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## Dedication

### William A. Arrowsmith

When I was 17, I had the good luck to spend an afternoon with Dr. William Arrowsmith at the home of Samuel A. Lynde, a second father to me. Sam was trying to launch an open university, and flew Arrowsmith in from Boston on one of the first 747 “jumbo jets.” He was unnerved by the size of the plane, I remember. I can also vividly recall his reading aloud the “[Speech of Chief Seattle](#).” Like Lynde, Dr. Arrowsmith was deeply concerned about the decline of American higher education, and had recently gained notoriety with his attacks on graduate education in the humanities. His lecture “[The Shame of the Graduate Schools: A Plea for a New American Scholar](#)” was published in *Harper’s Magazine* in 1966, and is as powerful today as it was then. Arrowsmith blamed “the hideous jungle of academic bureaucracy” for making the humanities irrelevant to modern life and sacrificing education to trivial research, “the cult of the fact” and career training.

Arrowsmith was the first scholar I wrote to about the dogmatization of *Lear*. I did not send him a copy of my restored version, but a long essay claiming that Shakespeare’s editors had botched their interpretations of the narrative. He read the paper with an open mind, and urged me to contact several experts in the field. “My opinion isn’t worth a straw among the Renaissance drama folk,” he said. He explained that he couldn’t tell me how “new” my narrative theories were, —“whether the scholars haven’t already mined [them] (I’m prepared a priori to suppose that they’ve ignored the essentials, simply on the basis of the way scholars in my field have read Greek tragedy). *You’ve got to find somebody who knows, and whose knowledge matter to others” (2.26.1976). [See [Appendix F](#).]*

Following Dr. Arrowsmith’s suggestion, I began writing to experts in the hope that one of them would take an interest in my theories, and write about them in a [peer-reviewed](#) publication. I am a college dropout, and my work lacks authority, as he tactfully put it. It was not until 14 May 2019 that Paul Werstine, the coeditor of *The Folger Shakespeare Library King Lear*, confirmed that many of the ideas were “new.” He wrote that my work was “indeed unprecedented in the editorial tradition, although I can imagine that perhaps a director might like such a staging.” [See [Appendix G](#).] My essay confused him, however. “It’s not clear to me that when you speak of *King Lear* you are conceiving of it as a performance, or a film, or an edition, or perhaps all three.” From his reply, I realized that it was unclear what exactly I had set about doing. The essay I had sent him misrepresented my objective, which was to restore the play to what Shakespeare’s had in mind when he wrote it, before it was subjected to revision. Upon confirmation from Dr. Werstine that my theories were new, I felt emboldened to publish my restoration online, come of it what will. I had only to heed the warning Dr. Arrowsmith gives to all editors in his [Introduction to \*The Bacchae\*](#):

“At the very least then *The Bacchae* requires of its critics gentleness in approaching it and humility in handling; the reader who is not willing to follow where the play, rather than his

prejudice, leads him forfeits his quarry. But *sophrosunê* is not a common critical virtue, and despite the critic's clear warning in the fate of Pentheus, the play has suffered more than most from the violence of its interpreters.”

## Acknowledgments

*“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” ~ Maya Angelou*

I wish to thank the many scholars who took time to write back to me about my narrative theories, including David and Ben Crystal, Alan C. Dessen, Richard Dutton, Gwynne Evans, Paul Fry, William Gibson, Catherine A Henze, C. Walter Hodges, David C. Itzkowitz, Jonathan Law, Maynard Mack, Kenneth Muir, Marvin Rosenberg, A.L. Rowse, Mark Rylance, Eugene M. Waith, and Paul Werstine. I can’t say any of them agreed with my changes, if only on principle, but the courtesy and kindness of their replies helped keep the project alive. I took it rightly or wrongly as a sign to persevere. My own mother thought I was crazy to care about Shakespeare’s intent when he wrote the play, or that it was even possible to question the authority of the quartos and Folio. She agreed with James Joyce that “Shakespeare is the happy hunting ground of all minds that have lost their balance.”

Special thanks to Camille Blinstrub for her unwavering support over the years.



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## How to Navigate This Document


One of the main objectives of this edition is to show readers how the parts of the play are interconnected and can be explained only by reference to the whole. Identifying the main patterns in the narrative allows us to interpret the action on the basis of the play's form and structure rather than our own personal experiences and preconceived opinions. This document was created in MS Word largely for its ability to create [bookmarks](#) and [hyperlinks](#). By doing so, readers' attention can be directed to important [motifs](#) and overarching themes in the play, such as Shakespeare's use of the human hand, and the pattern of irony the play is structured on. Furthermore, [hyperlinks](#) give readers immediate access to free-content on the web, such as source materials at the [InternetShakespeareEditions](#) and [The Folger Shakespeare Library](#), *Oxford English Dictionary*, [Wikipedia](#), *Britannica*, and so on, as well as artwork, video, and other visual media from around the world.

“Bookmarks and hyperlinks are useful tools for creating and organizing documents, especially if they are long, complex, or have multiple sections. They allow you to quickly jump to specific parts of your document, or to other files or web pages, without scrolling or searching. Hyperlinks are clickable paths to other files, web pages, email addresses, and locations within the document.” <sup>[19]</sup>

The text in this edition is interactive, allowing readers to think outside the linear format of a book. It engages them in *lateral thinking*—a somewhat dated term popular when I was in High School in 1967, —referring to “a manner of solving problems using an indirect and creative approach via reasoning that is not immediately obvious.” Interactive content emphasizes visualization. “A teacher who fosters critical thinking fosters reflectivity and visualization in learners by asking questions that stimulate thinking, which is essential to the construction of knowledge. The integration of visual teaching has a positive influence in the motivation students to learn, grow the level of learning and fosters critical thinking.” (“[The Use of Visualization in Teaching and Learning Process for Developing Critical Thinking of Students.](#)”)

“There are many studies showing that engagement with information improves learning and outcomes for participants. One oft-quoted reference is from New York University Educational Psychology Professor Jerome Bruner who cites studies showing that people remember 80% of what they see and do compared to only 20% of what they read and 10% of what they hear. Being engaged actively in materials increases the educational impact.” (Bill Shander, “[5 Reasons to Visualize Your Data and make it interactive.](#)”)

This document contains hundreds of [Internal links](#) and [External links](#). “Very simply, internal linking occurs when a site links to other [URLs](#) on the same site, whereas external linking occurs when a site links to [URLs](#) on a different site. Put another way, internal links are when you link to your own pages, while external links point to pages on other domains.” <sup>[4]</sup>

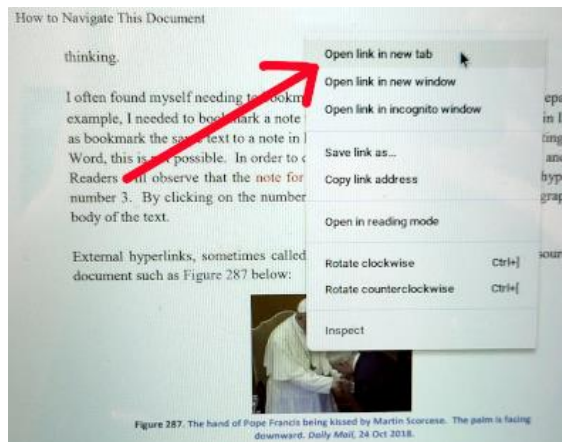
With internal links, when you hover your cursor over the text, it changes into a pointing finger . By clicking on it, you are directed to a note within the domain itself. For example, clicking on the



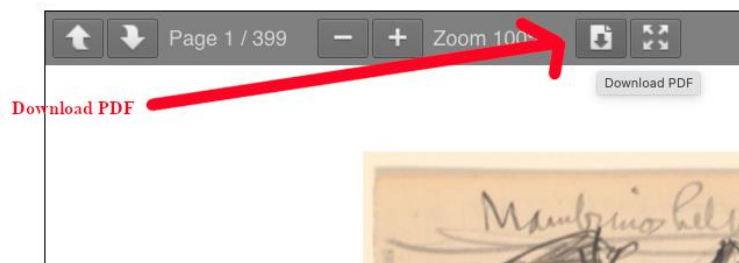
## How to Navigate This Document

line “*pray you*” (F, 937) takes you to note of explanation in the back of the document. To return to the place you were reading, click back on the text. It was sometimes necessary for me to hyperlink line numbers, such as 3. S.D. “*Exeunt two of Cornwall’s knights.*” These are internal links. To return to your place in the document, just click back on the line number.

External hyperlinks, sometimes called outbound links, lead to a page or resource outside the document such (F, 937) above. As with internal links, the mouse turns into a pointing finger when you hover over it. The difference is that you are directed to another domain, in this case the [InternetShakespeareEditions](#), where you can see how the text appears in Folio 1, 1623. In order not loose your place in the source document, simply press and hold the **Ctrl key** (⌘ **cmd key** on a Mac) and then click the link in your browser. The link will open in a new tab in the background. A second method is to **right-click** the mouse, and then select “Open link in new tab” from the menu as illustrated below.



In order to preserve the document formatting when I posted it online, I had to convert it into a PDF file. PDF files can be read online or downloaded, sparing readers the agony of reading the play in a browser window.



The behavior of hyperlinks in a PDF document is a little different from a MS Word document, especially in regard to what is called the “**hover effect**.” In MS Word, by default hyperlinks appear in blue and turn purple when the link is “visited.” This does not happen when links are visited in a PDF file. The color does not change.

As I discuss in the next section, “About this Text,” text highlighted in red within the play is a warning that it is pure narrative *theory* of my own making. Not only does it diverge from what is published in the quartos and Folio, but it is “unprecedented in the editorial tradition,” as Paul Werstine writes in a personal communication. For example, my stage direction in I,i,20., “Enter King Lear, *crowned, wearing a king-size codpiece,*” is not given by any other modern editor. The direction is hyperlinked to a note in the back of the document explaining my reasons for adding it. Readers are encouraged to disagree with my judgment, as Supreme Court Justices do when they write dissenting opinions. (See “The Role of Dissenting Opinions” by Ruth Bader Ginsburg.) It is my firmly held belief that unless the stage elements of the play are brought to readers’ attention, they will not take a second to think about Lear’s costume or any other matters intrinsic to the narrative structure of the work. The color serves as a warning to stop reading and start thinking.

## About This Text

*“One of the saddest lessons of history is this: If we’ve been bamboozled long enough, we tend to reject any evidence of the bamboozle. We’re no longer interested in finding out the truth. The bamboozle has captured us. It’s simply too painful to acknowledge, even to ourselves, that we’ve been taken.” ~ Carl Sagan*

My thesis is that *King Lear* was revised by the [Master of Revels](#) under the *Act to Restrain Abuses of Players*, a censorship law passed by Puritan Members of Parliament months before the play was performed in 1606. In addition to forcing Shakespeare to make major revisions in the text, I theorize that key stage directions were suppressed by Puritan authorities that were considered irreverent. The omission of these directions completely changes the tonal style of the play, its focalization, and its meaning. For example, the evidence is overwhelming that Shakespeare conceived of Lear being costumed in lurid *Tudor period* clothes with a gargantuan codpiece in contrast to the “sophisticated” Stuart period fashions worn by the rest of the characters. (See note I,i,32,S.D., “wearing a king-size codpiece”.)

A quick search for *King Lear* on Google reveals that there is no autograph manuscript. Over the centuries, the play has been variably patched together by [Shakespeare’s editors](#) from several unreliable secondary sources, licensed for publication by [The Master of Revels](#) before London theatres were closed during the Puritan interregnum in 1642. The first of them is [Quarto 1](#) published during Shakespeare’s lifetime in 1608; [Quarto 2](#) in 1619, three years after his death. The earliest collection of his plays is the [First Folio](#) published in 1623 by Shakespeare’s fellow actors [John Heminges](#) and [Henry Condell](#). “The Folio text is a far better printed text than the Quarto, with fewer obvious errors, but it has been reworked in a number of important ways. The reviser, or revisers, cut some quite long passages, added a number of generally shorter passages, altered some speech assignments, changed a large number of individual words, and shifted the dramatic and critical effect of some passages through a series of smaller changes” (Michael Best, “The two versions of *King Lear*”). The First Folio was followed by the publication of a [Second Folio](#) (1632), a [Third Folio](#) (1664) and a [Fourth Folio](#) (1685). Copies of these sources can be freely viewed online at the [InternetShakespeareEditions](#) and other websites committed to conservation, including the [Folger Shakespeare Library](#).

Beginning with [Lewis Theobald’s](#) *Shakespeare Restored* (1733), modern editions of *Lear* are collations or “conflations” of these early corrupted sources. (See [Shakespeare’s Editors](#).) It is widely assumed that the story—“the overarching narrative that encompasses the plot, characters, themes, and emotions of the play”<sup>[20]</sup>—can be derived solely on the basis of empirical observation: what can be seen in black and white. [Grace Ioppolo](#) puts the case against conflating *King Lear* trenchantly: “Any edition of *King Lear* which conflates the Quarto and Folio texts, . . . produces an inconsistent treatment of themes such as war and familial conflict, a confused presentation of the play’s structure and form, and, most important, a falsely conflated version of Cordelia and so



— O, see, see!

*Lear.* Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!  
 Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
 That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever.  
 I know when one is dead and when one lives.  
 She's dead as earth. [*He lays her down.*]

—Lend me a looking glass;  
 If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
 Why, then she lives.—

In my restoration, Act IV ends with Edmund's telling the audience that he intends to kill Lear and Cordelia after the battle, and Act V begins with them his prisoners. Concomitantly, I deleted scene 23 (Act 5, scene 2 in the Folio), and restored lines 2931-36 to their logical place at the end of IV,v in keeping with the despondent mood of Gloucester and the sequence of poetic imagery: "fruitfully" (F, 2718), "mature" (F, 2728), "rot" (F, 2931), and "ripeness" (F, 2935). [See Appendix B.]

What feels authentic about V,ii are the stage directions, which accord with what is known of Elizabethan theatrical practices, specifically their taste for music and marches. See "**march, marching**" in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p.140. I believe the scene is properly termed an "Interlude," as in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, "Interlude 1" (p. 243), and have so named it in my restored version. [See Appendix B: INTERLUDE.] Like the Italian *intermedio*, it functions dramatically as *an instrumental passage*, accompanied by a military procession across the stage, signaling the passage of time. [See Figure 338, "Portrait of Sir Henry Upton who is shown presiding over a banquet, while a masque of Mercury and Diana is performed, accompanied by musicians." ] In my version, the march is led by a Bagpipe Player, in order to evoke the emotional gravitas of the approaching battle. [See note INTERLUDE, S.D., "*Bagpiper plays.*"]

In my restoration, I have deleted scene 17 as published in the quarto version because it 1) is not in keeping with the stoic character of Lear's Knight (aka "*a Gentleman*"), and 2) throws a wrench into the story's plot. When Londoners came to see Shakespeare's play performed for the first time, they were expecting Cordelia to live after the battle and reign as queen as in *Geoffrey of Monmouth's history of King Leir*, *Holinshed's account of the story* and the popular pre-Shakespearean drama of 1594 written by Anonymous, "*The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordelia.*" As I theorize the play was originally written, Shakespeare uses these expectations to advantage in his storytelling by leaving his audience in suspense as to what a French army is doing in England until Cordelia tells us herself in scene 18. Lines Q, 2347.1-09 are more naturally spoken by Lear's Knight at the conclusion of scene 21, where he and Kent are discussing the logistics of the battle. [See Appendix C and Appendix D.]

In my restoration, I have emended speech assignments in the quartos and Folio when they contradict the narrative. For example, the line "*Out, vilde gelly! / Where is thy lustre now?*" (F, 2158-59) is assigned to Cornwall in both the quarto and Folio versions. (See note III,vii,80.S.D., "*She plucks out his other eye.*") However, based the account of Albany's Squire ("*Gentleman*", Q,



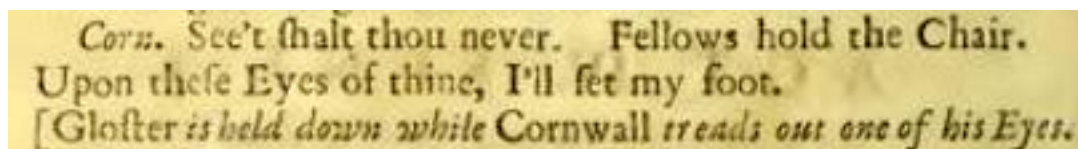
2311.8; “*Messenger*”, F, 2312), who was present in the scene as an eye witness (“*2 Seruant*”), it can be none other than Regan who puts out the earl’s second eye. (See note IV,ii,68. S.D., “*Enter Albany’s Squire.*”)

*Reg.* Out, vile jelly!  
Where is thy lustre now?

The main focus of this restoration is on the *narrative* elements of the play, which include both verbal and nonverbal communication. Aristotle points out the obvious when he says that Epic poetry uses words alone to tell a story, while Tragedy does so by means of **action** (*Poetics*, Chpt 23). The relationship between “the two versions of *King Lear*” is largely a pedantic matter. The difficulty is making sense of the relationship of the text to performance: “*The same message accompanied by different meta-communication can mean something entirely different, including its opposite, as in irony.*” As Volumnia says to Coriolanus, “*Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th’ ignorant / More learned then the eares.*” (F, 2177-78)

As with my textual emendations, stage directions original to this restoration are red-marked. For example, the direction “*Gives him a daisy*” is highlighted in red, and hyperlinked to a note in the back explaining on what evidence I base my decision for adding it. (See note IV,v,133, S.D., “*Gives him a daisy*”.) It asks the question what, if anything, is Lear *doing* when he gives “*money*” to Gloucester: “*There’s money for thee*” (F, 2573). If students are not asked the question by the editor, they will passively read over the line, assuming it is meant to be taken literally. “A rose is a rose is a rose.”

One of the traps of Shakespeare’s language is not language but literalism—“The disposition or tendency to accept a text, statement, etc., literally; the result of this, the interpretation of words in their literal sense” (*OED*). For example, when Cornwall says, “*Vpon these eyes of thine, Ile set my foote.*” (F, 2140), it has become Shakespearean dogma that “*these eyes*” refers *literally* to Gloucester’s eyeballs rather than *metaphorically* to his spectacles. (See note III,vii.65, “*these eyes.*”) Without giving a single reason why, many modern editors, such as Stanley Wells, add the stage direction, “*Cornwall puts out one of Gloucester’s eyes and stamps on it,*” *The Oxford Shakespeare* (2000) p. 209. The direction was first added by Nicholas Rowe in *The Works of William Shakespear*, Vol. 5, p, 2522 (1709), “*Gloster is held down while Cornwall treads out one of his eyes.*” See note III,vii,65,S.D., “*Stomps on “Gloucester’s spectacles.*”



Corn. See't shalt thou never. Fellows hold the Chair.  
Upon these Eyes of thine, I'll fet my foot.  
[Gloster is held down while Cornwall treads out one of his Eyes.]

Arguably the most egregious example of Shakespearean literalism is when Lear says, “*Off, off you Lendings: Come, vnbutton heere*” (F, 1888-89). Readers are told on authority that the action is limited to the words published in the quartos and Folio. Tolstoy, in his “impartial” synopsis of the story of *King Lear*, accepts this literalist approach to the art of Shakespeare, and sneeringly describes the most pivotal action in the play as “*the unbuttoning of Lear’s button.*”<sup>[96]</sup> A critical

reader, who famously challenged the idea that Napoleon was a “genius” in *War and Peace* (and should have known better than to trust the opinions of sophists, and especially German literary critics like Georg Gottfried Gervinus), blindly mistakes dogma for truth. He fallaciously concludes in his rant against the “genius” of Shakespeare that he was an immoral playwright: “Gervinus most clearly expresses the whole of Shakespeare's moral theory by saying that Shakespeare does not write for those classes for whom definite religious principles and laws are suitable (i.e., for nine hundred and ninety-nine one-thousandths of men) but for the educated.”<sup>[87]</sup> [See note III, iv,101,S.D., “*Edgar puts on the king’s discarded riding-cloak.*”]

In the editorial tradition of Nicholas Rowe, I added scene locations because it really matters where the characters are in the fictional world of the narrative. While it would have been obvious to Londoners in the 17th century where III,vi was taking place, the same cannot be said of modern student readers who know nothing about hunting, and are probably repulsed by the very idea of it. They are more likely to own a fox for a pet than chase and skin one. In Shakespeare’s day, foxes were considered vermin, and a bounty was offered for them.<sup>[5]</sup> “A new national poll commissioned by the animal welfare charity the League Against Cruel Sports finds that majority of the British public are in favour of keeping a number of activities banned in the Hunting Act illegal.”<sup>[6]</sup> [See note S.D.” *A Hunting Lodge.*”]

In a few instances, I also theorize where the actors are positioned on stage because Shakespeare uses the physical space of the Globe theatre, and its social stratification, to communicate meaning, such as Edgar’s entrance in the yard and Goneril’s position in the Lords Rooms. [See note I,iv,243.S.D., “*above*”.] These are intrinsic elements of his storytelling, and far too important to bury in a note merely for the pedantic purpose of conserving what was published in the corrupted quartos and Folio versions. Readers can see for themselves what was published through the hyperlinks. What they can’t see is what *wasn’t* published. How Elizabethan dramatists staged their plays in public theatres like the Globe have to be explained.

As I discuss in my notes to the *Dramatis Personæ*, there is no consistency between the quartos or the First Folio as to who’s who among the *tertiary* players with speaking roles. Sometimes they are ascribed the name of “*Servant*”; sometimes “*Knight*”; sometimes “*Gentleman*”, sometimes “*Messenger*”, and so on. Although readers are told by Shakespeare’s editors that the matter is of “relatively minor”<sup>[40]</sup> importance, and not worth troubling their heads over, this is not at all the case. “In art, as in life, everyone is the hero of their own particular story; it is worth thinking about what your minor characters' stories are, even though they may intersect only slightly with your protagonist's” (Sarah Waters).

In my restoration, I theorize that *Curan* in II,i, is the same character as the *Seruant* (Q, 2176.1) in III,vii, and the *Old Man* (F, 2188) in IV,i. He reenters II,i with the “*Seruants with Torches*” (F, 970) that attend Gloucester, and is “*Dispatch[ed]*” (F, 995) by his lord to issue a proclamation ordering Edgar’s arrest. (See note II,i,1., “*Curan*”.) The question is essential because it determines the POV from which the audience observes Gloucester’s blinding.

I also theorize that the lines variably assigned to a “*Servant*”, “*Messenger*”, “*Captain*”, “*Herald*”, “*An officer who bows and goes out*”, and “*The one with the bloody knife*,” are spoken by a single character: Albany’s Squire. (See [note III,vii,97](#), “*Squire*.”) The character is first identified as “*Seruant*” in III,vii (Q, 2178; lines Q, 2176.1-2177.9 were omitted in the First Folio). The part was likely performed by a young apprentice player, and not given a name by the copyist, which was customary according to Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare’s time, 1590-1642*. Albany summons a “*Herald Trumpeter*” in the final scene, and his *Squire* reads the paper he is given. (See [note V,i,107](#), “*Come hither, Herald*.”)

I have also assigned the parts arbitrarily ascribed in the quartos and folio to “*a Knight*”, “*a Gentleman*”, “*a Servant*”, and “*a Messenger*” to a single character. (See [note I,iv,47](#), “*Lear’s Knight*”.) As the codes of chivalry and masculine honor are central themes of the play, I have made a point in my restoration to distinguish between household knights and domestic servants as described by Mark Cartwright in “[The Household Staff in an English Medieval Castle](#)”.

In the original [King’s Men](#) production, the identity of the “extras” was communicated by their costumes. Thus, there would be no mistaking the rank of the brave young man who comes to the aid of Gloucester in III,vii. In my restoration I have given him the name “*Cornwall’s Knight*.” (See [note III,vii,69](#), “*Cornwall’s Knight*.”) He is an armed *household Knight* wearing the tabard of his lord.

There is not a list of acting credits in the quartos and folio indicating how the parts were cast. In my restoration, the roles of the King of France and Edgar are performed by the same actor. (See [note I,i,189](#). “*France*.”) The double casting is an integral element in the dramatic structure of the composition. Edgar, as we know from the [title page](#), is the *deuteragonist*—the second most important character in Shakespeare’s narrative. Seeing his fall from a great lord to a bedlam beggar is one of the main draws of the play, and one of its most important themes. Shakespeare did not need to compose a scene establishing the nobility and virtue of the character because his exemplary nature is implied by the double casting. The actor playing Edgar first presents at the very top of [Fortune’s wheel](#) in the role as the King of France, completely outshining Edmund and even Lear himself. Logically, it is why France is not present at the battle. It is also why Edgar is not present in the first scene, despite being Lear’s godson. It is why Shakespeare chose to use the word “*plight*” in Cordelia’s speech, “*That Lord, whose hand must take my **plight***” (F, 108). In its literal sense it means *pledge*, but it carries the double meaning of *adversity*. Both she and Edgar are banished by their fathers.

I concur with [Alois Brandl](#) that the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were also doubled, and performed by the same boy player. (See [note I,iv,86,S.D.](#), “*Enter Fool*.”) The essential idea Shakespeare is dramatizing in the relationship between Lear and the Fool is the *inversion* of the roles of parent and child, a theme we see play out in many of his works. The Fool is Cordelia’s *doppelgänger*, her double. She is like the ghost of Banquo in *MacBeth*, the physical embodiment of her presence in his guilty mind.

Text highlighted in blue is considered non-essential to the narrative. It includes textual variants between the quartos and Folio such “*sticke*” (F, 2130) and “*rash*” (Q, 2130)—scholarly minutiae that has no effect whatsoever on the story. Archaic words and phrases, such “*moiety*” (F, 10) and “*the cat is grey*” (Q,2014.21), are also blue-marked to save readers from having to look them up in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Shakespeare did not write *King Lear* alone at his desk. When restoring the play to its “original,” there are many many unknowable contributing factors that shaped the production. For example, there is no way to know what concessions Shakespeare had to make to the sharers of his own company, let alone the Master of Revels, before the play was staged and licensed for publication. Scenes I,v, and III,vi, were almost certainly “*retroscripted*”—a term used today in television and movies where dialogue is largely improvised by the actors. This was one of the defining features of *commedia dell'arte*, a style of theatre known to have had an influence on Shakespeare. “The actors improvised much of the dialogue based on scenarios that provided a plot outline, but little more. The actors would thus make up the lines and moment-to-moment actions as they went along.” (Rob Shimko, “A Brief Overview of Commedia Dell’arte.”)

This is to say, some lines in *Lear* may not have been written by Shakespeare at all. Robert Armin’s hand is evident in many of the Fool’s speeches, notably Merlin’s Prophecy (F, 1735-49), as well as the songs and snatches the first three acts are peppered with. Armin excelled at physical comedy, and Gloucester’s suicide *lazzi* (*lazzi di ammazzarsi*) might have been his invention, like Mouse’s pratfall in the King’s Men 1606 production of *Mucedorus*, a role he took over from Will Kempe a few months before *Lear* was staged. There is more evidence to suggest that he played the part of Gloucester than Lear’s Fool.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge for anybody committed to restoring the play is understanding the role music played in the narrative. As noted in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, “this common direction for **sound** occurs more than 630 times in over 220 plays” (pp. ,146-148). R.W. Ingram notes in “Patterns of Music and Action in Fletcherian Drama,” “by ‘music’ is meant songs, dances, and all instrumental music from conventional flourishes and alarums to concerted masque music. Too often attention has been centered on songs alone and their value as poetry.” Catherine Henze, in a personal communication on July 16, 2019, writes “Regarding the overall impact of music in *Lear*, I truly believe it is underestimated. *Lear*, IV.vii [scene 21] includes the section where music is explicitly used as medicine. There is certainly ample evidence that Renaissance audiences believed in the transformative power of music, as summarized in *Robert Armin and Shakespeare’s Performed Songs*, pp. 36-41.”

In Shakespeare’s day, the incidental music—“Music played as an accompaniment or ‘background’ to a play or film” (OED)—was composed in the oral tradition as it was in Roman theatre and *commedia dell'arte*. “The great profusion of Jacobean instrumental music, especially consort music, compared with the relative paucity of vocal or theatrical music, seems a reliable guide to the musical tastes of the period no matter how low a survival rate we assume. Jacobean England may well have been the earliest European society to value instrumental music more highly than

vocal. . . . Thomas Morley, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, called it ‘the chiefest kind of music which is made without a ditty,’ that is, without words, and emphasized *the freedom* that this gave the composer, who ‘taketh a point at his pleasure and wresteth and turneth it as he list, making either much or little of it according as shall seem best in his own conceit,’ so that ‘in this may more art be shown than in any other music because the composer is tied to nothing, but that he may add, diminish, and alter at his pleasure.’” (Richard Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music*.)

Analysis of the plot structure suggests the instrumental music in *Lear* was “cinematic” in nature. “[I]t establishes setting; it creates atmosphere; it calls attention to elements; it reinforces or foreshadows narrative developments; it gives meaning to a character’s actions or translates their thoughts; and it creates emotion. . . it adds an extra dimension to a film, uniting a series of images and encouraging audience absorption into the story.” (Kathryn Kalinak, *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 2010.) For example, it is the music that connects the audience emotionally with Gloucester’s recognition of Edgar’s voice at the conclusion of IV,v and Lear’s reconciliation with Cordelia in the next scene, resolving the two story main lines in one deft stroke: “*louder the musicke there*” (Q1, 2775.2). (See Appendix B.) When we read the play on paper, it appears that the Fool takes his exit from the play in scene 13 with the quip, “*And Ile go to bed at noone*” (F, 2043), the last lines spoken by the character. However, the question that needs asking is whether his departure is not marked solely by his words but also by the music he is playing on his flute or recorder, the same melody he played on his lute in I,v, and that Cordelia’s consort musicians play in scene 21. The melody serves as a rudimentary leitmotif for *agape*, and the healing property music was thought to possess. (See note I,iv,8,S.D., “*Music*.”)

One of the reasons Armin may have replaced Kempe was the audience’s demand for more music. “Armin was known for his musicality; with his arrival, there was a marked increase in singing in Shakespeare’s play.” (Catherine A. Henze, *Robert Armin and Shakespeare’s Performed Songs*.) While much has been made of Armin’s *verbal* wit, less has been written about his musicianship. He was the protégé of Richard Tarlton, an actor famous for his pipe and tabor, and known to be “Queen Elizabeth I’s favourite jester, the only one able to ‘undumpish’ her when she was out of humour and the only one allowed to tell her of her faults.”<sup>[18]</sup> “We don’t know if Tarlton set [his] extempore verses to existing tunes, or invented new melodies; and it is not clear whether Gabriel Harvey’s description of “his piperly Extemporizing” suggests that he self-accompanied these on-the-spot songs on pipe and tabor, probably keeping rhythm with the drum while he sang, perhaps playing instrumental verses and refrains with the addition of the pipe as an introduction and/or between verses, or whether the songs were sung a cappella and “his piperly Extemporizing” was a separate part of the act” (Early music performance 3/4.) It is only logical that both Tarlton and Armin followed the footsteps of medieval minstrels. (See Ian Pittway, “Tarleton’s Resurrection. Part 1/4: Tarleton’s place in the history of fools, clowns and jesters” (2021).





Video 1. tarletones riserrectione Jo: Dowlande from the handwritten Wickhambrook lute book, c. 1595, played by Ian Pittaway on an orpharion.

The instrumental music in *Lear* is so precisely timely and articulated, some sort of spotting, as in filmspotting, must have taken place in the process of production. To give a simple example, how would the trumpeter in II,i know when to sound the “*Tucket within*” (F, 1014) or if it was intended to parody the duke’s pomposity? He was not playing from a written score, and had to have been given instructions. Since Shakespeare is not known to have composed melodies, or even play an instrument, the person in charge of communicating with the musicians (the director so to speak) might well have been Armin.



Figure 1, *T. Rex*, Chicago’s Century of Progress, The Sinclair Exhibit, 1933.

Any restoration of *King Lear* is inevitably based on theory because there is no direct evidence to prove what Shakespeare wrote and what he didn’t write. Key non-verbal performance elements that cue the readers as to the how to interpret the text are missing in the quartos and Folio, such as the nature of the music, how the costumes were designed, what stage properties were used, the gestures of the actors, their “humors” and all the other elements in a play that communicate its meaning. Just like models of *T. Rex*, a dinosaur that was once depicted by paleontologists as a giant, long-tailed, lumbering lizard, that walked upright and slept lying down, our knowledge of Shakespeare is constantly evolving. [See Figure 1, “The image of TREX the making of a monster”, *Prehistoric Life*, 2024.] From 1934 to 1979, The Carnegie Museum of Natural History displayed one of its prize specimens with the wrong head.<sup>[17]</sup> Today, it is thought that one species of maniraptoran dinosaurs was the ancestor of chickens. (See “World’s most scientifically accurate *T. Rex* model now on display in New York.”)

Most of us, and most scientists, see science as a rational process, whereby a field of competing theories and hypotheses yields one that is best supported by reason and objective evidence. For such "rationalists," science is the model of organized rational activity. This traditional view has been opposed in recent years by practitioners of a new

field called [Science and Technology Studies \(STS\)](#), who claim that scientists are mistaken in thinking that their views are shaped mainly by objective evidence. They regard a notion such as "objectivity" as passé. Instead, they see nonscientific factors such as personal ambition, vested social interests, ideology, racism and sexism playing a major—or exclusive—role in molding scientific opinion. One branch of the STS movement aims to debunk the notion of a scientific "fact" altogether, claiming that these so-called "facts" are merely "constructs," and that they are not "discovered" but are "created" or constructed from what scientists agree upon as factual. (Keith M. Parsons, “[The Wrongheaded Dinosaur](#)”.)

Scholars know much more about the Globe Playhouse and the staging of Shakespeare’s plays than [William Aldis Wright](#) did when he edited the *Cambridge Shakespeare* in 1866. He had not even seen the drawing of the [Swan playhouse](#) which was discovered in the University of Utrecht library in 1880. [Aernout Van Buchel's](#) copy of [Johan de Witt's](#) sketch “forms the inevitable basis of any comprehensive account of the main structural features of a [Elizabeth] playhouse” ([Chambers, E.K. \*The Elizabethan Stage\*, 2:527](#). Oxford: Clarendon, 1923.) Chambers' seminal work was not published until 1925.

It is now generally accepted that the entertainment at the Globe was not limited to the “[diegesis](#)”—the fictional world in which the events of a narrative occur. As [Marianne Wynne-Davis](#) explains<sup>[4]</sup>, men and women “went to the theatre for many reasons, only one of which seems to have been to watch the play.” The experience of seeing *Lear* performed in the early 17th century was nothing like reading it unobserved in the sanctuary and safe-haven of a college library. Even less was it like seeing a production at [Sam Wanamaker’s Globe](#) or watching a video from the privacy of one’s home. What can be said with absolute certainty about The Globe Playhouse in 1606 is that it was no place to take the wife and kids.



Figure 2. Times Square in the 80s.

The theatre was situated the [District of Southwark](#), an area that New Yorkers might compare to Times Square in the 70s and 80s before Disney sanitized the place. In Shakespeare’s time, it was "the setting for a long-running battle between the highest concentration of hedonists in the country, and a movement who adherents believed that if you tapped your foot to music, you might as well just go the whole hog, rename yourself Beelzebub and have sexual intercourse with the corpse of a recently sacrificed goat" (*Shakespeare’s Pub* by Pete Brown, St. Martin's Publishing Group, 2013). It was virtually impossible for Elizabethan audiences to attend a play and [suspend disbelief](#) in the story (as we do at the movies) due to the circumstances of performance. There was no [proscenium](#), no “[fourth wall](#)” separating them from the actors and stagehands—they shared the

same light and the same spatiotemporal reality. The deictic centre of the event was as volatile as it is in mummers plays, street theatre, mountebank, and *Commedia dell'arte*. (See John H. McDowell, “Some Pictorial Aspects of Early Mountebank Stages”.)



Figure 3. Image of Mary Frith, alias Moll Cutpurse, a notorious pickpocket and fence of the London underworld. From title page of *The Roaring Girl* by Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker.

In any production at the Globe, a comely young man or woman in the audience might find themselves distracted by a besotted gentleman in the Lords Rooms gesturing suggestively at them. Handsomely dressed gallants could buy a seat on the side of the stage for two shillings (24 pence)<sup>[19]</sup> to fraternize with the boy actors, get a better view of the audience, and to draw attention to themselves, presumably in the hope of having a sexual encounter. John Rainolds, no doubt speaking from his own experience playing the female role of Hippolyta in a performance of the play *Palamon and Arcite* at Oxford, warns in his book *Th'overthrow of Stage-Playes* that dressed as a woman, or playing the woman's part, the boy player “may kindle sparkes of lust in vncleane affection” (p. 34). Same-sex sex is part of the spoken universe in *King Lear*. [See note IV,v, 137., “dost thou squiny at me?” (F, 2580-81)]. Though the word “homosexual” was not coined until 1868, the Globe was a welcome place to anybody who could pay the price of admission, including “sodomites,” pederasts, and cross-dressers like Mary Frith, a notorious fence and a pimp. [See Figure 3.]

When discussing *King Lear* with students who are very likely reading the play for the first time, it is important to acknowledge the reasons they might not like Shakespeare. Most of them presuppose from their experience of movies and television that the goal of theatre is to create the *illusion* of reality. Not only will the “metatheatrical” style of Elizabethan plays fail to meet their expectations of what makes good drama, but the language sounds stilted and artificial. “Real” people don’t speak in verse or talk archaic poesy. Moreover, the vocal techniques required to speak Shakespeare sound studied and affected, like John Gielgud’s reading of “Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” from *Macbeth*. (In my judgment, we hear much more of Shakespeare in Sir John’s conversation with Dick Cavett when he talks spontaneously about his working relationship with Marlon Brando on the set of *Julius Caesar*: the briskness of his speech, the impeccable enunciation of his words, the control of his breathing, and the warmth of his engagement with the audience.)



**Video 2** Barbara Billingsley (AKA June Cleaver), the whitest woman in America, translates “jive” to an English speaking-only flight attendant in the movie *Airplane!*

The received pronunciation of Shakespeare, the dialect traditionally spoken by *educated people* of high social class in the UK, resounds with elitism, even to Brits themselves. “The Conservatives have a super-weapon which they use all the time and which devastates the opposition – their control of the standard language, known variously as the Queen’s English/Oxford English/Public School English.” (The National, 2021.) “George Bernard Shaw famously wrote: ‘it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him’. This quote is a testament to the power of accents to position us in the social world by communicating information about our background, our upbringing and the communities we belong to” (AccentBiasBritain). See note IV,v,7., “*Methinks thy voice is altered.*”

The mere sound of “the Queen’s English” causes the vast majority of listeners to be wary of Shakespeare, like the rattle of a snake, especially to people whose native languages and cultures were stamped out by British colonialists. Following Goethe’s proclamation that Shakespeare was a genius, and the defeat of Napoleon by the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo in 1815, “Shakespeare became ... an emblem of national pride, the crown jewel of English culture, and a ‘rallying-sign’, as Thomas Carlyle wrote in 1841, for the whole British empire.”<sup>[3]</sup> He went from being a relatively minor Elizabethan poet, “whose most important works were *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Venus and Adonis*, and the *Sonnets*”<sup>[18]</sup>, to the spearhead of the British Empire. His name was treated by Robert Browning “as a sort of incantation, second only to God’s.” (Charles LaPorte, *The Victorian Cult of Shakespeare: Bardology in the Nineteenth Century*). The works of Shakespeare were weaponized by English imperialists on their civilizing mission to facilitate the Englishization of indigenous peoples,—the so-called “White Man’s Burden. [See Figure 4.] Shakespeare was made a symbol of English exceptionalism; a sign of the superiority of English culture, English customs, English Institutions, and, most importantly, the English language, which has remained the dominant *lingua franca* of international diplomacy, business and culture, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



**Figure 4.** The editorial cartoon “The White Man’s Burden (Apologies to Rudyard Kipling)” shows John Bull (Britain) and Uncle Sam (U.S.) delivering the world’s people of colour to civilisation (Victor Gillam, *Judge* magazine, 1 April 1899). The people in the basket carried by Uncle Sam are labelled Cuba, Hawaii, Samoa, ‘Porto Rico’, and the Philippines, while the people in the basket carried by John Bull are labelled Zulu, China, India, ‘Soudan’, and Egypt”

While Britain was building the largest Empire in human history, Americans were expanding their lands, and slaughtering its native people, in the name of *manifest destiny*, a doctrine that fueled the



growing debate over slavery, by raising the pressing question of whether new states being admitted to the Union would allow slavery or not—a conflict that would eventually lead to the Civil War.” Is that *The Family Shakespeare* being carried by Columbia in John Gast’s allegorical painting *American Progress*? (See Andrew Dickson, “West side story: how Shakespeare stormed America’s frontier.”) In his must-read anthology *White People in Shakespeare: Essays on Race, Culture and the Elite*, Arthur L. Little, Jr. presents the view that since the court of Queen Elizabeth I, through the early modern English theatre to the storming of the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021, white people have used Shakespeare to define their cultural and racial identity and authority.



**Figure 5. *American Progress* (1872) by John Gast shows Manifest Destiny, the belief in western expansion of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Settlers are moving west, guided and protected by Columbia, driving Native Americans and bison into obscurity. Columbia represents America, dressed in a Roman toga to represent classical republicanism, bringing the enlightened east to the darkened west.**

Not only is the manner and style of Shakespeare plays is foreign to 21<sup>st</sup> contemporary audiences, but the classical subjects they draw upon. In an attempt to broaden commercial interest in his works, the plays are typically adapted to suit the tastes of contemporary audiences, much like Sir Thomas Beecham’s 1959 re-orchestration of the *Messiah* for full symphony orchestra, or Otto Klemperer’s *St Matthew Passion*—“the utmost example of gross failures specific to mid 20th century Bach performing: slow, melodramatic playing, totally disrespectful to author’s demands.” By the early 70s, audiences wanted to hear to historically informed performances, such as those performed by Nikolaus Harnoncourt. I myself was an early subscriber to the Musical Heritage Society, which profoundly influenced the historical approach I take to Shakespeare.

Subjects taught in schools in the 16<sup>th</sup> century have all but been forgotten today. Shakespeare would have likely have attended the King Edward VI grammar school in Stratford-upon-Avon, and taught the trivium—grammar, logic, and rhetoric—a word most students in public schools in American have never even heard of. “Nobody learns rhetoric in school now,” says Dr. Elizabeth Dollimore.<sup>[16]</sup> “The study of ancient Greek and Latin long ago vanished from most American classrooms, and with it has gone a special understanding of the values and virtues prized by Western civilization. (Daniel Walker Howe, “Classical Education in America,” 2011.) In his book *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*, Jonathan Bate one of the world’s leading authorities on Shakespeare, “offers groundbreaking insights into how, perhaps more than any other influence, the classics made Shakespeare the writer he became. At the heart of the book is an argument that Shakespeare’s supreme valuation of the force of imagination was honed by the classical tradition and designed as a defense of poetry and theater in a hostile world of emergent Puritanism.”

For most students today, rhetoric does not stand out as a theme in *King Lear* because it is no longer



taught in schools. Shakespeare's audience, on the other hand, would have understood Lear's diatribe in Act IV as a satire on rhetoric and oratory because it was beaten into them as children in grammar school. (Do readers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century even know what a diatribe is?) [See [note IV,v,107](#), "*Lear is standing*."] Aristophanes lampoons the skill of rhetoric in *The Clouds*, where students enroll at "The Thinkery" (*Phrontisterion*) to learn how to make wrong answers sound right in cases of law.

What is also confusing to modern students about Shakespeare's plays, is the absence of detailed descriptions of the action. Tennessee Williams gives a 330-word stage direction for the opening of Act 1 scene one in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. By comparison, *King Lear* reads like a work of literature, —something akin to Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, an eponymous poem in 999 lines by the fictional poet John Shade, an English professor at "Wordsmith College." The poem is hilariously disjointed by a foreword, lengthy commentary and index written by Shade's neighbor and academic colleague, Charles Kinbote. Like *Pale Fire* the narrative of *King Lear* is constantly being interrupted by Shakespeare's unreliable editors. Going back and forth between the text and the notes it is difficult for readers to grasp the basic throughline of the story. The narrative reads like the probate case of *Jarndyce v Jarndyce* in *Bleak House*: "so complicated that no man alive knows what it means." (Chpt 1).

For Shakespeare to mean anything to students apart from a grade from their professors in High School and college, educators must abandon [authoritarian classroom management styles](#), and engage them in critical thinking. This is best accomplished by a technique known as [the Socratic method](#)—"a form of [argumentative dialogue](#) between individuals, based on asking and answering questions.... [The] method begins with commonly held beliefs and scrutinizes them by way of questioning to determine their internal consistency and their coherence with other beliefs and so to bring everyone closer to the truth."<sup>[16]</sup> The method is used by [first-year law professors](#); famously dramatized in the film *The Paper Chase* with John Houseman. It is impossible to ever know how *King Lear* was originally staged, or in what ways the text might have been revised. As Einstein said, "The important thing is to not stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. . . "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."

