¹⁵, [horeson](#), [glass-gazing](#), [super-serviceable finical](#)¹⁶ rogue: [ne-trunk-inheriting](#) slave: one that wouldst be a [bawd](#)¹⁷ in ray of good [service](#), and art nothing but the [composition](#)¹⁸ of knave, beggar, coward, [pander](#)¹⁹, and the son and heir of a longrel bitch: one whom I will beat into clamorous rhining if thou deny'st the least syllable of thy [addition](#)²¹.

SWALD Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou thus to [rail](#)²² n one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!

ENT What a brazen-faced [varlet](#)²⁴ art thou to deny thou nowest me! Is it two days since I tripped up thy heels and beat ee before the king? [Draw](#)²⁶, you rogue, for though it be night, et the moon shines: I'll make a [sop o'th'moonshine](#)²⁷ of you, ou whoreson [cullionly barber-monger](#)²⁸. Draw.

Draws his sword

SWALD Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

ENT Draw, you rascal: you come with letters against the ing, and take [vanity the puppet](#)³¹'s part against the royalty of er father: draw, you rogue, or I'll so [carbonado](#)³² your ranks: draw, you rascal, [come your ways](#)³³.

SWALD Help, ho! Murder! Help!

ENT Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue, stand, you neat³⁵
ave, strike!

Beats him

SWALD Help, ho! Murder! Murder!

Enter Bastard [Edmund], Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, Servants

DMUND How now, what's the matter? Part!

ENT With you, Goodman boy³⁹, if you please: come, I'll
esh ye⁴⁰: come on, young master.

LOUCESTER Weapons? Arms? What's the matter here?

ORNWALL Keep peace, upon your lives: he dies that strikes
gain. What is the matter?

EGAN The messengers from our sister and the king.

ORNWALL What is your difference⁴⁵? Speak.

SWALD I am scarce in breath, my lord.

ENT No marvel, you have so bestirred your valour⁴⁷. You
owardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee: a tailor made thee⁴⁸.

ORNWALL Thou art a strange fellow — a tailor make a man?

ENT A tailor, sir: a stone-cutter or a painter could not
ave made him so ill⁵¹, though they had been but two years
'th'trade.

ORNWALL Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

SWALD This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at
iit of his grey beard⁵⁵—

ENT Thou whoreson zed, thou unnecessary letter⁵⁶!— My
ord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted⁵⁷
illain into mortar and daub the wall of a jakes⁵⁸ with him.—
pare my grey beard, you wagtail⁵⁹?

ORNWALL Peace, sirrah!

ou **beastly**⁶¹ knave, know you no reverence?

ENT Yes, sir, but anger hath **a privilege**⁶².

ORNWALL Why art thou angry?

ENT That such a slave as this should wear a sword,
/ho wears no **honesty**⁶⁵. Such smiling rogues as these,
like rats, oft bite the **holy cords a-twain**⁶⁶
/hich are **too intrinse t'unloose, smooth**⁶⁷ every passion
hat in the natures of their lords **rebel**⁶⁸,
eing oil to fire⁶⁹, snow to the colder moods,
evenge, affirm, and turn their **halcyon beaks**⁷⁰
/ith every **gall** and **vary**⁷¹ of their masters,
nowing naught, like dogs, but following.—

To Oswald

plague upon your **epileptic visage**⁷³!
mile you **my** speeches, **as**⁷⁴ I were a fool?
oose, if I had you upon Sarum⁷⁵ plain,
d drive ye cackling home to **Camelot**⁷⁶.

ORNWALL What, art thou mad, old fellow?

LOUCESTER How fell you out? Say that.

ENT No contraries hold more antipathy
han I and such a knave.

ORNWALL Why dost thou call him knave? What is his fault?

ENT His countenance **likes**⁸² me not.

ORNWALL No more, perchance, does mine, nor his, nor hers—

ENT Sir, 'tis my **occupation**⁸⁴ to be plain:

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

ORNWALL This is some fellow
/ho, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect
saucy roughness, and constrains the garb⁹⁰
uite from his nature. He cannot flatter, he:
n honest mind and plain, he must speak truth!
n they will take it, so: if not, he's plain⁹³.
hese kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
arbour more craft and more corrupter⁹⁵ ends
han twenty silly ducking observants⁹⁶
hat stretch their duties nicely⁹⁷.

ENT Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity⁹⁸,
nder th'allowance of your great aspect⁹⁹,
/hose influence¹⁰⁰, like the wreath of radiant fire
n flickering Phoebus' front¹⁰¹—

ORNWALL What mean'st by this?

ENT To go out of my dialect¹⁰³, which you discommend so
much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer: he that beguiled¹⁰⁴ you in a
lain accent was a plain knave, which for my part I will not
e, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to't¹⁰⁶.

To Oswald

ORNWALL What was th'offence you gave him?

SWALD I never gave him any.

pleased the king his master very late
o strike at me, upon his misconception¹¹⁰:
/hen he, compact¹¹¹ and flattering his displeasure,
ripped me behind, being¹¹² down, insulted, railed,
nd put upon him such a deal of man¹¹³
hat worthied him¹¹⁴, got praises of the king

or him attempting who was self-subdued¹¹⁵;
nd, in the fleshment of this dread exploit¹¹⁶,
rew on me here again.

ENT None of these rogues and cowards¹¹⁸
ut Ajax is their fool.

ORNWALL Fetch forth the stocks¹²⁰!—
ou stubborn ancient knave, you reverent braggart¹²¹,
/e'll teach you.

ENT Sir, I am too old to learn.
all not your stocks for me: I serve the king,
n whose employment I was sent to you:
ou shall do small respects, show too bold malice¹²⁶
gainst the grace¹²⁷ and person of my master,
tocking his messenger.

ORNWALL Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and honour,
here shall he sit till noon.

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

ENT Why, madam, if I were your father's dog
ou should not use¹³³ me so.

EGAN Sir, being his knave, I will.

Stocks brought out

ORNWALL This is a fellow of the self-same colour¹³⁵
ur sister speaks of. Come, bring away¹³⁶ the stocks!

LOUCESTER Let me beseech your grace not to do so:
he king his master needs must take it ill
hat he so slightly valued in his messenger,
ould have him thus restrained.

ORNWALL I'll answer¹⁴¹ that.

EGAN My sister may receive it much more worse
o have her gentleman abused, assaulted.

Kent put in the stocks

ORNWALL Come, my lord, away.

Exeunt. [Gloucester and Kent remain]

LOUCESTER I am sorry for thee, friend: 'tis the duke's [pleasure](#)¹⁴⁵,
/hose disposition all the world well knows
/ill not be [rubbed](#)¹⁴⁷ nor stopped. I'll entreat for thee.

ENT Pray do not, sir. I have [watched](#)¹⁴⁸ and travelled hard:
ome time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.
good man's fortune may grow [out at heels](#)¹⁵⁰.
[ive you good morrow](#)¹⁵¹.

LOUCESTER The duke's to blame in this: 'twill be ill taken.

Exit

ENT Good king, that must [approve](#) the common [saw](#)¹⁵³,
hou [out of heaven's benediction com'st](#)¹⁵⁴
o the warm sun.

Pulls out a letter

pproach, thou [beacon](#) to [this under globe](#)¹⁵⁶,
hat by thy [comfortable](#)¹⁵⁷ beams I may
eruse this letter. [Nothing almost sees miracles](#)¹⁵⁸
ut misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia,
/ho hath most fortunately been informed
f my [obscured course](#)¹⁶¹, and shall find time
[rom this enormous state](#)¹⁶², seeking to give
osses their remedies. All weary and [o'erwatched](#)¹⁶³,
ake [vantage](#)¹⁶⁴, heavy eyes, not to behold
his shameful lodging.

fortune, goodnight: smile once more, turn thy wheel¹⁶⁶!

Sleeps

Enter Edgar

EDGAR I heard myself **proclaimed**¹⁶⁷,
and by the **happy**¹⁶⁸ hollow of a tree
escaped the hunt. No port is free, no place
that guard and most unusual vigilance
does not **attend my taking**¹⁷¹. Whiles I may scape,
will preserve myself, and **am bethought**¹⁷²
to take the basest and most poorest shape
that ever penury **in contempt of man**¹⁷⁴
brought near to beast: my face I'll grime with filth,
blanket my loins, **elf**¹⁷⁶ all my hairs in knots,
and with **presented**¹⁷⁷ nakedness outface
the winds and persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof and precedent
of **Bedlam**¹⁸⁰ beggars, who with roaring voices
strike in their numbed and **mortified**¹⁸¹ arms
pins, wooden **pricks**¹⁸², nails, sprigs of rosemary,
and with this horrible **object**, from **low**¹⁸³ farms,
poor **pelting**¹⁸⁴ villages, sheepcotes, and mills,
sometimes with lunatic **bans**¹⁸⁵, sometime with prayers,
enforce their charity. Poor **Turlygod**, poor **Tom**¹⁸⁶!
That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am¹⁸⁷.

Exit

Enter Lear, Fool and Gentleman

LEAR 'Tis strange that **they**¹⁸⁸ should so depart from home
and not send back my messengers.

ENTLEMAN As I learned,
he night before there was no purpose in them
f this remove.

Wakes

ENT Hail to thee, noble master!

EAR Ha? Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?

ENT No, my lord.

DOL Ha, ha, he wears [cruel](#)¹⁹⁶ garters. Horses are tied by
ie heads, dogs and bears by th'neck, monkeys by th'loins,
nd men by th'legs: when a man's [over-lusty at legs](#)¹⁹⁸, then he
ears wooden [nether-stocks](#)¹⁹⁹.

EAR What's he that hath so much thy [place](#)²⁰⁰ mistook
[o](#)²⁰¹ set thee here?

ENT It is both he and she:
our [son](#)²⁰³ and daughter.

EAR No.

ENT Yes.

EAR No, I say.

ENT I say, yea.

EAR By Jupiter, I swear, no.

ENT By [Juno](#)²⁰⁹, I swear, ay.

EAR They durst not do't:

hey could not, would not do't: 'tis worse than murder
o do [upon respect](#)²¹² such violent outrage.

[esolve](#) me with all [modest](#) haste [which way](#)²¹³

hou might'st deserve or they impose this [usage](#)²¹⁴,
[oming from us](#)²¹⁵.

ENT My lord, when at their home

did commend²¹⁷ your highness' letters to them,
 ere I was risen from the place that showed
 my duty kneeling, came there a reeking post²¹⁹,
 stewed²²⁰ in his haste, half breathless, panting forth
 from Goneril his mistress salutations,
 delivered letters, spite of intermission²²²,
 which presently²²³ they read: on those contents
 they summoned up their meiny, straight²²⁴ took horse,
 commanded me to follow and attend²²⁵
 the leisure of their answer, gave me cold looks:
 and meeting here the other messenger,
 whose welcome I perceived had poisoned mine —
 being the very fellow which of late
 displayed so saucily against²³⁰ your highness —
 having more man than wit about me, drew²³¹.
 He raised the house with loud and coward cries:
 our son and daughter found this trespass worth
 the shame which here it suffers.
 DOOL Winter's not gone yet if the wild geese fly that way²³⁵.

Sings

Fathers that wear rags
 Do make their children blind²³⁷,
 But fathers that bear bags²³⁸
 Shall see their children kind.
 Fortune, that arrant²⁴⁰ whore,
 Ne'er turns the key²⁴¹ to th'poor.
 But, for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours²⁴² for thy
 daughters as thou canst tell²⁴³ in a year.

EAR O, how this mother²⁴⁴ swells up toward my heart!

ysterica passio²⁴⁵, down, thou climbing sorrow:

hy element's below²⁴⁶!— Where is this daughter?

ENT With the earl, sir, here within.

EAR Follow me not: stay here.

Exit

ENTLEMAN Made you no more offence but what you speak of?

ENT None. How chance the king comes with so small a
umber?

DOL An thou had'st been set i'th'stocks for that
uestion, thou'dst well deserved it.

ENT Why, fool?

DOL We'll set thee to school to an ant to teach thee²⁵⁵
here's no labouring i'th'winter. All that follow their noses
re led by their eyes but blind men, and there's not a nose
mong twenty but can smell him that's stinking²⁵⁸. Let go thy
old when a great wheel runs down a hill lest it break thy
eck with following: but the great one that goes upward, let
im draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better
ounsel, give me mine again²⁶²: I would have none but knaves
ollow it, since a fool gives it.

Sings

That sir²⁶⁴ which serves and seeks for gain,

And follows but for form²⁶⁵,

Will pack²⁶⁶ when it begins to rain,

And leave thee in the storm.

But I will tarry, the fool will stay,

And let the wise man fly:

The knave turns fool that runs away,
The fool no knave, [perdy](#)²⁷¹.

Enter Lear and Gloucester

LEAR Where learned you this, fool?

DOUGLASS Not i'th'stocks, fool.

LEAR [Deny](#)²⁷⁴ to speak with me? They are sick, they are weary,
they have travelled all the night? Mere [fetches](#)²⁷⁵,
the images of revolt and [flying off](#)²⁷⁶.
Fetch me a better answer.

GLoucester My dear lord,
you know the fiery quality of the duke,
how unremovable and fixed he is
in his own course.

LEAR Vengeance, plague, death, [confusion](#)²⁸²!
fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,
and speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

GLoucester Well, my good lord, I have informed them so.

LEAR Informed them? Dost thou understand me, man?

GLoucester Ay, my good lord.

LEAR The king would speak with Cornwall: the dear father
would with his daughter speak, commands, [tends](#)²⁸⁹, service.
Are they informed of this? My breath and blood!
fiery? The fiery duke? Tell the hot duke that —
no, but not yet: maybe he is not well.

[Firmity doth still neglect all office](#)²⁹³

Wherefore our health is bound: we are not ourselves
When nature, being [oppressed](#)²⁹⁵, commands the mind
to suffer with the body. I'll forbear,

nd am fallen out with my more headier will²⁹⁷,
o take the indisposed and sickly fit

Sees Kent

or the sound man. Death on my state²⁹⁹! Wherefore
ould he sit here? This act persuades me
hat this remotion³⁰¹ of the duke and her
practice only. Give me my servant forth³⁰².
o tell the duke and's³⁰³ wife I'd speak with them,
ow, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,
r at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum
ill it cry sleep to death.

LOUCESTER I would have all well betwixt you.

Exit

EAR O me, my heart, my rising heart! But, down!

DOOL Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney³⁰⁹ did to the eels when
he put 'em i'th'paste alive: she knapped 'em o'th'coxcombs³¹⁰
ith a stick and cried 'Down, wantons³¹¹, down!' 'Twas her
rother that, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay³¹².

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, Servants

EAR Good morrow to you both.

CORNWALL Hail to your grace!

Kent here set at liberty

EGAN I am glad to see your highness.

EAR Regan, I think you are. I know what reason
have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad,
would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,

To Kent

epulch'ring an adult'ress³¹⁹.— O, are you free?

ome other time for that.— Belovèd Regan,
hy sister's [naught](#)³²¹: O Regan, she hath tied
harp-toothed unkindness, like a [vulture](#)³²², here.

Points to his heart

can scarce speak to thee. Thou'lt not believe
/ith how depraved a quality — O Regan!
EGAN I pray you, sir, take patience: I have hope
[ou less know how to value her desert](#)³²⁶
han she to scant her duty.

EAR Say? How is that?

EGAN I cannot think my sister in the least
/ould fail her obligation: if, sir, perchance
he have restrained the riots of your followers,
'is on such ground and to such wholesome end
s clears her from all blame.

EAR My curses on her!

EGAN O, sir, you are old:
ature in you stands on the very [verge](#)³³⁶
f her confine: you should be ruled and led
y some [discretion](#) that discerns your [state](#)³³⁸
etter than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you,
hat to our sister you do make return:
ay you have wronged her.

EAR Ask her forgiveness?

o you but mark how this [becomes the house](#)³⁴³:
ear daughter, I confess that I am old;

Kneels

ge is [unnecessary](#)³⁴⁵. On my knees I beg

hat you'll **vouchsafe** me **raiment**³⁴⁶, bed and food.

EGAN Good sir, no more: these are unsightly tricks:
eturn you to my sister.

Rises

EAR Never, Regan:

he hath **abated**³⁵⁰ me of half my train,
ooked black upon me, struck me with her tongue
lost serpent-like upon the very heart.

ll the stored vengeance of heaven fall
n her ingrateful **top**³⁵⁴! Strike her young bones,
ou **taking**³⁵⁵ airs, with lameness—

ORNWALL Fie, sir, fie!

EAR You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
ito her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,
ou **fen-sucked fogs drawn by the powerful sun**³⁵⁹
o fall and blister!

EGAN O the blest gods! So will you wish on me
hen the rash mood is on.

EAR No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse:
hy **tender-hafted**³⁶⁴ nature shall not give
hee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce, but thine
o comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
o grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,
o bandy hasty words, to **scant my sizes**³⁶⁸,
nd, in conclusion, to **oppose the bolt**³⁶⁹
gainst my coming in: thou better know'st
he **offices of nature**³⁷¹, bond of childhood,
ffects³⁷² of courtesy, dues of gratitude:

hy half o'th'kingdom hast thou not forgot,
/herein I thee endowed.

Tucket within

EGAN Good sir, [to th'purpose](#)³⁷⁵.

EAR Who put my man i'th'stocks?

Enter Steward [Oswald]

ORNWALL What trumpet's that?

EGAN I know't my sister's: this [approves](#)³⁷⁸ her letter,

To Oswald

hat she would soon be here.— Is your lady come?

EAR This is a slave, whose [easy-borrowed](#)³⁸⁰ pride
wells in the [sickly grace](#)³⁸¹ of her he follows.—
ut, varlet, from my sight!

ORNWALL What means your grace?

Enter Goneril

EAR Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope
hou didst not know [on't](#)³⁸⁵. Who comes here? O heavens,
'you do love old men, if your sweet [sway](#)³⁸⁶
[llow](#)³⁸⁷ obedience, if you yourselves are old,
lake it your cause, send down, and take my part!—

To Goneril

rt not ashamed to look upon this [beard](#)³⁸⁹?—

Regan, will you take her by the hand?

Regan and Goneril join hands

ONERIL Why not by th'hand, sir? How have I offended?

ll's not offence that [indiscretion](#)³⁹² finds
nd dotage terms so.

EAR O [sides](#)³⁹⁴, you are too tough!

Will you yet hold?— How came my man i'th'stocks?

ORNWALL I set him there, sir: but his own disorders³⁹⁶
deserved much less advancement³⁹⁷.

EAR You? Did you?

EGAN I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.

'till the expiration of your month,
you will return and sojourn with my sister,
dismissing half your train, come then to me:
I am now from home, and out of that provision
which shall be needful for your entertainment⁴⁰⁴.

EAR Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?
No, rather I abjure⁴⁰⁶ all roofs, and choose
no wage against the enmity o'th'air⁴⁰⁷,
no be a comrade with the wolf and owl,
'necessity's⁴⁰⁹ sharp pinch! Return with her?
Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
our youngest born, I could as well be brought
to knee his throne and, squire-like, pension⁴¹² beg
to keep base life afoot⁴¹³. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter⁴¹⁴
to this detested groom⁴¹⁵.

Points at Oswald

ONERIL At your choice, sir.

EAR I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad.
I will not trouble thee, my child, farewell:
We'll no more meet, no more see one another.
But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter —
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,

Which I must needs call mine: thou art a boil,
plague-sore, or [embossèd carbuncle](#)⁴²³,
in my [corrupted blood](#)⁴²⁴. But I'll not chide thee:
Let shame come when it will, I do not call it:
do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove.
[Lend](#)⁴²⁸ when thou canst, be better at thy leisure:
I can be patient, I can stay with Regan,
and my hundred knights.

EGAN Not altogether so:

[looked not for](#)⁴³² you yet, nor am provided
for your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister,
or those that [mingle reason with your passion](#)⁴³⁴
must be content to think you old, and so —
but she knows what she does.

LEAR Is this well spoken?

EGAN I dare [avouch](#)⁴³⁸ it, sir: what, fifty followers?
Is it not well? What should you need of more?
Fifty, or so many, [sith that](#) both [charge and danger](#)⁴⁴⁰
speak against so great a number? How in one house
should many people under two commands
hold amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.

ONERIL Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
from those that she calls servants, or from mine?

EGAN Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to [slack ye](#)⁴⁴⁶,
I could [control](#)⁴⁴⁷ them. If you will come to me —
for now I spy a danger — I entreat you
to bring but five-and-twenty: to no more

Will I give place or notice⁴⁵⁰.

EAR I gave you all—

EGAN And in good time you gave it⁴⁵².

EAR Made you my guardians, my depositaries⁴⁵³,

but kept a reservation⁴⁵⁴ to be followed

With such a number. What, must I come to you

With five-and-twenty? Regan, said you so?

EGAN And speak't again, my lord: no more with me.

EAR Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favoured⁴⁵⁸

When others are more wicked: not being the worst

To Goneril

stands in some rank of praise⁴⁶⁰.— I'll go with thee:

My fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,

And thou art twice her love.

CONERIL Hear me, my lord:

What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five,

To follow in a house where twice so many

Have a command to tend you?

EGAN What need one?

EAR O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars⁴⁶⁸

Are in the poorest thing superfluous:

How not⁴⁷⁰ nature more than nature needs,

Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady;

How only to go warm were gorgeous⁴⁷²,

Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st⁴⁷³,

Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need —

O heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!

O see me here, you gods, a poor old man,

s full of grief as age, wretched in both.
't it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts
gainst their father, *fool me not so much*⁴⁷⁹
o bear it tamely: touch me with noble anger,
nd let not women's weapons, water drops,
tain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
will have such revenges on you both,
hat all the world shall — I will do such things —
/hat they are yet I know not, but they shall be
he terrors of the earth! You think I'll weep:
o, I'll not weep: I have full cause of weeping,
Storm and tempest
ut this heart shall break into a hundred thousand *flaws*⁴⁸⁸,
*r ere*⁴⁸⁹ I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

Exeunt [Lear, Gloucester, Kent and Fool]

CORNWALL Let us withdraw: 'twill be a storm.

EGAN This house is little: the old man *and's*⁴⁹¹ people
annot be well *bestowed*⁴⁹².

ONERIL 'Tis his own *blame* hath *put himself from rest*⁴⁹³
nd must needs taste his folly.

EGAN For *his particular*⁴⁹⁵, I'll receive him gladly,
ut not one follower.

ONERIL So am I purposed.

/here is my lord of Gloucester?

Enter Gloucester

CORNWALL Followed the old man forth: he is returned.

LOUCESTER The king is in high rage.

CORNWALL Whither is he going?

LOUCESTER He calls to horse, but [will](#)⁵⁰² I know not whither.

ORNWALL 'Tis best to [give him way](#)⁵⁰³: he leads himself.

ONERIL My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

LOUCESTER Alack, the night comes on, and the high winds
o sorely [ruffle](#)⁵⁰⁶, for many miles about
here's scarce a bush.

EGAN O, sir, to wilful men
he injuries that they [themselves procure](#)⁵⁰⁹
must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors:
he is attended with a [desperate train](#)⁵¹¹,
and what they may incense him to, being apt
o [have his ear abused](#)⁵¹³, wisdom bids fear.

ORNWALL Shut up your doors, my lord, 'tis a wild night.
My Regan counsels well: come out o'th'storm.

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 1

running scene 6

Storm still. Enter Kent and a Gentleman, severally³

ENT Who's there, besides foul weather?

ENTLEMAN One minded like the weather, most unquietly².

ENT I know you. Where's the king?

ENTLEMAN Contending⁴ with the fretful elements;
ids the wind blow the earth into the sea
r swell the curlèd waters 'bove the main⁶,
hat things might change or cease.

ENT But who is with him?

ENTLEMAN None but the fool, who labours to out-jest⁹
is heart-struck injuries¹⁰.

ENT Sir, I do know you,
nd dare, upon the warrant of my note¹²
ommend a dear thing to you¹³. There is division —
lthough as yet the face of it is covered
/ith mutual cunning — 'twixt Albany and Cornwall,
/ho have — as who have not, that their great stars¹⁶
hroned and set high? — servants, who seem no less¹⁷,
/hich are to France the spies and speculations¹⁸
ntelligent of¹⁹ our state. What hath been seen,
ither in snuffs and packings²⁰ of the dukes,
r the hard rein which both of them hath borne²¹
gainst the old kind king, or something deeper,
/hereof perchance these are but furnishings²³.

ENTLEMAN I will talk further with you.

ENT No, do not.

or confirmation that I am much more
han my [out-wall](#)²⁷, open this purse and take

Gives a purse

hat it contains. If you shall see Cordelia —

Gives a ring

s fear not but you shall — show her this ring,
nd she will tell you who [that fellow](#)³⁰ is
hat yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!
will go seek the king.

ENTLEMAN Give me your hand. Have you no more to say?

ENT Few words, but, [to effect](#)³⁴, more than all yet:

hat when we have found the king — [in which your pain](#)³⁵

hat way, I'll this — he that first lights on him
[olla](#)³⁷ the other.

Exeunt [separately]

Act 3 Scene 2

running scene 6 continues

Storm still. Enter Lear and Fool

LEAR Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow,
ou [cataracts](#) and [hurricanoes](#)², spout
ill you have drenched our steeples, drown the [cocks](#)³!
ou sulphurous and [thought-executing fires](#)⁴,
[aunt-couriers](#)⁵ of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
inge my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
trike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world!
rack [nature's moulds](#), all [germens](#)⁸ spill at once
hat makes ingrateful man!

DOL O, nuncle, [court holy-water](#)¹⁰ in a dry house is better
than this rain-water out o'door. Good nuncle, in, ask thy
daughters' blessing: here's a night pities neither wise men
or fools.

EAR Rumble thy bellyful! Spit fire! Spout rain!
For rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.
[tax not you, you elements, with](#)¹⁶ unkindness:
never gave you kingdom, called you children;
you owe me no [subscription](#)¹⁸. Then let fall
our horrible pleasure: here I stand, your slave,
poor, infirm, weak and despised old man:
but yet I call you servile [ministers](#)²¹,
that will with two [pernicious](#)²² daughters join
our [high-engendered battles](#) against a [head](#)²³
so old and white as this. O, ho, 'tis [foul](#)²⁴!

DOL He that has a house to [put's](#)²⁵ head in has a good
[head-piece](#)²⁶:

Sings

The [codpiece](#) that will [house](#)²⁷
Before the head has [any](#)²⁸,
The head and he shall [louse](#)²⁹,
[So beggars marry many](#)³⁰.
The man that [makes his toe](#)³¹
What he his heart should make
Shall of a [corn](#)³³ cry woe,
And turn his sleep to wake.
For there was never yet fair woman, but she [made mouths](#)³⁵
in a glass.

Enter Kent

Disguised as Caius

KAR No, I will be the pattern of all patience:
will say nothing.

ENT Who's there?

DOL Marry, here's [grace and a codpiece](#)⁴⁰: that's a wise
man and a fool.

ENT Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night
love not such nights as these: the wrathful skies
[allow](#) the very [wanderers of the dark](#)⁴⁴
and make them keep their caves. Since I was man,
such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
such groans of roaring wind and rain, I never
remember to have heard: man's nature cannot carry
his affliction nor the fear.

KAR Let the great gods,
that keep this dreadful [pudder](#)⁵¹ o'er our heads,
find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
that hast within thee undivulged crimes
[unwhipped of](#)⁵⁴ justice: hide thee, thou bloody hand,
thou perjured, and thou [simular](#)⁵⁵ of virtue
that art incestuous: [caitiff](#)⁵⁶, to pieces shake,
that under covert and convenient [seeming](#)⁵⁷
has [practised on](#)⁵⁸ man's life: close pent-up guilts,
[give](#) your concealing [continents](#) and [cry](#)⁵⁹
these dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
more sinned against than sinning.

ENT Alack, bare-headed?

racious my lord, hard by here is a hovel:
ome friendship will it lend you gainst the tempest.
epose you there while I to this [hard house](#)⁶⁵ —
lore harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised,
hich even but now, [demanding](#)⁶⁷ after you,
enied me to come in — return and force
heir [scanted](#)⁶⁹ courtesy.

LEAR My wits begin to turn.

ome on, my boy: how dost, my boy? Art cold?
am cold myself.— Where is this straw, my [fellow](#)⁷²?
[he art of our necessities is strange](#)⁷³,
nd can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.—
oor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
hat's sorry yet for thee.

Sings

DOL [He that has and a little tiny wit](#)⁷⁷,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
Must [make content with his fortunes fit](#)⁷⁹,
Though the rain it raineth every day.

LEAR True, boy.— Come, bring us to this hovel.

Exeunt [Lear and Kent]

DOL This is a [brave](#) night to [cool](#) a [courtesan](#)⁸².
ll speak a prophecy ere I go:
hen priests are more [in word than matter](#)⁸⁴;
hen brewers [mar](#)⁸⁵ their malt with water;
hen nobles [are their tailors' tutors](#)⁸⁶;
o [heretics](#) burned, but [wenches' suitors](#)⁸⁷;
hen every case in law is [right](#)⁸⁸;

o squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
hen slanders do not live in tongues;
or cutpurses come not to throngs⁹¹;
hen usurers tell their gold i'th'field⁹²,
nd bawds⁹³ and whores do churches build,
hen shall the realm of Albion⁹⁴
ome to great confusion⁹⁵:
hen comes the time, who⁹⁶ lives to see't,
hat going shall be used with feet⁹⁷.
his prophecy Merlin⁹⁸ shall make, for I live before his time.

Exit

Act 3 Scene 3

running scene 7

Carrying torches

Enter Gloucester and Edmund

LOUCESTER Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural
ealing. When I desired their leave that I might pity² him,
ey took from me the use of mine own house, charged me
n pain of perpetual displeasure neither to speak of him,
ntreat for him, or any way sustain him.

DMUND Most savage and unnatural.

LOUCESTER Go to⁷; say you nothing. There is division between
ie dukes, and a worse matter than that. I have received a
tter this night — 'tis dangerous to be spoken — I have
ocked the letter in my closet¹⁰. These injuries the king now
ears will be revenged home; there is part of a power¹¹ already
oted. We must incline to the king: I will look¹² him and
rively relieve¹³ him. Go you and maintain talk with the duke,

that my charity be not of¹⁴ him perceived: if he ask for me, I
am ill and gone to bed: if I die for it — as no less is threatened
me — the king my old master must be relieved. There is
no range things toward¹⁷, Edmund: pray you be careful.

Exit

EDMUND This courtesy forbid thee¹⁸ shall the duke
instantly know, and of that letter too:
his seems a fair deserving²⁰ and must draw me
that which my father loses: no less than all.
The younger rises when the old doth fall.

Exit

Act 3 Scene 4

running scene 8

Enter Lear, Kent and Fool

Kent disguised as Caius

EDMUND Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter:
The tyranny of the open night's too rough
for nature³ to endure.

Storm still

LEAR Let me alone.

EDMUND Good my lord, enter here.

LEAR Will't break my heart?

EDMUND I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

LEAR Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
invades us to the skin so: 'tis to thee,
but where the greater malady¹⁰ is fixed
the lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear,
but if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea

hou'dst meet the bear i'th'mouth. When the mind's free¹³,
he body's delicate¹⁴: the tempest in my mind
oth from my senses take all feeling else
ave what beats there. Filial ingratitude!
it not as¹⁷ this mouth should tear this hand
or lifting food to't? But I will punish home¹⁸.
o, I will weep no more. In such a night
o shut me out? Pour on, I will endure.
i such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril,
our old kind father, whose frank²² heart gave all —
, that way madness lies: let me shun that:
o more of that.

ENT Good my lord, enter here.

EAR Prithee go in thyself: seek thine own ease:
his tempest will not give me leave to ponder
n things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.—

To the Fool

i, boy, go first.—

You houseless poverty—

ay, get thee in.— I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

Exit [Fool]

Kneels

oor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
hat bide³² the pelting of this pitiless storm,
ow shall your houseless heads and unfed sides³³,
our lopped and windowed³⁴ raggedness, defend you
rom seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
oo little care of this! Take physic, pomp³⁶,

xpose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
hat thou mayst shake the [superflux](#)³⁸ to them
nd show the heavens more just.

Enter Edgar and Fool

Within the hovel

EDGAR [Fathom](#) and half, [fathom and half](#)⁴⁰! Poor Tom!

FOOL Come not in here, nuncle, here's a [spirit](#)⁴¹. Help me,
elp me!

EDGAR Give me thy hand. Who's there?

FOOL A spirit, a spirit: he says his name's poor Tom.

EDGAR What art thou that dost [grumble](#)⁴⁵ there i'th'straw?
ome forth.

Edgar comes out, disguised as a mad beggar

EDGAR Away! The foul fiend follows me! Through the sharp
awthorn blow the winds. Hum! Go to thy bed and warm
ee.

FOOL Did'st thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou
ome to this?

EDGAR Who gives anything to poor Tom? Whom the [foul](#)⁵²
end hath led through fire and through flame, through ford
nd whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire, that hath laid [knives](#)⁵⁴
nder his pillow, and halters in his pew, set [ratsbane](#)⁵⁵ by his
[horrid](#), made him proud of heart, to ride on a [bay](#)⁵⁶ trotting-horse
ver [four-inched](#) bridges, to [course](#) his own shadow [for](#)⁵⁷
traitor. Bless thy [five wits](#)! Tom's a-cold. O, [do de, do de](#)⁵⁸, do
e. Bless thee from whirlwinds, [star-blasting](#) and [taking](#)⁵⁹! Do
oor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend [vexes](#): [there](#)⁶⁰
ould I have him now — and there — and there again, and

ere.

Storm still

EAR Has his daughters brought him to this [pass](#)⁶³?
ouldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give 'em all?

DOL Nay, he [reserved a blanket](#)⁶⁵, else we had been all
amed.

EAR Now, all the plagues that in the [pendulous](#)⁶⁷ air
ang [fated o'er men's faults](#)⁶⁸ light on thy daughters!

ENT He hath no daughters, sir.

EAR Death, traitor! Nothing could have [subdued nature](#)⁷⁰
o such a lowness but his unkind daughters.

it the fashion that discarded fathers
ould have [thus little mercy on their flesh](#)⁷³?
udicious punishment! 'Twas this flesh begot
hose [pelican](#)⁷⁵ daughters.

DGAR [Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill: alow, alow, loo, loo](#)⁷⁶!

DOL This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.

DGAR Take heed o'th'foul fiend: [obey](#)⁷⁸ thy parents, keep thy
ord's justice, swear not, [commit not](#)⁷⁹ with man's sworn
ouse, set not thy sweetheart [on proud array](#)⁸⁰. Tom's a-cold.

EAR What hast thou been?

DGAR A servingman, proud in heart and mind, that
arled my hair, wore [gloves](#)⁸³ in my cap, served the lust of my
mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with her: swore
s many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet
ice of heaven: one that [slept in](#)⁸⁶ the contriving of lust, and
raked to do it: wine loved I dearly, [dice](#)⁸⁷ dearly, and in woman
[out-paramoured the Turk](#): false of heart, [light of ear](#)⁸⁸, bloody

f hand: hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog
madness, lion in prey. Let not the *creaking of shoes nor*⁹⁰
rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman: keep
thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of *plackets*, thy *pen*⁹²
from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend. Still through the
hawthorn blows the cold wind, says *suum, mun, nonny*⁹⁴,
*olphin my boy, boy sessa! Let him trot by*⁹⁵.

Storm still

EAR Thou wert better in a grave than to *answer*⁹⁶ with thy
ncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more
than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the worm no silk,
the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the *cat no perfume*⁹⁹. Ha?
There's three *on's* are *sophisticated*¹⁰⁰. Thou art the thing itself:
*naccommodated*¹⁰¹ man is no more but such a poor bare,
orked animal as thou art. Off, off, you *lendings*¹⁰²! Come,
nbutton here.

Tears off his clothes

Enter Gloucester with a torch

DOL Prithee, nuncle, be contented: 'tis a *naughty*¹⁰⁴ night
to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old
father's heart, a small spark, all the rest on's body cold. Look,
here comes a *walking fire*¹⁰⁷.

DGAR This is the foul *Flibbertigibbet*: he begins at *curfew*¹⁰⁸
and walks till the first *cock*: he gives the *web and the pin*¹⁰⁹,
*quints*¹¹⁰ the eye and makes the hare-lip, mildews the white
heat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

Chants?

*Swithold footed thrice the old*¹¹²,

He met the **nightmare** and her **nine-fold**¹¹³;

Bid her alight,

And **her troth plight**¹¹⁵,

And, **aroint**¹¹⁶ thee, witch, aroint thee!

ENT How fares your grace?

EAR **What's**¹¹⁸ he?

ENT Who's there? What is't you seek?

LOUCESTER What are you there? Your names?

OGAR Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad,
the tadpole, the **wall-newt** and the **water**¹²², that in the fury of
his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for
delights, swallows the old rat and the **ditch-dog**¹²⁴, drinks the
green **mantle** of the **standing** pool, who is **whipped**¹²⁵ from
thing¹²⁶ to tithing, and stocked, punished and imprisoned,
who hath had **three suits to his back, six shirts**¹²⁷ to his body:
horse to ride, and weapon to wear,
but mice and rats and such small **deer**¹²⁹
have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my follower. Peace, **Smulkin**¹³¹, peace, thou fiend!

LOUCESTER What, hath your grace no better company?

OGAR **The prince of darkness** is a gentleman: **Modo he's**¹³³
called, and Mahu.

To Lear

LOUCESTER Our **flesh and blood**, my lord, is grown so **vile**¹³⁵,
that it doth hate what **gets**¹³⁶ it.

OGAR Poor Tom's a-cold.

LOUCESTER Go in with me: my duty cannot suffer
to obey in all your daughters' hard commands:

though their injunction be to bar my doors
and let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,
yet have I ventured to come seek you out
and bring you where both fire and food is ready.
LEAR First let me talk with this philosopher.—

To Edgar

What is the cause of thunder?

KENT Good my lord, take his offer: go into th'house.

LEAR I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban¹⁴⁷.—

To Edgar

What is your study?

EDGAR How to prevent¹⁴⁹ the fiend and to kill vermin.

They talk apart

LEAR Let me ask you one word in private.

To Gloucester

KENT Importune¹⁵¹ him once more to go, my lord:
his wits begin t'unsettle¹⁵².

GLoucester Canst thou blame him?

Storm still

His daughters seek his death. Ah, that good Kent!
He said it would be thus, poor banished man!
Now sayest the king grows mad: I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself. I had a son,
Now outlawed from my blood¹⁵⁸: he sought my life
But lately, very late. I loved him, friend:
No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!—

To Lear

do beseech your grace—

LEAR O, [cry you mercy](#)¹⁶³, sir.—

To Edgar

oble philosopher, your company.

EDGAR Tom's a-cold.

To Edgar

LOUCESTER In, fellow, there, into th'hovel: keep thee warm.

LEAR Come let's in all.

EDMUND This way, my lord.

LEAR With him;

will [keep still](#)¹⁷⁰ with my philosopher.

To Gloucester

EDMUND Good my lord, [soothe](#)¹⁷¹ him: let him take the fellow.

To Kent

LOUCESTER Take [him you on](#)¹⁷².

To Edgar

EDMUND Sirrah, come on: go along with us.

LEAR Come, good [Athenian](#)¹⁷⁴.

LOUCESTER No words, no words: hush.

EDGAR [Child Rowland to the dark tower came](#)¹⁷⁶,

is [word](#) was [still: fie, foh and fum,](#)¹⁷⁷

smell the blood of a British man.

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 5

running scene 9

Enter Cornwall and Edmund

CORNWALL I will have my revenge ere I depart [his](#)¹ house.

DMUND How, my lord, I may be censured, that [nature](#)² thus
gives way to loyalty, [something fears](#)³ me to think of.

ORNWALL I now perceive it was not altogether your brother's
evil disposition made him seek [his](#) death, but a [provoking](#)⁵
merit set a-work by a reprobable badness in himself.

DMUND How malicious is my fortune — that I must repent
[to be](#)⁸ just! This is the letter which he spoke of *Shows a letter*
which [approves](#) him [an intelligent party](#)⁹ to the advantages of
France. O heavens! That this treason were not, or not I the
detector!

ORNWALL Go with me to the duchess.

DMUND If the matter of this paper be certain, you have
mighty business in hand.

ORNWALL True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester.
Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our
[apprehension](#)¹⁷.

Aside

DMUND If I find him comforting the king, it will stuff
[his suspicion](#)¹⁹ more fully.— I will persevere in my course of
loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my
blood.

ORNWALL I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a dear
father in my love.

Exeunt

[Act 3 Scene 6](#)

running scene 10

Enter Kent and Gloucester

LOUCESTER Here is better than the open air, take it thankfully. I

ill [piece out](#)² the comfort with what addition I can: I will not
e long from you.

Exit

ENT All the power of his wits have given way to his
[impatience](#)⁵: the gods reward your kindness!

Enter Lear, Edgar and Fool

Edgar disguised as Poor Tom

DGAR [Frateretto](#) calls me, and tells me Nero is an [angler](#)⁶ in
ie [lake of darkness](#)⁷. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul
end.

DOL Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a
entleman or a [yeoman](#)¹⁰?

EAR A king, a king!

DOL No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman [to](#)¹² his son,
or he's a [mad](#)¹³ yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before
im.

EAR To have [a thousand](#)¹⁵ with red burning spits
ome [hizzing](#) in upon 'em¹⁶—

DGAR Bless thy five wits!

ENT O pity! Sir, where is the patience now
hat you so oft have boasted to retain?

Aside

DGAR My tears begin to take his part so much
hey [mar my counterfeiting](#)²¹.

EAR The little dogs and all,

[Trey, Blanch and Sweetheart](#)²³, see, they bark at me.

DGAR Tom will [throw his head](#) at them. [Avaunt](#)²⁴, you curs!

Be thy mouth [or black or](#)²⁵ white,

Tooth that [poisons](#)²⁶ if it bite,
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel [grim](#)²⁷,
Hound or spaniel, [brach](#) or [him](#)²⁸,
Or [bobtail tyke](#) or [trundle-tail](#)²⁹,
Tom will make him weep and wail:
For, with throwing thus my head,
Dogs leapt the [hatch](#)³², and all are fled.

[O de, de, de. Sessa!](#) Come, march to [wakes](#)³³ and fairs and
market towns. Poor Tom, thy [horn](#)³⁴ is dry.

LEAR Then let them [anatomize](#)³⁵ Regan: see what breeds
about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that make

To Edgar

these hard hearts?— You, sir, I [entertain](#)³⁷ for one of
my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of your garments:
you will say they are [Persian](#)³⁹; but let them be changed.

Enter Gloucester

At a distance

ENTER Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.

LEAR Make no noise, make no noise: draw the [curtains](#)⁴¹.
O, so, we'll go to supper i'th'morning.

Sleeps

DOL And I'll go to bed at noon.

To Kent

LOUCESTER Come hither, friend: where is the king my master?

ENTER Here, sir, but trouble him not: his wits are gone.

LOUCESTER Good friend, I prithee take him in thy arms;
have o'erheard a plot of death upon him:
here is a [litter](#)⁴⁸ ready, lay him in't

nd drive toward [Dover](#)⁴⁹, friend, where thou shalt meet
oth welcome and protection. Take up thy master:
'thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
/ith thine and all that offer to defend him,
tand in assurèd loss. Take up, take up,

They carry Lear

nd follow me, that will [to some provision](#)⁵⁴
ive thee quick conduct. Come, come, away.

Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 7

running scene 11

Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Bastard [Edmund] and Servants

To Goneril

CORNWALL [Post](#)¹ speedily to my lord your husband;

Gives a letter

ow him this letter: the army of France is
inded.— Seek out the traitor Gloucester.

[Exeunt some Servants]

EGAN Hang him instantly.

ONERIL Pluck out his eyes.

CORNWALL Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our
[ster](#)⁷ company: the revenges we are bound to take upon
our traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. [Advise](#)⁸
ie [duke](#) where you are going, to a most [festinate](#)⁹
reparation: we are bound to the like. Our [posts](#)¹⁰ shall be swift
nd [intelligent](#)¹¹ betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister: farewell, my
[ord of Gloucester](#)¹².

Enter Oswald

How now? Where's the king?

OSWALD My lord of Gloucester hath conveyed him hence:
Some five- or six-and-thirty of his knights,
Not [questrists](#)¹⁷ after him, met him at gate,
Who, with some other of [the lord's](#)¹⁸ dependants,
Are gone with him toward Dover, where they boast
To have well-armèd friends.

OSWALD Get horses for your mistress.

OSWALD Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

Exeunt [Goneril, Edmund and Oswald]

OSWALD Edmund, farewell.—

To seek the traitor Gloucester,
[inion him](#)²⁵ like a thief, bring him before us.

[Exeunt other Servants]

Though well we may not [pass upon his life](#)²⁶
Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall [do a court'sy](#)²⁸ to our wrath, which men
Lay blame but not control.

Enter Gloucester and Servants

Who's there? The traitor?

OSWALD Ingrateful fox! 'Tis he.

OSWALD Bind fast his [corky](#)³¹ arms.