"[W]hen every young man entering into life in our time has presented to him, as the model of moral perfection, not the religious and moral teachers of mankind, but first of all Shakespeare, concerning whom it has been decided and is handed down by learned men from generation to generation, as an incontestable truth, that he was the greatest poet, the greatest teacher of life, the young man can not remain free from this pernicious influence. When he is reading or listening to Shakespeare the question for him is no longer whether Shakespeare be good or bad, but only: In what consists that extraordinary beauty, both esthetic and ethical, of which he has been assured by learned men whom he respects, and which he himself neither sees nor feels? And constraining himself, and distorting his esthetic and ethical feeling, he tries to conform to the ruling opinion. He no longer believes in himself, but in what is said by the learned people whom he respects. I have experienced all this. Then reading critical examinations of the dramas and extracts from books with

explanatory comments, he begins to imagine that he feels something of the nature of an artistic impression. The longer this continues, the more does his esthetical and ethical feeling become distorted. He ceases to distinguish directly and clearly what is artistic from an artificial imitation of art” <sup>[123]</sup>

## Introduction: Madness and Machismo



Video 3. Glenn Gould's U.S. Television Debut: Bernstein Conducting Bach's Keyboard Concerto No. 1 in D minor. It is introduced by Bernstein who discusses the vagaries of Bach's score notations, which he compares to the omission of stage directions in Shakespeare's in *Hamlet*.

*"[The theory of relatively] occurred to me by intuition, and music was the driving force behind that intuition. My discovery was the result of musical perception."* ~ Albert Einstein

In deciding which of his daughters is the most deserving of the largest part of his kingdom, Lear demands that they prove their love for him in terms of words. He believes that they are the ultimate measure of knowledge. Gloucester makes the same tragic error by putting stock in the words he sees written in Edmund's letter. Had either trusted their intuition, they would have known the truth. It is perhaps not by coincidence that *King Lear* was written within a year of Francis Bacon's seminal work, published in 1605, *The Advancement of Learning* ("the first really important philosophical book to be written in English"). [See Figure 41.] "It is credited by Bacon's biographer-essayist Catherine Drinker Bowen with being a pioneering essay in support of empirical philosophy." In *Lear*, Shakespeare's view is much opposed to empiricism. He makes the case that true knowledge is not derived from mere words (*logos*, λόγος). It must be weighed by what is "felt". See note IV,v, 139, "*Read thou this challenge*" (F, 2581).

*Lear.* Read.

*Glou.* What with the Case of eyes?

*Lear.* Oh ho, are you there with me? No eies in your head, nor no mony in your purse? Your eyes are in a hea-uy case, your purse in a light, yet you see how this world goes.

*Glou.* I see it *feelingly*.

*Lear.* What, art mad? A man may see how this world goes, with no eyes. Looke with thine eares. (F, 2587-95)

The most difficult part in any restoration of *King Lear* is adjudicating the relationship of the text to performance. In a Tragedy, the "action"—the fundamental element of the plot, —is not limited to words. As Aristotle observes when he compares Epic to Tragedy in *The Poetics* (Chapters XXIII-XXVI), a playwright uses dramatization as well as words to communicate meaning. Its nonverbal performance elements, such as music, special effects, costumes, properties, "gestus" and so on, are integral parts of the message being sent to the audience.

Human communication is a very complex process which involves verbal exchange, but also a variety of kinesic and paralinguistic elements. These can be seen as **metacommunicative** signals, or messages about messages, indicating how the verbal communication should be understood and interpreted. The full meaning of the communication thus does not depend only on literal verbal meaning, but is codetermined in a critical way by the intensity and inflection of the voice, facial expression, accompanying gestures, secondary signals that we are sending to bystanders, etc. **Gregory Bateson** emphasized the role of logical typing in human communication. Communication and metacommunication do not belong to the same class of messages and lack of discrimination between them leads to confusion and generates paradoxes. Meta-communication provides clues as to how the verbal message should be decoded; *it is a signal about a signal*. The same verbal message framed by different metacommunication can mean something entirely different, including its opposite. Kinesic and paralinguistic aspects of communication (meta-communication) will determine whether the statement is serious or meant as a joke; it also gives the sometimes subtle clues that might qualify a statement as ironical and thus opposite to its verbal meaning. Nuances of meta-communication frequently qualify a statement as conveying hidden sexual meaning, rather than being simply informative and matter of fact, or make it possible to detect whether the message is friendly, neutral, or hostile. (Stanislav Grof, M.D., "Mind, Nature, and Consciousness: Gregory Bateson and the New Paradigm", 1981, pp, 7-8.)



**Figure 6. Lear sans codpiece.** From left to right: Bas relief at The Folger Shakespeare Library (Washington, DC), William Macready, Greg Hicks, Ian McKellan, Henry Irving, David Garrick, Charles Kean.

Take, for example, the nature of Lear’s costume. “Anybody who cares to study Shakespeare’s method will see that there is absolutely no dramatist of the French, English, or Athenian stage who relies so much for his effects on the dress of his actors as Shakespeare does himself” (Oscar Wilde, “**Shakespeare and Stage Costume.**”) There are no costume directions in the **quartos** and **First Folio**, and nothing is said about it in any modern publications. Conventionally, he is represented in dignified clothes of some sort allowing audiences to see themselves in the character (such as those worn by David Garrick, William Macready, Henry Irving, Donald Woffit, Laurence Olivier, Paul Scofield, Eric Porter, Don Warrington, etc.). [See Figure 6.] However, close reading of the text suggests that he is wearing outmoded *Tudor period* fashions, with a king-size codpiece. (See note I,i,32,S.D., “*wearing a king-size codpiece*”.)



Figure 7. Portrait of Henry VIII after Hans Holbein the Younger, Original c. 1536. "His large codpiece and heavily padded shoulders further enhance the aggressive masculinity of the image."

In Shakespeare's day, actors generally wore the dress of their own time. If Lear's sartorial history is thought to extend from 1525 to 1606, when the play was performed for James I and his wife Anne of Denmark (a "Theater Pioneer & Patron of the Arts"), it can be logically deduced from the allusions to his wearing a "codpiece" (F, 1692) that the author intended him to take the stage in grossly outmoded *Tudor period* clothes in striking opposition to the "sophisticated" *Stuart period* fashions worn by the other characters.



Figure 8. Agnolo Bronzino (Italian, 1503–1572). Detail from Portrait of Guidubaldo della Rovere, 1532. Palazzo Pitti.

"*The Apparell oft proclaimes the man*" (*Hamlet*, F. 537), and so it does with Lear who has not changed his style of dress since he was a lusty young man, when the codpiece was de rigueur. [See Figure 7.] The audience learns as much or more about how Lear perceives himself by his costume than anything he says in words. "Humans respond to and process visual data better than any other type of data. In fact, the human brain processes visual content 60,000 times faster than text. That means that a picture is actually worth 60,000 words! Even more, 90 percent of information transmitted to the brain is visual." (Bryan Caplan). Lear's costume is an unmistakable sign that the character's vision of himself is not one with reality. He has frozen himself in time like *Miss Havisham* or "Baby Jane" Hudson. He does not see himself as an octogenarian nearing the end of his life, but as a teenage potentate who has yet to start shaving: "*They flatter'd me like a Dogge, and told mee I had the white hayres in my Beard, ere the blacke ones were there.*" (F, 2543-45).

Lear's costume is a critical element in the mode of the narrative because it affects our point of view of the character. If dressed incongruously (or, as Brecht might say, if he appears "strange"), his attire has a "distancing effect", keeping the spectators from identifying emotionally with him. "*Making strange*" is about questioning what we would otherwise take for granted and observing the characters and events of the play with critical distance. (Suzie Martin, "Don't Laugh With Them, Laugh At Them.") In his outmoded costume, Lear does not come across as the imposing, powerful king he sees himself, but as a self-deluded, impotent old fool blinded by masculine vanity—a man who "thinks with his dick".





Figure 9. Thomas Betterton (1635-28 April 1710) as Henry VIII (sans codpiece).

How *King Lear* has come to be represented in print and on stage over time is an exhaustive subject far beyond the scope of this edition. J.S. Bratton writes, “Although the first recorded performance ... was at Whitehall before King James on 26 December 1606, it was written for performance at the Globe ... a public playhouse.” (*Plays In Performance: King Lear*, 1987, p.4.) Following the Interregnum, “Exclusive performing rights to the plays of Shakespeare were given to the two major acting companies. *King Lear* was made the property of The Duke of York’s Company, and performed (not very frequently) in the received Shakespearean version” (Bratton, p. 14). It was not until the story was given a radical overhaul by Nahum Tate that it enjoyed commercial success with Thomas Betterton in the title role. Tate, a Tory whose “politics were of the Vicar of Bray type, allowing him to change sides and support both the Catholic James II and the Protestant William III,”<sup>[5]</sup> provided Restoration audiences what they wanted to see: “love triumphant, and a [Protestant] monarch rightfully restored to his throne.”<sup>[6]</sup> Lear lives to reign as king, and Gloucester survives the shock of learning the identity of Edgar. Only the “villains” die. The play ends with Edgar marrying Cordelia, and joyfully declaring that “truth and virtue shall at last succeed.”

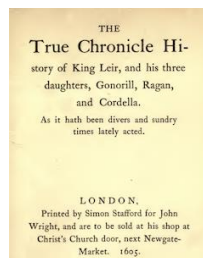


Figure 10. *The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordelia* by Anonymous.

Tate’s version appeared in 1681, a few years before the Glorious Revolution. It combines narrative elements of the quarto and Folio (notably, the characters of Gloucester, Edgar and Edmund), with a pre-Shakespearean drama written anonymously which was performed in 1594, “*The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordelia.*” [See Figure 10.] Sidney Lee writes in his Introduction to the latter, “Philip Henslowe, the theatrical manager, notes in his Diary that a piece, which he calls *Kinge Leare*, was acted at the Rose Theatre in London 'by the Queene's men and my Lord of Sussex together.’” Following Geoffrey of Monmouth’s chronicle of Leir of Briton, and Raphael Holinshed's account of King Leir in *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), this older version of the story ends happily with Cordella triumphing in battle and restoring her father to the throne. This is significant because when Shakespeare’s first audience came to see his version, nobody was expecting Cordelia to die. Kent’s equivocal account of the French invasion in III,i is a red herring suggesting that she and

France might want to restore her father to the throne and make herself queen, as in the histories. See Appendices C and D.



Figure 11. Edmund Kean as King Lear by (Isaac) Robert Cruikshank, hand-coloured etching, published 1823

“In 1810, all versions of the play were outlawed from the stage in deference to King George III’s mental illness; following his death in 1820, there was a surge to stage the play once more—but still using Tate’s version” (Alexandra E. LaGrand, “William Charles Macready and the restoration of William Shakespeare’s ‘King Lear’”). Edmund Kean was the first actor to play Lear with its tragic ending in 1823, but London audiences didn’t like it, and he had to revert back to Tate’s play after only three performances. [See Figure 11.] William Macready is credited for “restoring *King Lear* to the story Shakespeare’s original audiences would have recognized and the one that endures on our stages today” (Ibid). However, Macready’s staging in a theatre with a proscenium arch, with sets and costumes inspired by Stonehenge, can hardly be termed a “restoration” of Shakespeare’s “original”; certainly not one that Elizabethan audiences would have “recognized” from seeing it performed at the Globe. [See Figure 12.]



Figure 12. Playbill for 1839 production of King Lear with William Charles Macready in the title role. Bill Vol. G2 C85 1838-1839. Folger Shakespeare Library.

It was Goethe who put Shakespeare on the radar in his panegyric, “Zum Schakespears Tag” (1771): “Französchchen, was willst du mit der griechischen Rüstung, sie ist dir zu groß und zu schwer. Drum sind auch alle französische Trauerspiele Parodien von sich selbst.” (“Frenchie, what do you want with the Greek armor, it’s too big and too heavy for you. All French tragedies are parodies of themselves.”) Goethe had weaponized Shakespeare’s dramatic works in a cultural war against French neoclassicism. (See Paul Emerson Titsworth, “The Attitude of Goethe and Schiller toward the French Classic Drama.”) “‘Schakespears Tag’ represents a break for freedom - freedom from the overwhelming cultural authority of France, but also from eighteenth-century decorum more broadly. In Shakespeare’s name, the young Goethe threw away everything that limits the free expression of a free spirit. And while this had its political aspect, Goethe’s immediate point is that Shakespearean freedom represents a thrilling enlargement of experience.” (Ewan Fernie, “Free-town-am-Main,” *Shakespeare for Freedom: Why the Plays Matter.*)



Figure 13. John Bull holds the head of Napoleon Bonaparte in an 1803 caricature by James Gillray.

Closely associated with Goethe is *Sturm und Drang*, a proto-Romantic movement that exalted individual subjectivity and extremes of emotion. Its name “was borrowed from a play by Friedrich von Klinger, who had been inspired by the desire to present on the stage figures of Shakespearean grandeur, subordinating structural considerations to character and rejecting the conventions of French Neoclassicism.” The influence of *Sturm und Drang* on English literature is discussed by William Stokoe in his book *German Influence in the English Romantic Period 1788–1818, With Special Reference to Scott, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron*, 1926. As the story of *King Lear* is read in the quartos and Folio, without stage directions—i.e., “nonverbal signals that modify the meaning of verbal expressions”—its narrative voice suits the Romantic’s taste for violent emotions, interiority and subjectivity. (See Jon Stewart, “Romanticism: The Retreat to Subjectivity,” *An Introduction to Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: The Issue of Religious Content in the Enlightenment and Romanticism*, 2022.) Continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Christopher Plummer echoes the narrative put forward by Charles Lamb and the Romantics when he says “Lear is the storm.” [4]



Figure 14. Prometheus Bound, Anonymous German or Austrian, 19th-20th Century.

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, immethodised from the ordinary purposes of life, but exerting its powers, as the wind blows where it listelh, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. (*Prose Works*, p. 121, ed. 1836.)



Figure 15. Luigi Sabatelli, “Satan in Hell,” c. 1800

It can now be said with certainty that *King Lear* is completely untainted by Romanticism and “fourth wall” performance conventions. It takes the form of “metatheatre”—a term Andrew Gurr uses as a fact of Elizabethan drama in *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642* (1992), now in its 4th Edition. (See also “Metatheatre and the Fear of Playing,” 2017.) It is historically inaccurate to represent Lear as a Romantic hero—a man “supported in [his] anguish only by an unconquerable pride resembling that of Prometheus on the rock or of Satan in the burning marl, who can master [his] agonies by the force of [his] will, and who, to the last, defy the whole power of earth and heaven.” (Macaulay, “Moore’s Life of Lord Byron”, 1831). He is a metatheatrical character: “*a poore Player, / That struts and frets his houre vpon the Stage, / And then is heard no more. It is a Tale / Told by an Ideot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing*” (*Macbeth*, F, 2345-49). (See III,ii,1, “*Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks.*”)



Figure 16. Cardenio strikes Don Quixote with a rock for interrupting a romantic story he is telling, and leaves in a fit of violent madness. José Ribelles (1778-1835), illustration for ‘*El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*’ (1819), further details unknown. Wikimedia Commons.

There is a striking similarity between *Don Quixote* (1605) and *King Lear* (1606), where ideals of love and justice collide and conflict with the “real” world, having the effect of comedy. Although it remains unknown if Shakespeare was able to read Spanish, it stretches credulity to think that he was not given an account of the novel by his continental, literary friends. He appears to have liked it because when it was translated into English in 1612 by Thomas Shelton, Shakespeare and John Fletcher adapted an episode into *The History of Cardenio*. [See Figure 16.] The play is known to have been performed by The King's Men in 1613. Sadly, a copy has yet to be found. See *Cardenio*, Lost Plays Database.



Figure 17. Don Quixote and Sancho greet the supposedly enchanted Dulcinea riding a jackass; Dulcinea is thrown from her mount (background), engraved by Fredrick Bouttats (Antwerp, 1672-73). Vol. II, Chpt X.

Both works are deeply rooted in classical **Platonism**. The storytelling is marked by the use of different perspectives within the main plot and several subplots to create complex, multi-levelled narratives: one is read, the other is performed. They share many of the same themes such as the **philosophy of language, philology, chivalry and machismo**, love and friendship, justice and injustice. Both explore the contrast between idealism and reality. For example, the eponymous knight images **Dulcinea del Toboso** to be the model of female perfection. It takes **Sancho Panza** half the novel to realize she is in fact the “whoreson wench” Aldonza Lorenzo. “‘I know her well,’ said Sancho, ‘and let me tell you she can fling a crowbar as well as the lustiest lad in all the town.’” [See [Figure 17.](#)] Illusion versus reality is a central theme throughout Shakespeare’s works as well. It is perhaps most familiar to us in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* where Bottom is transformed into something other than the personification of masculine beauty and love Titania imagines him to be. [See [Figure 18.](#)] See “*Enter Píramus with the Asse head*” (F, 927). In *Lear*, however, key stage directions are omitted in the quartos and Folio indicating what the audience is seeing on stage, such as the ironic nature of Lear’s costume. We have only theory to induce that he is dressed like an ass in his outmoded codpiece.



**Figure 18.** Anita Louise as Titania and James Cagney as Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Max Reinhardt and William Dieterle, 1935, Warner Bros.

The omission of stage directions focuses our attention on what Lear is saying, the poetic grandeur of his speeches. When we read it, we see no clash between the world Lear imagines and the mundane world he inhabits. “We are in his mind,” as Lamb writes. Take Lear’s exclamation, “*To haue a thousand with red burning spits / Come hizzing in vpon 'em*” (F, 2013-14). Is the king reacting to something that suddenly pops into his head from the depths of his subconscious mind? Or is he reacting to something material he discovers behind the curtains which cause him to act—i.e., hold a trial? Taking *Don Quixote* as a model, what Shakespeare is dramatizing is the dialectic between Lear’s imagination and reality. It can be induced from the text that Lear finds himself in one of the outbuildings of a hunting lodge. The location is signaled by the properties revealed when he draws open the curtains in front of the opening in the tiring house wall. [See note III,vi,S.D., “*Hunting Lodge.*”] These include the carcass of a fox hung up for skinning, along with a polecat and other animal pelts. (Hunting is a central motif in the play.) [See [video 4](#), “How to Skin a Fox.”] At the sight of them, Lear draws his sword, and attacks and destroys the entire set, as Don Quixote does Master Peter’s Puppet Show in *The Second Part of Don Quixote*, Chapter XXVI. [See [Figure 196.](#)] Like the use of montage in film editing, Lear’s trial of a dead fox is juxtaposed with the trial of Gloucester in the next. The audience is asked to consider which of the two trials is madder. “*Ingratefull Fox*” (F, 2090,)” says Regan when the earl is brought in for interrogation.





Video 4. "How to Skin A Fox" (*Outdoor Life*).

*King Lear* is among Shakespeare's most didactic plays. It is phallocentrism gone mad. Arguably its principal teaching is how to control emotion, such as anger, within the context of being a man. "One of the most celebrated physicians and medical researchers of the ancient world, Galen of Pergamon, wrote a book about mental illness, called *On Passions and Errors of the Soul*. The passion considered most dangerous by Galen and other ancient writers is anger." (Donald J. Roberston). It is a subject the Stoic philosopher Seneca addresses in his widely read treatise *De Ira* (On Anger). "He was much in the right, whoever it was, that first called *anger a short madness*; for they have both of them the same symptoms; and there is so wonderful a resemblance betwixt the transports of *choler* and those of *frenzy*, that it is a hard matter to know the one from the other." (*Seneca of Anger, Chpt IV.*) The Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius wrote of anger,

"Keep this thought handy when you feel a fit of rage coming on—it isn't *manly* to be enraged. Rather, gentleness and civility are more human, and therefore *manlier*. A *real man* doesn't give way to anger and discontent, and such a person has strength, courage, and endurance—unlike the angry and complaining. The nearer a man comes to a calm mind, the closer he is to strength." (*The Thoughts of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, trans. George Long).



Figure 19. La Colère from *Méthode pour apprendre à dessiner les passions* by Charles Le Brun. "Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it." (Seneca).

The subject of male rage was as timely in Shakespeare's day as it was in classical antiquity. It is particularly relevant today as male anger has come to saturate our politics and culture. How do boys deal with their emotions when they are taught from birth that to *be a man* means hiding fear and vulnerability, and enduring suffering alone? Throughout human history to be "macho" is expected of male children in most cultures and families; even Kings. Up until the *Battle of Dettingen* in 1743, British monarchs were expected to lead troops into battle, a role Lear assumes after losing his mind in the storm. In III,ii he takes the stage shouting orders to the "Heavens", as a general might artillery officers in a siege. In IV,v, he enters camouflaged with weeds in order to lead an army of mercenaries in a stealth attack against injustice: "*when I have stole vpon these sonnes in law, then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill.*" (Q2, 2626-27). See note IV,v,80, *Enter Lear*.



Figure 20. Equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius.

Throughout Shakespeare's works, manliness is explicitly linked to the battlefield. Take, for example, *Coriolanus*. Nick Keough writes, "Volumnia connects acts of violence, aggression, and martial prowess to one's acquisition of masculinity. When discussing Coriolanus' success in battle, Volumnia declares: *"To a cruell Warre I sent him, from whence he return'd, his browes bound with Oake. I tell thee Daughter, I sprang not more in ioy at first hearing he was a Man-child, then now in first seeing he had proued himselfe a man."* (F, 375-78) ("Boys Will Be Boys: Constructions of Toxic Masculinity in Dramatic, Metaphorized, and Real-Life War Spaces")

In his history dramas *Coriolanus* and *1 Henry IV*, Shakespeare explores the connections between martial prowess and the construction of masculinity. When Cominius publically recollects Coriolanus' first military engagement, he shares the story of a young 16-year-old Coriolanus, who despite his "Amazonian chin", had displayed violent courage on the battlefield (II,ii,107). During a moment in which "he might act the *Woman in the Scene*" (F, 1310), Coriolanus, despite his youth, "prou'd best man i' th' field," (F, 1311) and defeated the more experienced Tarquin. In what is described as a rite of passage, Cominius claims that it is Coriolanus' courageous performance on the battlefield that transforms him from a boy into a man. Cominius' story suggests that Coriolanus exchanges his violent military deeds for his manhood, and that his newfound masculinity is something he has earned. Cominius' description of a pre-battle tested Coriolanus, too, equates untested boyhood with femininity, and therefore not only offering a direct connection between masculinity and war violence, but also positioning the feminine outside this military arena. (*Ibid.*)

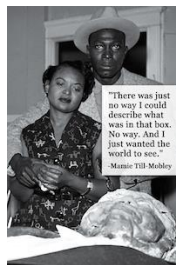


Figure 21. Mamie Till insisted on her son's casket being open so that the world "could see what they did to my baby." Photo by David Jackson.

The story arc takes Edgar "full circle" (F, 3136). We first see the actor at the top of Fortune's Wheel in the role of The King of France. (See note I,i,189, "France.") He is the exemplary model of being a man. The character's Stoic *apatheia* contrasts with Lear's anger and uncontrolled emotions. The moral of the story is that "If you want to determine the nature of anything, entrust it to time: when the sea is stormy, you can see nothing clearly" (Seneca). The story arc takes Lear from foolishness to wisdom, not from high to low. He never presents himself as pitiable. When he takes the stage in IV,v, wearing camouflage for battle, he resemble nothing less than a quixotic *antihero*

on a quest to redress the injustices of the world. He would sooner die than ask others for pity. In fact, he offers his own eyes to Gloucester if he will weep for him because he cannot weep for himself. “*If thou wilt weepe my Fortunes, take my eyes*” (F, 2618) The character’s **hamartia** is his masculine pride or **machismo** which follows him to the very end: “*I haue seene the day, with my good biting Faulchion / I would haue made him skip*” (F, 3241-42). In his final breaths, the actor does not milk the audience for sympathy. He challenges us to act: “***Looke on her? Looke her lips, / Looke there, looke there.***” (F, 3282-83). He wants us to see, as **Mamie Till** did when she placed her son **Emmett** in an open casket. “There was just no way I could describe what was in that box. No way. And I just wanted the world to **see.**” [See **Figure 21.**]

## Totus mundus agit histrionem



Figure 22. A crest depicting Hercules bearing the globe on his shoulders together with the motto "*Totus mundus agit histrionem*" (the whole world is a playhouse) is thought to have been displayed at the entrance to the Globe Theatre. (No photo credit is given at [tadshakespeare.weebly.com/the-globe-theatre.html](http://tadshakespeare.weebly.com/the-globe-theatre.html))

## Dramatis Personæ

LEAR, King of Britain

EDGAR, son to Gloucester  
KING OF FRANCE } Roles played by the same actor.

EARL OF GLOUCESTER

CORDELIA, youngest daughter to Lear  
FOOL, Cordelia's doppelgänger } Roles played by the same actor.

GONERIL, eldest daughter to Lear

REGAN, middle daughter to Lear

EDMUND, bastard son to Gloucester:

EARL OF KENT

DUKE OF ALBANY

DUKE OF CORNWALL

OSWALD, young steward to Goneril

DUKE OF BURGUNDY  
A CAPTAIN commissioned by Edmund to hang Lear and Cordelia } Roles played by the same actor.

CURAN, an aged Chamberlain in the service of Gloucester

LEAR'S KNIGHT

CORNWALL'S KNIGHT

ALBANY'S SQUIRE, a young squire in the service of Albany

DOCTOR

BAGPIPE PLAYER, a musician

HERALD TRUMPETER, a musician

Knights, Courtiers, domestic Servants, French and English Soldiers,  
Musicians.

**Dramatis Personæ]** There is no *Dramatis Personæ* in the quartos or the First Folio. One was first published in *The works of Mr. William Shakespear* by Nicholas Rowe in 1709, and has remained practically unchanged to the present day. [See Figure 23.] In regard to the principal and secondary characters, there is no doubting who they are because their titles are written or spoken in the text. Lear is a "King" (F, 4) and Gloucester an "Earl" (F, 1331). Albany is a "Duke" (F, 5) and Oswald a "Steward" (F, 506). The hard part is identifying who's who among the *tertiary* players with speaking roles.



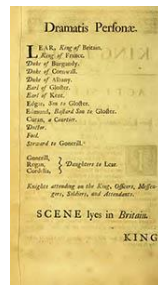


Figure 23. Dramatis Personæ from *King Lear. A Tragedy*, edited by Nicholas Rowe, 1709.

**CURAN.** In my restoration, CURAN (F, 927) in II,i, the *Servant* (Q, 2176.1) in III,vii, and the *Old Man* (F, 2188) in IV,i, are identified as a single character. He functions as Gloucester’s chamberlain, an upper servant with free access to the rooms in the castle. In II,i, he reenters with the “*Servants with Torches*” (F, 970) that attend Gloucester, and is “*Dispatch[ed]*” (F, 995) by his lord to proclaim Edgar an outlaw. The role of this character is essential in the narrative because it determines the POV from which the audience observes Gloucester’s blinding. Are we seeing it through the eyes of a group of anonymous “*Servants*”, who have no personal connection to the earl, or from the perspective of a character who has served the family his entire life, and shares a closeness with Edmund? If CURAN is the “*Servant*” (Q, 2176.1) and “*I Ser*” (Q, 2177.5) who leads Gloucester to poor Tom, it logically follows that he is the “*Old Man*” who brings Edgar his “*finest ‘parel*” (Q, 2240) (F, 2188).

**ALBANY’S SQUIRE.** Albany’s Squire is a conflation of parts erratically ascribed in the quartos and Folio to “a *Servant*”, “a *Messenger*”, “a *Captain*”, “a *Herald*”, “An officer who bows and goes out”, and “The one with the bloody knife.” (See note III,vii,97, “*Squire.*”) The first the audience sees of this strongly individuated character is in scene 14, where the printer gives him the name “2 *Servant*”(Q1, 2176.3) (Q2, 2176.3); lines Q, 2176.1-2177.9) were not published in the Folio. Capell and most other modern editors, including Stanley Wells in *The Oxford Shakespeare*, identify him as the “*Third Servant.*” He was sent by Albany to escort his wife to Gloucester’s castle in the role of a messenger to bring back news of the war with France. Shakespeare’s audience would have deduced his rank from his costume; he wears a tabard with his lord’s coat of arms. Unlike Albany’s knights, he is unarmed, and perhaps carries a caduceus or “Herald’s wand.” We next see him in IV,ii where he is identified as a “*Gentleman*” (Q, 2313) / “*Messenger*” (F, 2312) who gives Goneril and the duke an eye witness account of Gloucester’s blinding. (See note IV,ii,68,S.D., “*Enter Albany’s Squire.*”) He is logically the unnamed actor in scene 22 whom Edmund tells to summon Albany: “bring his constant pleasure” (F, 2849). Edward Capell (1768?) identifies the character as an anonymous “*Officer; who bows, and goes out.*” Clark and Wright refer to him a “*Gentleman, who goes out*” in the 1864 *Globe Shakespeare* (Furness, *New Variorum Edition*, p. 306).



Figure 24. Thirteenth century Spanish depiction of a pair of buisines, also called a herald's trumpet.

**HERALD TRUMPETER.** In the final scene, Albany sends for a “*Herald*” (F, 3051), a Fanfare Trumpeter, whose sole function is to summon Edgar on his buisine: “*If you haue victory, let the Trumpet sound / For him that brought it*” (F, 2885-86). (See note V,i,106, “*Enter a Herald Trumpeter.*”) It is the inexperienced young SQUIRE who reads Albany’s paper. He obviously knows nothing at all about heraldry, because he has to be told exactly what to say and when to say it. ALBANY’S SQUIRE is logically the same character as the “*Gentleman*” (F, 3169) or the “*one with a bloody knife*” (Q, 3169) who returns in horror with the knife Goneril used to kill herself with. He is logically the “*Captain*” (Q, 3265) or “*Messenger*” (F, 3169) who informs Albany of the news of Edmund’s death.

Heralds originally served as messengers. My reason for calling him a squire rather than a herald is his knowledge of unguents: he has the wherewithal to bandage Gloucester’s eyes. In *Don Quixote*, “The innkeeper before giving the sword thrust of knight errant to Don Quixote, advises him to get a squire who always carries ‘bandages and unguents with which to heal (Chap.III).’” (Paul Chul, “Home remedies in *Don Quixote*.”) Moreover, readers of Geoffrey Chaucer are sure to recall the youthful and inexperienced Squire in *The Canterbury Tales*: “as fressh as is the monthe of May . . . embroidered like a meadow bright”. His tale contrasts ironically with that of his father, *The Knight*. Though the SQUIRE in *Lear* is not related to the Duke of Albany, a strong bond exists between them that shows how codes of masculinity are subtly transmitted from old to young. The SQUIRE’S behavior is twice made a target of Albany’s patriarchal disapproval. The first is the lad’s overwrought account of Gloucester’s blinding in IV,ii, which manifestly irritates the duke. He does not give him a straight answer to the question of **who** put out “*The other eye of Glouster*” (F, 2315). (See note IV,ii,68. S.D. “*Enter Albany’s Squire.*”). In the final scene, before Lear’s entrance with Cordelia dead, the SQUIRE reacts with horror and pity on seeing Goneril and Regan dead. Albany’s response? “*This iudgement of the Heauens that makes vs tremble. / Touches vs not with pitty*” (F, 3185-86) (See note V,i,231-2.)

The role of the SQUIRE in *King Lear* is largely poetical. He is a symbol of innocence not yet corrupted, like the adolescent waitress Paola in Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita*. [See Figure 329.] One of the central themes of the play is what it means to be a man. Thus, in my restoration, the final couple of the play is addressed by Edgar to the SQUIRE: “*The oldest hath borne most, we that are yong, / Shall neuer see so much, nor liue so long*” (F, 3300-01). Shakespeare leaves us wondering what path the young SQUIRE will take on his journey to become a man.

**LEAR’S KNIGHT.** According to Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Profession of Player in Shakespeare’s time, 1590-1642*, it was not customary for roles performed by apprentice players to be assigned names. Like “ALBANY’S SQUIRE,” LEAR’S KNIGHT is given generic names in the quartos and Folio without any consistency or logic. Sometimes he is called a “*Knight*,” sometimes a “*Servant*,” sometimes a “*Gentleman*,” sometimes a “*Messenger*.” The reader is given no sense of him as a single individuated character. He first speaks in I,iv,47 where the copyist lists him as a *Knigh*. (F, 580) 49 (F, 583), 52 (F, 586), 59 (F, 593) ,68 (F, 603). He is misidentified as “*Kent*” in both quartos (580), and is subsequently given the name of a *seruant* (Q, 584, 586, 593, 602). After this, the different copyists give him the name

- *Gent.* (F, 921), *Seruant.* (Q, 921) in I,v;
- *Knight.* (Q, 1275), *Gen.* (F, 1273) in II,iv;
- *Gentleman.* (Q, 1615), *Gentleman.* (F, 1615) in III,i;
- *Gentleman.* (Q, 2347.1, scene deleted in F,
- *Gentleman* in IV,iii; *Messenger* in scene 18 in quartos
- *Gentleman* (Q, 2631), *Gentleman.* (F, 2630) in IV,v;
- *Gentleman* (F, 2762); *Gent.* (Q, 2843.1)

The manner and demeanor of this character supports Lear’s claim that the “*Knights and Squires*” (F, 750) in his retinue are men of character and breeding (F, 776). As the codes of chivalry and masculine honor are central themes of the play, I have made a point in my restoration to distinguish between household knights and domestic servants as described by Mark Cartwright in “The Household Staff in an English Medieval Castle”. Shakespeare’s characterization of LEAR’S KNIGHT is a critical factor in determining the authenticity of scene 17 in the quartos. (See Appendix C.)

**CORNWALL’S KNIGHT.** In the original King’s Men production, the rank of the tertiary characters was communicated by their costumes. This includes the brave young knight who comes to the aid of Gloucester in III,vii. In the quartos and Folio, he is identified merely as a “*Seruant*” (F, 2145)—a title that can equally be used to describe a Lord Chamberlain as it can a gong farmer. In my restoration, I have given him the name CORNWALL’S KNIGHT. (See note III,vii,69,73, 76,78. “*Cornwall’s Knight.*”) He is an armed *household Knight* wearing the tabard of his lord. Shakespeare’s audience would have presumed that he was taken into Cornwall’s household as a page to serve an apprenticeship in the duties of chivalry, —which accounts for his refined manners and speech. He is not a “*peasant*” or “*villain*” as Regan and the duke sarcastically refer to him as being. The character’s commanding physical presence first caught our attention in II,ii when he arrived with Cornwall and Regan as one of their personal bodyguards. In II,iv, he helps support Kent off stage when the latter is released from the stocks. That is, the character just doesn’t appear out of nowhere in III,vii before Regan stabs him in the back. He has already made a positive impression on us as a *manly* chivalrous character.

**EDGAR | THE KING OF FRANCE.** (See also note Edgar I,ii,126.) There is not a list of acting credits in the quartos and folio indicating how the parts were cast. In my restoration, the roles of the King of France and Edgar are performed by the same actor. This is not an arbitrary matter to be decided by the whim of a stage director. It is an integral element in the dramatic

structure of the composition. EDGAR, as we know from the [title page](#), is the deuteragonist—the second most important character in Shakespeare’s narrative. Seeing his fall from a great lord to a bedlam beggar is one of the main draws of the play. Shakespeare did not need to compose a scene establishing the nobility and virtue of the character because his exemplary nature is implied by the double casting.

The actor playing EDGAR first presents at the very top of [Fortune’s wheel](#) in the role as the KING OF FRANCE, completely outshining Edmund and even Lear himself. Logically, it is why FRANCE is not present at the battle. (See [note I,i,189](#). “*France.*”) It is why EDGAR is not present in the first scene, despite being Lear’s godson. It is why Shakespeare chose to use the word “*plight*” in Cordelia’s speech, “*That Lord, whose hand must take my **plight***” (F, 108). “*Plight,*” is being used its literal sense, meaning *pledge*, but the word is ironic in the style of the playwright. It carries the double meaning of *adversity*. Both she and EDGAR are banished by their fathers. (See [note I,i,101](#), “*plight.*”) The narrative arc of Edgar’s story arc takes him “*full circle*” (F, 3136), as Edmund describes it.

**CORDELIA | THE FOOL.** I concur with [Alois Brandl](#) that the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were also doubled, and performed by the same boy player. (See [note I,iv,86,S.D.](#), “*Enter Fool.*”) In the relationship between Lear and the FOOL, the important idea that Shakespeare is dramatizing is the *inversion* of the roles of parent and child, a theme we see play out in many of his works. The FOOL is essentially CORDELIA’S doppelgänger, her double. Like the ghost of Banquo in *MacBeth*, the Fool is the embodiment of her presence in his guilty mind. As Tichenor writes of the doubling of these parts, “when Lear holds the dead Cordelia in his arms and cries out, “And my poor fool is hanged,” it’s not the non-sequitur it might be when two separate actors play each role.” It is certainly true that double casting the parts of CORDELIA | FOOL and FRANCE | EDGAR breaks *the illusion* that the characters are real people and not actors in a play. However, *King Lear* does not abide by conventions of [naturalism](#) or [romantic realism](#). Doubling the parts is a device of [metatheatre](#), drawing attention to the work’s nature as theatre. According to [Lionel Abel](#), who coined the term, one of its main precepts is the Platonic idea that “*all the world’s a stage.*”

**Bagpipe Player.** See [note Interlude, S.D.](#), “*Bagpiper plays.*” See also [Appendix B](#).

**The Duke of Burgundy | The Captain.** Given the mischievous nature of the playwright, I guess that the parts of BURGUNDY and the CAPTAIN commissioned to hang Lear and Cordelia were played by the same actor as well. The doubling of these parts is nothing more than a metatheatrical wink at the audience, reminding us that we are watching a play.

I have listed the characters in order of the size and importance of their roles—in *reverse order of their curtain calls*.

# King Lear



ACT I, SCENE I.— [King Lear's Palace.]  
[The Platform]



Figure 25. Detail from John Speed's map of Cheshire. Courtesy UCDL.

*Trumpets Sound.*

*Enter Kent, Gloucester, wearing spectacles,  
and Edmund, reading a map.*

1        *Kent.* [*To Edmund.*] I thought the king had more affected the  
2        Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

*Gloucester steps between Kent and Edmund.*

3        *Glou.* It did always seem so to us; but now, in the division of  
4        the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values  
5        most, for equalities are so weigh'd that curiosity in  
6        neither can make choice of either's moiety.

7        *Kent.* Is not this your son, my lord?

8        *Glou.* His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so  
9        often blush'd to acknowledge him, that now I am braz'd  
10       to't.

11       *Kent.* I cannot conceive you.

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

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



18 *Glou.* But I have a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder  
 19 than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Though  
 20 this knave came something saucily to the world before  
 21 he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good  
 22 sport at his making, and the *whoreson* must be  
 23 acknowledged. —Do you know this noble gentleman,  
 24 Edmund?  
 25 *Edm.* No, my lord.  
 26 *Glou.* My lord of Kent. Remember him hereafter as my  
 27 honorable friend.  
 28 *Edm.* My services to your lordship.  
 29 *Kent.* I must love you, and sue to know you better.  
 30 *Edm.* Sir, I shall study deserving.  
 31 *Edm.* He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again.  
 32 The king is coming.

*Sennet. Enter King Lear, crowned, wearing a king-size  
 codpiece. Albany, Cornwall, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia,  
 two bearing coronets on cushions, Lear's Knight, and  
 others following in attendance. Lear ascends the  
 throne, assisted by Kent.*

33 *Lear.* Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.  
 34 *Glou.* I shall my liege. *[Exit Gloucester.]*  
 35 *Lear.* Meantime, we shall express our darker purpose. —  
 36 *[To Edmund.]* Give me the map there. —Know  
 that we have divided  
 37 In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent  
 38 To shake all cares and business from our age,  
 39 Conferring them on younger strengths, while we  
 40 Unburden'd crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,  
 41 And you, our no less loving son of Albany,  
 42 We have this hour a constant will to publish  
 43 Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife  
 44 May be prevented now. The princes, France and  
 Burgundy,  
 45 Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,  
 46 Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,  
 47 And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,  
 48 (Since now we will divest us both of rule,  
 49 Interest of territory, cares of state)  
 50 Which of you shall we say doth love us most,  
 51 That we our largest bounty may extend  
 52 Where *Nature* doth with merit challenge. —Goneril,  
 53 Our eldest-born, speak first.  
 54 *Gon.* *[Kneels.]* Sir,  
 55 I love you more than word can wield the matter;  
 56 Dearer than eyesight, space and liberty;  
 57 Beyond what can be valued rich or rare;  
 58 No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;

59 As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;  
60 A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;  
61 Beyond all manner of so much I love you.  
62 *Cor.* [*Aside.*] What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be  
silent.  
63 *Lear.* [*Pointing to the map.*] Of all these bounds, even from  
this line to this,  
64 With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,  
65 With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,  
66 We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issues  
67 Be this perpetual. [*Places a coronet on her head.*  
—What says our second daughter,  
68 Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall? Speak.  
69 *Reg.* [*Kneels.*] I am made of that self mettle as my sister,  
70 And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
71 I find she names my very deed of love,  
72 Only she comes too short: that I profess  
73 Myself an enemy to all other joys  
74 Which the most precious square of sense possesses,  
75 And find I am alone felicitate  
76 In your dear highness' love.  
[*Places a coronet on her head.*  
*Cor.* [*Aside.*] Then poor Cordelia!  
77 And yet not so, since I am sure my love's  
78 More ponderous than my tongue.  
79 *Lear.* To thee and thine hereditary ever  
80 Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,  
81 No less in space, validity, and pleasure  
82 Than that conferr'd on Goneril. —But now, our joy,  
83 Although our last and least, to whose young love  
84 The wine of France and milk of Burgundy  
85 Strive interest, what can you say to draw  
86 A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.  
87 *Cor.* [*Kneels.*] Nothing, my lord.  
88 *Lear.* Nothing?  
89 *Cor.* Nothing.  
90 *Lear.* [*Rising.*] Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.  
91 *Cor.* Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave  
92 My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty  
93 According to my bond; no more nor less.  
94 *Lear.* How? How, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,  
95 Lest you may mar your fortunes.  
*Cor.* Good my lord,  
96 You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I  
97 Return those duties back as are right fit,  
98 Obey you, love you, and most honor you.  
99 Why have my sisters husbands, if they say  
100 They love you all? Happily, when I shall wed,  
101 That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry

102 Half my love with him, half my care and duty.  
 103 Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,  
 104 To love my father all.  
 105 *Lear.* But goes thy heart with this?  
*Cor.* Ay, my good lord.  
 106 *Lear.* So young, and so untender?  
 107 *Cor.* So young, my lord, and true.  
 108 *Lear.* Let it be so. Thy truth then be thy dower:  
 109 For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,  
 110 The mysteries of Hecate and the night,  
 111 By all the operation of the orbs  
 112 From whom we do exist and cease to be,  
 113 Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
 114 Propinquity and property of blood,  
 115 And as a stranger to my heart and me,  
 116 Hold thee from this forever. The barbarous Scythian,  
 117 Or he that makes his generation messes  
 118 To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom  
 119 Be as well neighbor'd, pitied, and reliev'd,  
 120 As thou my sometime daughter.  
*Kent.* Good my liege—  
*[Kent steps between them.]*  
 121 *Lear.* Peace, Kent!  
 122 Come not between the dragon and his wrath.  
 123 I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest  
 124 On her kind nursery.—*[To Cordelia.]* Hence, and avoid  
 my sight! *[She rises and steps back.]*—  
 125 *[To Kent.]* So be my grave my peace, as here I give  
 126 Her father's heart from her!—Call France. Who stirs?  
*[Exit Edmund.]*  
 127 Call Burgundy. —Cornwall and Albany,  
 128 With my two daughters' dowers digest the third.  
 129 Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.  
 130 I do invest you jointly with my power,  
 131 Preeminence, and all the large effects  
 132 That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,  
 133 With reservation of an hundred knights  
 134 By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode  
 135 Make with you by due turn. Only we shall retain  
 136 The name and all th'addition to a king; the sway,  
 137 Revenue, execution of the rest,  
 138 Beloved sons, be yours. Which to confirm,  
 139 This 'coronet' part between you.  
*[Gives Albany his imperial crown.]*  
*Kent.* Royal Lear,  
 140 Whom I have ever honor'd as my king,  
 141 Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd,  
 142 As my great patron thought on in my prayers—  
 143 *Lear.* The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft.

144 *Kent.* Let it fall rather, though the fork invade  
 145 The region of my heart. Be Kent **unmanly**  
 146 When Lear is mad? What would'st thou do, old man?  
 147 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak  
 148 When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's  
     bound  
 149 When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state,  
 150 And, in thy best consideration, check  
 151 This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment,  
 152 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,  
 153 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds  
 154 **Reverb** no hollowness.  
*Lear.* Kent, on thy life, no more.  
 155 *Kent.* My life I never held but as a pawn  
 156 To **wage** against thine enemies; nor fear to lose it,  
 157 Thy safety being **the** motive.  
*Lear.* Out of my sight!  
 158 *Kent.* See better, Lear, and let me still remain  
 159 The true blank of thine eye.  
 160 *Lear.* Now, by **Apollo**—  
*Kent.* Now, by **Apollo**, king,  
 161 Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.  
*Lear.* O, vassal! miscreant!  
     *[Laying his hand upon his sword.]*  
 162 **Alb.** Dear sir, forbear!  
 163 *Kent.* Do.  
 164 Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
 165 Upon the foul disease. **Revoke** thy gift;  
 166 Or, whilst I can **vent** clamor from my throat  
 167 I'll tell thee thou dost evil.  
*Lear.* Hear me, **recreant**!  
 168 On thine allegiance, hear me!  
 169 That thou hast sought to make us break our vow,  
 170 Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd pride  
 171 To come betwixt our sentence and our power,  
 172 Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,  
 173 Our **potency** make good, take thy reward.  
 174 Five days we do allot thee for provision  
 175 To shield thee from disasters of the world;  
 176 And on the sixth to turn thy hated back  
 177 Upon our kingdom. If on the tenth day following  
 178 Thy banish'd **trunk** be found in our dominions,  
 179 The moment is thy death. Away! By **Jupiter**,  
 180 This shall not be revok'd.  
 181 *Kent.* **Fare thee well**, king. Sith thus thou wilt appear,  
 182 Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.—  
 183 *[To Cordelia.]* The gods to their dear shelter take thee,  
     maid,  
 184 That justly think'st and has most rightly said!—

185 *[To Goneril and Regan.]* And your large speeches may  
 your deeds approve,  
 186 That good effects may spring from words of love.—  
 187 Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu.  
 188 He'll shape his old course in a country new. *[Exit.]*

*Flourish. Re-enter Gloucester and Edmund,  
 with France and Burgundy.*

189 *Glou.* Here's **France** and Burgundy, my noble lord.