OSWALD What means your graces?

Good my friends, consider you are my guests:
To me no foul play, friends.

OSWALD Bind him, I say.

Servants bind him

OSWALD Hard, hard. O, filthy traitor!

LOUCESTER Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

ORNWALL To this chair bind him.— Villain, thou shalt find—

Regan plucks his beard

LOUCESTER By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done
o pluck me by the beard.

EGAN So [white](#)⁴¹, and such a traitor?

LOUCESTER [Naughty](#)⁴² lady,
hese hairs which thou dost [ravish](#)⁴³ from my chin
/ill [quicken](#)⁴⁴ and accuse thee. I am your host:
/ith robbers' hands my [hospitable favours](#)⁴⁵
ou should not [ruffle](#)⁴⁶ thus. What will you do?

ORNWALL Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

EGAN [Be simple answered](#)⁴⁸, for we know the truth.

ORNWALL And what confederacy have you with the traitors
[ate footed](#)⁵⁰ in the kingdom?

EGAN To whose hands you have sent the lunatic king? Speak.

LOUCESTER I have a letter [guessingly](#)⁵² set down,
/hich came from one that's of a neutral heart,
nd not from one [opposed](#)⁵⁴.

ORNWALL Cunning.

EGAN And false.

ORNWALL Where hast thou sent the king?

LOUCESTER To Dover.

EGAN Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not [charged at peril](#)⁵⁹—

ORNWALL Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

LOUCESTER I am [tied to th'stake](#) and I must [stand](#) the [course](#)⁶¹.

EGAN Wherefore to Dover?

LOUCESTER Because I would not see thy cruel nails

luck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister
in his [anointed](#)⁶⁵ flesh stick boarish fangs.
The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
in hell-black night endured, would have [buoyed](#)⁶⁷ up
and quenched the [stellèd](#)⁶⁸ fires:
Yet, poor old heart, he [help the heavens to rain](#)⁶⁹.
'Wolves had at thy gate howled that [stern](#)⁷⁰ time,
thou shouldst have said 'Good porter, [turn the key](#)⁷¹.'
[Ill cruels else subscribe](#)⁷²: but I shall see
he [wingèd vengeance](#)⁷³ overtake such children.

CORNWALL See't shalt thou never. [Fellows](#)⁷⁴, hold the chair.—
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

LOUCESTER He that will think to live till he be old,

Cornwall grinds out his eye

Give me some help! O cruel! O you gods!

REGAN One side will mock another: th'other too.

CORNWALL If you see vengeance—

SERVANT Hold your hand, my lord:
I have served you ever since I was a child,
but better service have I never done you
than now to bid you hold.

REGAN How now, you dog?

To Regan

SERVANT If you did wear a beard upon your chin,
I'd [shake it on this quarrel](#).— [What do you mean](#)⁸⁶?

They draw and fight

CORNWALL My [villain](#)⁸⁷?

SERVANT Nay, then, come on, and take the [chance of anger](#)⁸⁸.

To a Servant

EGAN Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus?

Kills him

ERVANT O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left
o see some mischief on him⁹¹. O!

Dies

ORNWALL Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!

Puts out

Gloucester's other eye

Where is thy lustre now?

LOUCESTER All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature⁹⁵
o quit⁹⁶ this horrid act.

EGAN Out⁹⁷, treacherous villain!

How call'st on him that hates thee: it was he
that made the overture⁹⁹ of thy treasons to us,
Who is too good to pity thee.

LOUCESTER O, my follies! Then Edgar was abused¹⁰¹.
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

EGAN Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
his way to Dover.

Exit [a Servant] with Gloucester

How is't, my lord? How look you?¹⁰⁵

ORNWALL I have received a hurt: follow me, lady.—
Turn out that eyeless villain: throw this slave
upon the dunghill.—Regan, I bleed apace¹⁰⁸:
Untimely¹⁰⁹ comes this hurt. Give me your arm.

Exeunt

Act 4 Scene 1

running scene 12

Enter Edgar Disguised as Poor Tom

EDGAR Yet better thus, and known to be contemned¹,
than still contemned and flattered². To be worst,
the lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
stands still in *esperance*⁴, lives not in fear:
*he lamentable change is from the best*⁵,
the worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,
thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!
the wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
was nothing to thy blasts.

Enter Gloucester and an Old Man

But who comes here? My father, *poorly led*¹⁰?
World, world, O world!
but that thy strange *mutations*¹² make us hate thee,
*life would not yield to age*¹³.

OLD MAN O, my good lord, I have been your tenant and your
father's tenant these *fourscore*¹⁵ years.

GLoucester Away, get thee away! Good friend, be gone:
thy comforts can do me no good at all,
*but they may hurt*¹⁸.

OLD MAN You cannot see your way.

GLoucester I have no way and therefore want no eyes:
I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen
our *means secure us*, and our *mere defects*²²
*rove our commodities*²³. O dear son Edgar,
the food of thy *abused*²⁴ father's wrath!

light I but live to see thee in my touch,
d say I had eyes again!

LD MAN How now? Who's there?

Aside

OGAR O gods! Who is't can say, 'I am at the worst'?
am worse than e'er I was.

LD MAN 'Tis poor mad Tom.

Aside

OGAR And worse I may be yet: the worst *is not*³¹
o long as we can say 'This is the worst.'

LD MAN Fellow, where goest?

LOUCESTER Is it a beggar-man?

LD MAN Madman and beggar too.

LOUCESTER He has some *reason*³⁶, else he could not beg.
th'last night's storm I such a fellow saw,
/hich made me think a man a worm: my son
ame then into my mind and yet my mind
/as then scarce friends with him. I have heard more since.
s flies to *wanton*⁴¹ boys are we to th'gods:
hey kill us for their sport.

Aside

OGAR How should this be?
ad is the *trade*⁴⁴ that must play fool to sorrow,
ng'ring itself and others.— Bless thee, master!

LOUCESTER Is that the naked fellow?

LD MAN Ay, my lord.

LOUCESTER Get thee away: if for my sake
hou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain

th'way toward Dover, do it for [ancient love](#)⁵⁰,
nd bring some covering for this naked soul,
hich I'll entreat to lead me.

LD MAN Alack, sir, he is mad.

LOUCESTER 'Tis the time's [plague](#)⁵⁴, when madmen lead the blind.
o as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure:
bove [the rest](#)⁵⁶, be gone.

LD MAN I'll bring him the best 'pparel⁵⁷ that I have,
[ome on't what will](#)⁵⁸.

Exit

LOUCESTER Sirrah, naked fellow—

Aside

OGAR Poor Tom's a-cold.— I cannot [daub it](#)⁶⁰ further.

LOUCESTER Come hither, fellow.

Aside

OGAR And yet I must.— Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

LOUCESTER Know'st thou the way to Dover?

OGAR Both stile and gate, horseway and footpath. Poor
om hath been scared out of his good wits: bless thee, good
ian's son, from the foul fiend!

LOUCESTER Here, take this purse, thou whom the heav'ns' plagues

Gives a purse

ave humbled to all [strokes](#)⁶⁸: that I am wretched
akes thee the [happier](#)⁶⁹: heavens, deal so still.
et the [superfluous](#) and [lust-dieted](#)⁷⁰ man,
hat [slaves your ordinance](#)⁷¹, that will not see
ecause he does not [feel](#), feel your pow'r [quickly](#)⁷²,
o distribution should undo excess,

nd each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?

OGAR Ay, master.

LOUCESTER There is a cliff, whose high and **bending**⁷⁶ head
looks fearfully in the **confined**⁷⁷ deep:
ring me but to the very **brim**⁷⁸ of it
nd I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
/ith something rich **about me**⁸⁰: from that place
shall no leading need.

OGAR Give me thy arm:

oor Tom shall lead thee.

Exeunt

Act 4 Scene 2

running scene 13

Enter Goneril, Bastard [Edmund] and Steward [Oswald]

ONERIL Welcome, **my lord**¹: I marvel our mild husband
ot met us on the way.— Now, where's your master?

SWALD Madam, within, but never man so changed.
told him of the **army**⁴ that was landed,
e smiled at it: I told him you were coming,
is answer was 'The worse': of Gloucester's treachery
nd of the loyal service of his son
/hen I informed him, then he called me '**sot**'⁸
nd told me I had **turned the wrong side out**⁹.
/hat most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;
/hat like, offensive.

To Edmund

ONERIL Then shall you go no further.

is the **cowish**¹³ terror of his spirit,

hat dares not **undertake**¹⁴: he'll not feel wrongs
Which **tie him to an answer**. Our wishes **on the way**¹⁵
lay **prove effects**. Back, Edmund, to my **brother**¹⁶:
Hasten his **musters** and **conduct his powers**¹⁷.
I must **change** names at home and give the **distaff**¹⁸
into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
shall pass between us: ere long you are **like**²⁰ to hear —
If you dare venture in your own behalf —
mistress's²² command. Wear this; spare speech.

Gives a favor

Recline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak,

Kisses him

I would stretch **thy spirits**²⁴ up into the air.
conceive²⁵, and fare thee well.

EDMUND Yours in the ranks of **death**²⁶.

Exit

CONERIL My most dear Gloucester!
O, the difference of man and man!
To thee a woman's **services**²⁹ are due:
My **fool usurps**³⁰ my body.

SWALD Madam, here comes my lord.

Exit

Enter Albany

CONERIL I have been **worth the whistle**³².

ALBANY O **Goneril**,³³

You are not worth the dust which the **rude**³⁴ wind
blows in your face.

CONERIL **Milk-livered**³⁶ man,

hat bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs,
/ho hast not in thy brows an eye **discerning**³⁸
hine honour from thy suffering.

LBANY See thyself, devil!

roper deformity seems not in the fiend⁴¹
o horrid as in woman.

ONERIL O **vain**⁴³ fool!

Enter a Messenger

ESSENGER O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead,
lain by his servant, going to put out
he other eye of Gloucester.

LBANY Gloucester's eyes?

ESSENGER A servant that he **bred, thrilled** with **remorse**⁴⁸,
pposed against the act, **bending**⁴⁹ his sword
o his great master, who, **threat-enraged**⁵⁰,
lew on him and amongst them felled him dead,
ut not without that harmful stroke which since
ath plucked him **after**⁵³.

LBANY This shows you are above,
ou **justices**, that these our **nether**⁵⁵ crimes
o speedily can **venge**⁵⁶. But, O, poor Gloucester!
ost he his other eye?

ESSENGER Both, both, my lord.—

Gives a letter

his letter, madam, craves a speedy answer:
his from your sister.

Aside

ONERIL One way I like this well:

ut being widow, and my Gloucester with her,
lay **all the building in my fancy pluck**⁶³
pon my hateful life: another way,
he news is not so **tart**⁶⁵.— I'll read, and answer.

[Exit]

LBANY Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

ESSENGER Come with my lady hither.

LBANY He is not here.

ESSENGER No, my good lord, I met him **back**⁶⁹ again.

LBANY Knows he the wickedness?

ESSENGER Ay, my good lord: 'twas he informed against him,
nd quit the house on purpose that their punishment
light have the freer course.

LBANY Gloucester, I live
o thank thee for the love thou showed'st the king
nd to revenge thine eyes.— Come hither, friend:
ell me what more thou know'st.

Exeunt

Act 4 Scene 3

running scene 14

Enter with Drum and Colours Cordelia, Gentleman and Soldiers

ORDELIA Alack, 'tis he: why, he was met even now
s mad as the **vexed**² sea, singing aloud,
rowned with **rank fumiter** and **furrow weeds**³,
/ith **burdocks**, **hemlock**, nettles, **cuckoo-flowers**⁴,
arnel, and all the **idle**⁵ weeds that grow
i our sustaining corn. A sentry send forth;
earch every acre in the high-grown field

nd bring him to our eye.—

[Exit a Soldier]

What can man's wisdom⁸
in the restoring his bereaved⁹ sense?
He that helps him take all my outward worth¹⁰.

ENTLEMAN There is means, madam:
Your foster-nurse of nature is repose¹²,
He which he lacks: that to provoke in him¹³
These many simples operative, whose power
Will close the eye of anguish.

ORDELIA All blest secrets,
Will you unpublished virtues¹⁷ of the earth,
Bring with my tears! Be aidant and remediate¹⁸
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him,
Till his ungoverned rage²⁰ dissolve the life
That wants the means²¹ to lead it.

Enter Messenger

MESSANGER News, madam:
The British powers are marching hitherward.
ORDELIA 'Tis known before: our preparation²⁴ stands
In expectation of them. O dear father,
Is thy business that I go about:
Therefore great France²⁷
My mourning and importuned²⁸ tears hath pitied.
O blown²⁹ ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right:
Soon may I hear and see him!

Exeunt

Act 4 Scene 4

running scene 15

Enter Regan and Steward [Oswald]

EGAN But are my brother's powers set forth?

SWALD Ay, madam.

EGAN Himself in person there?

SWALD Madam, with much [ado](#)⁴:

our sister is the better soldier.

EGAN Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

SWALD No, madam.

EGAN What might [import](#)⁸ my sister's letter to him?

SWALD I know not, lady.

EGAN Faith, he is [posted](#)¹⁰ hence on serious matter.

was great [ignorance](#)¹¹, Gloucester's eyes being out,
o let him live: where he arrives he moves

ll hearts against us. Edmund, I think, is gone,

1 pity of his misery, to dispatch

is [nighted](#) life: moreover, to [descry](#)¹⁵

he strength o'th'enemy.

SWALD I must needs [after](#)¹⁷ him, madam, with my letter.

EGAN Our troops set forth tomorrow. Stay with us:

he [ways](#)¹⁹ are dangerous.

SWALD I may not, madam:

Iy lady [charged my duty](#)²¹ in this business.

EGAN Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you
ransport her purposes by word? [Belike](#)²³,

ome things I know not what. [I'll love thee](#)²⁴ much,

et me unseal the letter.

SWALD Madam, I had rather—

EGAN I know your lady does not love her husband,
am sure of that: and at her late being here
he gave strange *oeillades* and most *speaking*²⁹ looks
o noble Edmund. I know you are *of her bosom*³⁰.

SWALD I, madam?

EGAN I speak in understanding. *Y'are*³², I know't.
herefore I do advise you, *take this note*³³.
ly lord is dead: Edmund and I have talked,
nd more *convenient*³⁵ is he for my hand
han for your lady's: you may *gather more*³⁶.
'you do find him, pray you give him this,

Gives a token or a letter

nd when your mistress hears thus much from you,
pray desire her *call her wisdom to her*³⁹.
o, fare you well.

'you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
referment falls on him that cuts him off.

SWALD Would I could *meet*⁴³, madam, I should show
/hat party I do follow.

EGAN Fare thee well.

Exeunt

Act 4 Scene 5

running scene 16

Enter Gloucester and Edgar

Edgar dressed like a peasant

LOUCESTER When shall I come to th'top of *that same hill*¹?

OGAR You do climb up it now: look how we labour.

LOUCESTER Methinks the ground is even.

OGAR Horrible steep.

ark, do you hear the sea?

LOUCESTER No, truly.

OGAR Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect
y your eyes' anguish.

LOUCESTER So may it be, indeed:

lethinks thy voice is altered and thou speak'st
i better [phrase and matter](#)¹¹ than thou didst.

OGAR You're much deceived: in nothing am I changed
ut in my garments.

LOUCESTER Methinks you're better spoken.

OGAR Come on, sir, here's the place: stand still. How fearful
nd dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!

he crows and [choughs](#) that [wing](#) the [midway](#)¹⁷ air
how scarce so [gross](#)¹⁸ as beetles: halfway down
angs one that gathers [samphire](#)¹⁹, dreadful trade!

lethinks he seems no bigger than his head.

he fishermen that walk upon the beach
ppear like mice, and [yond](#) tall anchoring [bark](#)²²

iminished to [her cock](#)²³, her cock, a buoy
lmost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,

hat on [th'unnumbered idle pebble](#)²⁵ chafes,

annot be heard so high. I'll look no more,

est my brain turn and [the deficient](#)²⁷ sight

[opple](#)²⁸ down headlong.

LOUCESTER Set me where you stand.

OGAR Give me your hand: you are now within a foot

f th'extreme verge: for all beneath the moon
ould I not **leap upright**³².

LOUCESTER Let go my hand.

ere, friend's³⁴ another purse: in it a jewel

Gives a purse

ell worth a poor man's taking: fairies and gods
rosper it³⁶ with thee! Go thou further off:
id me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

OGAR Now fare ye well, good sir.

LOUCESTER With all my heart.

Aside

OGAR Why I do **trifle**⁴⁰ thus with his despair
done to cure it.

Kneels

LOUCESTER O you mighty gods!
his world I do renounce, and in your sights
hake patiently my great affliction off:
I could bear it longer, and not fall
o quarrel with your great **opposeless**⁴⁶ wills,
ly snuff and loathèd part of nature⁴⁷ should
urn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!—
ow, fellow, fare thee well.

He falls forward

OGAR Gone, sir: farewell.—

Aside

nd yet I know not how **conceit**⁵¹ may rob
he treasury of life, when life itself
ields⁵³ to the theft: had he been where he thought,

y [this](#)⁵⁴ had thought been past. Alive or dead?—
o, you sir! Friend! Hear you, sir! Speak!—

Aside

hus might he [pass](#)⁵⁶ indeed: yet he revives.—
[/hat](#)⁵⁷ are you, sir?

LOUCESTER Away, and let me die.

OGAR Hadst thou been [aught](#)⁵⁹ but gossamer, feathers, air —
o many fathom down [precipitating](#)⁶⁰ —

hou'dst [shivered](#)⁶¹ like an egg: but thou dost breathe,
ast heavy substance, bleed'st not, speak'st, art sound.

en masts [at each](#)⁶³ make not the altitude
[/hich](#) thou hast perpendicularly fell:

hy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

LOUCESTER But have I fall'n or no?

OGAR From the dread summit of this chalky [bourn](#)⁶⁷.
ook up [a-height](#): the [shrill-gorged](#)⁶⁸ lark so far
annot be seen or heard: do but look up.

LOUCESTER Alack, I have no eyes.

ow wretchedness deprived that benefit,
o end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort
[/hen](#) misery could [beguile](#)⁷³ the tyrant's rage
nd frustrate his proud will.

OGAR Give me your arm.

Helps him up

p, so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

LOUCESTER Too well, too well.

OGAR This is above all strangeness.

pon the crown o'th'cliff what thing was that

Which parted from you?

LOUCESTER A poor unfortunate beggar.

OGAR As I stood here below, methought his eyes

Were two full moons: he had a thousand noses,

Whorls [whelked](#)⁸⁴ and waved like the enragèd sea.

There was some [fiend](#): therefore, thou [happy father](#)⁸⁵,

Think that the [clearest](#) gods, who [make them honours](#)⁸⁶

Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

LOUCESTER I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear

Affliction till it do cry out itself

'Enough, enough' and die. That thing you speak of,

It took it for a man: often 'twould say

'The fiend, the fiend': he led me to that place.

OGAR Bear [free](#)⁹³ and patient thoughts.

Enter Lear

Dressed with weeds

But who comes here?

[The safer sense will ne'er accommodate](#)⁹⁴

His master thus.

LEAR No, they cannot [touch](#)⁹⁶ me for crying: I am the king
myself.

OGAR O thou side-piercing sight!

LEAR Nature's above art in that respect. There's your
[dress-money](#). That fellow handles his bow like a [crow-keeper](#)¹⁰⁰.
[Show me a clothier's yard](#)¹⁰¹. Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace,
This piece of toasted cheese will do't. There's my [gauntlet](#)¹⁰²: I'll
[rove it on](#) a giant. Bring up the [brown bills](#). O, [well flown](#),¹⁰³
Bird! [I'th'clout](#), i'th'clout: [hewgh](#)! Give the [word](#)¹⁰⁴.

DGAR Sweet marjoram¹⁰⁵.

EAR Pass.

LOUCESTER I know that voice.

EAR Ha? Goneril with a white beard? They flattered me
ke a dog and told me I had the white hairs in my beard ere¹⁰⁹
ie black ones were there. To say 'Ay' and 'No' to everything
at I said 'Ay' and 'No' to was no good divinity¹¹¹. When the
uin came¹¹² to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter,
hen the thunder would not peace¹¹³ at my bidding, there I
ound 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men
'their words: they told me I was everything: 'tis a lie, I am
ot ague-proof¹¹⁶.

LOUCESTER The trick¹¹⁷ of that voice I do well remember:
't not the king?

EAR Ay, every inch a king.

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

pardon that man's life. What was thy cause¹²¹?
dultery?

hou shalt not die: die for adultery? No.

he wren goes to't¹²⁴ and the small gilded fly
oes lecher¹²⁵ in my sight. Let copulation thrive,
or Gloucester's bastard son was kinder to his father
han were my daughters got¹²⁷ 'tween the lawful sheets.
o't, luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers¹²⁸.

ehold yond simp'ring dame,

Whose face between her forks presages snow¹³⁰,

That minces virtue and does shake the head¹³¹

To hear of pleasure's name:

he [fitchew](#) nor the [soiled](#)¹³³ horse goes to't
/ith a more [riotous](#)¹³⁴ appetite. Down from the waist
hey are [centaurs](#)¹³⁵, though women all above:
[ut to the girdle](#) do the gods [inherit](#)¹³⁶,
eneath is all the fiends':
here's [hell](#), there's darkness, there is the [sulphurous](#)¹³⁸ pit:
[urning, scalding, stench, consumption](#)¹³⁹. Fie, fie, fie! Pah,
ah! Give me an ounce of [civet](#), good [apothecary](#)¹⁴⁰, sweeten
y imagination: there's money for thee.

LOUCESTER O, let me kiss that hand!

EAR Let me wipe it first: it smells of [mortality](#)¹⁴³.

LOUCESTER O, ruined piece of nature! This great world
hall [so](#)¹⁴⁵ wear out to nought. Dost thou know me?

EAR I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou
[juinny](#) at me? No, do thy worst, blind [Cupid](#)¹⁴⁷: I'll not love.
ead thou this [challenge](#), mark but the [penning](#)¹⁴⁸ of it.

LOUCESTER Were all thy letters suns, I could not see.

Aside

OGAR I would not [take this from report](#)¹⁵⁰: it is,
nd my heart breaks at it.

EAR Read.

LOUCESTER What, with the [case](#)¹⁵³ of eyes?

EAR O, ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your head,
or no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a [heavy case](#)¹⁵⁵,
our purse in a light, yet you see how this world goes.

LOUCESTER I see it [feelingly](#)¹⁵⁷.

EAR What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes
ith no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond [justice](#)¹⁵⁹ rails

pon yond [simple](#)¹⁶⁰ thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places,
nd [handy-dandy](#)¹⁶¹, which is the justice, which is the thief?
hou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

LOUCESTER Ay, sir.

EAR And the creature run from the cur? There thou
ightst behold the great image of authority: [a dog's obeyed](#)¹⁶⁵
i office.

hou rascal [beadle](#)¹⁶⁷, hold thy bloody hand!
/hy dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own back:
hou hotly lusts to [use](#) her in that [kind](#)¹⁶⁹
or which thou whip'st her. The [usurer](#) hangs the [cozener](#)¹⁷⁰.
hrough tattered clothes great vices do appear:
obes and furred gowns hide all. [Place sins with gold](#)¹⁷²,
nd the strong lance of justice [hurtless](#)¹⁷³ breaks:
rm [it](#)¹⁷⁴ in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
one does offend, none, I say, none: I'll [able 'em](#)¹⁷⁵.
ake that of me, my friend, who have the power
o seal th'accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,
nd like a [scurvy politician](#)¹⁷⁸ seem
o see the things thou dost not. [Now, now, now, now](#)¹⁷⁹.
ull off my boots: harder, harder: so.

Aside

DGAR O, [matter and impertinency](#)¹⁸¹ mixed! Reason in madness!

EAR If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
know thee well enough: thy name is Gloucester.
hou must be patient; we came crying [hither](#)¹⁸⁴.
hou know'st the first time that we smell the air
/e wail and cry. I will preach to thee: mark.

LOUCESTER Alack, alack the day!

LEAR When we are born, we cry that we are come
o this great stage of fools. This a good [block](#)¹⁸⁹:
were a [delicate](#)¹⁹⁰ stratagem to shoe
troop of horse with felt: I'll [put't in proof](#)¹⁹¹,
nd when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,
hen kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

Enter a [Gentleman](#) [with Attendants]

ENTLEMAN O, here he is: lay hand upon him.— Sir,
our most dear daughter—

LEAR No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even
he [natural fool](#)¹⁹⁷ of fortune. Use me well,
ou shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons:
am cut to th'brains.

ENTLEMAN You shall have anything.

LEAR No [seconds](#)²⁰¹? All myself?
/hy, this would make a man a man of [salt](#)²⁰²
o use his eyes for garden water-pots,
will [die bravely](#)²⁰⁴, like a smug bridegroom. What?
will be [jovial](#)²⁰⁵. Come, come, I am a king,
[lasters](#)²⁰⁶, know you that?

ENTLEMAN You are a royal one, and we obey you.

LEAR Then there's life in't. Come, an you get it, you shall
et it by running. [Sa, sa, sa, sa](#)²⁰⁹.

Exit

Running, Attendants follow

ENTLEMAN A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,
ast speaking of in a king! Thou hast a daughter

Who redeems nature from the general curse²¹²

Which twain²¹³ have brought her to.

DGAR Hail, gentle²¹⁴ sir.

ENTLEMAN Sir, speed you²¹⁵: what's your will?

DGAR Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward²¹⁶?

ENTLEMAN Most sure and vulgar²¹⁷: everyone hears that
Which can distinguish sound.

DGAR But, by your favour²¹⁹,
How near's the other army?

ENTLEMAN Near and on speedy foot: the main descry²²¹
Stands on the hourly thought.

DGAR I thank you, sir: that's all.

ENTLEMAN Though that the queen on special cause²²⁴ is here,
Her army is moved on.

Exit

DGAR I thank you, sir.

LOUCESTER You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from
Me:

Let not my worser spirit²²⁹ tempt me again
To die before you please!

DGAR Well pray you, father.

LOUCESTER Now, good sir, what are you?

DGAR A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows,
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows²³⁴,
Am pregnant to good pity²³⁵. Give me your hand:

Takes his arm

I'll lead you to some biding²³⁶.

LOUCESTER Hearty thanks:

he bounty and the benison²³⁸ of heaven
o boot, and boot²³⁹.

Enter Steward [Oswald]

SWALD A proclaimed prize! Most happy²⁴⁰!
hat eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh²⁴¹
o raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor,

Draws

riefly thyself remember²⁴³: the sword is out
hat must destroy thee.

LOUCESTER Now let thy friendly hand

Edgar interposes

ut strength enough to't.

SWALD Wherefore, bold peasant,
arest thou support a published²⁴⁸ traitor? Hence,
est that th'infection of his fortune take
ike hold on thee. Let go his arm.

DGAR 'Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion²⁵¹.

SWALD Let go, slave, or thou diest!

DGAR Good gentleman, go your gait²⁵³, and let poor volk
ass. An 'chud ha' bin zwaggered out of my life, 'twould not²⁵⁴
a' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. Nay, come not near
i'old man: keep out, che vor ye, or I'se²⁵⁶ try whether your
ostard or my ballow²⁵⁷ be the harder. 'Chill be plain with you.

SWALD Out, dunghill!

They fight

DGAR 'Chill pick your teeth, zir: come, no matter vor your foins²⁵⁹.

SWALD Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse:
'ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body

nd give the letters which thou find'st about me
o Edmund, Earl of Gloucester: seek him out
pon the English [party](#)²⁶⁴. O, untimely death! Death!

He dies

OGAR I know thee well: a [serviceable](#)²⁶⁵ villain,
s duteous to the vices of thy mistress
s badness would desire.

LOUCESTER What, is he dead?

OGAR Sit you down, father: rest you.
et's see these pockets: the letters that he speaks of
lay be my friends. He's dead: I am only sorry
e had no other [deathsmen](#)²⁷². Let us see.

Opens the letter

[leave](#)²⁷³, gentle wax, and manners, blame us not:
o know our enemies' minds we rip their hearts:
heir papers is more lawful.

Reads the letter

et our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many
pportunities to cut him off: if your [will want not](#)²⁷⁷, time and
lace will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing [done](#)²⁷⁸ if he
eturn the conqueror: then am I the prisoner, and his bed my
il, from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and
pply the place [for your labour](#)²⁸¹. Your — wife, so I would say
- affectionate [servant](#)²⁸², Goneril.'

, [undistinguished space](#) of woman's [will](#)²⁸³!

plot upon her virtuous husband's life,
nd the exchange my brother! Here in the sands
[hee I'll rake up](#), the [post unsanctified](#)²⁸⁶

f murderous lechers: and in the mature time²⁸⁷
with this ungracious paper strike²⁸⁸ the sight
of the death-practised²⁸⁹ duke: for him 'tis well
that of thy death and business I can tell.

LOUCESTER The king is mad: how stiff²⁹¹ is my vile sense,
that I stand up and have ingenious²⁹² feeling
of my huge sorrows. Better I were distract²⁹³,
so should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,

Drum afar off

and woes by wrong imaginations²⁹⁵ lose
the knowledge of themselves.

DOGAR Give me your hand:
far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

Exeunt

Act 4 Scene 6

running scene 17

Enter Cordelia, Kent and Gentleman

Kent still disguised

CORDELIA O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work
to match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
and every measure fail me³.

KENT To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid⁴.
All my reports go with the modest truth⁵,
or more nor clipped⁶, but so.

CORDELIA Be better suited⁷:
these weeds⁸ are memories of those worser hours,
prithce put them off.

ENT Pardon, dear madam,
et to be known shortens my made intent¹¹:
ly boon I make it, that you know me not¹²
ill time and I think meet¹³.

ORDELIA Then be't so, my good lord.— How does the king?

ENTLEMAN Madam, sleeps still.

ORDELIA O you kind gods,
ure this great breach in his abusèd nature!
h'untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up¹⁸
f this child-changèd¹⁹ father!

ENTLEMAN So please your majesty
hat we may wake the king: he hath slept long.

ORDELIA Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed
th'sway of your own will. Is he arrayed²³?

Enter Lear in a chair carried by Servants

ENTLEMAN Ay, madam: in the heaviness of sleep
/e put fresh garments on him.
e by, good madam, when we do awake him:
doubt of his temperance²⁷.

ORDELIA O my dear father! Restoration hang

Kisses him

hy medicine on my lips and let this kiss
epair those violent harms that my two sisters
ave in thy reverence³¹ made!

ENT Kind and dear princess!

ORDELIA Had you not been their father, these white flakes³³
id challenge pity of³⁴ them. Was this a face
o be opposed against the jarring winds?

line enemy's dog though he had bit me
hould have stood that night against my fire,
nd wast thou [fain](#)³⁸, poor father,
o hovel thee with swine and [rogues forlorn](#)³⁹
i [short](#)⁴⁰ and musty straw? Alack, alack!
his wonder that thy life and wits [at once](#)⁴¹
ad not [concluded all](#)⁴².— He wakes: speak to him.

ENTLEMAN Madam, do you: 'tis fittest.

ORDELIA How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

EAR You do me wrong to take me out o'th'grave:
hou art a soul in [bliss](#)⁴⁶, but I am bound
pon a [wheel of fire](#), [that](#)⁴⁷ mine own tears
o scald like molten lead.

ORDELIA Sir, do you know me?

EAR You are a spirit, I know: where did you die?

ORDELIA Still, still, far [wide](#)⁵¹!

ENTLEMAN He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

EAR Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?
am mightily [abused](#)⁵⁴. I should ev'n die with pity
o see another thus. I know not what to say.
will not swear these are my hands. Let's see:
feel this pinprick. [Would I were assured](#)⁵⁷
f my condition!

Kneels?

ORDELIA O, look upon me, sir,
nd hold your hand in benediction o'er me:
ou must not kneel.

Stops him from kneeling?

LEAR Pray, do not mock me:
I am a very foolish fond⁶³ old man,
Ourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less,
And to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
I think I should know you and know this man,
Yet I am doubtful, for I am mainly ignorant
Of that place this is, and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments, nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.
CORDELIA And so I am, I am.

Weeps

LEAR Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not:
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me, for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not.
CORDELIA No cause, no cause.
LEAR Am I in France?
GENT In your own kingdom, sir.
LEAR Do not abuse me.
GENTLEMAN Be comforted, good madam: the great rage⁸⁴,
You see, is killed in him. Desire him to go in:
Trouble him no more till further settling⁸⁶.
CORDELIA Will't please your highness walk?
LEAR You must bear with me. Pray you now, forget and forgive:

am old and foolish.

Exeunt

Act 5 Scene 1

running scene 18

Enter with Drum and Colours Edmund, Regan, Gentlemen and Soldiers

To a Gentleman

DMUND Know of the duke if his last purpose¹ hold,
or whether since he is advised by aught²
to change the course: he's full of alteration
and self-reproving: bring his constant pleasure⁴.

[Exit Gentleman]

EGAN Our sister's man is certainly miscarried⁵.

DMUND 'Tis to be doubted⁶, madam.

EGAN Now, sweet lord,
do you know the goodness I intend upon you:
tell me but truly — but then speak the truth —
do you not love my sister?

DMUND In honoured¹¹ love.

EGAN But have you never found my brother's way
to the forfended place¹³?

DMUND No, by mine honour, madam.

EGAN I never shall endure her¹⁵: dear my lord,
be not familiar¹⁶ with her.

DMUND Fear not. She and the duke her husband!

Enter with Drum and Colours Albany, Goneril, Soldiers

LBANY Our very loving sister, well be-met.
Sir, this I heard: the king is come to his daughter,
with others whom the rigour of our state²⁰

orced to cry out²¹.

EGAN Why is this reasoned²²?

ONERIL Combine together²³ against the enemy,
or these domestic and particular broils²⁴
are not the question here.

LBANY Let's then determine
with th'ancient of war²⁷ on our proceeding.

EGAN Sister, you'll go with us?

ONERIL No.

EGAN 'Tis most convenient³⁰: pray, go with us.

Aside

ONERIL O, ho, I know the riddle³¹.— I will go.

Exeunt both the armies. [Albany remains]

Enter Edgar

Disguised

EDGAR If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,
hear me one word.

LBANY I'll overtake you³⁴.— Speak.

EDGAR Before you fight the battle, ope this letter³⁵:

Gives a letter

If you have victory, let the trumpet sound³⁶
to him that brought it. Wretched though I seem,
I can produce a champion³⁸ that will prove
that is avouchèd there. If you miscarry³⁹,
our business of the world hath so an end,
and machination⁴¹ ceases. Fortune loves you.

LBANY Stay till I have read the letter.

EDGAR I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry⁴⁴
and I'll appear again.

Exit

LBANY Why, fare thee well: I will o'erlook⁴⁶ thy paper.
Enter Edmund

EDMUND The enemy's in view: draw up your powers⁴⁷.

Offers a paper

There is the guess of their true strength and forces
by diligent discovery⁴⁹, but your haste
is now urged on you.

LBANY We will greet the time⁵¹.

Exit

EDMUND To both these sisters have I sworn my love,
each jealous⁵³ of the other, as the sting
of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed
if both remain alive. To take the widow
exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril,
and hardly shall I carry out my side⁵⁸,
her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use
his countenance⁶⁰ for the battle, which being done,
let her who would be rid of him devise
his speedy taking off⁶². As for the mercy
which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
the battle done and they within our power,
shall never see his pardon, for my state⁶⁵
stands on me to defend, not to debate.

Exit

Act 5 Scene 2

running scene 19

Alarum within. Enter, with Drum and Colours, Lear, Cordelia and Soldiers over the stage and exeunt. Enter Edgar and Gloucester

EDGAR Here, [father](#)¹, take the shadow of this tree
or your good [host](#)². Pray that the right may thrive.
'ever I return to you again,
I'll bring you comfort.

LOUCESTER Grace go with you, sir!

Exit [Edgar]

*Alarum and [retreat](#) within
Enter Edgar*

EDGAR Away, old man! Give me thy hand, away!
Lear hath lost, he and his daughter [ta'en](#)⁷:
Give me thy hand, come on.

LOUCESTER No further, sir: a man may rot even here.

EDGAR What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
their going hence, even as their coming hither:
[Ipseness](#)¹² is all: come on.

LOUCESTER And that's true too.

Exeunt

Act 5 Scene 3

running scene 20

Enter in conquest, with Drum and Colours, Edmund, Lear and Cordelia as prisoners, Soldiers, Captain

EDMUND Some officers take them away: [good guard](#)¹,
until their [greater pleasures](#)² first be known
what are to [censure](#)³ them.

ORDELIA We are not the first
/ho with best [meaning](#)⁵ have incurred the worst.
or thee, oppressèd king, I am [cast down](#)⁶:
lyself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.
hall we not see these daughters and these sisters?
LEAR No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison.
/e two alone will sing like birds i'th'cage:
/hen thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
nd ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,
nd pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
t [gilded butterflies](#), and hear [poor rogues](#)¹⁴
alk of court news, and we'll talk with them too —
/ho loses and who wins, who's in, who's out —
nd [take upon's the mystery of things](#)¹⁷,
s if we were [God's spies](#): and we'll [wear out](#)¹⁸
i a walled prison [packs and sects](#)¹⁹ of great ones
[hat ebb and flow by th'moon](#)²⁰.

DMUND Take them away.

LEAR Upon such [sacrifices](#)²², my Cordelia,
he gods themselves [throw incense](#)²³. Have I caught thee?
e that parts us shall bring a [brand from heaven](#)²⁴
nd fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes:
he good years shall devour them, [flesh and fell](#)²⁶,
re they shall make us weep: We'll see 'em [starved](#)²⁷ first. Come.

Exeunt [Lear and Cordelia, guarded]

DMUND Come hither, captain, hark.

Gives a paper

ake thou this note, go follow them to prison.
ne step I have advanced thee: if thou dost
s this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
o noble fortunes. Know thou this: that men
re as the time is; to be [tender-minded](#)³³
oes not [become](#)³⁴ a sword. Thy great employment
ill not [bear question](#)³⁵: either say thou'lt do't
r thrive by other means.

APTAIN I'll do't, my lord.

DMUND About it, and [write happy](#)³⁸ when th'hast done.
lark, I say, instantly, and [carry](#)³⁹ it so
s I have set it down.

Exit Captain

Flourish. Enter Albany, Goneril, Regan, Soldiers

LBANY Sir, you have showed today your valiant [strain](#)⁴¹,
nd fortune led you well. You have the captives
/ho were the [opposites](#)⁴³ of this day's strife:
do require them of you, so to [use](#)⁴⁴ them
s we shall find their merits and our safety
lay equally determine.

DMUND Sir, I thought it fit
o send the old and miserable king to some [retention](#)⁴⁸
/hose age had [charms](#) in it, whose [title](#)⁴⁹ more,
o [pluck the common bosom](#)⁵⁰ on his side
nd [turn our impressed lances in our eyes](#)⁵¹
/hich do command them. With him I sent the [queen](#)⁵²,
ly reason all the same, and they are ready
omorrow, or at further space, t'appear

Where you shall hold your session⁵⁵.

LBANY Sir, by your patience⁵⁶,
hold you but a subject of⁵⁷ this war,
not as a brother.

EGAN That's as we list⁵⁹ to grace him.
He thinks our pleasure might have been demanded⁶⁰
ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,
more the commission⁶² of my place and person,
he which immediacy⁶³ may well stand up
and call itself your brother.

ONERIL Not so hot:
In his own grace⁶⁶ he doth exalt himself
more than in your addition⁶⁷.

EGAN In my rights,
by me invested, he compeers⁶⁹ the best.

LBANY That were the most⁷⁰ if he should husband you.

EGAN Jesters do oft prove prophets.

ONERIL Holla⁷², holla!
That eye that told you so looked but asquint⁷³.

EGAN Lady, I am not well, else I should answer

To Edmund

From a full-flowing stomach⁷⁵.— General,
make thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony⁷⁶:
dispose of them, of me: the walls⁷⁷ is thine:
Fitness the world⁷⁸ that I create thee here
My lord and master.

ONERIL Mean you to enjoy⁸⁰ him?

LBANY The let-alone⁸¹ lies not in your good will.

EDMUND Nor in thine, lord.

LBANY **Half-blooded**⁸³ fellow, yes.

To Edmund

EGAN Let the drum strike and prove my title thine.

LBANY Stay yet, hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee
in capital treason, and, **in**⁸⁶ thy arrest,
his **gilded serpent**. **For**⁸⁷ your claim, fair sister,
bar it⁸⁸ in the interest of my wife:

'tis she is **subcontracted**⁸⁹ to this lord,
and I, her husband, contradict your **banns**⁹⁰.
'you will marry, **make your loves to**⁹¹ me,
My lady is **bespoke**⁹².

ONERIL An **interlude**⁹³!

LBANY Thou art armed, Gloucester: let the trumpet sound:
'none appear to prove upon thy person
thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
here is my **pledge**: I'll **make it**⁹⁷ on thy heart,

Throws down a glove

re I taste bread, thou art in **nothing**⁹⁸ less
than I have here proclaimed thee.

EGAN Sick, O, sick!

Aside

ONERIL If not, I'll ne'er trust **medicine**¹⁰¹.

EDMUND There's my exchange: **what**¹⁰² in the world he's
that names me traitor, villain-like he lies.

Throws down a glove

all by the trumpet: he that dares approach,
in him, on you — who not? — I will maintain

ly truth and honour firmly.

Enter a Herald

LBANY A herald, ho!

To Edmund

rust to thy [single virtue](#)¹⁰⁸, for thy soldiers,
ll levied in my name, have in my name
ook their discharge.

EGAN My sickness grows upon me.

LBANY She is not well: convey her to my tent.—

[Exit Regan, led]

ome hither, herald. Let the trumpet sound
nd read out this.

A trumpet sounds

ERALD Reads 'If any man of [quality or degree](#)¹¹⁵ within the
[sts](#)¹¹⁶ of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl
f Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by
ie third sound of the trumpet: he is bold in his defence.'

First trumpet

ERALD Again!

Second trumpet

ERALD Again!

Third trumpet

Trumpet answers within

Enter Edgar armed

His helmet visor down

LBANY Ask him his purposes, why he appears
pon this call o'th'trumpet.

ERALD What are you?

our name, your quality, and why you answer

his present summons?

ƆGAR Know, my name is lost
y treason's tooth bare-gnawn and [canker-bit](#)¹²⁷:
et am I noble as the adversary
come to [cope](#)¹²⁹.

LBANY Which is that adversary?

ƆGAR What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloucester?

ƆMUND Himself: what say'st thou to him?

ƆGAR Draw thy sword,
hat, if my speech offend a noble heart,
hy arm may do thee justice: here is mine.

Draws

ehold, it is my privilege —
he privilege of mine [honours](#) —¹³⁷
ly oath and my profession. I [protest](#)¹³⁸,
[laugre](#) thy strength, [place](#)¹³⁹, youth and eminence,
espise thy victor sword and [fire-new](#)¹⁴⁰ fortune,
hy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor:
alse to thy gods, thy brother and thy father,
[onspirant](#)¹⁴³ gainst this high illustrious prince,
nd from th'extremest [upward](#)¹⁴⁴ of thy head
o the [descent](#)¹⁴⁵ and dust below thy foot
most [toad-spotted](#)¹⁴⁶ traitor. Say thou no,
his sword, this arm and my best spirits are [bent](#)¹⁴⁷
o prove upon thy heart whereto I speak,
hou liest.

ƆMUND In wisdom I should ask thy name,
ut since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,

nd that thy tongue some [say](#)¹⁵² of breeding breathes,
/hat safe and [nicely](#)¹⁵³ I might well delay
y rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
ack do I toss these treasons to thy head,
/ith the [hell-hated lie](#)¹⁵⁶ o'erwhelm thy heart,
/hich, [for they](#) yet glance [by](#)¹⁵⁷ and scarcely bruise,
his sword of mine shall give them [instant way](#)¹⁵⁸,
/here they shall rest forever. Trumpets, speak!

Draws

Alarums. Fights

Edmund falls

LBANY Save [him](#)¹⁶⁰, save him!

ONERIL This is [practice](#)¹⁶¹, Gloucester:

y th'law of war thou wast not bound to answer
n unknown opposite: thou art not vanquished,
ut [cozened and beguiled](#)¹⁶⁴.

LBANY Shut your mouth, [dame](#)¹⁶⁵,

r with this paper shall I stop it.— Hold, sir.—

To Goneril

hou worse than any name, read thine own evil.

o tearing, lady: I perceive you [know](#)¹⁶⁸ it.

Shows her the letter

ONERIL Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine:

/ho can [arraign](#)¹⁷⁰ me for't.

Exit

LBANY Most monstrous! O, know'st thou this paper?

DMUND Ask me not what I know.

LBANY Go after her: she's desperate: [govern](#)¹⁷³ her.

[Exit a soldier]

EDMUND What you have charged me with, that have I done,
and more, much more: the time will bring it out:

To Edgar

'tis past and so am I.— But what art thou
that hast this [fortune on](#)¹⁷⁷ me? If thou'rt noble,
do forgive thee.