190 *Lear.* My lord of Burgundy,  
 191 We first address toward you, who with this king  
 192 Hath rivall'd for our daughter. What, in the least,  
 193 Will you require in present dower with her,  
 194 Or cease your quest of love?

*Bur.* Most royal majesty,  
 195 I crave no more than hath your highness offer'd,  
 196 Nor will you tender less.

*Lear.* Right noble Burgundy,  
 197 When she was dear to us we did hold her so,  
 198 But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands.  
 199 If aught within that little seeming substance,  
 200 Or all of it, with our displeasure piec'd,  
 201 And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,  
 202 She's there, and she is yours.

*Bur.* I know no answer.

203 *Lear.* Sir,  
 204 Will you, with those infirmities she owes,  
 205 Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,  
 206 Dower'd with our curse and stranger'd with our oath,  
 207 Take her, or leave her?

*Bur.* Pardon me, royal sir;  
 208 Election makes not up in such conditions.

209 *Lear.* Then leave her, sir; for by the power that made me,  
 210 I tell you all her wealth.—*[To France.]* For you,  
 great king,  
 211 I would not from your love make such a stray  
 212 To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you  
 213 T'avert your liking a more worthier way  
 214 Than on a wretch whom Nature is asham'd  
 215 Almost t'acknowledge hers.

*France.* This is most strange,  
 216 That she, whom even but now was your best object,  
 217 The argument of your praise, balm of your age,  
 218 The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time  
 219 Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle  
 220 So many folds of favor. Sure, her offense  
 221 Must be of such unnatural degree  
 222 That monsters it, or your forevouch'd affection  
 223 Fall into taint; which to believe of her



224 Must be a faith that reason without miracle  
 225 Should never plant in me.

*Cor.* I yet beseech your majesty,  
 226 (If for I want that glib and oily art  
 227 To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend,  
 228 I'll do't before I speak), that you make known  
 229 It is no vicious **plot**, **murder** or foulness,  
 230 No unchaste action, or dishonor'd step  
 231 That hath depriv'd me of your grace and favor,  
 232 But even for want of that for which I am richer,  
 233 A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue  
 234 That I am glad I have not, though not to have it  
 235 Hath lost me in your liking.

*Lear.* Better thou  
 236 Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better.

*France.* Is it but this? A tardiness in nature  
 237 Which often leaves the history unspoke  
 238 That it intends to do?—My lord of Burgundy,  
 239 What say you to the lady? Love's not love  
 240 When it is mingled with regards that stand  
 241 Aloof from th'entire point. Will you have her?  
 242 She is herself a dowry.  
 243

*Bur.* Royal king,  
 244 Give but that portion which yourself propos'd,  
 245 And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
 246 Duchess of Burgundy?

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

*Bur.* I am very sorry, then, you have so lost a father  
 248 That you must lose a husband.  
 249

*Cor.* Peace be with Burgundy.  
 250 Since that respect and fortunes are his love  
 251 I shall not be his wife.

*France.* Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;  
 252 Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd!  
 253 Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon.  
 254 Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.  
 255 Gods, gods! 'Tis strange that from their cold'st neglect  
 256 My love should kindle to inflam'd respect.  
 257 Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,  
 258 Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.  
 259 Not all the dukes of wat'rish Burgundy  
 260 Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me.  
 261 Bid them farewell, Cordelia; though unkind,  
 262 Thou lovest here, a better where to find.  
 263

*Lear.* Thou hast her, France. Let her be thine, for we  
 264 Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see  
 265 That face of hers again. Therefore be gone  
 266 Without our grace, our love, our benison.—  
 267 Come, noble Burgundy.  
 268

*Flourish. Exeunt Lear, Burgundy, Cornwall, Albany,  
Gloucester, Edmund, the Gentleman and Attendants.*

*Music.*

269 *France.* Bid farewell to your sisters.  
 270 *Cor.* The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes  
 271 Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are,  
 272 And like a sister am most loth to call  
 273 Your faults as they are named. Love well our father.  
 274 To your *professed bosoms* I commit him;  
 275 But yet, alas! stood I within his grace,  
 276 I would prefer him to a better place.  
 277 So farewell to you both.  
 278 *Gon.* Prescribe not us our duties.  
*Reg.* Let your study  
 279 Be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you  
 280 At Fortune's alms.  
*Gon.* You have obedience scanted,  
 281 And well are worth the want that you have wanted.  
 282 *Cor.* Time shall unfold what *plighted* cunning hides;  
 283 Who covers faults, at last with shame derides.  
 284 Well may you prosper.  
*France.* Come, my fair Cordelia.

*[Flourish. Exeunt France and Cordelia.*

*Soft Music still.*

285 *Gon.* Sister, it is *not little* I have to say of what most nearly  
 286 appertains to us both. I think our father will hence  
 287 tonight.  
 288 *Reg.* That's most certain, and with you; next month with us.  
 289 *Gon.* You see how full of changes his age is; the observation  
 290 we have made of it hath *not* been little. He always lov'd  
 291 our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath  
 292 now cast her off appears too grossly.  
 293 *Reg.* 'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but  
 294 slenderly known himself.  
 295 *Gon.* The best and soundest of his time hath been but *rash*.  
 296 Then must we look from his age, to receive not alone  
 297 the imperfections of *long-engraffed* condition, but  
 298 therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and  
 299 choleric years bring with them.  
 300 *Reg.* Such *unconstant starts* are we like to have from him as  
 301 this of Kent's banishment.  
 302 *Gon.* There is further compliment of leave-taking between  
 303 France and him. *[She takes her by the hand.]* Pray let's  
 304 hit together. If our father carry authority with such dis-  
 305 position as he bears, this last surrender of his will but  
 306 offend us.  
 307 *Reg.* We shall further think of it.  
 308 *Gon.* We must do something, and i'th'heat.

[*Flourish. Exeunt.*]

ACT I, SCENE II.—[The Earl of Gloucester's Castle.]  
[The Platform]

*Enter Edmund, with a letter.*

1        *Edm.* Thou, **Nature**, art my goddess. To thy law  
2        My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
3        Stand in the plague of custom, and permit  
4        The curiosity of nations to deprive me  
5        For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines  
6        Lag of a brother? Why 'bastard?' Wherefore 'base?'  
7        When my dimensions are as well compact,  
8        My mind as generous, and my shape as true,  
9        As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
10       With 'base'? With 'baseness'? 'Bastardy'? 'Base',  
      'base'?  
11       Who in the lusty stealth of nature take  
12       More composition and fierce quality  
13       Than doth within a dull, stale, tired bed,  
14       Go to th'creating a whole tribe of fops,  
15       Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,  
16       Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.  
17       Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund  
18       As to th'legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate'!  
19       Well, my 'legitimate', if this letter speed,  
20       And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
21       Shall to th'legitimate. I grow, I prosper.  
22       Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

*Enter Gloucester, wearing spectacles.*

23       *Glou.* Kent banish'd thus! And France in choler parted!  
24       And the king gone tonight! Prescrib'd his power!  
25       Confin'd to exhibition! All this done  
26       Upon the gad!—Edmund, how now. What news?  
27       *Edm.* So please your lordship, none.        [*Putting up the letter.*]  
28       *Glou.* Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?  
29       *Edm.* I know no news, my lord.  
30       *Glou.* What paper were you reading?  
31       *Edm.* Nothing, my lord.  
32       *Glou.* No? What needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your  
33       **pocket**? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide  
34       itself. Let's see. Come, if it be nothing, I shall not need  
35       spectacles.  
36       *Edm.* I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is a letter from my  
37       brother that I have not all o'erread, and for so much as I  
38       have perus'd, I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.  
39       *Glou.* Give me the letter, sir.

- 40 *Edm.* I shall offend either to detain or give it. The contents, as  
 41 in part I understand them, are to blame.
- 42 *Glou.* Let's see, let's see.
- 43 *Edm.* I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as  
 44 an essay or taste of my virtue. [*Gives him the letter.*]
- 45 *Glou.* [*Reads.*] *'This policy and reverence of age makes the*  
 46 *world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes*  
 47 *from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find*  
 48 *an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged*  
 49 *tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is*  
 50 *suffer'd. Come to me that of this I may speak more. If our*  
 51 *father would sleep till I wak'd him, you should enjoy half*  
 52 *his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother,*  
 53 *Edgar.'*
- 54 *Hum.* Conspiracy? 'Sleep till I wak'd him, you should  
 55 enjoy half his revenue.'—My son Edgar? Had he a hand  
 56 to write this? A heart and brain to breed it in? When came  
 57 you to this? Who brought it?
- 58 *Edm.* It was not brought me, my lord, there's the cunning of it.  
 59 I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.
- 60 *Glou.* You know the character to be your brother's?
- 61 *Edm.* If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his;  
 62 but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.
- 63 *Glou.* [*Readjusting his spectacles.*] It is his.
- 64 *Edm.* It is his hand, my lord, but I hope his heart is not in the  
 65 contents.
- 66 *Glou.* Has he never before sounded you in this business?
- 67 *Edm.* Never, my lord; but I have heard him oft maintain it to be  
 68 fit that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declin'd, the father  
 69 should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his  
 70 revenue.
- 71 *Glou.* O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred  
 72 villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! Worse than  
 73 brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him. I'll apprehend him.  
 74 Abominable villain! Where is he?
- 75 *Edm.* I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to  
 76 suspend your indignation against my brother till you can  
 77 derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should  
 78 run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed  
 79 against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great  
 80 gap in your own honor, and shake in pieces the heart of  
 81 his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for him, that he  
 82 hath writ this to feel my affection to your honor, and to no  
 83 other pretense of danger.
- 84 *Glou.* Think you so?
- 85 *Edm.* If you honor judge it meet, I will place you where you  
 86 shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance  
 87 have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay  
 88 than this very evening.

- 89 *Glou.* He cannot be such a monster—  
 90 *Edm.* Nor is not, sure.  
 91 *Glou.* —To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him.  
 92 Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into  
 93 him, I pray you. Frame this business after your own  
 94 wisdom. I would unstate myself to be in a due resolution.  
*[Gives him back the letter.]*  
 95 *Edm.* I will seek him, sir, presently; convey the business as I  
 96 shall find means, and acquaint you withal.  
 97 *Glou.* These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good  
 98 to us. Though the wisdom of Nature can reason it thus and  
 99 thus, yet Nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects.  
 100 Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities,  
 101 mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the  
 102 bond crack'd 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine  
 103 comes under the prediction: there's son against father. The  
 104 king falls from bias of nature: there's father against child.  
 105 We have seen the best of our time. Machinations,  
 106 hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us  
 107 disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund. It  
 108 shall lose thee nothing. Do it carefully.—And the noble  
 109 and true-hearted Kent banish'd! his offense, honesty! 'Tis  
 110 strange. *[Exit.]*  
 111 *Edm.* This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we  
 112 are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behavior,  
 113 we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and  
 114 stars; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly  
 115 compulsion, knaves, thieves, and teachers by spherical  
 116 predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an  
 117 enforc'd obedience of planetary influence; and all that we  
 118 are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion  
 119 of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the  
 120 charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother  
 121 under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under *Ursa*  
 122 *major*, so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Tut! I  
 123 should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the  
 124 firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.—  
*Enter Edgar, reading on a book.*  
 125 Edgar. And pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old  
 126 comedy. My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like  
 127 Tom o'Bedlam. O! these eclipses do portend these  
 128 divisions. *Fa, sol, la, mi.*  
*Demonstrating the solfège technique on his hand.*  
 129 *Edg.* How now, brother Edmund! What serious contemplation  
 130 are you in?  
 131 *Edm.* I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other  
 132 day, what should follow these eclipses.



133 *Edg.* Do you busy yourself with that?  
 134 *Edm.* I promise you, the effects he writes of **succeed** unhappily;  
 135 as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent;  
 136 death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in  
 137 state; menaces and maledictions against king and nobles;  
 138 needless **diffidences**, banishment of friends, **dissipation** of  
 139 **cohorts**, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.  
 140 *Edg.* How long have you been a **sectary** **astronomical**?  
 141 *Edm.* When saw you my father last?  
 142 *Edg.* The night gone by.  
 143 *Edm.* Spake you with him?  
 144 *Edg.* Ay, two hours together.  
 145 *Edm.* Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in  
 146 him by word nor countenance?  
 147 *Edg.* None at all.  
 148 *Edm.* Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him;  
 149 and at my entreaty **forbear his presence** until some little  
 150 time hath **qualified** the heat of his displeasure, which at  
 151 this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your  
 152 person it would scarcely allay.  
 153 *Edg.* Some villain hath done me wrong.  
 154 *Edm.* That's my fear. I pray you **have a continent** forbearance  
 155 till the speed of his rage goes slower, and as I say, retire  
 156 with me to my lodging, from whence I will **fitly** bring you  
 157 to hear my lord speak. Pray ye, go. There's my key. If you  
 158 do **stir abroad**, **go arm'd**.  
 159 *Edg.* Arm'd, brother?  
 160 *Edm.* Brother, I advise you to the best. I am no honest man if  
 161 there be any good **meaning** toward you. I have told you  
 162 what I have seen and heard but **faintly**, nothing like the  
 163 **image and horror** of it. Pray you, away.  
 164 *Edg.* Shall I hear from you **anon**?  
 165 *Edm.* I do serve you in this business.— *[Exit Edgar.*  
 166 A credulous father, and a brother noble,  
 167 Whose nature is so far from doing harms  
 168 That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty  
 169 My **practices** ride easy! I see the business.  
 170 Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:  
 171 All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.

*[Trumpets Sound. Exit.*

ACT I, SCENE III.—[The Duke of Albany's Palace.]  
 [The Platform]

*Enter Goneril, coifed, with Oswald, her Steward,  
 wearing a sword.*



[Exit Servant.

*A banquet is served in. Music.*

9 How now, what art thou?

10 *Kent.* A man, sir.

11 *Lear.* What dost thou profess? What would'st thou with us?

12 *Kent.* I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly  
13 that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to  
14 converse with him that is wise and says little; to fear  
15 judgment; to fight when I cannot choose,—

*Enter Oswald, with a dish of poor-John.*

16 and to eat no fish.

*Exit Oswald.*

17 *Lear.* What art thou?

18 *Kent.* A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

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

21 *Kent.* Service.

22 *Lear.* Who wouldst thou serve?

23 *Kent.* You.

24 *Lear.* Dost thou know me, fellow?

25 *Kent.* No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I  
26 would fain call master.

27 *Lear.* What's that?

28 *Kent.* Authority.

29 *Lear.* What services canst thou do?

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

34 *Lear.* How old art thou?

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

38 *Lear.* Follow me. Thou shalt serve me; if I like thee no worse  
39 after dinner I will not part from thee yet.—Dinner, ho!  
40 Dinner. —Where's my knave? My fool? —Go you and  
41 call my fool hither. [Exit a Servant.

*Re-enter Oswald.*

42 You, you sirrah. Where's my daughter?

43 *Osw.* So please you— [Exit.

44 *Lear.* What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back.—

[Exit Lear's Knight.

45 Where's my fool? Ho! I think the world's asleep.

*Re-enter Lear's Knight.*

46 —How now, where's that mongrel?

47 *Lear's Knight.* He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.  
48 *Lear.* Why came not the slave back to me when I call'd him?  
49 *Lear's Knight.* Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he  
50 would not.  
51 *Lear.* He would not?  
52 *Lear's Knight.* My lord, I know not what the matter is; but, to my  
53 judgment, your highness is not entertain'd with that  
54 ceremonious affection as you were wont. There's a great  
55 abatement of kindness appears as well in the general  
56 dependents as in the duke himself also and your daughter.  
57 *Lear.* Ha! say'st thou so?  
58 *Lear's Knight.* I beseech you, pardon me, my lord, if I be  
59 mistaken, for my duty cannot be silent when I think your  
60 highness wrong'd.  
61 *Lear.* Thou but rememb'rest me of mine own conception. I have  
62 perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I have rather  
63 blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very  
64 pretense and purpose of unkindness. I will look further  
65 into't. But where's my fool? I have not seen him this two  
66 days.  
67 *Lear's Knight.* Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the  
68 fool hath much pined away.  
69 *Lear.* No more of that. I have noticed it well.—Go you, and tell  
70 my daughter I would speak with her.—  
71 *[Exit a Knight.]*  
71 Go you, call hither my fool.— *[Exit a Knight.]*  
*Re-enter Oswald.*  
72 O you sir. You! Come you hither, sir. Who am I?  
73 *Osw.* My lady's father.  
74 *Lear.* 'My lady's father?' my lord's knave. You whoreson  
75 dog! You slave! You cur!  
76 *Osw.* I am none of these, my lord. I beseech your pardon.  
77 *Lear.* Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?  
*[Striking him with his whip.]*  
78 *Osw.* I'll not be stricken, my lord.  
79 *Kent.* Nor tripp'd neither, you base football player.  
*Kent trips up his heels. Oswald falls.*  
80 *Lear.* I thank thee, fellow. Thou serv'st me, and I'll love thee.  
81 *Kent.* Come, sir, arise. Away! I'll teach you differences.  
82 *[Strikes him with his sword.]* Away, away! If you will  
83 measure your lubber's length again, tarry. But away! Go  
84 to. Have you wisdom? *[Exit Oswald.]* So.  
85 *Lear.* Now my friendly knave, I thank thee. There's earnest of  
86 thy service.

*[Takes purse from his codpiece and gives Kent money.]*

*Enter Fool, with lute.*

- 87 *Fool.* Let me hire him too. Here's my coxcomb.  
*[Offers Kent his coxcomb.]*
- 88 *Lear.* How now, my pretty knave! How dost thou?
- 89 *Fool.* *[To Kent.]* Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.
- 90 *Lear.* Why, my boy?
- 91 *Fool.* Why? For taking one's part that's out of favor. Nay, and  
 92 thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold  
 93 shortly. *[To Kent]*—There, take my coxcomb. Why, this  
 94 fellow has banish'd two on's daughters, and did the  
 95 third a blessing against his will. If thou follow him thou  
 96 must needs wear my coxcomb.—How now, nuncle!  
 97 Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters.
- 98 *Lear.* Why, my boy?
- 99 *Fool.* If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs  
 100 myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters.
- 101 *Lear.* Take heed, sirrah; the whip.
- 102 *Fool.* Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipp'd out,  
 103 when the lady's Brach may stand by th'fire and stink.
- 104 *Lear.* A pestilent gall to me!
- 105 *Fool.* I'll teach thee a speech.
- 106 *Lear.* Do.
- 107 *Fool.* Mark it, nuncle:  
 108 *Have more than thou showest,*  
 109 *Speak less than thou knowest,*  
 110 *Lend less than thou owest,*  
 111 *Ride more than thou goest,*  
 112 *Learn more than thou trowest,*  
 113 *Set less than thou throwest;*  
 114 *Leave thy drink and thy whore,*  
 115 *And keep in-a-door,*  
 116 *And thou shalt have more*  
 117 *Than two tens to a score.*
- 118 *Lear.* This is nothing, fool.
- 119 *Fool.* Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer; you gave  
 120 me nothing for 't. Can you make no use of nothing,  
 121 nuncle?
- 122 *Lear.* Why no, boy. Nothing can be made out of nothing.
- 123 *Fool.* *[To Kent.]* Prithee, tell him, so much the rent of his land  
 124 comes to. He will not believe a fool.
- 125 *Lear.* A bitter fool.
- 126 *Fool.* Doth thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter  
 127 fool and a sweet one?
- 128 *Lear.* No, lad; teach me.
- 129 *Fool.* *That lord that counsell'd thee*  
 130 *To give away thy land,*  
 131 *Come place him here by me,*  
 132 *Do thou for him stand.*  
 133 *The sweet and bitter fool*  
 134 *Will presently appear;*



- 135 *The one in motley here,*  
 136 *The other found out there.*
- 137 *Lear.* Dost thou call me fool, boy?  
 138 *Fool.* All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast  
 139 born with.
- 140 *Kent.* This is not altogether fool, my lord.  
 141 *Fool.* No, faith, lords and great men will not let me. If I had a  
 142 monopoly out, they would have part on't. And ladies  
 143 too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself;  
 144 they'll be snatching.—Nuncle, give me an egg, and I'll  
 145 give thee two crowns.
- 146 *Lear.* [*Giving him an egg.*] What two crowns shall they be?  
 147 *Fool.* Why, after I have cut the egg i'th'middle and eat up the  
 148 meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy  
 149 crown i'th'middle, and gav'st away both parts, thou  
 150 bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst  
 151 little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden  
 152 one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be  
 153 whipp'd that first finds it so.
- 154 *Fools had ne'er less grace in a year;*  
 155 *For wise men are grown foppish,*  
 156 *And know not how their wits to wear*  
 157 *Their manners are so apish.*
- 158 *Lear.* When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?  
 159 *Fool.* I have used it, nuncle, e'er since thou mad'st thy  
 160 daughters thy mothers; for when thou gav'st them the  
 161 rod and putt'st down thine own breeches,  
 162 *Then they for sudden joy did weep,*  
 163 *And I for sorrow sung,*  
 164 *That such a king should play bo-peep,*  
 165 *And go the fools among.*
- 166 Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy  
 167 fool to lie. I would fain learn to lie.
- 168 *Lear.* And you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipp'd.  
 169 *Fool.* I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll  
 170 have me whipp'd for speaking true, thou'lt have me  
 171 whipp'd for lying; and sometimes I am whipp'd for  
 172 holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o' thing than  
 173 a fool; and yet I would not be thee, nuncle. Thou hast  
 174 pared thy wit o'both sides and left nothing i'th'middle.  
 175 Here comes one o'the parings.
- Enter Goneril, above.*
- 176 *Lear.* How now, daughter! What makes that frontlet on? You  
 177 are too much of late i'th'frown.
- 178 *Fool.* Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to  
 179 care for her frowning; now thou art an O without a  
 180 figure. I am better than thou art now. I am a fool, thou  
 181 art nothing. [*To Goneril.*]—Yes, forsooth, I will hold

182 my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say  
 183 nothing. Mum, mum—  
 184 *He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,*  
 185 *Weary of all, shall want some.*  
 186 —That's a sheal'd peascod.

*[Pointing to Lear's codpiece.]*

187 *Gon.* Not only, sir, this your all-licens'd fool,  
 188 But other of your insolent retinue  
 189 Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth  
 190 In rank and not-to-be-endured riots. Sir,  
 191 I had thought, by making this well known unto you,  
 192 To have found a safe redress; but now grow fearful,  
 193 By what yourself too late have spoke and done,  
 194 That you protect this course, and put it on  
 195 By your allowance; which if you should, the fault  
 196 Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,  
 197 Which, in the tender of a wholesome weal,  
 198 Might in their working do you that offence,  
 199 Which else were shame, that then necessity  
 200 Will call discreet proceeding.

201 *Fool.* For you know, nuncle, the hedge-sparrow fed the  
 202 cuckoo so long, that it had it head bit off by its young:  
 203 *So out went the candle,*  
 204 *And we were left darkling.*

205 *Lear.* Are you our daughter?

206 *Gon.* I would you would make use of your good wisdom,  
 207 Whereof I know you are fraught; and put away  
 208 These dispositions which of late transport you  
 209 From what you rightly are.

210 *Fool.* May not an ass know when a cart draws the horse?—  
 211 *Whoop, Jug! I love thee!*

212 *Lear.* Does any here know me? This is not Lear.  
 213 Does Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his  
 eyes?

214 Either his notion weakens, his discernings  
 215 Are lethargied—*[Pinches himself.]* Ha! Waking? 'Tis  
 not so.

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

217 *Fool.* Lear's shadow.

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

221 *Fool.* Which they will make an obedient father.

222 *Lear.* Your name, fair gentlewoman?

223 *Gon.* This admiration, sir, is much o'th'savor  
 224 Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you  
 225 To understand my purposes aright.  
 226 As you are old and reverend, should be wise.  
 227 Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;

228 Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd, and bold,  
 229 That this our court, infected with their manners,  
 230 Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust  
 231 Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel  
 232 Than a grac'd palace. The shame itself doth speak  
 233 For instant remedy. Be then desir'd  
 234 By her, that else will take the thing she begs,  
 235 A little to disquantity your train;  
 236 And the remainders, that shall still depend,  
 237 To be such men as may besort your age,  
 238 Which know themselves and you.

*Lear.* Darkness and devils!—

239 Saddle my horse. Call my train together.—  
 240 Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee.  
 241 Yet have I left a daughter.

*Gon.* You strike my people, and your disorder'd rabble  
 242 Make servants of their betters.  
 243

*Enter Albany, above.*

244 *Lear.* Woe, that too late repents!—O sir, are you come?  
 245 Is it your will? Speak, sir.—Prepare my horses.—  
*[Exit Lear's Knight.*

246 Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
 247 More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child,  
 248 Than the sea-monster.

*Alb.* Pray, sir, be patient.

249 *Lear.* *[To Goneril.]* Detested kite! Thou liest!  
 250 My train are men of choice and rarest parts,  
 251 That all particulars of duty know,  
 252 And in the most exact regard support  
 253 The worships of their name. O most small fault,  
 254 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!  
 255 Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature  
 256 From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love,  
 257 And added to the gall.—O Lear, Lear, Lear!  
*[Striking his head.*

258 Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in,  
 259 And thy dear judgment out!—Go, go, my people.

260 *Alb.* My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant  
 261 Of what hath moved you.

*Lear.* It may be so, my lord.—

262 Hear, Nature, hear! Dear goddess, hear!  
 263 Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend  
 264 To make this creature fruitful!  
 265 Into her womb convey sterility!  
 266 Dry up in her the organs of increase,  
 267 And from her derogate body never spring  
 268 A babe to honor her! If she must teem,  
 269 Create her child of spleen, that it may live

270 And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her!  
 271 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,  
 272 With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks  
 273 Turn all her mother's pains and benefits  
 274 To laughter and contempt, that she may feel  
 275 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
 276 To have a thankless child! —Away, away!

*[Exeunt Lear, Kent and Knights.]*

277 *Alb.* Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

278 *Gon.* Never afflict yourself to know more of it,

279 But let his disposition have that scope

280 As dotage gives it.

*Re-enter Lear.*

281 *Lear.* What! fifty of my followers at a clap;

282 Within a fortnight!

*Alb.* What's the matter, sir?

283 *Lear.* I'll tell thee.— Life and death! I am asham'd

284 That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,

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

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

287 Th'untented woundings of a father's curse

288 Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,

289 Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,

290 And cast you, with the waters that you lose,

291 To temper clay. Yea, is't come to this?

292 Ha! Let it be so. I have another daughter,

293 Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable.

294 When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails

295 She'll flay thy wolvisch visage. Thou shalt find

296 That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think

297 I have cast off forever. *[Exit.]*

*Gon.* Do you mark that?

298 *Alb.* I cannot be so partial, Goneril,

299 To the great love I bear you—

300 *Gon.* Pray you, content.—What, Oswald, ho!—

301 *[To the Fool.]* You, sir, more knave than fool, after  
 your master.

302 *Fool.* Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry. Take the fool with  
 303 thee.—

304 *A fox, when one has caught her,*

305 *And such a daughter,*

306 *Should sure to the slaughter,*

307 *If my cap would buy a halter;*

308 *So the fool follows after.* *[Exit.]*

309 *Gon.* This man hath had good counsel. A hundred knights!

310 'Tis politic and safe to let him keep

311 At point a hundred knights; yes, that on every dream,

312 Each **buzz**, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,  
 313 He may **enguard** his dotage with their powers,  
 314 And hold our lives in **mercy**.—Oswald, I say!  
 315 *Alb.* Well, you may fear too far.  
*Gon.* Safer than trust too far.  
 316 Let me **still** take away the harms I fear,  
 317 Not fear **still** to be taken. I know his heart.  
 318 What he hath utter'd I have writ my sister.  
 319 If she sustain him and his hundred knights  
 320 When I have show'd th'unfitness—

*Re-enter Oswald.*

How now, Oswald!

321 What, have you writ that letter to my sister?  
 322 *Osw.* Ay, madam.  
 323 *Gon.* Take you some company, and away to horse.  
 324 Inform her full of my **particular** fear;  
 325 And thereto add such reasons of your own  
 326 As may **compact** it more. Get you gone,  
 327 And hasten your return. *[Exit Oswald.*  
 —No, no, my lord,  
 328 This **milky** gentleness and course of yours  
 329 Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,  
 330 You are much more at task for want of wisdom  
 331 Than prais'd for **harmful** mildness.  
 332 *Alb.* How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell.  
 333 Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.  
 334 *Gon.* Nay, then—  
 335 *Alb.* Well, well; th'event. *[Trumpets Sound. Exeunt.*

ACT I, SCENE V.—[Court before the Same.]  
 [The Platform.]

*Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool with lute.*

1 *Lear.* Go you before to **Cornwall** with these letters. Acquaint  
 2 my daughter no further with any thing you know **than**  
 3 comes from her demand out of the letter. If your diligence  
 4 be not speedy I shall be there afore you.  
 5 *Kent.* I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your letter.  
*[Exit.*

*The Fool plays a sad tune on his lute.*

6 *Fool.* If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not in danger  
 7 of **kibes**?  
 8 *Lear.* Ay, boy.  
 9 *Fool.* Then, I prithee, be merry; thy wit shall not go slipshod.  
 10 *Lear.* Ha, ha, ha!



11 *Fool.* Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly; for  
12 though she's as like this as a crab's like an apple, yet I  
13 can tell what I can tell.  
14 *Lear.* What canst tell, boy?  
15 *Fool.* She will taste as like this as a crab does to a crab. Thou  
16 canst tell why one's nose stands i'th'middle on's face?  
17 *Lear.* No.  
18 *Fool.* Why, to keep one's eyes of either side's nose, that what  
19 a man cannot smell out, he may spy into.  
20 *Lear.* I did her wrong.  
21 *Fool.* Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?  
22 *Lear.* No.  
23 *Fool.* Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.  
24 *Lear.* Why?  
25 *Fool.* Why, to put's head in; not to give it away to his  
26 daughters, and leave his horns without a case.  
27 *Lear.* I will forget my nature. So kind a father!—Be my horses  
28 ready?  
29 *Fool.* Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the seven  
30 stars are no mo than seven is a pretty reason.  
31 *Lear.* Because they are not eight?  
32 *Fool.* Yes, indeed! Thou would'st make a good fool.  
33 *Lear.* [*Begins to weep.*] To take't again perforce! Monster  
34 ingratitude!  
35 *Fool.* If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for  
36 being old before thy time.  
37 *Lear.* How's that?  
38 *Fool.* Thou should'st not have been old till thou hadst been  
39 wise.  
40 *Lear.* O! let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven;  
41 Keep me in temper. I would not be mad!

*Enter Lear's Knight.*

42 *Lear's Knight.* Ready, my lord.  
43 *Lear.* Come, boy. [*Exeunt Lear and Lear's Knight.*]  
44 *Fool.* She that's a maid now, and laughs at my departure,  
45 Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut shorter.  
*[Hits a high note on his lute. Exit.]*



ACT II, SCENE I.—[The Earl of Gloucester's Castle.]  
[The Platform and Upper Casement in the Tiring House.]

*Enter Edmund and Curan, separately.*



40 To stand auspicious mistress.  
*Glou.* But where is he?  
 41 *Edm.* Look, sir, I bleed.  
*Gloucester readjusts his spectacles to see the wound.*  
*Glou.* Where is the villain, Edmund?  
 42 *Edm.* Fled this way, sir, when by no means he could—  
 43 *Glou.* Pursue him, ho! Go after. [*Exeunt some Knights.*  
 —‘By no means’ what?  
 44 *Edm.* Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;  
 45 But that I told him the revenging gods  
 46 ‘Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend,  
 47 Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond  
 48 The child was bound to th’father. Sir, in fine,  
 49 Seeing how loathly opposite I stood  
 50 To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion,  
 51 With his prepared sword he charges home  
 52 My unprovided body, lanc’d mine arm:  
 53 And when he saw my best alarum’d spirits  
 54 Bold in the quarrel’s right, roused to th’encounter,  
 55 Or whether gasted by the noise I made,  
 56 Full suddenly he fled.  
*Glou.* Let him fly far.  
 57 Not in this land shall he remain uncaught  
 58 And found. [*To Curan.*] Dispatch,—the noble duke  
 my master,  
 59 My worthy arch and patron, comes tonight.  
 60 By his authority I will proclaim it  
 61 That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,  
 62 Bringing the murderous coward to the stake.  
 63 He that conceals him, death. [*Exit Curan.*  
 64 *Edm.* When I dissuaded him from his intent,  
 65 And found him pight to do it, with curst speech  
 66 I threaten’d to discover him. He replied,  
 67 ‘Thou unpossessing bastard! Dost thou think,  
 68 If I would stand against thee, would the reposal  
 69 Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee  
 70 Make thy words faith’d? No, what I should deny—  
 71 As this I would; ay, though thou didst produce  
 72 My very character—I’d turn it all  
 73 To thy suggestion, plot and damned practice.  
 74 And thou must make a dullard of the world,  
 75 If they not thought the profits of my death  
 76 Were very pregnant and potential spirits  
 77 To make thee seek it.’  
*Glou.* O strange and fast’ned villain!  
 78 Would he deny his letter, said he?  
 [*Tucket within.*  
 79 Hark! The duke’s trumpets. I know not why he

comes.

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

*Enter Cornwall and Regan,  
 attended by Cornwall's Knight and four other bodyguards.*

86 *Corn.* How now, my noble friend! Since I came hither,  
 87 Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.  
 88 *Reg.* If it be true, all vengeance comes too short  
 89 Which can pursue th'offender. How dost, my lord?  
 90 *Glou.* O! madam, my old heart is crack'd, it's crack'd.  
 91 *Reg.* What, did my father's **godson** seek your life?  
 92 He whom my father nam'd, your Edgar?  
 93 *Glou.* O lady, lady, shame would have it hid.  
 94 *Reg.* Was he not companion with the riotous knights  
 95 That tended upon my father?  
 96 *Glou.* I know not, madam. 'Tis too bad, too bad.  
 97 *Edm.* Yes, madam, he was of that consort.  
 98 *Reg.* No marvel then, though he were ill affected,  
 99 'Tis they have **put him on** the old man's death  
 100 To have th'**expense and waste** of his revenues.  
 101 I have this present evening from my sister  
 102 Been well inform'd of them, and with such cautions  
 103 That if they come to sojourn at my house,  
 104 I'll not be there.  
*Corn.* Nor I, assure thee, Regan.—  
 105 Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father  
 106 A **child-like office**.  
*Edm.* It was my duty, sir.  
 107 *Glou.* He did **bewray** his practice, and receiv'd  
 108 This hurt you see striving to **apprehend** him.  
 109 *Corn.* Is he pursued?  
*Glou.* Ay, my good lord.  
 110 *Corn.* If he be taken he shall never more  
 111 Be fear'd of doing harm. Make your own purpose,  
 112 How in my strength you please.—For you, Edmund,  
 113 Whose **virtue and obedience** doth this instant  
 114 So much commend itself, you shall be ours.  
 115 Natures of such deep trust we shall much need.  
 116 You we first seize on.  
*Edm.* I shall serve you, sir,  
 117 Truly, however else.  
*Glou.* For him I thank your grace.  
 118 *Corn.* You know not why we came to visit you—  
 119 *Reg.* Thus out of season, **threading dark-ey'd night**.

120 Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some prize,  
 121 Wherein we must have use of your advice.  
 122 Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,  
 123 Of differences, which I best thought it fit  
 124 To answer from our home; the several messengers  
 125 From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,  
 126 Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow  
 127 Your needful counsel to our businesses,  
 128 Which craves the instant use.  
*Glou.* I serve you, madam.  
 129 Your graces are right welcome. [*Flourish. Exeunt.*]

ACT II, SCENE II.—[Before Gloucester's Castle.]  
 [The Platform.]

*Enter Kent and Oswald, severally.*

1 *Osw.* Good dawning to thee, friend. Art of this house?  
 2 *Kent.* Ay.  
 3 *Osw.* Where may we set our horses?  
 4 *Kent.* I'th'mire.  
 5 *Osw.* Prithee, if thou lov'st me, tell me.  
 6 *Kent.* I love thee not.  
 7 *Osw.* Why then, I care not for thee.  
 8 *Kent.* If I had thee in **Tisbury pinfold**, I would make thee care  
 9 for me.  
 10 *Osw.* Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.  
 11 *Kent.* Fellow, I know thee.  
 12 *Osw.* What dost thou know me for?  
 13 *Kent.* A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base,  
 14 proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound,  
 15 filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-  
 16 taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable,  
 17 finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that  
 18 wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art  
 19 nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward,  
 20 pander, and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch. One  
 21 whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deni'st  
 22 the least syllable of thy addition.  
 23 *Osw.* Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou thus to rail on  
 24 one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!  
 25 *Kent.* What a brazen-fac'd varlet art thou to deny thou  
 26 knowest me! Is it two days since I tripp'd up thy heels  
 27 and beat thee before the king? [*Drawing his sword.*]  
 28 Draw, you rogue; for though it be night, yet the moon  
 29 shines. I'll make a sop o'th'moonshine of you. You  
 30 whoreson cullionly barbermonger, draw.



31 *Osw.* Away! I have nothing to do with thee.  
 32 *Kent.* Draw, you rascal. You come with letters against the  
 33 king, and take *Vanity* the puppet's part against the  
 34 royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so  
 35 *carbonado* your shanks. Draw, you rascal. [*Beating*  
 36 *him.*] Come your ways.  
 37 *Osw.* Help, ho! Murder! Help!  
 38 *Kent.* Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue, stand! You neat slave,  
 39 strike!  
 40 *Osw.* Help, ho! Murder! Murder! Help!

*Enter Edmund, with his rapier drawn.*

41 *Edm.* How now, what's the matter? Part!  
 42 *Kent.* [*To Edmund.*] With you goodman boy, if you please.  
 43 Come, I'll flesh ye. Come on, young master.

*Enter Cornwall, Regan, and Gloucester,  
 Cornwall's Knight, and other heavily armed knights.*

44 *Glou.* Weapons! Arms! What's the matter here?  
 45 *Corn.* Keep peace, upon your lives.  
 46 He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?  
 47 *Reg.* The messengers from our sister and the king.  
 48 *Corn.* What is your difference? Speak.  
 49 *Osw.* I am scarce in breath, my lord.  
 50 *Kent.* No marvel, you have so bestirr'd your valor. You  
 51 cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee. A tailor made  
 52 thee.  
 53 *Corn.* Thou art a strange fellow. A tailor make a man?  
 54 *Kent.* A tailor, sir. A stonecutter or a painter could not have  
 55 made him so ill, though they had been but two years  
 56 o'th'trade.  
 57 *Corn.* Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?  
 58 *Osw.* This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spar'd at suit  
 59 of his grey beard—  
 60 *Kent.* Thou whoreson zed! Thou unnecessary letter!—My  
 61 lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted  
 62 villain into mortar and daub the wall of a jakes with  
 63 him.—'Spare my grey beard,' you *wagtail*!  
 64 *Corn.* Peace, sirrah!  
 65 You *beastly* knave, know you no reverence?  
 66 *Kent.* Yes, sir; but anger hath a privilege.  
 67 *Corn.* Why art thou angry?  
 68 *Kent.* That such a slave as this should wear a sword,  
 69 Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,  
 70 Like rats, oft bite the *holy cords* a-twain  
 71 Which are too intrince t'unloose; smooth every  
 passion  
 72 That in the natures of their lords rebel;  
 73 Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;

74 Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks  
75 With every gale and vary of their masters,  
76 Knowing nought, like dogs, but following.—  
77 A plague upon your epileptic visage!  
78 Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?  
79 Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,  
80 I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

81 *Corn.* What, art thou mad, old fellow?  
82 *Glou.* How fell you out? Say that.  
83 *Kent.* No contraries hold more antipathy  
84 Than I and such a knave.

85 *Corn.* Why does thou call him knave? What is his fault?  
86 *Kent.* His countenance likes me not.  
87 *Corn.* No more, perchance, does mine, nor his, nor hers.  
88 *Kent.* Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain.  
89 I have seen better faces in my time  
90 Than stands on any shoulder that I see  
91 Before me at this instant.

*Corn.* This is some fellow,  
92 Who, having been prais'd for bluntness, doth affect  
93 A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb  
94 Quite from his nature. He cannot flatter. He,  
95 An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth;  
96 And they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.  
97 These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness  
98 Harbor more craft and more corrupter ends  
99 Than twenty silly-ducking observants,  
100 That stretch their duties nicely.

101 *Kent.* Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,  
102 Under th'allowance of your great aspect,  
103 Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire  
104 On flick'ring Phoebus' front—

*Corn.* What mean'st by this?  
105 *Kent.* To go out of my dialect, which you discommend so  
106 much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer. He that beguil'd you  
107 in a plain accent was a plain knave, which for my part I  
108 will not be, though I should win your displeasure to  
109 entreat me to't.

110 *Corn.* What was th'offence you gave him?  
111 *Osw.* I never gave him any.  
112 It pleas'd the king his master very late  
113 To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;  
114 When he, compact, and flattering his displeasure,  
115 Tripp'd me behind; being down, insulted, rail'd,  
116 And put upon him such a deal of man,  
117 That worthied him, got praises of the king  
118 For him attempting who was self-subdu'd;  
119 And, in the fleshment of this dread exploit,  
120 Drew on me here again.

- 121 *Kent.* None of these rogues and cowards  
 122 But Ajax is their fool.
- Corn.* Fetch forth the stocks!  
 123 You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend braggart,  
 124 We'll teach you.
- Kent.* Sir, I am too old to learn.  
 125 Call not your stocks for me. I serve the king,  
 126 On whose employment I was sent to you.  
 127 You shall do small respect, show too bold malice  
 128 Against the grace and person of my master,  
 129 Stocking his messenger.
- Corn.* Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and honor,  
 130 There shall he sit till noon.
- Reg.* Till noon? Till night, my lord, and all night too.
- Kent.* Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,  
 133 You should not use me so.
- Reg.* Being his knave, I will.
- Corn.* This is a fellow of the self-same color  
 135 Our sister speaks of.—Come, bring away the stocks.  
 136 *[Stocks brought out.]*
- Glou.* Let me beseech your grace not to do so.  
 137 His fault is much, and the good king his master  
 138 Will check him for't. Your purpos'd low correction  
 139 Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches  
 140 For pilf'rings and most common trespasses  
 141 Are punish'd with. The king must take it ill  
 142 That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,  
 143 Should have him thus restrained.  
 144
- Corn.* I'll answer that.
- Reg.* My sister may receive it much more worse  
 145 To have her gentleman abus'd, assaulted,  
 146 For following her affairs.—  
 147 *[To Cornwall's Knight.]* Put in his legs.  
*Kent is put in the stocks.*
- Corn.* Come, my good lord, away.  
*[Flourish. Exeunt all but Gloucester and Kent.]*
- Glou.* I am sorry for thee, friend; 'tis the duke's pleasure,  
 149 Whose disposition, all the world well knows,  
 150 Will not be rubb'd nor stopp'd. I'll entreat for thee.
- Kent.* Pray do not, sir. I have watch'd and travell'd hard.  
 152 Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.  
 153 A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.  
 154 Give you good morrow!
- Glou.* The duke's to blame in this; 'twill be ill taken.  
 156 *[Exit. Soft music.]*
- Kent.* Good king, that must approve the common saw,  
 157 Thou out of heaven's benediction com'st  
 158 To the warm sun! *[He takes a letter out of his purse.]*  
 159

—Approach, thou beacon to this  
under globe,

160 That by thy comfortable beams I may  
161 Peruse this letter.—Nothing almost sees miracles  
162 But misery. [*Puts away the letter.*]—I know 'tis from  
Cordelia,  
163 Who hath most fortunately been inform'd  
164 Of my obscured course, and shall find time  
165 From this enormous state, seeking to give  
166 Losses their remedies. All weary and o'erwatch'd,  
167 Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold  
168 This shameful lodging.  
169 Fortune, good night. Smile once more. Turn thy  
wheel. *[He sleeps.*

ACT II, SCENE III.—[Before a Hovel.]  
[*The Yard.*]

*Enter Edgar, below.*

1 *Edg.* I heard myself proclaim'd;  
2 And by the happy hollow of a tree  
3 Escap'd the hunt. No port is free; no place,  
4 That guard, and most unusual vigilance  
5 Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape,  
6 I will preserve myself; and am bethought  
7 To take the basest and most poorest shape  
8 That ever penury, in contempt of man,  
9 Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,  
10 Blanket my loins, elf all my hairs in knots  
11 And with presented nakedness outface  
12 The winds and persecutions of the sky.  
13 The country gives me proof and precedent  
14 Of Bedlam beggars who, with roaring voices,  
15 Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms  
16 Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;  
17 And with this horrible object, from low farms  
18 Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes, and mills,  
19 Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
20 Enforce their charity. 'Poor *Hurdygurd!* Poor Tom!'  
21 That's something yet. Edgar I nothing am. *[Exit.*

ACT II, SCENE IV.—[Before Gloucester's Castle.]  
[*The Platform.*]

*Tucket within. Enter Lear, Fool, and Lear's Knight.*







88 *Glou.* My dear lord,  
 89 You know the fiery *quality* of the duke;  
 90 How *unremovable* and fix'd he is  
 91 In his own course.  
 92 *Lear.* Vengeance! Plague! Death! Confusion!  
 93 'Fiery'! What '*quality*'? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester!  
 94 I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.  
 95 *Glou.* Well, my good lord, I have inform'd them so.  
 96 *Lear.* 'Inform'd them'? Dost thou understand me, man?  
 97 *Glou.* Ay, my good lord.  
 98 *Lear.* The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father  
 99 Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends  
 100 service;  
 101 Are they 'inform'd' of this? My breath and blood!  
 102 'Fiery'! the 'fiery' duke! Tell the *hot* duke that—  
 103 No, but not yet. Maybe he is not well.  
 104 Infirmary doth still neglect all *office*  
 105 Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves  
 106 When Nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind  
 107 To suffer with the body. I'll forbear;  
 108 And am fall'n out with my more *headier* will,  
 109 To *take* the indispos'd and sickly fit  
 110 For the sound man.—[*Looking on Kent.*] Death on my  
 111 state! Wherefore  
 112 Should he sit here? This act persuades me  
 113 That this *remotion* of the duke and her  
 114 Is *practice* only. Give me my servant forth.  
 115 Go tell the duke and's wife I'd speak with them;  
 116 Now; presently. Bid them come forth and hear me,  
 117 Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum  
 118 Till it cry *sleep to death*.  
 119 *Glou.* I would have all well betwixt you. [*Exit.*]  
 120 *Lear.* O me! My heart, my rising heart! [*Clutching his heart.*]  
 121 But, down!  
 122 *Fool.* Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when  
 123 she put 'em i'th'paste alive. She *knapp'd* 'em o'th'  
 124 coxcombs with a stick, and cried, 'Down wantons,  
 125 down!' 'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to his  
 126 horse, *buttered* his hay.  
 127 *Enter Cornwall and Regan, above.*  
*Reenter Gloucester with Knights.*  
 128 *Lear.* Good morrow to you both.  
 129 *Corn.* Hail to your grace!  
 130 [*Kent is set at liberty.*]  
 131 *Reg.* I am glad to see your highness.  
 132 *Lear.* Regan, I think you are. I know what reason  
 133 I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad,  
 134 I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,

- 128 Sepulchring an adult'ress. *[To Kent.]*—O! are you  
free?
- 129 Some other time for that.
- Kent is helped off by Cornwall's Knight  
and Lear's Knight.*
- Beloved Regan,
- 130 Thy sister's naught. O Regan, she hath tied  
131 Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here.  
*[Points to his liver.]*
- 132 I can scarce speak to thee. Thou'lt not believe  
133 With how depriv'd a quality—O Regan!
- 134 *Reg.* I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope  
135 You less know how to value her desert  
136 Than she to scant her duty.
- Lear.* Say? How is that?
- 137 *Reg.* I cannot think my sister in the least  
138 Would fail her obligation. If, sir, perchance  
139 She have restrain'd the riots of your followers,  
140 'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,  
141 As clears her from all blame.
- 142 *Lear.* My curses on her!
- Reg.* O sir, you are old!
- 143 Nature in you stands on the very verge  
144 Of her confine. You should be rul'd and led  
145 By some discretion that discerns your *state*  
146 Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray you  
147 That to our sister you do make return.  
148 Say you have wrong'd her.
- Lear.* Ask her forgiveness?
- 149 Do you but mark how this becomes the house—  
150 *[Kneeling.]* 'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old.  
151 *Age is unnecessary.* On my knees I beg  
152 That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed and food.'
- 153 *Reg.* Good sir, no more. These are unsightly *tricks*.  
154 Return you to my sister.
- Lear.* *[Rising.]* Never, Regan!
- 155 She hath abated me of half my train;  
156 Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue  
157 Most serpent-like upon the very heart.  
158 All the stor'd vengeance of heaven fall  
159 On her ingrateful *top!* Strike her young bones,  
160 You *taking* airs, with lameness!
- Corn.* Fie, sir, fie!
- 161 *Lear.* You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames  
162 Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,  
163 You *fen-suck'd* fogs drawn by the pow'ful sun,  
164 To fall and blister!
- 165 *Reg.* O, the blest gods! So will you wish on me,



202 I am now from home, and out of that provision  
 203 Which shall be needful for your entertainment.  
 204 *Lear.* Return to her? And fifty men dismiss'd?  
 205 No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose  
 206 To *wage* against the enmity o'th'air;  
 207 To be a comrade with the wolf, and *howl*  
 208 Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her?  
 209 Why, the *hot-blooded* France, that dowerless took  
 210 Our youngest born, I could as well be brought  
 211 To knee his throne and, squire-like, pension beg  
 212 To keep base life afoot. Return with her?  
 213 Persuade me rather to be slave and *sumpter*  
 214 To this detested groom. *[Pointing at Oswald.]*  
*Gon.* At your choice, sir.  
 215 *Lear.* I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad.  
 216 I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewell.  
 217 We'll no more meet, no more see one another;  
 218 But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter;  
 219 Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,  
 220 Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,  
 221 A plague-sore, or *embossed* carbuncle,  
 222 In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee.  
 223 Let shame come when it will, I do not call it.  
 224 I do not bid the *thunder-bearer* shoot,  
 225 Nor tell tales of thee to *high-judging* Jove.  
 226 Mend when thou canst. Be better at thy leisure.  
 227 I can be patient. I can stay with Regan.  
 228 I and my hundred knights.  
*Reg.* Not altogether so.  
 229 I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided  
 230 For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister;  
 231 For those that *mingle reason with your passion*  
 232 Must be content to think you old, and so—  
 233 But she knows what she does.  
*Lear.* Is this well spoken?  
 234 *Reg.* I dare avouch it, sir. What? Fifty followers?  
 235 Is it not well? What should you need of more?  
 236 Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger  
 237 Speak 'gainst so great a number? How, in one house,  
 238 Should many people, under two commands,  
 239 Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.  
*Gon.* Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance  
 241 From those that she calls servants, or from mine?  
 242 *Reg.* Why not, my lord? If then they chanc'd to *slack ye*,  
 243 We could control them. If you will come to me,  
 244 For now I spy a danger, I entreat you  
 245 To bring but five-and-twenty. To no more  
 246 Will I give place or notice.  
 247 *Lear.* I gave you all—

Reg. And in good time you gave it.

248 Lear. Made you my guardians, my depositaries,  
 249 But kept a reservation to be follow'd  
 250 With such a number. What? Must I come to you  
 251 With five-and-twenty? Regan, said you so?  
 252 Reg. And speak't again, my lord. No more with me.  
 253 Lear. Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favor'd  
 254 When others are more wicked. Not being the worst  
 255 Stands in some rank of praise. [*To Goneril.*] I'll go  
 with thee.  
 256 Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,  
 257 And thou art twice her love.

Gon. Hear me, my lord.

258 What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five,  
 259 To follow in a house where twice so many  
 260 Have a command to tend you.

Reg. What need one?

261 Lear. O! reason not the need. Our basest beggars  
 262 Are in the poorest thing superfluous:  
 263 Allow not nature more than nature needs,  
 264 Man's life is cheap as beast's. [*To Regan.*] Thou art a  
 lady;  
 265 If only to go warm were gorgeous,  
 266 Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,  
 267 Which scarcely keeps thee warm. *But, for true need—*

*A noise of distant thunder heard, then music.*

268 You Heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!  
 269 You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,  
 270 As full of grief as age; wretched in both.  
 271 If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts  
 272 Against their father, fool me not so much  
 273 To bear it tamely. Touch me with noble anger,  
 274 And let not women's weapons, water-drops,  
 275 Stain my man's cheeks! —No, you unnatural hags,  
 276 I will have such revenges on you both  
 277 That all the world shall—I will do such things—  
 278 What they are yet I know not, but they shall be  
 279 The terrors of the earth!

*Distant thunder, and music still.*

280 —You think I'll weep;  
 281 No, I'll not weep.  
 282 I have full cause of weeping, but this heart  
 283 Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws  
 284 Or ere I'll weep.—O Fool! I shall go mad.

*Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, and Fool.*

285 Corn. Let us withdraw, 'twill be a storm.

286 Reg. This house is little. The old man and's people







ACT III, SCENE I.—[A Heath.]  
[The Platform.]

*Storm still.*

*Enter Kent and Lear's Knight, severally.*

1 *Kent.* Who's there, besides foul weather?

2 *Lear's Knight.* One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

3 *Kent.* I know you. Where's the king?

4 *Lear's Knight.* Contending with the fretful elements;  
5 Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,  
6 Or swell the curlèd waters 'bove the main,  
7 That things might change or **cease**.

*Kent.* Who is with him?

8 *Lear's Knight.* None but the fool, who labors to outjest  
9 His heart-strook injuries.

*Kent.* Sir, I do know you;  
10 And dare, upon the warrant of my note,  
11 Commend a dear thing to you. There is division,  
12 Although as yet the face of it is cover'd  
13 With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;  
14 Who have, as who have not that their great stars  
15 Thron'd and set high, Servants, who seem no less,  
16 Which are to France the spies and speculations  
17 Intelligent of our state. What hath been seen,  
18 Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,  
19 Or the hard rein which both of them hath borne  
20 Against the old kind king, or something deeper,  
21 Whereof (perchance) these are but furnishings,  
22 True it is, from France there comes a power  
23 Into this scatter'd kingdom; who already,  
24 Wise in our negligence, have secret feet  
25 In some of our best ports, and are at point  
26 To show their open banner. Now to you.  
27 If on my credit you dare build so far  
28 To make your speed to Dover, you shall find  
29 Some that will thank you, making just report  
30 Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow  
31 The king hath cause to plain.  
32 I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,  
33 And from some knowledge and assurance offer  
34 This office to you.

35 *Lear's Knight.* I will talk further with you.

*Kent.* *No, do not.*  
36 For confirmation that I am much more  
37 Than my outwall, open this purse, and take  
38 What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia—  
39 As fear not but you shall—*show her this ring,*  
40 And she will tell you who that fellow is  
41 That yet you do not know.— *[Storm and Tempest.*  
Fie on this storm!  
42 I will go seek the king.  
*Lear's Knight.* Give me your hand.  
43 Have you no more to say?  
44 *Kent.* Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet:  
45 That when we have found the king—in which your pain  
46 That way, I'll this—he that first lights on him  
47 *Holla* the other. *[Exeunt severally.]*

ACT III, SCENE II.—[Another part of the Heath.]  
[The Platform.]

*Lear and Fool enter, and move apart.*

1 *Lear.* Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!  
*Burst of horrid thunder.*  
Rage! Blow!—  
*Groan of roaring wind.*  
2 You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
3 Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!  
*Sound of scolding rain.*  
4 —You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,  
5 Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
6 Singe my white head!—  
*A flash of lightning.*  
And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
7 Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world  
8 Crack Nature's molds, all germens spill at once  
9 That makes ingrateful man!—  
*Silence.*  
10 *Fool.* O nuncle.— Court holy water in a dry house is better  
11 than this rainwater out o'door. *[Comes downstage.]*  
12 Good nuncle, in. Ask thy daughters' blessing. Here's a  
13 night pities neither wise men nor fools.  
*Thunder, lightning, wind and rain.*

14           *Lear.* Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!  
 15           Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters.  
 16           I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;  
 17           I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children.  
 18           You owe me no subscription. Then let fall  
 19           Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,  
 20           A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.  
 21           But yet I call you servile ministers,  
 22           That will with two pernicious daughters join  
 23           Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head  
 24           So old and white as this. O, ho! 'tis foul!  
 25           *Fool.* He that has a house to put's head in has a good head-  
 26           piece.  
 27                           *The codpiece that will house*  
 28                           *Before the head has any,*  
 29                           *The head and he shall louse;*  
 30                           *So beggars marry many.*  
 31                           *The man that makes his toe*  
 32                           *What he his heart should make,*  
 33                           *Shall of a corn cry woe,*  
 34                           *And turn his sleep to wake.—*  
 35           For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths  
 36           in a glass.

*Thunder and Lightning.*

37           *Lear.* No, I will be the pattern of all patience.  
 38           I will say nothing.  
 39           *Kent.* *[Within.]* Who's there?  
 40           *Fool.* Marry, here's grace and a codpiece.  
 41           *Kent.* *[Within.]* Holla!

*Enter Kent.*

42           *Fool.* *[Aside.]* That's a wise man and a fool.  
 43           *Kent.* Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night  
 44           Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies  
 45           Gallow the very wanderers of the dark  
 46           And make them keep their caves. Since I was man,  
 47           Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,  
 48           Such groans of roaring wind and rain I never  
 49           Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot carry  
 50           Th'affliction nor the fear.  
 51           *Lear.*                           Let the great gods,  
 52           That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads  
 53           Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,  
 54           That hast within thee undivulged crimes  
 55           Unwhipp'd of Justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand,  
 56           Thou perjur'd, and thou simular of virtue  
 57           That art incestuous. Caitiff, to pieces shake,  
 58           That under covert and convenient seeming

58 Has practis'd on man's life. Close pent-up guilts,  
 59 Rive your concealing continents and cry  
 60 These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man  
 61 More sinn'd against than sinning.

*Storm still.*

*Kent.* Alack, bareheaded!

62 Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;  
 63 Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest;  
 64 Repose you there while I to this hard house—  
 65 More harder than the stones whereof 'tis rais'd,  
 66 Which even but now, demanding after you,  
 67 Denied me to come in—return and force  
 68 Their scanted courtesy.

*Lear.* My wits begin to turn.—

69 Come on, my boy. How does, my boy? Art cold?  
 70 I am cold myself.—Where is this straw, my fellow?  
 71 The art of our necessities is strange,  
 72 And can make vile things precious. Come, your  
 hovel.—

73 Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart  
 74 That's sorry yet for thee.

*Fool.* *He that has and a little tiny wit,  
 With hey, ho, the wind and the rain  
 Must make content with his fortunes fit,  
 Though the rain it raineth every day.*

*Lear.* True, boy.—Come, bring us to this hovel.

*[Lear and Kent exit.]*

*Fool.* This is a brave night to cool a courtesan.  
 I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:  
 When priests are more in word than matter;  
 When brewers mar their malt with water;  
 When nobles are their tailors' tutors;  
 No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;  
 When every case in law is right;  
 No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;  
 When slanders do not live in tongues;  
 Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;  
 When usurers tell their gold i'th' field;  
 And bawds and whores do churches build—  
 Then shall the realm of Albion  
 Come to great confusion—  
 Then comes the time, who lives to see't,  
 That going shall be us'd with feet.

*Thunder and lightning.*

96 —This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his  
 97 time. *[Exit.]*

1

ACT III, SCENE III.—[Gloucester's Castle.]  
[The Lords Rooms.]

*Enter Gloucester and Edmund, above.*

- 1 *Glou.* Alack, alack! Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing.  
2 When I desir'd their leave that I might pity him, they  
3 took from me the use of mine own house; charg'd me, on  
4 pain of perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him,  
5 entreat for him, or any way sustain him.  
6 *Edm.* Most savage and unnatural!  
7 *Glou.* Go to; say you nothing. There is division between the  
8 dukes, and a worse matter than that. I have receiv'd a  
9 letter this night; 'tis dangerous to be spoken; I have  
10 lock'd the letter in my closet. These injuries the king now  
11 bears will be revenged home. There is part of a power  
12 already footed. We must incline to the king. I will look  
13 him and privily relieve him. Go you and maintain talk  
14 with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceiv'd. If  
15 he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. If I die for it, as  
16 no less is threatened me, the king my old master must be  
17 reliev'd. There is strange things toward, Edmund. Pray  
18 you, be careful. *[Exit.*  
19 *Edm.* This courtesy forbid thee shall the duke  
20 Instantly know, and of that letter too.  
21 This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me  
22 That which my father loses—no less than all.  
23 The younger rises when the old doth fall. *[Exit.*

1

ACT III, SCENE IV.—[The Heath. Before a Hovel.]  
[The Yard and Platform.]

*Storm still.*

*Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool, below.*

- 1 *Kent.* Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter.  
2 The tyranny of the open night's too rough  
3 For nature to endure.  
4 *Lear.* Let me alone.  
5 *Kent.* Good my lord, enter here.  
6 *Lear.* Wilt break my heart?  
7 *Kent.* I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.  
8 *Lear.* Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm  
Invades us to the skin. So 'tis to thee.  
But where the greater malady is fix'd,



9                   The lesser is scarce felt. Thou’dst shun a bear;  
 10                   But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea,  
 11                   Thou’dst meet the bear i’t’h’mouth. When the mind’s  
                       free,  
 12                   The body’s delicate. This tempest in my mind  
 13                   Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
 14                   Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!  
 15                   Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand  
 16                   For lifting food to’t. But I will punish home.  
 17                   No, I will weep no more.—In such a night  
 18                   To shut me out?—Pour on! I will endure.—  
 19                   In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril!  
 20                   Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all!—  
 21                   O that way madness lies. Let me shun that.  
 22                   No more of that.

*Storm still.*

*Kent.*                   Good my lord, enter here.  
 23                   *Lear.* Prithee, go in thyself. Seek thine own ease.  
 24                   This tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
 25                   On things would hurt me more. But I’ll go in.—  
 26                   [*To the Fool.*] In, boy; go first.—You houseless  
                       poverty—  
 27                   Nay, get thee in. I’ll pray, and then I’ll sleep.—

*[Exit Fool, under the stage.]*

28                   Poor naked wretches, whereso’er you are,  
 29                   That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
 30                   How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
 31                   Your loop’d and window’d raggedness, defend you  
 32                   From seasons such as these? O, I have ta’en  
 33                   Too little care of this! Take physic, Pomp;  
 34                   Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
 35                   That thou mayst shake the superflux to them  
 36                   And show the heavens more just.

*Edgar winds his horn, from under the stage.*

37                   *Edg.* Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor Tom!  
 38                   *Fool.* [*From below.*] Come not in here, Nuncle; here’s a spirit!  
 39                   Help me! Help me!  
 40                   *Kent.* Give me thy hand.—Who’s there?

*Re-enter Fool, from under the stage.*

41                   *Fool.* A spirit, a spirit. He says his name’s poor Tom.  
 42                   *Kent.* What art thou that dost grumble there i’t’h’straw?  
 43                   Come forth.

*Thunder and Lightning.*

*Enter Edgar, from under the stage, disguised as a Tom o’Bedlam  
 and carrying a horn in a baldric.*

44 *Edg.* Away! The foul fiend follows me! [*Sound of wind.*  
 45 *Through the sharp hawthorn blow the cold winds.*  
 46 Humh!—Go to thy cold bed and warm thee.  
 47 *Lear.* Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to  
 48 this?  
 49 *Edg.* Who gives anything to poor Tom, whom the foul fiend hath  
 50 led through fire and through flame, through ford and  
 51 whirlpool, o’er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives  
 52 under his pillow, and *halts* in his pew; set *ratsbane* by his  
 53 porridge; made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-  
 54 horse over *four-inch’d* bridges, to course his own shadow  
 55 for a traitor.

*Storm still.*

56 —Bless thy *five wits*! *Tom’s a-cold.*  
 57 *Lear.* What, has his daughters brought him to this *pass*?  
 58 Couldst thou save nothing? Would’st thou give ‘em all?  
 59 *Fool.* Nay, he *reserv’d* a blanket, *else* we had been all sham’d.  
 60 *Lear.* Now all the plagues that in the *pendulous* air  
 61 Hang *fated* o’er men’s faults light on thy daughters!  
 62 *Kent.* He hath no daughters, sir.  
 63 *Lear.* Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdu’d nature  
 64 To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.  
 65 Is it the fashion that discarded fathers  
 66 Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?  
 67 Judicious punishment! ‘Twas this flesh begot  
 68 Those *pelican* daughters.

*Storm still .*

69 *Edg.* *Pillicock sat on Pillicock hill.*  
 70 *Alow, alow, loo, loo!*  
 71 *Fool.* This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen.  
 72 *Edg.* Take heed o’th’foul fiend. Obey thy parents; keep thy word  
 73 justly; swear not; commit not with man’s sworn spouse; set  
 74 not thy sweet heart on proud array. *Tom’s a-cold.*  
 75 *Lear.* What has thou been?  
 76 *Edg.* A *servingman*, proud of heart and mind, that *curl’d* my hair,  
 77 wore *gloves* in my cap, serv’d the lust of my mistress’ heart,  
 78 and did the act of darkness with her; swore as many oaths  
 79 as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face of  
 80 heaven; one that slept in the contriving of lust, and wak’d  
 81 to do it. Wine lov’d I deeply, *dice* dearly, and in woman  
 82 out-paramour’d the Turk. False of heart, *light of ear*, bloody  
 83 of hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog  
 84 in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor  
 85 the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman. Keep  
 86 thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of *plackets*, thy pen  
 87 from lenders’ books, and defy the foul fiend.—

*Sound of scolding wind.*

88 Still "through the hawthorn blows the cold wind."  
 89 Says, "suum, mun, hey no nonny."—  
 90 **Dolphin**, my boy, my boy:

*Winds his horn.*

91 —Sessa! Let him trot by.

*Thunder and Lightning.*

92 **Lear**. Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy  
 93 uncover'd body this extremity of the skies.—Is man no  
 94 more than this? Consider him well.—Thou ow'st the worm  
 95 no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no  
 96 perfume. Ha! Here's three on's are sophisticated. Thou art  
 97 the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such  
 98 a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.—Off, off you  
 99 lendings! Come; unbutton here.

*Lear tears off pieces of his costume.*

*Edgar puts on the king's discarded riding-cloak.*

100 **Fool**. Prithee, nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night to swim  
 101 in.—

*Enter Gloucester with a torch, muffled in a  
 voluminous, hooded cloak.*

102 Now, a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's  
 103 heart: a small spark; all the rest on's body cold.—Look,  
 104 here comes a walking fire.

105 **Edg**. This is the foul Flibbertigibbet. He begins at curfew, and  
 106 walks till the first cock; he gives the web and the pin,  
 107 squinies the eye, and makes the harelip; mildews the white  
 108 wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

*Swithold footed thrice the 'old;*

*He met the Nightmare, and her nine-fold;*

*Bid her alight,*

*And her troth plight,*

*And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!*

114 **Kent**. How fares your grace?

115 **Lear**. [*Pointing to Gloucester.*] What's he?

116 **Kent**. Who's there? What is't you seek?

117 **Glou**. What are you there? Your names?

118 **Edg**. Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the  
 119 tadpole, the wall newt, and the water; that in the fury of his  
 120 heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow dung for sallets,  
 121 swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog, drinks the green  
 122 mantle of the standing pool; who is whipp'd from tithing to  
 123 tithing, and stocked, punish'd, and imprison'd; who hath  
 124 had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body,

*Horse to ride, and weapons to wear,*

*But mice and rats and such small deer*

125  
 126

127 *Have been Tom's food for seven long year.*

*Thunder Still.*

128 —Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin! Peace, thou fiend!

129 *Glou.* What, hath your grace no better company?

130 *Edg.* The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Modo he's called,  
131 and Mahu.

132 *Glou.* Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile,  
133 That it doth hate what gets it.

134 *Edg.* Poor Tom's a-cold.

135 *Glou.* Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer  
136 T'obey in all your daughters' hard commands.

137 Though their injunction be to bar my doors,

138 And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,

139 Yet I have ventured to come seek you out

140 And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

141 *Lear.* First let me talk with this philosopher.—

142 [*To Edgar.*] What is the cause of thunder?

143 *Kent.* Good my lord, take his offer; go into th'house.

144 *Lear.* I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.—

145 What is your study?

146 *Edg.* How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin.

147 *Lear.* Let me ask you one word in private. [*They talk aside.*]

148 *Kent.* Importune him once more to go, my lord;

149 His wits begin t'unsettle.

*Glou.* Canst thou blame him?

150 His daughters seek his death. Ah, that good Kent!

151 He said it would be thus, poor banish'd man!

152 Thou say'st the king grows mad. I'll tell thee, friend,

153 I am almost mad myself. I had a son,

154 Now outlaw'd from my blood. He sought my life

155 But lately, very late. I loved him, friend,

156 No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,

157 The grief hath craz'd my wits.—

*Storm and Tempest.*

What a night's this!—

158 *Kent.* I do beseech your grace—

*He tries to pull Lear away from Edgar.*

*Lear.* [*To Kent.*] O, cry you mercy, sir!—

159 Noble philosopher, your company.

160 *Edg.* Tom's a-cold.

161 *Glou.* In, fellow, there, into th'hovel. Keep thee warm.

162 *Lear.* Come, let's in all.

*Kent.* This way, my lord.

*Lear.* With him!

163 I will keep still with my philosopher.

164 *Kent.* Good my lord, soothe him. Let him take the fellow.

165 *Glou.* Take him you on.

166 *Kent.* Sirrah, come on. Go along with us.  
 167 *Lear.* Come, good Athenian.  
 168 *Glou.* No words, no words. Hush!  
 169 *Edg.* **Child Rowland** to the dark tower came,  
 170 His word was still: “Fie foh, and fum,  
 171 I smell the blood of a British man.”  
*[Drum and Trumpet within. Exeunt.]*

ACT III. SCENE V.—[Gloucester’s Castle.]  
 [The Lords Rooms.]

*Enter Cornwall and Edmund, above.*

1 *Corn.* I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.  
 2 *Edm.* How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives  
 3 way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.  
 4 *Corn.* I now perceive it was not altogether your brother’s evil  
 5 disposition made him seek his death, but a provoking  
 6 merit set a-work by a reprobable badness in himself.  
 7 *Edm.* How malicious is my fortune that I must repent to be  
 8 just! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him  
 9 an intelligent party to the advantages of France. *[Gives*  
 10 *letter to Cornwall.]* O heavens, that this treason were  
 11 not, or not I the detector!  
 12 *Corn.* Go with me to the duchess.  
 13 *Edm.* If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty  
 14 business in hand.  
 15 *Corn.* True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester. Seek  
 16 out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our  
 17 apprehension.  
 18 *Edm.* *[Aside.]* If I find him comforting the king, it will stuff  
 19 his suspicious more fully.—I will persevere in my course  
 20 of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and  
 21 my blood.  
 22 *Corn.* I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a dearer  
 23 father in my love. *[Drums sound. Exeunt.]*

ACT III, SCENE VI.—[A Hunting Lodge.]  
 [The Platform with a Discovery.]

*Enter Kent and Gloucester.*

1 *Glou.* Here is better than the open air. Take it thankfully. I will  
 2 piece out the comfort with what addition I can. I will not  
 3 be long from you.  
 4 *Kent.* All the power of his wits have given way to his  
 5 impatience. The gods reward your kindness!

*Enter Lear, Fool and Edgar, wearing Lear’s cloak.*





46 *Fool.* The cat is grey.  
 47 *Lear.* [*Taking the joint-stool Kent is sitting on.*] Arraign her  
 48 first—'tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this  
 49 honorable assembly, she kick'd the poor king her father.  
 50 *Fool.* Come hither mistress. Is your name Goneril?  
 51 *Lear.* She cannot deny it.  
 52 *Fool.* Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint stool.  
 53 *Lear.* And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim  
 54 What store her heart is made on.—

*Gives the unskinned fox to Kent who tosses it aside.*

Stop her there!—  
 55 [*Draws on Kent.*] Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption  
 in the place!—  
 56 False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?  
 57 *Edg.* Bless thy five wits!  
 58 *Kent.* O pity! Sir, where is the patience now  
 59 That you so oft have boasted to retain?  
 60 *Edg.* [*Aside.*] My tears begin to take his part so much,  
 61 They mar my counterfeiting.  
 62 *Lear.* The little dogs and all,—  
 63 Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart,—see, they bark at me.  
 64 *Edg.* Tom will throw his head at them.—Avaunt, you curs!

*[Raises his horn.*

65 Be thy mouth or black or white,  
 66 Tooth that poisons if it bite,  
 67 Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,  
 68 Hound or spaniel, brach or lym,  
 69 Bobtail tike or trundle-tail,  
 70 Tom will make him weep and wail;  
 71 For, with throwing thus my head,  
 72 Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

*[Blows horn.*

73 Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs and market  
 74 towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.  
 75 *Lear.* [*To Kent, who has retrieved the fox*] Then, let them  
 76 anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart. Is  
 77 there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts?—  
 78 [*To Edgar.*] You, sir, I entertain for one of my hundred;  
 79 only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will  
 80 say they are Persian, but let them be chang'd.

*Edgar removes the cape. Fool plays soft music.*

81 *Kent.* [*Taking Lear gently downstage.*] Now, good my lord, lie  
 here and rest awhile.  
 82 *Lear.* Make no noise, make no noise.—Draw the curtains. So;  
 83 so. [*Curtains are drawn close.*]

*Re-enter Lear, peeping from behind the curtains.*

84 —We'll go to supper i' th' morning.

85 *Fool.* And I'll go to bed at noon. *[Exit Lear.]*

*Re-enter Gloucester.*

86 *Glou.* *[To Kent.]* Come hither, friend. Where is the king my  
master?

87 *Kent.* Here, sir; but trouble him not, his wits are gone.

88 *Glou.* Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms.

89 I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him.

90 There is a litter ready; lay him in't,

91 And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet

92 Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.

93 If thou should'st dally half an hour, his life,

94 With thine, and all that offer to defend him,

95 Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up;

96 And follow me, that will to some provision

97 Give thee quick conduct.

*Kent.* Oppressed nature sleeps.

98 This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews

99 Which, if convenience will not allow,

100 Stand in hard cure.— *[To the Fool.]* Come, help to  
bear thy master.

101 Thou must not stay behind.

*Glou.* Come, come, away.

*Music. Exeunt Kent, Gloucester, and the Fool,  
behind the curtains.*

102 *Edg.* When we our betters see bearing our woes,

103 We scarcely think our miseries our foes.

104 Who alone suffers, suffers most i' th' mind,

105 Leaving free things and happy shows behind;

106 But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,

107 When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.

108 How light and portable my pain seems now,

109 When that which makes me bend makes the king bow.

110 He childed as I father'd! Tom, away!

111 Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray

112 When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee,

113 In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.

114 What will hap more tonight, safe 'scape the king?

115 Lurk, lurk. *[Exit.]*

### ACT III, SCENE VII.—[Gloucester's Castle.]

[The Platform.]

*Drum and Trumpet. Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Edmund,  
Cornwall's Knight, Curan, Albany's Squire, and armed knights  
belonging to the dukes.*



—Villain, thou shalt find—

*Regan plucks Gloucester's beard.*

- 34 *Glou.* By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done  
 35 To pluck me by the beard.  
 36 *Reg.* So white, and such a traitor!  
*Glou.* *Naughty lady,*  
 37 These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,  
 38 Will quicken and accuse thee. I am your host.  
 39 With robbers' hands my hospitable favors  
 40 You should not ruffle thus.—What will you do?  
 41 *Corn.* Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?  
 42 *Reg.* Be simple-answer'd, for we know the truth.  
 43 *Corn.* And what confederacy have you with the traitors  
 44 Late footed in the kingdom—  
*Reg.* *To whose hands*  
 45 You have sent the lunatic king. Speak!  
 46 *Glou.* I have a letter guessingly set down,  
 47 Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,  
 48 And not from one oppos'd.  
*Corn.* *Cunning.*  
*Reg.* *And false.*  
 49 *Corn.* Where hast thou sent the king?  
*Glou.* *To Dover.*  
 50 *Reg.* Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charg'd at peril—  
 51 *Corn.* Wherefore to Dover?—Let him answer that.  
 52 *Glou.* I am tied to th'stake, and I must stand the course.  
 53 *Reg.* Wherefore to Dover.  
*Glou.* *Because I would not see*  
 54 Thy cruel nails pluck out his poor old eyes,  
 55 Nor thy fierce sister in his anointed flesh  
 56 Stick boarish fangs. The sea, with such a storm  
 57 As his bare head in hell-black night endur'd,  
 58 Would have buoy'd up and quench'd the stelled fires;  
 59 Yet, poor old heart, he help the heavens to rain.  
 60 If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time,  
 61 Thou should'st have said, 'Good porter, turn the key,'  
 62 *All cruel's else subscrib'd.* But I shall see  
 63 The winged vengeance overtake such children.  
 64 *Corn.* See't shalt thou never.—Fellows, hold the chair.—  
 65 Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

*Stomps on Gloucester's spectacles.*

- 66 *Glou.* He that will think to live till he be old,  
 67 Give me some help!—O cruel! O you gods!

*Cornwall puts out Gloucester's eye.*

- 68 *Reg.* One side will mock another; th'other too.  
 69 *Corn.* If you see vengeance—  
*Cornwall's Knight.* *Hold your hand, my lord.*

70 I have serv'd you ever since I was a child,  
 71 But better service have I never done you  
 72 Than now to bid you hold.

*Reg.* How now, you dog!

73 *Cornwall's Knight.* If you did wear a beard upon your chin,  
 74 I'd shake it on this quarrel.

*Reg.* What do you mean?

75 *Corn.* —My villain?

76 *Cornwall's Knight.* Nay then, come on, and take the chance of anger.  
*He draws his sword against Cornwall.*

77 *Reg.* —Give me thy sword. —A peasant stand up thus!  
*She snatches a sword and runs at him behind. He falls into  
 Cornwall, stabbing him. The duke falls down bleeding.*

78 *Knight.* O! I am slain. My lord, you have one eye left  
 79 To see some mischief on him. Oh! [*He dies.*]

80 *Corn.* [*To Regan.*] Lest it see more, prevent it!  
*She plucks out his other eye.*

*Reg.* Out, vile jelly!

81 *Where is thy lustre now?*

82 *Glou.* All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?—  
 83 Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature  
 84 To quit this horrid act.

*Reg.* Out, treacherous villain!  
 85 Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he  
 86 That made the overture of thy treasons to us,  
 87 Who is too good to pity you.

88 *Glou.* O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd!  
 89 Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

90 *Reg.* Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell  
 91 His way to Dover.— [*Exit two with Gloucester.*]  
 How is't, my lord? How look you?

92 *Corn.* I have receiv'd a hurt. Follow me, lady.—  
 93 Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave  
 94 Upon the dunghill.  
*Two of Cornwall's knights exeunt with the body.*

—Regan, I bleed apace.  
 95 Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.  
*Exit Cornwall, led by Regan. Music.*

96 *Curan.* I'll never care what wickedness I do  
 97 If this man come to good.

*Squire.* If she live long,  
 98 And in the end meet the old course of death,  
 99 Women will all turn monsters.

100 *Curan.* Let's follow the old earl, and get the Bedlam  
 101 To lead him where he would. His roguish madness

102 Allows itself to anything.  
103 *Squire*. Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs  
104 To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help him!  
*[Trumpets sounds. Exeunt severally.]*



ACT IV, SCENE I.—[The Heath.]

[The Yard and the Platform.]

*Enter Edgar still disguised as Tom o' Bedlam,  
from under the stage.*

1 *Edg.* Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd,  
2 Than still contemn'd and flatter'd, to be worst.  
3 The lowest and most dejected thing of Fortune  
4 Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.  
5 The lamentable change is from the best;  
6 The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,  
7 Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace.  
8 The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst  
9 Owes nothing to thy blasts.

*Enter Gloucester with a staff, led by Curan.*

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

*Curan.* O my good lord!

13 I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant  
14 These fourscore years.

15 *Glou.* Away, get thee away. Good friend, begone.  
16 Thy comforts can do me no good at all;  
17 Thee they may hurt.

*Curan.* You cannot see your way.

18 *Glou.* I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;  
19 I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen  
20 Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
21 Prove our commodities. Oh! dear son Edgar,  
22 The food of thy abused father's wrath;  
23 Might I but live to see thee in my touch,  
24 I'd say I had eyes again.

*Edgar winds his horn.*

—How now! Who's there?









62 Alb. Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame.  
 63 Bemonster not thy feature. Were't my fitness  
 64 To let these hands obey my blood,  
 65 They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
 66 Thy flesh and bones; howe'er thou art a fiend,  
 67 A woman's shape doth shield thee.  
 68 Gon. Marry, your manhood—*mew*.

*Enter Albany's Squire.*

69 Alb. What news?  
 70 *Squire.* O my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead—  
 71 Slain by his servant, going to put out  
 72 The other eye of Gloucester. [*Goneril frowns at him.*  
 Alb. Gloucester's eyes?  
 73 *Squire.* A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,  
 74 Oppos'd against the act, bending his sword  
 75 To his great master; who, thereat enrag'd,  
 76 Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him dead;  
 77 But not without that harmful stroke which since  
 78 Hath pluck'd him after.  
 Alb. This shows you are above,  
 79 You justicers, that these our nether crimes  
 80 So speedily can venge! But, O poor Gloucester!  
 81 Lost he his other eye?  
*Squire.* Both, both, my lord.—  
 82 This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer.  
*[Presents a letter.*  
 83 'Tis from your sister.  
 Gon. [*Aside.*] One way I like this well;  
 84 But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,  
 85 May all the building in my fancy pluck  
 86 Upon my hateful life. Another way,  
 87 The news is not so tart.—I'll read, and answer. [*Exit.*  
 88 Alb. Where was his son when they did take his eyes?  
 89 *Squire.* Come with my lady hither.  
 Alb. He is not here.  
 90 *Squire.* No, my good lord. I met him back again.  
 91 Alb. Knows he the wickedness?  
 92 *Squire.* Ay, my good lord; 'twas he inform'd against him,  
 93 And quit the house on purpose that their punishment  
 94 Might have the freer course.  
 Alb. Gloucester, I live  
 95 To thank thee for the love thou show'st the king,  
 96 And to revenge thine eyes.—Come hither, friend.  
 97 Tell me what more thou know'st.

*[Drum and trumpet within. Exeunt*



Osw. Madam, with much ado.  
 3 Your sister is the better soldier.  
 4 Reg. Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?  
 5 Osw. No, madam.  
 6 Reg. What might import my sister's letter to him?  
 7 Osw. I know not, lady.  
 8 Reg. Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.  
 9 It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,  
 10 To let him live. Where he arrives he moves  
 11 All hearts against us. Edmund, I think, is gone,  
 12 In pity of his misery, to dispatch  
 13 His nighted life; moreover, to descry  
 14 The strength o'th'enemy.  
 15 Osw. I must needs after him, madam, with my letter.  
 16 Reg. Our troops set forth tomorrow. Stay with us.  
 17 The ways are dangerous.  
 Osw. I may not, madam;  
 18 My lady charg'd my duty in this business.  
 19 Reg. Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you  
 20 Transport her purposes by word? Belike,  
 21 Some things—I know not what. I'll love thee much—  
 22 Let me unseal the letter.  
 Osw. Madam, I had rather—  
 23 Reg. I know your lady does not love her husband.  
 24 I am sure of that; and at her late being here,  
 25 She gave strange œilliads and most speaking looks  
 26 To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.  
 27 Osw. I, madam?  
 28 Reg. I speak in understanding. Y' are, I know 't.  
 29 Therefore I do advise you, take this note:  
 30 My lord is dead. Edmund and I have talk'd  
 31 And more convenient is he for my hand  
 32 Than for you lady's. You may gather more.  
 33 If you do find him, pray you, give him this—  
 [Gives him a glove.  
 34 And when your mistress hears thus much from you,  
 35 I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.  
 36 So, fare you well.  
 37 If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,  
 38 Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.  
 39 Osw. Would I could meet him, madam. I should show  
 40 What party I do follow.  
 Reg. Fare thee well. [Exeunt.

1

ACT IV, SCENE V.—[The Country near Dover.]  
 [The Platform.]





38 To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,  
 39 My snuff and loathed part of nature should  
 40 Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!

*Edgar blows a raspberry.*

41 —Now, fellow, fare thee well.  
*Edg.* Gone, sir, farewell.

*He falls.*

42 [*Aside.*] And yet I know not how conceit may rob  
 43 The treasury of life when life itself  
 44 Yields to the theft. Had he been where he thought,  
 45 By this had thought been past.—Alive or dead?  
 46 Ho, you sir! Friend, hear you? Sir, speak.—  
 47 [*Aside.*] Thus might he pass indeed; yet he revives.—  
 48 What are you, sir?

*Glou.* Away, and let me die.

49 *Edg.* Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,  
 50 So many fathom down precipitating,  
 51 Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg; but thou dost breathe,  
 52 Hast heavy substance, bleed'st not, speak'st, art sound.  
 53 Ten masts at each make not the altitude  
 54 Which thou hast perpendicularly fell.  
 55 Thy life's a miracle! Speak yet again.

*Glou.* But have I fall'n or no?

57 *Edg.* From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.  
 58 Look up a-height. The shrill-gorg'd lark so far  
 59 Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.

60 *Glou.* Alack! I have no eyes.  
 61 Is wretchedness depriv'd that benefit  
 62 To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,  
 63 When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,  
 64 And frustrate his proud will.

*Edg.* Give me your arm.

65 Up; so. [*He helps Gloucester to his feet.*] How is't?  
 Feel you your legs? You stand.

66 *Glou.* Too well, too well. [*He sits.*]

*Edg.* This is above all strangeness.

67 Upon the crown o'th'cliff what thing was that  
 68 Which parted from you?

*Glou.* A poor unfortunate beggar.

69 *Edg.* As I stood here below methought his eyes  
 70 Were two full moons. He had a thousand noses,  
 71 Horns whelk'd and wav'd like the enridged sea.  
 72 It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father  
 73 Think that the clearest god's, who make them honors  
 74 Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

75 *Glou.* I do remember now. Henceforth I'll bear  
 76 Affliction till it do cry out itself

77                   ‘Enough, enough,’ and die. That thing you speak of,  
78                   I took it for a man. Often ‘twould say  
79                   ‘The fiend, the fiend.’ He led me to that place.  
80                   Edg.   Bear free and patient thoughts.—

*Enter Lear, camouflaged with weeds.*

But who comes here?

81                   The safer sense will ne’er accommodate  
82                   His master thus.  
83                   Lear.   No, they cannot touch me for coining. I am the king  
84                   himself.  
85                   Edg.   O thou side-piercing sight!  
86                   Lear.   Nature’s above Art in that respect. [*Gives Edgar a*  
87                   *thistle.*] There’s your press-money. That fellow handles  
88                   his bow like a crowkeeper.—[*To Gloucester.*] Draw me a  
89                   clothier’s yard. [*Gloucester stirs.*] Look, look, a Mouse.  
90                   Peace, peace! [*Lear smells his own hand.*] This piece of  
91                   toasted cheese will do’t. [*Gives Gloucester his hand and*  
92                   *helps him to his feet.*] There’s my gauntlet. I’ll prove it  
93                   on a giant. [*Lifting up the bandages.*] Bring up the brown  
94                   bills. O, well flown, bird! I’th’ clout, i’th’ clout.

*[Clutching his heart.*

95                   Hewgh!—[*To Edgar.*] Give the word.  
96                   Edg.   Sweet marjoram.  
97                   Lear.   Pass.  
98                   Glou.   I know that voice. [*Kneels.*  
99                   Lear.   Ha! Goneril with a white beard! They flattered me like a  
100                   dog, and told me I had the white hairs in my beard ere the  
101                   black ones were there. To say ‘ay’ and ‘no’ to everything  
102                   that I said. ‘Ay’ and ‘no’ too was no good divinity. When  
103                   the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me  
104                   chatter, when the thunder would not peace at my bidding,  
105                   there I found ‘em, there I smelt ‘em out. Go to. They are  
106                   not men o’their words. They told me I was everything.  
107                   ‘Tis a lie. I am no ague-proof.

*[Gloucester topples over.*

108                   Glou.   The trick of that voice I do well remember.  
109                   Is’t not the king?  
110                   Lear.                   Ay, every inch a king.  
111                   When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.  
112                   I pardon that man’s life. What was thy cause  
113                   Adultery?  
114                   Thou shall not die. Die for adultery? No.  
115                   The wren goes to’t, and the small gilded fly  
116                   Does lecher in my sight.  
117                   Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester’s bastard son  
118                   Was kinder to his father than my daughters  
119                   Got ‘tween the lawful sheets. To’t! Luxury, pell-mell!  
                 For I lack soldiers. Behold yond simp’ring dame,

120 Whose face between her forks presages snow;  
 121 That minces virtue, and does shake the head  
 122 To hear of pleasure's name.  
 123 The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't  
 124 With a more riotous appetite.  
 125 Down from the waist they are Centaurs,  
 126 Though women all above.  
 127 But to the girdle do the gods inherit,  
 128 Beneath is all the fiend's. There's hell, there's darkness,  
 129 There is the sulphurous pit—burning, scalding,  
 130 Stench, consumption; fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!—  
 131 Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary,  
 132 To sweeten my imagination.  
 133 There's money for thee.

*Gives him a daisy.*

*Glou.* O, let me kiss that hand.

134 *Lear.* Let me wipe it first. It smells of mortality.

135 *Glou.* O ruin'd piece of Nature! This great world  
 136 Shall so wear out to naught.

*Kisses Lear's hand.*

—Dost thou know me?

137 *Lear.* I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou squiny at  
 me?

138 No, do thy worst, blind Cupid, I'll not love.

*Gloucester sobs, still holding Lear's hand.*

139 Read thou this challenge. Mark but the penning of it.

140 *Glou.* Were all thy letters suns, I could not see.

*Feels Lear's open palm.*

141 *Edg.* [*Aside.*] I would not take this from report. It is,  
 142 And my heart breaks at it.

143 *Lear.* Read.

144 *Glou.* What, with the case of eyes?

145 *Lear.* O ho! Are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor  
 146 no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case,  
 147 your purse in a light; yet you see how this world goes.

148 *Glou.* I see it feelingly.

149 *Lear.* What, art mad! A man may see how this world goes with  
 150 no eyes. Look with thine ears. See how yond justice rails  
 151 upon yond simple thief. Hark, in thine ear. Change places,  
 152 and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?  
 153 Thou has seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

154 *Glou.* Ay, sir.