EDGAR Let's exchange [charity](#)¹⁷⁹.
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund:
't is more, the more [th'hast](#)¹⁸¹ wronged me.

Removes his helmet

My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
The gods are just, and of our [pleasant](#)¹⁸³ vices
make instruments to plague us:
The [dark](#) and [vicious](#) place where thee he [got](#)¹⁸⁵
lost him his eyes.

EDMUND Th'hast spoken right: 'tis true,
The [wheel](#)¹⁸⁸ is come full circle: I am here.

To Edgar

ALBANY Methought thy very gait did [prophecy](#)¹⁸⁹
thy royal nobleness: I must embrace thee.
Let sorrow split my heart if ever I
did hate thee or thy father!

EDGAR Worthy prince, I know't.

ALBANY Where have you hid yourself?
How have you known the miseries of your father?

EDGAR By nursing them, my lord. [List](#)¹⁹⁶ a brief tale,
and when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst!

he bloody proclamation¹⁹⁸ to escape
hat followed me so near — O, our lives' sweetness!
hat we the pain of death would hourly die²⁰⁰
ather than die at once! — taught me to shift
ito a madman's rags, t'assume a semblance²⁰²
hat very dogs disdained: and in this habit²⁰³
let I my father with his bleeding rings²⁰⁴,
heir precious stones new lost, became his guide,
ed him, begged for him, saved him from despair²⁰⁶,
ever — O, fault! — revealed myself unto him
ntil some half-hour past, when I was armed.
ot sure, though hoping, of this good success²⁰⁹,
asked his blessing, and from first to last
old him our pilgrimage: but his flawed²¹¹ heart —
lack, too weak the conflict to support —
'wixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
urst smilingly.

DMUND This speech of yours hath moved me,
nd shall perchance do good: but speak you on:
ou look as you had something more to say.

LBANY If there be more, more woeful, hold it in,
or I am almost ready to dissolve²¹⁹,
earing of this.

Enter a Gentleman

With a bloody knife

ENTLEMAN Help, help, O, help!

OGAR What kind of help?

LBANY Speak, man.

DGAR What means this bloody knife?

ENTLEMAN 'Tis hot, it [smokes](#)²²⁵:

came even from the heart of — O, she's dead!

LBANY Who dead? Speak, man.

ENTLEMAN Your lady, sir, your lady; and her sister
y her is poisoned: she confesses it.

DMUND I was contracted to them both: all three
ow marry in an instant.

DGAR Here comes Kent.

Enter Kent

LBANY Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead:

Goneril and Regan's bodies brought out

his judgement of the heavens, that makes us tremble,

Sees Kent

ouches us not with pity.— O, is this he?—

To Kent

he time will not allow the [compliment](#)²³⁶

hich very manners urges.

ENT I am come

o bid my king and master [aye](#)²³⁹ goodnight:

he not here?

LBANY [Great thing](#)²⁴¹ of us forgot!

peak, Edmund, where's the king? And where's Cordelia?—

ee'st thou this [object](#)²⁴³, Kent?

Points to the bodies

ENT Alack, why thus?

DMUND Yet Edmund was beloved:

he one the other poisoned for my sake

nd after slew herself.

LBANY [Even](#)²⁴⁸ so. Cover their faces.

DMUND I pant for life: some good I mean to do,
espite of mine own nature. Quickly send —
e brief in it — to th'castle, for my [writ](#)²⁵¹
on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:
ay, send in time.

LBANY Run, run, O, run!

OGAR To who, my lord? Who has the [office](#)²⁵⁵?

To Edmund

end thy token of reprieve.

DMUND Well thought on: take my sword,
ive it the captain.

To a Gentleman

OGAR Haste thee, for thy life.

[Exit Gentleman]

DMUND He hath commission from thy wife and me
o hang Cordelia in the prison and
o lay the blame upon her own despair,
hat she [fordid](#)²⁶³ herself.

Edmund is borne off

LBANY The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.

Enter Lear with Cordelia in his arms

Gentleman and others following

EAR Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:
ad I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
hat heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!
know when one is dead and when one lives:

he's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass:
' that her breath will mist or stain the [stone](#)²⁷⁰,
/hy, then she lives.

ENT Is this the [promised end](#)²⁷²?

OGAR Or image of that horror?

LBANY [Fall and cease!](#)²⁷⁴

EAR This feather stirs: she lives! If it be so,
is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
hat ever I have felt.

Kneels

ENT O my good master!

EAR Prithee, away.

OGAR 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

EAR A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
might have saved her: now she's gone for ever!—
ordelia, Cordelia! Stay a little. Ha?

/hat is't thou say'st?— Her voice was ever soft,
entle and low, an excellent thing in woman.—
killed the [slave](#)²⁸⁶ that was a-hanging thee.

ENTLEMAN 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

EAR Did I not, fellow?

have seen the day, with my good biting [falchion](#)²⁸⁹
would have made him skip: I am old now,
nd these same [crosses](#)²⁹¹ spoil me.— Who are you?
[line eyes are not o'th'best](#): I'll tell you [straight](#)²⁹².

ENT If fortune brag of [two she loved and hated](#)²⁹³,
ne of them we behold.

EAR This is a [dull sight](#)²⁹⁵. Are you not Kent?

ENT The same,
our servant Kent: where is your servant Caius²⁹⁷?

EAR He's a good fellow, I can tell you that:
he'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.

ENT No, my good lord, I am the very man—

EAR I'll see that straight³⁰¹.

ENT That from your first of difference and decay³⁰²
have followed your sad steps.

EAR You are welcome hither.

ENT Nor no man else³⁰⁵: all's cheerless, dark and deadly.
our eldest daughters have fordone³⁰⁶ themselves,
and desperately³⁰⁷ are dead.

EAR Ay, so I think.

LBANY He knows not what he says, and vain is it³⁰⁹
that we present us to him.

Enter a Messenger

EDGAR Very bootless³¹¹.

MESSENGER Edmund is dead, my lord.

LBANY That's but a trifle here.

Our lords and noble friends, know our intent:
That comfort to this great decay³¹⁵ may come
shall be applied. For us, we will resign³¹⁶,
sparing the life of this old majesty,

To Edgar and Kent

On him our absolute power:— you, to your rights
With boot and such addition³¹⁹ as your honours
have more than merited. All friends shall taste
the wages of their virtue, and all foes

he [cup](#) of their deservings.— O, [see, see](#)³²²!

LEAR And my poor [fool](#)³²³ is hanged! No, no, no life?

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,

and thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,

never, never, never, never, never!

May you undo [this button](#): thank you, [sir](#)³²⁷.

O you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,

look there, look there!

He dies

EDGAR He faints! My lord, my lord!

ENTER Break, heart, I prithee, break.

EDGAR Look up, my lord.

ENTER Vex not his [ghost](#)³³³: O, let him pass! He hates him

that would upon the [rack](#)³³⁴ of this tough world

stretch him out [longer](#)³³⁵.

EDGAR He is gone, indeed.

ENTER The wonder is he hath endured so long:

He but [usurped](#)³³⁸ his life.

ALBANY Bear them from hence. Our present business

is general woe.—

To Kent and Edgar

Friends of my soul, you twain

rule in this realm, and the [gored](#) state [sustain](#)³⁴².

ENTER I have a [journey](#)³⁴³, sir, shortly to go:

My master calls me, I must not say no.

EDGAR The weight of this sad time we must obey:

Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.

The oldest hath borne most: we that are young

hall never see so much nor live so long.

Exeunt with a dead march

TEXTUAL NOTES

Q = First Quarto text of 1608

F = First Folio text of 1623

F2 = a correction introduced in the Second Folio text of 1632

Ed = a correction introduced by a later editor

SD = stage direction

SH = speech heading (i.e. speaker's name)

List of parts = Ed

DMUND *sometimes spelled Edmond, often referred to in directions and speech headings as Bastard*

.1.30 SD *one ... then* = Q. *Not in F* **33 lord** = F. Q = *Liege* **36 fast** = F. Q = *first* **37 age** = F. Q = *state* **38 Conferring** = F. Q = *Confirming* **strengths** = F. Q = *yeares* **38–43 while ... now** = F. *Not in Q* **47–48 Since ... state** = F. *Not in Q* **57 found** = F. Q = *friend* **62–63 and ... rivers** = F. *Not in Q* **66 of Cornwall** = F. Q = *to Cornwell, speake* **77 ponderous** = F. Q = *richer* **81 conferred** = F. Q = *confirm'd* **82 our ... love** = F. Q = *the last, not least in our deere loue* **84 interested** = Ed. F = *interest* **draw** = F. Q = *win* **87 SH LEAR Nothing? ... Nothing.** = F. *Not in Q* **103 sisters** = F. Q = *sisters, to loue my father all.* **110 mysteries** = F2. F = *miseries.* Q = *mistresse* **night** = F. Q = *might* **118 shall ... bosom** = F. Q = *Shall* **136 shall** = F. Q = *still* **151 falls** = F. Q = *stoops* **Reserve thy state** = F. Q = *Reuerse thy doome* **158 pawn** = F. Q = *a pawne* **159 ne'er** = F. Q = *nor* **164 SH LEAR** = Q. F = *Kear.* **165 SH KENT** = Q. F = *Lent.* **167 Miscreant** = F. Q = *recreant* **168 SH ALBANY ... forbear.** = F. *Not in Q* **SH CORDELIA** *some editors expand F's Cor. to Cornwall* **170 gift** = F. Q = *doome* **175 strained** = F. Q = *straied* **176 sentences** = F *corrected.* F *uncorrected,* Q = *sentence* **179 Five** = F. Q = *Foure* **180 disasters**

= F. Q = diseases **181 sixth** = F. Q = fift **182 next** = Ed. F, Q = tenth **187 Freedom** = F. Q = Friendship **194 SH CORDELIA** = F (*corrected*). *Some editors expand to Cornwall.* Q = *Glost.* **213 Dowered** = F. Q = Couered **225 object** = F. Q = best obiect **234 Should** = F. Q = Could **237 will** = F. Q = well **238 make known** = F. Q = may know **248 but** = F. Q = no more but **252 regards** = F. Q = respects **255 king** = F. Q = *Leir* **263 respect and fortunes** = F. Q = respects / Of fourtune **270 my** = F. Q = thy **286 Love** = F. Q = vse **291 SH REGAN** = F (*Regn*). Q = *Gonorill* **292 SH GONERIL** = F. Q = *Regan* **295 want** = F. Q = worth **296 plighted** = F. Q = pleated **297 with shame derides** = F. Q = shame them derides **306 not been** = Q. F = beene **319 sit** = F. Q = hit

.2.1 **SH EDMUND** = Ed. F, Q = *Bast. (throughout)* **13 tirèd** = F. Q = lyed **18 fine word, 'legitimate'** = F. *Not in Q 21 to th'legitimate* = F. *Sometimes emended to top the legitimate* **24 Prescribed** = F. Q = subscribd **38 o'erlooking** = F. Q = liking **53 wake** = F. Q = wakt **55 you to this** = F. Q = this to you **67 declined** = F. Q = declining **80 that ... writ** = F. Q = he hath wrote **81 other** = F. Q = further **99–104 This ... graves** = F. *Not in Q 106–7 honesty! 'Tis strange* = F. Q = honest, strange **111 stars** = F. Q = the starres **113 spherical** = F. Q = spirituell **117 a star** = F. Q = Starres **119 I should** = F. Q = Fut, I should. **120 maidenliest spelled maidenlest in F and Q 121 bastardizing** = F. Q = bastardy **122 Pat** = F. Q = *Edgar*; and out **123 sigh ... o'Bedlam** = F. Q = sith like them of Bedlam **124 Fa ... mi.** = F. *Not in Q 130 writes* = F. Q = writ **146–49 I ... brother?** = F. *Not in Q 150 I am* = F. Q = go arm'd, I am

.3.0 **SD Steward** = F. Q = *Gentleman* **3 SH OSWALD** = Ed. F = Ste. Q = *Gent. (throughout)* **14 I'd** = F. *Sometimes emended to I'll* **15 distaste** = F. Q = dislike **17 have said** = F. Q = tell you **20 so.** = F. Q = so. I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall, That I may speak: **21 course. Prepare** = F. Q = very course, goe prepare

.4.1 will = F. Q = well 6 So ... thy = F. Q = thy 7 SD
Horns ... Attendants = F. Q = Enter Lear 43 SD Enter Steward
appears one line later in F 49 SH KNIGHT = F (*spelled Knigh here
and on two other occasions in Act 1 scene 4*). Q = Kent daughter =
Q. F = Daughters 51 SH KNIGHT = F. Q = *seruant (throughout)* 57
of kindness appears = F. Q = *apeer's* 66 purpose = F. Q =
purport 73 SD Enter Steward placed one line later in F 78 these = F.
Q = this your pardon = F. Q = you pardon me 80 stricken = F.
Q = struck 86 Have ... So = F. Q = you haue wisdom 93 SH
LEAR Why, my boy? = F. Q = Kent. Why Fool? 102 all my = F.
Q = any 106 the Lady Brach = F. Q = Ladie oth'e brach 107 gall
= F. Q = gull 110 nuncle = F. Q = vncl 121 SH KENT = F. Q
= Lear 130 one = F. Q = foole 141 grace = F. Q = wit 143 And
= F. Q = They to = F. Q = doe 152 fool = F. Q = fooles 164
You = F. Q = Methinks you 166 frowning = F. Q = frowne 171
nor crust = F. Q = neither crust nor crumb = Q. F = not crum
173 shelled *spelled sheal'd in F, sheald in Q* 188 know = F. Q =
trow 193 I = F. Q = Come sir, I your = F. Q = that 195
transport = F. Q = transforme 199 This = F. Q = why this 201
weakens, his = F. Q = weaknes, or his 202 Ha! Waking? = F. Q
= sleeping or wakeing; ha! sure 204 SH FOOL Lear's shadow. =
F. *Assigned to Lear in Q* 206 This admiration, sir = F. Q = Come
sir, this admiration 215 graced = F. Q = great 227 SD Albany =
F. Q = Duke (*throughout*) 228 Woe = F. Q = We 229 Speak ... my
= F. Q = that wee prepare any 233 SH ALBANY Pray ... patient.
= F. *Not in Q* 234 liest = F. Q = list 235 My = F. Q = list my are
= F. Q = and 246 Of ... you. = F. *Not in Q* 258 cadent = F. Q =
accent 262 Away, away! = F. Q = goe, goe, my people? 264 more
of it = F. Q = the cause 273 thee worth them = F. Q = the
worst 274 Th'untented = F. Q *uncorrected* = the vtender 275
Pierce = F. Q *uncorrected* = peruse thee! Old = F. Q = the old
277 loose = F. Q = make 278–79 Ha? ... daughter = F. Q = yea,
i'st come to this? yet haue I left a daughter 282 flay *spelled flea in F
and Q* 285 that = F. Q = that my Lord 288–89 Pray ... sir = F. Q
= Come sir no more, you 297–309 SH GONERIL This ... SD Enter
Steward = F. Q = Gon. What Oswald, ho. 309 How now, Oswald?

= F. Q = *Oswald*. Here Madam. **310 What** = F. Q = *Gon*. What **318 condemn** = F. Q = dislike **319 at task** = F. Q *uncorrected* = alapt. Q *corrected* = attaskt **322 better, oft** = F. Q = better ought

.5.0 SD *Enter ... Fool* = F. Q = *Enter Lear*. **18 tell** = F. Q = not tell **42–43 Keep ... now,** = F. Q = I would not be mad, keepe me in temper, I would not be mad, **44 SH GENTLEMAN** = F. Q = *Seruant*.

.1.2 **you** = Q. F = your **8–9 ear-kissing** = F. Q = eare-bussing **18 act ... work** = F. Q = aske breefnes ... helpe **29–30 pardon ... I** = F. Q = pardon me in crauing, I **37 SD Enter ... torches** = F. Q = *Enter Glost*. **40 Mumbling** = F. Q = warbling **41 stand** = F. Q = stand's **49 revenging** = F. Q = reuengiue **50 the thunder** = F. Q = their thunders **56 latched** = F. Q = lancht **57 And** = F. Q = but **60 Full** = F. Q = but **67 coward** = F. Q = caytife **73 would the reposal** = F. Q = could the reposeure **75 should I** = F. Q = I should **78 practice** = F. Q = pretence **81 spirits** = F. Q = spurres **83 O, strange** = F. Q = Strong **84 said he?** = F. Q = I neuer got him, **85 where** = F. Q = why **91 SD Enter ... Attendants** = F. Q = *Enter the Duke of Cornwall* **93 strangeness** = F. Q = strange newes **101 tended** = F. Q = tends **106 th'expense ... of** = F. Q *uncorrected* = these—and wast of this. Q *corrected* = the wast and spoyle of **115 bewray** = F. Q = betray **129 threading** = F. Q = threatening **130 prize** = F. Q *corrected* = poyse **133 differences** = F. Q *uncorrected* = defences **best** = F. Q *corrected* = lest **thought** = Q. F = though **134 home** = F. Q *uncorrected* = hand **137 businesses** = F. Q = busines

.2.1 **dawning** = F. Q *corrected* = euen. Q *uncorrected* = deuen **15 worsted-stocking** = Q *corrected*. F = woosted-stocking. Q *uncorrected* = wosted stocken **16 whoreson** = F. Q = knaue, a whorson **super-serviceable finical** = F. Q = supersinicall **20 clamorous spelled clamours in F** **25 since** = F. Q = ago since **27 you** = F. Q = draw, you **39 if** = F. Q = and **51 they** = F. Q = hee **51–52 years o'th'trade** = F. Q = houres at the trade **53 SH CORNWALL** = F. Q = *Glost*. **61 know you** = F. Q = you haue **66 the holy** = F. Q = those **67 too intrinse** = Ed. F = t'intrince **69**

fire = F. Q = stir **the** = F. Q = their **70 Revenge** = F. Ed = Reneage **71 gall** = F. Q = gale **72 dogs** = F. Q = dayes **74 Smile spelled** Smoile in F, smoyle in Q **77 What** = F. Ed = Why **81 fault** = F. Q = offence **92 An ... plain** = F. Q = he must be plaine **98 faith, in** = F. Q = sooth, or in **101 flickering** = Q (flitkering). F = flicking **111 compact** = F. Q = coniunct **116 fleshment** = F. Q = flechuent **dread** = Q. F = dead **121 ancient** = F. Q *corrected* = miscreant. Q *uncorrected* = ausrent **129 Stocking** = F. Q *corrected* = stopping. Q *uncorrected* = stobing. **139 he** = F. Q = hee's **145 duke's** = Q. F = Duke **148 travelled spelled** trauail'd in F and Q **153 saw** = F. Q *uncorrected* = say **158 miracles** = F. Q *corrected* = my wracke. Q *uncorrected* = my rackles **160 most** = F. Q *uncorrected* = not **164 Take** = F. Q *uncorrected* = Late **heavy spelled** heanie in F **170 unusual spelled** vnusall in F **176 hairs** = F. Q = haire **181 arms** = F. Q = bare arms **180 Pins** = F. Q *uncorrected* = Pies **183 farms** = F. Q = seruice **185 Sometimes** = F. Q = Sometime **187 SD Enter ... Gentleman** = F. Q = *Enter King* **190 SH GENTLEMAN** = F. Q = *Knight (throughout)* **192 this** = F. Q = his **194 thy** = Q. F = ahy **197 heads** = F. Q = heeles **198 man's** = Q. F = man **208–9 By ... ay** = F. Q = No no, they would not./ *Kent*. Yes they haue **214 impose** = F. Q = purpose **220 panting** = Q. F = painting **223 those** = F. Q = whose **224 meiny** = F. Q = men **235–43 SH FOOL Winter's ... a year.** = F. *Not in Q* **245 Hysterica spelled Historica** in F and Q **250 the** = Q. F = the the **251 number** = F. Q = traine **258 twenty** = F. Q = a 100 **260 upward** = F. Q = vp the hill **262 have** = Q. F = hause **264 serves and seeks** = F. Q = serues **275 have ... the** = F. Q = traueled hard to; **travelled spelled** travail'd in F **fetches** = F. Q = Iustice **285–86 SH GLOUCESTER Well ... man?** = F. *Not in Q* **288 father** = F. Q *uncorrected* = fate **289 commands, tends,** = F. Q *corrected* = commands her. Q *uncorrected* = come and tends **290–91 Are ... Fiery?** = F. *Not in Q* **310 knapped** = F. Q = rapt **316 you** = Q. F = your **318 mother's tomb** = Q *corrected*. F = Mother Tombe. Q *uncorrected* = mothers fruit **328–33 SH LEAR Say? ... blame.** = F. *Not in Q* **337 her** = Q. F = his **360 blister** = F. Q = blast her pride **384 SH LEAR** = F. Q = *Gon.* **stocked** = F.

Q = struck **410 hot-blooded** = F *uncorrected*. F *corrected* = hot-bloodied. Q = hot bloud in **422 boil spelled** Byle in F **468 need** = F. Q = deed **471 is** = F. Q = as. *Sometimes emended to is as* **480 tamely** = F. Q = lamely **488 flaws** = F. Q = flowes **497 SH GONERIL** = F. Q = *Duke* **499 SH CORNWALL** = F. Q = *Reg.* **501-2 SH CORNWALL Whither ... horse** = F. *Not in Q* **503 SH CORNWALL** = F. Q = *Re.* **505 high** = F. Q = bleak

.1.1 **Who's there, besides** = F. Q = Whats here beside **12 note** = F. Q = Arte **16-23 Who ... furnishings** = F. See "*Quarto passages that do not appear in the Folio*," p. 134, for alternative lines in Q **30 that** = F. Q = your **35-6 in ... this** = F. Q = Ile this way, you that

.2.8 **all** = F. Ed = an **germens spelled** *germaines in F* **12 wise ... fools** = F. Q = wise man nor foole **16 tax** = F. Q = taske **22 will ... join** = F. Q = haue ... ioin'd **42 are** = F. Q = sit **49 fear** = F. Q = force **55 of** = F. Q = man of **59 concealing continents** = F. Q = concealed centers **67 you** = F. Q = me **76 That's sorry** = F. Q = That sorrowes **77 little tiny** = Ed. F = little-tyne. Q = little tine **80 Though** = F. Q = for **81 True, boy** = F. Q = True my good boy **82-98 SH FOOL This ... time.** = F. *Not in Q*

.3.0 **SD Edmund** = F. Q = *the Bastard with lights.* **4 perpetual** = F. Q = their **12 footed** = F. Q = landed **15 if** = F. Q = though **17 strange things** = F. Q = some strange thing

.4.8 **contentious** = F. Q *corrected* = tempestious. Q *uncorrected* = crulentious **9 skin so:** = F *corrected*. F *uncorrected* = skin: so: **12 thy** = Q. F = they **roaring** = F. Q *uncorrected* = raging **18 home** = F. Q = sure **19-20 In ... endure** = F. *Not in Q* **22 all** = F. Q = you all **29-30 In ... sleep** = F. *Not in Q* **32 storm** = F. Q = night **34 lopped** = F. Q = loopt **40 SH EDGAR Fathom ... Tom!** = F. *Not in Q* **48 blow the winds** = F. Q = blowes the cold wind **Hum! ... bed** = F. Q = goe to thy cold bed **50 Did'st ... thy** = F. Q = Hast thou giuen all to thy two **53 through fire** = Q. F = though Fire **and through flame** = F. *Not in Q* **ford** = Q. F = Sword **58 Bless** = Q. F = Blisse **58-59 O ... de.** = F. *Not in Q* **59**

Bless = Q. F = blisse **63 Has** = F. Q = What. Ed = What, have
64 Wouldst = F. Q = didst **68 light** = F. Q = fall **79 word's**
justice = F. Q = words justly **87 I dearly** = F. Q = I deeply **94**
says ... nonny = F. Q = hay no on ny **95 boy, boy** = F. Q = boy,
my boy, **sessa** = Ed. F = *Sesey*. Q = cease **96 a** = F. Q = thy
101-2 lendings! ... here = F. Q *corrected* = lendings, come on. Q
uncorrected = leadings, come on bee true **106 on's** = F. Q = in
108 foul = F. Q = foul fiend **109 till the** = Q. F = at **110 squints**
= F. Q *corrected* = squemes. Q *uncorrected* = queues **114 alight** =
F. Q = O light **126 stocked, punished** = F. Q = stock-punisht **127**
hath had three = Q. F = hath three **131 Smulkin** = F. Q =
snulbug **135 my ... vile** = F. Q = is growne so vild my Lord **147**
same = F. Q = most **163 you** = F. Ed = your **176 tower came** =
F. Q = towne come

.5.10 were not = F. Q = were

.6.12-14 SH FOOL No ... him. = F. *Not in Q* **21 They** = F. Q =
Theile **27 mongrel grim, 28 Hound** = Ed. F = Mongrill, Grim, /
Hound. Q = mungril, grim-hound **him** = F (Hym). *Sometimes*
emended to lym **29 tyke** = Q (tike). F = tight **33 Do ... Sessa!** = F.
Q = loudla doodla **37 these hard hearts** = F. Q = this hardnes **39**
Persian = F. Q = Persian attire **40 and rest awhile** = F. Q =
awhile **42 So, so, we'll** = F. Q = so, so, so, / Weele **i'th'morning**
= F. Q = i'th'morning so, so, so **43 SH FOOL And ... noon** = F.
Not in Q **53 Take up, take up** = F. Q *corrected* = Take vp the King.
Q *uncorrected* = Take vp to keepe

.7.3 traitor = F. Q = vilaine **8 Advise** = Q. F = Aduice **9 festinate**
spelled festiuat in F *and festuant in Q* **37 none** = F. Q = true **48**
answered = F. Q = answerer **60 answer** = F. Q = first answer
62 Dover? = F. Q = Dover, sir? **65 stick** = F. Q = rash **66 as his**
bare = F. Q *corrected* = on his lowd. Q *uncorrected* = of his lou'd
67 buoyed = F. Q *corrected* = bod. Q *uncorrected* = layd **69 rain**
= F. Q = rage **70 howled that stern** = F. Q = heard that dearne
95 enkindle = F. Q = vnbridle

.1.6-10 Welcome ... comes = F. Q = Who's **10 poorly led** = F. Q
corrected = parti, eyd **15 these fourscore years** = F. Q = this

forescore **19 You** = F. Q = Alack sir, you **42 kill** = F. Q = bitt **48 Get thee away** = F. Q = Then, prethee, get thee gon **49 hence** = F. Q = here **60 daub** = F. Q = dance **62 And ... Bless** = F. Q = Blesse **65–6 thee ... son** = F. Q = the good man **71 slaves** = F. Q = stands **73 undo** = F. Q = under **77 fearfully** = F. Q = firmly

.2.10 most ... dislike = F. Q = hee should most desire **13 terror** = F. Q *uncorrected* = curre **16 Edmund** = F. Q = *Edgar* **18 names** = F. Q = armes **28 O ... man!** = F. *Not in Q* **30 My fool** = F. Q *corrected* = A Foole. Q *uncorrected* = My foote **body** = F. Q *corrected* = bed **32 whistle** = F. Q *corrected* = whistling **41 seems** = F. Q *corrected* = shewes **44 SH MESSENGER** = F. Q = *Gent.* **48 thrilled** = F. Q = thrald **50 threat-enraged** = F. Q = thereat inraged **55 justices** = F. Q *corrected* = Iustisers. Q *uncorrected* = your Iustices **65 tart** = F. Q = tooke

.3.0 SD Gentleman = Ed. F = *Gentlemen*. Q = *Doctor* **2 vexed** = F. Q = vent **3 fumiter** = Ed. F = Fenitar. Q = femiter **4 burdocks** = Ed. F = Hardokes. Q = hor-docks **6 sentry spelled** *Centery in F, centurie in Q* **send** = F. Q = sent **10 helps** = F. Q = can help **19 distress** = Q. F = desires **28 importuned** = F. Q = important **29 incite** = F. Q = in sight

.4.6 lord = F. Q = lady **13 Edmund** = F. Q = and now **16 o'th'enemy** = F. Q = at'h army **17 madam ... letter** = F. Q = with my letters **18 troops set** = F. Q = troope sets **24 Some things** = F. Q = Some thing **29 oeillades spelled** *Eliads in F, aliads in Q* **43 meet** = F. Q = meet him **should** = F. Q = would

.5.0 SD Edgar = F. Q = *Edmund* **1 I** = F. Q = we **21 walk** = Q. F = walk'd **48 bless him** = F. Q = blesse **67 summit** = F. Q = summons **76 How is't? Feel** = F. Q = how feele **84 whelked spelled** *wealk'd in F* **enraged** = F. Q = enridged **86 make them** = F. Q = made their **96 crying** = F. Q = coyning **102 piece of toasted** = F. Q = tosted **104 I'th'clout, i'th'clout: hewgh** = F. Q = in the ayre, hagh **108 Goneril ... beard?** = F. Q = *Gonorill*, ha *Regan*, **116 ague-proof** = F. Q = argue-prooffe **127 were** = Ed. *Not in F, Q* **139 consumption** = F. Q = consumation **140 civet ... sweeten** = F. Q = Ciuet, good Apothocarie, to sweeten

143 Let me = F. Q = Here **148 this** = F. Q = that **149 thy** = F. Q = the **see** = F. Q = see one **160 change places, and** = F. *Not in Q* **165 dog's obeyed** = F. Q = dogge, so bade **171 tattered clothes great** = F. Q = tottered raggs, smal **172–77 Place ... lips** = F. *Not in Q*; **Place sins** = F. Ed. = Plate sin **179 Now ... now.** = F. Q = no now **186 wail spelled** wawle in F, wayl in Q **190 shoe** = F. Q = shoot **191 felt** = F. Q = fell I'll ... **proof** = F. *Not in Q* **194 hand ... Sir** = F. Q = hands upon him sirs **198 surgeons** = F. Q = a churgion **203 water-pots** = F. Q = water-pots, Ay, and laying autumn's dust. / *Gent.* Good sir— / *Lear.* **204 smug bridegroom** = F. Q = bridegroom **206 Masters** = F. Q = my maisters **208 Come** = F. Q = nay **209 Sa ... sa.** = F. *Not in Q* **211 a daughter** = F. Q = one daughter **218 sound** = F. Q = sence **221 speedy foot** = F. Q = speed fort **233 tame to** = F. Q = lame by **238 bounty ... benison** = F. Q *uncorrected* = bornet and beniz **239 To ... boot** = F. Q *corrected* = to boot, to boot. Q *uncorrected* = to saue thee **242 old** = F. Q = most **256 I'se spelled** ice in F **257 ballow** = F. Q *corrected* = bat. Q *uncorrected* = battero **264 English** = F. Q = *British* **270 these** = F. Q = his **the** = F. Q = These **271 sorry** = F. Q = sorrow **282 affectionate servant, Goneril** = F. Q = your affectionate seruant and for your own *Venter, Gonorill* **283 will** = F. Q = wit **294 severed** = F. Q = fenced

ct 4 Scene 6 = Ed. F = *Scna Septima*

.6.0 SD Gentleman = F. Q = *Doctor* **18 jarring** = F. Q = hurrying **24 SH GENTLEMAN** = F. Q *assigns this and the next line to the Doctor, and the following two lines to a Gentleman* **27 of** = F. Q = not of **temperance.** = F. Q = temperance. / *Cord.* Very well. / *Doct.* Please you draw neere, louder the musicke there, **35 opposed** = F. Q = exposd **jarring** = F. Q = warring **36 enemy's** = F. Q = iniurious **49 do ... me?** = F. Q = know me. **64 not ... less** = F. *Not in Q* **85 killed** = F. Q = cured **him.** = F. Q = him and yet it is danger to make him euen ore the time hee has lost

.1.3 alteration = F. Q *uncorrected* = abdication **11 In** = F. Q = I, **17 not** = F. Q = me not **19 Sir ... heard** = F. Q = For ... heare

24 and particular broils = F. Q = dore particulars **27 proceeding.** = F. Q = proceeding. / *Bast.* I shall attend you presently at your tent. **41 And machination ceases** = F. *Not in Q* **loves** = F. Q = loue **48 Here** = F. Q = Hard **guess** = F. Q = quesse **true** = F. Q = great

.2.1 tree = F. Q = bush **14 SH GLOUCESTER And ... too.** = F. *Not in Q.*

.3.2 first = F. Q = best **26 good years** = F. Q = goode **40 down.** = F. Q = down. / *Cap.* I cannot draw a cart, nor eate dride oats, / If it bee mans worke ile do't. **48 send** = F. Q *uncorrected* = saue **retention** = F. Q *uncorrected* = retention and appointed guard **49 had** = F. Q = has **60 might** = F. Q = should **63 immediacy** = F. Q = imediate **67 addition** = F. Q = aduancement **70 SH ALBANY** = F. Q = *Gon.* **77 Dispose ... thine:** = F. *Not in Q* **84 SH REGAN** = F. Q = *Bast.* **thine** = F. Q = good **86 thy arrest** = F. Q = thine attaint **87 sister** = Q. F = sister **88 bar** = Ed. F = bare **91 loves** = F. Q = loue **94 let ... sound:** = F. *Not in Q* **95 person** = F. Q = head **97 make** = F. Q = proue **101 medicine** = F. Q = poyson **116 lists** = F. Q = hoast **117 by** = F. Q = at **120 SH HERALD** = F. Q = *Edmund* **128–29 Yet ... cope** = F. Q = yet are I mou't / Where is the aduersarie I come to cope with all **136–37 my ... honours** — = F. Q = the priuiledge of my tongue, **140 Despise** = F. Q = Despite **143 Conspirant** = F. Q = Conspicuate **145 below thy foot** = F. Q = beneath thy feet **147 are** = F. Q = As **152 tongue** = F. Q = being **153 What ... delay** = F. *Not in Q* **154 rule** = F. Q = right **155 Back** = F. Q = Heere **156 hell-hated lie o'er-whelm** = F. Q = hell hatedly, oreturnd **157 scarcely** = Q. F = scarely **162 war** = F. Q = armes **wast** = F. Q = art **166 stop ... sir** = F. Q = stople it **167 name** = F. Q = thing **172 SH EDMUND** = F. Q = *Gon.* **183 vices** = F. Q = vertues **184 plague** = F. Q = scourge **200 we** = F. Q = with **207 fault** = F. Q = Father **211 our** = F. Q = my **222 SH EDGAR** = F. Q = *Alb.* **223 SH ALBANY Speak, man.** = F. *Not in Q* **224 SH EDGAR** = F. Q *assigns line to Albany* **226 O, she's dead!** = F. *Not in Q* **227 Who ... man.** = F. Q = Who man, speake? **229 confesses** = F. Q

= hath confest **234 judgement** = F. Q = Iustice **235 is this** = F.
Q = tis **265 you** = Q. F = your **281 you, murderers, traitors** =
F. Q = your murderous traytors **287 SH GENTLEMAN** = F. Q =
Cap. **290 him** = F. Q = them **295 This ... sight.** = F. *Not in Q* **298**
you that = F. Q = that **302 first** = F. Q = life **309 says** = F. Q
= sees **327 sir.** = F. Q = sir, O, o, o, o. **328–29 Do ... there!** = F.
Not in Q **331 SH KENT** = F. Q = *Lear* **342 realm** = F. Q =
kingdome **345 SH EDGAR** = F. Q = *Duke*

QUARTO PASSAGES THAT DO NOT APPEAR IN THE FOLIO

Lines are numbered continuously, for ease of reference.

Following 1.2.88:

DMUND Nor is not, sure¹.

LOUCESTER To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him.

Heaven and earth!

Following 1.2.130:

of unnaturalness⁴ between the child and the parent,
death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities, divisions⁵ in
state, menaces and maledictions⁶ against king and nobles,
heedless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of⁷
honors, nuptial breaches⁸, and I know not what.

DGAR How long have you been a sectary astronomical⁹?

DMUND Come, come,

Following 1.3.16:

Not to be overruled. Idle¹¹ old man,

that still would manage those authorities

that he hath given away! Now by my life

old fools are babes again, and must be used¹⁴

with checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused¹⁵.

Following 1.4.131:

DOL That lord that counselled thee to give away thy land,

come place him here by me, do thou for him stand¹⁷,

he sweet and bitter fool will [presently](#)¹⁸ appear:

he one in [motley](#)¹⁹ here, the other found out there.

EAR Dost thou call me fool, boy?

DOL All thy other titles thou hast given away, that thou
wast born with.

ENT This is not [altogether fool](#)²³ my lord.

DOL No, faith, lords and great men will not let me, if I
had a monopoly out, they would have part [on't](#)²⁵: and ladies
too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself, they'll be
[snatching](#)²⁷.

Following 1.4.204:

would learn that, for by the [marks](#)²⁸ of sovereignty,
knowledge, and reason, I should be [false](#)²⁹ persuaded I had
daughters.

DOL Which they will make an obedient father.

Following 2.2.137:

his fault is much, and the good king, his master,
will [check](#) him for't: your purposed [low correction](#)³³
such as basest and 'stemnest³⁴ wretches
or [pilf'rings](#) and most common [trespasses](#)³⁵
are punished with.

Following 3.1.7:

ears his white hair,
which the impetuous blasts with [eyeless](#)³⁸ rage
[atch](#)³⁹ in their fury, and make nothing of,
trives in his little world of man to out-scorn,
the to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain:
his night wherein the [cubdrawn](#) bear would [couch](#)⁴²,

he lion and the belly-pinched⁴³ wolf
keep their fur dry, unbonneted⁴⁴ he runs,
and bids what will take all⁴⁵.

Replaces 3.1.16–23:

But true it is, from France there comes a power⁴⁶
into this scattered⁴⁷ kingdom, who already
rise in our negligence, have secret feet⁴⁸
in some of our best ports, and are at point⁴⁹
to show their open banner.

Now to you:

On my credit⁵² you dare build so far
to make your speed to Dover, you shall find
some that will thank you, making just report⁵⁴
of how unnatural and bemadding⁵⁵ sorrow
the king hath cause to 'plain⁵⁶.
I am a gentleman of blood⁵⁷ and breeding,
and from some knowledge and assurance⁵⁸,
offer this office⁵⁹ to you.

Following 3.6.16:

EDGAR The foul fiend bites my back.

DOLORES He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a
horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

EDGAR It shall be done, I will arraign them straight⁶³,

To Edgar

Some sit thou here most learned justice⁶⁴.—

To the Fool

Thou, sapient⁶⁵ sir sit here.

O, you she foxes—

EDGAR Look where he stands and glares. Want'st thou eyes⁶⁷
at trial, madam?

come o'er the bourn⁶⁹, Bessy, to me—

Sings

DOLORES Her boat hath a leak⁷⁰,

And she must not speak⁷¹

Why she dares not come over⁷² to thee.

EDGAR The foul⁷³ fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a
nightingale, Hopdance⁷⁴ cries in Tom's belly for two white
erring,

broak not black angel⁷⁶, I have no food for thee.

EDGAR How do you sir? Stand you not so amazed⁷⁷,

Will you lie down and rest upon the cushings⁷⁸?

LEAR I'll see their trial first, bring in their evidence.—

To Edgar

Thou robèd man of justice, take thy place—

To the Fool

And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity⁸¹,

To Kent

Stand by his side:— you are o'th'commission⁸²,

and so is he too.

EDGAR Let us deal justly.

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?

Why sheep be in the corn,

And for one blast of thy minikin⁸⁷ mouth,

Why sheep shall take no harm.

But hurr⁸⁹, the cat is grey.

LEAR Arraign her first, 'tis Goneril. I here take my oath

efore this honourable assembly, she kicked the poor king
er father.

DOL Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

EAR She cannot deny it.

DOL Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool⁹⁵.

EAR And here's another whose warped looks⁹⁶ proclaim
/hat store her heart is made on⁹⁷: stop her there!
rms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!
also justicer, why hast thou let her scape⁹⁹?

Following 3.6.55:

ENT Oppressed¹⁰⁰ nature sleeps:
his rest might yet have balmed thy broken sinews¹⁰¹,
/hich, if convenience¹⁰² will not allow,

To Fool

tand in hard cure¹⁰³.— Come help to bear thy master:
hou must not stay behind.

Exeunt. [Edgar remains]

DGAR When we our betters see bearing our woes¹⁰⁵,
/e scarcely think our miseries our foes.
/ho alone suffers, suffers most i'th'mind¹⁰⁷,
eaving free things and happy shows¹⁰⁸ behind,
ut then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip¹⁰⁹,
/hen grief hath mates, and bearing¹¹⁰ fellowship:
ow light and portable¹¹¹ my pain seems now,
/hen that which makes me bend, makes the king bow¹¹²:
e childed as I fathered¹¹³. Tom away!
lark the high noises and thyself bewray¹¹⁴
/hen false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee,

thy just proof¹¹⁶ repeals and reconciles thee.
That will hap more tonight, safe scape the king¹¹⁷:
urk¹¹⁸, lurk.

Exit

Following 3.7.109:

SERVANT I'll never care what wickedness I do,
this man come to good.

SECOND SERVANT If she live long,
and in the end meet the old course of death¹²²,
Women will all turn monsters.

FIRST SERVANT Let's follow the old earl, and get the Bedlam¹²⁴
to lead him where he would¹²⁵: his madness
flows itself to¹²⁶ anything.

SECOND SERVANT Go thou: I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs¹²⁷
to apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!

Following 4.1.66:

Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once: of lust, as
bidicut, Hobbididence, prince of dumbness, Mahu of¹³⁰
ealing, Modo of murder, Flibbertigibbet of mopping and¹³¹
owing, who since possesses chambermaids and waiting-
omen. So, bless thee, master.

Following 4.2.35:

fear your disposition:
That nature, which contemns i'th'origin¹³⁵
cannot be bordered certain¹³⁶ in itself.
He that herself will sliver and disbranch¹³⁷
from her material sap perforce¹³⁸ must wither
and come to deadly use¹³⁹.

ONERIL No more, the [text](#)¹⁴⁰ is foolish.

LBANY Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:

ilths [savour but](#)¹⁴² themselves. What have you done?

igers, not daughters, what have you performed?

father, and a [gracious](#)¹⁴⁴ agèd man,

/hose [reverence](#) even the [head-lugged](#)¹⁴⁵ bear would lick,

lost barbarous, most degenerate, have you [madded](#)¹⁴⁶. Could

ly good [brother suffer](#)¹⁴⁷ you to do it?

man, a prince, by him so benefited!

' that the heavens do not their [visible spirits](#)¹⁴⁹

end quickly down to [tame](#)¹⁵⁰ the vile offences, it will come,

humanity must perforce prey on itself,

like monsters of the deep.

Following 4.2.39:

hat not know'st

[ools do those villains pity who are punished](#)¹⁵⁴

re they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?

[rance](#) spreads his banners in our [noiseless](#)¹⁵⁶ land,

/ith [plumèd helm, thy state begins threat](#)¹⁵⁷,

/hilst thou, a [moral](#)¹⁵⁸ fool, sits still and cries

lack, why does he so?'

Following 4.2.43:

LBANY Thou changèd and [self-covered](#)¹⁶⁰ thing, for shame

[emonster not thy feature. Were't my fitness](#)¹⁶¹

o let these hands obey my [blood](#)¹⁶²,

hey are apt enough to dislocate and tear

hy flesh and bones: [howe'er](#)¹⁶⁴ thou art a fiend,

woman's shape doth shield thee.

ONERIL **Marry**, your manhood **mew**¹⁶⁶—

Enter a Gentleman

LBANY What news?

Following 4.2.77:

Enter Kent and a Gentleman

ENT Why the King of France is so suddenly gone **back**¹⁶⁸,
now you no reason?

ENTLEMAN Something he left **imperfect**¹⁷⁰ in the state, which
nce his coming forth is thought of, which **imports**¹⁷¹ to the
ingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return
as most required and necessary.

ENT Who hath he left behind him general?

ENTLEMAN The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

ENT Did your letters pierce the queen to any
emonstration of grief?

ENTLEMAN Ay, sir, she took them, read them in my presence,
nd now and then an ample tear **trilled**¹⁷⁹ down
er delicate cheek: it seemed she was a queen over
er **passion**¹⁸¹, who, most rebel-like,
ought to be king o'er her.

ENT O, then it moved her.

ENTLEMAN Not to a rage: patience and sorrow strove
/ho should express her **goodliest**¹⁸⁵. You have seen
unshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears
/ere like a better way: those happy **smilets**¹⁸⁷,
hat played on her ripe lip seem not to know
/hat guests were in her eyes, which, parted thence,
s pearls from diamonds dropped. In brief,

orrow would be a rarity most beloved,
'all could [so become it](#)¹⁹².

ENT Made she no verbal question?

ENTLEMAN Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of 'father'
antingly forth, as if it pressed her heart:
ried 'Sisters, sisters! Shame of ladies, sisters!
ent, father, sisters! What, i'th'storm, i'th'night?
[et pity not be believed](#)¹⁹⁸!' There she shook
he holy water from her heavenly eyes,
nd [clamour moistened her](#): then away she [started](#)²⁰⁰
o deal with grief alone.

ENT It is the stars,
he stars above us, govern our conditions,
lse one self [mate and make](#)²⁰⁴ could not beget
uch different [issues](#)²⁰⁵. You spoke not with her since?

ENTLEMAN No.

ENT Was this before the king returned?

ENTLEMAN No, since.

ENT Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's i'th'town;
/ho [sometime](#), in his better [tune](#)²¹⁰, remembers
/hat we are come about, and by no means
/ill yield to see his daughter.

ENTLEMAN Why, good sir?

ENT A [sovereign](#) shame so [elbows](#)²¹⁴ him: his own unkindness,
hat stripped her from his benediction, turned her
o foreign [casualties](#)²¹⁶, gave her dear rights
o his dog-hearted daughters: these things sting
is mind so venomously, that burning shame

etains him from Cordelia.

ENTLEMAN Alack, poor gentleman!

ENT Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

ENTLEMAN 'Tis so, they are [afoot](#)²²².

ENT Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,

and leave you to [attend](#) him: some [dear cause](#)²²⁴

Will in concealment wrap me up awhile.

When I am known [aright](#), you shall not [grieve](#)²²⁶

ending me this acquaintance. I pray you go

long with me.

Exeunt

Following 4.6.27:

CORDELIA Very well.

DOCTOR Please you, draw near.— Louder the music there!

Following 4.6.35:

Do stand against the [deep dread-bolted](#)²³¹ thunder,

And the most terrible and nimble stroke

Of quick [cross](#) lightning? To [watch](#) — poor [perdu](#)²³⁴!—

With this thin [helm](#)²³⁴?

Following 4.6.89:

ENTLEMAN Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was so
vain?

ENT Most certain, sir.

ENTLEMAN Who is [conductor of his people](#)²³⁸?

ENT As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.

ENTLEMAN They say Edgar, his banished son, is with the Earl of
Burgundy in Germany.

ENT [Report](#)²⁴² is changeable. 'Tis time to look about: the

owers of the kingdom approach apace²⁴³.

ENTLEMAN The arbitrament²⁴⁴ is like to be bloody. Fare you well,
r.

ENT My point and period will be thoroughly wrought²⁴⁶,
r²⁴⁷ well or ill, as this day's battle's fought.

Exit

Following 5.1.13:

DMUND That thought abuses²⁴⁸ you.

EGAN I am doubtful that you have been conjunct²⁴⁹
nd bosomed with her, as far as we call hers²⁵⁰

Following 5.1.17:

ONERIL I had rather lose the battle than that sister
ould loosen him and me.

Following 5.1.21:

Where I could not be honest²⁵³,
never yet was valiant. For²⁵⁴ this business,
touches us as²⁵⁵ France invades our land,
ot bolds the king, with²⁵⁶ others whom I fear,
lost just and heavy causes make oppose²⁵⁷.

DMUND Sir, you speak nobly.

Following 5.3.55:

t this time

le sweat and bleed: the friend hath lost his friend;
nd the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed²⁶¹
y those that feel their sharpness:
he question of Cordelia and her father
equires a fitter place.

Following 5.3.220:

OGAR This would have seemed a [period](#)²⁶⁵
 o [such as love not](#) sorrow, but [another](#),²⁶⁶
 o amplify too much, would make much more,
 nd top extremity.
 /hilst I was [big in clamour](#)²⁶⁹, came there in a man,
 /ho, having seen me in my worst [estate](#)²⁷⁰,
 hunned my abhorred society, but then finding
 /ho 'twas that so endured, with his strong arms
 e [fastened on my neck](#)²⁷³ and bellowed out
[s](#)²⁷⁴ he'd burst heaven, threw me on my father,
 old the most piteous tale of Lear and him
 hat ever ear received, which in recounting
 is grief grew [puissant](#) and the [strings of life](#)²⁷⁷
 egan to crack: twice then the trumpets sounded,
 nd there I left him ['tranced](#)²⁷⁹.

LBANY But who was this?

OGAR Kent, sir, the banished Kent, who in disguise
 ollowed his [enemy king](#)²⁸² and did him service
[nproper for](#)²⁸³ a slave.

TEXTUAL NOTES

Q = First Quarto text of 1608

Q2 = a correction introduced in the Second Quarto text of 1619

Ed = a correction introduced by a later editor

SH = Speech heading (i.e. speaker's name)

1 SH EDMUND = Ed. Q = *Bast. (throughout)* **25 on't** = Q. Q2 =
 an't **ladies** = Q (*corrected*). Q (*uncorrected*) = lodes **34 basest and**
 'temnest = Q (*corrected*). Q (*uncorrected*) = belest and contaned
67 Want'st = Q2. Q = wanst **69 bourn** = Ed. Q = broome **91 she**
kicked = Ed. Q = kickt **95 joint-stool** = Q2. Q = ioyne stoole **97**

on = Ed. Q = an **125 madness** = Q (*corrected*). Q (*uncorrected*) =
rogish madnes **131 Flibbertigibbet** *spelled Stiberdigebit in Q 131–32*
mopping and mowing = Ed. Q = Mobing, & *Mohing* **151**
Humanity = Q (*corrected*). Q (*uncorrected*) = Humanly **157 threat**
spelled thereat *in Q (corrected)* **state begins threat** = Q (*corrected*).
Q (*uncorrected*) = slayer begin threats **166 mew** = Q (*corrected*). Q
(*uncorrected*) = now **178 Ay, sir,** = Ed. Q = I say **184 strove** =
Ed. Q = streme

SCENE-BY-SCENE ANALYSIS

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Relationships between key characters are established. Several themes are introduced: power/authority, deception, nature, kinship, sanity, and sight.

Lines 1–33: Kent and Gloucester discuss Lear. Edmund is introduced. Gloucester insists that Edmund is as dear to him as his older, legitimate, son, Edgar, and claims that “the whoreson must be acknowledged.” The bawdy language used to describe Edmund’s conception undermines the good intentions behind this.

Lines 34–193: A trumpet flourish emphasizes the ceremonial, public nature of events from this point. Instructing Gloucester to fetch France and Burgundy, Lear reveals his “darker purpose”—to allocate a piece of kingdom to each of his three daughters, intending the “largest bounty” to whoever “doth love [him] most.” This reveals Lear’s inability to separate public and domestic and highlights his perception of emotions as subject to pecuniary measurement. Tensions exist between his love of power and his portrayal of himself as an old man who wishes to “Unburdened crawl toward death.”

Goneril’s speech is effusive but ambiguous, as she declares that she loves her father “more than word can wield the matter.” Regan is similarly flattering but ambiguous, telling Lear to “prize” her at Goneril’s “worth,” as she is “made of that self-mettle” as her sister. Cordelia’s asides show her dilemma—she is torn between genuine love for her father and reluctance or inability to voice this before the court. She is offered “a third more opulent” than her sisters—unlike Gloucester, Lear does not even suggest he values his

daughters equally. In contrast to her sisters, Cordelia's response is simply "Nothing." Lear encourages her to say more, because "Nothing will come of nothing," a concept that is explored throughout the play. Lear disinherits Cordelia, and Kent's attempts to speak up for her fuel his anger.

Retaining a hundred knights, Lear divides his kingdom between Goneril and Regan, intending to live with each of them for alternate months. Kent intervenes, showing respect for Lear, but suggesting that he is not thinking clearly and urging him to "check / This hideous rashness." Lear banishes Kent.

Lines 194–281: Lear explains to the King of France and Duke of Burgundy that Cordelia's "price is fallen." She is no longer "dear" to him, a word that highlights his belief that love is quantifiable. Burgundy cannot decide, so Lear offers his daughter to France but says he would not want him to marry a "wretch" that "Nature is ashamed" of. France asks what Cordelia's "monstrous" offense is and she asks Lear to make it clear that it is lack of the "glib and oily art" of false speech. Burgundy says that he will take her with her original dowry. Echoing Cordelia, Lear declares that this is "Nothing," so Burgundy declines. France sees Cordelia's virtues and comments that "unprized precious" Cordelia is "most rich, being poor," highlighting France and Lear's differing perceptions of "worth," and challenging Lear's assertion that "Nothing will come of nothing."

Lines 282–299: Leaving with France, Cordelia says goodbye "with washèd eyes," suggesting tears but also clear perception of her sisters' characters.

Lines 300–323: Goneril and Regan discuss Lear's "poor judgement" and the "changes" and "infirmity" of his old age, but Regan observes that "he hath ever but slenderly known himself." Goneril expresses concern about Lear's desire for authority. Regan agrees that they must "think" about this, but Goneril says that they "must do something," highlighting a subtle difference between them.

ACT 1 SCENE 2

Lines 1–22: Edmund is angry that he will not inherit. He protests about the label “base” and argues that he is as good as “honest madam’s issue”—better, even, because there was passion in his conception. He reveals his designs on Edgar’s inheritance.

Lines 23–107: Edmund conceals a letter from Gloucester in a way that draws attention to it. He tells Gloucester it is “Nothing,” but then pretends that it is from Edgar. Gloucester reads its contents, which suggest that Edgar and Edmund should murder Gloucester and split the inheritance. Edmund manipulates Gloucester, who is easily persuaded that Edgar is an “unnatural” villain. Edmund pretends to plead on Edgar’s behalf and arranges that Gloucester will overhear a conversation between them. Gloucester exits, blaming all the problems in family and state on “These late eclipses in the sun and moon.”

Lines 108–161: Edmund is scornful of those who believe that destiny is decided by the stars and blame their “evil” on “a divine thrusting on,” thus raising a debate between free will and fate, as he claims that the stars have no influence on his personality or fortune. Edgar interrupts and Edmund changes behavior on “cue,” suggesting his directorial role in the action. He persuades Edgar that Gloucester is angry with him and suggests that they avoid meeting. Giving Edgar the key to his lodging, he promises to help.

ACT 1 SCENE 3

Goneril and her steward Oswald discuss Lear’s irrational temper. She gives instructions to say that she is ill and cannot see Lear and that the servants are to ignore him.

ACT 1 SCENE 4

Lines 1–89: Kent is disguised, but while his appearance has changed, his nature has not—he is still an “honest-hearted fellow.”

Not recognizing him, Lear employs Kent and asks Oswald for Goneril, but is ignored. One of Lear's knights says that Oswald refuses to come back, that Goneril is unwell, and points out that Lear has been neglected recently. When Oswald reappears, he is disrespectful and Lear loses his temper. Kent trips Oswald up and insults him, earning Lear's thanks.

Lines 90–174: Lear's Fool delivers a series of jokes, riddles, nonsense, and rhymes. These have comic effect, but they are also ambiguous, providing perceptive comment on Lear's circumstances and reinforcing some key themes such as cruelty, division, and folly. In the Quarto text, Kent comments that "This is not altogether fool my lord."

Lines 175–297: Goneril lists her grievances. Lear's temper and language become wilder, suggesting the growing disquiet of his mind. The interjections of the Fool, combining nonsense and wisdom, contribute to the growing disorder. Albany ineffectually attempts to calm Lear, who curses Goneril with either sterility or the future birth of a "child of spleen." He leaves. Goneril ignores Albany, showing where the power lies in their relationship. Lear returns, having discovered that Goneril has reduced his train of knights by fifty. Despite uncontrollable anger, his tears suggest weakness. He decides to go to Regan, saying she will "flay" Goneril's "wolfish visage"—an example of the animal imagery associated with the two sisters.

Lines 298–325: Goneril claims it is unwise to allow Lear to enforce the whims of his old age, and calls Oswald to take a letter to Regan. She criticizes Albany for his "milky gentleness."

ACT 1 SCENE 5

Lear sends letters to Gloucester with Kent, then struggles against madness as he talks to his Fool.

ACT 2 SCENE 1

Lines 1–91: Edmund urges Edgar to escape, suggesting that Cornwall believes Edgar is plotting against him, and that Gloucester is in pursuit. Edmund directs Edgar's flight, pretending that he is helping, but convincing Gloucester's party that he is trying to stop him. He wounds his own arm and tells Gloucester that Edgar stabbed him when he refused to help Edgar. Gloucester tells "Loyal and natural" Edmund that he will make him his heir.

Lines 92–140: Gloucester confirms Cornwall and Regan's queries about Edgar. Cornwall praises Edmund, takes him into his service, then begins to explain their arrival. Regan interrupts, showing her dominance, and claims that she wanted Gloucester's advice on letters from Lear and Goneril.

ACT 2 SCENE 2

Lines 1–144: Outside Gloucester's castle, Oswald claims not to know the disguised Kent, who insults and beats him. While Cornwall attempts to establish how the quarrel started, Kent continues to insult Oswald, who explains that Kent (who calls himself "Caius") is in Lear's service. Cornwall comments on Kent's plain-spoken nature, but ironically assumes that his "plainness / Harbour[s] more craft and more corrupter ends" and places him in the stocks. In the Quarto text, Gloucester argues stocks are for "basest and "temnest wretches" and it is insulting to Lear to punish his messenger in them.

Lines 145–166: Gloucester apologizes and says that he will plead for Kent's release, but Kent says not to. Kent's soliloquy reveals that he has a letter from Cordelia.

Lines 167–187: Edgar intends to disguise himself as a mad beggar from Bedlam. Edgar's soliloquy and the following sequence are sometimes edited and played as separate scenes, but the action continues uninterrupted in that Kent remains onstage asleep in the stocks.

Lines 188–271: Lear will not believe that Regan and Cornwall have put Kent in the stocks—it is an “outrage” “upon respect.” Fighting his rising anger, Lear goes to confront them. The Fool comments on Kent’s folly in continuing to serve Lear.

Lines 272–383: Enraged that Regan and Cornwall will not speak with him, Lear sends Gloucester to summon them. His language reflects his growing disturbance, which he fights to suppress—“my rising heart! But, down!” When they arrive, Lear pours out his grievances against Goneril. Regan responds in a reasoned but insulting manner, saying that Lear is old and needs to be “ruled and led,” and suggests that he ask Goneril’s forgiveness. Lear’s pride and anger rise, but he thinks Regan will acknowledge the “dues of gratitude” that he has bought with “half o’th’kingdom.”

Lines 384–515: Goneril and Regan unite against Lear, gradually reducing his number of knights—a symbol of his power—until he has nothing. He reminds them of what they owe him—“I gave you all.” When Regan asks whether Lear needs even one follower, he replies “O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars / Are in the poorest thing superfluous: / Allow not nature more than nature needs, / Man’s life is cheap as beast’s.” The encounter of king and beggar, the question of “superfluity,” and the stripping down from courtly accoutrements to raw nature are at the core of the play. Lear asks the heavens for patience, but the growing storm reflects his turbulent mind and he leaves in “high rage” to go out onto the heath. Goneril, Regan, and Cornwall tell Gloucester to shut his doors against Lear and the storm.

ACT 3 SCENE 1

In this act, the relatively brief and fast-paced scenes move between different locations and characters. This, combined with the evocation of the storm, creates a sense of chaos that mirrors the breakdown of Lear’s reason and kingdom.

Kent learns that Lear is on the heath in the storm with the Fool. He reveals that the French have spies in the courts of Cornwall and Albany, between whom dissension is growing. Kent gives the Gentleman a ring to show to Cordelia as confirmation of his true identity.

ACT 3 SCENE 2

Lear's disordered speech reflects his mental state as he invokes nature to destroy mankind and "Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world." In his chaotic speeches there are recurrent references to children, ingratitude, and justice as he blames his daughters for his situation. The Fool encourages Lear to shelter, commenting that the "night pities neither wise men nor fools," drawing attention to the blurred distinctions between wisdom and folly, sanity and insanity. Lear rages about justice, still denying any responsibility and asserting that he is "a man / More sinned against than sinning." Kent persuades him to take shelter in a nearby hovel while he begs Goneril and Regan for shelter. Alone, the Fool speaks a rhymed "prophecy" that perhaps transcends the context of the play, warning against the injustices and corruption of "Albion" (Britain).

ACT 3 SCENE 3

Gloucester has been refused permission to help Lear and has lost control of his castle. He reveals that Edmund has a letter concerning Cornwall and Albany locked in his closet, and that he intends to help Lear. He asks Edmund to tell Cornwall that he is ill, to prevent his assistance of Lear being discovered. Once alone, Edmund reveals his intention to betray Gloucester.

ACT 3 SCENE 4

Lines 1–103: Kent tries to persuade Lear to enter the hovel out of the storm, but Lear is more concerned with the "tempest" in his mind and remains outside, dwelling on "Poor naked wretches" who, "houseless" and "unfed," have no defense against the elements. In a

moment of brief self-awareness he declares: “O, I have ta’en / Too little care of this!” The Fool is frightened out of the hovel by Edgar, in disguise as the near-naked “Poor Tom.” In a pitiful and ironic contrast to the genuine insanity of Lear, “Tom” feigns madness through fragmented speech. Like the Fool’s nonsense, however, there are recognizable themes, pertinent to the play, such as lust, devilishness, and nakedness. Lear continues to dwell on his troubles, insisting that “Nothing” but “unkind daughters” could have “subdued nature / To such a lowness” in Tom. Asking “Is man no more than this?,” Lear removes his clothes, approaching the raw condition of “the thing itself: unaccommodated man.”

Lines 104–178: In a confused conversation that evokes the external storm and the “tempest” inside Lear’s head, Gloucester and Kent attempt to persuade Lear to enter Gloucester’s castle. Tom interjects with “insane” comments that focus on demons and witchcraft, but are taken by Lear to be the words of a “philosopher” and “learnèd Theban.” Ironically, Gloucester talks of Edgar and “poor banished” Kent.

ACT 3 SCENE 5

Edmund has betrayed Gloucester. Cornwall swears that he will have revenge and rewards Edmund by giving him his father’s title. Edmund pretends to be distressed at having to betray Gloucester, but plans to make it worse by discovering him “comforting the king.”

ACT 3 SCENE 6

Gloucester shows Kent, Lear, Tom, and the Fool into a farmhouse adjoining his castle. The dialogue is fragmented as Lear continues to focus on injustice, the Fool continues to produce sense in nonsense, and Edgar acts his part as madman. Kent’s voice of reason is unable to prevail. In a Quarto-only sequence, Lear insists on holding a “trial” of Goneril and Regan, seeing them before him in his

madness. With Tom and the Fool as judges, this episode highlights the distorted nature of justice so far in the play. Edgar's pity for Lear makes it hard to sustain his "counterfeiting," and after Gloucester leads the others away, he rejects his disguise.

ACT 3 SCENE 7

Cornwall sends Goneril to tell Albany that France has landed, instructing Edmund to accompany her. Oswald informs Cornwall that Lear has gone to Dover. Gloucester is brought for questioning. Regan cruelly encourages the servant to bind Gloucester "hard" and disrespectfully plucks his beard. He admits that he sent Lear to Dover to protect him from Regan's "cruel nails" and Goneril's "boarish fangs." Cornwall puts out one of Gloucester's eyes. A servant tries to help Gloucester, but as Cornwall fights him, Regan seizes a sword—a symbol of her "unwomanly" power—and stabs the servant. Cornwall takes Gloucester's other eye as Regan reveals that it was Edmund who betrayed him. Gloucester thus gains metaphorical "sight" as he is literally blinded. Regan orders Gloucester to be put out onto the heath to "smell / His way to Dover." She leads the mortally injured Cornwall away. In the Quarto text, the remaining servants discuss Regan's lack of womanly feeling, offer first aid to Gloucester and vow to get "the Bedlam" (Tom) to lead him to Dover.

ACT 4 SCENE 1

Edgar argues that even the "most dejected thing of fortune" can still have hope, but then he sees his blinded father and realizes he is "worse than e'er." Gloucester shows self-awareness when he says that he "stumbled" when he saw, and ironically talks of his "dear son Edgar." Gloucester blames the gods, to whom men are "As flies," and who "kill us for their sport." The old man leading Gloucester recognizes "Poor Tom" and Edgar realizes that he must remain disguised and "play fool to sorrow." Gloucester wishes Tom to lead him to Dover, despite the old man's protests, arguing that " 'Tis the

time's plague, when madmen lead the blind." Edgar's pity for Gloucester means that he struggles to maintain his deception. Gloucester asks to be taken to the edge of Dover's cliffs.

ACT 4 SCENE 2

Lines 1–31: Goneril wonders why Albany did not meet her. Oswald informs her that Albany has changed—he “smiled” to hear of the French army's arrival and said “The worse” at Goneril's return. He refuses to believe Gloucester's treachery or Edmund's loyalty. Goneril sends Edmund back, blaming Albany's change on his “cowish terror.” She gives him a love token and kisses him, telling him to wait for “A mistress's command.”

Lines 32–77: Albany and Goneril quarrel. In a Quarto-only sequence, Albany shows new strength as he berates Goneril for her treatment of her father, calling her and Regan “Tigers, not daughters”; she accuses him of cowardice, describing him as “a moral fool.” In the Folio's edited version of their exchange, Goneril calls her husband a “Milk-livered man.” A messenger brings news of Cornwall's death and Gloucester's blinding; he delivers Goneril a letter from Regan. Albany is horrified and swears revenge on Edmund for his betrayal of Gloucester. Goneril shows mixed feelings at Cornwall's death—Regan is less powerful as a widow, but she is also free to marry Edmund.

ACT 4 SCENE 3

In a Quarto-only scene, Kent and a Gentleman inform the audience that France has returned to his kingdom, leaving Cordelia in England. Kent asks for Cordelia's reaction to his letter. The natural imagery—“Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears”—shows her goodness and contrasts with the darker images of nature associated with Goneril and Regan. Kent comments that the differences between the sisters can only be accounted for by “the stars above” who “govern our conditions,” recalling the comments

made about fate and free will by Gloucester and Edmund in Act 1 Scene 2. Lear is in Dover but refuses to see Cordelia because of his “burning shame” at his treatment of her.

The Folio text moves straight to a scene in which Cordelia marches onstage at the head of her army, informing the audience that Lear has been sighted, still mad, crowned with wildflowers and weeds. Cordelia sends soldiers to find him. A Gentleman (Doctor in Quarto) says that sleep will help Lear and that there are medicinal herbs that will achieve this—a benevolent image of nature that contrasts with the violent storm. A messenger brings news that the British are marching toward them and Cordelia makes it clear that France’s armies are not fighting for “blown ambition”—unlike Goneril and Regan—but for love of Lear.

ACT 4 SCENE 4

Albany’s army has set out, although Oswald says that it took “much ado” for Albany himself to join them and that Goneril “is the better soldier.” Oswald has a letter from Goneril to Edmund that Regan wishes to read, but Oswald refuses. Regan expresses concern at Goneril’s interest in Edmund and argues that he is better suited to her, because she is a widow. She asks Oswald to remind Goneril of this and tells him there is a reward for whoever kills Gloucester.

ACT 4 SCENE 5

Lines 1–93: Edgar persuades Gloucester that they are at a cliff top. Gloucester comments that Edgar’s “voice is altered.” With truthful irony, Edgar responds that he is changed in nothing but his garments. Gloucester delivers a suicide speech and then throws himself forward. Edgar pretends to have found him at the bottom of the cliff, claiming that it is a miracle he survived the fall. He asks who was with Gloucester at the cliff’s head, suggesting that “It was some fiend,” but that he has been spared by the gods. Gloucester resolves to “bear / Affliction.”

Lines 94–209: Lear appears dressed in flowers and talking nonsense, still fixated on his daughters. Gloucester recognizes his voice, but Lear does not recognize him, taking him for “Goneril with a white beard.” In a pitifully ironic exchange Lear claims to remember Gloucester’s eyes and demands that he read an imaginary challenge. Lear excoriates women for their sexual indulgence. He shows “reason in madness” as he talks of justice and how it is useless against sin that is plated “with gold.” Lear runs away from Cordelia’s attendants.

Lines 210–299: Edgar is leading Gloucester to safety, but Oswald finds them and tries to kill Gloucester. Under yet another persona, Edgar fatally wounds Oswald, who begs him to deliver a letter to Edmund. Edgar reads the letter from Goneril, urging Edmund to kill Albany so that she may marry him. Edgar buries Oswald, keeps the letter to show Albany, and leads Gloucester away.

ACT 4 SCENE 6

Cordelia thanks Kent and asks him to change out of his disguise. Kent replies that he has a reason to remain as he is. A Gentleman (Doctor in Quarto) asks Cordelia’s permission to wake Lear. Cordelia kisses Lear and laments her sisters’ treatment of him. When he wakes, she addresses him with respect fitting for a “royal lord.” Lear is disorientated and humbled, in contrast to his earlier pride, and calls himself a “foolish fond old man.” He recognizes Cordelia and assumes that she hates him, acknowledging that she has “some cause.” She refutes this and leads him away. Kent reveals that Edmund is leading Cornwall’s army.

ACT 5 SCENE 1

Lines 1–31: Edmund describes Albany’s “alteration” and “self-reproving.” Regan questions Edmund about Goneril and accuses him of adultery with her. Edmund denies this as Albany and Goneril arrive, bringing news that Lear and Cordelia are reunited. Albany is

divided between his role as a leader who must defend his country and his personal reluctance to fight Lear. Goneril and Regan are both reluctant to leave Edmund alone with the other.

Lines 32–66: Disguised, Edgar hands Albany the letter and leaves. Edmund informs Albany that “The enemy’s in view.” Alone, Edmund contemplates the two sisters, coldly observing that “Neither can be enjoyed / If both remain alive.” He resolves to let Goneril kill Albany if he survives the battle and swears that there will be no mercy for Lear and Cordelia.

ACT 5 SCENE 2

Edgar leaves Gloucester in safety and goes to fight for Lear. He returns to report that Lear and Cordelia have been defeated and captured. Gloucester wishes to remain where he is to be captured or to die, but Edgar says that men must “endure” until their appointed time.

ACT 5 SCENE 3

Lines 1–114: Cordelia thinks that they will see her sisters now they are captives, but Lear does not wish to, constructing a fantasy where he and Cordelia will live happily and safely in prison. Edmund orders them to be taken away and gives the captain instructions to kill them. Albany, Goneril, and Regan arrive, and Albany praises Edmund’s “valiant strain,” asking for the captives. Edmund says that he has sent Lear away so that he will not “pluck the common bosom on his side.” Albany reproves Edmund for taking authority, but Regan claims that he has proved himself Albany’s “brother” by leading her armies. Goneril and Regan begin to fight over Edmund and Regan claims him as her “lord and master.” Albany arrests Edmund for treason and ironically bars Regan’s claim on Edmund as he is “subcontracted” to Goneril. As Albany challenges Edmund, Regan is taken ill, poisoned by Goneril. The trumpet sounds to

summon a champion for Albany who will maintain that Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, is “a manifold traitor.”

Lines 115–264: Edgar answers the summons but does not identify himself, except that he is “as noble” as Edmund. They fight and Edmund is mortally wounded, but Goneril argues that he is not defeated because he was not bound to fight “An unknown opposite.” Albany demonstrates the shift in power between them as he tells her to “Shut [her] mouth” and produces her letter to Edmund. Goneril flees. Edmund admits the charges and wishes to know his killer, as he will forgive him if he is noble. Edgar reveals his identity and says that they should “exchange charity.” He argues that “The gods are just,” perhaps a response to Gloucester’s lament in Act 4 Scene 1. Edgar relates how Gloucester died on being told of the true identity of the man who has led him in his blindness: his heart was too weak to support the extremes of “joy and grief” provoked by the knowledge. A messenger brings news that Goneril has poisoned Regan and stabbed herself. Their bodies are brought onstage as Kent arrives, seeking Lear. Edmund resolves to do “some good” before dying and reveals that Lear and Cordelia are condemned to death, and that Cordelia’s hanging will be made to look like suicide. He sends his sword as a “token of reprieve” and is carried out.

Lines 265–348: Howling, Lear carries in Cordelia’s body. He tries to revive her, ignoring Kent’s attempts to speak to him, and reveals that he killed the executioner, remembering “the day” that he “would have made [them] skip,” a brief return to his previous, regal self before he disintegrates once more. He dies believing that he sees Cordelia breathe, and Kent begs his own heart to break. Edmund’s death is reported and Albany asks Kent and Edgar to rule and sustain “the gored state,” but Kent refuses, feeling death is near. Despite Albany’s assertion that “All friends shall taste / The wages of their virtue, and all foes / The cup of their deservings,” any sense of justice, human or divine, seems scant, and the play’s resolution is bleak.

***KING LEAR* IN PERFORMANCE: THE RSC AND BEYOND**

The best way to understand a Shakespeare play is to see it or ideally to participate in it. By examining a range of productions, we may gain a sense of the extraordinary variety of approaches and interpretations that are possible—a variety that gives Shakespeare his unique capacity to be reinvented and made “our contemporary” four centuries after his death.

We begin with a brief overview of the play’s theatrical and cinematic life, offering historical perspectives on how it has been performed. We then analyze in more detail a series of productions staged over the last half-century by the Royal Shakespeare Company. The sense of dialogue between productions that can only occur when a company is dedicated to the revival and investigation of the Shakespeare canon over a long period, together with the uniquely comprehensive archival resource of promptbooks, program notes, reviews, and interviews held on behalf of the RSC at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon, allows an “RSC stage history” to become a crucible in which the chemistry of the play can be explored.

Finally, we go to the horse’s mouth. Modern theater is dominated by the figure of the director. He or she must hold together the whole play, whereas the actor must concentrate on his or her part. The director’s viewpoint is therefore especially valuable. Shakespeare’s plasticity is wonderfully revealed when we hear directors of highly successful productions answering the same questions in very different ways.

FOUR CENTURIES OF *KING LEAR*: AN OVERVIEW

The first Lear was Richard Burbage, the leading actor with Shakespeare's company, the King's Men. He was described by an anonymous elegist listing his best-known roles as "Kind Lear."¹ Little is known otherwise of the earliest performances. The Fool is thought to have been played by Robert Armin, the company's leading comic actor after the departure of Will Kempe. A talented singer and musician, Armin was noted for his witty paradoxical fooling. Some scholars have, however, suggested that Armin may have played Edgar, since Tom o'Bedlam speaks a kind of fool's language and Armin was equally capable of the multiple role changes that the character puts himself through. This casting would have opened up the possibility for a boy actor to double the roles of Cordelia and the Fool, who never appear on stage together. Such doubling would give added poignancy to the line "And my poor fool is hanged," but it remains counterintuitive to suppose that Armin was cast in any role other than that of the Fool.

There is a record of a court performance at Whitehall on St. Stephen's night, 26 December 1606. It was a bold choice to play the mad king and the image of a "dog obeyed in office" before the court. A play of "king Lere" was performed at Gowthwaite Hall in Yorkshire in 1610. This was probably Shakespeare's version, not the old *Leir* play (which recently scholarship has ascribed to Thomas Kyd, author of the highly successful *Spanish Tragedy*). A company of English actors in Dresden in 1626 played the "Tragoedia von Lear, König in Engelandt," probably also Shakespeare's version.

The play was revived briefly after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and subsequent reopening of the theaters, but in 1681 Nahum Tate staged a production using a text that he himself had adapted. In his dedicatory epistle Tate emphasized the idea of the rough and unfinished nature of Shakespeare's work. It was a "heap of jewels" that needed to have order, regularity, and polish applied to it for its true beauty to be revealed. Tate simplified language, plot, and character, eliminating the Fool and much of the play's complexity. He included a love story between Edgar and Cordelia, together with a confidante for Cordelia, Arante. The play's happy ending concludes with Lear restored, handing his throne over

to Edgar and Cordelia. Tate's *Lear* and various revised forms of the adaptation, including one by David Garrick, replaced the original on stage, except possibly in Dublin, where the Smock Alley promptbooks are based on Shakespeare's printed text. The authentically Shakespearean original was not performed on the London stage again, save for a handful of performances by Edmund Kean in the early nineteenth century, until Macready's restored (if heavily cut) production of 1838.



2. William Charles Macready as Lear in 1838, with the dead Cordelia: until this revival, the stage was dominated by Nahum Tate's reworking with a happy ending in which Cordelia survives and marries Edgar.

Thomas Betterton had been Tate's Lear. David Garrick, the most celebrated actor-manager of the eighteenth century, restored parts of Shakespeare's text in his own production at Drury Lane but

retained Tate's ending. His performance was acclaimed for its pathos and humanity. In his diary James Boswell records: "I was fully moved, and I shed abundance of tears."² The Shakespearean editor George Steevens, after confessing his view that "Tate's alteration ... had considerably improved the great original," went on to extol the virtues of Garrick's acting: "Were we to inquire in what particular scene Mr. Garrick is preeminently excellent it would be a difficult circumstance to point it out." He did, though, single out Garrick's "mode of speaking the curse at the end of the first act of the play." In his view Garrick "gives it additional energy, and it is impossible to hear him deliver it without an equal mixture of horror and admiration."³ John Philip Kemble (Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 1788) played Lear with his tragedian sister, Sarah Siddons, as Cordelia. The critic and poet Leigh Hunt was disappointed: "He personated the king's majesty perfectly well, but not the king's madness ... he is always stiff, always precise, and he will never, as long as he lives, be able to act any thing mad unless it be a melancholy mad statue."⁴

During the Regency period, when old King George III was mad, the London theater managers tactfully abstained from staging the play. Soon after the king's death in 1820, the fiery Romantic actor Edmund Kean played the role at Drury Lane later to mixed reviews. The London *Times* objected that the storm scene "was less effective than many others" chiefly because it was "exhibited with so much accuracy that the performer could scarcely be heard amidst the confusion," but the reviewer was better pleased by the fifth act in which "there was scarcely a dry eye in the theatre."⁵ William Hazlitt felt that "Mr. Kean chipped off a bit of the character here and there: but he did not pierce the solid substance, nor move the entire mass."⁶ Hazlitt reviewed Junius Brutus Booth's production at Covent Garden in the same year more favorably: "There was no feebleness, and no vulgarity in any part of Mr. Booth's acting, but it was animated, vigorous, and pathetic throughout."⁷

When Macready, who had played Edmund to Booth's Lear, restored Shakespeare's text in his Covent Garden production of 1838, the Fool, reintroduced for the first time in more than a

hundred and fifty years, was played by a young woman, Priscilla Horton. Macready set the play in a pagan Saxon Britain replete with Druidic stone circles. Critics were generally enthusiastic:

Mr. Macready's Lear, remarkable before for a masterly completeness of conception, is heightened by this introduction of the Fool to a surprising degree. It accords exactly with the view he seeks to present of Lear's character.... Mr. Macready's representation of the father at the end, broken down to his last despairing struggle, his heart swelling gradually upwards till it bursts in its closing sigh, completed the only perfect picture that we have of Lear since the age of Betterton.⁸

It may be asked how someone writing a century and a half after the event could have known that Betterton's was a "perfect picture" of Lear, but the point here is to stress how much the characterization of Lear gains from the restoration of his foil, the Fool.

Samuel Phelps produced the play at Sadler's Wells in 1845 using simpler staging and a fuller version of the text than that of Macready, which had remained heavily cut despite the rejection of Tate. The naturalism of Phelps' performance was praised but the storm was thought excessive: "It is not imitation, but realization."⁹ Charles Kean staged a successful production at the Princess's Theater in 1858. Set in Anglo-Saxon Britain, it boasted a strong supporting cast including Kate Terry as Cordelia. Meanwhile in New York, Edwin Booth, son of Junius Brutus, revived the play using Shakespeare's text, giving a performance described by William Winter as "the fond father and the broken old man. It was the great heart, shattered by cruel unkindness, that he first, and most of all, displayed."¹⁰ The great Italian actor Tommaso Salvini, also won praise for his performances at Boston's Globe Theatre in 1882 and London's Covent Garden in 1884, despite the fact that he spoke in Italian while the rest of the cast spoke in English, a proceeding that the novelist Henry James described as "grotesque, unpardonable, abominable."¹¹ Henry Irving's elaborately staged production at the

Lyceum in 1892 was set in a Britain of Roman ruins with Druidic priests and Viking warriors. Using a heavily cut text that reduced the play's violence and sexuality, Irving emphasized Lear's age and paternalism in a performance that attracted mixed notices, although Ellen Terry's Cordelia was widely praised.

At the end of the nineteenth century directors such as William Poel and Harley Granville Barker promoted the simple staging of Shakespeare's plays, attempting to recreate the conditions of the Elizabethan playhouse, with its fast continuous action in contrast to the spectacular staging of the Victorians, which involved lengthy scene changes. In his *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1927), Granville Barker argued vigorously against critical prejudice toward the play in performance and insisted on its theatrical viability, a judgment borne out by the many productions since. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have produced a number of distinguished Lears but have also concentrated on more balanced productions that give greater weight and opportunity to lesser roles.

John Gielgud first played Lear in Harcourt Williams' production at the Old Vic in 1931 at the age of twenty-six. Despite his obvious talent, critics thought him too young for the part. In 1940 Gielgud had a second opportunity to play the part, again at the Old Vic, in a production set in early modern Europe, based on the ideas of Granville Barker, who oversaw the early rehearsals and personally coached Gielgud. In an essay of 1963 Gielgud claimed that the ten days in which Barker worked with the company "were the fullest in experience that I have ever had in all my years upon the stage."¹² The production was a success, although the noted critic James Agate concluded that Gielgud's performance was "a thing of great beauty, imagination, sensitiveness, understanding, executive virtuosity, and control. You would be wrong to say—this is not King Lear! You would be right to say that this is Lear every inch but one."¹³

In 1936 the director-designer Theodore Komisarjevsky staged a memorable and radical production at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. There was a simple but effective set, consisting mainly of a grand staircase, illuminated by a

cyclorama that changed color to reflect the mood of the scene. As the London *Times* review put it:



3. Expressionist design in the 1930s: the opening scene of the Komisarjevsky production.

On this simple stage of steps and platforms, where every movement is sharp and significant and the light-borne colour keeps pace with the changing character of the scene, Mr. Randle Ayrton has complete freedom to act Lear.¹⁴

A decade later Laurence Olivier played Lear at the Old Vic as “a whimsical old tyrant who takes this way of dividing his kingdom simply as a jest, until the joke turns serious because Cordelia refuses to play.”¹⁵ His performance was not to all tastes but Alec Guinness as the Fool was widely praised. Sir Donald Wolfit, an old-style actor-manager, toured his own production between 1947 and 1953—Ronald Harwood’s experience as Wolfit’s backstage dresser inspired his play *The Dresser* (1980).

Gielgud played Lear for a third time in 1950, in a production which he co-directed with Anthony Quayle. Although his performance had developed in a number of ways, it was still largely influenced by his work with Granville Barker. He played the part again in 1955 in a production directed by George Devine and designed by Isamu Noguchi. This time Gielgud aimed for psychological realism in his performance but it was generally agreed that while the stylized set worked, the heavy costumes were problematic.



4. John Gielgud as Lear in the hovel (1950 production), with Fool and Poor Tom in the foreground, the disguised Kent behind.

In 1956 Orson Welles directed and starred in a production at the New York City Center. Falling and breaking one ankle and spraining the other during rehearsals, Welles, undeterred, played the part in a wheelchair, pushed around by the Fool. In 1959 Charles Laughton

played Lear in a production at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, directed by Glen Byam Shaw. Critics were divided, especially about Laughton's conception of the role. One of them, Alan Brien, complained that Laughton developed "from boyishness to senility without even an intervening glimpse of maturity."¹⁶

Three years later Peter Brook directed his groundbreaking production starring Paul Scofield (discussed in detail below). There have been numerous distinguished productions since: in 1968 Trevor Nunn directed with Eric Porter playing Lear; in 1974 Buzz Goodbody directed a pared-down version for the RSC's small studio theater, *The Other Place*; in 1976 Trevor Nunn directed Donald Sinden as Lear; in 1979 Peter Ustinov played Lear in a production directed by Robin Phillips at Stratford, Ontario; Adrian Noble's 1982 production with Michael Gambon is discussed below. In 1989 Jonathan Miller directed Eric Porter at the Old Vic; 1990 saw the Renaissance Theatre company's production, directed by Kenneth Branagh with Richard Briers as Lear and Emma Thompson as the Fool; in the same year Nicholas Hytner directed John Wood at Stratford; in 1993 Noble directed the play at Stratford again, this time with Robert Stephens as Lear (discussed below). In 1997 in the (London) National's intimate Cottesloe studio, Richard Eyre directed a production (his swan-song as artistic director) with Ian Holm playing Lear—a highly acclaimed production that was later recorded for television; in the same year Peter Hall directed Alan Howard at the Old Vic; and in 1999 Yukio Ninagawa directed Nigel Hawthorne for the RSC; in 2001 Julian Glover played Lear in Barry Kyle's production at the Globe and the following year Jonathan Kent directed Oliver Ford-Davies at the Almeida, a performance much admired for its intelligence; Jonathan Miller again directed the play, this time for the 2002 Stratford Festival, Ontario, with Christopher Plummer in the lead; in 2004 Bill Alexander directed Corin Redgrave in a production that used a full conflated text and ran for nearly four hours; in 2007 the RSC's Complete Works Festival in which all Shakespeare's plays were performed closed with Trevor Nunn's production at the Courtyard Theatre with Ian McKellen as King Lear (see interview with Nunn, below). Powerful small-scale

productions include a touring one by Kaboodle Theatre Company (1991–94), which made very strong use of a mix of Oriental-imperial costumes and modernity (a feisty Cordelia in Doc Martens boots).

The tradition of adapting the play has been continued in the theater with versions such as Edward Bond's radical rewriting, *Lear* (1972) and the Women's Theatre Group and Elaine Feinstein's feminist *Lear's Daughters*, as well as Jane Smiley's novel, *A Thousand Acres* (1997). On film, there were early silent versions in America and Italy (1909–10). A number of stage productions have been filmed, including Peter Brook's, shot in a stark black-and-white style that intensified the existential bleakness of his stage version. Grigori Kozintsev (1970) produced a beautiful, deeply moving version featuring the sufferings of Russian peasants. It was based on a translation by Boris Pasternak and used haunting music by Dmitri Shostakovich. Akira Kurosawa's *Ran* (1985), set in feudal Japan, substantially reworked Shakespeare's play so as to eliminate Gloucester but incorporate the subplot material in a version in which Lear's daughters become his married sons. It played a major part in stimulating renewed western interest in epic eastern cinema.

AT THE RSC

Lears for Our Time

Our own century seems better qualified to communicate and respond to the full range of experience in King Lear than any previous time, save possibly Shakespeare's own.¹⁷

In post-Second World War England, *King Lear* has been performed more times than in its entire prior performance history. The play speaks with special power to the contemporary psyche. In a violent age when atrocities, murders, poverty, and acts of self-destruction are commonly seen on television, the violence in the play, and its concerns about human rights, seem particularly apposite. However, *Lear* is so vast in its conception that, as well as societal concerns, it

deals with very fundamental philosophical thoughts about what it is to be human in a godless world, or in a world where faith plays little part in the absurdity of human behavior.

Jan Kott's influential book entitled *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964) was of great inspiration to late-twentieth-century directors. His thoughts about *King Lear* as a play about "the disintegration of the world" prompted a landmark production of the play by Peter Brook, which would alter the way the play was conceived and the characters performed to this day:

In the 1950s it became apparent that the world might destroy itself through accidental nuclear warfare, and the plays of Samuel Beckett achieved international fame: *Waiting for Godot* (1953) showed a world of absurdity, *Endgame* (1957) a world without meaning at all. Soon afterward the Polish critic Jan Kott wrote an influential essay, "King Lear, or Endgame," which viewed Shakespeare through the spectacles or blinkers of Beckett and emphasized the element of grotesque tragicomedy in the play.¹⁸

Brook was also heavily influenced by the dramatic theories of Bertolt Brecht, with his desire to "alienate" the audience by breaking down the illusions of realism. Brecht's influence was especially evident in the bare staging of *Lear*. Two large flats at either side of the stage moved in and out at angles to create internal and external spaces. The storm was created by three large rusty thunder sheets with a vibrating motor behind creating a hint of rumbling thunder. The lighting was deliberately bright and constant, only dimming for the storm scene and Gloucester's blinding. Everything was seen with clarity, leaving no room for the dramatic signaling that darkness evokes. There was no background music. Brook firmly believed that *Lear* should be staged with no music at all. Music almost always controls our emotional reaction to a scene, and Brook was particularly keen to block any easy audience response.

J. C. Trewin described the set:

Visually we are taken to a terrifying world, a place of abstract symbols, a rust-flaking world, harsh and primitive. There are tall, coarse gray-white screens; metal shapes that might have been dredged from the seabed: things ancient, scaled with rust. As the night moves on, the stage grows barer and barer until nothing is left but the screens, and Lear and Gloucester play out their colloquy on a bleak infinity of stage; two voices at the world's end.¹⁹

Brook wanted this *Lear* to be a *Lear* of its time. He designed the production himself and wanted to create a totally believable society, both barbaric and sophisticated. It is notable that this production took place just after the Cuban missile crisis. He wished to create a nihilistic vision, to remove the sympathetic responses of the audience and blur the lines between good and evil in the play. As a result of this he was accused of distorting Shakespeare's tragedy to enhance his own directorial viewpoint.

Brook's interpretation meant that productions of *Lear* would never be the same after this point. Indeed, there have been very few productions since that have not followed his lead in some regard, whether their focus be political, metaphysical, or domestic.