155 *Lear.* And the creature run from the cur? There thou might'st  
 156 behold the great image of Authority. A dog's obey'd in  
 157 office.—

158 Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

159 Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;  
 160 Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind  
 161 For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the  
     cozener.  
 162 Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;  
 163 Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sins with gold,  
 164 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;  
 165 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.  
 166 None does offend, none, I say, none. I'll able 'em.  
 167 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power  
 168 To seal th'accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,  
 169 And, like a scurvy politician, seem  
 170 To see the things thou dost not.—Now, now, now, now.

*Soft music. Sitting beside Gloucester.*

171 Pull off my boots. Harder, harder. So.

*Gloucester removes Lear's boots.*

172 *Edg.* [*Aside.*] O! matter and impertinency mix'd!

173 Reason in madness.

174 *Lear.* If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.

175 I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester;

176 Thou must be patient; we came crying hither.

177 Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air

178 We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee. Mark.

*He stands.*

179 *Glou.* Alack, alack the day!

180 *Lear.* When we are born, we cry that we are come

181 To this great this stage of fools; this' a good block.—

182 It were a delicate stratagem to shoe

183 A troupe of horse with felt. I'll put't in proof,

184 And when I have stol'n upon these sons in law,

185 Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

*Enter Lear's Knight, with the French Officer  
 and other French soldiers.*

186 *Lear's Knight.* O, here he is. Lay hand upon him.—Sir,

187 Your most dear daughter—

188 *Lear.* [*To Edgar.*] No rescue?—What, a prisoner? I am even

189 The natural fool of Fortune. —Use me well.

190 You shall have ransom.

*Gives some weeds to Lear's Knight.*

Let me have surgeons;

191 I am cut to th'brains.

*Lear's Knight.* You shall have anything.

192 *Lear.* No seconds? All myself?

193 Why this would make a man a man of salt,

194 To use his eyes for garden waterpots,

195 Ay, and laying autumn's dust. I will die bravely,  
 196 Like a smug bridegroom.—What! I will be jovial.  
 197 Come, come! I am a king, masters, know you that?  
 198 *Lear's Knight.* You are a royal one, and we obey you.  
 199 *Lear.* Then there's life in't. Come, and you get it, you shall get  
 200 it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

*Exit running. French Officer and his soldiers in pursuit.*

201 *Lear's Knight.* A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,  
 202 Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one daughter  
 203 Who redeems nature from the general curse  
 204 Which twain have brought her to.

205 *Edg.* Hail, gentle sir!

*Lear's Knight.* Sir, speed you. What's your will?

206 *Edg.* Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?

207 *Lear's Knight.* Most sure and vulgar; every one hears that,  
 208 Which can distinguish sound.

209 *Edg.* But, by your favor,  
 210 How near's the other army?

211 *Lear's Knight.* Near, and on speedy foot. The main descry  
 212 Stands on the hourly thought.

*Edg.* I thank you, sir. That's  
 all.

213 *Lear's Knight.* Though that the queen on special cause is here,  
 214 Her army is mov'd on.

*Edg.* I thank you, sir.

*Exit Lear's Knight.*

215 *Glou.* You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me.  
 216 Let not my worser spirit tempt me again  
 217 To die before you please.

*Edg.* Well pray you, father.

218 *Glou.* Now, good sir, what are you?

219 *Edg.* A most poor man, made tame to Fortune's blows;  
 220 Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,  
 221 Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand,  
 222 I'll lead you to some biding.

*Glou.* Hearty thanks;

223 The bounty and the benison of heaven  
 224 To boot, and boot!

*Enter Oswald.*

*Osw.* A proclaim'd prize! Most happy  
 225 That eyeless head of thine was first fram'd flesh  
 226 To raise my fortunes. [*Drawing his sword.*] Thou old  
 unhappy traitor,

227 Briefly thyself remember. The sword is out  
 228 That must destroy thee.

*Glou.* Now let thy friendly hand



229 Put strength enough to't.

*Edgar steps between them.*

Osw. Wherefore, bold peasant,

230 Dar'st thou support a publish'd traitor? Hence,  
231 Lest that th'infection of his fortune take  
232 Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

Edg. Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.

234 Osw. Let go, slave, or thou diest.

235 Edg. Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass. And  
236 'chud ha' bin zwagger'd out of my life, 'twould not ha'  
237 bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. Nay, come not near  
238 th'old man. [*Taking Gloucester's staff.*] Keep out, che  
239 vor' ye, or ice try whither your costard or my ballow be  
240 the harder. Chill be plain with you.

241 Osw. Out, dunghill! [*He thrusts his sword at Edgar.*]

242 Edg. Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come; no matter vor your foins.

*They fight. Edgar disarms Oswald with Gloucester's staff,  
and kills the Steward with his own sword.*

243 Osw. Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse.

244 If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body,  
245 And give the letters which thou find'st about me  
246 To Edmund Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out  
247 Upon the British party. O, untimely death.—  
248 Death. [*He dies.*]

249 Edg. I know thee well: a serviceable villain,  
250 As duteous to the vices of thy mistress  
251 As badness would desire.

Glou. What, is he dead?

252 Edg. Sit you down, father; rest you.  
253 Let's see these **pockets**. The letters that he speaks of  
254 May be my friends.— [*Goes through his pockets.*]

He's dead. I am only sorry

255 He had no other deathsman.—Let us see.

256 Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not.  
257 To know our enemies' minds, we rip their hearts;  
258 Their papers is more lawful.

259 [*Reads.*] *Let our reciprocal vows be remembered.  
260 You have many opportunities to cut him off. If your  
261 will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offer'd.  
262 There is nothing done if he return the conqueror; then  
263 am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail; from the  
264 loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the  
265 place for your labor.*

*Your wife, so I would say—*

267 *Affectionate servant,*

268 *Goneril.*

269 O indistinguish'd space of woman's will!

270 A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,  
 271 And the exchange my brother!—Here, in the sands,  
 272 Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified  
 273 Of murderous lechers; and in the **mature** time  
 274 With this ungracious paper strike the sight  
 275 Of the death-practis'd duke. For him 'tis well  
 276 That of thy death and business I can tell.

*Exit Edgar, carrying off Oswald's body. Sad music within.*

277 *Glou.* The king is mad. How stiff is my vile sense  
 278 That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling  
 279 Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract.  
 280 So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,  
 281 And woes by wrong imaginations lose  
 282 The knowledge of themselves.

*Edg.* Give me your hand.

283 *Glou.* No further, sir; a man may **rot** even here.

284 *Edg.* What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure  
 285 Their going hence, even as their coming hither.  
 286 **Ripeness** is all. Come on.

*Glou.* And that's true too.

287 *Edg.* **Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.**

288 **Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.** [*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV, SCENE VI.—[A Tent in the French Camp.]  
 [The Platform.]

*Soft music. Enter Cordelia, Kent, Doctor, and  
 Lear's Knight.*

1 *Cor.* O, thou good Kent! How shall I live and work  
 2 To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,  
 3 And every measure fail me.

4 *Kent.* To be acknowledg'd, madam, is o'erpaid.  
 5 All my reports go with the modest truth,  
 6 No more nor clipp'd, but so.

*Cor.* Be better suited.  
 7 These weeds are memories of those worsèr hours.  
 8 I prithee, put them off.

*Kent.* Pardon, dear madam.  
 9 Yet to be known shortens my made intent.  
 10 My boon I make it that you know me not  
 11 Till time and I think meet.

12 *Cor.* Then be't so, my good lord.—  
 [*To the Doctor.*] How does the king?

13 *Doct.* Madam, sleeps still.

14 *Cor.* O, you kind gods,  
 15 Cure this great breach in his abusèd nature!

16 Th'untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up  
 17 Of this child-changed father.

*Doct.* So please your majesty  
 18 That we may wake the king? He hath slept long.

19 *Cor.* Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed  
 20 I'th'sway of your own will. Is he array'd?

21 *Lear's Knight.* Ay, madam, in the heaviness of sleep  
 22 We put fresh garments on him.

23 *Doct.* Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;  
 24 I doubt not of his temperance.

*Cor.* Very well.

*Enter Lear in a chair carried by Servants.*

25 *Doct.* Please you, draw near.—Louder the music there.  
*[Music still.]*

26 *Cor.* O my dear father! Restoration hang  
 27 Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss  
 28 Repair those violent harms that my two sisters  
 29 Have in thy reverence made. *[Kissing Lear.]*

*Kent.* Kind and dear princess.

30 *Cor.* Had you not been their father, these white flakes  
 31 Did challenge pity of them. Was this a face  
 32 To be oppos'd against the warring winds?  
 33 To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?  
 34 In the most terrible and nimble stroke  
 35 Of quick, cross-lightning? To watch—poor *perdu!*—  
 36 With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,  
 37 Though he had bit me, should have stood that night  
 38 Against my fire. And wast thou fain, poor father,  
 39 To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,  
 40 In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!  
 41 'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once  
 42 Had not concluded all.—He wakes. Speak to him.

43 *Doct.* Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

44 *Cor.* How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

45 *Lear.* You do me wrong to take me out o'th'grave.  
 46 Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound  
 47 Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears  
 48 Do scald like molten lead.

*Cor.* Sir, do you know me?

49 *Lear.* You are a spirit, I know. Where did you die?

50 *Cor.* Still, still, far wide.

51 *Doct.* He's scarce awake. Let him alone awhile.

52 *Lear.* Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?  
 53 I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity  
 54 To see another thus. I know not what to say.  
 55 I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see—  
*[Pricks himself.]*

56 I feel this pinprick. Would I were assur'd

57 Of my condition.  
 Cor. *[She kneels.]* O, look upon me, sir,  
 58 And hold your hand in benediction o'er me.  
*Lear kneels.*  
 59 No, sir, you must not kneel.  
 Lear. Pray do not mock me.  
 60 I am a very foolish fond old man,  
 61 Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less;  
 62 And to deal plainly,  
 63 I fear I am not in my perfect mind.  
 64 Methinks I should know you and know this man,  
 65 Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant  
 66 What place this is, and all the skill I have  
 67 Remembers not these garments; nor I know not  
 68 Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,  
 69 For as I am a man, I think this lady  
 70 To be my child Cordelia.  
 Cor. And so I am, I am.  
 71 Lear. Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not.  
 72 If you have poison for me, I will drink it.  
 73 I know you do not love me; for your sisters  
 74 Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.  
 75 You have some cause; they have not.  
 Cor. No cause, no cause.  
 76 Lear. Am I in France?  
 Kent. In your own kingdom, sir.  
 77 Lear. Do not abuse me.  
 78 Doct. Be comforted, good madam. The great rage,  
 79 You see, is kill'd in him: and yet it is danger  
 80 To make him even o'er the time he has lost.  
 81 Desire him to go in. Trouble him no more  
 82 Till further settling.  
 83 Cor. Will't please your highness walk?  
 84 Lear. You must bear with me.  
 85 Pray you now, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish.  
*Music still.*  
*Exeunt Lear, Cordelia, Doctor, and Attendants.*  
 86 *Kent.* Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back, know  
 87 you no reason?  
 88 *Lear's Knight.* Something he left imperfect in the state, which  
 89 since his coming forth is thought of, which imports to the  
 90 kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal  
 91 return was most requir'd and necessary.  
 92 *Kent.* Who hath he left behind him general?  
 93 *Lear's Knight.* The Marshall of France, Monsieur La Far. Holds  
 94 it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was so slain?  
 95 *Kent.* Most certain, sir.

96 *Lear's Knight.* Who is conductor of his people?  
 97 *Kent.* As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.  
 98 *Lear's Knight.* They say Edgar, his banish'd son, is with the Earl  
 99 of Kent in Germany.  
 100 *Kent.* Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about. The  
 101 powers of the kingdom approach apace.  
 102 *Lear's Knight.* The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare you  
 103 well, sir. [*Exit.*]  
 104 *Kent.* My point and period will be thoroughly wrought,  
 105 Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought. [*Exit.*]

ACT IV, SCENE VII.—[The British Camp near Dover.]  
 [The Platform.]

*Enter Edmund and Regan from one door,  
 Albany's Squire from behind the arras.*

1 *Edm.* Know of the duke if his last purpose hold,  
 2 Or whether since he is advis'd by aught  
 3 To change the course; he's full of alteration  
 4 And self-reproving; bring his constant pleasure.

*To Albany's Squire, who exits behind the  
 curtains.*

5 *Reg.* Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.  
 6 *Edm.* 'Tis to be doubted, madam.  
*Reg.* Now, sweet lord,  
 7 You know the goodness I intend upon you.  
 8 Tell me, but truly, but then, speak the truth,  
 9 Do you not love my sister?  
*Edm.* In honor'd love.  
 10 *Reg.* But have you never found my brother's way  
 11 To the forfended place?  
*Edm.* That thought abuses you.  
 12 *Reg.* I am doubtful that you have been conjunct  
 13 And bosom'd with her as far as we call hers.  
 14 *Edm.* No, by mine honor, madam.  
 15 *Reg.* I never shall endure her! Dear my lord,  
 16 Be not familiar with her.  
*Edm.* Fear me not.  
 17 She and the duke her husband!

*Enter, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril,  
 Albany's Squire, and Soldiers.*

18 *Reg.* [*Aside.*] I had rather lose the battle than that sister  
 19 Should loosen him and me.  
 20 *Alb.* Our very loving sister, well bemet.  
 21 Sir, this I hear; the king is come to his daughter,





55           *Edm.* To both these sisters have I sworn my love,  
56           Each *jealous* of the other as the stung  
57           Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?  
58           Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd  
59           If both remain alive. To take the widow  
60           Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;  
61           And hardly shall I *carry out my side*,  
62           Her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use  
63           His *countenance* for the battle, which being done,  
64           Let her who would be rid of him devise  
65           His speedy *taking off*. As for the mercy  
66           Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,  
67           The battle done, and they within our power,  
68           *Shall* never see his pardon; for my *state*  
69           *Stands* on me to defend, not to debate.

*[Exit. End of Act IV.]*



## INTERLUDE

*Alarum within. Bagpiper plays. Enter with Drum and Colours, Cordelia with her father in her hand, Lear's Knight, and Soldiers, over the stage, and exeunt. Alarum and retreat sounded within.*



### ACT V, SCENE I.—[The British Camp near Dover.] [The Platform.]

*Enter Edmund, with Lear and Cordelia guarded by two officers, Captain.*

- 1        *Edm.* Some officers take them away. Good guard,  
2                    Until their greater pleasures first be known  
3                    That are to censure them.
- 4        *Cor.*    *[To Lear.]*                    We are not the first  
5                    Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst.  
6                    For thee, oppressed king, I am cast down.  
7                    Myself could else outfrown false Fortune's frown.  
8                    Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?
- 9        *Lear.* No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison.  
10                    We two alone will sing like birds i'th' cage.  
11                    When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,  
12                    And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,  
13                    And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
14                    At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
15                    Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—  
16                    Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—  
17                    And take upon's the mystery of things  
18                    As if we were God's spies. And we'll wear out,  
19                    In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones  
20                    That ebb and flow by th'moon.
- 20        *Edm.*    Take them away.
- 21        *Lear.* Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,  
                  The gods themselves throw incense.                    *[She weeps.*  
                  Have I caught thee?

22 He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,  
 23 And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes.  
 24 The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell  
 25 Ere they shall make us weep. We'll see 'em starv'd  
     first.  
 26 Come.

*Drums sound within.*

*Exeunt Lear and Cordelia, guarded.*

27 *Edm.* Come hither, captain. Hark.  
 28 Take thou this note. *[Giving him a paper.*  
     Go follow them to prison.  
 29 One step I have advanc'd thee. If thou dost  
 30 As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way  
 31 To noble fortunes. Know thou this, that men  
 32 Are as the time is. To be tender-minded  
 33 Does not become a sword. Thy great employment  
 34 Will not bear question. Either say thou't do't,  
 35 Or thrive by other means.

*Capt.* I'll do't, my lord.

36 *Edm.* About it, and write happy when th'hast done.  
 37 Mark, —I say, instantly, and carry it so  
 38 As I have set it down.

39 *Capt.* I cannot draw a cart nor eat dried oats.  
 40 If it be man's work I'll do it. *[Exit.*

*Flourish. Enter in conquest, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril, Regan,  
 Albany's Squire, English Soldiers, Lear's Knight and other captives, their  
 heads and faces bloody and besmeared with mud and dirt.*

41 *Alb.* *[To Edmund.]* Sir, you have show'd today your valiant  
     strain,  
 42 And Fortune led you well. You have the captives  
 43 Who were the opposites of this day's strife.  
 44 I do require them of you, so to use them  
 45 As we shall find their merits and our safety  
 46 May equally determine.

*Edm.* Sir, I thought it fit  
 47 To send the old and miserable king  
 48 To some retention and appointed guard;  
 49 Whose age had charms in it, whose title more,  
 50 To pluck the common bosom on his side,  
 51 And turn our impress'd lances in our eyes  
 52 Which do command them. With him I sent the queen,  
 53 My reason all the same, and they are ready  
 54 Tomorrow, or at further space, t'appear  
 55 Where you shall hold your session. At this time  
 56 We sweat and bleed. The friend hath lost his friend,  
 57 And the best quarrels in the heat are curs'd  
 58 By those that feel their sharpness.

59 The question of Cordelia and her father  
60 Requires a fitter place.

61 *Alb.* Sir, by your patience,  
62 I hold you but a subject of this war,  
63 Not as a brother.

64 *Reg.* That's as we list to grace him.  
65 Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,  
66 Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,  
67 Bore the commission of my place and person,  
68 The which immediacy may well stand up  
69 And call itself your brother.

70 *Gon.* Not so hot.  
71 In his own grace he doth exalt himself  
72 More than in your addition.

73 *Reg.* In my rights,  
74 By me invested, he compeers the best.

75 *Gon.* That were the most, if he should husband you.

76 *Reg.* Jesters do oft prove prophets.

77 *Gon.* Holla, holla!  
78 That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint.

79 *Reg.* Lady, I am not well, else I should answer  
80 From a full-flowing stomach.—*[To Edmund.]* General,  
81 Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony.  
82 Dispose of them, of me; the walls are thine.  
83 Witness the world that I create thee here  
84 My lord and master.

85 *Gon.* Mean you to enjoy him?  
86 *Alb.* The let-alone lies not in your good will.

87 *Edm.* Nor in thine, lord.

88 *Alb.* Half-blooded fellow, yes.

89 *Reg.* *[To Edmund.]* Let the drum strike, and prove my title  
90 thine.

91 *Alb.* Stay yet. Hear reason.—Edmund, I arrest thee  
92 On capital treason, and, in thy attaint,  
93 This gilded serpent. *[Pointing to Goneril.]*  
94 —For your claim, fair sister,  
95 I bar it in the interest of my wife.  
96 'Tis she is subcontracted to this lord,  
97 And I, her husband, contradict your banes.  
98 If you will marry, make your loves to me.  
99 My lady is bespoke.

100 *Gon.* An interlude!  
101 *Alb.* Thou art arm'd, Gloucester. Let the trumpet sound.  
102 If none appear to prove upon thy person  
103 Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,  
104 There is my pledge.  
105 *[Throws his gauntlet down at Edmund's feet.]*  
106 I'll make it on thy heart  
107 Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less

96 Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

*Regan falls down in a swoon.*

*Reg.* Sick, O, sick!

97 *Gon.* [*Aside.*] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

98 *Edm.* There's my exchange. [*Takes up Albany's gauntlet.*]

99 What in the world he is  
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.  
100 Call by the trumpet. He that dares approach—  
101 On him, on you, who not?—I will maintain  
102 My truth and honor firmly.

*Alb.* —A herald, ho! —

103 Trust to thy single virtue, for thy soldiers  
104 All levied in my name, have in my name  
105 Took their discharge.

*Reg.* My sickness grows upon me.

106 *Alb.* She is not well. Convey her to my tent.—

*[Exit Regan, led.]*

*Enter a Herald Trumpeter.*

107 Come hither, herald.— [*To Squire.*] Let the trumpet  
sound,

108 And read out this. [*Hands him a paper.*]

109 *Squire.* Sound, trumpet!

*Trumpet sounds.*

110 [*Squire reads.*] *If any man of quality or degree within the*  
111 *lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed*  
112 *Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him*  
113 *appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He is bold in his*  
114 *defense.*

115 *Squire.* Sound!

*First trumpet.*

116 *Squire.* Again!

*Second trumpet.*

117 *Squire.* Again!

*Third trumpet.*

*[Trumpet answers within.]*

*Enter Edgar in armor with his beaver shut,  
a trumpet before him.*

118 *Alb.* [*To Squire.*] Ask him his purposes, why he appears  
119 Upon this call o'th'trumpeter.

*Squire.* What are you?

120 Your name, your quality, and why you answer  
121 This present summons?

*Edg.* Know, my name is lost,

122 By treason's tooth bare-gnawn, and canker-bit;  
 123 Yet am I noble as the adversary  
 124 I come to cope.

*Alb.* Which is that adversary?

125 *Edg.* What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloucester?  
 126 *Edm.* Himself. What say'st thou to him?  
*Edg.* Draw thy sword,  
 127 That, if my speech offend a noble heart,  
 128 Thy arm may do thee justice. Here is mine.—  
*[He draws his sword.]*

129 Behold, it is the privilege of mine honors,  
 130 My oath, and my profession. I protest,  
 131 Maugre thy strength, place, youth, and eminence,  
 132 Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,  
 133 Thy valor, and thy heart, thou art a traitor,  
 134 False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,  
 135 Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,  
 136 And from th'extremest upward of thy head  
 137 To the descent and dust below thy foot,  
 138 A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou 'No,'  
 139 This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent  
 140 To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,  
 141 Thou liest.

*Edm.* In wisdom I should ask thy name,  
 142 But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,  
 143 And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,  
 144 What safe and nicely I might well delay  
 145 By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn;  
 146 Back do I toss these treasons to thy head,  
 147 With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart,  
 148 Which, for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise,  
 149 This sword of mine shall give them instant way,  
 150 Where they shall rest for ever. *[He draws his sword.]*  
 —Trumpets, speak!

*Alarums. They fight. Edmund falls.*

151 *Gon.* *[To Edgar.]* Save him, save him.  
*She rushes to Edmund's side.*  
 —This is practice, Gloucester.

152 By th'law of war, thou wast not bound to answer  
 153 An unknown opposite. Thou art not vanquish'd,  
 154 But cozen'd and beguil'd.  
*She kisses Edmund vehemently.*

*Alb.* Shut your mouth, dame,  
 155 Or with this paper shall I stopple it.—  
*[To Edmund.]* Hold, sir!—  
 156 *[To Goneril.]* Thou worse than any name, read thine own  
 evil. *[He gives Goneril her letter.]*





194 Not sure, though hoping of this good success,  
 195 I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last  
 196 Told him my pilgrimage. But his *flaw'd* heart,  
 197 Alack, too weak the conflict to support,  
 198 'Twix two extremes of passion, joy and grief,  
 199 Burst smilingly.

*Edm.* This speech of yours hath mov'd me,  
 200 And shall perchance do good. But speak you on.  
 201 You look as you had something more to say.

202 *Alb.* If there be more, more woeful, hold it in;  
 203 For I am almost ready to dissolve,  
 204 Hearing of this.

*Edg.* This would have seem'd a period  
 205 To such as love not sorrow; but another,  
 206 To amplify too much, would make much more,  
 207 And top extremity.  
 208 Whilst I was big in clamor came there in a man  
 209 Who, having seen me in my worst estate,  
 210 Shunn'd my abhorr'd society; but then, finding  
 211 Who 'twas that so endur'd, with his strong arms  
 212 He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out  
 213 As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father,  
 214 Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him  
 215 That ever ear receiv'd, which in recounting  
 216 His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life  
 217 Began to crack. Twice then the trumpets sounded,  
 218 And there I left him *tranc'd*.

*Alb.* But who was this?  
 219 *Edg.* Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise  
 220 Follow'd his enemy king and did him service  
 221 Improper for a slave.

*Enter Albany's Squire, with a bloody knife.*

222 *Squire.* Help, help, O, help!

*Edg.* What kind of help?

*Alb.* Speak, man.

223 *Edg.* What means this bloody knife?

*Squire.* 'Tis hot, it smokes.

224 It came even from the heart of—O, she's dead.

*Alb.* Who dead? Speak, man.

226 *Squire.* Your lady, sir, your lady; and her sister  
 227 By her is poison'd. She confesses it.

228 *Edm.* I was contracted to them both. All three  
 229 Now marry in an instant.

*Edg.* Here comes Kent.

*Enter Kent.*

230 Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead.

231 [*To Squire*] This judgment of the heavens, that makes us



265

**The cup of their deservings.***Re-enter Lear, with Cordelia dead in his arms.*

— O, see, see!

266

*Lear.* Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!

267

Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so

268

That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever.

269

I know when one is dead and when one lives.

270

She's dead as earth. [*He lays her down.*]

—Lend me a looking glass;

271

If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,

272

Why, then she lives.—

*Lear takes a feather from his bonnet.**Kent.* Is this the promis'd end?

273

*Edg.* Or image of that horror?*Alb.* Fall and cease!

274

*Lear.* This feather stirs. She lives! If it be so,

275

It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows

276

That ever I have felt.

*Kent.* [*Kneeling.*] O, my good master—

277

*Lear.* Prithee, away.*Edg.* 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

278

*Lear.* A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!

279

I might have sav'd her. Now she's gone forever.—

280

Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha!

281

What is't thou say'st?—Her voice was ever soft,

282

Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.

283

I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

284

*Off.* 'Tis true, my lords, he did.*Lear.* Did I not, fellow?

285

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion,

286

I would have made them skip. I am old now,

287

And these same crosses spoil me.—

[*To Kent.*] Who are you?

288

Mine eyes are not o'th'best, I'll tell you straight.

289

*Kent.* If Fortune brag of two she lov'd and hated,

290

One of them we behold.

291

*Lear.* This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?*Kent.* The same.

292

Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?

293

*Lear.* He's a good fellow, I can tell you that.

294

He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.

295

*Kent.* No, my good lord. I am the very man—

296

*Lear.* I'll see that straight.

297

*Kent.* That from your first of difference and decay,

298

Have follow'd your sad steps.

*Lear.* You are welcome hither.

299

*Kent.* Nor no man else. All's cheerless, dark, and deadly.

300 Your eldest daughters have *fordone* themselves,  
301 And desperately are dead.

*Lear.* Ay, so I think.

302 *Alb.* [*To Edgar.*] He knows not what he says, and vain is it  
303 That we present us to him.

*Edg.* Very bootless.

*Enter Albany's Squire.*

304 *Squire.* Edmund is dead, my lord.

*Alb.* That's but a trifle here.

305 *Lear.* And my poor fool is hang'd. No, no, no life.

306 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,

307 And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,

308 Never, never, never, never, never.—

309 [*To Edgar.*] Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.

310 Do you see this. Look on her, look, her lips,

311 Look there, look there! [*Clutching his heart.*

—O, o, o, o, o. [*He dies.*

*Edg.* He faints! My lord, my lord.

312 *Kent.* Break, heart, I prithee, break.

*Edg.* Look up, my lord.

313 *Kent.* Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass. He hates him

314 That would upon the rack of this tough world

315 Stretch him out longer.

*Edg.* He is gone, indeed.

316 *Kent.* The wonder is he hath endur'd so long.

317 He but usurp'd his life.

318 *Alb.* Bear them from hence. Our present business

319 Is general woe.—

*The bodies of Goneril and Regan are taken out.*

[*To Kent and Edgar.*] Friends of my soul, you twain

320 Rule in this realm, and the gor'd state sustain.

321 *Kent.* [*To Albany.*] I have a journey, sir, shortly to go.

322 My master calls me. I must not say no.

323 *Edg.* [*To Albany.*] The weight of this sad time we must obey.

324 Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.—

*The bodies of Lear and Cordelia are placed on a bier.*

325 [*To Albany's Squire.*] The oldest hath borne most. We

that are young

326 Shall never see so much nor live so long.

*The bodies of Lear and Cordelia are borne off by Edgar, Kent, Albany and*

*Albany's Squire.*

*Exeunt, with a dead march.*

FINIS

## Notes

**Cover page illustration:** Mambrino's Helmet. Verso: Don Quixote, Sancho Panza, and Dorothea at the Inn(?), c. 1920s, Edmund Joseph Sullivan, The Morgan Library and Museum.



Figure 26. Title page, First Quarto, 1608. InternetShakespeareEditions.

**King Lear**] “M. William Shakespeare: *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 King's Maiestie at Whitehall upon S.Stephans night in Christmas Holidays.* By his Maiesties servants playing vsually at the Gloabe on the Bancvke-Side. *LONDON*, Printed for *Nathaniel Butter*, and are to be sold at his shop in Pauls Church-yard at the signe of the Pide Bull near *St. Austins Gate*. 1608.” [See Figure 26, First Quarto, 1608.]

“Although this Quarto was dated 1608, we know that the Court performance was in 1606, and not 1607 because the entry in the Stationers’ Register on 26 November 1607 tells us . . . ‘Kynge Lear as yt was played before the kings maiestie at Whitehall upon St. Stephans nights at Christmas Last by his maiiesties servants playng vsually at the globe on the Banksyde.’” (KING LEAR: THE ARDEN EDITION OF THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE by Muir, Kenneth, p. xvii).



Figure 27. Aernout van Buchel's copy of Johannes de Witt's drawing of the Swan playhouse, c.1596, British Museum.

ACT I, SCENE I] *Actus Primus. Scæna Prima* (F, 1). Scene 1 in Quarto.

S.D. *King Lear's Palace.*] Rowe, Not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F. The stage, a mounted platform in the yard. Elizabethan dramatists held the stage as an acting platform, not a scenic environment. [See Figure 27.]



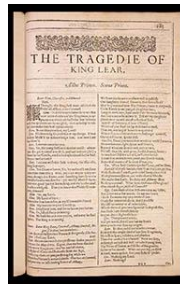


Figure 28. *The Tragedie of King Lear, Actus Primus, scæna prima* as it appears on page 283 in the First Folio, 1623. InternetShakespeareEditions.

S.D. *Trumpets Sound*] Ed. Not in Q, F. At The Globe Playhouse, trumpets were sounded to announce to the audience that the play was starting. In *King Lear*, music is used consistently to signal the end of one scene or the beginning of the next. Note in Figure 28 above, the deficiency of stage directions. Compare also the facsimile copies of Quarto 1 and Quarto 2 at the InternetShakespeareEditions.

S.D. *Enter Kent, Gloucester and Edmund*] (F, 2). *Enter Kent, Gloster and Bastard.* (Q, 3-4).



Figure 29. Bow spectacles found in the original case and dating back at least 340 years were among the finds of a recently discovered warship *The Gloucester*.

S.D. *wearing spectacles*] Ed. Not in Q, F. [See Figure 29.] Compare Robert Davenport, *A New Tricke to Cheat the Divell* (1625), III,i, “*Enter the Divell like a Gentleman, with glasse eyes.*” The audience’s first impression of Gloucester is one of a lewd *vecchio* stock character, bragging to Kent about his sexual exploits, and wearing unnatural-looking spectacles. He could easily exist in the cosmology of *Commedia dell’arte*, a “*leane and slipper’d Pantalooone, / With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side*”, as Jacques describes the sixth age of man in *As You Like it*. (F, 1136-38). He is probably standing between Kent and Edmund, comically obstructing Kent’s view of Edmund in the style of farce. His body language is more suggestive of embarrassment than pride in his bastard son, which is underscored by his words, “*He hath bin out nine yeares, and away he shall againe*” (F, 35-6).

Gloucester can’t see things at close distance without the means of bow spectacles: “[*I*]f it bee nothing, I shall not neede Spectacles” (F, 369-70). He is far-sighted (hyperopic) like a mouse. Due to exigencies of the plot, he needs to wear them all of the time, even outdoors in the storm: “*This is the foul Flibbertigibbet...he gives the web and the pin, squinies the eye.*” (See note III,iv,105, “*Flibbertigibbet*”). It is only by means of his spectacles that he is able to “see”. Ironically, Cornwall stomps on them before putting out the first of his eyes. See III,vii,65, note: “*Upon these eyes of thine I’ll set my foot.*”

What is important about this scene is its introduction to the major theme of adultery. Gloucester treats it as a subject to boast about, without any moral consequences. His sexual

promiscuity is the reference in III,iv,113 when Poor Tom invokes “*Swithold*” (F, 1900), i.e., St. Vitalis of Assisi, the patron saint of genital disease, upon his father's entrance. In IV,v, Lear presupposes that the blinding of Gloucester is a punishment for the sin of committing adultery (F, 2555-2562). At the end of the play, Edgar moralizes about his father's licentiousness to Edmund: “*The Gods are iust, and of our pleasant vices/ Make instruments to plague vs:/ The darke and vitious place where thee he got,/ Cost him his eyes*” (F, 3130-34). See also note IV,v, 89, “*Look, look, a Mouse.*”

S.D. *reading a map*] Ed. Not in Q, F. It is a matter of the utmost consequence how Lear's kingdom is divided on the map as well as the courtier appointed to present it. The play begins with Kent and Gloucester discussing the *equal* portions marked for Albany and Cornwall. What they can see that a reader cannot is the relation of the dukes' “*moieties*” to the rest of the kingdom. Lear explicitly states that he will give the “*largest bounty*” (F, 57) to the daughter that proves herself most deserving of it. What he wants to do is show the world that the size of his love for Cordelia is much bigger than it is for his elder daughters, —a fact Goneril bitterly acknowledges: “*he always lou'd our Sister most*” (F, 315-6). Lear could have given all three of his children equal portions of the kingdom, and still retained a part for himself, as Kent advises him to do later in the scene: “*Reserve thy state*” (F, 159).

Theoretically, Edmund has been appointed map-bearer, and is reading it as he enters. When I contacted A.L. Rowse in this regard, he graciously replied that “there would be nothing improper let alone degrading in exhibiting a map at court. The most famous one of all England was Saxton's, a large affair, of which the great Lord Burghley was instigator and patron. You could make quite a thing of it—if it didn't get in the way of the ladies dresses ! or the action.”

Dr. Rowse is probably referring to the colored 142.5 x 105.0 cm (56.1 by 41.3 inches) wall map entitled “*The Travellers Guide being the best Mapp of the Kingdom of England and Principality of Wales.*” For practical reasons, it is more likely that the map presented to Lear is similar in appearance to the parchment map of the British Isles measuring 64 x 46 cm (25 x 18 inches), presented to Henry VIII as a New Year's gift for the year 1537, and hung at Hampton Court. [Figure 30.] Lear points to Edmund when he says, “*Giue me the Map there,*” (F, 42). Compare *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, “*what letter are you reading there*” (F, 353).



Figure 30. This 25" x 18" color map from Ziereis Facsimilies was a New Year's gift from the Archdeacon of Rochester to King Henry VIII, and hung in Hampton Court Palace, the King's favorite residence.

There are only two instances of a **map** being used as a prop cited in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* (p.140): *2 Tamburlaine*, V,iii,127, “*One brings a Map.*” Also, *Anything for a Quiet Life* by John Webster and Thomas Middleton, IV,i,

"[KNAVESBEE shows them a map.] 'Look you, sir: here is Clangibbon, a fruitful country and well-wooded.'" In both instances, the map is presented by a single person, and can be presumed to have been rolled as in Figure 31.



Figure 31. Portrait of the engineer Luca Martini, Bronzino Agnolo, 1555, Palazzo Pitti Florence Italy.

Nicola Beech in the Maps and Manuscripts Reference Team at The British Library, writes in a personal communication, "I would think that if the map was large or fairly large then the maps would have been rolled so they could be easily carried and would probably been stored as rolls as you might see today in the Parliamentary Archives. If the map was smaller as the Saxton maps were when produced singly, they could have been kept flat or in a portfolio. [Figure 32.] I don't think we really know. Lord Burghley we know used and annotated the single maps produced by Saxton as they were produced before they were bound into volumes."



Figure 32. Map of England and Wales by Christopher Saxton, 1579. 41.3 x 53.8 cm.

How the portions of the kingdom are divided plays no further part in the story. Kent merely insinuates in III,i that there could be "*something deeper*" (F, 1637) in the rift between the dukes than their "*snuffes and packings*" (F, 1635), i.e., a brewing rebellion. What is important are the conclusions the audience draws from seeing 1) how much bigger Lear's love is for his youngest daughter, and 2) how Edmund's plan of action is shaped by the plot. It is in his role as map-bearer that he first encounters Goneril and Regan (and they him), whose feelings of rejection by their father he understands. The three "villains" can rightly be considered kindred spirits. They share a common bond of not being loved equally by their fathers.

A born seducer, Edmund knows that he has aroused their interest, as he does Kent's, and consequently takes bold steps in the next scene to undo his brother and his father. In *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster argues that instead of merely revealing random events that occur within a text (as "story" does), plot emphasizes *causality* between these events. "We have defined a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. 'The king died and then the queen died,' is a story. 'The king died, and then the queen died of grief' is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it."

2. S.D. *Gloucester steps between Kent and Edmund*] Ed. not in Q, F. Cf., “*Let Fraude make as though he would strike him, but let Dissimulation step betwene them*” (Robert Wilson, *Three Ladies of London*, A.iii). Unlike a novel, theatre is spatial, and the proxemics of the actors (together with other nonverbal forms of communication) must ALWAYS be considered when interpreting what is being said. Of course, readers are welcome to disagree with my judgement but they have to stop and think critically about the staging, hence the red-marking. A structural paradigm in the narrative is that what first presents as comedy turns to tragedy. Gloucester’s unexpected intrusion into Kent’s conversation with Edmund is *lasso* one might expect of Pantalone, who is often depicted as the father to one of the *innamorati* (the lovers), driven to keep his child and their respective lover apart. It is a bit of comic business that draws attention to the stigma of Edmund’s illegitimacy. Although Gloucester states that he loves his bastard son in equal measure with Edgar, his body language suggests otherwise. A few lines later, Edmund overhears him telling Kent, “*He hath bin out nine yeares, and away he shall again*” (F, 35-6). Adultery is held a sin by the Church, and deserving of punishment—a fact Lear addresses in his diatribe on injustice in IV,v: “*I pardon that mans life. What was thy cause? / Adultery? Thou shalt not dye: dye for Adultery? / No, the Wren goes too't, and the small gilded Fly / Do's letcher in my sight. / Let Copulation thriue: / For Glousters bastard Son was kinder to his Father, / Then my Daughters got 'twene the lawfull sheets.*” (F, 2556-61).

S.D. *To Edmund*] Ed. Not in Q, F. A passive reader might assume that Kent is talking to Gloucester, but it is Edmund he wishes to engage in conversation. Kent sees him looking intently at the map, and uses it to “break the ice.” Gloucester does not give his son an opportunity to answer.

1. **affected**] favored

5. **equalities are so weigh'd**] that the most careful scrutiny of the two shares could not induce either of the dukes to prefer his fellow’s portion to his own. In Shakespeare’s day, substantial advancements were made in the fields of cartography and surveying. The important idea being expressed is that the dukes’ territories were drafted using the most advanced *scientific knowledge* of mathematics and geometry. [See [Figure 33](#).]



Figure 33. Allegory and personification of Geometry teaching two scholars how to measure the earth in an engraving by C. Cort, 1565, after F. Floris, c. 1557.

5. **curiosity**] exactest scrutiny

6. **moiety**] The *OED* defines moiety as a legal or quasi-legal term for one of two equal parts. Cf. 1592 T. Kyd *Spanish Trag.* ii. sig. D “*She is daughter and halfe heire, Vnto our brother heere Don Ciprian, And shall enjoy the moitie of his land.*” What the audience can observe about these “moieties” from their color is not their equality but their *inequality*; how small they are in relation to rest of Lear’s kingdom.

7. **Is not this your son**] Edmund is making his debut at court. He has never been formally

introduced to the Earl of Kent, the king's most trusted advisor.

8. **breeding**] upbringing. Cf. I,i,96.

9. **braz'd**] hardened, literally plated with brass

11. **conceive**] Kent uses the word in the sense of 'understand;' Gloucester puns on its sexual meaning in his next speech. Since readers can't see Kent's reaction to Gloucester's grossly overfamiliar locker room talk when they read the play in a book, it must be noted that the former expresses no carnal interest in women at any time during the play, and is presumed to be a childless bachelor. The one time he mentions sex is when he commends himself to Lear for not sucking cock. (See note I,iv,16, "*eat no fish*.") Kent is at best indifferent to the sexual exploits of an old adulterer, and likely put off by his uncouthness. His single motive for joining Gloucester is be introduced to Edmund, his dashing young son. He is just making small talk about the lands being given to Albany and Cornwall, a subject he quickly drops. If he knew of Lear's "*darker purpose*" (F, 41) to relinquish his monarchical authority, he would not engage himself in a frivolous conversation about dowries and cartography. Kent's body language tells us that his desire to meet Edmund is more than just proper etiquette; he genuinely wants to be introduced.

Edmund's objective here is to win Kent's approval. He does this by appealing to the latter's sense of being manly, and showing no feelings one way or the other about his father's demeaning introduction. Secretly, Edmund must be hoping that Kent will tell the king that his father is nearing a state of dotage, and unfit to serve in court any longer. Who better to hold the title Earl of Gloucester than he himself?

12. **mother**] "Edgar hears his mother and the circumstances of his birth spoken of with the most degrading and licentious levity" (Raysor) qu. Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 4. See V,i,239 note.

16. **issue**] result

18. **But I have a son**] Kent must be personally acquainted with Edgar, as Regan is. She asks Gloucester in II,i: "*What, did my Fathers Godsonne seeke your life? / He whom my Father nam'd, your Edgar?*" (F, 1030-31). The reason for Edgar's absence in scene i is that his part is doubled with the King of France. See note I,i,189., "*France*".

22. **whoreson**] bastard

31. **out**] Out of the country. "This circumstance serves to account for Edmund's being unacquainted with so distinguished a man at Lear's court as Kent; indeed, for their mutual ignorance of each other" (Eccles) qu. Furness, p. 6.

32. S.D. **Sennet**] F, 37. *Sound a Sennet*. (Q, 37). "A set of notes on the trumpet or cornet, ordered in the stage-directions of Elizabethan plays, apparently as a signal for the ceremonial entrance or exit of a body of players" (OED).

32. **Enter...**] Ed. *Enter King Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Gonerill, Regan, Cordelia, and attendants*. (F, 37-8). *Enter one bearing a Coronet, then Lear, then the Dukes of Albany, and Cornwall, next Gonorill, Regan, Cordelia, with followers*. (Q, 37-38.2).

32. **crowned**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *Richard III*, IV,ii, "*Enter Richard crown'd*" (Q1, 2588). "Henslowe's inventory includes 'three imperial crowns; one plain crown.'" (*Diary*, App. 2, 89.) (**crown, crowned**, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 60). See



note I,i,139, “*coronet.*”



Figure 34. The codpiece of Don Grazia de Medici (1562) reconstructed by Anne-Marie Norton, with embellishments derived from the codpiece of Cosimo Medici (1574). From “Egregious Renaissance Maleness, From the Inside Out: An up-close look at the codpiece” by Michael Glover, *Hyperallergic*, 2020.

32. S.D. *wearing a king-size codpiece*] Ed. Not in Q, F. There are no directions in the First or Second Quartos or the First Folio describing Lear’s costume. The evidence to support the theory that Lear is wearing a codpiece is overwhelming: 1) several explicit references to it in the spoken dialogue (see note III,ii,40., “*grace and a codpiece*” and note I,iv,186, “*That’s a sheal’d peascod*”; 2) the phallogentric thinking of Lear’s character; 3) the major themes of toxic masculinity and impotence; 4) the play’s ironic style; 5) its historical context of emergent Puritanism; and, 6), the profound influence of Renaissance Neoplatonism on Shakespeare. Most importantly, there is no evidence that he isn’t.

In Shakespeare’s day, actors generally wore the dress of their own time. If Lear’s sartorial history is thought to extend from 1525 to 1606, when the play was performed for James I, it can be logically deduced from the references to his wearing a codpiece that he takes the stage in grossly outmoded *Tudor period* clothes in distinct opposition to the sophisticated *Stuart period* fashions worn by the other characters. That is to say, he has not changed his style of dress since he was a lusty young man when the codpiece was de rigueur. [See Figure 7.] Research has shown that most adults imagine themselves as younger than their actual chronological age. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare takes this observation to a level of the grotesque. Lear’s vision of himself is not one with reality. He has frozen himself in time like Miss Havisham or “Baby Jane” Hudson. He does not see himself as an octogenarian nearing the end of his life, but a teenage potentate who has yet to start shaving: “*They flatter’d me like a Dogge, and told mee I had the white hayres in my Beard, ere the blacke ones were there.*” (F, 2543-45).

The codpiece was a conspicuous and decorative pouch attached to a man’s breeches or close-fitting hose to cover the genitals. The word comes from the Old English *codd* “a bag, pouch, husk,” in Middle English, “testicles” (cognate with Old Norse *koddi* “pillow; scrotum”) + piece. It was worn by men in the 15th and 16th centuries as a display of fertility and masculinity.