Critics and directors of the Left have been quick to seize on Lear's demand that the ruling class expose themselves "to feel what wretches feel, / That thou mayst shake the superflux to them" and Gloucester's wish that "distribution should undo excess, / And each man have enough" as evidence of the play's critique of existing political structures, and much recent criticism has discussed *King Lear* as a political drama reflecting the ideological concerns that were to divide England during the seventeenth century.²⁰

This trend in recent criticism has been reflected in performance. Set pre-First World War, the RSC's 1976 production made reference to the conditions of those disenfranchised by war. One page of the program featured hundreds of faces of workhouse children; on another there was a bleak landscape with two figures in the distance, presumably working a land that yields little or nothing. In this production Donald Sinden's acclaimed performance as Lear



5. “What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes”: the bleakness of Peter Brook’s 1962 production with Paul Scofield (left) as Lear and Alan Webb as the blinded Gloucester.

chronicles the process by which suffering turns self-pity and self-love into outward versions of themselves. In practice this means that Lear learns to identify with the poor and downtrodden, classes never far from the drab, pockmarked, nineteenth century face of this production. Indeed, the three-man directorate of Trevor Nunn, John Barton and Barry Kyle ... do all they can to bring period penury to our attention, gratuitously introducing a troupe of vagrants to trot round the stage between scenes, and transforming Michael Williams’s Fool into a bald scrofulous relic, a seedily eccentric song-and-dance man who might have stumbled out of *Bleak House* ... determined to stress that *Lear* is a social as well as an elemental play.²¹

The setting for the 2004 production directed by Bill Alexander was of a postwar world in which the country was in a flux of insecurity, distinctly modern in feel but without reference to a specific time:

This *Lear* appears at times to be set in a crumbling mental home, backed by the scaffolding and half-destroyed brick walls of Tom Piper’s bleak setting. It suggests that a nuclear bomb has already fallen on Lear’s kingdom and the survivors are left wandering about trying to work out—post-Apocalypse—who they are and what has happened and above all where the hell they are supposed to be going next.... There is a bizarre timelessness here—so that in a post-Victorian world, when the old King comes on dressed like a mad deserter from the First World War, there is no real surprise, just

the feeling that Alexander and his cast have had yet another disturbing thought about the many insights into madness and identity-crisis offered in the play.²²

Of the setting, designer Tom Piper explained:

Bill [Alexander] felt very strongly that you can't set this play in one particular place, it has to be an invented world, so we're aiming to create parallel worlds: the Victorian married with strange bits of technology.... I wanted to include a broken element, to convey a sense of a world that could be in decay or on the edge of industrialisation.²³

Corin Redgrave, a noted left-wing campaigner as well as a member of a distinguished acting dynasty, played Lear in this production. He saw the play as “modern, topical and relevant because it so vividly portrays a country divided by an almost impassable fault-line between those who have enough and those who don't. Any attempt I make to build up an idea of Lear the man, Lear the ruler, is still very strongly influenced by that thinking.”²⁴

Again, although not overtly political in the actors' focus, Adrian Noble's 1993 production infused the political implication of Lear's decision into the setting:

This production turned the map into paper flooring whose divisions the Fool (a gag over his mouth emphasizing his obvious outrage) was made to mark with red paint. It was then gradually reduced to tatters until the ground beneath, which was covered with a great blood-red stain, was wholly revealed.²⁵

There are numerous references in *King Lear* to the stars, gods, and the fates. Setting the play in a non-Christian era endows the play with an adaptable metaphysical stance that has international appeal. In 1999, Japanese director Yukio Ninagawa of the Sainokuni

Shakespeare Company undertook a joint production with the RSC. This production focused on the elemental nature of the play, the dark forces of nature that emerge from the void created by Lear's misjudgments:

This is a hauntingly but savagely beautiful production. Yukio Horio's set is dominated by a huge black wooden walkway sloping gently toward you and widening into an immense platform. At the back the walkway seems to disappear into black darkness, whence the actors emerge like mythological figures, both real and remote. All this suggests the structure of the classical Noh stage, where the curtained entrance also leads somewhere indeterminate: a primeval darkness that holds no moral secrets ... this reinforces the uncomfortable Shakespearian vision of a world where you are left without the consolation or guidance of a moral order.²⁶

The handling of the storm scene was particularly controversial. Boulders of various sizes were choreographed to drop onto the stage as Lear raged against the storm. Most audience members and reviewers were more concerned about the safety of the actors than the director's vision, which "conjures a world in which Nature's moulds are cracked."²⁷

The breakdown in family relationships is, of course, central to *King Lear* and modern directors have often used this as an accessible focal point in productions. Initially produced as a touring production for schools, Buzz Goodbody's small cast chamberpiece version of *Lear* in 1974

was performed by a cast of nine, with one musician playing gong, trumpet, snare and kettle drum. An all-purpose servant was added, while one sub-plot was cut (losing Albany, Cornwall, Oswald, and the French King).... The acting area was empty, except for a few props, like a rug and banners which unfurled when Lear

appeared.... Scenes were set simply, using props and, as with the storm, music and lights, which at key moments in the production underscored the director's point.... *Lear* was not seen as epic in terms of great public scenes of wide-open spaces peopled with a huge cast.... Its focus was on two families, in which the personal as well as the age differences played a more important part than is usually recognised.²⁸

In this powerful, intimate production, “the play as a whole became an intense study of private griefs of their two families, with Kent and the Fool both reduced to appalled outsiders, helplessly looking on.”²⁹

Described by critic Irving Wardle as “an all-too-familiar story of family life,”³⁰ Nicholas Hytner's 1990 production also turned *Lear* into a tale of dysfunctional family neurosis. He encoded his very cerebral reading in the set design of David Fielding, creating an enclosed space for the staging of *Lear* that took the form of a cube:

Open on one side with its outer walls painted to look like heavy steel, the cube simply revolves and stops, to present a succession of interiors and exteriors. Sometimes it will stop with a corner pointing toward the audience so that actors can stand out of sight of each other while Shakespearian eavesdropping can take place. In the storm scene, it will revolve continuously—the idea being that, as a metaphor for the world of the play (as well as Lear's mental world), it is spinning out of control.³¹

The effect of the cube was to reduce the scale of the play—something apparently deliberate in the director's interpretation. Psychological and domestic, Lear's world became both a mental ward and the interior of his mind, a controlled civilized space allowed to go mad through neglect and misjudgment. John Wood's very human and neurotic Lear went on an inner and outer journey

of physical suffering and mental awareness: “We are left with an interpretation which is as much medical as moral. The geriatric ward slugs it out with the psychiatric wing. There is little sense of hubris on the one hand, or of concentrated evil on the other.”³² The emphasis on Lear’s genuine insanity stemming from the family reflected the wider world of the play and the state of Britain. Michael Billington described it as “an exploration of the insane contradictions of a world where the gods are seen as both just and wantonly cruel, where Nature is both purifying and destructive.”³³

Fools and Madmen

Real and assumed madness play an essential part in the plot of *King Lear*. In a program note by Michael MacDonald, author of a historical study called *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth Century England* (1983), Adrian Noble’s 1993 production was contextualized by means of the suggestion that the audience

is presented with three kinds of madness: real in Lear himself, assumed in Tom/Edgar, and professional in the Fool. To its original audience, in a population largely uneducated, unable to distinguish between epilepsy, demonic possession and a skilful beggar on the make, the spectacle of an old man and a half-naked creature railing at the weather and babbling about demons would not have been especially unusual: like the unemployed and other vagrants the countryside teemed with, they were a fact of life.³⁴

Lear is very rarely played as being driven mad exclusively by the cruelty that is inflicted on him, but is often portrayed as being dangerously unhinged from the start. In Nicholas Hytner’s production,

the early household scenes are honeycombed with ... micro-sequences, which take you inside Lear’s

head, showing his hunger for affection, his need to play the strong man, his short attention span, and his helpless descents into blind rage. These are an embarrassment to the court and they give the sisters every pretext for saying something to keep the old man happy. But it is only when they try to draw the line that you really see what they have had to put up with. At the suggestion that he should shed a few knights, all hell breaks loose in the Albany dining room, with Lear emptying his gun into the ceiling, crushing Goneril to the ground like a blubbering child, clearing the space for carnage by hanging the Fool on a coat-hook: and finally vanishing into the night leaving his shaken hosts facing each other down a long table for their solitary dinner.³⁵

Very clearly a man with no control over his own emotions, John Wood's Lear was also an emotional vandal to his daughters, and his influence could be seen in their learned behavior.

In Buzz Goodbody's 1974 production, to be a sane man in a cruel world was to be part of that cruelty. Lear's madness became the transitional stage from cruelty to humanity:

Tony Church did not play Lear as a virtuoso acting part, but as a down-to-earth king, a patriarch who got his pleasure from hunting. He is out in the cold because of who he is—not a mighty monarch fallen from grace, but an old man on the point of death, facing himself and his life.... When he is “sane,” he represents the cruel world, arbitrary and aggressive, and only when he is “mad” does he embody human values.³⁶

In the stunning visual sequence that started Adrian Noble's 1982 production, lunacy not only led to virtue but was linked to it through the characters of the Fool and Cordelia:

On Lear's throne the Grock-like Fool and Cordelia sit facing each other, with their necks at opposite ends of a taut halter (resembling a noose), as if lunacy and virtue were inseparable.... What follows is a delirious descent into a world of barbarism in which farce and tragedy are umbilically linked.³⁷

Antony Sher played the Fool as "Lear's alter-ego, the visible mark of his insanity. His Master's Voice as he perches on his lap like a ventriloquist's doll, the conscience of the King."³⁸ In the words of the reviewer in the *Jewish Chronicle*, "There is a strong sense in which, just as the great comic double acts are like watching a schizophrenic trying to pull himself together, Antony Sher's red-nosed clown and Michael Gambon's violent old man are two warring parts of one psyche."³⁹ The poet and critic James Fenton, writing in the London *Sunday Times*, pushed the point further:

Michael Gambon's Lear was a man all too willing to cast off his role as king, and his relationship to the Fool pointed to this uneasiness.

Lear's foolishness and his love for his Fool are the points of departure for the interpretation. In all his madness, his anger and his suffering, we do not forget this. Indeed, I wonder if Lear has ever fooled around so enthusiastically.

Imagine a production in which the King, though condemned to kingship, would clearly love to have been a comedian, while the Fool, although unable to stop jesting, is transfixed by the horror of his true perception of the tragedy. This is the version which Adrian Noble has directed.... This is not the Fool of criticism, not an A-level "assess-the significance-of-the-Fool" fool. This is your genuine professional fool. Inside whom is a man in a panic, the Cassandra of the play, whose raving prophecies terrify the prophet himself.⁴⁰

Sher described how in rehearsals they came up with a solution to the disappearance of the Fool after the arrival of Tom o'Bedlam.⁴¹ During the mock trial scene the Fool picked up a pillow to represent Regan. On the words "anatomize her," Lear stabbed the pillow in a frenzy of rage. In his insane and violent outburst he fatally stabbed the Fool accidentally. With all the attention on Lear leaving the hovel, the others did not realize what had happened. The Fool slumped down dead into a barrel in which he stood.

The emphasis put on the Fool in this production (the program cover featured a fool's face with a red nose that appeared to be an amalgam of Lear and the Fool), along with Sher's magnificent performance, led many critics to feel that the play became unbalanced, losing impetus in the final acts after the Fool was killed.

At the end of the hovel scene Edgar has replaced the Fool as Lear's spiritual mentor. Lear takes Edgar off in one direction as the Fool exits in another. According to director Adrian Noble,

That happens accidentally. He doesn't plan that.... For some reason he decides to take on the sins of others ... in exactly the same way as a pilgrim, monk or nun ... dedicate their lives in a particular way that enables other people to have a richer spiritual life. It is a gift of humanity to God. This is exactly the same thing with Edgar.⁴²

Lear's journey into his own fooldom takes him from the enclosed mental space of the court out into the world and the secrets of humanity, to emotions denied and hidden from him by dint of his position in society. This awakening by the Fool and Poor Tom leads to a political and spiritual epiphany that is life-changing and possibly world-changing. Many directors have seen the following lines—often quoted in their program notes—as the core of the play:

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,

How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your lopped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just.

The political dimensions of *King Lear* are most clearly evidenced in the king's interaction with the mad beggar. Edgar, the abused son, and Poor Tom, the forgotten citizen of Lear's England, embody both familial and national neglect. Edgar's disguise as Bedlam beggar is also crucial to Lear's spiritual journey. In Noble's second production of the play for the RSC in 1993:

[Lear's] growing obsession with this emblem of "unaccommodated man" causes the displacement of the Fool ... was brilliantly visualized in the image of Ian Hughes clinging forlornly to Poor Tom's hand at the end of a human chain that Gloucester led across the stage.⁴³

Visually Edgar has variously appeared as a Caliban-type figure, the poor bare-forked animal spouting obscenities but in need of the world's pity, as Christ-like with a crown of thorns, bloodied and suffering for the world's sins, or alternatively as demonic, as in the RSC's 1982 production when "Jonathan Hyde's Edgar as a virtually naked Poor Tom [burst] through the splintering floor like some infernal demon born on to Lear's 'great stage of fools'."⁴⁴ "It was the modern equivalent of the entrance of a devil from the pit of Hell, and Tom's demonic side, which actors so often miss as they go for shivering pathos, was established at once."⁴⁵

Thrown to the wilderness by his family, Edgar evolves from "worm" to potential king. His suffering appears as a barbaric initiation rite designed by the toughest of gods. It is a trial of cruelty fitting for the evil world that is unleashed in the play.

The Absence of Humanity

King Lear is a play rich with vicious bestial images, all symbolic of the barbaric capabilities of man and woman. Goneril, for instance, is described as having a “wolfish visage.” Edward Topsell’s *Historie of Foure-footed Beastes* (1607) mixed scientific fact, folklore, and classical allusions to animals and mythological creatures, giving them often exotic and fantastic attributes. It describes the customary attributes associated with the wolf in animal lore: treachery, deceit, hypocrisy, ravenousness, and cruelty. These associations gave Shakespeare’s audience an accurate idea of Goneril’s character and her subsequent behavior. However, for modern directors, “Another interpretative decision that must be faced ... is whether to accept the moral polarity of Lear’s daughters as a fact of the story or to suggest more naturalistic reasons for their behavior.”⁴⁶

In recent years patriarchal repression and child abuse of one form or another have often been regarded as the defining reasons for evil in children. Lear has accordingly been portrayed as physically and mentally abusive or neglectful, demanding, cantankerous, a bully who has created so much pent-up anger in his two elder daughters that it erupts when they are given the opportunity to release their feelings without recrimination; that is to say, when they are in power.

In the influential 1962 production, Peter Brook portrayed Lear’s knights as rowdy and destructive, while Irene Worth’s Goneril was self-contained and cool, remonstrating with Lear in measured tones, speaking as somebody with cause to complain. Some critics thought such a treatment a distortion of the text, but most modern directors have followed this interpretation to some degree. Though it helps to humanize Goneril, it does make the descent into evil very difficult to portray.

Janet Dale, who played the part in 1993, admitted that “I am trying to play her with a conscience, but I suspect the lines won’t support it.” Rather than an outright evil woman, she wished to portray her as a woman “of moral degeneration.”⁴⁷

By focusing on the psychology of these extremely dysfunctional families, the violence in Nicholas Hytner's 1990 production became rooted in explainable terms:

The production is about confused people destroyed by their incomprehensible emotions or, as with Wood's massively erratic Lear, struggling through new ones.... The effects of long abuse are evident in his daughters. Alex Kingston's Cordelia has become rebellious, bloody-minded and rejects Lear almost more than he does her. Estelle Kohler's Goneril and Sally Dexter's Regan, seem still to want the love of this old, impossible man.... It is fashionable nowadays to allow us to see the "bad" daughters' point of view, but rarely as strongly as here. Both of them seem badly in need of Valium, psychoanalysis, or both. They are frustrated, exhausted, at the end of a tether which finally breaks, liberating all that suppressed anger and barely contained madness. Their evils proliferate, but they, like Goneril and Regan themselves, are ultimately Lear's fault.⁴⁸

Order opens up to reveal chaos. And the same pattern is visible in erratic human behaviour. Lear, having cursed Goneril with sterility, rushes back to embrace her. Astonishingly, Regan first conspires in the blinding of Gloucester and then tenderly asks him, rather than her wounded husband, "How dost my lord?" Mr. Hytner ushers us into a morally topsy-turvy universe in which good and evil frequently cohabit within the same person.⁴⁹

One cannot escape the fact that what Regan and Goneril do is evil and unnatural. In Buzz Goodbody's 1974 production, which cut the role of Cornwall, "Regan put out Gloucester's eyes unaided, with a broach."⁵⁰ Modern stagings of the blinding scene nearly always show Regan's active participation in the mutilation of Gloucester.

Emily Raymond, who played Goneril in 2004, felt that Goneril and Regan “had a brutal upbringing—[with] smacks of physical violence and mental abuse. I think Lear probably took his daughters to hangings and taught them the brutal way to deal with traitors—you don’t hang them, you pluck out their eyes and let them live, to serve as a deterrent to others.”⁵¹

What impact does it have to turn the violence and evil in *Lear* into something psychological instead of metaphysical? Does the implication that it is somehow the “natural” result of a bad, neglected upbringing diminish the epic nature of the play and the horrific impact of the sisters’ monstrous acts? Lear’s world is thrown out of order by his inability to be an adequate father *and* king. James I, in his publication *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, underlined the divine right of kings and the duty of all monarchs to treat their subjects as a caring father would do his children. Lear’s misunderstanding of his role as a fixed point in the natural order of things and his irresponsibility in relation to his position in society unleash unnatural chaos.

In 1993 Adrian Noble emphasized violent cosmic forces prevalent in the play by use of an abstract but symbolic set:

When David Bradley’s superlative Gloucester, his eyes gouged out, staggers away from the scene of atrocity and from Simon Dormandy’s chillingly, psychopathic Cornwall, the focus clears at last. Noble used the Folio edition of the text, so cutting the aid of Gloucester’s servants after the blinding. The sightless Bradley gazes in the direction of a blue and white model of the globe, fixed above the stage. As he stares, a crack runs across the globe’s circumference and the sands of time begin to pour out of it. The society of King Lear, with family life collapsing in warfare and inhuman cruelty ... is ominous of all civilized human life ruined and coming to an end.⁵²

In this bleak vision,

Noble's most original stroke is to suggest that the cruelty unleashed by Lear's folly spreads to even the conventionally good characters. The chief beneficiary is Simon Russell Beale's extraordinary Edgar who starts as goody-two shoes and who is turned by the horrors he has witnessed into a symbol of revenge. In this production he doesn't just kill Oswald; he batters his face with a staff as if in retaliation for the blinding of his father. The most unplayable major role in Shakespeare suddenly acquires a specific identity: a man forever tainted by the contagion of violence.⁵³

In his final battle with Edmund, Russell Beale as Edgar tried "to rip out the dying Edmund's eyes in reprisal."⁵⁴ Similarly, Bill Alexander's 2004 production included "chilling touches that alert you afresh to the barbarism of its world. For example, in the climactic duel between Edmund and Edgar, it's only chance that stops the virtuous brother from exacting primitive 'eye for an eye' justice"⁵⁵—"In order to force Edmund to drop his arms, [Edgar] grabbed him by either side of his face and pushed his thumbs into his eyes. This reference to the blinding of Gloucester was eerily resonant."⁵⁶

Our opinion of Edgar will determine how we consider the end of the play. His spiritual journey, which echoes Lear's, provides him with a unique understanding of humanity and the preciousness of life. But he is also a very human avenger who has to set the world right and provide hope for the future. To overbalance his character with deliberate malicious and violent action furthers a nihilistic vision of the play by removing the certainty of redemption for a lost and barbaric world. Adrian Noble in 1982 stressed this element of unredeemed cruelty. The *Guardian* critic Michael Billington explains:

Edgar slays Oswald by breaking his back with a staff, and the fraternal duel between Edgar and Edmund is a bare-chested, bloody, unchivalric combat that ends with

Edmund's head being dumped in water. Even at the last the characters look out into the future in a spirit of skeptical uncertainty.⁵⁷

In Peter Brook's vision of the play chaos was part of the natural order. His production emphasized the inhumanity and disinterestedness of the forces that annihilate Lear. There was no moral structure beneath the surface of civilization: "Everywhere one looks, one sees only the facades and emblems of a world and, ironically, as characters acquire sight, it enables them to see only into a void."⁵⁸

Brook removed key moments of redemption and humanity: the servants did not tend Gloucester after he has been blinded but callously bumped into him as they cleared away the stage. Edmund's attempt to redeem himself and stop the order that will see the death of Cordelia was cut. As Lear died, his final words "Look there" were spoken as he stared ahead into nothingness. We were not left with the usual tableau of survivors grieving over Lear and Cordelia. The cast left, carrying out their dead bodies, leaving Edgar and the dead Edmund on stage alone. Edgar moved center-stage, and then went to his brother. As he dragged his brother's corpse up toward the back of the stage a distant rumble of thunder sounded in the background, leaving the audience with the impression that worse was to follow. "[W]e that are young / Shall never see so much nor live so long" took on a genuinely apocalyptic meaning. This was an image of the horror of "the promised end" of the world.

Where Brook's production succeeded was in making the audience grieve for humanity, or more specifically for the absence of humanity. It seemed a fitting statement for its time, and it is one that still touches us today. Lear's speech in the hovel is central to Brook's vision—it is not by chance that he used this quote in the program for the production's world tour: "Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel." Corin Redgrave, who played King Lear in 2004, also took this line:

The play investigates how, in a dying or decaying world, we can live better and be better toward one another. It can't produce any conclusions to that because the world as Shakespeare saw it at that time was dying, just as our world as we see it is dying. Shakespeare was writing in a world which he sees going to hell on wheels and writing a text book in case the world should ever recover. So it is the most bleak of plays, but it is a very salutary play, a very necessary play ... you could not possibly lose *King Lear* without impoverishing ourselves terribly.⁵⁹

THE DIRECTOR'S CUT: INTERVIEWS WITH ADRIAN NOBLE, DEBORAH WARNER, AND TREVOR NUNN

Adrian Noble, born in 1950, arrived at the RSC from the Bristol Old Vic, where he had directed several future stars in productions of classic plays. His first production on the main stage of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford was the acclaimed 1982 *Lear*, discussed here, with Michael Gambon as the king and Antony Sher as an extraordinarily powerful Fool. Two years later his *Henry V* sowed the seed for Kenneth Branagh's film. Among his other major productions during his two decades at the RSC were *Hamlet*, again with Branagh in the title role, *The Plantagenets*, based on the *Henry VI/Richard III* tetralogy, and the two parts of *Henry IV*, with Robert Stephens as Falstaff. Stephens returned in 1993 to play Lear in a second production of the tragedy, also discussed here. Noble's 1994 *Midsummer Night's Dream* was made into a film. He was artistic director from 1991 to 2003, since when he has been a freelance director. His production style is characterized by strong use of colors and objects (such as umbrellas), and fluid scenic structure.

Deborah Warner, born in 1959, trained in stage management at the Central School of Speech and Drama. At the age of twenty-one she formed her own "fringe" company, Kick Theatre, imaginatively staging stripped-down productions of the classics, including *King Lear* (1985, discussed here), at the Edinburgh Festival. In 1987 she made her RSC debut with a rigorously simple but deeply moving

Titus Andronicus, starring Brian Cox, on the intimate stages of the Swan at Stratford and The Pit at London's Barbican. A *King John* in a similar style followed the next year and in 1990 she directed *King Lear*, again with Brian Cox, on the proscenium Lyttelton stage of the National Theatre in London (also discussed here). She has subsequently specialized in Samuel Beckett and opera, but has returned to Shakespeare with a *Richard II* at the National, featuring her collaborator Fiona Shaw cross-dressed in the title role, and a large-scale *Julius Caesar* at the Barbican.

Sir Trevor Nunn is the most successful and one of the most highly regarded of modern British theater directors. Born in 1940, he was a brilliant student at Cambridge, strongly influenced by the literary close reading of Dr. F. R. Leavis. At the age of just twenty-eight he succeeded Peter Hall as artistic director of the RSC, where he remained until 1978. He greatly expanded the range of the company's work and its ambition in terms of venues and touring. He also achieved huge success in musical theater and subsequently became artistic director of the National Theatre in London. His productions are always full of textual insights, while being clean and elegant in design. Among his most admired Shakespearean work has been a series of tragedies with Ian McKellen in leading roles: *Macbeth* (1976, with Judi Dench, in the dark, intimate space of The Other Place), *Othello* (1989, with McKellen as Iago and Imogen Stubbs as Desdemona), and *King Lear* (2007, in the Stratford Complete Works Festival, on world tour, and then in London).

One of the first questions one always wonders about with *King Lear* is: What do you decide on as a setting for the play? We've seen everything from a Stonehenge-like world to contemporaneity by way of Samurai Japan. So what kind of a world did you and your designer seek to create?

Noble: There are two or three driving forces in relation to the setting. First of all there is the need to create a series of credible family units, because the dynamic of the play emanates from damaged families; in particular Lear's and Gloucester's two parallel

families. So one needs to be able to create a domesticity and parallel familial worlds. The second thing one needs to be able to explore is an epic quality, by which I mean the fact that the reality we live in fractures and splinters as the reality inside Lear's head fractures and splinters. Shakespeare quite deliberately expresses the horrors and the madness that are happening inside the human being through the physicality of it.

In both productions I sought for a setting and a world that could fragment and start behaving in an almost independent way. With both productions the walls started splitting and almost exploded apart. In 1993 with Robert Stephens as Lear I found an image at the very end of the first act which I felt was rather telling: the moon started bleeding sand. That seemed to me an exquisitely painful image, with the moon's very strong connection with the eye. The milk of human kindness had completely disappeared.

I found myself eschewing a completely modern, contemporary world, because it seemed to me that would quite swiftly become a highway to nowhere. In a similar way I eschewed the old Stonehenge version which seemed to me as silly as setting it in Wapping. So we found a world that probably related to Europe a hundred and fifty years ago, with greatcoats, where people still hunted, where the motor vehicle hadn't taken over our world. Neither myself, Bob Crowley, who designed the first, or Anthony Ward, who designed the second, would I think be able to place it within fifty years of a particular date.

Warner: My interest in both my productions was to release the characters through their language and their relationships. What the play does is to take the audience into the interior of themselves. It is a mirror of the desolation of the human spirit, how lost it is, how far we fall in families and how hard sought are the conditions that prompt personal change. That's why the setting of any given production has little connection to the key that may unlock the scenes and acts. The play has to flow through our imaginations and then it has to lodge, and that is why I used such a pared-down aesthetic so that the space is clear for that to happen. All great plays

do this but each must be met in their particular. With Kick Theatre in 1985 we were in a church hall in Edinburgh with three ladders and a bucket of water for the heath scene. With the NT [National Theatre] we were on the wide open stage of the Lyttelton Theatre where different aesthetic choices needed to be made before we began. Hildegard Bechtler's set was poetic and beautiful but bare, and the "world" was not precisely named by it. It was not the "Stone Age *Lear*," or the "Third Reich *Lear*" but the Brian Cox, David Bradley, Ian McKellen, Susie Engel, and Clare Higgins *Lear*. It was actor led and actor inspired and I still believe that that is a very good way with Shakespeare. Belief in casting and the group creation of the world is what matters.

Nunn: Shakespeare says that King Lear is the king of Ancient Britain. On the other hand, Shakespeare includes scenes involving dueling with swords, there are references to a graced palace, to women wearing gorgeous clothes that scarcely keep them warm, and Gloucester refers to wearing spectacles. Shakespeare is making clear that he doesn't mind breaking the rules as far as historical accuracy goes. It's very likely that *King Lear* was performed at the Globe, or indeed at court performances, with the actors wearing a mixture of contemporary Elizabethan/Jacobean clothing, with some additional elements of cloak and robe that would indicate an earlier period.

I think Shakespeare was interested in the idea that a history play should apply acutely and precisely to the age that the *audience* lives in, so he was keen to have it both ways. I've seen Stonehenge-based productions of *King Lear*, and frankly it does seem very odd that Lear should make such a fuss about being out on a heath in a storm when his normal domestic condition appears to be open to the elements.

Shakespeare is presenting the huge contrast between a man who has been encouraged to believe that he is the closest thing to a god in human terms, and the man who comes to perceive he is like a beggar "no more but this." Lear is a conduit of the gods and he's in totally autocratic authority. His smallest whisper is converted into

law, and nobody, such as Kent, can question him. So, in this production, I have elected to set the play in a seemingly nineteenth-century environment with resonances of the tsarist order in Russia and/or the Austrian autocracy of Franz Joseph. The intention is to stress that Lear's power is total and dictatorial like a tsar or an emperor, in all matters, political and social, and that it derives from god with whom he communicates. This, I think, allows us to encompass the requirements of the social structure of the play and, what's more, the anachronisms make complete sense. Lear's journey takes him from that autocratic power to somebody who, in the storm, asks himself for the first time, "How do wretches survive in conditions like these, if they cannot keep warm because they have no proper clothing?" And then, wanting to embrace that houseless situation, he meets Tom o'Bedlam (who happens to be a man going through the same crisis, another man who's been used to comfort and is now, in order to survive, turning himself into a crazed beggar), and as he studies the beggar's naked exposure, Lear urgently wants to place himself in that condition, so he can experience being the "forked animal" for himself.

Shakespeare had long been fascinated with the philosophical idea that a king can journey through the guts of a beggar. He has used the notion of king to beggar on a number of previous occasions, but in *Lear* he takes it to the extreme. I think *Richard II* is almost a sketch for *King Lear*; here we have a godlike king who in the end is sobbing, "I need friends and since I am ordinary like you—how can you say I am a king?" Shakespeare takes that king to a small prison cell, and then, alone and the lord of nothing, he grants him extraordinary self-knowledge. But in *King Lear*, the journey of the king is to a yet more extreme destination.

Why did your Lear react so extremely to Cordelia's refusal to play the game of quantifying her love in words (or perhaps of quantifying her love all too literally—if I marry, my father will have 50 percent of my love and my husband the other 50 percent)?

Noble: In a way you have to go back a step from that to ask yourself why Lear loves Cordelia so much more than the other two girls. There are dozens of reasons why, and I think most families could find their own reason why one child is, or appears to be, more beloved than the other. If the character in question is an obsessive like Lear then it starts getting potentially dangerous. His little girl has grown up and defies him, and he can't deal with that at all. He can't deal with retiring, he can't deal with getting old, he can't deal with not being in control anymore. And as a consequence of all these things poor Cordelia gets it in the neck. And he regrets it almost immediately. Within a day he regrets it—probably within hours.

Warner: My Lear was a spoilt Lear, a vain Lear—a man who wants to hear what he wants to hear. His foolish gung-ho confidence is to wrap and disguise his need—a desire for a public show of affection—in a party game. He makes light of something that is weighty and important to him so that nobody suspects his underlying vulnerability. He demands that his daughters play out in public something that is private, and he claims this right because the prizes are high and marvelous. However, he knows who will take which prize because the “game” is rigged—the parcels of land are already named, signed, and sealed by king and court. The whole extravagant business is a contrivance to feed his vanity, to continue to make him feel that he holds the center even in old age. We are witnessing a grotesque public massage of ego. Lear is a man used to getting what he wants, but he gets badly burnt. He discovers that love is not a commodity, that it must be given freely. It may be that he has lost sight of what love is a long time before the play begins. He's getting the answer he wants in two cases from the very daughters he did not treat well—if their behavior later in the piece is anything to go by—and seems to barely know the character of his favorite—Cordelia—whose reaction is a huge surprise to him. There is a lot we do not know about this mysterious man, but his short-sightedness is placed on the table at the very opening of the play. Here is a man who will need to travel far to begin to gain the gift of

personal insight. His friend Gloucester will literally lose his sight: blind men both.



6. Ian McKellen as Lear in Trevor Nunn's 2007 production, in the opening scene with quasi-military "Ruritanian" regalia.

And why didn't your Cordelia, or why couldn't she, put her love into words?

Noble: That's a much more difficult question to answer. It's a young person's thing, whereby the spoken truth is more important than making your mum and dad happy. It's the moment of leaving home. The domestic psychological detail is very precise in the play. In Lear's household, Cordelia is at the point of leaving home to go and get married. That's a huge moment in every family, although it's very often not recognized. Some daughters never leave home. They are still at home, in the thrall of their parents, when they're seventy. Cordelia leaves home and Lear can't deal with that. But she knows she has to do it, especially with a father like him.

Warner: Cordelia does not want to play this extravagant and obscene party game. She is young, she is shy, and she is about to be married, perhaps even the public nature of this serious business of land division is difficult for her. Anyhow, extravagant party game or not, it is the wrong moment for her to speak of her love to her father, and she certainly does not want to talk about such matters in public. When her sisters speak she is appalled by their preparedness to speak on cue, and especially so since she knows they are being dishonest. Cordelia wants to hold to her own truth. Horrified by what is happening around her, she wants to stop the game, and that is just what she does. It goes horribly wrong because she won't play, and she advertently or inadvertently humiliates her father in public. She is young and she believes with stern clarity in the virtues of honesty, truth, and love. She is earnest—some might say overearnest in this context, and she causes an atomic explosion.



7. The opening scene in Deborah Warner's 1990 production: a party game goes horribly wrong, with Brian Cox as Lear in wheelchair and paper crown.

Lear is both a king and a father. That often seems to be a choice that directors and actors have to make—are you going to give the primary emphasis to Lear's journey as a king giving up his crown, or is the primary emphasis going to be on the family relationships? Or do you actually think that the essence of the play is that the two are inextricably intertwined?

Noble: Without question they are entwined. I didn't find that a choice. It isn't a choice that I recognize.

Warner: The father relationship is the most interesting, he is a father who happens to be a king; but since all fathers are kings then, yes, all is intertwined. There is a lot we don't know about him, about his reign—but we know that he owns the land of his country and chooses to divide that up in such a way that will benefit his retirement most comfortably. He is a king/father heading toward retirement, a dangerous time in all families and in all monarchies.

Nunn: You won't be surprised to hear that your "third way" alternative is the one this production goes for. Shakespeare is frighteningly brilliant at doing "family breakup." He does it superbly—in *Hamlet*, for example. I would say he does it equally shockingly in *The Merchant of Venice*, and in *Macbeth* we watch a marriage coming apart at the seams. There are small insights in *King Lear* into how the king's family has been pushed apart by events and attitudes. Lear is eighty years old. He has three daughters, and there is no Mrs. Lear. The older daughters are married to powerful men and live in their own palaces. The youngest daughter is only just of marriageable age. Hidden behind the play, is there a story that he was a king who had two wives?—the first wife producing two daughters, Goneril and Regan, and then after her death (as we can frequently see in modern complex family histories) there is the child of a second marriage, the late child (as far as that father is concerned) who then dominates the father's affections. There's sufficient evidence in the play to suggest that jealousies and rifts within the family derive from such a backstory.

But I don't think exploration of a family feud is where Shakespeare wants matters to stop. It's not where his focus is. Routinely at the start of rehearsals, I say we have to first uncover the *theme* of a Shakespeare play. If you're a director, you must X-ray the play to find out what its bone structure is and where its vital organs are. A production shouldn't work from the outside, it must proceed from a sense of what the *internal* structure is, and thereby discover how everything contained in the play is meaningful because it is contiguous to that thematic structure.

In the case of *Lear*, it being one of the greatest plays of Shakespeare's maturity, the investigation is not going to be easy and the wellspring is not going to lie very close to the surface. Those who have written about *Lear* as Shakespeare's study of Nature are, to my thinking, somewhere near the mark, in the sense that Shakespeare is certainly inquiring into *human* nature in *Lear*, and he often uses the term "nature" to encompass human behavior and its contradictions. But let's take that definition of a theme just a little bit further. I would say Shakespeare is wanting to look at the human

being, both sublime and ridiculous; I think he is asking, “What is the human condition?” Why do humans say to themselves they are close to being angels, aspiring toward those qualities that are spiritual and godlike? And yet, why are they, in much of their action, so close to behaving like animals? Why, as it were anthropologically, do they have animal instincts that the species appears not to be able to get rid of?

I think it’s no surprise that in this play Shakespeare doesn’t define exactly who the god or gods are. There’s a shadowy Apollo or Jupiter, and the sun is sacred, but the largely anonymous gods are referred to, as a sort of necessity for human beings to believe in, so that somehow humans can feel their actions are predestined, or governed by forces above and beyond themselves. Everything is under the control or the will of the gods.

But then, close to the center of the play, there’s a young man who says: “Thou, nature, art my goddess: to thy law / My services are bound”—a young man who seems to be saying, “I don’t believe in the gods above, it’s human nature that I am influenced by.” At the end of that first soliloquy, Edmund says, I sense almost in mockery: “Now gods, stand up for bastards.” Well, he implies, you “gods” have supposedly stood up for everybody else, it’s high time you let bastards have a go. It’s an extremely dangerous bit of comedic dramaturgy, but atheistical Edmund, creating mayhem in his world, is placed in sharp contrast to the majority who genuinely beg the gods to intervene, at times almost obsessively. And I think Shakespeare makes it clear that “the gods” don’t. Repeatedly they are deaf or callous or nonexistent. They do nothing, even when their intervention would be an affirmation of “the good” in opposition to what is evil; they don’t utter, they don’t move a muscle. Are the heavens empty?

An actor who has played Lear has said that the real difficulty in playing the part is deciding how much to let rip how soon—if you give too much to the anger in the first half you’re too exhausted for the madness in the second half, but if you have too much control to begin with, the transition into madness

can seem too sudden and extreme to be convincing. Do you recognize that difficulty? And as a director, what can you do to help your Lear through it?

Noble: I think that's very true. Most Lears I've talked to find the second half much easier than the first half, because the first half requires such a level of energy and a very skillful control of your resources. The truth is, it's almost unplayable—the pain is so great, the vocal demands so much. I've seen people cop out of it and say I'm going to do it quite quietly, but that's complete crap. They are selling the part and the audience short. It gets actors down a lot actually, because it magnifies your failures. The same is true for directors. It's like Everest, it's an unforgiving mountain, and people die on the way up, or they get badly hurt. It is like singing Wagner, and not everybody can sing Wagner.

Warner: You need all your energy and all your fight to play Lear, just as an opera singer needs theirs for Tristan, Wotan, or Siegfried. You cannot leave it too late. Brian Cox was forty-four when he played it for me. The first scene demands that the actor hit raw and engulfing fury within minutes. Throughout the opening scenes this anger is further released until it lets fly and the play climbs from there. You have to risk exhaustion to play it well. This play is not gentle on its lead actor, but where Shakespeare is brilliant and kind is in letting the evening be shared and there is, of course, the famous break at the start of the second half for a rest in the dressing room. Shakespeare always acts as helpful assistant to the director and he supports the actors by graphing and arcing their evening. Actors must follow him for their physical well-being, but they must follow what he asks for too. Real anger, real madness ... or, no play.

How did your production deal with the part of the Fool and his disappearance halfway through the action?

Noble: In the first production in 1982 with Michael Gambon and Tony Sher it became quite famous. We did an improvisation in

rehearsal, and I said just hold that a fraction longer, and the net result was that King Lear accidentally stabbed the Fool, and he died. I had teachers coming in to say “You have to write in your program that that is not what Shakespeare wrote!” Because it is completely logical. Just before this, there’s: “The little dogs and all, Trey, Blanch and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me” and there’s “lie here and rest awhile”; “draw the curtains.” And so we had the Fool using a cushion and Lear chasing him, and in stabbing the cushion he accidentally stabs the Fool. And then the little feathers became dogs. It was very beautiful and completely logical.



8. “The oldest hath borne most”: Robert Stephens (right) as Lear and David Bradley as Gloucester, finding a human bond in their anguish, in Adrian Noble’s 1993 production.

The Fool’s function in life is entirely tied up with the king. He’s like a soldier’s batman. There’s no logic for him to exist once the

master's dead, or mad.

Warner: My National Theatre Fool (David Bradley) died during the interval of exhaustion and cold. He went to sleep in a wheelbarrow somewhere in the dark interior of the hovel and never woke again. A sad and quiet death that went practically unnoticed. In my Kick Theatre production the actress Hilary Townley played both Cordelia and the Fool (a doubling I am sure Shakespeare intended), which solves so many issues so very easily. For example, “my poor fool is hanged” draws effortless and painful meaning from such casting.



9. Michael Gambon as Lear and Antony Sher as the Fool, with mask, in Adrian Noble's 1982 production.

One striking feature of Shakespeare's reworking of the old anonymous *Leir* play is his removal of its Christian frame of reference (that was one of the reasons why Tolstoy perversely said he preferred the old play!). The characters are always appealing to the gods but not getting the response they want. And then there is Edmund appealing to “Nature” as his goddess. What was your thinking about religion in the play?

Noble: The first time I did it I quite consciously sought a godless universe. I was very influenced by Brecht and Beckett. I sought a godless universe and a quite vengeful, spiteful universe. I made heavy cuts at the end of the play to highlight that fact.

The second time I imagined a universe that was not godless, but in which the gods sat back and refused to interfere. The choice is as much to do with the director or interpreter as the writing.

Warner: The removal of any uniting Christian frame makes this text all the more available to us now. The characters are struggling away as we are all struggling away, and have ever been struggling away for centuries. From the seventeenth century to the twenty-first, Shakespeare allows us no simple answers, and that is why productions should beware of giving them.

Nunn: Remember, in the old *Leir* play, the king is restored to his throne and Cordelia lives. By changing the ending, Shakespeare deliberately violates a seemingly fundamental rule of drama, namely that plays serve as a moral or cautionary influence on their audience, because they show, regardless of trial and vicissitude, that the good will triumph in the end. In *King Lear* we're surely expecting just that, but Shakespeare won't allow it. I think this is proof positive that Shakespeare's intentions were very different from those of the old play. Shakespeare's investigation of the extremes of human behavior, into the nature of man the species, concludes that life *isn't* like a morality play. When everything in our religious and cultural history requires us to believe that ultimately the gods will intervene on the side of virtue, Shakespeare says emphatically that they don't. It's more than the conclusion that his play is not Christian, it's that he moves to a conclusion that is, at the very least, agnostic.

For me, it is centrally important that there is no sense of divine justice in this tragedy. I'm wondering whether any other writer during the Elizabethan age ever ventured to question whether or not the heavens might be empty? In the early scenes, as I said, Shakespeare's play sets up the fundamental belief in his characters

that human actions are overseen by the gods. Lear seems to believe that, like him, the gods are old men, that they are intelligent, and that they're watching, and he clearly sees himself as in privileged contact with the gods. But as the play progresses, Shakespeare shows us more people praying for the intervention of the gods, to no avail. The battle at the climax of the story will determine whether or not the "good" will triumph. Gloucester is urged by Edgar to "Pray that the right may thrive." He does. They don't. Finally, as it's realized that a death sentence is on both Lear and Cordelia, Albany leads all present in a final prayer as soldiers run to the prison—"The gods defend her!" The first word of the next line is "Howl." Cordelia is dead. No intervention. The gods aren't mentioned again.

So yes, I think Edmund is placed before us early on as evidence of a solitary, dangerous, atheistical intelligence. Then as Lear's journey takes him increasingly toward challenging the behavior of the gods, arriving at his epiphany in the "unaccommodated man" speech, his more fundamental questions begin. "What is the *cause* of thunder?" "Is there any *cause* in nature that makes these hard hearts?" His questions now seem to be reaching toward Darwinian rather than divine explanations, and his belief in the gods begins to evaporate.

What about Edgar? He's quite an actor, performing in different voices, isn't he? He's Poor Tom, but then after that, after the cliff fall, he's the man on the beach and after that he's the peasant with the accent who kills Oswald—why does Edgar have all these different languages and voices and play all these different roles? Why doesn't he much sooner just say, "Look, Dad, I'm sorry. You should be sorry, you got the wrong son, I'm the good one. You're blind, this is me ..." So many opportunities in so many different roles ... until he finally gets around to telling his father the truth, by which time he's left it so late that all Gloucester can do is die of a heart attack.

Noble: I think he takes upon himself the sins of others, in particular the sins of the father, in order to redeem himself. It's a profoundly religious, spiritual journey that Edgar goes on and a very tough

regime that he imposes upon himself. The disguises, flagellation, and infliction of misery are all part of that. Through the course of the play he cleanses himself. He's like a character out of a George Herbert poem.

Nunn: Edgar does say, at a crucial moment of the play, at the moment where he could cease to be the Tom o'Bedlam character at last, "I cannot daub it further," and then in the very next instant, "And yet I must." In this production we've tried to identify something specific about that change of mind. There are men on Gloucester's orders scouring the country on the hunt to capture and kill Edgar if they find him. We have a troop of those soldiers passing at that point, so Edgar's "yet I must" is clearly justified as self-preservation, and by association the preserving of his father.

But there's a deeper explanation that Edgar himself also provides when he takes Gloucester, who is suicidally bent, to an imaginary cliff edge. Just before the death plunge moment, Edgar has an aside to the audience, "Why I do trifle thus with his despair / Is done to cure it." This is fundamental in Edgar's journey. He observes that his father is now only full of resentment and hatred for the world, of believing that there was never anything worth believing in. Edgar, still clinging to his belief in divine justice, cannot allow his misguided, misled father to die a bad death or an unredeemed death. Therefore he makes it his mission to bring his father beyond suicidal thoughts to a different, reconciled set of attitudes. The gods seem to be unwilling to back up that reconciliation and continue to rain down horror, but Edgar's changes of identity are entirely to bring his father to a better spiritual place.

There's something of a fairytale quality to the play, isn't there? Goneril and Regan as the ugly sisters, Cordelia as a Cinderella with an unhappy ending. But, especially since Peter Brook's famous production and film, there's also an approach to the play that emphasizes Lear's unreasonable rage, the chaos caused by his riotous knights, and the sense that his daughters, Goneril especially, aren't villains through and through.

Noble: It's hard to really admire anybody in the play actually. You can like them all a lot, and you can feel for them a lot, but it is hard to admire anybody. You can admire Gloucester, and probably Edgar's morality. As for the sisters, Shakespeare always writes what is needed. It can be very frustrating, especially for actresses, because it often happens with the female parts, that Shakespeare sees no point in showing you the bits of the iceberg under the water. He thinks that is a complete waste of scenes. It doesn't mean that the bit that is revealed does not have a complete world of which it is a part. Exactly the same thing applies to Gertrude and Lady Macbeth, whereby when the function ceases to have a crucial element or a driving force, Shakespeare just stops. Lady Macbeth and Gertrude just stop. Actresses tend to think there must be a missing or lost scene, but there isn't. Like the Fool in the second half of the play, it isn't there because there's no need for it. It doesn't mean you can't make it completely real, but you have to come at it from his time, not like a movie. The actor may have a backstory, but you can only show so much because you don't need anymore.

Nunn: I think it would be wholly wrong for a production to suggest that Goneril and Regan are of evil disposition at the beginning of the play; but there is a degree of ambition in their behavior, and there is a degree of competition between them, and possibly there is that element of hidden resentment of how their much-the-younger sister has become the favorite of their old father.

Traditionally, late-nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century versions of *Lear* did indeed go very strongly for the interpretation that Lear himself was always to be seen as kind and gentle and white-haired and frail. And therefore a delightful old man goaded intolerably by two wicked sisters. When Peter Brook did his production in 1962, there was a sense that an extraordinary revolution had taken place because Brook, absolutely honest to the text, said: "Lear is behaving entirely unjustifiably, now he's behaving appallingly, and now he's behaving absolutely beyond the limit to the point where no father can expect to get away with that." It was a production that tried explicitly to exonerate the sisters. I

remember that, at that time, the impact of revealing Lear's behavior as frequently unacceptable hit home very strongly. Now, of course, any production trying to propose that Lear is a close relative of Father Christmas would be laughed off the stage. The Brook view has become the standard view.

However, we do still have to explain how Goneril and Regan get to a condition of alarming ruthlessness in the second half of the play. All I will say is—especially if anybody hasn't seen the play before—watch out for the moment when Lear utters his curse on Goneril, and particularly his curse on Goneril's womb—a curse more bloodcurdling than I hope any lady in the audience will ever hear in her life. We all know that when dreadful things are said in rage, those words can never be unsaid. This is a major turning point of the play and causes Goneril to become vengeful, regardless of consequence.

The blinding of Gloucester is perhaps the most horrific moment in all Shakespeare. How did you stage that and did it have contemporary resonances for you? In Trevor Nunn's 2007 production Regan behaves with sadistic glee that's also a kind of fear—it inevitably conjured up the American soldiers in Abu Ghraib jail in Iraq. Torture in times of war is something that just doesn't go away ...

Noble: Yes, it had resonances in the sense that it confronts you with the most shocking things that humanity can do to humanity, but I almost never make references to contemporary events, because in my view it's a blind alley. Scenes like that talk directly to the audience and their souls and hearts. You don't need people coming on in flak jackets and dressed as Iraqis.

It is a dangerous scene for a number of reasons. It's dangerous because the blinding is done to an old man, and secondly, it's completely plugged in to this extraordinarily dangerous sexual relationship between Cornwall and Regan. It's plugged in to the scheme of the play in terms of the breakdown of order and the dawn of chaos. It's a wild, very, very unpleasant scene.

Warner: The theater is a very safe place to explore the taboo and the pornographic. That safe place of examination may be the very point of theater. As a theater director, if you have to do a blinding you want to make it as ghoulish as you can. The audience is then left working it through in the safety of the evening, and a live and engaged audience will inevitably draw contemporary parallels. All great plays have the power to do this and the greater the performances the greater that power to prompt connection. This brings us back to what I said about these plays flowing through our imaginations. Few of us experience directly something like the horror of Abu Ghraib, but the theater allows us to imagine such a reality, to process it, and to question it from every angle. The Greek theater was a public debate where the audience tested their response to the barbaric and nudged toward a legal system and the founding of modern democracy. Shakespeare's theater took this debate into the newfound world of the seventeenth century and put up onstage every single human emotion, so that we could have a place to go where we might discuss ourselves. Sometimes one can view Shakespeare's legacy as the complete human emotional encyclopedia. A place to go to study each and every human experience—to map ourselves in the safety of the theater.

Nunn: As you know, this is not a production that is trying to say “Here we are in the Middle East in the twenty-first century.” But it is hoping that all the things that are part of our experience now will be brought to bear on a contemporary audience watching and receiving the play.

Shakespeare's play was almost certainly heavily censored when it was first performed. It was probably first performed at court and so it is likely that quite a number of cuts were applied to the text because statements were being made that would not be acceptable to a royal ear, and possibly shouldn't be heard by anybody. There are a host of things that Lear says about human institutions, “justice”—“which is the justice, which is the thief?”; “authority” as in the police or governmental authority—“a dog's obeyed in office”—getting its power from name or uniform, but not by

standards of behavior. He talks about “politicians”—“Get thee glass eyes, / And like a scurvy politician seem / To see the things thou dost not.” Lear goes through a list of modern and, to our ears, highly recognizable contemporary institutions and says so many of them are corrupt and therefore worthless. But Shakespeare had the perfect reply to the censors. The man saying these terrible things is mad. Who knows, if he had not had that defense, Shakespeare might have done a spell in jail.

Over previous generations the blinding scene has been cut down or merely “suggested,” as something taking place in the dark. Such bowdlerization of Shakespeare is based on the judgment that these things are not for civilized people to watch, or hear. In the twentieth century, believing that Shakespeare should be very much like Samuel Beckett (who was so obviously greatly influenced by the play), the blinding scene became increasingly essential to the play. As we watch, Shakespeare is saying, “Face up to the fact that human beings are capable of unspeakably animal behavior toward each other.” These days, as we read of torture, of the callousness of the suicide bomber who blows up children, we ask how any group of people can say they are justified by any cause whatsoever in doing such things to another group of people? But Shakespeare tells us that it is in us. We humans do it. We do it as a species, and we must face the truth that it’s in human nature to be inhuman.

Academics get very exercised about the variants between the Quarto and Folio texts of the play—the fact that Lear has different dying words in each version, that a different person inherits the gored state at the end of each version (Albany speaks the final lines in Quarto, Edgar in Folio), and so on. Did you concern yourself with these textual matters or do you feel that the director is free to pick and mix, cut and paste, his or her own version of the play?

Noble: I think the director is free to do what he wants to do, but he must also be answerable for what he does. I’ve never been very interested in the textual variations. What I did, particularly in the

first production, was skin the last three hundred or four hundred lines—I was absolutely brutal with the cuts there. And the impact of it was that, at the very moment of repentance, it was too late. There was no time to save Lear and Cordelia’s lives, because the people on stage had been chatting, talking all the time. That was all very much to do with the fact that it was a godless universe. The truth is on both occasions I created a world that seemed to me to be logical from all the different versions. I would then be responsible for that and I would stand by that.

Nunn: I don’t think that in 1968 when I first directed the play anybody was yet saying, “The Quarto and the Folio are two quite different plays.” I remember at the time consulting John Barton and arriving at a “best of both worlds” conflated text. That text became the basis of the text I used in 1976 with Donald Sinden, but then when I started out this time with Ian McKellen I did read a number of scholars who were telling me that I *should* be making a choice between Quarto and Folio. Alas, I found myself unwilling to lose rich and evocative material from either version, and so I worked with a slightly different conflation, but a conflation nonetheless. For me, the more important change since I first directed the play is not in scholarship, but in the simple fact that I am thirty years older now. Shakespeare’s engagement with ultimate questions about mortality, what we construct for ourselves to explain or to accept our mortality, of course speaks more potently to me now. The play, as I have said, is very hard on organized human society and institutions of every kind. There is very little Lear and Gloucester have left to believe in, before they must endure their going hence. Edgar is left to conclude the play, and I think deliberately, it is a conclusion of a man who has nothing really to say. He offers no positive, no beliefs, no journey to a better future. He is by then almost the only character left standing, and in the bleakest of all Shakespeare’s endings, he seems to know that all we can determine on is to “endure.”

SHAKESPEARE'S CAREER IN THE THEATER

BEGINNINGS

William Shakespeare was an extraordinarily intelligent man who was born and died in an ordinary market town in the English Midlands. He lived an uneventful life in an eventful age. Born in April 1564, he was the eldest son of John Shakespeare, a glove maker who was prominent on the town council until he fell into financial difficulties. Young William was educated at the local grammar in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, where he gained a thorough grounding in the Latin language, the art of rhetoric, and classical poetry. He married Ann Hathaway and had three children (Susanna, then the twins Hamnet and Judith) before his twenty-first birthday: an exceptionally young age for the period. We do not know how he supported his family in the mid-1580s.

Like many clever country boys, he moved to the city in order to make his way in the world. Like many creative people, he found a career in the entertainment business. Public playhouses and professional full-time acting companies reliant on the market for their income were born in Shakespeare's childhood. When he arrived in London as a man, sometime in the late 1580s, a new phenomenon was in the making: the actor who is so successful that he becomes a "star." The word did not exist in its modern sense, but the pattern is recognizable: audiences went to the theater not so much to see a particular show as to witness the comedian Richard Tarlton or the dramatic actor Edward Alleyn.

Shakespeare was an actor before he was a writer. It appears not to have been long before he realized that he was never going to grow into a great comedian like Tarlton or a great tragedian like Alleyn.

Instead, he found a role within his company as the man who patched up old plays, breathing new life, new dramatic twists, into tired repertory pieces. He paid close attention to the work of the university-educated dramatists who were writing history plays and tragedies for the public stage in a style more ambitious, sweeping, and poetically grand than anything that had been seen before. But he may also have noted that what his friend and rival Ben Jonson would call “Marlowe’s mighty line” sometimes faltered in the mode of comedy. Going to university, as Christopher Marlowe did, was all well and good for honing the arts of rhetorical elaboration and classical allusion, but it could lead to a loss of the common touch. To stay close to a large segment of the potential audience for public theater, it was necessary to write for clowns as well as kings and to intersperse the flights of poetry with the humor of the tavern, the privy, and the brothel: Shakespeare was the first to establish himself early in his career as an equal master of tragedy, comedy, and history. He realized that theater could be the medium to make the national past available to a wider audience than the elite who could afford to read large history books: his signature early works include not only the classical tragedy *Titus Andronicus* but also the sequence of English historical plays on the Wars of the Roses.

He also invented a new role for himself, that of in-house company dramatist. Where his peers and predecessors had to sell their plays to the theater managers on a poorly paid piecework basis, Shakespeare took a percentage of the box-office income. The Lord Chamberlain’s Men constituted themselves in 1594 as a joint stock company, with the profits being distributed among the core actors who had invested as sharers. Shakespeare acted himself—he appears in the cast lists of some of Ben Jonson’s plays as well as the list of actors’ names at the beginning of his own collected works—but his principal duty was to write two or three plays a year for the company. By holding shares, he was effectively earning himself a royalty on his work, something no author had ever done before in England. When the Lord Chamberlain’s Men collected their fee for performance at court in the Christmas season of 1594, three of them went along to the Treasurer of the Chamber: not just Richard

Burbage the tragedian and Will Kempe the clown, but also Shakespeare the scriptwriter. That was something new.

The next four years were the golden period in Shakespeare's career, though overshadowed by the death of his only son, Hamnet, age eleven, in 1596. In his early thirties and in full command of both his poetic and his theatrical medium, he perfected his art of comedy while also developing his tragic and historical writing in new ways. In 1598, Francis Meres, a Cambridge University graduate with his finger on the pulse of the London literary world, praised Shakespeare for his excellence across the genres:

As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witness his *Gentlemen of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Love Labours Lost*, his *Love Labours Won*, his *Midsummer Night Dream* and his *Merchant of Venice*: for tragedy his *Richard the 2*, *Richard the 3*, *Henry the 4*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Juliet*.

For Meres, as for the many writers who praised the “honey-flowing vein” of *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, narrative poems written when the theaters were closed due to plague in 1593–94, Shakespeare was marked above all by his linguistic skill, by the gift of turning elegant poetic phrases.

PLAYHOUSES

Elizabethan playhouses were “thrust” or “one-room” theaters. To understand Shakespeare's original theatrical life, we have to forget about the indoor theater of later times, with its proscenium arch and curtain that would be opened at the beginning and closed at the end of each act. In the proscenium arch theater, stage and auditorium are effectively two separate rooms: the audience looks from one world into another as if through the imaginary “fourth wall” framed by the proscenium. The picture-frame stage, together with the elaborate scenic effects and backdrops beyond it, created the

illusion of a self-contained world—especially once nineteenth-century developments in the control of artificial lighting meant that the auditorium could be darkened and the spectators made to focus on the lighted stage. Shakespeare, by contrast, wrote for a bare platform stage with a standing audience gathered around it in a courtyard in full daylight. The audience were always conscious of themselves and their fellow-spectators, and they shared the same “room” as the actors. A sense of immediate presence and the creation of rapport with the audience were all-important. The actor could not afford to imagine he was in a closed world, with silent witnesses dutifully observing him from the darkness.

Shakespeare’s theatrical career began at the Rose Theatre in Southwark. The stage was wide and shallow, trapezoid in shape, like a lozenge. This design had a great deal of potential for the theatrical equivalent of cinematic split-screen effects, whereby one group of characters would enter at the door at one end of the tiring-house wall at the back of the stage and another group through the door at the other end, thus creating two rival tableaux. Many of the battle-heavy and faction-filled plays that premiered at the Rose have scenes of just this sort.

At the rear of the Rose stage, there were three capacious exits, each more than ten feet wide. Unfortunately, the very limited excavation of a fragmentary portion of the original Globe site in 1989 revealed nothing about the stage. The first Globe was built in 1599 with similar proportions to those of another theater, the Fortune, albeit that the former was polygonal and looked circular, whereas the latter was rectangular. The building contract for the Fortune survives and allows us to infer that the stage of the Globe was probably substantially wider than it was deep (perhaps forty-three feet wide and twenty-seven feet deep). It may well have been tapered at the front, like that of the Rose.

The capacity of the Globe was said to have been enormous, perhaps in excess of three thousand. It has been conjectured that about eight hundred people may have stood in the yard, with two thousand or more in the three layers of covered galleries. The other “public” playhouses were also of large capacity, whereas the indoor

Blackfriars theater that Shakespeare's company began using in 1608—the former refectory of a monastery—had overall internal dimensions of a mere forty-six by sixty feet. It would have made for a much more intimate theatrical experience and had a much smaller capacity, probably of about six hundred people. Since they paid at least sixpence a head, the Blackfriars attracted a more select or “private” audience. The atmosphere would have been closer to that of an indoor performance before the court in the Whitehall Palace or at Richmond. That Shakespeare always wrote for indoor production at court as well as outdoor performance in the public theater should make us cautious about inferring, as some scholars have, that the opportunity provided by the intimacy of the Blackfriars led to a significant change toward a “chamber” style in his last plays—which, besides, were performed at both the Globe and the Blackfriars. After the occupation of the Blackfriars a five-act structure seems to have become more important to Shakespeare. That was because of artificial lighting: there were musical interludes between the acts, while the candles were trimmed and replaced. Again, though, something similar must have been necessary for indoor court performances throughout his career.

Front of house there were the “gatherers” who collected the money from audience members: a penny to stand in the open-air yard, another penny for a place in the covered galleries, sixpence for the prominent “lord's rooms” to the side of the stage. In the indoor “private” theaters, gallants from the audience who fancied making themselves part of the spectacle sat on stools on the edge of the stage itself. Scholars debate as to how widespread this practice was in the public theaters such as the Globe. Once the audience were in place and the money counted, the gatherers were available to be extras on stage. That is one reason why battles and crowd scenes often come later rather than early in Shakespeare's plays. There was no formal prohibition upon performance by women, and there certainly were women among the gatherers, so it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that female crowd members were played by females.

The play began at two o'clock in the afternoon and the theater had to be cleared by five. After the main show, there would be a jig—which consisted not only of dancing, but also of knockabout comedy (it is the origin of the farcical “afterpiece” in the eighteenth-century theater). So the time available for a Shakespeare play was about two and a half hours, somewhere between the “two hours’ traffic” mentioned in the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet* and the “three hours’ spectacle” referred to in the preface to the 1647 Folio of Beaumont and Fletcher’s plays. The prologue to a play by Thomas Middleton refers to a thousand lines as “one hour’s words,” so the likelihood is that about two and a half thousand, or a maximum of three thousand lines, made up the performed text. This is indeed the length of most of Shakespeare’s comedies, whereas many of his tragedies and histories are much longer, raising the possibility that he wrote full scripts, possibly with eventual publication in mind, in the full knowledge that the stage version would be heavily cut. The short Quarto texts published in his lifetime—they used to be called “Bad” Quartos—provide fascinating evidence as to the kind of cutting that probably took place. So, for instance, the First Quarto of *Hamlet* neatly merges two occasions when Hamlet is overheard, the “Fishmonger” and the “nunnery” scenes.

The social composition of the audience was mixed. The poet Sir John Davies wrote of “A thousand townsmen, gentlemen and whores, / Porters and servingmen” who would “together throng” at the public playhouses. Though moralists associated female play-going with adultery and the sex trade, many perfectly respectable citizens’ wives were regular attendees. Some, no doubt, resembled the modern groupie: a story attested in two different sources has one citizen’s wife making a postshow assignation with Richard Burbage and ending up in bed with Shakespeare—supposedly eliciting from the latter the quip that William the Conqueror was before Richard III. Defenders of theater liked to say that by witnessing the comeuppance of villains on the stage, audience members would repent of their own wrongdoings, but the reality is that most people went to the theater then, as they do now, for entertainment more than moral edification. Besides, it would be

foolish to suppose that audiences behaved in a homogeneous way: a pamphlet of the 1630s tells of how two men went to see *Pericles* and one of them laughed while the other wept. Bishop John Hall complained that people went to church for the same reasons that they went to the theater: “for company, for custom, for recreation ... to feed his eyes or his ears ... or perhaps for sleep.”

Men-about-town and clever young lawyers went to be seen as much as to see. In the modern popular imagination, shaped not least by *Shakespeare in Love* and the opening sequence of Laurence Olivier’s *Henry V* film, the penny-paying groundlings stand in the yard hurling abuse or encouragement and hazelnuts or orange peel at the actors, while the sophisticates in the covered galleries appreciate Shakespeare’s soaring poetry. The reality was probably the other way round. A “groundling” was a kind of fish, so the nickname suggests the penny audience standing below the level of the stage and gazing in silent open-mouthed wonder at the spectacle unfolding above them. The more difficult audience members, who kept up a running commentary of clever remarks on the performance and who occasionally got into quarrels with players, were the gallants. Like Hollywood movies in modern times, Elizabethan and Jacobean plays exercised a powerful influence on the fashion and behavior of the young. John Marston mocks the lawyers who would open their lips, perhaps to court a girl, and out would “flow / Naught but pure Juliet and Romeo.”

THE ENSEMBLE AT WORK

In the absence of typewriters and photocopying machines, reading aloud would have been the means by which the company got to know a new play. The tradition of the playwright reading his complete script to the assembled company endured for generations. A copy would then have been taken to the Master of the Revels for licensing. The theater book-holder or prompter would then have copied the parts for distribution to the actors. A partbook consisted of the character’s lines, with each speech preceded by the last three or four words of the speech before, the so-called “cue.” These would

have been taken away and studied or “conned.” During this period of learning the parts, an actor might have had some one-to-one instruction, perhaps from the dramatist, perhaps from a senior actor who had played the same part before, and, in the case of an apprentice, from his master. A high percentage of Desdemona’s lines occur in dialogue with Othello, of Lady Macbeth’s with Macbeth, Cleopatra’s with Antony, and Volumnia’s with Coriolanus. The roles would almost certainly have been taken by the apprentice of the lead actor, usually Burbage, who delivers the majority of the cues. Given that apprentices lodged with their masters, there would have been ample opportunity for personal instruction, which may be what made it possible for young men to play such demanding parts.



10. Hypothetical reconstruction of the interior of an Elizabethan playhouse during a performance.

After the parts were learned, there may have been no more than a single rehearsal before the first performance. With six different

plays to be put on every week, there was no time for more. Actors, then, would go into a show with a very limited sense of the whole. The notion of a collective rehearsal process that is itself a process of discovery for the actors is wholly modern and would have been incomprehensible to Shakespeare and his original ensemble. Given the number of parts an actor had to hold in his memory, the forgetting of lines was probably more frequent than in the modern theater. The book-holder was on hand to prompt.

Backstage personnel included the property man, the tire-man who oversaw the costumes, call boys, attendants, and the musicians, who might play at various times from the main stage, the rooms above, and within the tiring-house. Scriptwriters sometimes made a nuisance of themselves backstage. There was often tension between the acting companies and the freelance playwrights from whom they purchased scripts: it was a smart move on the part of Shakespeare and the Lord Chamberlain's Men to bring the writing process in-house.

Scenery was limited, though sometimes set pieces were brought on (a bank of flowers, a bed, the mouth of hell). The trapdoor from below, the gallery stage above, and the curtained discovery-space at the back allowed for an array of special effects: the rising of ghosts and apparitions, the descent of gods, dialogue between a character at a window and another at ground level, the revelation of a statue or a pair of lovers playing at chess. Ingenious use could be made of props, as with the ass's head in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In a theater that does not clutter the stage with the material paraphernalia of everyday life, those objects that are deployed may take on powerful symbolic weight, as when Shylock bears his weighing scales in one hand and knife in the other, thus becoming a parody of the figure of Justice who traditionally bears a sword and a balance. Among the more significant items in the property cupboard of Shakespeare's company, there would have been a throne (the "chair of state"), joint stools, books, bottles, coins, purses, letters (which are brought onstage, read, or referred to on about eighty occasions in the complete works), maps, gloves, a set of stocks (in which Kent is put in *King Lear*), rings, rapiers, daggers, broadswords,

staves, pistols, masks and vizards, heads and skulls, torches and tapers and lanterns, which served to signal night scenes on the daylight stage, a buck's head, an ass's head, animal costumes. Live animals also put in appearances, most notably the dog Crab in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and possibly a young polar bear in *The Winter's Tale*.

The costumes were the most important visual dimension of the play. Playwrights were paid between £2 and £6 per script, whereas Alleyn was not averse to paying £20 for "a black velvet cloak with sleeves embroidered all with silver and gold." No matter the period of the play, actors always wore contemporary costume. The excitement for the audience came not from any impression of historical accuracy, but from the richness of the attire and perhaps the transgressive thrill of the knowledge that here were commoners like themselves strutting in the costumes of courtiers in effective defiance of the strict sumptuary laws whereby in real life people had to wear the clothes that befitted their social station.

To an even greater degree than props, costumes could carry symbolic importance. Racial characteristics could be suggested: a breastplate and helmet for a Roman soldier, a turban for a Turk, long robes for exotic characters such as Moors, a gabardine for a Jew. The figure of Time, as in *The Winter's Tale*, would be equipped with hourglass, scythe, and wings; Rumour, who speaks the prologue of *2 Henry IV*, wore a costume adorned with a thousand tongues. The wardrobe in the tiring-house of the Globe would have contained much of the same stock as that of rival manager Philip Henslowe at the Rose: green gowns for outlaws and foresters, black for melancholy men such as Jaques and people in mourning such as the Countess in *All's Well That Ends Well* (at the beginning of *Hamlet*, the prince is still in mourning black when everyone else is in festive garb for the wedding of the new king), a gown and hood for a friar (or a feigned friar like the duke in *Measure for Measure*), blue coats and tawny to distinguish the followers of rival factions, a leather apron and ruler for a carpenter (as in the opening scene of *Julius Caesar*—and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where this is the only sign that Peter Quince is a carpenter), a cockle hat with staff and a

pair of sandals for a pilgrim or palmer (the disguise assumed by Helen in *All's Well*), bodices and kirtles with farthingales beneath for the boys who are to be dressed as girls. A gender switch such as that of Rosalind or Jessica seems to have taken between fifty and eighty lines of dialogue—Viola does not resume her “maiden weeds” but remains in her boy’s costume to the end of *Twelfth Night* because a change would have slowed down the action at just the moment it was speeding to a climax. Henslowe’s inventory also included “a robe for to go invisible”: Oberon, Puck, and Ariel must have had something similar.

As the costumes appealed to the eyes, so there was music for the ears. Comedies included many songs. Desdemona’s willow song, perhaps a late addition to the text, is a rare and thus exceptionally poignant example from tragedy. Trumpets and tuckets sounded for ceremonial entrances, drums denoted an army on the march. Background music could create atmosphere, as at the beginning of *Twelfth Night*, during the lovers’ dialogue near the end of *The Merchant of Venice*, when the statue seemingly comes to life in *The Winter’s Tale*, and for the revival of Pericles and of Lear (in the Quarto text, but not the Folio). The haunting sound of the hautboy suggested a realm beyond the human, as when the god Hercules is imagined deserting Mark Antony. Dances symbolized the harmony of the end of a comedy—though in Shakespeare’s world of mingled joy and sorrow, someone is usually left out of the circle.

The most important resource was, of course, the actors themselves. They needed many skills: in the words of one contemporary commentator, “dancing, activity, music, song, elocution, ability of body, memory, skill of weapon, pregnancy of wit.” Their bodies were as significant as their voices. Hamlet tells the player to “suit the action to the word, the word to the action”: moments of strong emotion, known as “passions,” relied on a repertoire of dramatic gestures as well as a modulation of the voice. When Titus Andronicus has had his hand chopped off, he asks, “How can I grace my talk, / Wanting a hand to give it action?” A pen portrait of “The Character of an Excellent Actor” by the dramatist John Webster is almost certainly based on his impression

of Shakespeare's leading man, Richard Burbage: "By a full and significant action of body, he charms our attention: sit in a full theatre, and you will think you see so many lines drawn from the circumference of so many ears, whiles the actor is the centre...."

Though Burbage was admired above all others, praise was also heaped upon the apprentice players whose alto voices fitted them for the parts of women. A spectator at Oxford in 1610 records how the audience was reduced to tears by the pathos of Desdemona's death. The puritans who fumed about the biblical prohibition upon cross-dressing and the encouragement to sodomy constituted by the sight of an adult male kissing a teenage boy on stage were a small minority. Little is known, however, about the characteristics of the leading apprentices in Shakespeare's company. It may perhaps be inferred that one was a lot taller than the other, since Shakespeare often wrote for a pair of female friends, one tall and fair, the other short and dark (Helena and Hermia, Rosalind and Celia, Beatrice and Hero).

We know little about Shakespeare's own acting roles—an early allusion indicates that he often took royal parts, and a venerable tradition gives him old Adam in *As You Like It* and the ghost of old King Hamlet. Save for Burbage's lead roles and the generic part of the clown, all such castings are mere speculation. We do not even know for sure whether the original Falstaff was Will Kempe or another actor who specialized in comic roles, Thomas Pope.

Kempe left the company in early 1599. Tradition has it that he fell out with Shakespeare over the matter of excessive improvisation. He was replaced by Robert Armin, who was less of a clown and more of a cerebral wit: this explains the difference between such parts as Lancelet Gobbo and Dogberry, which were written for Kempe, and the more verbally sophisticated Feste and Lear's Fool, which were written for Armin.

One thing that is clear from surviving "plots" or storyboards of plays from the period is that a degree of doubling was necessary. 2 *Henry VI* has more than sixty speaking parts, but more than half of the characters only appear in a single scene and most scenes have only six to eight speakers. At a stretch, the play could be performed

by thirteen actors. When Thomas Platter saw *Julius Caesar* at the Globe in 1599, he noted that there were about fifteen. Why doesn't Paris go to the Capulet ball in *Romeo and Juliet*? Perhaps because he was doubled with Mercutio, who does. In *The Winter's Tale*, Mamillius might have come back as Perdita and Antigonus been doubled by Camillo, making the partnership with Paulina at the end a very neat touch. Titania and Oberon are often played by the same pair as Hippolyta and Theseus, suggesting a symbolic matching of the rulers of the worlds of night and day, but it is questionable whether there would have been time for the necessary costume changes. As so often, one is left in a realm of tantalizing speculation.

THE KING'S MAN

The new king, James I, who had held the Scottish throne as James VI since he had been an infant, immediately took the Lord Chamberlain's Men under his direct patronage. Henceforth they would be the King's Men, and for the rest of Shakespeare's career they were favored with far more court performances than any of their rivals. There even seem to have been rumors early in the reign that Shakespeare and Burbage were being considered for knighthoods, an unprecedented honor for mere actors—and one that in the event was not accorded to a member of the profession for nearly three hundred years, when the title was bestowed upon Henry Irving, the leading Shakespearean actor of Queen Victoria's reign.

Shakespeare's productivity rate slowed in the Jacobean years, not because of age or some personal trauma, but because there were frequent outbreaks of plague, causing the theaters to be closed for long periods. The King's Men were forced to spend many months on the road. Between November 1603 and 1608, they were to be found at various towns in the south and Midlands, though Shakespeare probably did not tour with them by this time. He had bought a large house back home in Stratford and was accumulating other property. He may indeed have stopped acting soon after the new king took the throne. With the London theaters closed so much of the time and a

large repertoire on the stocks, Shakespeare seems to have focused his energies on writing a few long and complex tragedies that could have been played on demand at court: *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, and *Cymbeline* are among his longest and poetically grandest plays. *Macbeth* only survives in a shorter text, which shows signs of adaptation after Shakespeare's death. The bitterly satirical *Timon of Athens*, apparently a collaboration with Thomas Middleton that may have failed on the stage, also belongs to this period. In comedy, too, he wrote longer and morally darker works than in the Elizabethan period, pushing at the very bounds of the form in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*.

From 1608 onward, when the King's Men began occupying the indoor Blackfriars playhouse (as a winter house, meaning that they only used the outdoor Globe in summer?), Shakespeare turned to a more romantic style. His company had a great success with a revived and altered version of an old pastoral play called *Mucedorus*. It even featured a bear. The younger dramatist John Fletcher, meanwhile, sometimes working in collaboration with Francis Beaumont, was pioneering a new style of tragicomedy, a mix of romance and royalism laced with intrigue and pastoral excursions. Shakespeare experimented with this idiom in *Cymbeline* and it was presumably with his blessing that Fletcher eventually took over as the King's Men's company dramatist. The two writers apparently collaborated on three plays in the years 1612–14: a lost romance called *Cardenio* (based on the love-madness of a character in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*), *Henry VIII* (originally staged with the title "All Is True"), and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a dramatization of Chaucer's "Knight's Tale." These were written after Shakespeare's two final solo-authored plays, *The Winter's Tale*, a self-consciously old-fashioned work dramatizing the pastoral romance of his old enemy Robert Greene, and *The Tempest*, which at one and the same time drew together multiple theatrical traditions, diverse reading, and contemporary interest in the fate of a ship that had been wrecked on the way to the New World.

The collaborations with Fletcher suggest that Shakespeare's career ended with a slow fade rather than the sudden retirement supposed

by the nineteenth-century Romantic critics who read Prospero's epilogue to *The Tempest* as Shakespeare's personal farewell to his art. In the last few years of his life Shakespeare certainly spent more of his time in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he became further involved in property dealing and litigation. But his London life also continued. In 1613 he made his first major London property purchase: a freehold house in the Blackfriars district, close to his company's indoor theater. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* may have been written as late as 1614, and Shakespeare was in London on business a little more than a year before he died of an unknown cause at home in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1616, probably on his fifty-second birthday.

About half the sum of his works were published in his lifetime, in texts of variable quality. A few years after his death, his fellow actors began putting together an authorized edition of his complete *Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*. It appeared in 1623, in large "Folio" format. This collection of thirty-six plays gave Shakespeare his immortality. In the words of his fellow dramatist Ben Jonson, who contributed two poems of praise at the start of the Folio, the body of his work made him "a monument without a tomb":

And art alive still while thy book doth live
And we have wits to read and praise to give ...
He was not of an age, but for all time!

SHAKESPEARE'S WORKS: A CHRONOLOGY

1589–91

? *Arden of Faversham* (possible part authorship)

1589–92

The Taming of the Shrew

1589–92

? *Edward the Third* (possible part authorship)

1591

The Second Part of Henry the Sixth, originally called *The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* (element of coauthorship possible)

1591

The Third Part of Henry the Sixth, originally called *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (element of coauthorship probable)

1591–92

The Two Gentlemen of Verona

1591–92; perhaps revised 1594

The Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus (probably co-written with, or revising an earlier version by, George Peele)

1592

The First Part of Henry the Sixth, probably with Thomas Nashe and others

1592/94

King Richard the Third

1593

Venus and Adonis (poem)

1593–94

The Rape of Lucrece (poem)

1593–1608

Sonnets (154 poems, published 1609 with *A Lover's Complaint*, a poem of disputed authorship)

1592–94/1600–03

Sir Thomas More (a single scene for a play originally by Anthony Munday, with other revisions by Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, and Thomas Heywood)

1594

The Comedy of Errors

1595

Love's Labour's Lost

1595–97

Love's Labour's Won (a lost play, unless the original title for another comedy)

1595–96

A Midsummer Night's Dream

1595–96

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

1595–96

King Richard the Second

1595–97

The Life and Death of King John (possibly earlier)

1596–97

The Merchant of Venice

1596–97

The First Part of Henry the Fourth

1597–98

The Second Part of Henry the Fourth

1598

Much Ado About Nothing

1598–99

The Passionate Pilgrim (20 poems, some not by Shakespeare)

1599

The Life of Henry the Fifth

1599

“To the Queen” (epilogue for a court performance)

1599

As You Like It

1599

The Tragedy of Julius Caesar

1600–01

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (perhaps revising an earlier version)

1600–01

The Merry Wives of Windsor (perhaps revising version of 1597–99)

1601

“Let the Bird of Loudest Lay” (poem, known since 1807 as “The Phoenix and Turtle” [turtledove])

1601

Twelfth Night, or What You Will

1601–02

The Tragedy of Troilus and Cressida

1604

The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice

1604

Measure for Measure

1605

All's Well That Ends Well

1605

The Life of Timon of Athens, with Thomas Middleton

1605–06

The Tragedy of King Lear

1605–08

? contribution to *The Four Plays in One* (lost, except for *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, mostly by Thomas Middleton)

1606

The Tragedy of Macbeth (surviving text has additional scenes by Thomas Middleton)

1606–07

The Tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra

1608

The Tragedy of Coriolanus

1608

Pericles, Prince of Tyre, with George Wilkins

1610

The Tragedy of Cymbeline

1611

The Winter's Tale

1611

The Tempest

1612–13

Cardenio, with John Fletcher (survives only in later adaptation called *Double Falsehood* by Lewis Theobald)

1613

Henry VIII (All Is True), with John Fletcher

1613–14

The Two Noble Kinsmen, with John Fletcher

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE TRAGEDIES: A CHRONOLOGY

Era/Date	Event	Location	Play
Greek myth	Trojan War	Troy	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
Greek myth	Theseus King of Athens	Athens	<i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i>
c.tenth–ninth century BC?	Leir King of Britain (legendary)	Britain	<i>King Lear</i>
535–510 BC	Tarquin II King of Rome	Rome	<i>The Rape of Lucrece</i>
493 BC	Caius Martius captures Corioli	Italy	<i>Coriolanus</i>
431–404 BC	Peloponnesian war	Greece	<i>Timon of Athens</i>
17 Mar 45 BC	Battle of Munda: Caesar's victory over Pompey's sons	Munda, Spain	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
Oct 45 BC	Caesar returns to Rome for triumph	Rome	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
15 Mar 44 BC	Assassination of Caesar	Rome	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
27 Nov 43 BC	Formation of Second Triumvirate	Rome	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
Oct 42 BC	Battle of Philippi	Philippi, Macedonia	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
Winter 41–40 BC	Antony visits Cleopatra	Egypt	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
Oct 40 BC	Pact of Brundisium; marriage of Antony and Octavia	Italy	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
39 BC	Pact of Misenum between Pompey and the triumvirs	Campania, Italy	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>

39–38 BC	Ventidius defeats the Parthians in a series of engagements	Syria	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
34 BC	Cleopatra and her children proclaimed rulers of the eastern Mediterranean	Alexandria	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
2 Sep 31 BC	Battle of Actium	On the coast of western Greece	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
Aug 30 BC	Death of Antony	Alexandria	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
12 Aug 30 BC	Death of Cleopatra	Alexandria	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
Early first century AD	Cunobelinus/ Cymbeline rules Britain (and dies before AD 43)	Britain	<i>Cymbeline</i>
During the reign of a fictional (late?) Roman emperor		Rome	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>
c.ninth–tenth century AD	Existence of legendary Amleth?	Denmark	<i>Hamlet</i>
15 Aug 1040	Death of Duncan I of Scotland	Bothnguane, Scotland	<i>Macbeth</i>
1053	Malcolm invades Scotland	Scotland	<i>Macbeth</i>
15 Aug 1057	Death of Macbeth	Lumphanan, Scotland	<i>Macbeth</i>
7 Oct 1571	Naval battle of Lepanto between Christians and Turks	The Mediterranean off the coast of Greece	A context for <i>Othello</i>

FURTHER READING AND VIEWING

CRITICAL APPROACHES

Booth, Stephen, *King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition and Tragedy* (1983). Not for beginners, but very penetrating.

Bradley, A. C., *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904). Still worth reading a century after publication.

Avell, Stanley, "The Avoidance of Love," in *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (1987). A skeptical philosopher's reading; still less for beginners, but so full of deep insight that it has claims to be among the best pieces ever written on the play.

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(1988). Inventive account of why Shakespeare used an anti-Popish treatise for the mad language of Poor Tom.

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THE PLAY IN PERFORMANCE

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Jackson, Russell, and Robert Smallwood, eds, *Players of Shakespeare 2* (1988). Interviews with actors, including Antony Sher on playing the Fool in Adrian Noble's production.

Meggatt, Alexander, *King Lear, Shakespeare in Performance* (1991). Good survey.

Mgden, James, and Arthur H. Scouten, eds, *Lear from Study to Stage: Essays in Criticism* (1997). Contains several illuminating essays.

Mosenberg, Marvin, *The Masks of King Lear* (1972). Many fascinating details of performances down the ages.

AVAILABLE ON DVD

ing Lear, directed by Peter Brook (1970, DVD 2005). Bleak interpretation with magisterial performance by Paul Scofield.

ing Lear (Korol Lir), directed by Grigori Kosintsev (1970, DVD 2007). Powerful Russian version.

ing Lear, directed by Jonathan Miller (BBC Television Shakespeare, 1982, DVD 2004). Michael Hordern as Lear in a reworking (with fuller, perhaps overlong text) of an earlier television version by Miller, based ultimately on a stage production at Nottingham.

ing Lear, directed by Michael Elliott (Channel 4 Television, 1983, DVD 2007). Laurence Olivier's last Shakespearean performance.

an, directed by Akira Kurosawa (1985, DVD 2006). Epic Japanese adaptation in Samurai setting.

Thousand Acres, directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse (1997, DVD 2006). Jessica Lange, Michelle Pfeiffer, and Jennifer Jason Leigh in a film version of a novel by Jane Smiley that transposes the story to the American Midwest and tells it from the point of view of the three daughters.

ing Lear, directed by Richard Eyre (BBC2 Television 1998, DVD 2006). Filming of Eyre's exemplary small-scale National Theatre production.