Masculinity was big in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe – along with notions of chivalry, honour and romance. Codpieces were speedily hijacked for the purpose of proving masculinity in the most blatant of manners. The most elaborate versions were singularly showy and portraits show that in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century the codpiece reached epic (if not priapic) proportions. No expense was spared: codpieces were made in luxury silk velvet, jewelled or embroidered. Even young boys were obliged to wear them. (*What Goes*



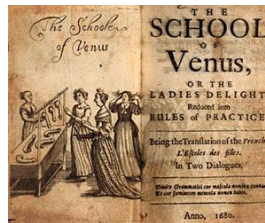
*Up Must Come Down: A Brief History of the Codpiece.)*



**Figure 35. Tudor Man in Red. The Royal Collection: Portrait of a Man in Red - German/Netherlandish School, 16th century (artist) Creation Date: c. 1530-50.**

Costume historians have long argued that the codpiece fell from favor as the result of the vogue for femininity that swept through the French and English courts. Elaborate ruffs and ballooning breeches heralded a shift in focus to the face and hips. “It’s evident in the late-16th and early 17th-century portrait miniatures of decorous young men by Nicholas Hilliard and similar painters that the style of men’s fashion was taking a new direction,” says Bartels.

There’s ample historical evidence that men have always agonised about their masculinity – and especially the question of size. A late 15<sup>th</sup> century manuscript entitled *Deti Piacevoli* recounts the following joke (translated by Barbara Bowen): “A woman was asked what kind of penises women preferred, big or small or medium-sized. She answered: ‘Medium ones are the best.’ When asked the reason, she replied: ‘Because there aren’t any big ones.’” (“What goes up must come down: a brief history of the codpiece”, University of Cambridge).



**Figure 36. L'Escole des Filles ou la Philosophy des dames is a sex manual by an unknown author first published in Paris in 1655. One of the first uses of the word *dildo* in literature is an erotic poem by Thomas Nashe entitled "The Choise of Valentines" (c. 1592). It concerns male performance anxiety.**

Modern audiences do not need a Ph.D. in costume history for Lear’s attire to stick out like a sore thumb. Tudor male clothing was characterized by its lurid colors, excessive ornateness, and exaggerated masculinity. He would probably have been dressed in a solid color, such as red (like a cock). [See Figure 35.] His apparel contrasts strikingly with the black garments worn on formal state occasions in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. [See Figure 37.]



**Figure 37. The Somerset House Conference, 1604**

*King Lear* was inspired in some part by the historic Conference at Hampton Court (1604)

which was called in response to the *Millenary Petition*, a list of requests by Puritans. It was given to James I in 1603 when he was travelling to London in order to claim the English throne. The Puritans felt that the English Reformation had not gone far enough to purge the Church of England from all perceived errors of the Roman Catholic Church. Puritans in Shakespeare's day would have regarded Lear as the Antichrist of Christian eschatology in his brightly colored, ostentatious, blatantly sexualized costume, or so we might conclude from Ben Jonson's comedy and satire *The Alchemist* (1610) when the Anabaptist character of Ananias decries showy clothing: "*They are profane, / Lewd, superstitious, and idolatrous breeches . . . That ruff of pride / About thy neck betrays thee . . . Thou look'st like Antichrist, in that lewd hat*" (4.7.46-55). Similarly, in Thomas Middleton's *The Family of Love* (1603-1607), a Puritan bellows-mender preaches against crimson breeches (4.1.18). Puritan characters in early modern English drama were quick to condemn anything smacking of fun, and lavish apparel was a prime object of their scorn." Robert I. Lublin, *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage*, p. 139.



Figure 38. Philip Stubbs (Stubbes) (c. 1555 – c. 1610) was an English pamphleteer.

"Beyond targeting religious clothing, stage Puritans similarly disparaged sumptuous apparel railing against ostentatious display almost as often and as vociferously as they did again the surplice. This attack on rich clothing mirrors the condemnation of pride in apparel that was being issued from the pulpit and in print at the time. Scholars, starting with E.K. Chambers, have focused considerable attention on the anti-theatrical writings of the period, but those works often devote equal or even greater attention to clothing than they do to the theatre. For instance, Philip Stubbes's *Anatomie of Abuses* issues a strong condemnation of the theatres, but devotes far more space to ridiculing English "Sumptuous Attyre." At considerable length, Stubbes assaults opulent hats, ruffs, shirts, doublets, hose, stocks, shoes, jerkins, cloaks, and scarves, as well as gilt swords and scabbards, the wearing of feathers or velvet visors, the use of make-up, particular hairstyles, cross-dressing, and new fashions. On stage, the most common targets of Puritan attack are large ruffs and oversized breeches. Accordingly, in *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, shortly after extolling his uncle for never donning Protestant religious apparel, Stupido attacks the poets who wear "such diabolical ruffs, and wicked great breeches full of sin, that is would make a zealous professors harte bleed for grief" (3.1.359-61).

31. S.D. *Two bearing coronets on cushions*] Ed. "Enter one bearing a Coronet" (Q, 37); not in F. Cf. *Lust's Dominion*, "bearing the crown on a cushion" (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 63). A coronet is "a small or inferior crown; spec. a crown denoting a dignity inferior to that of the sovereign, worn by the nobility, and varying in form according to rank" (*OED*, 1.a.). See *Julius Cesaer*, I,ii, "I sawe Marke Antony offer him a

*Crowne, yet 'twas not a Crowne neyther, 'twas one of these Coronets*” (F, 340-41). Lear bestows conspicuously *small coronets* on Goneril and Regan as a confirmation of the smaller territories he is giving them. Until he states his “*darker purpose*” (F, 41), nobody is aware of his decision to abdicate, and give his own imperial crown to Cordelia. Lear wants to impress Cordelia and the world with the size of his love, by giving her the big part of his kingdom together with his big *imperial crown*—which he cynically refers to as a “coronet” when he parts with it: “*This ‘coronet’ part between you.*” (F, 147) (Inverted commas are mine.) In *King Lear*, **size matters**: “*I, euey inch a King*” (F, 2554). The ostentatious business with the coronets is reflection of Lear’s histrionic nature. He is Shakespeare’s prototype of Macbeth’s “*poore Player*” (F, 2345), a bad actor who “indicates” everything. (See note I,iv..216. S.D. “*Pinches himself.*”)

32. **Lear’s Knight**] Not in Q, F. See note I,iv,47, *Lear’s Knight*. Theoretically, the audience first notices this character among the young nobles present in I,i, standing near to Kent.
32. **others following in attendance**] Ed. Not in Q, F, See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642: permissive stage directions* (pp. 161-62). “A category that includes the many signals that leave key details indeterminate (1) most commonly the specific number of actors required for an entrance.”



Figure 39. Frontispiece to Simonds D'Ewes “*Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*” [1682].

32. S.D. **Lear ascends the throne**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *Richard III* (Modern), IV,ii, 2592, “*Here he ascends the throne[, assisted by Buckingham].*” See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642: throne, chair of state* (pp. 228-29): “Our sense of how thrones were brought onstage, has been influenced by Jonson’s mocking of the “*creaking throne*” that “*comes down the boys to please*” (*Every Man in His Humour*, Prologue, line 16). The throne is raised on a dais and was probably lowered by cables owing to its size and heavy weight. [See Figure 39.] Logically, the throne would have been part of the preset, and raised during the loud “*Flourish*” and music accompanying the exeunt of Lear, Burgundy, Cornwall, Albany, Gloucester, Edmund, Lear’s Knight and Attendants. (See note I,i,268, S.D., “*Flourish*”).
32. S.D. **assisted by Kent**] Showing the audience Kent’s importance at court.
34. **my liege**] (Q, 40)] *my Lord* (F, 40).
34. **Exit Gloucester**] *Exit.* (F, 40). Not in Q. *Exeunt Gloucester and Edmund.* Capell.
36. S.D. **To Edmund**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Edmund is holding the map, the object of Lear command: “*Give me the map there*” (F, 42). Compare *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, “*what letter are you reading there*” (F, 353). As noted above, Edmund has been given the honor of presenting the map. He holds it up as Lear shows his daughters their smaller portions of the kingdom. See note I,i,S.D. “*reading a map.*”
36. **there**] “Multifariously employed to point to, and single out, persons and things” (Alexander

Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*). Compare IV,vi, 28, “*Louder the music there*”

37. **fast**] fixed, settled.

40. **death**] It is only natural that Lear feels depressed about marrying off the daughter he loves most, and his fast-approaching death. He is, after all, “*Fourescore and vpward*” (F, 2815), an age far exceeding the life expectancy of Elizabethans, which is thought to have been around 40. (Shakespeare and Burbage died when they were 52; Armin was 47.) Lear, in common with most men who are taught from childhood that it's not manly to express feelings and emotions associated with depression, responds by getting insanely angry—the one emotion knows how to express. See note I.i.87., “*Nothing*.” The Staff at the Mayo Clinic write about the problem of male depression: “*Male depression: Understanding the issues*.”

40. **son**] son-in-law

42. **constant will**] firm intention

43. **daughters’]** Lear’s inability to conceive a male child would have immediately signaled a problem with his fertility to Elizabethans. “*Bring forth men–children only,/ For thy undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males*” (*Macbeth*, F, 554-5).

43. **several dowers]** separate marriage gifts

48. **divest us both]** part with



Figure 40. Plato & Aristotle as central figures in Raphael's *The School of Athens* (1510). Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican Museum

50. **Which of you shall we say doth love us most]** The main philosophical question Shakespeare is dramatizing in *King Lear* asks how we know love? Is it something that can be measured by modern science and geometry, like the boundaries of a kingdom? [See Figure 47.] Can it be ascertained by *logos* (λόγος)—“a term used by Greek (esp. Hellenistic and Neo-Platonist) philosophers in certain metaphysical and theological applications developed from one or both of its ordinary senses ‘reason’ and ‘word’” (*OED*). It is the same question he asks in his metaphysical poem *The Phoenix and the Turtle* where love transcends logic and material facts.

Lear’s tragedy begins when he takes his daughters’ words literally, just as Gloucester’s begins when he takes the words he sees written in Edmund’s letter as empirical proof of Edgar’s treachery. Shakespeare wants to persuade the audience that had either Lear or Gloucester been guided by their feelings instead of *logos*, they would have known the truth. In the sixth section of the sixth book of *The Nicomachean Ethics*, [see Figure 46], Aristotle covers the fourth of five capacities people have for attaining true knowledge: *Intuition*. “Intuition, in philosophy, is the power of obtaining knowledge that cannot be acquired either by **inference** or observation, by **reason** or experience. As such, intuition is thought of as an original, independent source of

knowledge, since it is designed to account for just those kinds of knowledge that other sources do not provide. Knowledge of necessary truths and of moral principles is sometimes explained in this way” (*Britannica*). It must be noted that Francis Bacon's cyclopedic work *The Advancement of Learning* (“the first really important philosophical book to be written in English”) was published in 1605, a few months before *King Lear* was written. [See Figure 41.] “It is credited by Bacon's biographer-essayist Catherine Drinker Bowen with being a pioneering essay in support of empirical philosophy.” It is unimaginable that Shakespeare hadn't read it.



Figure 41. Title Page from *The Advancement of Learning* by Francis Bacon

During the Victorian era, when the quartos and folio were sanctified like holy relics, concepts of science and intuition were dichotomized and strictly gendered, as in Jung's theory of a *masculine* consciousness (Logos) and a *feminine* consciousness (Eros). As far back as Sophocles', King Oedipus's means of knowledge is contrasted with the blind prophet Tiresias's, who was “famous for clairvoyance and for being transformed into a woman for seven years.” [See Figure 42.] In his engaging book *Divination and Human Nature: A Cognitive History of Intuition in Classical Antiquity*, (2016), Peter T. Struck “[works] through evidence that positions divinatory knowledge within the classical thought-world in a way that is more or less analogous to the position of the modern concept of intuition”:



Figure 42. The Greek mythological prophet Tiresias is transformed into a woman by the goddess Hera, after striking two copulating snakes with a stick. Engraving taken from *Die Verwandlungen des Ovidii : in zweyhundert und sechs- und zwanzig Kupffern*. 1690.

Though they have different ideas on how exactly it works and how to value it, the Greek philosophers considered here show a consistent understanding of traditional divinatory insight as the result of an ancillary form of cognition that takes place outside our self-conscious, purposive thinking. It enters into our awareness and offers incremental insight into what is around the corner. They construe it as a feature of human nature, as embedded in physiological processes that have to do with our status as embodied organisms situated in a surrounding atmosphere of stimuli. It relies on mechanisms buried deep in our natural structures, and the philosophers allow that some people will have a better mechanism for it than others. I have tried to show that its cognitive status is consistently congruent to what most contemporary English speakers would call intuition, and that it is best understood as a cultural formation responding to the provocation nature of surplus knowledge .... On the side of classical drama, the story



of Oedipus would on this view include a layer of commentary on Oedipus' particular failings. His renown for his ability to win a confrontation of wits with the Sphinx shows him as an acute thinker in a discursive mode. But his ongoing confrontation with the messages from Delphi, particularly brought to a head by Tiresias, would, by the perspective worked through here, show him to be deficient at another kind of cognition, the non-conscious insight that comes from what we would call intuition. He has discursive rational capacity aplenty but is lacking something else.



Figure 43. Jean-Martin Charcot demonstrating the female-only disease of hysteria in a roomful of males. Etching by A. Lurat, 1888, after P.A.A. Brouillet, 1887.

51. **bounty**] generosity

52. **Where**] in the case where. See *Shakespeare Lexicon*, Vol 3, Schmidt. p. 1357

52. **Nature**] Mother Nature, closely related to Justitia or Lady Justice: the divine or ultimate force in the universe that decides just deserving. Ironically, in the next scene, Edmund calls on Nature to justify his own deserving, and offers his outward physical appearance as proof: “*Thou Nature art my Goddess, to thy Law/ My services are bound*” (F, 335-6). See note I,ii,1, “*Nature*”.



Figure 44. *Justitia*, Raphael. Stanza della Segnatura. Vatican City.

52. **doth with merit challenge**] F, 58. *Where merit doth most challenge it*, (Q, 58). Lear believes that “Nature” demands empirical proof of deserving, and will give the largest bounty of his kingdom to the daughter who can demonstrate the truth of her love for him by their words. The concept of **desert** is linked to the idea of **divine justice**. The play builds to Albany’s moralistic pronouncement “*All Friends shall / Taste the wages of their vertue, and all Foes / The cup of their deservings*” (F, 3274-76), only to be followed by Lear’s entrance with Cordelia dead in his arms. (See note V,i,263-265, “*All friends etc.*”) Furness quotes Crosby, ““With merit’ I take to be an adverbial phrase equivalent to ‘deservedly;’ and the verb *to challenge*, in addition to its sense of *to contend*, or *vie with*, has an older and less common meaning—viz., to *make title to*, or *claim as due*. Chaucer thus uses it in *The Frankeleyne's Tale* : ‘Nat that I chelenge eny thing of right Of yow, my soverayn lady, but you’re grace.’”

54. S.D. **Kneels**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See note IV,v,98.S.D., “*Kneels.*” See also note IV,v,99, “*Ha, Goneril with a white beard*” (F, 2543).

54. **Sir**] (Q, 74); not in F, 74

62. S.D. **Aside**] Pope. Not in Q, F.

63. S.D. **Pointing to the map**] Not in Q, F. It is here that Goneril first takes notice of Edmund.



The audience sees that she finds him more interesting to look at than the map. Her attention does not go unnoticed by Regan, nor to Edmund, who immediately recognizes his opportunity for advancement in court.

63. **bounds**] boundaries. What is remarkable about the lands given to Goneril and Regan is how small they are in comparison to the rest of Lear's kingdom. Their portions are brightly marked in color making it easy for all to see. [See Figure 30.]
64. **champains**] plains
65. **meads**] meadows
67. S.D. **Places a coronet on her head**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See note I,i,31.,S.D., "*Two bearing coronets on cushions.*"
68. **Speak**] *speake?* Q, 73. Not in F, 73
69. S.D. **Kneels**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See Note 54.
72. **comes too short**] F, 77. *came short*, (Q, 76)
74. **precious**] fastidious
74. **square**] a tool for measuring. [See Figure 45.]



Figure 45. Probable portrait of Benedikt Rejt, detail of *Danish king Eric comes to see St. Wenceslas church in the St. Wenceslas Chapel of St. Vitus Cathedral, c. 1450 Prague*

74. **possesses**] have knowledge of. Regan rebuffs even the smallest pleasure measurable by science. She is saying that the only joy she knows in life is her father.
75. **felicitate**] made happy
76. S.D. **Places a coronet on her head**] Ed. See note I,i,31.
76. S.D. **Aside**] Pope. Not in Q, F.
78. **ponderous**] heavy
81. **validity**] value
82. **But**] Q, 88. Not in F, 88
83. **least**] a reference to Cordelia's diminutive size. Cf. also note I,i,199, "*little seeming substance.*"
84. **wine**] Ed. *Vines* (F, 90). (Lines 90-91 omitted in Q.) Wine = red, contrasting with white = milk. Lear is thinking licentiously about Cordelia's wedding night, and the bloodstains on the sheets following intercourse. Cf. III,iv,73-4 note: *Pillicock...loo!* Wine and milk also suit the humors of Cordelia's two suitors: France is *sanguine*: red or "*hot-blooded*" (F, 1505). Burgundy is *phlegmatic* or "*watrish*" (F, 283), his liver "*white as milke*", as Bassanio might describe him in *Merchant of Venice*, III,ii (F, 1432). Theoretically, the part was played by an apprentice in the company rather than the of the Principal Actors, as Edgar was.
85. **Strive interest**] Ed. Strive to be interest. (F, 91). Not in Q. To have a share of. Lear suggests that Cordelia's suitors are motivated by profit alone. See Furness, p, 15.

86. **opulent]** rich

86. **Speak]** *speake*. F, 92. Not in Q.

87. S.D. **Kneels]** Ed. Not in Q, F. The next time Cordelia kneels before her father is in IV,vi,57. See note IV, vi,58, S.D. "*Lear kneels*."

87. **Nothing]** Ironically, Edmund uses the same word to describe the letter he forges to deceive his father in the next scene. (See note I,ii,31, "*Nothing*.") Thus, the whole tragedy is literally over "*nothing*." It must come as no surprise to Lear that Cordelia would engage him in philosophy. Under different circumstances, he probably would have delighted in philoso-phizing with her about the epistemology of love. In fact, he tries to cheer her up in the final scene, as they are being led away to prison, with happy memories of the times they spent laughing at "*gilded Butterflies*" (F, 2953), and debating different schools of classical philosophy: "*And wee'l weare out / In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones, / That ebbe and flow by th'Moone*." (F, 2956-59). (See note V,i,16, "*mystery of things*.") Philosophy is a subject near and dear to Lear himself, as we see when he pulls "poor Tom" aside in IV,iv to discuss the "*cause of Thunder*" (F, 1933), presumably thinking him a follower of Diogenes of Sinope. (See note III,iv,159, "*noble philosopher*.")

It can take children many years to recognize that the world does not revolve around themselves, and that their parents have feelings and needs of their own. There is no question that Cordelia is grossly insensitive to the despair her father is feeling at this moment, something she begs his forgiveness for in IV,vi, "*O looke vpon me Sir,/ And hold your hand in benediction o're me*" (F, 2810-12). When interpreting the character's motivation, bear in mind that *King Lear* is a cautionary tale against the effects of anger and uncontrolled emotion. Within the narrative structure of the play, Cordelia's response not does appear as merely self-willed and obstinate, as Goneril describes it when she says, "*You haue obedience scanted*" (F, 304). Her words are measured by reason. She acts rationally and virtuously, just as the King of France does in the face of Lear's violent rage. Her behavior accords with the Stoics ideal of *apatheia*. "Nearly all the schools and disciplines of the ancient world had their own word for [apatheia]. The Buddhists called it *upekkha*... The Muslims spoke of *aslama*. The Hebrews, *hishtavut*. The second book of the Bhagavad Gita, the epic poem of the warrior Arjuna, speaks of *samatvam*, an "evenness of mind—a peace that is ever the same." The Greeks had *euthymia* and *hesychia*. The Epicureans, *ataraxia*. The Christians and Romans, *aequanimitas*. In fact, the last word Marcus Aurelius heard from his dying stepfather, Antoninus, was *aequanimitas*. Equanimity. *Stillness*." ("Daily Stoic Emails")

89. **Nothing]** F, 95. Not in Q,

90. S.D. **Rising]** Ed. Not in Q, F. A menacing gesture intended to intimidate her. It also gives dramatic heft to the word "*nothing*".

90. **Nothing]** F, 96. *How, nothing can come of nothing*, (Q, 93).

93. **my bond]** my duty as a daughter

94. **How? How, Cordelia]** F, 100. *Goe to, goe to*, (Q, 100).

96. **begot]** fathered

96. **bred]** reared, brought up. Cf. I,i,8

101. **take my plight]** accept my wedding vow. The word "*plight*" has a double meaning because

the roles of the King of France and Edgar are played by the same actor. The latter is soon to find himself sharing Cordelia's *plight*. He too is banished by his father.

104. **To love my father all]** Q, 111. Not in F.

108. **Let it be so]** F, 115. *Well, let it be so,* (Q, 115).

110. **mysteries]** secret rites

109. **Hecate]** a Greek goddess of the lower world, and patroness of magic and witchcraft. She killed the giant Clytius during the Gigantomachy, the battle fought between the Giants and the Olympian gods for supremacy of the cosmos. Shakespeare may have become acquainted with Hecate in Edmund Spenser's *The Fairie Queene* (See Jessica Dell, "Divided They Fall: (De)constructing the Triple Hecate in Spenser's Cantos of Mutabilitie"). Hecate is the first of many Greek and Roman gods alluded to in the play in order to avoid the players' risk of being accused of heresy. *Lear* was performed for James I on Saint Stephen's Day in 1606, a few months after a censorship law was passed by the English Parliament, the '*Acte to retain Abuses of Players*'. The new law, enforced by George Buck, "shows the influence of parliamentary puritans in promoting legislation which banned from the stage the more familiar use of 'the holy Name of God or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghost or of the Trinity'". Janet Clare, *Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority: Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*, p. 124.

111. **operation]** astrological influence

114. **Propinquity]** close relationship

117. **generation]** children



Figure 46. Jupiter castrates Saturn eating his children. French, Anonymous, c. 1501. Jupiter's castration of Saturnus is combined with Saturnus' (Cronus') eating of his children.

117. **messes]** portions of food. In Greek mythology, the god Cronus (Saturn in Roman myth) castrated his father Uranus and devoured his children. [Figure 46.]

118. **to my bosom]** (F, 125) Not in Q.

120. S.D. **Kent steps between them]** Not in Q, F.

122. **dragon]** A red dragon is probably Lear's coat of arms, which the audience can see blazoned on the tabards of his knights. "The proud and ancient battle standard of the Welsh is The Red Dragon (*Y Ddraig Goch*) and consists of a red dragon, passant (standing with one foot raised), on a green and white background." (The Red Dragon of Wales, Ben Johnson.) It is supposed to be the battle standard of King Arthur.



Figure 47. The Dragon Devouring the Companions of Cadmus, 1588, Hendrick Goltzius, Netherlandish, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

123. **set my rest**] stake my all. The idiom is taken from the game of **primero**, a gambling card game.
124. S.D. **To Cordelia**] Not in Q, F.
124. S.D. **She rises and steps back**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
225. S.D. **To Kent**] Not in Q, F.
126. **Who stirs**] Lear calls for action from his attendants, who are all too dumbfounded to move. Edmund jumps at the opportunity, and fetches France and Burgundy. He impresses us as being a man of action.
126. S.D. **Exit Edmund**] Ed. Not in F or Q.
131. **Preeminence**] high status
133. **reservation**] “The word is a legal term, and means the action or fact of reserving (for oneself or another) some right, power or privilege” (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p.11).



Figure 48. The Meeting of Henry VIII and the Emperor Maximilian I circa 1513.

133. **hundred knights**] “The corps formed as the Troop of Gentlemen in 1509 by King Henry VIII served to act as a mounted escort, armed with spear and lance to protect the sovereign, in battle or elsewhere. Henry decided to have “this new and sumptuous Troop of Gentlemen composed of cadets of noble families and the highest order of gentry as his personal Body Guard or ‘Nearest Guard’, cadets being the younger sons of nobles.” [See Figure 48.]
136. **th’addition**] titles, honors
136. **sway**] control
139. **‘coronet’**] Inverted commas, Ed. Not in Coronet (Q, 147) Coronet (F, 147). Lear cynically relinquishes his own golden imperial crown. As the Fool later tells him, “*thou had'st little wit in thy bald crowne, when thou gau'st thy golden one away*” (F, 677-8).
139. S.D. **Gives Albany his imperial crown**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear does not like the duke of Cornwall. See F, 4-5. He ridicules his “*fiery*” disposition in II,iv,92.
144. **fork**] arrowhead
145. **unmanly**] Ed. *unmannerly* (Q, 155); *unmannerly* (F,154). “Not having or demonstrating qualities traditionally associated with men, such as courage, fortitude, self-control, etc.; unbecoming or inappropriate to a man; unmasculine, effeminate” (*OED*). Compare “*This is in thee a Nature but infected,/ A poore vnmanly Melancholly sprung / From change of future*” (*Timon of Athens*, F, 1823-25). Cf. also: *H6. F, 209; H8. F, 575; Tim. F, 1824; Hml. F, 276*. Kent’s masculine ethos, like Lear’s, is the driving force of the character, not his manners. He refers to his **manhood** getting the better of him (II,iv,41), “*Having more man than wit about me*” F, 1318), as does Oswald when he tells Cornwall in II,ii,116 that he “*put upon him such a deal of man.*” (F, 1196).
149. **Reserve thy state**] Retain some of your power.
154. **Reverb**] reverberate

155. **a]** Q, 166. Not in F.
156. **wage]** stake, make war
157. **the]** Q, 168. Not in F.
160. **Apollo]** A deity in both Greek and Roman religions. See [Wikipedia](#)
161. **O]** (F, 175). Not in Q.
161. **vassal]** wretched slave
161. **miscreant]** scoundrel
161. S.D. ***Laying his hand upon his sword]*** Rowe. Not in Q, F. A menacing gesture of violence. Compare III,vii,32,S.D., *Cornwall lays his hand on his sword.*
162. **Alb]** Ed. *Alb. Cor.* (F, 176). Not in Q. The dual dialogue in the Folio implies a like-mindedness between the dukes of Albany and Cornwall. As we come to see I,iv, the former is a conciliatory character who wants to do the right thing. The Duke of Cornwall proves weak and passive. He dares not oppose his domineering wife let alone the enraged king.
162. **Dear sir, forbear!]** F. Not in
163. **Do]** *Doe*, (Q, 176). Not in F.
165. **Revoke]** Take back, cancel
166. **vent clamor]** make noise
167. **recreant]** (F, 181). Not in Q. traitor
173. **potency]** Lear is referring explicitly to his authority and power as a king. It is implicit that he is taking Kent's defiance as a direct challenge to his manhood.
173. **make]** Q2 (186). *made* (Q, 186). *made* (F, 186). prove, test the truth of. The present tense of Q2 has more immediacy than the past tense of the First Quarto and First Folio. Lear is saying that for daring to challenge his power, he is going to prove to Kent how **potent** he is by banishing him from the kingdom. Furness quotes Moberly: "Shakespeare ingeniously makes Lear forget that he is giving up his power on that very day, and pronounce a sentence on Kent to take effect in ten days." *New Variorum Edition*, p. 26.
178. **trunk]** body
179. **Jupiter]** also referred to as Jove (II,iv,225), is the god of the sky and thunder and king of the gods in ancient Roman religion and mythology. He is known as Zeus in Greek mythology. [See <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/105466/the-battle-between-the-gods-and-the-giants> Figure 128.]
181. **Fare thee well]** (F, 194). *Why fare thee well* (Q, 194).
183. S.D. ***To Cordelia]*** Hanmer. Not in Q, F.
185. S.D. ***To Goneril and Regan]*** Hanmer. Not in Q, F.
185. **large speeches]** grand words
188. S.D. ***Exit]*** F, 201. Not in Q.
188. S.D. ***Flourish]*** F, 202. Not in Q. Trumpet fanfare
188. S.D. ***Re-enter Gloucester and Edmund, with France and Burgundy]*** Ed. *Enter France, and Burgundie with Gloster.* (Q, 302). *Enter Gloster with France, and Burgundy Attendants.* (F, 303-4). Edmund returns with his father.
189. **France]** There is not a list of acting credits in the quartos and folio indicating that the parts of the King of France and Edgar were played by the same actor. (See note I,ii,124, S.D. "*Enter Edgar.*") However, his doing so explains why Edgar (Lear's godson) is conspicuously absent



in the first scene (which takes place on the same day as I,ii as indicated by the costumes Gloucester and Edmund are wearing), and “*Why the King of Fraunce is so suddenly gone backe*”, leaving “*Monsier la Far*” to act as Marshall during the battle (Q1, 2341.2-2347.9). See also note I,i,101., “*That Lord, whose hand must take my plight*” (F, 108).



Figure 49. Lady Fortune with Reynard the Fox as Pope and Anti-Christ

The reader first sees the actor (who doubles as Edgar in the next scene), at the very top of Fortune’s Wheel. [See Figure 49.] He is splendidly dressed to woo Cordelia, and totally outshines Lear, who looks old and impotent in his outmoded Tudor period apparel with its signature codpiece. The audience is impressed by his superiority over Edmund who serves only as an attendant that nobody of importance in court has ever seen before. The Bastard cuts a fine figure indeed, but his costume pales in comparison to the King of France’s in its richness, sophistication, and as a statement of power. [See Figure 50] France is “the ideal of power and virtue, self-assurance and maturity, certitude and domination” (Joshua Rothman, “[When Men Wanted to Be Virile](#)”).



Figure 50. “King James I of England,” attributed to John de Critz (c. 1605). Museo del Prado.

The character is not only remarkable for the splendid clothes he wears but for his state of mind, his *equanimity*—what the Stoics called *apatheia*. He is not intimidated by Lear’s anger but insists on knowing the reasons why Cordelia was banished before making a decision about marrying her. When he discovers the truth, he is so taken with her virtue that he weds her without a dowry, further infuriating Lear who has lost the ability to reason, so maddened is he by anger. On France’s departure with Cordelia, Regan insults him as being a *roué*, but her lewd taunt rolls off him like water on a duck’s back. (See [note I,i.278, “Gon.”](#)) In Act II, Lear lets it slip that he too thinks France is licentious or “*hot-blooded*” (F,1505), as he calls it.

189. **Burgundy**] The roles of Burgundy and the Captain (F, 2969) commissioned by Edmund to hang Lear and Cordelia in prison might well have been played by the same actor. Shakespeare is a mischievous playwright, and I don’t believe he would have passed up the irony. “Meta-theatricality has been a dimension of drama ever since its invention in the theatre of classical Greece 2,500 years ago. One major purpose of this meta-theatricality was to keep the spectators away from utter involvement or belief in the development of the plot presented.” (Metatheatre)



192. **hath rivell'd**] competed
193. **present dower**] marriage gift
194. **Most**] (F, 210). Not in Q.
196. **tender**] offer, give
199. **aught**] anything
199. **little seeming substance**] diminutive. The line is “metatheatrical,” alluding to the small size of the boy actor playing Cordelia. Note that the Gentleman remarks about the diminished size of the Fool as well. (See note I,vi,68, “*the Foole hath much pined away*” (F, 603).
200. **piec'd**] added, joined
201. **fitly like**] suitably please
203. **Sir**] (Q, 221). Not in F.
204. **owes**] possesses, owns
208. **Election**] choice
210. S.D. **To France**] Pope. Not in Q, F.
211. **stray**] departure
213. **T'avert**] to redirect
216. **best**] (Q, 236). Not in F.
217. **argument**] subject, theme
217. **balm**] comfort
218. **trice**] in a moment
219. **dismantle**] strip away
222. **forevouch'd**] previously promised
- 224-5. **that reason without miracle . . . me**] only a miracle could make me believe
229. **plot**] Ed. *blot* (Q, 249), (F, 249). The gradation ‘vicious blot, murder, foulness’ is not happy as Moberly correctly observes. See Furness, *A New Variorum Edition*, p. 33. Collier conjectures that “*murther, or*” is a corruption of “no other.” He writes, “Murder or murder of the Ff, seems entirely out of place; Cordelia could never contemplate that anybody would suspect her of murder as the ground of her father’s displeasure; she is referring to “vicious blots” and “foulness” in respect to virtue.”
229. **murder or**] (Q, 249). *murther, or* (F, 249). *nor other* (Collier).
233. **still-soliciting**] always begging
235. **Better thou**] (F, 256). *Goe to, goe to*, (Q, 256)
237. **Is it but this**] (F, 258). *Is it no more than this?* (Q, 259).
237. **tardiness in nature**] natural reticence
238. **history**] story
241. **regards**] other considerations
242. **th'entire point**] the essential issue
247. **I am firm**] (F, 269). Not in Q.
250. **respect and fortunes**] status and wealth
257. **kindle**] ignite
257. **inflam'd respect**] passionate admiration
260. **wat'rish**] According to Wright, “Burgundy was the best watered district of France.” (Furness, *A New Variorum Edition*, p. 46). France’s remark might be taken as a veiled insult to the Duke

of Burgundy. In humoral medicine, the four humors corresponded in their natures to earth, air, fire, and water. A person with a phlegmatic disposition was cold and wet like water. Lear suggests the same when he compares the humors of France and Burgundy to “*wine and milk*.” See note I,i,84, “*wine*”.

261. **unpriz'd**] dowerless

267. **benison**] blessing

268. S.D. **Flourish**] (F, 202). Not in Q. Logically, the Flourish served the practical purpose of diverting the audience's attention from the “*creaking throne*” being hoisted from the stage. See Prologue from *Every Man in His Humour*.

268. S.D. **Music**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

268. S.D. **Exeunt Lear, Burgundy, Cornwall, Albany, Gloucester, Edmund, the Gentleman and Attendants**] *Exit Lear and Burgundie*. (Q, 291). *Exeunt*. (F, 291).

277. **professed bosoms**] publicly stated love

*Gonorill. Prescribe not vs our duties?  
Regan. Let your study be to content your Lord,  
Who hath receaued you at Fortunes almes,  
You haue obedience scanted,  
<sup>305</sup> And well are worth the worth that you haue wanted.*

Figure 51. Regan's and Goneril's speeches as read in the First Quarto, 301-305. InternetShakespeareLibrary.

278. **Gon**] *Gonorill*. (Q, 301). *Regn*. (F, 301). [See Figure 51 from Quarto 1, 1608.]

278. **Reg**] *Regan*. (Q, 302). *Gon*. (F, 302). [See Figure 51 from Quarto 1, 1608.]

278. **duties**] duties? Q, 301. *dutie*. (F, 301). Characteristically, Goneril takes moral offense at Cordelia's reproach.



Figure 52. “*Ill-Matched Lovers*”, Quentin Massys, c. 1520-1525, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

278-9. **Let your study be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you**] This line is assigned to Goneril in the First Folio (F, 302-3), and to Regan in the quartos (Q, 302-303). [See Figure 51.] Regan's speeches are characterized by sarcasm, of which this is the first of many examples. The barb is aimed at the King of France who she implies wants to marry her sexually inexperienced sister for her youth and beauty alone. She also implies that Cordelia must learn to service him like a whore. [See Figure 52.] It's one of Regan's snarkiest remarks, and she has a great many. The line must stand on its own to be effective.

279. **At Fortune's alms**] like a beggar. “In medieval and ancient philosophy, the Wheel of Fortune, or *Rota Fortunae*, is a symbol of the capricious nature of Fate. (Wiki.) [See Figure 49.]

280-81. **Gon. You have obedience scanted . . . wanted**] F, 30-4. As part of Regan's speech (Q,

302-304). As part of Goneril's speech. (F, 302-305). This line is a restatement of Goneril's previous words, "Prescribe not us our duties" (Q, 301), which she said to Cordelia in huff of self-righteous indignation. Now, Goneril is strongly disapproving of Regan's prurience, and wants to change the subject back to Cordelia's moral duty. Shakespeare is playing with the idea that the same words can communicate something entirely different depending on the context. The complex syntax of the line has the grim, formal tone of many of Goneril's other speeches, such as "now by my life old fooles are babes again, & must be vs'd with checkes as flatteries, when they are seene abusd" (Q, 522.2-4). (See also F, 716-724.) This exchange between the sisters helps differentiate the two characters from each other dramatically: the elder, a hypocritical, puritanical prude; the other, a sadistic bitch who derives pleasure from inflicting pain and humiliation on others. The two of them sound like two pecking hens when the sentences are divided.

As the audience observed, their lust was aroused by Edmund when he was holding up the map, and both are envious of the pleasures awaiting Cordelia. (Compare note III,vii,20., "Farewell, sweet lord and sister.") Goneril's moral hypocrisy, especially in regard to sex, becomes a major subject in Lear's diatribe in IV,v. (F, 2563-70). This is the first and only time the audience sees her pretending to be shocked by the subject of sex. Her sexual relationship with Oswald is implicit. [See note: I,iii,S.D., with Oswald, her Steward.]

281. **And well are worth the want . . . wanted**] You are well deserving of the want of a dower (nothing) that you have asked for ("nothing").

282. **plighted**] "Plighted has the primary meaning of 'pleated, folded,'" and unfold is a pun on "unpleat" and "reveal"; the statement carries an additional resonance in that plighted can also be used in reference to someone who has pledged her word or her honest, so that Cordelia can be heard to say that her sisters, who have outwardly plighted their truth and love to Lear, have actually pledged instead their cunning" Paul Werstine, *King Lear, Folger Shakespeare Library.*, Simon & Schuster, 2015.

284. S.D. **Flourish**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (p. 94): **flourish**

284. S.D. **Exeunt France and Cordelia**] *Exit France and Cor.* (F, 309). *Exit France & Cord.* (Q, 309).

284. **Soft Music still**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (pp. 146-48): **music.**

284. **my**] (F, 309). Not in Q.

285. **not little**] (F, 310). *not a little* (Q, 310)

290. **not**] (Q, 316). Not in F.



Figure 53. Ruins of forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, where "know yourself" was once said to be inscribed.

293-4. **yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself**] “*Know thyself*” (γνῶθι σεαυτόν) is the first of three Delphic maxims inscribed in the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. [See Figure 53.] “Why should the god advise those consulting him to know themselves? Wasn’t it precisely their lack of knowledge that had led them to him? Perhaps the god was trying to tell us that, in some way or other, knowing oneself is the key to knowing anything at all, and that any inquiry could start only from a condition of self-awareness. Maybe it meant that self-knowledge is not the beginning but rather the end of true wisdom” (Peter T. Struck, *Divination and Human Nature: A Cognitive History of Intuition in Classical Antiquity*, (2016).

295. **rash**] hasty, hot-headed.

297. **long-engraffed**] long ingrained, deeply rooted

298. **the**] (F, 323). Not in Q.

299. **choleric**] ill-tempered

300. **unconstant starts**] unpredictable behavior

303. S.D. ***She takes her by the hand***] Ed. Not in Q. F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (p. 109): **hand**, “Of the many other actions and gestures the most common (locution) are *taking of/by a hand, joining of hands, offering of a hand, laying a hand on a person/sword*” (p. 109). Goneril’s gesture signifies that she and Regan are of the same mind and heart. Here, Shakespeare is setting up a gag in IV,vii,36 when Goneril takes Regan by the hand to *forcibly* keep her from leaving with Edmund before the battle.

**Gon.** Sister, you’ll go with us?

**Reg.** No.

**Gon.** ‘Tis most convenient. Pray you go with us.

*[She takes her by the hand.]*

**Reg.** O, ho! I know the riddle.—I will go.

Lear himself comments on Goneril’s signature gesture in II,iv,190 when he sees her take Regan by the hand, “*Will you take her by the hand?*” (F, 1484). In Act IV, Shakespeare hilariously ridicules the folly of Goneril and Regan by having them each give the same token of their affections to Edmund—a *glove*:

**Gon.** Wear this. Spare speech.

*[Gives him a glove.]*

See note IV,ii,21, S.D., “*Gives him a glove.*” Compare note IV,iv,33, “*Gives him a glove.*”

**Reg:** If you do find him, pray you, give him this—

*[Gives him a glove.]*

And when your mistress hears thus much from you,  
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.

As touched on in my commentary on the action in IV,ii,21, naked and gloved hands are a central motif in *King Lear*. Shakespeare’s father was a glover.

303-04. **Pray let’s hit together**] *pray lets hit together* (Q, 329). *pray you let vs sit together* (F, 328) The important word here is “*hit.*” Her explicit meaning is to “agree together” (*OED*, 17), but it betrays her desire to forcefully strike her father, as with a bat or a stick. In I,vi, the

Fool likens Goneril to “Jug” (F, 737) AKA *Joan*, the original name for Judy—the violent wife of Mr. Punch. [See Figure 96.] In III,vi,47, Goneril appears in Lear’s imagination as a joint-stool for having “kickt” him (Q, 2014.23). See note III,vi,47., S.D. “*Taking the joint-stool Kent is sitting on.*”



Figure 54. Woman wearing breeches and a codpiece. "Histoire de la virilité, 1-l'invention de la virilité de l'Antiquité aux lumières", Paris, Éditions du Seuil, page 208.

308. **i'th'heat**] immediately

308. **Flourish**] Ed. Not in Q, F. In *King Lear*, music or sound effects are used consistently to signal the end of one scene or the beginning of the next.

308. **Exeunt**] (Q, 333); (F, 333).

ACT I, SCENE II] *Scena Secunda* (F, 333). Scene 2 in Quarto.

S.D. **The Earl of Gloucester’s Castle**] Pope *subst.*

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed.

S.D. **Enter Edmund**] Rowe *subst. Enter Bastard.* (F, 334). *Enter Bastard Solus.* (Q, 334). It is inferred by the clothes Edmund is wearing that Act I scene ii occurs on the same day as the last one: they are unchanged. He enters this scene exhilarated by his brilliant debut at court. He was the only courtier to act immediately when Lear ordered France and Burgundy to be summoned; everybody else stood by frozen in shock. He won the approval of the Earl of Kent with his handsome appearance, but most importantly succeeded in arousing the sexual interest of Goneril and Regan, who both acknowledged him during the business with the map. The two duchesses have the right to appoint whoever they want to court, and one or both are certain to require his presence in England. Edmund has effectively checked the move of his father to send him out of the county. It is under these auspicious circumstances that he hatches his plan to destroy Edgar.

S.D. **with a letter**] Pope, *subst.* Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (p. 131): **letter**: a widely used property and plot device cited in over 400 directions, typically *enter with a letter*. Compare note IV,vii,40., S.D. “*Giving him Goneril’s letter.*”

1. **Nature**] The idea of natural selection or “survival of the fittest” has been with us long before Darwin.

“Lucretius' poem *De rerum natura* provides the best surviving explanation of the ideas of the Greek Epicurean philosophers. It describes the development of the cosmos, the Earth, living things, and human society through purely naturalistic mechanisms,



without any reference to supernatural involvement. *De rerum natura* would influence the cosmological and evolutionary speculations of philosophers and scientists during and after the Renaissance. This view was in strong contrast with the views of Roman philosophers of the Stoic school such as Cicero, Seneca the Younger (c. 4 BC – AD 65), and Pliny the Elder (23 – 79 AD) who had a strongly teleological view of the natural world that influenced Christian theology. Cicero reports that the peripatetic and Stoic view of nature as an agency concerned most basically with producing life ‘best fitted for survival’ was taken for granted among the Hellenistic elite.” (History of evolutionary thought, Wiki.) [See Figure 55.]



Figure 55. Lucretius opens his poem *De rerum natura* by addressing Venus not only as the mother of Rome (Aeneadam genetrix) but also as the veritable mother of nature (Alma Venus).

Edmund’s speech addresses the question determinism, the ancient debate of “nature vs. nurture.” “Plato proposed that the origins of structure and function lie in the organism’s nature whereas Aristotle proposed that they lie in its nurture. This nature/nurture dichotomy and the emphasis on the origins question has had a powerful effect on our thinking about development right into modern times.” (“The Biological Implausibility of the Nature-Nurture Dichotomy & What It Means for the Study of Infancy,” David J. Lewkowicz, 2011. If one believes that “all events, including human action, are ultimately determined by causes external to the will,”<sup>[17]</sup> it might be thought that Edmund’s deeds are “determined” by his being born a bastard. The same might be asked of Oswald. Were the choices he made to advance himself in society “determined” by his being born poor, a fact the disguised Earl of Kent rubs unmercifully in the lad’s face in II,ii (F, 1075-1203)? See note I,iii,S.D., “Steward. What does Edmund mean at the end of the play when he says, “*some good I meane to do / Despight of mine owne Nature*” (F, 3200-01). Is Edmund what forensic psychologist Robert Hare might clinically term a psychopath, a person who by nature is incapable of feeling empathy or remorse?

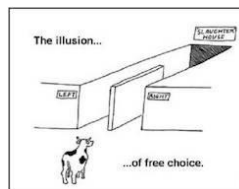


Figure 56. What is Determinism?

The idea that some humans are inherent free riders without moral scruple seems to have become controversial only in the postmodern era, when it has become fashionable to deny that any of us have a “nature” at all. For as long as humans have roamed the Earth, we have noticed that there are people who seem to be what psychiatrist Adolf Guggenbühl-Craig called “emptied souls.”<sup>17</sup> One of Aristotle’s students, Theophrastus, was probably the first to write about them, calling them “the unscrupulous.”<sup>18</sup> These are people who lack the ordinary connections that bind us all



and lack the inhibitions that those connections impose. They are, to over simplify, people without empathy or conscience. (Kent A. Kiehl and Morris B. Hoffman, “The Criminal Psychopath: History, Neuroscience, Treatment, and Economics”, 2011.)