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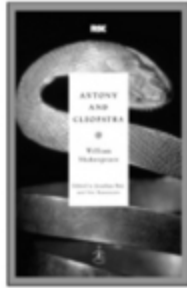
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Act 1 Scene 1

¹ *Location: the royal court, Britain*

affected favored

qualities ... **moiety** their qualities are so evenly balanced that the most careful scrutiny cannot distinguish between either man's share

breeding upbringing (plays on the sense of "conception") **charge** cost (plays on the sense of "accusation, blame")

brazed made brazen, hardened

³ **conceive** understand (Gloucester then plays on sense of "become pregnant")

³ **ere** before

⁴ **fault** transgression/loss of scent during a hunt/vagina

⁵ **undone** plays on the sense of "not copulated with" issue outcome/child

⁵ **proper** handsome/worthy/rightful

⁷ **by** ... **law** legitimate

⁷ **some** year about a year

³ **dearer** more beloved (plays on the sense of "more expensive")

³ **account** estimation (plays on the financial sense)

⁴ **whoreson** i.e. bastard (here used affectionately)

⁷ **sue** entreat, seek

³ **deserving** to be worthy of (your esteem)

³ **out** away (perhaps abroad or in the house of another nobleman; it was common for a nobleman's son to be educated in the house of another important family)

¹ *Sennet* trumpet call signaling a procession

¹ *bearing a coronet* carrying a small crown denoting inferior rank/wearing a wreath or garland about the head (must be of material that can be broken in half)

- ┆ **Attend** wait on, look after
- ┆ **darker** secret (with sinister connotations)
- ┆ **fast intent** firm intention
- ┆ **business** official duties/exertion/anxiety
- ┆ **son** i.e. son-in-law (like Albany)
- ┆ **constant will** unshakable intention
- ┆ **publish** proclaim, make public
- ┆ **several dowers** individual dowries
- ┆ **that** so that
- ┆ **sojourn** stay
- ┆ **Interest** possession
- ┆ **bounty** generosity/gift
- ┆ **nature ... challenge** natural affection, combined with merit, makes a claim
- ┆ **wield** express
- ┆ **grace** virtue
- ┆ **makes breath poor** makes words insufficient/renders one breathless (in the attempt to express it)
- ┆ **unable** inadequate
- ┆ **all ... much** i.e. all possible expressions of the amount of love
- ┆ **bounds** territories
- ┆ **shadowy** shady
- ┆ **champaigns riched** rich open countryside
- ┆ **wide-skirted meads** extensive meadows
- ┆ **self-mettle** same temperament/same substance (“metal”)
- ┆ **prize ... worth** value myself in equal terms
- ┆ **deed** action, performance/bond, legal document
- ┆ **that** in that

- 2 **square of sense** guiding principle governing the senses/(physical or mental) region of the senses
- 3 **alone felicitate** only happy
- 7 **ponderous** weighty
- 3 **hereditary** by inheritance
- 1 **validity** value
- 3 **vines ... Burgundy** Lear characterizes France and Burgundy by their assets: vineyards and cattle pastures
- 1 **interested** admitted, given a share
- 1 **draw** attract/receive, collect/pull forth (as one “draws lots”)
- 2 **bond** duty (with connotations both of a binding legal agreement and of restrictive shackles)
- 3 **Mend** improve
- 1 **mar** spoil
- 5 **begot** conceived, fathered
- 5 **bred** raised, brought up
- 1 **plight** pledge, promise
- 6 **untender** hard/cruel (plays on the sense of “not young”)
- 0 **Hecate** Greek goddess of witchcraft and the moon
- 1 **operation** movement and astrological influence
- 1 **orbs** planets
- 4 **Propinquity ... blood** close ties of kinship
- 6 **this** this time (or Lear gestures toward himself)
- 6 **Scythian** person from Scythia, an ancient region extending over much of eastern Europe and Asiatic Russia, notorious for its barbarous inhabitants
- 7 **generation** children/own people
- 7 **messes** small groups of people who eat together/portions of food, meals/disgusting concoctions/troubled, confused conditions
- 9 **neighbourhood** treated with hospitable kindness

- 20 **sometime** former
- 21 **liege** lord, one to whom feudal duty and service was owed
- 24 **set my rest** stake everything (card-playing term)/repose, be at ease
- 25 **kind** affectionate (in the manner of a family member)
- 25 **nursery** care
- 25 **avoid** leave
- 27 **Who stirs?** Get on with it!/Why don't you move?
- 29 **digest** absorb, incorporate
- 30 **plainness** frankness, plain speaking
- 30 **marry her** be her dowry/get her a husband
- 32 **large effects** extensive trappings
- 33 **troop with** accompany
- 34 **With reservation of** reserving the right to have (legal language)
- 35 **sustained** maintained, supported
- 37 **th'addition to** the title and honors of
- 37 **sway** authority, rule
- 45 **make ... shaft** avoid the arrow (of my anger)
- 46 **fork** barbed arrowhead
- 48 **thou** kings are almost always addressed, respectfully, as "you"; Kent is **unmannerly** in his use of the familiar "thou"
- 51 **Reserve thy state** retain your sovereignty
- 52 **in ... consideration** with wise and careful reflection
- 53 **Answer ... judgement** I'll stake my life on my opinion
- 56 **Reverb no hollowness** do not reverberate hollowly (i.e. emptily/insincerely)
- 58 **held** regarded, valued
- 58 **pawn** a pledge, surety
- 59 **wage** deposit as security

- 53 **blank** center of a target/line of sight (Kent asks to be the means to help Lear see better)
- 54 **Apollo** Greek and Roman sun god
- 57 **vassal** servant/wretch
- 57 **Miscreant** villain (literally, “infidel, unbeliever”)
- 58 **forbear** stop, desist
- 59 **Kill ... disease** i.e. Lear has got things the wrong way round
- 70 **foul disease** loathsome, festering disease/syphilis
- 73 **recreant** traitor
- 74 **That** in that, since
- 75 **durst** dared
- 75 **strained** excessive/unnatural
- 76 **sentences** pronouncements, decisions
- 77 **nor ... nor** neither ... nor
- 77 **place** status, rank
- 78 **potency** power
- 78 **made good** being carried into effect/shown to be valid/secured, defended
- 80 **disasters** misfortunes
- 83 **trunk** body
- 84 **Jupiter** supreme Roman god
- 86 **sith** since
- 90 **your ... approve** may your actions prove the truth of your grand statements
- 93 **shape ... course** behave in his usual manner
- 1 **Flourish** trumpet fanfare signaling the arrival of an important person
- 97 **rivalled** competed
- 97 **in the least** at the lowest

- 18 **present dower** immediately available dowry
- 12 **tender** offer
- 14 **hold her so** consider her to be **dear** (i.e. beloved/worth a great deal)
- 16 **ought** anything
- 16 **little seeming substance** insignificant (or physically small) thing/one who totally refuses to play a part
- 17 **pieced** augmented, increased
- 18 **fitly like** justly please
- 1 **infirmities** deficiencies
- 1 **owes** owns
- 3 **Dowered with** given as a dowry
- 3 **strangered** made a stranger, disowned
- 6 **Election ... up** choice is impossible
- 8 **tell you** inform you of/enumerate
- 9 **from ... stray** stray so far from your love as
- 15 **your object** your focus, the object of your sight (the apple of your eye)
- 16 **argument** theme
- 16 **balm** soothing ointment
- 17 **trice** mere moment
- 18 **monstrous** unnatural
- 18 **dismantle** strip off (the **folds** of the metaphorical cloth of favor)
- 11 **monsters it** it becomes monstrous
- 11 **fore-vouched** previously sworn
- 12 **Fall into taint** (must) come under suspicion
- 12 **which ... me** i.e. and to believe in all reason that she had committed such a monstrous offense would require a miracle
- 16 **for** (your anger is) because

- 36 **want** lack
- 37 **purpose not** not intend to do what I say
- 39 **foulness** wickedness/moral impurity
- 12 **for which** i.e. for lack of which
- 13 **still-soliciting** constantly entreating, self-seeking
- 18 **tardiness in nature** natural slowness
- 19 **history** account (of an action)
- 12 **regards ... point** irrelevant concerns
- 13 **respect and fortunes** status and wealth
- 16 **Most choice forsaken** most desirable when rejected
- 17 **seize upon** take possession of (legal term)
- 18 **be it lawful** provided it is lawful
- 19 **their** may refer to either the gods or to Lear and Burgundy
- 70 **inflamed** glowing, ardent
- 71 **thrown ... chance** cast to my luck (gambling metaphor)
- 73 **wat'rish** well-watered (with rivers)/wet, feeble
- 74 **unprized** unvalued (may play on a sense of "priceless")
- 75 **though unkind** though they are cruel (or "lacking in natural familial affection")
- 76 **where** somewhere, place
- 30 **grace** favor (with connotations of "divinely sanctioned mercy")
- 30 **benison** blessing
- 13 **washèd** i.e. wet with tears
- 36 **as ... named** by their true names
- 37 **your professèd bosoms** i.e. the love you claim to have for him
- 37 **commit** entrust; perhaps with connotations of "confine (to prison)"
- 19 **prefer** advance, promote
- 12 **study** concern, endeavor
- 14 **At fortune's alms** as a charitable gift from fortune

- 14 **scanted** stinted, withheld/slighted, neglected
- 15 **are ... wanted** deserve to be deprived of the love you have failed to show (to others)
- 16 **plighted cunning** secret cunning/deceitful promises
- 17 **Who ... derides** those who hide their faults will in the end be shamed and mocked
- 10 **nearly** closely
- 17 **grossly** obviously
- 18 **ever** always
- 19 **slenderly** slightly
- 10 **The ... rash** even at his best and healthiest he was impulsive
- 11 **look** expect
- 12 **long-engrafted condition** long-implanted tendencies
- 12 **therewithal** in addition to that
- 13 **choleric** irascible, hot-tempered, impulsive/bilious; one of the four “humors” or temperaments thought to be related to an excess of bile in the constitution
- 15 **unconstant starts** unpredictable fits
- 17 **compliment** etiquette, ceremony
- 18 **sit together** i.e. get together, confer
- 19 **carry** maintain, manage
- 19 **disposition** frame of mind
- 20 **last surrender** recent yielding (of authority)
- 20 **offend** harm
- 22 **i'th'heat** immediately

Act 1 Scene 2

2 *Location: the Earl of Gloucester's residence*

Wherefore why

Stand in endure/stand still under

curiosity scruples, fussiness

nations i.e. society

moonshines months

Lag of behind (i.e. younger than)

base illegitimate (also low/unworthy/dishonorable)

dimensions physical proportions

compact composed

generous noble

true well-proportioned/authentic, true to his father's likeness

honest madam's issue a legitimate child

↳ **Who** i.e. we bastards who

↳ **take** require/receive

↳ **More ... quality** a more complex creation and more vigorous disposition

↳ **fops** weak fools

↳ **Got** conceived

↳ **As** the same as

↳ **speed** succeed

↳ **invention** scheme

↳ **to th'legitimate** advance to (or "take over") the place of the legitimate son; editors sometimes emend this to "top the legitimate"

↳ **choler** anger

↳ **parted** departed

↳ **Prescribed** restricted, limited

↳ **exhibition** an allowance, maintenance

↳ **gad** spur of the moment

↳ **up** away

↳ **terrible dispatch** fearful and hasty stowing away

- 7 **for** as for
- 3 **o'erlooking** reading
- 1 **essay or taste** test
- 5 **policy ... age** policy of revering the old (**policy** also suggests the "strategic cunning" of the elderly)
- 5 **the ... times** i.e. our youth, our prime
- 5 **fortunes** inheritance
- 7 **relish** savor, enjoy
- 7 **idle** useless
- 3 **fond** foolish
- 3 **sways** rules
- 3 **as ... suffered** only insofar as it is allowed to do so
- 3 **casement** window
- 3 **closet** private room
- 3 **character** handwriting
- 3 **matter** subject matter
- 1 **in ... that** given the contents
- 1 **fain** willingly
- 7 **at perfect age** being mature
- 7 **declined** old/ill
- 2 **sirrah** sir (used to social inferiors and children)
- 2 **apprehend** arrest
- 3 **Abominable** often, popularly, "inhuman, unnatural" (from the incorrect belief that the word was derived from the Latin *ab homine*, i.e. "away from man")
- 7 **run ... course** proceed securely
- 7 **where** whereas
- 7 **proceed** perhaps with legal connotations (in keeping with apprehend and testimony)

- › **pawn down** pledge
- 1 **feel** test, feel out
- 2 **pretence** intention, purpose
- 1 **meet** suitable
- 5 **auricular assurance** i.e. by hearing for yourself
- 5 **have your satisfaction** resolve yourself of any doubt
- › **wind ... him** insinuate yourself into his confidence for me
- › **frame** devise, arrange
- › **unstate ... resolution** give up my rank and wealth to be resolved on this matter
- 2 **presently** immediately
- 2 **convey** manage, undertake
- 3 **withal** therewith
- 1 **late** recent
- 5 **wisdom of nature** human reason/natural science
- 5 **scourged** punished
- 5 **sequent effects** subsequent events
- 11 **bias of nature** natural inclination (a bowling image: the **bias** refers to the curving path taken by a weighted ball)
- 4 **it ... nothing** i.e. it will advantage you
- 8 **excellent foppery** supreme foolishness
- 9 **surfeits** excesses
- 0 **disasters** misfortunes
- 1 **on** i.e. by
- 2 **treachers** traitors
- 3 **spherical predominance** the dominant influence of a particular planet at one's birth
- 5 **divine** celestial, supernatural
- 5 **evasion** shuffling excuse

- .6 **whoremaster** i.e. lecherous, whore-using
- .6 **goatish** lustful
- .7 **charge** responsibility
- .7 **compounded** had sex
- .8 **the dragon's tail** the constellation Draco
- .8 **Ursa Major** (constellation of) the Great Bear (or Plough)
- .9 **rough** cruel, violent
- .20 **maidenliest** most virginal
- .21 **firmament** sky, heavens
- .21 **bastardizing** conception out of wedlock
- .22 **Pat** on cue
- .22 **catastrophe** conclusion
- .22 **comedy** play
- .22 **my cue** could also mean "designated role"
- .23 **Tom o'Bedlam** i.e. a madman (from the Saint Mary of Bethlehem hospital in London, an institution for the insane)
- .24 **divisions** conflicts, discords (plays on the sense of "musical variations")
- .24 **Fa ... mi** Edmund hums a musical scale to himself
- .27 **this** the
- .30 **succeed** follow
- .31 **unhappily** unluckily, by misfortune
- .36 **countenance** bearing, demeanor/facial expression
- .39 **forbear** avoid
- .40 **qualified** cooled, lessened
- .41 **mischief ... person** harm caused by your presence
- .42 **allay** abate, calm
- .44 **have ... forbearance** i.e. restrain yourself and stay away from him
- .46 **fitly** at an appropriate time

- 18 **abroad** out of the house
- 11 **meaning** intention
- 13 **image and horror** horrific true picture
- 14 **anon** soon
- 15 **serve** help/trick, deceive
- 19 **practices** plots
- 20 **wit** intelligence, ingenuity
- 21 **meet** fitting
- 21 **fashion fit** shape to my purposes

Act 1 Scene 3

3 *Location: Goneril and the Duke of Albany's residence*

gentleman man of gentle (i.e. noble) birth attached to a royal household

chiding rebuking

flashes breaks out

1) **come slack** fall short

1 **answer** be answerable for

1 **fellows** fellow servants

1 **question** conflict, a dispute

5 **distaste** dislike

1 **straight** straight away

1 **to** i.e. and tell her to

Act 1 Scene 4

as will I perhaps “as I intend” (but most editors opt for the Quarto “well”- i.e. “as well as being disguised”)

defuse confuse, disorder

full issue complete outcome

razed my likeness erased my true appearance

stay wait

1 **What ... profess?** What is your occupation? (Kent shifts the sense of profess to “claim, declare”)

1 **wouldst thou** do you want

2 **us** Lear continues to use the royal plural pronoun

3 **judgement** i.e. God’s judgment/the judgment of fellow men

3 **cannot choose** have no other option

3 **to eat ... fish** i.e. only to eat a hearty diet of meat/not to eat fish on Fridays like a Roman Catholic/not to have sex with prostitutes

1 **keep honest counsel** keep secrets like an honorable man/keep secrets that are honorable

1 **mar ... tale** spoil an elaborate story

7 **anything** “thing” plays on the sense of “vagina”

1 **knave** rogue/servant

1 **So** if it

3 **clotpoll** idiot

3 **slave** servant/villain

1 **roundest** bluntest

3 **entertained** received, treated hospitably

3 **wont** accustomed (to receive)

7 **general dependants** servants as a whole

3 **rememb’rest** remind

3 **conception** notion, thought

1 **faint** slight/lazy, half-hearted

3 **jealous curiosity** mistrustful fastidiousness

3 **very pretence** real intention

7 **cur** dog

- › **bandy** exchange looks as an equal (literally, “bat to and fro” as in tennis)
- › **strucken** struck, beaten
- › **football** played by the lower classes (unlike tennis)
- › **differences** class distinctions
- › **measure ... length** be knocked flat to the floor
- › **lubber** clumsy lout
- › **tarry** stay
- › **go to** an expression of impatient dismissal
- › **earnest** part-payment in advance
- › **coxcomb** fool’s headgear with a crest like a cock’s comb
- › **pretty** fine-looking/clever
- › **an ... sits** i.e. if you cannot please those in power
- › **on’s** of his
- › **needs** necessarily
- › **nuncle** contraction of “mine uncle”
- › **Would** I wish
- › **living** property, possessions
- › **Brach** bitch
- › **pestilent gall** troublesome irritation
- › **Mark** pay attention to
- › **owest** own
- › **goest** walk
- › **trowest** believe
- › **Set ... throwest** don’t stake everything on the throw of the dice
- › **have ... score** i.e. make a profit
- › **score** twenty
- › **unfee’d** unpaid
- › **use** employment/profit

- 34 **crowns** coins (the sense then shifts to “eggshells,” “royal headgear,” and “head”)
- 36 **meat** edible contents
- 36 **clovest** split
- 40 **like myself** i.e. foolishly
- 41 **grace** favor, patronage
- 42 **foppish** foolish
- 44 **apish** silly
- 46 **used it** made it my custom
- 47 **rod** punishment cane
- 51 **bo-peep** a child’s game (in which an adult alternately conceals and reveals his or her face)
- 52 **the fool among** among fools
- 54 **fain** gladly
- 55 **An** if
- 56 **marvel** wonder
- 50 **pared** trimmed
- 53 **frontlet** ornamental headband/band worn round forehead at night to smooth wrinkles
- 56 **figure** accompanying digit (to make it a number higher than zero)
- 58 **forsooth** in truth
- 71 **nor ... crumb** i.e. no part of the loaf
- 72 **want some** need something/experience need
- 73 **peascod** peapod
- 74 **all-licensed** licensed to speak entirely freely
- 76 **carp** complain
- 77 **rank** excessive, uncontrolled
- 79 **safe** certain
- 80 **too late** all too recently

- 31 **course** behavior
- 31 **put it on** encourage it
- 33 **scape** escape
- 33 **redresses sleep** punishments be neglected
- 34 **in ... proceeding** might offend and shame you but which, in the interests of maintaining a healthy state, must be deemed a prudent course of action
- 39 **cuckoo** young cuckoo, hatched from an egg its mother had laid in another bird's nest
- 40 **it's had it** it had its
- 40 **it young** the young cuckoo
- 41 **darkling** in darkness
- 44 **fraught** equipped (literally "freighted")
- 45 **dispositions** moods
- 48 **Jug** a form of "Joan," often used as a generic name for a prostitute
- 41 **notion** understanding
- 41 **discernings** **Are lethargied** power of discernment is asleep
- 42 **Waking?** Am I awake?
- 44 **shadow** reflection/ghost/shadow cast by the sun/imitator, actor
- 46 **admiration** air of wonder
- 46 **o'th'savour** of the flavor
- 49 **should** i.e. you should
- 41 **bold** presumptuous, audacious
- 43 **epicurism** gluttony/pleasure-seeking
- 45 **graced** honorable
- 45 **speak** call
- 46 **desired** requested, entreated
- 48 **disquantity your train** reduce your retinue
- 49 **depend** be your dependants, serve you

- 20 **besort** befit, suit
- 21 **know ... you** i.e. know their place, and yours
- 24 **Degenerate** having lost the qualities proper to a family member
- 28 **that** to he who
- 34 **kite** bird of prey, scavenger
- 35 **rarest parts** splendid qualities
- 37 **in ... name** uphold the honor of their names with the most careful consideration (or "... in every respect")
- 40 **engine** piece of machinery
- 42 **gall** bitterness
- 46 **moved** provoked, angered
- 52 **increase** procreation
- 53 **derogate** degenerate, debased
- 54 **teem** be fertile, have children
- 55 **spleen** malice
- 56 **thwart** perverse, obstinate
- 56 **disnatured** unnatural
- 58 **cadent** falling
- 58 **fret** erode, wear
- 59 **pains** efforts (also suggests labor pains)
- 59 **benefits** kindnesses
- 56 **dotage** foolish old age
- 57 **at a clap** with one blow
- 72 **perforce** by force, uncontrollably
- 73 **Blasts** violent gusts of winds
- 74 **Th'untented** the festering (literally, not probed and cleaned surgically)
- 75 **fond** foolish/doting
- 77 **waters ... loose** i.e. tears

- ⁷⁸ **temper** moisten
- ⁷⁸ **clay** i.e. earth, the ground
- ³⁰ **kind** benevolent/possessed of natural familial love
- ³⁰ **comfortable** comforting
- ³² **visage** face
- ³⁶ **partial** biased
- ³⁸ **content** content yourself, i.e. be quiet
- ³⁵ **halter** hangman's noose
- ³⁸ **politic** prudent, shrewd
- ³⁹ **At point** armed and ready
- ³⁹ **that** so that
- ³⁰ **buzz** rumor
- ³⁰ **fancy** whim
- ³¹ **enguard** protect, defend
- ³² **in** at (his)
- ³⁵ **still** always
- ³⁶ **taken** defeated, captured
- ³⁵ **compact** confirm, consolidate
- ³⁸ **under pardon** if you'll pardon my saying so
- ³⁹ **at task** taken to task, blamed
- ³⁴ **th'event** the outcome (will tell)

Act 1 Scene 5

- before** ahead
- demand out of** questions prompted by
- kibes** chilblains
- ³ **wit** intellect
- ³ **slip-shod** in slippers (worn for chilblains)
- ³ **Shalt** i.e. thou shalt

- ‡ **crab** sour-tasting crab apple
- ‡ **on's** of his
- ‡ **side's** side of his
- ‡ **her** i.e. Cordelia (though Goneril is just possible)
- ‡ **asses** idiots/donkeys (i.e. Lear's servants)
- ‡ **the seven stars** the Pleiades
- ‡ **pretty** ingenious
- ‡ **again** back again (refers either to an intention to reclaim sovereignty, or to Goneril's withdrawal of Lear's privileges)
- ‡ **temper** my right state of mind
- ‡ **maid** virgin
- ‡ **things** penises

Act 2 Scene 1

- ‡ **Location: the Earl of Gloucester's residence**
- ‡ **severally** separately
- Save thee** God save thee (a common greeting)
- abroad** out there, in circulation
- ones** i.e. the **news**, regarded as plural
- ear-kissing arguments** rumored, whispered topics, not established truths
- ‡ **toward** impending
- ‡ **perforce** of necessity
- ‡ **take** arrest
- ‡ **queasy question** dangerous, uncertain nature
- ‡ **watches** is on guard, on the lookout
- ‡ **intelligence** information
- ‡ **i'th'haste** in haste

- 5 **have ... Albany** i.e. have you spoken in support of Cornwall and against Albany/have you spoken critically about Cornwall's hostility to Albany
- 7 **Advise yourself** consider
-) **In cunning** to deceive (Gloucester; though playing on the fact that it is Edgar who is being tricked)
- 1 **quit you** acquit yourself
- 1 **beget ... endeavour** give the impression that I fought more fiercely
- 5 **fierce** violent/brave/zealous
-) **conjuring** invoking
-) **the moon** i.e. Hecate, goddess of the moon and of witchcraft
- 1 **stand auspicious mistress** favor him as his patroness
-) **bend** direct
- 2 **fine** conclusion
- 3 **loathly opposite** deeply opposed, horrified
- 1 **fell** savage, ruthless
- 5 **prepared** unsheathed
- 5 **charges home** makes a direct attack on
- 5 **unprovided** unprotected
- 5 **latched** caught
- 7 **alarumed** stirred, roused
- 3 **quarrel's right** rightfulness of my cause
- 3 **th'encounter** the fight
-) **ghasted** frightened
-) **Full** very
- 3 **found — dispatch** once found, he shall be killed
- 1 **arch and patron** chief patron
- 7 **stake** i.e. place of execution
-) **pight** determined

- › **curst** angry
- └ **discover** reveal his plans
- › **unpossessing** unable to take possession of land and property (illegitimate children could not legally inherit)
- › **would stand against** stood against, contradicted
- › **reposal** placing
- › **faithed** believed
- › **character** handwriting
- › **suggestion** incitement to evil
- › **practice** scheme
- › **make ... world** think the world very stupid
- › **not thought** did not think
- › **profits** i.e. benefits to Edmund
- └ **pregnant ... spirits** fertile and powerful temptations (literally, evil spirits)
- 1 **Tucket** personal trumpet call, here signaling the arrival of Cornwall
- › **strange** unnatural
- › **fastened** confirmed, determined
- › **where** why
- › **ports** seaports/gates of walled towns
- › **picture** could also mean “description”
- › **natural** naturally loyal and loving to one’s family (plays on the sense of “illegitimate”)
- › **work the means** find a way
- └ **capable** able to inherit
- 1 **tended upon** attended, waited on
- 3 **consort** company (often pejorative)
- 4 **though ... affected** if he is ill-disposed
- 5 **put him on** incited him to

- 16 **th'expense** the spending
- 13 **child-like** i.e. obedient, loving
- 13 **office** duty/service
- 15 **bewray** inform on, expose
- 15 **his practice** Edgar's plot
- 20 **make ... please** to achieve your ends, use my means and authority in any way you wish
- 21 **For** as for
- 23 **be ours** i.e. work for us, join our household
- 25 **seize on** take possession of (legal term)
- 29 **out of season** inconveniently, unconventionally
- 29 **threading** finding a way through (sewing image)
- 29 **dark-eyed** quibbling on the idea of a needle's eye
- 30 **occasions** events/circumstances
- 30 **prize** importance
- 33 **differences** disputes
- 34 **from** away from
- 35 **attend dispatch** wait to be dispatched
- 38 **craves ... use** requires immediate action.

Act 2 Scene 2

2 ***Location: outside the Earl of Gloucester's residence***

2 ***severally*** separately

dawning it is actually before dawn; we later learn that the moon shines

Ay in fact, Kent is not a servant at this house; perhaps Kent opens up an opportunity to abuse Oswald

set put, lodge (Kent plays on the sense of "fix, make stuck")

mire mud

if ... me i.e. if you would be so kind (Kent pretends to take the expression literally)

Lipsbury pinfold the pound for stray animals in Lips-town (i.e. “between my teeth”)

› **use** treat

› **for** as

› **knave** rogue (two lines later the sense shifts to “servant”)

› **broken meats** scraps of food

› **three-suited** servingmen were permitted to have three outfits a year

› **hundred-pound** far more than a servingman’s income; possibly a contemptuous reference to those who bought knighthoods from James I for £100

› **worsted-stocking** i.e. servant/unable to afford silk stockings (worsted is a woollen fabric)

› **lily-livered** cowardly, with a bloodless liver (the organ thought to be the seat of strong emotions)

› **action-taking** litigious

› **whoreson** bastard

› **glass** mirror

› **glass-gazing** vain

› **super-serviceable** ready to do any kind of service

› **finical** fussy

› **one-trunk-inheriting** owner (or heir to) no more than would fit in a single trunk

› **bawd** pimp

› **service** plays on the sense of “sex”

› **composition** combination

› **pander** go-between/pimp

- 1 **addition** attributes/title/mark of honor added to a coat of arms (ironic)
- 2 **rail rant**, heap abuse
- 4 **varlet** rogue
- 5 **Draw** draw your sword
- 7 **sop o'th'moonshine** i.e. beat you to a pulp (so that you resemble either a soggy piece of bread lying under the moon's light, or the blancmange pudding called moonshine)
- 3 **cullionly** rascally
- 3 **barber-monger** frequenter of barbers (i.e. vain fop)
- 1 **vanity the puppet** i.e. Goneril, imagined as a puppet (or dressed-up woman) who is the personification of vanity
- 2 **carbonado** slash diagonally, like meat prepared for broiling or grilling
- 3 **come your ways** come on then
- 5 **neat** trim, foppish
- 1 **With you** i.e. I'll fight with you
- 1 **Goodman** a man below the rank of gentleman
- 1 **Goodman boy** a contemptuous and belittling form of address (used to Edmund)
- 1 **flesh ye** initiate you (into fighting; from the practice of feeding dogs bits of freshly killed meat in order to excite them for prey)
- 5 **difference** argument
- 7 **bestirred your valour** worked up your courage (ironic)
- 3 **disclaims in** disowns
- 3 **tailor made thee** i.e. his only worth lies in his fancy clothes
- 1 **ill** badly
- 5 **suit ... beard** his own request, because his old age required it
- 5 **zed ... letter** "z" was regarded as **unnecessary** because "s" could be used instead and there was no "z" in the Latin alphabet

- 7 **unbolted** unsifted (plays on the sense of “unmanly/impotent”—a “bolt” was a term for the penis)
- 3 **jakes** privy, toilet
- 9 **wagtail** tail-wagger, obsequious person/womanizer
- 1 **beastly** brutish
- 2 **a privilege** license to express itself
- 5 **honesty** honor, integrity
- 5 **holy cords** sacred bonds (family or matrimonial ties)
- 5 **a-twain** in two
- 7 **too intrinse t’unloose** too intertwined to be disentangled
- 7 **smooth** flatter, indulge
- 3 **rebel** i.e. against reason
- 9 **Being ... fire** i.e. feed the fire of their masters’ passions
- 9 **halcyon beaks** the kingfisher (halcyon) was thought to act as a weather vane if dried and hung up
- 1 **gall** irritation
- 1 **vary** change
- 3 **epileptic visage** seeing Oswald smiling away his insults, Kent compares his expression to that of an epileptic, grimacing involuntarily
- 1 **my** at my
- 1 **as** as if
- 5 **Goose** proverbially stupid bird; cackling suggests that Oswald may be laughing
- 5 **if ... Camelot** i.e. if I had you at my mercy, I’d send you running home in fright; the exact nature of this reference is unclear, though, as Camelot was sometimes identified with Winchester, some suspect a jibe about a “Winchester goose” (i.e. a prostitute/venereal disease)
- 5 **Sarum** Salisbury, in Wiltshire
- 5 **Camelot** legendary city that was home to King Arthur

- 2 **likes** pleases
- 4 **occupation** habit, business
- 5 **saucy** insolent
- 5 **constrains ... nature** forces the style (of speaking) away from its true purpose
- 3 **An** if
- 3 **so** so be it
- 3 **plain** honest (his excuse for his rudeness)
- 5 **craft** cunning
- 5 **corrupter** corrupt
- 5 **ducking observants** bowing attendants
- 7 **stretch ... nicely** strain to perform their duties to the last detail
- 3 **verity** truth
- 5 **th'allowance** the approval
- 5 **aspect** face/planetary position (in comparing Cornwall to a powerful planet, Kent mocks a courtier's flattery)
- 10 **influence** astrological influence
- 11 **Phoebus** the Greek and Roman sun god
- 11 **front** forehead
- 13 **dialect** usual manner of speaking
- 14 **beguiled** deceived
- 16 **though ... to't** even if I should incur your displeasure by refusing (to be a **knave**) when asked
- 10 **misconstruction** misinterpretation
- 11 **compact** colluding (with the king)
- 12 **being** and I being
- 13 **deal of man** great show of manliness
- 14 **worthied him** earned him honor/made him a hero

- 5 **attempting ... self-subdued** attacking one who offered no resistance
- 6 **fleshment** excitement of a first success
- 6 **dread exploit** fearsome military enterprise (sarcastic)
- 8 **None ... fool** there is not one of these rogues and cowards who cannot make a fool of a man like **Ajax** (the great Greek warrior was famously stupid; Cornwall is the subject of this dig)
- 20 **stocks** instrument of public punishment in which the offender sat with his ankles and sometimes wrists confined
- 21 **reverent** old and revered (sarcastic)
- 21 **braggart** boaster
- 26 **bold malice** impudent hostility
- 27 **grace** sovereignty
- 33 **use** treat
- 35 **colour** type
- 36 **sister** sister-in-law, i.e. Goneril
- 36 **away** here/there (Cornwall directs where the stocks are to be placed)
- 41 **answer** be responsible for
- 45 **pleasure** will
- 47 **rubbed** deflected (from bowling where the “rub” is the obstacle that disrupts the path of the ball)
- 48 **watched** gone without sleep
- 50 **out at heels** worn out (literally, coming through one’s stockings or shoes; an appropriate phrase for one whose feet are poking out of the stocks)
- 51 **Give ... morrow** Good-bye
- 53 **approve** prove
- 53 **saw** saying

- 54 **out ... sun** proverbial for going from good to bad; Kent means that Regan will prove worse than Goneril
- 56 **beacon** i.e. the sun
- 56 **this under globe** i.e. the earth
- 57 **comfortable** comforting, encouraging
- 58 **Nothing ... misery** the miserable are almost the only people to see miracles
- 51 **obscured course** secret (and “disguised”) course of action/dimmed fortunes
- 52 **From** away from (i.e. in France)
- 52 **enormous state** disordered situation (or country)
- 53 **o’erwatched** worn out by lack of sleep
- 54 **vantage** advantage
- 56 **Fortune ... wheel!** Fortune was traditionally depicted as a woman turning a wheel that raised humans up and cast them down
- 57 **proclaimed** publicly declared an outlaw
- 58 **happy** opportune, fortunate
- 71 **attend my taking** wait to catch me
- 72 **am bethought** have decided
- 74 **in ... man** despising mankind (in particular, man’s claim to be superior to beasts)
- 76 **elf tangle** (into “elflocks” or messy knots of hair)
- 77 **presented** openly displayed
- 30 **Bedlam** the Saint Mary of Bethlehem hospital in London; a number of those who were released became beggars
- 31 **mortifièd** deadened
- 32 **pricks** spikes
- 33 **object** sight
- 33 **low** humble, lowly
- 34 **pelting** paltry, insignificant

- 35 **bans** curses
- 36 **Turlygod** unexplained; perhaps a deliberately nonsensical name
- 36 **Poor ... Tom!** the sorts of cries the beggars would utter; several sixteenth-century accounts refer to beggars calling themselves “Poor Tom”
- 37 **That’s something yet** i.e. at least as Poor Tom I have some form of existence
- 37 **Edgar ... am** as Edgar I do not exist/I renounce my identity as Edgar
- 2 **Gentleman** presumably one of Lear’s reduced retinue of knights
- 38 **they** i.e. Regan and Cornwall
- 36 **cruel** puns on “crewel” (i.e. wool used for stockings)
- 38 **over-lusty at legs** as a servant, too ready to run away (perhaps plays on the sense of “too eager for sex”)
- 39 **nether-stocks** stockings
- 30 **place** position (as Lear’s messenger)
- 31 **To** as to
- 33 **son** son-in-law
- 39 **Juno** wife of **Jupiter**, the supreme Roman god
- 32 **upon respect** upon consideration/against the respect due to a king and his representatives
- 33 **Resolve** make clear to, inform
- 33 **modest** moderate, reasonable
- 33 **which way** why, how
- 34 **usage** treatment
- 35 **coming from us** when you were sent by me
- 37 **commend** deliver
- 39 **reeking** steaming (with sweat)
- 39 **post** messenger
- 30 **Stewed** hot and drenched in sweat

- 12 **spite of intermission** in spite of interrupting me/in spite of his halting breath
- 13 **presently** immediately
- 14 **meiny** retinue
- 14 **straight** straight away
- 15 **attend ... answer** wait until they had time to answer
- 10 **Displayed ... against** openly behaved so impudently toward
- 11 **man than wit** courage than sense
- 11 **drew** drew my sword
- 15 **Winter's ... way** i.e. there is more stormy weather (trouble) on the way
- 17 **blind** i.e. to their father's needs
- 18 **bags** moneybags
- 10 **arrant** downright/notorious
- 11 **turns the key** opens the door/provides sexual favors
- 12 **dolours** griefs (puns on "dollar," a silver coin)
- 13 **tell** relate/count
- 14 **mother** i.e. hysteria (frequently a female affliction thought to arise from the womb or, in men, the abdomen; characterized by breathlessness and agitation)
- 15 ***Hysterica passio*** the Latin term for hysteria
- 16 **element** rightful environment
- 16 **below** i.e. in the womb
- 15 **to school to** i.e. to learn from
- 15 **ant ... i'th'winter** i.e. the ant gathers food only in the summer when it is abundant; similarly, men work only when there is profit to be gained from a patron who is at the height of his fortunes
- 18 **stinking** i.e. with the stench of decaying fortunes
- 12 **again** back again
- 14 **sir** man

- 5 **form** appearances, outward show
- 6 **pack** pack up, be off
- 1 **perdy** by God (from the French *par dieu*)
- 4 **Deny** refuse
- 5 **fetches** tricks, stratagems (Lear goes on to employ the sense of “bring”)
- 6 **flying off** desertion
- 2 **confusion** destruction, overthrow
- 9 **tends** attends, awaits
- 3 **Infirmity ... bound** illness always makes us neglect the duties which, when healthy, we are bound to carry out
- 5 **oppressed** overwhelmed/afflicted
- 7 **fallen ... will** angry with my more headstrong impulse
- 9 **sound** healthy
- 9 **my state** royal state
- 1 **remotion** removal
- 2 **practice** deceit, cunning
- 2 **Give ... forth** release my servant
- 3 **and’s** and his
- 9 **cockney** squeamish or affected woman/town-dweller not used to hardier country ways
- 0 **i’t’h’paste alive** alive into the pie (being too squeamish to kill them first)
- 0 **knapped** hit
- 0 **o’t’h’coxcombs** on the heads
- 1 **wantons** frisky creatures
- 2 **battered his hay** another example of misguided kindness (horses dislike grease)
- 9 **sepulch’ring** entombing

- ⁹ **adult'ress** i.e. as you could not possibly be my daughter if you were not glad to see me
- ¹ **naught** wicked/worthless
- ² **vulture** recalls the Greek legend of Prometheus, who was punished for stealing fire from the gods by having his liver perpetually gnawed by vultures
- ⁶ **You ... duty** you are more likely to undervalue her worth than she is to neglect her duty
- ⁶ **verge ... confine** limit of her domain (i.e. you are near death)
- ⁸ **discretion** (person of) good judgment
- ⁸ **state** personal condition (imaged as a country; ironic glance at the sense of "kingship")
- ³ **becomes the house** befits the royal line or family
- ⁵ **unnecessary** superfluous, useless
- ⁶ **vouchsafe** permit
- ⁶ **raiment** clothing
- ⁰ **abated** deprived
- ⁴ **top** head
- ⁵ **taking** infectious
- ⁹ **fen-sucked ... blister** noxious vapors produced by sunshine on swampy ground were considered to be infectious and so to cause blistering
- ⁴ **tender-hafted** delicately framed, gently disposed
- ⁸ **scant my sizes** reduce my allowances (of food and drink etc.)
- ⁹ **oppose the bolt** lock the door
- ¹ **offices of nature** natural filial duties
- ² **Effects** outward marks
- ⁵ **to th'purpose** get to the point
- ⁸ **approves** confirms, bears out
- ⁰ **easy-borrowed** easily assumed

- 31 **sickly** diseased, corrupt
- 31 **grace** favor/royalty
- 35 **on't** of it
- 36 **sway** authority, rule
- 37 **Allow** sanctions, approves
- 39 **beard** gray beard, symbol of his age
- 32 **indiscretion** poor judgment
- 34 **sides** bodily frame, rib cage
- 36 **disorders** misconduct
- 37 **much less advancement** less favorable treatment
- 34 **entertainment** hospitable reception
- 36 **abjure** renounce
- 37 **wage ... o'th'air** battle against the hostility of the open air
- 39 **Necessity's** need's, deprivation's
- 32 **knee** kneel before
- 32 **squire-like** like a servant or follower
- 32 **pension** financial allowance
- 33 **afoot** going
- 34 **sumpter** packhorse, beast of burden
- 35 **groom** manservant
- 23 **embossèd carbuncle** swollen tumor
- 24 **corrupted blood** diseased lineage
- 28 **Mend** improve
- 32 **looked not for** did not expect
- 34 **mingle ... passion** apply rational judgment to your impulsive behavior
- 38 **avouch** declare, affirm
- 30 **sith that** since
- 30 **charge and danger** expense and the risk of riotous behavior

16 **slack** ye treat you negligently
17 **control** discipline
50 **place or notice** room or acknowledgment
52 **in ... it** it was about time you did so
53 **guardians, my depositaries** trustees
54 **kept a reservation** reserved the right
58 **well-favoured** good-looking
50 **stands ... praise** is, in relative terms, worthy of some praise
58 **Our ... superfluous** even our most wretched beggars have something, however poor, that is more than they absolutely need
70 **Allow not** if you do not allow
72 **If ... gorgeous** if being sumptuously dressed simply entailed wearing sufficiently warm clothes
73 **what ... wear'st** your magnificent clothes
79 **fool ... much** don't make me such a fool as
38 **flaws** fragments
39 **Or ere** before
51 **and's** and his
52 **bestowed** lodged, accommodated
53 **blame** fault (that he)
53 **put ... rest** turned himself away from repose/deprived himself of peace of mind
55 **his particular** him individually
52 **will** will go
53 **give him way** let him go, give him scope
56 **ruffle** rage, bluster
59 **themselves procure** bring on themselves
1 **desperate train** retinue of dangerous men
3 **have ... abused** be misled by what he is told

Act 3 Scene 1

1 Location: somewhere out in the open, not far from the Earl of Gloucester's residence

severally separately

minded ... unquietly in the same restless and disturbed mood as the storm

Contending battling against/competing with
main mainland

out-jest drive out with jokes

› **heart-struck injuries** injuries that strike to the heart

› **warrant ... note** basis of what I have observed (about you)

› **Commend ... you** entrust you with an important matter

› **as ... high** i.e. like anyone to whom fortune has given power and royal authority

› **seem no less** seem to be only servants (but are really spies)

› **France** the King of France

› **speculations** observers

› **Intelligent of** bearing information about

› **snuffs** resentments

› **packings** plots

› **hard rein** harsh curbing (equestrian metaphor; puns on “reign”)

› **borne** maintained

› **furnishings** superficial trappings

› **out-wall** outward appearance

› **that fellow** i.e. Kent

› **to effect** in importance

› **in ... this** to which end you employ your efforts that way while I go this way

› **Holla** shout to

Act 3 Scene 2

cataracts floods/waterspouts

hurricanes waterspouts

cocks weathercocks

thought-executing fires i.e. lightning (as swift as thought/thought-destroying)

Vaunt-couriers forerunners

nature's moulds the molds in which nature makes living creatures

germens seeds

› **court holy-water** courtly flattery

› **tax ... with** accuse ... of

› **subscription** allegiance

› **ministers** agents

› **pernicious** destructive/wicked

› **high-engendered battles** battalions created in the heavens

› **head** plays on the sense of “army”

› **foul** wicked/bad (weather)

› **put's** put his

› **head-piece** helmet/brain

› **codpiece** penis (literally, appendage worn on the front of a man's breeches to cover and emphasize the genitals)

› **house** find a house for itself, i.e. have sex

› **any** i.e. any shelter

› **louse** get lice (in pubic and head hair)

› **So ... many** in this way beggars end up with a string of mistresses (or “end up not only with a woman but a quantity of lice”)

› **makes ... make** values most what he should value least/considers his penis (sex) more important than his heart (love/moral integrity)

› **corn** may suggest a syphilitic sore

- 5 **made ... glass** practiced smiling or pouting in a mirror
- 9 **grace ... codpiece** royalty and a fool (fools sometimes wore exaggerated codpieces and were proverbially well-endowed)
- 1 **Gallow** gally, i.e. frighten
- 1 **wanderers ... dark** nocturnal animals
- 1 **pudder** pother, tumult
- 1 **Unwhipped of** unpunished by
- 5 **simular** faker, pretender
- 5 **caitiff** villain, wretch
- 7 **seeming** false appearances, deception
- 3 **practised on** plotted against
- 9 **Rive** split open
- 9 **continents** containers
- 9 **cry ... grace** beg for mercy from these terrifying summoners (officers who summoned the accused to court)
- 5 **hard** near
- 5 **hard house** pitiless household (Gloucester's house, under the authority of Cornwall and Regan)
- 7 **demanding** (when I was) asking urgently
- 9 **scanted** withheld
- 2 **fellow** servant (but with connotations of "companion")
- 3 **The ... strange** necessity has a strange skill
- 7 **He ... day** adapted from Feste's song at the end of *Twelfth Night*
- 7 **and a** a very
- 7 **wit** possibly plays on the sense of "penis"
- 9 **make ... fit** make his happiness fit his fortunes/be content with the fortune that he deserves
- 2 **brave** fine
- 2 **cool** i.e. cool the lust of

- 2 **courtesan** courtier's mistress, high-class prostitute
- 4 **in ... matter** more concerned with words than substance (i.e. do not practice what they preach)
- 5 **mar** spoil (i.e. water down for their own profit)
- 5 **are ... tutors** i.e. teach their tailors about fashion
- 7 **heretics** religious dissenters, conventionally punished with burning at the stake
- 7 **wenches' suitors** i.e. who are afflicted with the burning effects of syphilis
- 3 **right** just
- 4 **cutpurses** thieves who cut the strings of moneybags hanging at their victims' waists
- 4 **throngs** crowds
- 2 **usurers** moneylenders, notorious for charging excessively high interest
- 2 **tell ... i'th'field** count their money openly
- 3 **bawds** pimps
- 4 **Albion** ancient name for Britain
- 5 **confusion** destruction, overthrow
- 5 **who** whoever
- 7 **going ... feet** walking will be done on foot (perhaps simply meaning "things will return to normal")
- 3 **Merlin** in the legendary history of Britain, the reign of Lear precedes that of Arthur by centuries

Act 3 Scene 3

- 3 **Location: the Earl of Gloucester's residence**
- leave ... pity** permission to help, take pity on
- Go to** expression of impatient dismissal
- 4 **closet** private room/cabinet

- 1 **home** thoroughly
- 1 **power** army
- 2 **footed** ashore
- 2 **incline to** support, side with
- 2 **look** look for
- 3 **privily relieve** secretly help
- 1 **that** so that
- 1 **of** by
- 7 **toward** imminent
- 3 **courtesy forbid thee** forbidden kindness (to Lear)
- 1 **This ... deserving** i.e. my action should be worth a good reward

Act 3 Scene 4

4 ***Location: outside a hovel somewhere out in the open, not far from the Earl of Gloucester's residence***

nature human nature

- 1 **greater malady** i.e. mental suffering
- 3 **i'th'mouth** face to face
- 3 **free** free of worry, untroubled
- 1 **delicate** sensitive
- 7 **as** as if
- 3 **home** soundly
- 2 **frank** generous
- 2 **bide** endure
- 3 **sides** bodies (with visible ribs)
- 1 **lopped and windowed** full of holes
- 3 **physic** medicine (often a purgative)
- 3 **pomp** splendor, ostentatious display (i.e. rich and powerful people)

- › **superflux** superfluity, excess (**flux** was used for a discharge of excrement from the bowels, the result of a purgative)
- › **Fathom** about six feet
- › **Fathom and half** Edgar calls as though he is measuring the depth of the water in the hovel, as a sailor might in a leaking ship
- › **spirit** evil spirit, demon
- › **grumble** mutter, mumble
- › **foul** wicked
- › **knives ... pew** the devil was believed to tempt men to damnation by leaving them the means of committing suicide (even in church)
- › **ratsbane** rat poison
- › **porridge** vegetable or meat soup
- › **bay** reddish-brown
- › **four-inched** four inches wide (the devil gives one the arrogance to try and perform extremely difficult feats)
- › **for** as
- › **course** hunt
- › **five wits** five mental faculties (common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation, and memory)
- › **do ... de** the sound of chattering teeth?
- › **star-blasting** being afflicted by the malign influence of the stars
- › **taking** being infected with disease/malign influence of the stars
- › **vexes** torments
- › **there ... there** perhaps Edgar snatches at parts of his body as he tries to catch lice or the devil; or he may grab or point at the air around him
- › **pass** state, predicament
- › **reserved a blanket** kept a blanket (to cover himself)
- › **pendulous** overhanging
- › **fated ... faults** destined to punish men's faults

- › **subdued nature** reduced human nature
- › **thus ... flesh** refers to Edgar's self-mutilation
- › **pelican** young pelicans supposedly fed on their mother's blood; they were proverbial for filial cruelty
- › **Pillicock ... Pillicock-hill** possibly part of an old nursery rhyme, but **Pillicock** is slang for penis and **Pillycock-hill** the female genitals
- › **alow ... loo** possibly from "halloo" (cry to incite dogs in a hunt), perhaps an imitation of a cock's crow, or simply a nonsensical sound
- › **obey** Edgar begins a paraphrased version of five of the Ten Commandments
- › **commit not** i.e. do not commit adultery
- › **on proud array** in overly fine clothes
- › **gloves** i.e. a mistress' gift, displayed by being worn in one's cap
- › **slept in** i.e. dreamed of
- › **dice** i.e. gambling
- › **out-paramoured the Turk** had more lovers than the Turkish Sultan, famous for his harem
- › **light of ear** eager to listen to gossip
- › **creaking ... silks** i.e. the sounds of a fashionable woman walking
- › **plackets** openings in skirts/vaginas
- › **pen ... books** i.e. do not sign a loan agreement
- › **suum, mun** presumably Edgar imitates the sounds of the wind
- › **nonny** often used as part of a refrain in popular songs
- › **Dolphin ... by** perhaps Edgar addresses an imaginary horse; sessa is a cry of encouragement used in hunting or may derive from the French *cessez* ("stop")
- › **answer** face, encounter
- › **cat no perfume** the secretions of the anal glands of the civet cat are used to make perfume