3. **in the plague of custom]** condemned by the rules of society
4. **curiosity]** squeamishness, false delicacy, over-particularity or fastidiousness.
4. **deprive me]** debar me, keep me out of my rights.
5. **For that]** because.
6. **Lag of]** behind in years.
6. **base]** Bastards were sometimes called “base sons.”
7. **dimensions]** proportions. Edmund is saying that his physical shape is just as good as Edgar’s, who was born in wedlock.
7. **compact]** put together, made
8. **generous]** gallant, high-spirited, courageous, befitting a person of noble birth.
8. **as true]** well-proportioned. Compare *Shake-speares Sonnets* (Quarto I, 1609), 62, “Me thinks no face so gracious is as mine, / No shape so *true*,” (Q1, 920-1).
9. **honest]** chaste.
9. **issue]** child
12. **More composition]** a fuller mixture.
12. **fierce quality]** more energetic quality
14. **fops]** foolish silly persons
19. **speed]** prosper
21. **to th’]** (F, 355). *tooth’* (Q, 355). *Top the* Capell. See elliptical uses of “to” (*OED*, I,1,(c)). British linguist David Crystal writes in a personal communication on 9 July 20: “This notion of ‘going to’ or ‘blossoming into’ resonates nicely with growing and prospering - contra Capell’s point about a ‘natural introduction’”. See Furness, *A New Variorum Edition*, “top”, p. 45.
22. S.D. **Enter Gloucester]** (Q, 337), (F,337).



Figure 57. Portrait of Thomas More wearing bow spectacles. Flemish School, circa 16th century. Musee Granet, France.

22. S.D. **wearing spectacles]** Ed. Not in Q, F. He is probably wearing bow rather than rivet spectacles, such as those in Figure 63. See note I,i,S.D., “wearing spectacles.” Like Edmund, he is wearing the same costume as before, signifying that scene ii is occurring the same day, now night time.
24. **Prescrib’d]** limited, restricted, confined within bounds
25. **Confin’d to exhibition]** restricted to an allowance.
26. **Upon the gad]** suddenly, as if pricked by a gad or goad.

27. S.D. **Putting up the letter**] Rowe. Not in Q, F.
28. **earnestly**] eagerly
28. **put up**] put away
31. **Nothing**] Compare I,i,87, “*Nothing.*” Shakespeare’s use of irony is the principal stylistic feature of the play. In *De rerum natura*, Lucretius dedicates time to exploring the axiom that nothing can be produced from nothing, and that nothing can be reduced to nothing (*Nil fieri ex nihilo, in nihilum nil posse reverti*). The word “nothing” is used 34 times in *King Lear*.
32. **terrible dispatch**] fearful haste.



Figure 58. Portrait of Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, by Hans Eworth, 1563.

33. **pocket**] In “Hands Deep in History: Pockets in Men and Women's Dress in Western Europe, c. 1480–1630” Rebecca Unsworth, writes that “the sixteenth century saw the rise of new codes of manners and civility, as expressed in conduct manuals. Not only was there less shame in removing an item from a pocket rather than a codpiece, but pockets could also be used to hide things from view” (p.160). She notes that in *Materializing Gender in Early Modern England*, “Will Fisher argues that certain accessories and aspects of appearance in the early modern period — handkerchiefs, codpieces, beards and hair — were prostheses, integral yet detachable attachments to the body, which both shaped and compensated for a lack in the original body. Fisher sees these features as not only outwardly marking a person's gender identity, but as actively constituting it. Pockets are not able to mould one's gender in the same way” (p. 158). Edgar goes through Oswald’s “pockets” after he kills him. See note IV,v,253, “*pockets.*”



Figure 59. Men’s hose worn skin-tight in the fifteen century was described as being “so closely fitted that they showed almost all their muscles, as if they were completely naked.” Agostina Veneziano, 1517, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Purses are conspicuously absent in portraits of the James I after his coronation in 1603, such as that worn by Thomas Howard in a painting from 1563 by Hans Eworth. [See Figure 58.] Presumably, they had ceased to be fashionable as an accessory to men’s clothes except as expensive novelty item, like the frog-shaped purse made from yellow taffeta in the collection of The Royal Trust. “James VI of Scotland and I of England, was notoriously neglectful of his own appearance, despite being shown wearing a striking pale blue doublet in a portrait miniature by Nicholas Hilliard, c.1609–15. He did, however, expect his courtiers to promote

the Stuart court as a centre of culture and fashion to the rest of Europe . . . [Courtiers] could even be driven to bankruptcy in their pursuit of fashion.” (“The Sartorial styles of Kings and Queens Revealed”, [The Royal Collection Trust](#)).

35. **spectacles**] Shakespeare is using them to symbolize the artificial nature of the character’s sight.

The 15th century marks a crucial time in the development of spectacles. By the time of Johann Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press around 1450, glasses were already used by artisans as well as monks and other religious scholars. But once books became available to everyone, the demand and subsequent popularity of spectacles rose exponentially. By the early 16th century, spectacle peddlers who were selling glasses became a common sight on the streets and throughout the countryside of Western Europe. . . . After 1665, demand also increased more dramatically when the first newspaper, the *London Gazette*, appeared. . . . From the beginning, spectacles failed to remain in position and stay on. As noted during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, they were of the riveted type which was normally hand-held. These spectacles evolved into the type with a more comfortable arched bridge known as bow specs. Following this, the ultra-rare slit-bridge spectacles appeared with slits to give some added elasticity to the nose bridge. Then one piece wire (usually copper) frames with round lenses, better known as Nuremberg style nose spectacles, came into fashion, being mass-produced throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century and until the early 19th century. (“Antique Spectacles,” curated by David A. Fleishman M.D.)

36. **pardon me**] excuse me for trying to conceal it.

38. **o’erlooking**] inspection

44. **essay or taste of my virtue**] To take the ‘assay’ of a dish was to taste it. (Muir, *The Cambridge Shakespeare Edition*, p.25.)

44. S.D. **Gives him the letter**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

45. S.D. **Reads**] Q (370). F (382) reads.

- 45-6. **This policy and reverence of age**] the policy of reverencing age

46. **bitter**] Whiter, in an unpublished note, points out that the word was suggested by *taste* (44), and that it suggests *relish*. (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 25.)

- 46-7. **best of our times**] best years of our lives.

48. **relish**] appreciate

- 48-9. **to find an idle . . . tyranny**] I begin to feel that to be thus oppressed by an aged and tyrannical father is nothing but a state of vain and foolish servitude. (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 25-6.)

- 49-50. **who sways not as it hath . . . suffer’d]** who is able to rule not by its strength but by our tameness in putting up with it.

59. **casement**] casement window. A casement window is hinged on one side and swings outward to the left or right. Compare *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, III.i, “*Why then may you leaue a casement of the great / chamber window (where we play) open, and the Moone / may shine in at the casement.*” (F, 867-69). (See note II,i,19, S.D., *Edgar descends from above with a rope.*)



Figure 60. Tudor casement windows at The Folk of Gloucester,.

59. **closet**] private apartment (*OED* 1b)
60. **character**] handwriting
61. **durst**] would, dare
62. **fain**] rather
63. S.D. ***Readjusting his spectacles***] Ed. Not in Q, F. Perch-style, bow spectacles are not as easily worn as the “over the ear” innovation later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They present an “obstacle” for the actor who needs to be constantly readjusting them to order to see, and prevent them from falling off his nose. “Obstacles are anything and everything that get in the way of your objectives,” writes Los Angeles acting teacher Ivana Chubbuck. (*Backstage*). Gloucester’s objective is to see. [Compare note III,vi,7.S.D., “*Gloucester readjusts his spectacles.*”]
66. **sounded**] a nautical metaphor
68. **perfect age**] adult
68. **declin’d**] past their prime
69. **as ward to the son**] under the guardianship of
72. **Abhorred**] detestable
72. **detested**] detestable
- 77-78. **you should run a certain course**] you would be adopting a safe plan.
78. **where**] whereas
80. **gap**] breach
81. **pawn**] stake
82. **feel**] test.
83. **pretence of danger**] dangerous intention.
- 86-7. **auricular assurance**] hearing for yourself
- 92-3. **wind me into him**] A nautical term. “To turn (a vessel) about or in some particular direction (*OED*. 8)
93. **Frame**] fashion, manage
94. **unstate myself**] forfeit my rank and fortune
94. **to be in a due resolution**] to be convinced of his innocence, or even of his guilt, and so freed from uncertainty.
94. S.D. ***Gives him back the letter***] Ed. Not in Q, F. Theoretically, when Edgar looks up from his book, he spots Edmund studying the letter, and asks, “*What serious contemplation are you in?*” (F, 467-8).
95. **presently**] at once
95. **convey**] manage

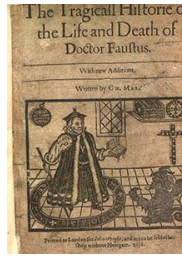


Figure 61. *Doctor Faustus conjuring Mephistopheles from a trap door on the Frontispiece of the 1631 edition of Marlowe's play.*

97. **late**] A total eclipse of the sun occurred on Wednesday 12 October 1605, which was preceded by a partial eclipse of the moon on September 27th in the same year. Comets appeared in England throughout Shakespeare's lifetime. According to Frances W. Yates in her book entitled *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, "the dominant philosophy of the Elizabethan age was the occult philosophy'. Other books by Yates in the same line are *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* and *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*. Yates unequivocally demonstrates the pervasive influence of occult philosophy in the Renaissance, by revealing that practically all the great figures of the Renaissance were aware of and actively interested in Hermeticism, Cabala, magic and Neoplatonic philosophy. In Yates' view, this occult philosophy was even more of a driving force in the Renaissance than the rational Humanism of Erasmus" (Julian Scott, *The Occult Philosophy in the English Renaissance*). King James I himself was a deeply superstitious man, obsessed with witchcraft and the occult. He published a dissertation 1597 titled *Daemonologie* "in the form of a Socratic dialogue for the purpose of making arguments and comparisons between magic, sorcery and witchcraft," which included a classification of demons. This book is believed to be one of the main sources used by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*. See note II,i,39, "wicked charms."



Figure 62. *John Dee was an Anglo-Welsh mathematician, astronomer, astrologer and occult philosopher, and an advisor to Queen Elizabeth I.*

- 98-99. **can reason it thus and thus**] can offer explanations of eclipses  
99. **yet Nature finds itself scourg'd**] yet the natural world of man is afflicted by the disasters that follow.  
100. **falls off**] revolts.  
101. **mutinies**] riots, insurrections.  
104. **falls from bias of nature**] goes against natural instincts. The metaphor is from bowls.  
106. **hollowness**] falseness, insincerity  
107. **disquietly**] unquietly  
110. S.D. *Exit*] (F, 446). Not in Q.  
111. **foppery**] stupidity

112. **surfeits**] natural evil results, as indigestion follows from over-eating.
114. **on**] by
115. **treachers**] traitors
- 115-16. **spherical predominance**] because a particular planet was most powerful at the hour of our birth. See II,i,39 note.
118. **divine thrusting on**] supernatural impelling or incitement (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*).
119. **whoremaster**] lecherous
119. **goatish**] lascivious
120. **compounded**] had sex with
121. **dragon's tail**] conjunction of the waning moon with the sun's orbit (thought to be an evil influence)
- 121-22. **Ursa Major**] a star cluster (Great Bear). Edmund is a Leo, a fire sign.
122. **Tut**] Dyce. *Fut*, (Q, 460). Not in F. See Furness, p.54. "**Tut** is an ejaculation (often reduplicated) expressing impatience or dissatisfaction with a statement, notion, or proceeding, or contemptuously dismissing it. (The Scottish *toot*, *toots*, expresses mild expostulation.) (*OED*, a.)
124. **bastardizing**] extra-marital conception.
124. S.D. **Enter Edgar**] (Q, 462). Not in F. (See note EDGAR | KING OF FRANCE in the *Dramatis Personae*.) As the play is published in the quartos and folio, the stature of Edgar is not adequately dramatized to establish the character as the deuteragonist in the story. Obviously, Edgar's reversal of fortune (*peripeteia*) from lord to bedlam beggar will be less effective if he is not seen at the top of Fortune's Wheel. [See Figure 49.] The title of the play reads: *M. William Shake-speare: HIS True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King LEAR and his three Daughters. With the vnfortunate life of Edgar, sonne and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his sullen and assumed humor of TOM of Bedlam.*

Though we are *told* in the narrative that Edgar is Gloucester's "*legitimate*" heir (F, 350), and "*a Brother Noble, / Whose nature is so farre from doing harmes, / That he suspects none* (F, 499-501), the character *does* nothing to make him likable to Shakespeare's mostly male audience. On the contrary, as read in the quartos and Folio, the character comes across as a dupe. When Edgar first takes the stage in I,ii, he is greeted by laughter following a snide joke by Edmund, "*my Cue is villanous Melancholly, with a sighe like Tom 'Bedlam*" (F, 464-5). In this scene, Shakespeare gives him only 30 lines of dialogue. When Edmund tells him of a deadly plot against him, he trusts his brother's warning, and takes his advice. A macho man, like Lear or Kent, would have flown into a violent rage, and rashly stormed off to defend his innocence. Edgar seems to have no balls.

He next appears in II,i where he speaks one line (F, 958), and shows no skill at sword play, furthering the impression that he is a *girlie man*. He then takes flight from the castle, and disguises himself as a bedlam beggar, "*the basest, and most poorest shape / That euer penury in contempt of man, / Brought neere to beast.*" (F, 1258-1260). It is not until he vanquishes Edmund in the final scene of the play that he is recognized as a noble character: "*Me thought*



*thy very gate did prophesie / A Royall Noblenesse,*” says Albany (F, 3137-38). It is impossible to believe that the character has come “*full circle*” (F, 3136), as Edmund says at the end of the play, because he never appears at the top of Fortune’s Wheel.

The character of Edgar embodies the ideals of a Stoic. “If you want to determine the nature of anything, entrust it to time: when the sea is stormy, you can see nothing clearly,” writes Seneca in his widely read self-help book for men and boys, *De Ira (On Anger)*. “Anger is a temporary madness . . . The greatest remedy for anger is delay.” One of the most celebrated physicians and medical researchers of the ancient world, Galen of Pergamon, wrote a book about mental illness, called *On Passions and Errors of the Soul*. “The passion considered most dangerous by Galen and other ancient writers is anger” (Donald J. Roberston). As Marcus Aurelius wrote, “Keep this thought handy when you feel a fit of rage coming on—it isn’t manly to be enraged. Rather, gentleness and civility are more human, and therefore manlier. A real man doesn’t give way to anger and discontent, and such a person has strength, courage, and endurance—unlike the angry and complaining. The nearer a man comes to a calm mind, the closer he is to strength.” (*The Thoughts of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, trans George Long).

The German literary critic Georg Gottfried Gervinus rightly notes, “To play Edgar requires a man to be ‘*every inch an actor.*’ He changes at least six different times.” (qu. Furness p.459.) The actor must possess the mimetic skills of an Alec Guinness, who famously played eight separate characters in the classic British black comedy *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. He needs to convincingly transform himself from the *King of France* into *Edgar*, into a *bedlam beggar*, into a *domestic servant*, into a *farmer from Dover*, into a *country bumpkin*, and into a *knight* whose conservative English “*tongue some say of breeding breathes*” (F, 3099). Following Edgar’s address to the audience in II,iii (F, 1251-1272), it is not until the actor reveals his “true” identity to Edmund in the final scene (F, 3130) that we hear his “real” voice again.



**Video 5. Video clip from *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Alec Guinness as Lady Agatha, the suffragette, one of eight different characters he plays in this classic British black comedy. Readers of *The Guardian* rank his performance #1 among the ten best actor transformations of all time.**

The actor personifies one of the most important concepts of the play: the idea that there is no such a thing as a “real” person or a “real” self. Edgar is only able to survive the cruelty of fortune by improvisation, by constantly adapting to change. Who we *are* is nothing but make believe: “*All the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women, meere Players*” (*As You Like It*, F, 1118-19). Men, as we see them, are “walking shadows,” as in Plato’s allegory of the cave. [See Figure 70.] The King of France and Edgar and mad Tom are one Platonic Form. They represent imperfect copies of the human “Form,” just as Cordelia and the Fool are imperfect copies of *agape*: love. (See note I,iv,87 S.D. “*Enter Fool.*”) [See video 12, “David Sedley: Plato’s Theory of Forms.”]



Figure 63. Plato's Allegory of the cave, 1604, Engraving of Jan Sanraedam (1565-1607) after a painting of Cornelis Corneliszoon van Haarlem (1562-1638). British Museum.

124. S.D. *reading on a book*] Ed. Not in Q, F. There are many examples where characters enter “*reading*” cited in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (pp. 176-177), notably “*Enter Hamlet reading on a Book*” (*Hamlet*, F,1203). Edgar’s “*reading on a book*” is a “signifier” of the character’s intellect.



Figure 64. Portrait of an Unknown Young Man with a Book, Bronzino, 1530s, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.

In contrast to Edmund, who is formally attired in the clothes he wore in the scene before, Edgar is (theoretically) casually dressed, perhaps even in a state of *undress* as in the miniature of *A Man Against a Background of Flames* by Isaac Oliver. [See Figure 64.] (See also *What You Will*, by John Marston. I,i,21, S.D., “*Enter Giacomo, unbraced, and careless dressed*”; III,i,S.D, “*Enter Francisco, half-dressed, in his black doublet and round cap.*” See also *Hamlet*. II,i, “*Lord Hamlet with his doublet all vnbrac'd*” (F, 974). Edgar is not wearing a sword. (See note I,ii,158. “*go arm 'd.*”) Edgar’s costume, like the book he is reading, reinforces the idea that the character is more interested in philosophy than his outward appearance. The audience has already seen the actor in far richer clothes than Edmund’s, establishing him dramatically (i.e., nonverbally), as the superior character. In fact, Edmund is not even a blip on the radar when the King of France is presented to Lear.



Figure 65. Unknown Man, ca. 1600 attributed to Nicholas Hilliard by the V&A.

125. *pat he comes*] Unless Edgar is flown in on a crane, Edmund is not alluding to the mechane or *deus ex machina* associated with the tragedies of Euripides. He is mocking the formulaic (i.e., predictable) style of Aristophanes’ plays, specifically the *exodos*. (See G.M.Sifakis, “The Structure of Aristophanic Comedy,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 112, 1992, 123-142.) Edgar is so preoccupied “*reading on a book,*” that he is unaware of his brother’s presence.

Edmund’s snide remark is noteworthy for what it tells us about the character. He is repre-

senting himself as the “comic hero” of an “old comedy”: villainous, manipulative, and very convincing. (See note I,ii,125-6, “old comedy.”) Edmund is the “ironical man” of Aristotle and Horace who makes fun for his own amusement like a “free man.” (See *Aristotle, Horace, and the Ironic Man*, Zoja Pavlovskis, *Classical Philology*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (Jan., 1968), pp. 22-41, The University of Chicago Press). Edmund’s disapproval of Aristophanes’ and Shakespeare’s formulaic writing styles is a technique of **metatheatre**. Compare the contrived (“pat”) entrance of Edgar disguised as poor Tom in III,iv,44.S.D., “*Enter Edgar*,” and the equally contrived entrance of Gloucester in III,iv.104., “*Enter Gloucester*.” The most contrived entrance in the play is Lear’s in the final scene, with Cordelia dead in his arms, after Albany loudly proclaims, “*All Friends shall / Taste the wages of their vertue, and all Foes / The cup of their deservings*” (F, 3274-76). (See note V,i, 258-266. “*You lords and noble friends . . . O, see, see!*”]

125. **catastrophe**] “A final event; a conclusion generally unhappy” (Johnson); a disastrous end, finish-up, conclusion, upshot; overthrow, ruin, calamitous fate. (*OED*, **2.a.**) Shakespeare’s use of the word is ironic, as the *agon* of the play spells “catastrophe” for Edmund.
- 125-26. **old comedy**] Athenian comedy is conventionally divided into three periods: Old Comedy (in the form of the eleven surviving plays of *Aristophanes*), Middle Comedy, and New Comedy. “All the Old Comedy writers worked within a highly structured format.”
126. **cue**] “The concluding word or words of a speech in a play, serving as a signal or direction to another actor to enter, or begin his speech.” (*OED*, **1.a.**) Compare *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, V,i, “*Deceiuing me, / Is Thisbies cue; she is to enter*,” (F, 1986-7). The word draws attention to Edmund’s part as an actor. See **metatheatre**.
127. **Tom o’ Bedlam**] A term to describe beggars and vagrants assumed to be former inmates of the **Bethlem Royal Hospital** (Bedlam). Edmund is mocking their mendicancy. The audience knows from the title of the play that Edgar is driven to assume the form of Tom of Bedlam. [See Figure 30.]



Figure 66. Guidonian hand.

128. **divisions**] In music, division (also called diminution or coloration) refers to a type of ornamentation or variation common in 16th- and 17th-century music in which each note of a melodic line is “divided” into several shorter, faster-moving notes. See Wiki.
128. **Fa, sol, la, mi**] Edmund is contemptuously mocking the suffering of Tom o’ Bedlams’, who use singing as a technique for begging. Here, he is instructing “poor Tom” in solfège to hone his skills as a mendicant.



Video 6. Professor William Mahrt demonstrates the solfège technique using the Guidonian hand.

128. **Demonstrating the solfège technique on his hand**] Ed. Not in Q. F. The Guidonian hand was a mnemonic device used to assist singers in learning to sight-sing. [Figure 66.] Some form of the device may have been used by Guido of Arezzo, a medieval music theorist who wrote a number of treatises, including one instructing singers in sightreading.”
129. **serious contemplation**] Theoretically, Edgar sees Edmund contemplating the letter written to undo him (hence the necessity of Gloucester’s giving it back to him). Edgar’s line is unintentionally ironic, and the audience will laugh as they do when Albany greets Regan before the battle in IV,vii,20, “*Our very louing Sister, well be-met*” (F, 2865). In an ironic reversal of circumstances, Edmund enters in IV,vii,50 to discover Albany holding the letter Edgar intercepts from Goneril proving him of treason.
- 131-2. **this other day**] the other day
134. **succeed**] turn out
138. **diffidences**] suspicions, cases of mutual distrust.
- 138-39. **dissipation of cohorts**] i.e. the dissolution of Lear’s entourage.
140. **sectary astronomical**] believer in, or student of, astrology.
149. **forbear his presence**] avoid meeting him
150. **qualified**] mitigated
154. **have a continent forbearance**] restrain your feelings, and keep away.
156. **fitly**] opportunely
157. **key**] Logically, the key alludes metatheatrically to a space in the Globe Playhouse. Edgar next appears upon Edmund’s command in II,i, to “*descend*” (F, 949) onto the platform. In my judgement, he makes his entrance from a great **casement** window on the *third* level of the tiring house, which the audience knows is inaccessible without **a key**. See note, II,i,19, S.D. “*descends from above with a rope.*” “**Keys** are used to control access” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 123).
158. **stir abroad**] go out
158. **go arm’d**] *goe arm’d*. (F, 491). Not in Q. Evidently, Edgar is not presenting wearing a sword. See note 124, S.D., “*reading on a book*”.
161. **meaning**] intention
162. **faintly**] euphemistically
163. **image and horror**] horrible reality—the horror which an exact description would fill you with
164. **anon**] soon
165. **Exit Edgar**] (Q. 498). After line 166 *anon*. (F, 497)
169. **practices**] intrigues
171. **All with me’s meet that I can fashion fit**] To me everything is fitting and justifiable that I can utilize for my purposes; the end justifies the means. (Muir, *The Cambridge Shakespeare*

*Edition*, p. 32.)

171. *Trumpets Sound*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

171. S.D. *Exit*] (Q, 504); (F, 504)

ACT I, SCENE III.] Scena Tertia. (F, 505). Scene 3 in Quarto.

S.D. *The Duke of Albany's Palace*] Capell, *subst.*

S.D. *The Platform*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *Enter Goneril*] *Enter Gonerill, and Steward.* (F, 506). Q. *Enter Gonorill and Gentleman.*

(Q, 506). There are no costume directions in the quartos or Folio to indicate how Goneril is dressed. If readers presuppose that Shakespeare's narrative abides by conventions of theater naturalism, the illusion that the play is set in a time before Merlin will be broken if she is wearing fashions from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is now widely established that *King Lear* takes the form of *metatheatre*, where "the boundaries between the play as a work of self-contained art and life are dissolved" (Calderwood, *Shakespearean metadrama*, 1971 p. 4). The Globe Playhouse was located in the district of Southwark, —ground zero in the Puritans' war on vice. Though *puritanism* is non-specific in the play, like the disease of *syphilis*, Goneril's seething indignation at her father's pursuit of pleasure in the forms of hunting, drinking, feasting, camaraderie, music, laughing, etc., would have been implicitly understood by Shakespeare's audience as a sign of puritanism, "the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy." (Henry Mencken).

Theatrical conventions of Shakespeare's era permitted actors to be costumed in fashions of their own time, and the many explicit references to items of Elizabethan clothing in *King Lear* is evidence that they were. What is being dramatized in this scene is the clash between Goneril's strong puritanical moral beliefs and her father's "Epicurisme" (F, 753), as she refers to it. The contrasting ethos of the two characters is represented visually on stage by their manner of dress. Theoretically, she is modestly or simply dressed, in styles that would immediately identify her as a Puritan. (See note I,iii,S.D., "coifed.")



Figure 67. "A Puritan Family, from *Tenor of the Whole Psalms in Four Parts, 1563.*" Courtesy of Meisterdrucke.

So what precisely does it mean to be costumed in "Puritan dress", as Jasper Mayne indicates in *The City Match*: "Enter Dorcas out of her Puritan dresse" (IV,iii, Folger Library). "When you think of Puritan women two images come to mind. One is a woman named Prudence in a black dress with white collar and white headcloth who spends all day praying and the other is a woman "possessed by the devil" screaming as she's being dragged to be burnt at the stake for witch-craft. ("Goody Two Shoes or Witches?")





Figure 68. Nicholas Hilliard's *Unknown Woman of 1602* wears typical Puritan fashion of the early years of the century. Her tall black felt hat with a rounded crown is called a *capotain* and is worn over a linen cap. She wears a black dress and a white stomacher over a chemise with blackwork embroidery trim; her neckline is filled in with a linen partlet.

For the Puritans, one of the ways to display their views was clothing. So, let's take a look at the Puritan attire. But don't get too excited. Structurally, it's absolutely the same as what we see in a non-Puritan attire. Though, the Puritan costumes looked very conservative and modest. If a gown had a low neckline, women wore high-necked smocks and wide collars to cover the skin. It's a myth that Puritans wore black all the time. They wore black on Sundays only. Do you know why they didn't wear black all the time? Because they thought black was too fancy. It was too fancy and should only be saved for Sundays. They usually wore brown or gray. No bright colors, of course. Also, they avoided shiny fabrics and too many decorations. Wool and linen were preferred over silks and satins. But Puritan women of the upper class used 'appropriate' amount of lace and embroidery. Women wore coifs on their heads, but also steeple-crowned hats, which they would wear over their coifs. In general, there were levels of Puritanism." (Puritan clothing in 17th-century Europe). The article is based on a video by Amanda Hallay (11:16).

**S.D. *coifed***] Ed. Not in Q, F. It is important to signal to the audience that time has elapsed since scenes i and ii, which occur on a single day. (See note I,ii.S.D., "*Enter Edmund.*") This is accomplished by Goneril's change of clothes. Her costume is unmistakably puritanical in its high-neckline, sadd colors, and her exposed coif. By logic, we can infer she is dressed formally in the first scene, and wearing a hat as was customary. [See Figure 68.] Regan, in contrast, is no Puritan. Theoretically, she dressed voguishly, perhaps in a low cut dress like Anne of Denmark's or Frances Howard's, if not completely bare-breasted. (See note I,v,12. "*crab's like an apple.*") "Women of the 1600s, from queens to prostitutes, commonly exposed one or both breasts in public and in the popular media of the day, according to a study of fashion, portraits, prints, and thousands of woodcuts from 17th-century ballads." (Jennifer Viegas, "Study: Breast Baring Popular in 1600s". *Discovery News*, 2004.)

**S.D. *Steward***] A Steward is defined as "An official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household expenditure; a major-domo" (*OED*, 1.a). "The lady of the castle was in charge of its daily management and supplies, but naturally, the mundane task of procurement, logistics, and staff management was usually in the hands of the castle **steward** or *seneschal*" (*World History Encyclopedia*).

It is impossible for readers to see how Oswald was originally cast. If he is young and sexually attractive, it will be assumed that his services to "his mistress" extend into the bedroom, as



Regan suggests: “*I know you are of her bosome*” (F, 2413). Why else would Goneril elevate a pretty teenager to a high position in her household if he was not her lover? Just as Edmund uses his handsome outward appearance to rise in court, so Oswald owes his position of Steward to his sexual desirability. Of course, if he is cast as an unattractive middle-aged clown, like *Malvolio*, the Steward to Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, their relationship has completely different connotations.



Figure 69. A 17th Century engraving from England showing the inflating of an animal bladder football.

So too the audience’s understanding of Kent’s visceral hatred of Oswald hinges on the physical beauty of the actor playing the role. Kent’s scorn is so excessive that his motives have to be questioned. Disguised as “*Caius*” (F, 3249), Kent commends himself to the king by telling him he is no cocksucker like Oswald. [See note I,iv,16, “*eate no fish.*”] The show “*of man*” (F, 1196) he displays by tripping and humiliating him proves so much to Lear’s liking that he is immediately hired and rewarded with money. (See note I,iv,79, S.D., “*Kent trips up his heels.*”)

In II,ii, Kent takes Oswald’s words “*if thou lou’st me, tell me*” (F, 1080) as one might an unsavory sexual proposition from a “*Winchester Goose*” (F, 1156). He then berates and beats the boy for being raised a pauper and affecting to be a gentleman. He cites Oswald’s curled hair and clean-shaven face and foppish clothes and not knowing how to wield a sword as proof of his poor pedigree. Going by Queen Gertrude’s reaction to the promises of love spoken by the Player Queen in *Hamlet*, it can be reasoned that Shakespeare’s prurient audience at The Globe Playhouse would have recognized the intensity of Kent’s feelings about Goneril’s household servant as a reflection of insecurity about his own masculinity and sexual desires: “*The lady doth protest too much, methinks*” (*Hamlet*, Q2, 2098). If Oswald is read by the audience as physically undesirable, there will be no undercurrents of sexuality in Kent’s abuse of him. As *Gore Vidal* writes in a personal communication:

[T]he male body as an object of beauty and desire for both sexes was very late coming in a sad Jesus Christ-besotted peasant nation like the US. The first manifestation in a mainline movie was *It Happened One Night* when Clark Gable took off his shirt to reveal no undershirt. Sales of undershirts plummet . . . But no one quite understood what was happening. Beauty and desirability were the province of the female. A man could be handsome but hardly erotic—he was judged by his suit, Borsalino hat, the twinkle in his eye. Then came Tennessee Williams with quite other notions of what the male meant. When Brando appeared in 1947 on stage in a torn sweaty t-shirt the male as erotic object exploded into the slow American consciousness.... Incidentally, from the beginning, the female was celebrated by the likes of C.B. DeMille who may have set the style for the later exhibition of the male which he himself did not exhibit, his males’ bodies looked like refugees from a Turkish bath for alcoholics. In my time in

Hollywood's 50s, male beauty deeply disturbed directors and producers—competition “terror.”



Figure 70. Victor Mature as Samson in MGM's box office hit *Samson and Delilah* (1949) directed by Cecil B. DeMille, looking very much like “a refugee from a Turkish bath for alcoholics.”

Unlike Hollywood in the 40s and 50s, male beauty was held as an advantage by Elizabethans. Edward II was known for the favors he bestowed on the handsome and athletic Piers Gaveston. Queen Elizabeth I surrounded herself with physically ideal men such as Sir Walter Raleigh, and Sir Robert Dudley. According to Samantha Smith, the sexual proclivities of King James I was a subject of speculation during his own lifetime (“James I & VI and his male ‘favourites’”). He is well-known for lavishing attention on a succession of good-looking male courtiers, the last being twenty-one year old George Villiers, “the handsomest-bodied man in all of England; his limbs so well compacted,” declared Godfrey Goodman. (Pauline Gregg. *King Charles I*, 1984, p.49.) Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have joked that “King Elizabeth” had been succeeded by “Queen James.”



Figure 71. *The Bath House*, n.d. Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528 Nuremberg), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

While the term “homosexual” was not used before 1892, the sexual practices of human beings were then as they are now and always will be. John Rainolds, an English academic and churchman with Puritan views, at 17 years of age, played the female role of Hippolyta in a performance of the play *Palamon and Arcite* at Oxford, as part of an elaborate entertainment for Queen Elizabethan I. He might be speaking from experience when he warns in his book *Th' overthrow of Stage-Playes*: “Dressed as a woman, or playing the woman's part, the boy player attracts the *affections* of the *men* in the audience through the image he portrays. ... among the kinds of adulterous lewdness how *filthy* and monstrous a sin against nature *men's* natural corruption and viciousness ... nations, . . . thirdly, what *sparkles* of *lust* to that *vice* the *putting* on of *woman's attire* on *men* may *kindle* in *unclean affections*.” Same-sex sex is part of the spoken universe in *King Lear*. See note IV,v,137-38, “*Dost thou squiny at me? No, doe thy worst blinde Cupid, Ile not loue.*” (F, 2580-82).

S.D. **wearing a sword**] Ed. Not in Q, F. In II,ii,68 Kent alludes to Oswald's sword when Cornwall asks him why he is angry: “*That such a slave as this should wear a sword,/ Who wears no honesty*” (F, 1145-46). In Shakespeare's day, swords or rapiers were an integral part of a gentleman's civilian attire. They were intended for display “as a sign of male honor, social

rank, and contemporary fashion.” In medieval literature, the sword reflects “the warrior who wields it by standing in as a *phallic symbol* and the general concept of gender beyond its physical uses in war.”

[S]words were a part of the picture of “masculinity” and of knighthood, it’s important to acknowledge the role that they played in medieval literature. The sword was something held in high regard as physical symbols of valor and honor that these men wore and fought with. It was a label passed down from generations and inherited from fathers before them. (Rachel E. Savini, “The —ick of It: Phalluses, Swords, and Character Development in *Beowulf* and *Morte d'Arthur*, 2019)



Figure 72. Adolescents, Omne Bonum, c.1360-1375—Royal 6 E VI f. 58v, England. Detail of a historiated initial ‘A’(dolescens) of a young woman with a mirror and a young man with a sword. British Library.

Oswald wears a sword or rapier to appear a fashionable gentleman. (See Peter Tonkin, “Elizabethan Swordplay - The Rise and Rise of the Rapier”.) Needless to say, it serves no practical use to a household attendant setting out dinner any more than Regan’s low neckline was cut to keep her warm. His sword must be one of very low quality, bought second-hand, like his clothes. In IV,v,242, Edgar quickly disarms him with a wooden staff. Ironically, Oswald is killed with his own weapon because he couldn’t afford to be taught how to use it. [See note IV,v,254, “*I am only sorry.*”]

1. S.D. *Gon*].

1. **chiding**] scolding

5. **crime**] offence

7. **upbraids**] criticizes

8. **trifle**] trivial matter

8. **hunting**] In the story of Lear as told in Layamon’s *Brut* the two dukes covenanted with Lear ‘that they would provide for the king Hawks and hounds that he might ride over all the country and live in bliss while he lived.’ Lear’s hunting is mentioned elsewhere in the poem. (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p.33). Hunting is a central motif in *King Lear*. [See note III,vi, S.D. *Hunting Lodge*.] King James I was famously obsessed with the hunt. Grace Elliot notes in her blogspot, “King James I – Dogs, Hunting and the Nation’s Discontent”:

James asserted, as William the Conqueror had, “a royal prerogative” to hunt. To this end it was expected all the subjects of his realm, from noblemen to peasants, would facilitate this sport. In practice this meant he was free to roam across any land he wished – and do tremendous damage in the process.

James wanted to hunt in the French style – which involved mounted huntsmen tearing across the countryside on horses. To this end he imported French hounds and fifty red

deer from a forest in Fontainebleau. James' detractors went so far as to say he spent his life in the saddle and in common with many country squires, hunting was all he seemed to care about. "*Does all go well with you? In all your letters I find not one word of horse, hawk or hound?*"

In keeping with the French way of hunting with James placing restrictions on land owners and farmers. If the hunt was to pass their way he forbade the ploughing of land (furrows being a hazard to galloping horses) and ordered pigs to be confined (so their rooting didn't create dangerous holes) Worse still, locals were commanded to take down any fences, walls or hedges that might obstruct His Majesty's ride. During the hunt itself mounted huntsmen and packs of hounds caused considerable damage – often trampling crops, damaging fences, destroying gardens and scattering flocks or herds of animals. But the disruption didn't end there. Local common folk were ordered to provide workers to assist the hunt, taking them away from their work – if it was harvest time. In addition, a farmer was expected to provide food and fodder for all the royal party – which could easily amount to a hundred or so people. Attempts to appeal to the king to recoup their expenses fell on deaf ears. Indeed, during one hunt, a local hit on an ingenious way of getting the king's attention – by kidnapping his favorite dog, Jowler. Jowler went missing and reappeared later with a message tied to his collar which read: "Good Mr Jowler, we pray you speak to the King, for he hears you every day, and he does not hear us. Ask that His Majesty be pleased to go back to London, or else this countryside will be undone. All our provisions are used up already and we are not able to entertain him any longer."

10. **come slack of former services**] are less serviceable, less dutiful to him, than formerly.

11. **answer**] be answerable for

11. S.D. **Horn within**] Capell, not in Q, F. Huntsman John Tabachka demonstrates the call of "Going Home" on the hunting horn, and explains its use. [See [Video 6.](#)]



[Video 7.](#) "Going Home". The call of a hunting horn at the end of a hunt.

14. **come to question**] made an issue

15. **distaste**] dislike

17. **Idle**] foolish

21. **With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abus'd**] they must be rebuked when they abuse the flatteries shown them.

25. **occasions**] opportunities

26. **straight**] immediately

27. **hold my very course**] follow my lead

27. **Trumpet**] Ed. Not in F, Q.

27. S.D. **Exeunt**] (F, 528). *Exit.* (Q, 528).

ACT I, SCENE IV. *Scena Quarta*. (F, 529). Scene 4 in Quarto.



Figure 73. A model of Hampton Court's kitchens, and the Great Hall and Great Watching Chambers where food was served.  
© Historic Royal Palaces.

S.D. **A Hall in the same**] Capell; not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform and the Lords Rooms**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *Enter Kent*] (Q, 530) (F, 530).

S.D. *disguised*] Rowe; not in Q, F.

2. **defuse**] disguise. He is now speaking with a different accent.

2-3. **my good intent . . . likeness**] I may be able to carry out the good purpose which made me so disguise myself, i.e. to attend on the king

4. **raz'd my likeness**] obliterated my former appearance. Raz'd has a double meaning as Kent has "shaved off" his beard and hair. Compare *Island Princess*, (wln 3031), "*Pulls his Beard and hair off.*" (The Folger Shakespeare Library)

7. S.D. **Tucket within**] Ed. *Horns within* (F, 538). Not in Q. I thought it necessary to distinguish between the hunting horn we heard in scene iii, and the fanfare played on a trumpet announcing Lear's entrance within the tiring-house [See note I,ii,11. S.D., "*Horn within.*"] See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **within**, p. 253.

7. S.D. **Enter Lear**] *Enter Lear and Attendants*. (F, 538). *Enter Lear*. (Q, 539). Lear is still wearing Tudor period fashions but clothes suitable for hunting. [See Figure 161.]

7. S.D. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See note I,iv,47, *Lear's Knight*.

7. S.D. **Knights**] Rowe. Not in Q, F. See "Knights" (F, 141).

7. S.D. **from hunting**] Ed. Compare *The Taming of the Shrew*, "*Enter a Lord from hunting, with his traine*" (F, 18).

7. S.D. **Domestic Servants of the castle in attendance**] Ed. *Attendants*. F, 538. Not in Q, 539. Lear's "*Knights and Squires*" (F, 750) are distinguished from Goneril's domestic servants by their costumes.

8. **stay**] wait

8. **jot**] moment

8. **dinner**] Lear calls for a banquet to be brought out.

8. S.D. **Exit Servant**] Ed. *Attendant*. Malone. Not in Q, F. A domestic servant of the castle.



Figure 74. Fasting nuns at the refectory table being served fish by skeletons (an allegory of abstinence), from Cotton MS Tiberius A VII/1, f. 97v.

8. S.D. **A banquet is served in**] Ed. Not in F, Q. There are no stage directions in the quartos (Q,



540) or the First Folio (F, 540) in regard to the banquet. It is only in theory that there is one. “Banquets are specified in roughly 100 directions most of which deal with how banquets are to be brought onstage; banquets can be discovered by means of a curtain; most common are directions for a banquet to be fetched, set/out/forth, and brought” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, 1999, p. 19.)

I,iv is arguably the most complex in *King Lear* to stage because it should leave the audience wondering if it is watching a tragedy or a farce. (See note I,v,44, “*She that's a Maid now, & laughs at my departure,/ Shall not be a Maid long, vnlesse things be cut shorter*” (F, 923-24). Here, Shakespeare is juxtaposing Lear’s stereotypical masculine behavior and mindset with Goneril’s puritanical ideals of temperance, moderation, and self-restraint. Elizabethan audiences at The Globe would certainly have regarded the scene as political satire since they themselves were on the receiving end of Puritan attacks from the mid-16th century, culminating in the closure of all theaters in London in 1642. William Ringler writes in “The First Phase of the Elizabethan Attack on the Stage, 1558-1579

“The first evidence of the attack is in *A Sermon Preached at Pawles Crosse on Sunday the thirde of November 1577. in the time of the Plague* (1578). The author, who signed himself T. W and has been variously identified as Thomas Wilcox or Thomas White, took for his subject the corruption and vice then existent in London. It was a time of plague, ‘and the cause of plagues is sinne, if you looke to it well, and the cause of sinne are playes: therefore the cause of plagues are playes.’ He called the sumptuous theaters, which had just been built, a monument of London's prodigality and folly, and asserted that ‘you can scantly name me a sinne, that by that sincke is not set a gogge’” (p.406). (*The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 1942).

Puritanism is to *King Lear* what McCarthyism is to *The Crucible*. The banquet is an essential part of the narrative in dramatizing the political tension between the Puritans and the State. Under a new censorship law passed by the English Parliament called “*The Act to Restrain Abuses of Players*” (1606), Shakespeare and his company were not allowed to “jestingly or profanely speak or use the holy Name of God, or of Christ Jesus, or the Holy Ghost, or of the Trinity, which are not to be spoken but with Fear and Reverence” (Wikiwand). The reason the play is set in ancient Briton is to skirt censorship laws.



Figure 75. Puritan family Meal. An illustration from *A Short History of the English People* by John Richard Green. Sex and food are conflated throughout Shakespeare’s plays, and the banquet served to Lear is not one any hungry sportsman would welcome.

Instead of presenting Lear a meal that would satisfy his manly appetite, like the one lavished on James I on a hunting trip to Hoghton Tower, the food, drink and entertainment provided by Goneril is a Lenten affair, evoking the final meal of Jesus. In *Henry IV, Part 2*, F, 2329, Falstaff



makes a connection between diet and masculine sexual prowess. He attributes to Prince John a form of anaemia called chlorosis which was commonly termed ‘green-sickness’: *There's neuer any of these demure Boyes come to any prooffe: for thinne Drinke doth so ouer-coole their blood, and making many Fish-Meales, that they fall into a kinde of Male Greene-sicknesse: and then, when they marry, they get Wenches*” (F, 2327-31). (Compare note II,iv, 55, “*Hysterica passio*”).

“The contemporary references to [green-sickness] cited by Gordon Williams demonstrate that it was usually thought to afflict young women, its cure being sexual activity (Williams 1994c, ‘green sickness’). As Ian Maclean pointed out, most early moderns, following Aristotle, believed that sex was determined at the moment of conception by the male semen and this could be affected by diet, climate or physical constitution (Maclean 1980, 37). Sir John’s comment about the sex of children born to weak men recalls Macbeth’s comment that his wife should “Bring forth Men-Children onely: / For thy vndaunted Mettle should compose / Nothing but Males. (F, 554-6). Sir John believes the way to courage is through the stomach: in effect, according to Falstaff, the Prince’s diet of weak beer and fish has made him effeminate, suggesting his inferiority, and that he will thus produce inferior, that is female, children” (*Food in Shakespeare: Early Modern Diaries and the Plays*, Joan Fitzpatrick, University of Northampton, 2007, p. 28).



Video 7. “Improvisation Around 1600” by Elam Rotem, *Early Music Sources*. Illustration above, “Sylvestro Ganassi, *Opera intitulata Fontegara* (Venice, 1535).

8. S.D. **Music**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Music commonly accompanies banquets in Elizabethan drama, e.g., *Atheist’s Tragedy*, S.D., “A Banquet set out. Music.” (p. 264); *Anthony and Cleopatra*, S.D., *Musicke playes. Enter two or three Seruants with a Banket.* (F, 1333-34); *Timon of Athens*, “Hoboyes Playing lowd Musicke. A great Banquet seru’d in.” (F, 337-8). (See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **music**, p. 146-48.)

The vital role of music in *King Lear* cannot be overstated. Through it, the audience is cued how to interpret the narrative, as it does in cinema. “It establishes setting; it creates atmosphere; it calls attention to elements; it reinforces or foreshadows narrative developments; it gives meaning to a character’s actions or translates their thoughts; and it creates emotion.” (Kathryn Kalinak, “What does film music do?”) Sadly, no records of the incidental music in Elizabethan drama exist. The evidence of its use comes mostly from the stage direction **Music**—“This common direction for sound occurs more than 630 times in over 220 plays usually with context thinly indication of the instrument(s)” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580–1642*, pp.146-48.)



Figure 76. A broken consort of young men.