- 00 **on's** of us
- 00 **sophisticated** not simple or natural
- 01 **unaccommodated** unprovided for (i.e. not wearing clothes)
- 02 **lendings** clothes that are "lent" only, not part of him
- 04 **naughty** nasty, wicked
- 07 **walking fire** i.e. Gloucester and his torch
- 08 **Flibbertigibbet** the name of a devil (all of the devils Edgar mentions are to be found in Samuel Harsnett's 1603 *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*)
- 08 **curfew** i.e. nightfall
- 09 **cock** cockcrow
- 09 **web ... pin** cataract of the eye
- 10 **squints** causes to squint
- 12 **old** wold, downs
- 12 **swithold** probably Saint Withold, apparently a protector from harm
- 12 **footed thrice** walked three times
- 13 **nightmare** evil female spirit supposed to settle upon a sleeper's chest, inducing bad dreams and feelings of suffocation
- 13 **nine-fold** perhaps the imps who attend her
- 15 **her troth plight** give a solemn promise (to do no more harm)
- 16 **aroint** begone (used to witches and demons)
- 18 **What's who's**
- 22 **wall-newt** i.e. lizard on the wall
- 22 **water** i.e. water newt
- 24 **ditch-dog** i.e. dead dog in a ditch
- 25 **mantle** scum
- 25 **standing** stagnant
- 25 **whipped** the standard punishment for vagabonds

- ²⁶ **tithing** parish
- ²⁷ **three ... shirts** the clothing allowance of a servant
- ²⁹ **deer** animals
- ³¹ **Smulkin** the name of a devil (that, according to Harsnett, took the form of a mouse)
- ³³ **The ... darkness** the devil
- ³³ **Modo ... Mahu** the names of two devils
- ³⁵ **flesh and blood** i.e. children (Gloucester is thinking of Edgar, Goneril, and Regan)
- ³⁵ **vile** debased, corrupted
- ³⁶ **gets** begets, conceives
- ⁴⁷ **Theban** i.e. Greek philosopher (from Thebes)
- ⁴⁹ **prevent** forestall, thwart
- ⁵¹ **Importune** urge
- ⁵² **t'unsettle** to be disturbed
- ⁵⁸ **blood** lineage, family
- ⁶³ **cry you mercy** excuse me
- ⁷⁰ **keep still** remain
- ⁷¹ **soothe** indulge, humor
- ⁷² **him you on** him along with you
- ⁷⁴ **Athenian** i.e. Greek philosopher (from Athens)
- ⁷⁶ **Child ... came** perhaps a line from a lost ballad about the legendary French hero Roland (**Child** was the title for a young man seeking knighthood)
- ⁷⁷ **word** password/customary saying
- ⁷⁷ **still** always
- ⁷⁷ **fie ... man** the cry of the giant in the children's tale of Jack the giant-killer

Act 3 Scene 5

5 *Location: the Earl of Gloucester's residence*

his i.e. Gloucester's

nature natural familial affection

something fears somewhat frightens

his i.e. Gloucester's

provoking ... himself Edgar's sense of his own worth, provoked into action by Gloucester's reprehensible badness/a provoking quality in Gloucester, which incited Edgar's reprehensible wickedness

to be of being

approves proves

an intelligent party a spy, an informer

' apprehension arrest

' his suspicion suspicion of Gloucester

Act 3 Scene 6

6 *Location: unspecified; presumably an outbuilding on the Earl of Gloucester's estate*

piece out supplement

impatience anger/inability to bear suffering

Frateretto the name of a devil; in Harsnett he is associated with a "fiddler," which perhaps suggests Nero, the first-century Roman emperor who famously played the fiddle while Rome burned

angler fisherman/thief

lake of darkness presumably the Stygian lake of the classical underworld, but a phallic fishing rod and vaginal dark lake may also be implied; perhaps Nero's murder of his own mother is glanced at—she reportedly asked to be stabbed in the womb as this was where her son had grown

' yeoman land owner below the rank of gentleman

' to as

- 3 **mad** sense now shifts to “angry”
- 5 **a thousand** i.e. a thousand devils
- 5 **hizzing** hissing
- 5 **'em** them i.e. Goneril and Regan; the Quarto text continues at this point with an imaginary “arraignment” of Goneril (see “Quarto Passages That Do Not Appear in the Folio,” p. 132)
- 1 **mar my counterfeiting** spoil my pretense
- 3 **Trey ... Sweetheart** names for bitches—even his female dogs, he imagines, have turned against him; their names may suggest Lear’s daughters (“tray” can mean “pain, affliction,” “blanch” can mean “to deceive,” “to flatter”)
- 1 **throw his head** unclear; presumably a threatening gesture of some sort
- 1 **Avaunt** begone
- 5 **or black or** either black or
- 5 **poisons** i.e. with rabies
- 7 **grim** fierce
- 3 **brach** bitch
- 3 **him** male
- 3 **bobtail tyke** small dog with a tail that has been bobbed (cut short)
- 3 **trundle-tail** dog with a long, curling tail
- 2 **hatch** lower half of a divided door
- 3 **Do ... de** apparently the sound of chattering teeth again
- 3 **Sessa!** cry of encouragement used in hunting or may derive from the French *cessez* (“stop”)
- 3 **wakes** annual parish fairs (frequented by beggars)
- 1 **horn** beggars carried drinking horns on strings round their necks
- 5 **anatomize** dissect
- 7 **entertain** employ
- 3 **Persian** i.e. gorgeous, luxurious

- ┆ **curtains** Lear imagines that he is in a curtained bed
- ┆ **litter** vehicle containing a bed, here apparently drawn by horses
- ┆ **Dover** port on the south coast
- ┆ **to ... conduct** i.e. hastily guide you to the necessary supplies for your journey

Act 3 Scene 7

7 *Location: the Earl of Gloucester's residence*

Post travel swiftly

sister sister-in-law, i.e. Goneril

Advise counsel, urge

duke i.e. the Duke of Albany

festinate preparation hasty preparation of troops

- ┆ **posts** messengers

- ┆ **intelligent** possessed of information

- ┆ **lord of Gloucester** Edmund's new title (though when Oswald uses it, he refers to Edmund's father)

- ┆ **questrists** seekers

- ┆ **the lord's** i.e. Gloucester's

- ┆ **Pinion him** bind his arms

- ┆ **pass ... justice** issue a death sentence without a formal trial

- ┆ **do a court'sy** bow, yield

- ┆ **corky** withered, dry

- ┆ **plucks his beard** a highly insulting gesture

- ┆ **white** i.e. old, dignified

- ┆ **Naughty** wicked

- ┆ **ravish** seize forcibly, pluck

- ┆ **quicken** come to life

- ┆ **hospitable favours** welcoming (facial) features

- 5 **ruffle** treat roughly/snatch
- 3 **Be simple answered** answer straightforwardly
- 1 **Late footed** recently landed
- 2 **guessingly** without certain knowledge
- 4 **opposed** i.e. to the dukes
- 3 **charged at peril** commanded on peril of your life
- 1 **tied to th'stake** like a bear in the popular sport of bear-baiting
- 1 **stand** endure
- 1 **course** designated bout, during which the bear was attacked by dogs
- 5 **anointed** i.e. holy (having been anointed with holy oil at the coronation)
- 7 **buoyed** swelled, risen
- 3 **stellèd** starry
- 3 **holp** helped
- 3 **holp ... rain** i.e. by weeping
- 3 **stern** cruel, unyielding
- 1 **turn the key** i.e. to let them in
- 2 **All ... subscribe** i.e. in such circumstances, all other cruel people would sanction a kind action
- 3 **wingèd vengeance** i.e. vengeance of the gods
- 4 **Fellows** servants
- 5 **shake ... quarrel** i.e. defy you (or "challenge you to a fight") over this cause
- 5 **What ... mean?** What do you think you are doing?
- 7 **villain** servant
- 3 **chance of anger** risk of what anger may bring (in a fight)
- 1 **mischief on him** injury done to him
- 5 **sparks of nature** warmth of natural filial affection

5 **quit** requite, avenge

7 **Out** expression of impatience and disgust

9 **overture** disclosure

11 **abused** wronged, maligned

15 **How look you?** How are you?

18 **apace** rapidly

19 **Untimely** at the wrong time (with war imminent)

7 ***Exeunt*** here the Quarto text has an additional sequence in which loyal servants apply a palliative to Gloucester's eye sockets (see "Quarto Passages That Do Not Appear in the Folio," p. 134)

Act 4 Scene 1

¹ *Location: somewhere out in the open, not far from the Earl of Gloucester's residence*

thus i.e. a beggar

contemned despised

contemned and flattered despised secretly though flattered to your face

esperance hope

The ... **laughter** the most miserable kind of change is a decline in fortunes; when things are at their worst they can only get better

¹ **poorly led** led by a poor man/led in a way unsuitable to his status

² **But** were it not

² **mutations** changes/fickleness

³ **Life ... age** we would not accept old age

⁵ **fourscore** eighty

³ **Thee ... hurt** i.e. you may be punished for helping me

² **means secure us** wealth gives us false security, overconfidence

² **mere defects** sheer deficiencies

³ **Prove our commodities** turn out to be benefits

¹ **abusèd** deceived

¹ **is not** has not yet arrived

⁵ **reason** rationality, sanity

¹ **wanton** unruly/cruelly mischievous

¹ **trade** course of action/practice

¹ **ancient love** old affection

¹ **plague** affliction

⁵ **the rest** all

⁷ **'pparel** apparel, clothing

- 3 **Come ... will** whatever may come of it
- 1 **daub it** put on a false face, pretend
- 3 **strokes** blows, afflictions
- 1 **happier** more fortunate
- 1 **superfluous** immoderate, extravagant, overindulgent
- 1 **lust-dieted** fed solely by pleasure
- 1 **slaves your ordinance** subjects your laws to his desires
- 2 **feel** empathize, feel compassion (sense then shifts to “experience”)
- 2 **quickly** soon/while he is alive/sharply
- 5 **bending** overhanging
- 7 **confined** channeled (between England and France)
- 3 **brim** edge
- 1 **about me** that I have on my person

Act 4 Scene 2

2 ***Location: outside Goneril and the Duke of Albany’s residence***

my lord i.e. Edmund

army i.e. French army

‘sot’ fool

turned ... out turned inside out, got things the wrong way round
(clothing metaphor)

3 **cowish** cowardly

1 **undertake** take action

5 **tie ... answer** oblige him to respond

5 **on the way** i.e. that we expressed during the journey here

5 **prove effects** be fulfilled

5 **brother** brother-in-law, i.e. Cornwall

7 **musters** gathering of troops

7 **conduct his powers** escort his forces

- 3 **change** exchange
- 3 **distaff** spindle for weaving, common symbol of womanhood or wifeliness
- 3 **like** likely
- 2 **favor** love token
- 2 **mistress** ruler/lover
- 1 **thy** Goneril starts to use the more intimate pronoun to Edmund
- 1 **spirits** plays on sense of “penis”
- 3 **conceive** understand/imagine (with procreative connotations)
- 3 **death** plays on sense of “orgasm”
- 3 **services** sexual services
- 3 **fool** i.e. Albany
- 3 **usurps** wrongfully possesses
- 2 **worth the whistle** worth looking for (from the proverb “it is a poor dog that is not worth the whistling”)
- 3 **Goneril ... face** the Quarto text has a longer dialogue in which Albany berates Goneril (see “Quarto Passages That Do Not Appear in the Folio,” p. 135)
- 1 **rude** rough
- 3 **Milk-livered** pale-livered, cowardly (cowardice was associated with lack of blood in the liver and milk with women)
- 3 **discerning ... suffering** that can distinguish between what may be honorably tolerated from what must not be endured
- 1 **Proper ... woman** deformity does not seem as abhorrent in a devil (to whom it is appropriate) as it does in a woman
- 3 **vain** stupid/worthless
- 3 **bred** brought up in his household
- 3 **thrilled** pierced, moved
- 3 **remorse** pity (for Gloucester)
- 3 **Opposed** opposed himself

- › **bending** aiming, directing
- › **threat-enraged** enraged by the threat
- › **after** i.e. to death
- › **justices** (divine) judges
- › **nether** earthly
- › **venge** avenge, punish
- › **all ... life** demolish the dream (of having Edmund) that I have constructed, leaving me with the life I hate
- › **tart** sour
- › **back** going back
- 3 ***Location: the French camp, near Dover. The Quarto text precedes this scene with another one in which Kent and a Gentleman discuss the French king's return to France and Cordelia's concern for her father (see "Quarto Passages That Do Not Appear in the Folio," pp. 137–39)***

Act 4 Scene 3

- 3 ***Colours*** military banners
- vexed** angry, turbulent
- rank fumiter** abundant fumitory (a vigorously growing weed)
- furrow weeds** weeds that grow in the furrows of plowed fields
- burdocks** weeds with prickly flower heads or burs
- hemlock** plant producing a potentially lethal sedative
- cuckoo-flowers** name given to various wildflowers growing when the cuckoo calls (i.e. May/June)
- Darnel** type of grass that grows as a weed among corn
- idle** useless
- What ... wisdom** what can human knowledge do
- bereavèd** stolen, lost
- › **outward worth** worldly goods

- 2 **repose** rest, sleep
- 3 **that ... operative** there are many effective medicinal herbs that can induce that in him
- 7 **unpublished virtues** secret powers (of herbs)
- 3 **aidant** helpful
- 3 **remediate** remedial, healing
- 9 **rage** frenzy
- 1 **wants the means** i.e. lacks the sanity
- 1 **preparation** equipped military force
- 7 **France** i.e. the King of France
- 3 **importuned** importunate, pressing
- 9 **blown** swollen with pride/corrupt

Act 4 Scene 4

4 *Location: the Earl of Gloucester's residence*

ado fuss

import mean, contain

9 **posted** hurried

1 **ignorance** folly

5 **nighted** darkened (literally, and in terms of his fortunes)

5 **descry** discover

7 **after** go after

9 **ways** roads

1 **charged my duty** swore me to obedience

3 **Belike** perhaps/probably

1 **I'll love thee** Regan switches to the familiar thee to cajole him—love implies the promise of favors, sexual or otherwise

9 **oeillades** amorous glances

9 **speaking** eloquent

- › **of her bosom** in her confidence/sexually intimate
- › **Y'are ye** (you) are
- › **take this note** note this well
- › **convenient** fitting
- › **gather more** infer the rest
- › **call ... her** have more sense
- › **meet** i.e. meet him

Act 4 Scene 5

- 5 ***Location: somewhere out in the open, near Dover***
 - that same hill** the hill I mentioned (i.e. the cliff Gloucester described at the end of Act 4 Scene 1)
- › **phrase and matter** style and sense
- 7 **choughs** jackdaws or other birds of the crow family
- 7 **wing** fly across
- 7 **midway** i.e. middle regions of
- › **gross** large
- › **samphire** aromatic plant used in pickling; it was picked from cliffs by men suspended on ropes
- › **yond** yonder, that
- › **bark** small ship
- › **her cock** (the size of) her cock boat, a small boat towed behind a ship
- › **th'unnumbered idle pebble** countless insignificant pebbles
- 7 **the deficient** my defective
- › **Topple** topple me
- › **leap upright** jump up in the air
- › **Here, friend's** here, friend, is
- › **Prosper** it cause it to prosper

- › **trifle** play
- › **opposeless** irresistible
- 7 **My ... nature** the smoldering wick and hated remains of my life
- └ **conceit** imagination
- › **Yields** submits willingly
- └ **this** this time, now
- › **pass** die
- 7 **What** who (Edgar adopts another persona)
- › **aught** anything
- › **precipitating** falling headlong
- └ **shivered** shattered
- › **at each** end to end
- 7 **bound** boundary (between land and sea)
- › **a-height** on high
- › **shrill-gorged** shrill-throated
- › **beguile** cheat
- └ **whelked** twisted
- › **fiend** i.e. tempting him to the sin of suicide
- › **happy father** fortunate old man (**father** was a form of address for an elderly man, though Edgar plays with the literal sense)
- › **clearest** brightest, purest
- › **make ... impossibilities** acquire honor for themselves by performing things that are impossible in the human world
- › **free** untroubled
- └ **The ... thus** were he (Lear) in his right mind, he would never permit himself to dress like this (or possibly “Gloucester’s senses will not be able to withstand seeing his master like this”)
- › **touch** accuse, blame/lay hands on
- 10 **press-money** money paid to military recruits when they were conscripted (Lear seems to imagine he is recruiting an army)

- 10 **crow-keeper** scarecrow/person employed to scare crows from the crops
- 11 **Draw ... yard** draw your bow to its fullest extent (the length of a longbow's arrow, which, at about thirty-six inches, was the same as the length of a cloth-seller's measuring rod)
- 12 **gauntlet** armored glove thrown down as a challenge to a duel
- 13 **prove it on** make good my cause against
- 13 **brown bills** long-handled weapons, painted or varnished brown and topped with axe-like blades; or soldiers carrying such weapons
- 13 **well flown, bird** the language of falconry, here used to describe an arrow's flight
- 14 **I'th'clout** cloth at the center of an archer's target
- 14 **hewgh** perhaps Lear imitates the sound of the arrow as it flies through the air or hits the target
- 14 **word** password (continues Lear's military fantasy)
- 15 **Sweet marjoram** Edgar invents a password that relates to Lear's headgear and to the plant's alleged medicinal properties in treating brain disorders
- 19 **like a dog** i.e. as if they were fawning dogs
- 19 **had ... there** i.e. was wise even while I was still a child
- 1 **divinity** theology
- 2 **me** i.e. my teeth
- 3 **peace** be still
- 6 **ague-proof** immune to fever and shivering
- 7 **trick** characteristic, individual quality
- 1 **cause** charge, offense
- 14 **goes to't** does it, has sex
- 15 **lecher** fornicate
- 17 **got** begot, conceived
- 18 **luxury** lechery, lust

- 28 **for ... soldiers** i.e. more sex means more children to man his army
- 30 **between ... snow** forecasts frigidity between her legs
- 31 **minces virtue** affects chastity
- 31 **shake the head** i.e. in disapproval
- 33 **fitchew** polecat/prostitute
- 33 **soilèd** fed with green fodder, so lively, skittish
- 34 **riotous** unrestrained, lustful
- 35 **centaurs** mythical creatures that were human above the waist and horse below; reputed to be lustful
- 36 **But ... girdle** only as far as the waist
- 36 **inherit** possess, have power over
- 38 **hell** slang term for the vagina
- 38 **sulphurous** suggests both hell and syphilis
- 39 **burning ... consumption** alludes to painful syphilitic burning, odor and decay (consumption)
- 40 **civet** perfume
- 40 **apothecary** person who prepared and sold drugs, spices, perfumes etc.
- 43 **mortality** being human/death
- 45 **so** similarly
- 47 **squinny** squint
- 47 **Cupid** Roman god of love, traditionally depicted as blind or blindfolded
- 48 **challenge** written challenge to a duel
- 48 **penning** style/handwriting
- 50 **take ... report** believe it if I heard it reported
- 53 **case** sockets
- 55 **heavy case** sorrowful predicament
- 57 **feelingly** literally, through touch/with great emotion

- 59 **justice** judge
- 50 **simple** humble
- 51 **handy-dandy** take your pick (from the child's game of guessing which clenched hand contains something)
- 55 **a ... office** given authority, even a dog will be obeyed
- 57 **beadle** parish officer, responsible for punishing thieves, prostitutes, and vagabonds
- 59 **use** employ sexually
- 59 **kind** manner
- 70 **usurer** moneylender, notorious for charging excessively high interest
- 70 **cozener** cheat
- 72 **Place ... gold** i.e. when sins are committed by the rich
- 73 **hurtless** harmlessly
- 74 **it** i.e. sin
- 75 **able 'em** authorize them
- 78 **scurvy politician** despicable schemer
- 79 **Now ... now** perhaps comforting Gloucester, perhaps distracted by his boots
- 81 **matter and impertinency** sense and nonsense
- 84 **hither** i.e. into this world
- 89 **block** style of hat or mold for hats (perhaps Lear removes his headgear)/block from which to mount a horse/tree stump (stage may even give rise to a sense of "scaffold and executioner's block")
- 90 **delicate** ingenious
- 91 **put't in proof** try it out
- 3 **Gentleman** perhaps the same man that Kent gave instructions to in Act 3 Scene 1
- 97 **natural fool** born fool (as opposed to a professional jester)
- 91 **seconds** supporters (as for a duel)

- 12 **salt** i.e. tears
- 14 **die** plays on the sense of “orgasm”
- 14 **bravely** handsomely
- 15 **jovial** cheerful/majestic (like Jove, king of the gods)
- 16 **Masters** sirs
- 19 **Sa ... sa** hunting cry, from French *ça* (“that’s it,” “it’s there”)
- 2 **nature** i.e. human nature
- 2 **general curse** curse of original sin
- 3 **twain** Adam and Eve (but also suggests Goneril and Regan)
- 4 **gentle** noble
- 5 **speed you** (may God) prosper you
- 6 **toward** impending
- 7 **vulgar** widely known
- 9 **by your favour** if you would be so good
- 11 **main ... thought** sight of the main army is expected hourly
- 14 **Though that** though
- 14 **on special cause** for a special reason (i.e. to find Lear)
- 19 **worser spirit** evil angel/bad side of my nature
- 14 **known ... sorrows** deeply felt sorrows I have experienced
- 15 **pregnant ... pity** disposed to compassion
- 16 **biding** dwelling
- 18 **benison** blessing
- 19 **To ... boot** in addition, and may it benefit you
- 10 **proclaimed prize** i.e. a man with a price on his head
- 10 **happy** fortunate
- 11 **framed flesh** conceived and born
- 13 **thysself remember** recall your sins (i.e. prepare to die)
- 18 **published** proclaimed
- 11 **’Chill** I shall

51 **'chill ... 'casion** I shall not let go, sir, without further occasion (cause); for his new persona, Edgar adopts a West Country accent in which he substitutes “v” for “f” and “z” for “s”

53 **your gait** on your way

54 **An ... vortnight** if I could have been killed by boasting, I would not have lasted a fortnight (or “it would have been shorter by a fortnight”)

56 **che vor ye** I warrant you, I promise you

56 **i'se** I shall

57 **costard** head (literally, a large apple)

57 **ballow** cudgel

59 **pick** knock out with the cudgel

59 **foins** sword thrusts

54 **party** side

55 **serviceable** eager to serve, ready to do anything

72 **deathsman** executioner

73 **Leave** give me leave, permit me

77 **will** desire/lust

77 **want not** is not lacking

78 **done** achieved

51 **for your labour** as a reward for your efforts/as a place for sexual activity

52 **servant** lover

53 **undistinguished space** limitless scope

53 **will** lust

56 **Thee ... up** I will bury you (Oswald)

56 **post unsanctified** unholy messenger

57 **in ... time** when the time is ripe

58 **ungracious** wicked, sinful

58 **strike** blast/afflict

39 **death-practised** whose death is plotted

41 **stiff** stubborn

42 **ingenious** sensitive, intelligent

43 **distract** mad

45 **wrong imaginations** illusions

Act 4 Scene 6

6 *Location: the French camp, near Dover*

every ... me all my efforts will be inadequate

o'erpaid i.e. already more than enough

All ... truth everything I have told you is the simple truth (or possibly “may all reports of me be unexaggerated and accurate”)

Nor ... clipped neither overstated nor abbreviated

suited dressed

weeds clothes

1 **Yet ... intent** to have my identity known now would spoil the plan
I have devised

2 **My ... it** the favor I ask is

2 **know me not** do not acknowledge me

3 **meet** suitable

3 **wind up** put in tune (by tightening the pegs on a stringed instrument)

4 **child-changed** changed by his children

3 **I'th'sway ... will** as you see fit, under your own authority

3 **arrayed** dressed (appropriately)

7 **doubt of** fear for

7 **temperance** self-control

1 **reverence** i.e. position deserving respect, venerable state

3 **Had you** even if you had

- 3 **flakes** locks of hair
- 4 **Did challenge** would have demanded
- 4 **of** from
- 3 **fain** obliged
- 3 **rogues forlorn** destitute vagabonds
- 3 **short** i.e. broken up (and hence less comfortable)
- 4 **at once** at the same time
- 2 **concluded all** come entirely to an end
- 5 **bliss** i.e. heaven
- 7 **wheel of fire** i.e. one of hell's tortures of the damned; recalls Ixion, who, in Greek mythology, was bound to a wheel of fire for attempting to seduce the queen of the gods
- 7 **that** so that
- 4 **wide** wide of the mark, confused
- 4 **abused** wronged, ill-treated/deluded
- 7 **Would ... condition!** I wish I could be sure of what state I am in!
- 3 **fond** silly
- 4 **rage** frenzy
- 5 **further settling** his mind is more settled

Act 5 Scene 1

- 1 **Location:** *the British camp, near Dover*
- 1 **Drum and Colours** soldiers with military flags and a drum beating
- Know of** find out from
- last purpose** most recent intention
- since** subsequently
- advised** persuaded/warned
- aught** anything, i.e. any news
- self-reproving** self-reproach

constant pleasure fixed wishes

miscarried come to harm

doubted feared

‡ **honoured** honorable

‡ **forfended place** forbidden place, i.e. Goneril's vagina

‡ **I ... her** I cannot stand her

‡ **familiar** too friendly/sexually intimate

‡ **rigour ... state** harshness of our government

‡ **cry out** i.e. protest in pain

‡ **Why ... reasoned?** Why are we discussing this?

‡ **Combine together** i.e. let us combine our two armies

‡ **domestic ... broils** private internal squabbles

‡ **th'ancient of war** experienced senior officers

‡ **convenient** suitable, seemly

‡ **know the riddle** understand your enigmatic request, see your trick
(Regan wants to keep a suspicious eye on Goneril)

‡ **I'll overtake you** presumably Albany calls after those who have or
are in the process of departing

‡ **ope** open

‡ **letter** i.e. the letter Oswald was carrying from Goneril to Edmund

‡ **sound** i.e. sound a summons

‡ **champion** one who fights in single combat

‡ **avouchèd** declared, affirmed

‡ **miscarry** lose the battle and die

‡ **machination** plotting

‡ **cry** make the proclamation

‡ **o'erlook** read over

‡ **powers** troops

‡ **discovery** intelligence-gathering, reconnaissance

- ‡ **greet the time** be ready when the time comes
- ‡ **jealous** suspicious, mistrustful
- ‡ **hardly** with difficulty
- ‡ **carry ... side** fulfill my side of the agreement (with Goneril)/achieve my own (power-seeking) ends
- ‡ **countenance** authority
- ‡ **taking off** murder
- ‡ **shall** i.e. they shall
- ‡ **my ... debate** my position relies on action not discussion

Act 5 Scene 2

- ‡ **Location: not far from the battlefield, near Dover**
- ‡ **Alarum** trumpet call to arms
- father** form of address for an old man
- host** i.e. shelter
- ‡ **retreat** trumpet call signaling retreat
- ta'en** (are) captured
- ‡ **Ripeness** readiness/the right time

Act 5 Scene 3

- ‡ **Location: the British camp, near Dover**
- good guard** guard them carefully
- greater pleasures** the wishes of more important people (i.e. Goneril, Regan, Albany)
- censure** judge, sentence
- meaning** intentions
- cast down** humbled by fortune/defeated in battle/dejected
- ‡ **gilded butterflies** actual butterflies/lavishly dressed courtiers
- ‡ **poor rogues** wretched fellows

- 7 **take ... things** understand the secret inner workings of the world
- 3 **God's spies** spying on the world on God's behalf/looking at the world from a lofty vantage point, like God
- 3 **wear out** outlive
- 3 **packs and sects** cliques and factions
- 3 **That ... th'moon** i.e. whose fortunes ebb and flow like the tides
- 2 **sacrifices** refers to either Cordelia's sacrifice for Lear or their joint loss of freedom
- 3 **throw incense** i.e. like priests performing the sacrifice
- 1 **brand ... foxes** alludes to the practice of smoking foxes out of their holes
- 5 **flesh and fell** flesh and skin (i.e. entirely)
- 7 **starved** dead
- 3 **tender-minded** sensitive, soft-hearted
- 1 **become** befit, suit
- 5 **bear question** permit discussion
- 3 **write happy** count yourself fortunate
- 3 **carry** manage
- 1 **strain** lineage
- 3 **opposites** opponents
- 1 **use** treat
- 3 **retention** detention, confinement
- 3 **Whose** refers to the **king**
- 3 **charms** bewitching spells
- 3 **title** name of king/legal entitlement (to land and power)
- 3 **pluck ... bosom** draw the sympathies of the common people
- 1 **turn ... them** i.e. turn our conscripted soldiers' weapons against ourselves
- 2 **queen** i.e. Cordelia

- 5 **session** hearing in a court of justice
- 5 **by your patience** if you'll excuse me
- 7 **subject of** subordinate in
- 9 **list** please
- 9 **pleasure ... demanded** wishes might have been asked
- 2 **commission** authority
- 3 **immediacy** closeness, connection
- 5 **grace** merit
- 7 **your addition** the honors or titles you bestow on him
- 9 **compeers** equals
- 9 **That ... most** i.e. he would be most fully invested with your rights
- 2 **Holla** whoa, stop
- 3 **asquint** crookedly, distortedly
- 5 **full-flowing stomach** a stomach full of anger (where stomach is used like "heart" for the seat of the passions)
- 5 **patrimony** inheritance
- 7 **Dispose of** use, deal with
- 7 **walls** Regan images herself as a fortress surrendering
- 3 **Witness the world** let the world witness
- 9 **enjoy** i.e. have sex with him as your husband
- 1 **let-alone** permission or refusal to give it
- 3 **Half-blooded** illegitimate (fellow is contemptuous)
- 5 **in** i.e. along with
- 7 **gilded serpent** i.e. Goneril
- 7 **For** as for
- 3 **bar it** prevent its advancement (legal term)
- 9 **subcontracted** engaged for a second time, entered into a contract that is subsidiary to her marriage contract with Albany

- › **banns** proclamation of marriage (spelled “banes” in Folio, perhaps playing on “evil-doings”)
- › **make ... to woo**, make advances to
- › **bespoke** spoken for
- › **interlude** brief comic play (i.e. “What a farce!”)
- › **pledge** challenge/pledge to fight
- › **make it** i.e. make it good
- › **nothing** no way
- › **medicine** drugs (i.e. poison)
- › **what** whoever
- › **single virtue** unaided courage or strength
- › **quality or degree** noble birth or high rank
- › **lists** catalog of soldiers
- › **canker-bit** eaten away by canker-worms (grubs that feed on plants)
- › **cope** encounter, fight with
- › **honours ... profession** i.e. as a knight
- › **protest** declare
- › **Maugre** despite
- › **place** position, rank
- › **fire-new** i.e. brand new, freshly minted
- › **Conspirant** a conspirator
- › **upward** top, crown
- › **descent** lowest part, sole
- › **toad-spotted** toads’ spots were believed to contain venom
- › **bent** resolved/tensed for action
- › **say** assay, evidence
- › **nicely** in strict keeping with the rules
- › **hell-hated lie** the lie I hate as much as hell

- 57 **for they** since they (the **treasons**)
- 57 **by off**
- 58 **instant way** an immediate passage (to your heart)
- 50 **him** probably a call to Edgar to spare Edmund's life so that a confession can be obtained from him
- 51 **practice** trickery
- 54 **cozened and beguiled** cheated and deceived
- 55 **dame** woman
- 58 **know** recognize
- 70 **arraign** indict, bring to trial
- 73 **govern** restrain
- 77 **fortune on** good fortune to defeat
- 79 **charity** forgiveness
- 81 **th'hast** thou hast (i.e. you have)
- 83 **pleasant** pleasurable (sexually so in this case)
- 85 **dark** literally and metaphorically
- 85 **vicious** immoral
- 85 **got** begot, conceived
- 88 **wheel** wheel of fortune
- 89 **prophecy** suggest, foretell
- 96 **List** listen (to)
- 98 **bloody proclamation** i.e. the sentence of death pronounced on him
- 100 **the ... die** would repeatedly suffer pain as bad as death
- 102 **semblance** outward appearance
- 103 **habit** clothing/guise, appearance
- 104 **rings** i.e. eye sockets
- 106 **despair** the spiritual hopelessness that precedes suicide
- 109 **success** outcome (in the duel with Edmund)

- 1 **pilgrimage** course of events/period of exile/spiritual journey
- 1 **flawed** cracked
- 9 **dissolve** i.e. in tears
- 25 **smokes** i.e. steams with **hot** blood
- 36 **compliment** etiquette (of greeting)
- 39 **aye** forever (Kent is aware he is dying)
- 11 **Great thing** vital matter
- 13 **object** sight
- 18 **Even** exactly
- 51 **writ** written order (for execution; a legal term)
- 55 **office** task, responsibility
- 53 **fordid** killed
- 70 **stone** specular stone, a crystalline substance used to make mirrors
- 72 **promised end** the death Lear expected (when he divided the kingdom)/Judgment Day, the end of the world (the sense that Edgar understands)
- 74 **Fall and cease!** either Albany calls for the end of the world, or he wishes for Lear to die and be put out of his anguish
- 36 **slave** villain/wretched servant
- 39 **falchion** curved sword
- 71 **crosses** troubles, frustrations
- 72 **Mine ... o'th'best** failing sight was believed to be a sign of approaching death
- 72 **straight** in a moment
- 73 **two ... hated** perhaps "two people she first loved and then hated"; it is not entirely clear who the **one** Kent refers to is
- 75 **dull sight** refers either to Lear's dim eyesight or to the motionless Cordelia
- 77 **caius** the only mention of the name Kent assumed when he was in disguise

- 1 I'll ... **straight** I'll attend to that in a moment
- 2 **your ... decay** the beginning of the change and decline in your fortunes (may also suggest mental decay)
- 5 **Nor ... else** completes Kent's previous, unfinished sentence with "and no one else" as well as beginning his current one with "neither I nor anyone else (is welcome)"
- 6 **fordone** killed
- 7 **desperately** as a result of the spiritual despair that precedes suicide
- 9 **vain ... him** it is useless for us to tell him who we are
- 1 **bootless** pointless
- 5 **this great decay** noble ruin, i.e. Lear
- 6 **For** as for
- 6 **resign** hand over
- 9 **boot** advantage, additions
- 9 **addition** titles, honors
- 2 **cup** painful experience (plays on the related sense of "drinking vessel")
- 2 **see, see** something attracts Albany's attention, presumably to Lear
- 3 **fool** i.e. Cordelia (fool was a term of endearment), but recalls Lear's Fool as well
- 7 **this button** may refer to Cordelia's (hoping to help her breathe) or Lear's own (if he is once again afflicted by "the mother," the hysteria that causes one to struggle for breath)
- 7 **sir** it is unclear whom Lear addresses here
- 3 **ghost** spirit
- 4 **rack** torture instrument that stretched the limbs
- 5 **longer** for a longer period of time/to longer physical dimensions
- 8 **usurped** stole, made illegal use of (beyond its rightful length)
- 2 **gored** wounded, bleeding

¹² **sustain** support/keep alive

¹³ **journey** i.e. to death

Quarto Passages That Do Not Appear in the Folio

Nor ... sure and I am sure he is not

unnaturalness lack of natural family feeling

dearth famine

ancient amities long-standing friendships

divisions breaches, disagreements

maledictions curses

diffidences doubts, mistrust

dissipation of cohorts dispersal of troops

nuptial breaches breaking of marriage vows

sectary astronomical devotee of astrology (in the period, astronomy and astrology were often indistinguishable from one another)

¹ **Not** i.e. we are not

¹ **Idle** foolish/useless

¹ **used** handled, dealt with

⁵ **checks as flatteries** rebukes instead of flattery

⁵ **seen abused** seen to be misguided

⁷ **stand** i.e. stand in

³ **presently** immediately

¹ **motley** the traditional multicolored costume of the fool

³ **altogether fool** entirely foolish (the Fool replies to the sense of “the only fool”)

⁵ **on’t** of it

⁷ **snatching** may imply snatching at the Fool’s genitals or phallic baton (picking up on and shifting the sense of **part**; fools were proverbially well-endowed)

- › **marks** outward signs
- › **false** falsely
- › **check** rebuke
- › **low correction** base punishment
- † **'temnest** most despised (contemnest)
- › **pilf'rings** petty thefts
- › **trespasses** crimes
- › **eyeless** blind
- › **Catch** seize
- › **cubdrawn** drained of milk by her cubs, ravenous
- › **couch** take cover, lie in its lair
- › **belly-pinchèd** starving
- † **unbonneted** bare-headed
- › **bids ... all** invites anyone who wishes to do so to take everything
- › **power** army
- › **scattered** divided
- › **Wise in** aware of/taking advantage of
- › **feet** footholds
- › **at ... show** on the point of displaying
- › **on ... far** i.e. if you trust me so far as
- › **credit** trustworthiness
- † **making just report** for making an accurate report
- › **bemadding** madness-provoking
- › **'plain** complain, lament
- › **blood** noble family
- › **assurance** certainty
- › **office** task
- › **arraign** indict, put on trial
- › **straight** straight away

- 4 **justice** judge
- 5 **sapient** wise
- 7 **Want'st thou** do you lack
- 7 **eyes** may signify “spectators”
- 9 **Come ... me** a snatch of popular song
- 9 **ourn** stream
- 9 **Her ... leak** i.e. she is menstruating (or possibly “she has gonorrhea”)
- 1 **speak** say
- 2 **come over** i.e. for sex
- 3 **foul** possible pun on “fool”
- 4 **Hopdance** a devil associated with music (like all of the fiends Edgar mentions, taken from Samuel Harsnett’s 1603 *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*)
- 5 **black angel** i.e. the fiend in Tom’s belly, which is causing it to rumble
- 7 **do** are
- 7 **amazed** stunned, overwhelmed
- 3 **cushings** cushions
- 1 **yoke-fellow of equity** partner in fairness
- 2 **Bench** sit on the bench
- 2 **o’th’commission** of the panel of judges
- 7 **for ... mouth** i.e. if the shepherd summons his sheep back by playing his pipe
- 7 **minikin** dainty/shrill
- 9 **Purr** Harsnett mentions a devil called Purr, though devils were popularly thought to assume the shape of cats
- 5 **Cry you mercy** I beg your pardon
- 5 **joint-stool** a well-made stool
- 5 **another** i.e. Regan

- 5 **warped looks** contorted facial expression/warped wood
- 7 **store** material/tradesman's stock
- 7 **on** of
- 9 **False justicer** corrupt judge
- 9 **scape** escape
- 10 **Oppressed** overwhelmed/afflicted
- 11 **balmed ... sinews** soothed your shattered nerves
- 12 **convenience** opportunity
- 13 **Stand ... cure** will be hard to heal
- 15 **bearing our woes** enduring the same suffering as us
- 17 **Who ... i'th'mind** mental anguish is worst for those who suffer alone
- 18 **free** carefree
- 18 **happy shows** displays of happiness/visions of good fortune
- 19 **sufferance** suffering
- 19 **o'erskip** pass over, not notice
- 20 **bearing** endurance (of affliction)
- 21 **portable** bearable
- 22 **bow** i.e. bow down under a truly heavy weight (with suggestion of servile bowing, inappropriate to a king)
- 23 **He ... fathered** his children have treated him as my father has treated me
- 24 **high noises** important rumors/what is being said among the powerful
- 24 **bewray** reveal
- 26 **In ... proof** in proving you to be just
- 27 **What ... king** whatever else happens tonight, may the king escape safely
- 28 **Lurk** i.e. stay out of sight
- 32 **old ... death** i.e. die naturally, in old age

- ²⁴ **Bedlam** Bedlam beggar, i.e. Poor Tom
- ²⁵ **where he would** wherever he wants to go
- ²⁶ **Allows itself to** enables him to do
- ²⁷ **flax ... eggs** both were conventionally used to soothe damaged eyes
- ³⁰ **Obidicut ... Flibbertigibbet** more fiends mentioned by Samuel Harsnett; “flibbertigibbet” can also mean “a gossip” or “a flighty, frivolous woman”
- ³¹ **mopping and mowing** grimacing, making faces
- ³⁵ **contemns i'th'origin** despises its originator (father)
- ³⁶ **bordered certain** safely contained
- ³⁷ **sliver and disbranch** split and break off (like a branch from a tree)
- ³⁸ **material** essential, substantial
- ³⁸ **perforce** necessarily
- ³⁹ **come ... use** be destroyed (like firewood)
- ⁴⁰ **text** sermon
- ⁴² **savour but** only enjoy, appreciate
- ⁴⁴ **gracious** generous/good/(as a king) possessed of divine grace
- ⁴⁵ **reverence** position deserving respect, venerable condition
- ⁴⁵ **head-lugged** that has been pulled about by its head, i.e. enraged
- ⁴⁶ **madded** sent mad
- ⁴⁷ **brother** brother-in-law, i.e. Cornwall
- ⁴⁷ **suffer** allow
- ⁴⁹ **visible spirits** spirits in visible form, avenging angels
- ⁵⁰ **tame** crush
- ⁵⁴ **Fools ... mischief** i.e. only fools pity villains (like Lear) who are punished as a preventative measure before they have done wrong
- ⁵⁶ **France** the King of France
- ⁵⁶ **noiseless** silent, inactive

- 57 **plumèd helm** (soldiers') helmets adorned with feathers
- 57 **thy ... threat** begins to threaten the state
- 58 **moral** moralizing
- 50 **self-covered** self-concealing
- 51 **Bemonster ... feature** do not make your beauty hideous by revealing your true fiend's face
- 51 **Were't my fitness** if it were proper for me
- 52 **blood** anger
- 54 **howe'er** however much, although
- 56 **Marry** by the Virgin Mary
- 56 **mew** a contemptuous and belittling cat's meow
- 58 **back** i.e. to France
- 70 **imperfect** unfinished
- 71 **imports** signifies, brings with it
- 79 **trilled** trickled
- 31 **passion** strong emotion/grief
- 35 **goodliest** best, most effectively
- 37 **smilets** little smiles, half-smiles
- 52 **so become it** grace it so well, make it seem so attractive
- 58 **Let ... believed!** Put no trust in pity!
- 50 **clamour moistened her** the expression of her grief moistened her with tears
- 50 **started** hastened, went abruptly
- 54 **mate and make** husband and wife
- 55 **issues** children
- 50 **sometime** sometimes
- 50 **tune** i.e. frame of mind
- 54 **sovereign** overpowering (plays on the related literal sense of "kingly")

- .4 **elbows** pushes, jostles
- .6 **casualties** chance, uncertainties
- .2 **afoot** on the move
- .4 **attend** wait on, look after
- .4 **dear cause** important reason
- .6 **aright** rightly, as myself
- .6 **grieve** regret
- .1 **deep** rumbling, deep-voiced
- .1 **dread-bolted** hurling terrifying thunderbolts
- .3 **cross** forked
- .3 **watch** remain awake/be on guard
- .4 **perdu** “lost one” (French), the name given to a guard placed in an extremely open, dangerous position
- .4 **helm** helmet/covering of hair
- .8 **conductor ... people** commander of his forces
- .2 **Report** rumor
- .3 **powers ... kingdom** British forces
- .3 **apace** rapidly
- .4 **arbitrament** deciding of the dispute
- .6 **point ... wrought** the conclusion of my aims will be thoroughly brought about
- .7 **Or** either
- .8 **abuses** dishonors, wrongs
- .9 **doubtful** fearful
- .9 **conjunct And bosomed** sexually intimate
- .0 **as ... hers** to the fullest extent
- .3 **honest** honorable
- .4 **For** as for
- .5 **touches us as** i.e. affects our honor insofar as

⁵⁶ **bolds** insofar as it emboldens

⁵⁶ **with** (who) along with

⁵⁷ **Most ... oppose** has most just and weighty grounds for hostility

⁵¹ **the ... sharpness** i.e. in the heat of emotion even the best grounds for hostility are cursed by those who have suffered the losses and afflictions of battle (Edmund pretends to be anxious that Lear and Cordelia receive a fair trial)

⁵⁵ **period** limit, extreme point

⁵⁶ **such ... not** those who do not love

⁵⁶ **another ... extremity** to enlarge upon another sorrowful tale (that of Kent) would increase sorrow even further and exceed all limits

⁵⁹ **big in clamour** loud in lamentation

⁷⁰ **estate** condition

⁷³ **fastened ... neck** i.e. embraced me

⁷⁴ **As** as if

⁷⁷ **puissant** powerful

⁷⁷ **strings of life** i.e. heartstrings

⁷⁹ **'tranced** absorbed by grief/in a faint, unconscious

⁸² **enemy king** i.e. the king who had treated him as an enemy

⁸³ **Improper for** unfitting even for