What did it sound like? Scholars believe that it was **polyphonic**, and performed by a “broken consort.” [See Figure 76.] In an account of the entertainment provided for Queen Elizabeth in 1591, six instruments are named, “After this speech, the Fairy Quene and her maides daunced about the garden, singing a song of sixe partes, with the musicke of an exquisite consort, wherein was the lute, bandora, base-violl, citterne, treble-violl, and flute.” *The Honorable Entertainment giueen to the Queen Maiestie in Progresse, at Eluetham in Hampshire, by the right Honorable the Earle of Hertford* (London, 1591), sig. E1-E1V, from **Music in English Renaissance Drama**, edited by John H. Long, p. 53.



Video 9. John Tyson on **polyphony and improvisation in the Renaissance**.

It was likely composed in an oral tradition, like the stage music in Roman Comedy and *Commedia dell'arte*. “Instrumental musicians of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance rarely worked from scores, but improvised or memorized most of their pieces.” (The Essential Role of Improvisation in Musical Performance, Carol S. Gould and Kenneth Keaton.) John Tyson says of it, “In the Renaissance, improvisation was a fundamental part of all music making. Renaissance Music is a kind of middle ground in Western Music. It is exquisite high art and yet allows each performer the freedom of expression we often associate with pop music” (See Video 8, 3:37 – 1:07:22).



Video 10. **Jacobean broken consort music was dominated by polyphony and collective improvisation like early jazz as in this 20th century classic “My Heart” by Louis Armstrong and His Hot Fives.**

“[I]t turns out that counterpoint is something that any musician (not just geniuses like Josquin and Bach) can do on the spot. Every choirboy in the Renaissance could improvise, and did so every day (Canguilhem 2011, 45–46). Renaissance improvisation is highly constrained: in order to produce correct improvised counter-point there is a limited set of choices for every new note. It is this very limitation of choice that makes it relatively easy to improvise in real time. You can even learn to do it from Peter Schubert’s YouTube **videos**.” (*Renaissance Improvisation and Musicology*, Julie E. Cumming, Volume 19, Number 2, June 2013.

Typically, the incidental music at the Globe was performed in a *minstrels' gallery* or *music room*—“by inference from directions and other evidence a location *above* on the upper playing level, which given the number of signals for music above is probably used more often the indicated by the few actual directions.” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 148). [See Figure 77.]



Figure 77. The elaborate minstrels' gallery in the Lescot Wing's lower main room, Louvre Palace, Paris.

Incidental music in *Lear* appears to be mostly diegetic, meaning that it exists in the world of the story, as when the Doctor tells the musicians in IV,vi, “*louder the musicke there*” (Q, 2775.2). From Goneril’s explicit orders to Oswald that the attendants serving dinner to her father are neglectful of their hungry guests (F, 519-27), it follows that she has given similar instructions to the musicians. Rather than setting a lively tone suitable for feasting and merry-making, they play music appropriate for *The Last Supper*. [See Figure 78.] The music helps to establish the farcical tone of the scene, and the puritanic nature of Goneril’s character.



Figure 78. Detail from *The Last Supper*, Leonardo da Vinci.

11. **What dost thou profess**] What is your job?
14. **converse**] consort
- 14-5. **fear judgment**] by an earthly or a heavenly judge.
15. **when I cannot choose**—] Em-dash, Ed. when I cannot choose, (F, 547) when I cannot chuse, (Q, 548).
15. S.D. **Enter Oswald**] Ed. Not in F, Q.
15. S.D. **with a dish of poor-John**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Theoretically, the first course of the meal is carried in by Oswald: a platter of salted herring or *poor-John*—“The name given by seamen to salted and dried fish of the cheaper varieties.” Goneril has chosen the fish as a metaphor for her father’s penis: old, wrinkly and small in size. Cf. *Rom.*, I,i,33, *'Tis well thou art not Fish: If thou had'st, thou had'st beene poore Iohn.* (F, 33-4). Gregory is saying that Sampson’s dick is small and dried-out. The term *poor john* is still used today as a slang word. The *urbandictionary* gives the example, *"Yo dude, did you see the poor john on Gary in the showers today. It's like a raisin!"*



Video 11. “3 BEST ways to Eat Herring in Amsterdam.”

Herring was in such abundance in England during the Middle Ages as to prompt the founding of [Great Yarmouth](#). Though regularly eaten, it does not seem to be much liked. Barbara Harvey writes that in monasteries at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it was a frequent dish only in Lent” (*Living and Dying in England 1100-1540: The Monastic Experience*, p. 49.) Thus, if poor-John is served to Lear for dinner, it helps signal the time of year the play occurs: **Spring**. See note IV,iii,4, “cuckoo-flowers” (F, 2354). This is a matter of utmost consequence in the story as Lear’s “mad scene” happens on or close to [May Day](#)—a celebration of spring, “with origins in ancient agricultural rituals to ensure fertility.” “May-game or Pageant” was explicitly banned in [The Act to Restrain Abuses of Players](#). In Philip Stubbe’s *Anatomy of Abuses*—a tract against all forms of merry making, he has a section entitled ‘Against May’ where he decries the degree of sexual license taken at the festival:

Every parish town and village assemble themselves together. Men and women and children, old and young, and go off, some to the woods and groves, some to the hills and mountains, here they spend the night in pastimes. In the morning they return bringing with them birth-boughs and trees to deck their assemblies withal. I’ve heard it credibly reported by men of great gravity, credibility and reputation, that forty, three score, or a hundred youths, going to the woods overnight. They have scarcely the third part of them, returned home undefiled. (Shakespeare, *May Day and the Hobby Horse*, Shakespeare Institute Library.)



Figure 79. Battle of the Herrings.

As a side note, “[The Battle of the Herrings](#)” was a military action near the town of [Rouvray](#), which took place on 12 February 1429 during the [siege of Orléans](#) in the [Hundred Years' War](#). The immediate cause of the battle was an attempt by French and Scottish forces to intercept a supply convoy headed for the English of “some 300 carts and wagons, carrying crossbow shafts, cannons and cannonballs but also barrels of herring.” The latter were being sent since the meatless Lenten days were approaching. It was the presence of this stock of fish which would give the somewhat unusual name to the battle. This supply convoy was escorted by an English force under [Sir John Fastolf](#) and had been outfitted in Paris, whence it had departed some time earlier. The battle was decisively won by the English. (Wiki) [See [Figure 79](#).]

16. **eat no fish**] A double entendre referring both to the unappetizing plate of “[poor-John](#)” Kent won’t eat, and to Oswald himself. That is, he will not “eat” (i.e. perform fellatio) on the lad. [See [Video 10](#).] Knowing Lear’s obsessive concern with manliness, what better way to

recommend himself than by ridiculing cock-suckers. The audience won't "get the joke" without seeing the type of fish being served together with the person serving it. Hence the dramatic necessity of its being presented separately from the other dishes by Oswald. (See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, 1999, **Dish /Dishes**, p. 71-2.) "It was not the habit of the Elizabethan to gorge himself on each dish, but to taste liberally of all the dishes that suited him, taking a little bit from each dish as it passed him" (*Elizabethan Dining*.) Throughout II,ii, Kent looks at Oswald as something to be eaten: "*Lipsbury Pinfold*" (F, 1083); "*sop oth' Moonshine*" (F, 1105); "*carbonado your shanks*" (F, 1111); "*vnboulded villaine*" (F, 1139-40); "*Goose*" (F, 1156).



Figure 80. "Flaisch macht Flash" or "flesh equals flesh". "Nun walks with fish in hand chasing a cat, she wants to trade the fish with a penis that the cat has in its mouth. A jester watches through a window frame", c. 1555, artist unknown, Rijksmuseum.

16. S.D. *Exit Oswald*] Ed. Not in F, Q.
25. **countenance**] bearing—not merely 'face' (Kittredge)
28. **Authority**] viz., power and authority. See note I,i,173. "*potency*".
30. **keep honest counsel**] keep an honorable secret
30. **curious**] elaborate, complicated, elegant, nice.
- 35-6. **to love a woman . . . anything**] Kent's droll retort about his passion for women is dry and unconvincing—a line from Shakespeare that might be quoted at a soirée by Philippe I, Duke of Orléans, the cross-dressing, sexually fluid brother of King Louis IV of France.
40. **knave**] "A man or boy whose behaviour invites disapproval, but who is nonetheless likeable; a wag, a rogue (rogue n. 3). Frequently as a term of endearment, or as a playful term of reproof" (*OED*, 3.b).
41. S.D. *Exit Servant*] Ed. *Attendant*. Dyce. Not in Q, F. Another domestic servant of the castle distinguished by his costume.
41. S.D. *Re-enter Oswald*] Ed. *Enter Steward*, after line 43 *daughter*, Q, 575 and F, 573.
43. **So please you**—] Oswald has no animus towards Lear. He has been expressly ordered to neglect him during dinner. (See F, 519-28.) Oswald is written as a sympathetic character whom Edgar says he regrets having to kill himself: "*I am onely sorry / He had no other Deathsman.*" (F, 2710-11). His failing is being born poor and wanting to be treated like a gentleman. "Elizabethan England had four main classes: the Nobility, the Gentry, the Yeomanry, and the Poor. A person's class determined how they could dress, where they could live, and the kinds of jobs people and their children could get" (*Historical Association*).
43. S.D. *Exit*] F, 576. Not in Q.
44. **clotpoll**] clod-pate, blockhead.
44. S.D. *Exit Lear's Knight*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See note I,iv,47. "*Lear's Knight*"
45. S.D. *Re-enter Lear's Knight*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Knight. Dyce.
47. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Knigh*. (F, 580). *Kent*. (Q, 580). (See note LEAR'S KNIGHT in the Dramatis



Personae.) One of the “*hundred Knights*” (F, 141) Lear keeps with him in return for their loyalty, protection, service, and camaraderie. Compare “*And let his **Knights** haue colder lookes among you*” (F, 525). Just as Davey Crockett, dinosaurs, knights and GI Joes can logically coexist in the imagination of a child, the story of *King Lear* mixes Greek and Roman gods, with Bedlam beggars (Bethlehem Royal Hospital was founded in 1247), knights from the Middle Ages, Puritans, and characters wearing contemporary Stuart period fashions. Obviously, the play does not abide by conventions of theatre Realism. Shakespeare’s audience most certainly would have associated “Lear’s Knight” with the medieval Christian institution of knighthood and codes of chivalry. He is very likely wearing a tabard with the King’s coat of arms: theoretically, *a dragon*. His demeanor supports Lear’s claim that the “*Knights and Squires*” (F, 750) in his retinue are men of character and breeding. I hypothesize that the audience first takes notice of him standing next to Kent in I.i.

In my restoration, “Lear’s Knight” is a conflation of several unindividuated parts ascribed arbitrarily to “*a Knight*”, “*a Gentleman*”, “*a Messenger*”, and “*a Servant*” in the quartos and folio: *Knigh.* (F, 583, F, 586, F, 593, F, 602) / *seruant* (Q, 584, 586, 593, 602) in I,iv; *Gent.* (F, 921), *Seruant.* (Q, 921) in I,v; *Knigh.* (Q, 1275), *Gen.* (F, 1273) in II,iv; *Gentleman.* (Q, 1615), *Gentleman.* (F, 1615) in III,i; *Gentleman.* (Q, 2347.1, scene deleted in F; *Gentleman* in IV,iii; *Messenger* in scene 18 in quartos; *Gentleman* (Q, 2631), *Gentleman.* (F, 2630) in IV,v; *Gentleman* (F, 2762); *Gent.* (Q, 2843.1). The lines are logically spoken by one character. They straightforward, deferential, and marked by brevity. Because the part was played by an apprentice, and not one of the “Principall Actors” receiving a share of the profits, “*Lear’s Knight*,” as I call him, was not given a name by the copyist. (See Appendices B and C.)

49, 52, 59, 68. **Lear’s Knight**] Ed. *Knigh* (F, 583, 586, 593, 602). *seruant* (Q, 584, 586, 594, 601).

See “*Our selfe by Monthly course,/ With reseruacion of an hundred Knights,/ By you to be sustain’d,*” (F, 140-42).

49. **roundest**] fullest, plainest

53. **entertain’d**] treated

62. **rememb’rest**] remindest

62. **conception**] idea

63. **most faint**] weak or languid

64. **curiosity**] ‘a punctilious jealousy, resulting from a scrupulous watchfulness of his own dignity’ (Steevens)

65. **very pretence and purpose**] deliberate act.

67. **this**] these.

68. **the fool hath much pined away**] The line is a metatheatrical joke alluding to the size of the boy actor playing the parts of Cordelia and the Fool. Cordelia is remarkably diminutive. Compare “our last and *least*” (F, 89) and “that *little* seeming substance” (F, 216). [See Figure 81.]





Figure 81. Title page of *The Italian Taylor and his Boy* by Robert Armin (1609).

70. S.D. *Exit a Knight*] Ed. *Attendant*. Dyce. Not in Q, F. One of Lear's Knights.
71. S.D. *Exit a Knight*] Ed. *Attendant*. Dyce. Not in Q, F. One of Lear's Knights.
71. S.D. *Re-enter Oswald*] Collier subst. Enter Steward after *sir*? line 72 (F, 608). Not in Q.
77. **bandy**] exchange, as in a game of tennis.
77. S.D. *Striking him with his whip*] Rowe *subst*. Not in Q, F. (See **strike**, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 219.)
78. **strucken**] struck

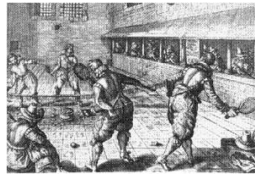


Figure 82. Tennis. Royal interest in England began with Henry V (reigned 1413–22) but it was Henry VIII (reigned 1509–47) who made the biggest impact as a young monarch, playing the game with gusto at Hampton Court on a court he had built in 1530 and on several other courts in his palaces.

79. **football player**] Kent thinks that Oswald is less suited for striking (as in tennis, a sport for royals) than for tripping (as in football, a sport for common villagers). The reference is to Oswald's low social class and young age. (See note I,iii,S.D., "*Steward*".) "Francis Willughby's *Book of Games*, written around 1660 (Willughby died at the age of 36 before the book was completed), contains diagrams indicating the placement of goal markers. In addition to containing a proscription against kicking an opponent above the shin, it also included what might be the first primer on how to foul an opponent entitled "Tripping of Heels." (Farnsworth, 2020).



Figure 83. An Elizabethan woodcut print depicting football. Photograph: Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library.

79. S.D. *Kent trips up his heels. Oswald falls*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Cf. *Roaring Girl*, wln 0836, "*Moll trips up his heels he falls.*" (The Folger Shakespeare Library). In *King Lear*, "The beatings on stage resemble nothing so much as *Comedy of Errors*, the plays of Plautus, or the comedies of Aristophanes. What *Lear* gives us is not a story told first as tragedy, then as farce. It is farcical tragedy, tragedy deflated by slapstick violence, all the more horrifying for being slapstick." (Peter Leithart, "Slapstick Comedy," *Theopolos*). Scholars are generally agreed that Shakespeare incorporated theatrical traditions of *commedia dell'arte*, into some of his plays.

(“Shakespeare & Commedia Dell’Arte: Gl’ingannati”).

“The rough-and-tumble of slapstick has been a part of low comedy and farce since ancient times, having been a prominent feature of Greek and Roman mime and pantomime, in which bald-pated, heavily padded clowns exchanged quips and beatings to the delight of the audience. The Renaissance produced the athletic zanies of the *commedia dell’arte* and even rougher clowns, such as the hunchbacked, hook-nosed, wife-beating Pulcinella, who survived into the 20th century as the Punch of children’s puppet shows” (Britannica).



Figure 84. President Gerald Ford tripping up Chevy Chase.

The comical effect of the whipping and tripping of Oswald might be compared to *Pantalone*’s beratement and beatings of *Arlecchino*. Doubtless, the stage business ends in the actor’s performing a spectacular pratfall causing the audience to laugh. His beating further strengthens Goneril’s claim that her father and his men are unruly and ungracious.

81. **I’ll teach you differences**] I’ll teach you your proper place as a low-born servant.
82. **Strikes him with his sword**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Kent is implying that he will chop Oswald up into pieces like something to be eaten. See also: “*If I had thee in Lisbury Pinfold*” (F, 1083) and “*Ile so carbonado your shanks*” (F, 1111).
83. **lubber**] “An inferior servant, drudge, scullion” (*OED*, 1.†c): “*Mediastinus, a drudge or lubber, which doth in the howse all maner of vyle seruice, as swepe or clense the house, carie wodde to the kytchen, and other like drudgery*. T. Elyot *Dict.*, 1538.
84. **have you wisdom**] ‘Are you in your senses?’
84. S.D. **Exit Oswald**] Theobald. Not in Q, F.
84. **So**] Be gone!
85. **earnest**] earnest-money, a small sum paid to secure a bargain, hansom.



Figure 85. *Young Knight in a Landscape, with a handkerchief in his codpiece*, Vittore Carpaccio (c. 1505). Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

86. S.D. **Takes purse from out of his codpiece and gives money to Kent**] Ed. *Gives Kent money*. Capell. Not in Q, F. Unsurprisingly, there is not a stage direction in the quartos and folios specifying exactly where Lear is carrying his money. In *Hands Deep in History: Pockets in Men and Women’s Dress in Western Europe, c. 1480–1630*, Rebecca Unsworth writes, “Another apparent alternative to the pocket was the codpiece. Vecellio stated that soldiers in the time of Charles V (1500–1558) had a very large codpiece ‘which they used in place of a pocket’, and the *Treasvrie* corroborates this by noting that when men were still wearing skin-

tight hose, instead of a pocket,

[...] they hadde a large and ample Cod-piece, which came vppe with two wings, and so were fastned to eyther side with two Pointes. In this wide roome, they had Linnen bagges, tied with like Points to the inside, betweene the Shirte and Cod-piece. This serued as the receipt for Pursse, Hand-kerchers, Apples, Plummes, Peares, Oreniges, and other fruits. (Ibid)

“The character of *Panurge* takes an orange out of his codpiece on one occasion in François Rabelais's (c. 1494–1553) *Pantagruel*, and a few men can be seen with items other than their genitals spilling out of their codpieces in a couple of images, implying that some men, especially labourers and soldiers, did indeed house prized possessions in their codpieces.” (Ibid)



Figure 86. *The Funny Dreams of Pantagruel* (1565), illustrator thought to be François Desprez.

86. S.D. *Enter Fool*] (Q, 624) (F, 624). (See note CORDELIA | FOOL in the *Dramatis Personae*.) In the day, the parts of women were played by boy apprentice actors. Since Shakespeare is not alive to ask him, it is all a matter of dramatic theory if the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were written to be performed by the same player as first proposed by Alois Brandl in 1894 (*Shakespeare*, E. Hofmann & Co, 1894, Berlin). In this restoration, the Fool functions dramatically as Cordelia's “doppelgänger”—her double. She haunts the mind of her father as palpably as the ghost of Banco does Macbeth. She is always present in his thoughts, as he is in hers.

The concept of alter egos and double spirits has appeared in the folklore of many cultures from ancient Egypt to the Victorian era. The sighting of a fetch, a supernatural “double” in Irish folklore is regarded as an omen, usually for impending death. (See note V,i,306, “*fool*.”) John Donne supposedly saw his wife's doppelgänger in 1612 in Paris, on the same night as the stillbirth of their daughter. Superstition was rife in England all through Middle Ages and beyond. In the view of Frances W. Yates, “occult philosophy was even more of a driving force in the Renaissance than the rational Humanism of Erasmus” (Julian Scott, *The Occult Philosophy in the English Renaissance*). When Lear cries “*And my poore Foole is hang'd*” (F, 3277), he is seeing a portent of Death.

Why doubling the roles of Cordelia and the Fool must be considered an essential element in the narrative is because it gives a dramatic form to the *inversion* of the role of father and daughter. Lear's Fool stands for more than a sharp-tongued, royal jester like *Feste* in *Twelfth Night*. He is a manifestation of Cordelia's love and devotion, what the ancient Greeks termed *agape*: “It embraces a profound sacrificial love that transcends and persists regardless of

circumstance.” *King Lear* is a supremely metaphysical work, like Shakespeare’s poem “[The Phoenix and the Turtle](#).” Walter J. Ong, writes in “[Metaphor and the Twinned Vision: The Phoenix and the Turtle](#)”,

"The doubling or twinning of two concepts which metaphor thus demands is a clue to the psychological and linguistic importance of metaphor. At the heart of the linguistic situation, there is another kind of twinning which human intellection must constantly seek to circumvent but which it can never succeed in escaping. This twinning is at the heart of all human operations of understanding. It is the judgment or enunciation or statement, the operation by which a subject is joined to a predicate to make a unit of discourse which has, as we say, *complete* sense."

The abstract philosophical idea Shakespeare is dramatizing is that Cordelia and the Fool are one Platonic Form, namely, [agape love](#). [See [video 12](#), “[David Sedley: Plato’s Theory of Forms](#).”] Since the days of the ancient Greeks, philosophers have been attempting to explain the [nature of love](#), but at no time in human history has its meaning become so contentious as during the [European Reformation](#). According to *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, “Luther’s rediscovery of the primacy of *agape* was the linchpin of the Reformation and the rediscovery of genuine Christian ethics.” (See G. Meilaender and W. Werpehowski, *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 2007, p. 456.)



[Video 12](#). [Video](#), [David Sedley: Plato's Theory of Forms](#).

The tools of storytelling in a playwright’s arsenal are not limited to words. Like the doubling of Edgar and the King of France, the casting of Cordelia and the Fool is among the most important questions to put to readers about the narrative structure of the play. Most students in secondary and undergraduate school, where they are first introduced to Shakespeare, are not familiar with techniques of [metatheatre](#). Their experience of drama comes from television and movies. They will inevitably presuppose that the narrative corresponds with conventions of [naturalism](#) or [realism](#), which hold that creating the illusion of reality in acting, staging, and playwriting is the most important element of good theatre. For example, according to [Matt Ray](#), what makes a great movie is the [willing suspension of disbelief](#). “In order for drama, theatre, and most fiction to succeed, it has to convince us to suspend our disbelief or suspend our rational mind from saying, ‘this isn’t real, it is artificial.’” If Cordelia and the Fool are played by the same actor, the illusion that they are real people is broken: they are manifestly “performing actors (and not actually the characters they are playing).”

“Acting at the new Globe in broad daylight shows what an anachronism the modern tradition of stage realism is on such a stage. The inherent and manifest artifice of playing in such a venue makes attempts at psychologically plausible acting ineffective, and certainly misconceived. The original staging at the Globe was more openly unrealistic than modern conditioning can admit” (Andrew Gurr, “[Metatheatre and the](#)

Fear of Playing” in *Neo-Historicism. Studies In Renaissance Literature, History, and Politics*, 2000, pp. 91-110.)



Figure 87. Peeter van Bredael, *Commedia dell'arte Scene in an Italian Landscape*, 17th/18th century.

The idea that Armin played the Fool, which is stated as an incontrovertible fact by authorities in many common sources of reference, including *The Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica*, rule out the theory that the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were double cast. As William A. Ringler, Jr. writes, "The usual assumption that Armin played the Fool has no evidence of any sort to back it." ('Shakespeare and His Actors: Some Remarks on *King Lear*,' in *Proceedings of the Comparative Literature Symposium*, XII, pp. 183-94.) The idea is totally ahistorical. It is based entirely on modern conventions of naturalism and realism, rather than metatheatre and Renaissance Neoplatonism. Today, it is not necessary for the role of the Fool be played by a boy. I believe Shakespeare would have preferred females to play the parts he wrote for them but was constricted by the culture of his day. (See Elizabeth Steinway, "Why weren't women allowed to act in Shakespeare's plays?")

Armin was in his mid-30 when *Lear* was performed for James I in 1606, and believed to be an "ugly dwarf of a man." As such, he was not suited physically to play Cordelia's doppelgänger or suggest an inversion of the father/daughter relationship. He appears to have been immensely gifted as a writer, a musician, and an actor who excelled in improvisation and physical comedy. Like Robin Williams, he was equally convincing in both comedy and drama. Readers might be surprised to know that he is thought by some to have played Iago in *The Tragedy of Othello* (Arnie Perlstein, "Identity of the Clown in *Othello*.").



Figure 88. THE History of the two Maids of More-clacke, VVith the life and simple maner of IOHN in the Hospitall. ROBERT ARMIN, seruant to the Kings most excellent Maiestie.

Armin's hand is clearly evident in *Lear*, but this by no means indicates that he himself performed the role of the Fool. He could just as well have written the part for a boy apprentice under his guidance. According to Richard Dutton, Armin took on at least one [apprentice] (James Jones, bound July 15, 1608: Kathman, 2004b, 18) . . . There is no record of what training exactly was given to apprentices "pur apprendre l'arte d'une Stageplayer" ("to learn the art of a stageplayer").<sup>26</sup> John Astington very reasonably suggests that "Working partners are always latent instructors" and that like most trade apprentices the boys essentially learned on the job,



in conjunction with the masters who bound them and the other older players (2010, 99; see also Tribble, 2009)” (*Shakespeare's Theatre: A History*, 2018, qu., “Apprentices”, *Erenow*).

The only actual evidence we have that Armin performed as an actor in *Lear*, tenuous as it is, is that he played the part of Gloucester. (See note IV,v, 89-90, “*Look, look, a Mouse.*”) Richard Dutton notes that Armin took over the role of Mouse from Will Kemp in The King’s Men revised production of *Mucedorus* (1606) in which a spectacular pratfall was added to the plot (possibly by Shakespeare himself) to make use of Armin’s skills at physical comedy. If this was the case, among the excess meanings of “*Mouse*” (F. 2536), one can be taken as a metatheatrical joke alluding to the difficult “108” pratfall Armin performed in *Mucedorus*, which he reprised a few months later in the role of Gloucester. (See note IV,v,41. S.D., “*He falls.*”.)

The theory that the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were performed by the same apprentice actor is bolstered by Shakespeare’s plot structure: the two characters never share the stage together. The diminutive size of the Fool and his youth are referred to in the spoken dialogue: “*our last and least*” (F, 89), “*that little-seeming substance*” (F, 216) and “*the Fool has much pined away*” (F, 603). Lear describes Cordelia’s voice as “*ever soft, gentle and low*” (F, 3236-37), presumably in contrast to the high-pitched squeaks of “*little eyases*” referred to in *Hamlet* (F, 1386-87). Thomas B. Stroup observes that Lear refers to the Fool as “*boy*” or “*lad*” nearly a dozen times (“Cordelia and the Fool”, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Volume 12, Issue 2, Spring 1961, pages 127–132). [See Figure 81.]

86. *with lute*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See I,v,S.D. *with lute*. There are no stage directions in the quartos or Folio indicating that the Fool is carrying a lute or any other instrument in this scene. We have only the slightest textual intimation of his doing so when Lear asks in I,iv,159 (F, 684), “*When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?*” The Fool replies that ever since Cordelia’s banishment he has used “*it*” (F, 685). Perhaps “*it*” is being used as an indirect object referring to the lute, though he appears to be speaking about music in in general. (See Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary: Music*, “vocal or instrumental harmony” as in *The Tempest*, I,ii: “*This Musicke crept by me vpon the waters, / Allaying both their fury, and my passion / With it's sweet ayre.*” (F, 534-36).



Figure 89. 1596 Caravaggio, *The Lute Player* New York.

Many instances of characters (mostly boy apprentices) carrying lutes are cited in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (p.137), most famously “*Ophelia playing on a Lute*” (*Hamlet*, Q1, 2766.1). See also *Taming of the Shrew*, II,ii, “*Enter...with his boy bearing a lute.*” (F, 897-99), and *Old Fortunatus*, III,i, “*Enter...a Boy after them with a lute.*”

“One consistent thread runs through the records of the boy players, and that is musical



accomplishment,” writes Dutton. “From the Hind brothers in the 1570s who were expected to sing and play on the cittern, through Augustine Phillips’s two apprentices, one of whom received his bass viol in his will, and the other a cittern, bandore, and lute, to John Wilson among Heminge’s apprentices, they all either were or trained to be proficient musicians. The first quarto text of Hamlet tells us that the boy who played ‘Ofelia’ entered ‘playing on a lute, and her hair down singing’ when she went mad (Q1, G4v)”. (Q1, 2766.1). (*Ibid.*).



Figure 90. David playing the harp before Saul, Rembrandt, c. 1630, Städels Museum, Frankfurt.

The real clincher for adding the direction comes in the next scene where the Fool plays music on his lute to soothe Lear’s afflicted mind, evoking the teenaged David who famously plays his harp for King Saul in the Bible (1 Samuel 16:14-23). [See Figure 90.] The lute was the most popular Elizabethan musical instrument. "Of all the moods of the human spirit, that which has long had the closest kinship with music is melancholy. From ancient days, music had been recognized as both the cause and the cure of melancholy either as passing mood or malady, and in the sixteenth century, probing every source in their study of the human spirit, artists, philosophers, scientists and educators turned their attention once again to the power of music ‘to exhilarate a sorrowful heart’” (*Melancholy and Music in the Renaissance* by Doris Silbert, Music Library Association, 1947, p.413).

Music had its place in the classical syllabus of European universities. Music theory, including the Pythagorean version of the tone system and harmonic/ consonant and disharmonic/ dissonant proportions, was common knowledge amongst ‘free men cultivating the free arts (artes liberales)’. The classical doctrine was combined with the dominating medical theories, e.g. *humoral medicine* (or *humoral pathology*) — a doctrine with great influence through many centuries. In humoral medicine, health is influenced by four bodily fluids or ‘humours’: blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile. According to this theory good health was the result of a harmonic balance between the humours, while disease reflected some sort of imbalance between them. Historically the doctrine goes back to circa 400 BC, and one of its most important spokesmen was the influential medical theorist Galen in the time of the Roman Empire. It was considered foundational in medical theory right up to the eighteenth century” (*A Comprehensive Guide to Music Therapy : Theory, Clinical Practice, Research and Training* by Lars Ole Bonde, Inge Nygaard Pedersen and Tony Wigram, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002. p.25). [See Figure 99.]



Figure 91. Lutes – Plate XVI from Michael Praetorius, Syntagma Musicum, 1619.

As a practical matter, there are many sizes and shapes of lutes and other string instruments that the actor might be using. (See John Southworth, *The English Medieval Minstrel*, pp. 3–4.) [See Figure 91.] These include *mandores* and *gitterns* (small lute like instruments) used by medieval minstrels. In *Commedia dell'arte*, the guitar (*vihuela*) is used by *Brighella* and *Scapino*. [See Figure 120.] It is possible that in addition to a lute, the Fool carries a small wind instrument, such as a pipe or recorder, in his belt. (See note III,vi,80. S.D., “*Fool plays soft music.*”) What’s important is not the precise instrument(s) the Fool carries, but that he is using music to communicate his primary message. “From simply being a background filler and moving the story along, to being the driving force of a piece of film, music has the power to sway the audience in many different ways. It can be used to manipulate one’s feelings, create an atmosphere, create drama, draw a person’s attention, and immerse you in a story.

87. **coxcomb**] The cap of the professional was fool was typically crowned with a crest like that of a cock. Some coxcombs appear to be formed with ass’s ears and the head of a rooster curling forward. [See Figure 92.] Its meaning derives from the foolishness of the bird’s mating rituals, and has obvious phallic symbolism.



Figure 92. Detail of a coxcomb. ‘Trivulzio Book of Hours’, Flanders ca. 1470 (Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, SMC 1, fol. 110v).

The Fool proffers his coxcomb to Kent upon seeing Lear take a purse he is carrying inside his codpiece, to give him money. (See note IV,v,86-7,S.D., “Gives Edgar a thistle.”) Thus, the joke is devised to be understood in two ways. The first of the meanings is a literal one: he is calling Kent foolish for accepting service with the King. What’s funny, however, is the analogy between his *coxcomb* and Lear’s *codpiece*. He is implying that both are emblematic of their respective characters—tokens of foolishness.

Lear’s identification with a codpiece is the source of the Fool’s joke in III,ii,42 after Kent shouts “*Holla*” to the Gentlemen. It will be recalled that at the end of III,i,47 the two of them agreed that “*He that first lights on him, / Holla the other*” (F, 1652-3). Kent’s “*Holla*” was expunged from the *First and Second Quartos* and the *First Folio*, but there can be no doubting where his shout-out occurs. Kent has only to hear the word “*codpiece*” to know he has found his man: no human being alive is still wearing one.

*Kent*: [Within.] Who’s there?

*Fool*. Marry, here’s grace and a codpiece!

*Kent*. [Within.] *Holla!*

*Enter Kent.*

*Fool*. [Aside.] That’s a wise man and a fool. (III,ii,39-41)

The Fool remarks that Kent is wise for following the king and finding him, and a fool for the same reason. Cf., “*when a wiseman giues thee better counsel giue me mine againe,I would*

*hause none but knaues follow it, since a Foole giues it"* (F, 1347-49). The joke is metatheatrical in its timing. It is said *after* the audience's response to Kent's "*Holla!*" It is a fool's profession to get laughs.

87. S.D. *Offers Kent his coxcomb*] Rowe, subst. Not Q, F.

89. S.D. *To Kent*] Ed, not in Q, F.

89. *you were best*] you had better.

90. *Lear. Why my boy*] F, 628. *Kent. Why Foole?* Q, 629. It would be brash for Kent to address Lear's Fool so soon after joining his retinue. Note that he does not enter into the conversation until line 141, where he addresses Lear himself: "*This is not altogether foole my Lord*" (Q, 670.08; line cut in *First Folio*). Kent has to be wary of being recognized, and would not jump into a conversation with such an all-knowing character as the Fool. He probably regrets having attracted the latter's attention to begin with.

93. S.D. *To Kent*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

94. *on's*] of his.

95. *blessing against his will*] He inadvertently did Cordelia a favor by banishing her.

96. *nuncle*] contracted from *mine uncle*. 'It seems to have been the customary appellation of the licensed fool to his superiors' (Nares).

99. *living*] property

101. *whip*] Fools were commonly whipped. Lear has freshly used it on Oswald

103. *the lady's*] New Camb. (conj. Letherland); the Lady F, 642; *Ladie oth'e* Q, 642.

104. *A pestilent gall to me*] It is possible that the meaning of this line is limited only to his words, and refers to the constant pestering of the Fool, which is upsetting Lear's stomach. However, given all the physical comedy in the scene, it more likely refers to some bit of food *lazzi* at the dinner table, such as Lear's spitting out weak ale, or having a dish of food taken away from him before he's had a chance to taste it. The possibilities for farce at a banquet are endless, especially one hosted for hungry sportsmen by an austere Puritan who believes that an ascetic life of fasting and prayer are needed for her father's salvation. [See [Figure 105](#), video from *Naked Gun 2 ½: The Smell of Fear*.]



Video 13. Leslie Nielsen, dinner at the White House from the *Naked Gun 2 ½: The Smell of Fear*.

104. *gall*] the contents of the gallbladder, bile (proverbial for its bitterness). Cf. "*bitter Fool*" (F, 666).

112. *trowest*] think

116-7. *And thou shalt have more/Than two tens to a score*] meaning, I suppose, something akin to a penny saved is a penny earned.

118. *Lear*] Q, 659. Kent F, 658. Again, it would be brash for Kent to address Lear's Fool. He wisely takes a back seat, and lets Lear do all the talking.

122. *nothing can be made out of nothing*] Cf. I,ii,37. In *De rerum natura*, Lucretius dedicates time to exploring the axiom that nothing can be produced from nothing, and that nothing can

be reduced to nothing (*Nil fieri ex nihilo, in nihilum nil posse reverti*). Dramatic irony is the hallmark of *King Lear*.

123. S.D. **To Kent**] Rowe; not in Q, F.

132. **Do for him stand**] i.e., Lear.

134. **presently**] at once.

136. **there**] He points at Lear, who is the bitter fool.

142. **monopoly**] If I had a monopoly on foolishness, great men would fight me for some of it. ‘Monopolies in Shakespeare’s time were common objects of satire’ (Steevens) qu. Furness p. 74.

143. **fool**] With a play on “fool”, “a kinde of clouted creame called a foole or a trifle in English.” 1598 J. Florio *World of Wordes*. (*OED*, 1)

144. **egg**] probably referring to a dish of hard-boiled eggs. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, eggs could be eaten in England during Lenten fasts. Cf. *A Match at Midnight*, II,ii, *Enter Jarvis with a rabbit in one hand and a dish of eggs in another*.

146. S.D. **Giving him an egg**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

152. **like myself**] like a Fool

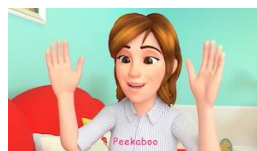
153. **so**] i.e. true.

154-7. **Fools had ne’er less grace in a year**] True Fools are not given proper respect because “wise” men have ruined their reputations with their dull wits and apish manners.

159. **it**] music in general, not just words that are sung. (See note I,iv,86, “*with lute*.”) As discussed above, music was considered a cure for melancholy. “Many men are melancholy by hearing Musicke, but it is a pleaseing melancholy that it causeth, and therefore to such as are discontent, in woe, feare, sorrow, or dejected, it is a most present remedy, it expells cares, alters their grieved mindes, and easeth in an instant. (Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621).

162-5. **Then they for sudden joy did weep . . .**] A snippet from a song. “Rollins, *M.L.R.*, 1920, p. 87, points out that the Fool is adapting an old ballad: ‘Some men for sodayne ioye do wepe,/And some in sorrow syng: / When that they lie in daunger depe, / To put away mourning.’” (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, pp. 43-44). See also Furness, p. 75. “Compare Heywood’s *Rape of Lucrece*, 1608 : ‘When Tarquin first in court began, And was approved king, Some men for sudden joy gan weep, But I for sorrow sing.’”

164. **play bo-peep**] A medieval children’s game commonly known as **peek-a-boo**. [See Figure 106.] The *OED* defines **bo-peep** as “A nursery play with a young child, who is kept in excitement by the nurse or play-mate alternately concealing herself (or her face), and peeping out for a moment at an unexpected place, to withdraw again with equal suddenness” (1.a). “Mark how he playeth *bo-peep* with the scripture,” W. Tyndale, 1528.



Video 14. “Peek A Boo” | @CoComelon Nursery Rhymes & Kids Songs.

It is thought that the nursery rhyme “*Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep*” dates back to the

beginning of the nineteenth century. However, in *King Lear*, there is also an allusion to the rhyme “*Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn, The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.*” (See note III,vi,41-44, “*Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd.*”) It is possible, therefore, that “*Little Bo-Peep*” and “*Little Boy Blue*” derive from a single nursery rhyme of Medieval origin. Bridget Begg discusses the contributions of nursery rhymes, folklore and nonsense to English literature and drama in her very interesting dissertation “*Medieval Nonsense Verse: Contributions to the Literary Genre.*” See also Jordan Kirk, *Medieval Nonsense: Signifying Nothing in Fourteenth-Century England*, 2021.

What strikes me about nursery rhythms and lullabies, and why they matter in *King Lear*, is that they are spoken/sung to infants and small children before the meaning of words is even known to them. There is now scientific evidence that reading with your children has positive chemical effects for both parent and child. They are a tool in parent-child bonding. Sophie Brickman writes in *The Guardian*, “When you better understand not just the history of books and reading, but also the neurological benefits triggered by *shared* reading, it seems straight up silly that the activity peaks at age five. Five! Then it’s all downhill from there, according to Scholastic’s most recent [Kids and Family Reading Report](#).”

Higher levels of neural synchrony predict a higher level of engagement with a given stimulus, and also are connected to a greater release of oxytocin. The hormone, known as “the love drug”, is most commonly linked to childbirth – mothers get a flood of it during labor and directly afterwards, to help foster a bond between mother and child, and nursing – but also pops up when we fall in love, or during sexual arousal. The higher your oxytocin level, the more warm fuzzies you feel. (“[The number of children who read for fun is at a historic low. Why?](#)”)

175. S.D. *Enter Goneril*] (F, 702) (Q, 702)

175. *above*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Theoretically, Goneril is standing in the “Lords Rooms” amongst the wealthy “Lords”—as illustrated in Aernout Van Buchel's copy of Johan de Witt's drawing of the Swan Playhouse. [See Figure 27.] The idea of actors performing in different sections of the Globe Playhouse is not much of a stretch in *King Lear* because Cordelia tells us they are: “*was't thou faine (poore Father) / To houell thee with Swine and Rogues forlorne, / In short, and musty straw?*” (F, 2786-88). (See note II,iii, S.D., “*from under the stage.*”) Just as Lear finds himself in the yard, among the “*penny-stinkards*” (aka, the “*groundlings*”), Goneril appears among the wealthy perfumed spectators seated luxuriously in the “Lords Rooms,” looking down on her father. The blocking gives a dramatic form to her vanity and *hauteur*. Shakespeare is not thinking scenically about the action but spatially. He is using the class stratification of the theater to represent character. The different levels further dramatize the philosophy of *Rota Fortunæ*, *Fortune's Wheel*. See note II,i,19,S.D., “*descends from above with a rope.*” When Kent tells Oswald, “*you come with Letters against the King, and take Vanitie the puppets part, against the Royaltie of her Father*” (F, 1108), the audience has seen Goneril giving directives to him from “above” like a puppeteer. (See note II,ii,33.)

176. *makes*] is doing.

176. *frontlet*] a decorative band worn on the forehead. Lear is referring to Goneril’s frowning face. Compare I,iv, “*Yes forsooth I will hold my tongue, so your face bids me, though you say*”



*nothing*” (F, 708-09). Goneril gives the same menacing look to Albany’s Squire, aka the “*Messenger*” in IV,ii (F, 2312), when he reports the news of Cornwall’s death.

170-80. **an O without a figure**] *nothing*.

181. S.D. **To Goneril**] Not in Q, F.

182. **so your face bid me**] Compare IV,ii,72, S.D., “*Goneril frowns at him.*”

183. **Mum, mum**] I will stay mute. “Mumchance is characterized as a sort of dice or card game requiring silence. The idea of silence is based on the prefix “mum” and is the key to most of etymological surmises about the game.” (Delmar E. Solem, “Some Elizabethan Game Scenes”, p.17).

184-5. **He that keeps nor crust nor crumb**] He that has nothing soon shall be wanting something.

186. **sheal’d peascod**] i.e. Lear’s codpiece. The remark is a double entendre, as shealed peas are among the dishes served for dinner. [See [Figure 93](#).] Garden peas—also commonly called English peas or green peas—are one of the first vegetables harvested in spring. “At Barking Nunnery, it is said, that they managed to get a dish of green peas by Lent” (Chatterbox, p. 270). “The pods are firm and rounded, and the round peas inside need to be removed, or shelled, before eating (the pods are discarded).” (Christine Gallary, “What’s the Difference Between Snow Peas, Snap Peas, and Garden Peas?”)



Figure 93. “Peas were on the menu for James I during his stay at Houghton Tower, in Lancashire, where there massive meals were prepared for dinner, supper and breakfast the next day” ([The Sun](#)).

The lavish and sumptuous banquet prepared for James I, where he famously knighted a piece of beef, could not be more dissimilar to the Lenten dinner served to Lear and his young Knights, who are famished from hunting all day. Henry VIII regarded vegetables peasant food. “But they were always on the banquet table, usually cabbage, broad beans, peas, leeks and onions” (Tracey Furniss, “Weird foods and eating habits of British kings and queens – from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I and Victoria”). Dishes using dried peas and beans were typically prepared during the Lenten season, including [pease pottage](#). “In southern England is the small village of [Pease Pottage](#) which, according to tradition, gets its name from serving pease pottage to convicts.” The Puritan family seated around the dinner table in [Figure 75](#) appear to be eating some form of pottage.

186. S.D. **Pointing to Lear’s codpiece**] Ed. *Pointing to Lear*. Johnson. Not in Q, F.

189. **carp**] find fault, criticize.

190. **rank**] gross, excessive.

192. **safe**] sure

193. **too late**] i.e., recently.

194. **put it on**] instigate it.

195. **allowance**] approbation

197. **in the tender of a wholesome weal**] i.e., in the nurturing of a healthy body politic (*weal*).



The syntax of Goneril's speech is anything but maternal! [See Figure 94.] The Fool mocks her austerity (F, 726-29).

198. **tender**] delicate care for

198. **wholesome**] healthy

198. **weal**] body politic



Figure 94. Nature Forging a Baby, from the *Roman de la Rose*, Master of the Prayer Books, ca. 1490-1500. London, British Library, MS Harley 4425, f140r.

202. **cuckoo**] The cuckoo is associated with cuckoldry, as in *Love's Labor's Lost*. "The common cuckoo is an obligate brood parasite; it lays its eggs in the nests of other birds. At the appropriate moment, the hen cuckoo flies down to the host's nest, pushes one egg out of the nest, lays an egg and flies off. The whole process takes about 10 seconds. A female may visit up to 50 nests during a breeding season. Common cuckoos first breed at the age of two years." Cuckoos arrive in the UK in early spring and are gone by June.

202. **it had**] (Q, 727). it's had (F, 727)

202. **by its**] *by it* (F, 727), *beit* (Q, 727)

207. **fraught**] stored

208. **dispositions**] states of mind, temperamental fits.

210. **May not an ass know when a cart draws the horse**] The Fool refers to Æsop's fable of the miller, his son, and the ass. The basic situation in this fable is of a man and his son who are accompanied by their donkey and meet constant criticism from passers by of the way it is used or treated by them. The story's purpose is to show that everyone has their own opinion and there is no way one can satisfy all. There are four or five different elements to the story that are ordered differently according to version. When both walk beside the donkey they are criticized for not riding it. When the father rides, he is blamed for making his young son walk; when the son rides, he is blamed for leaving his elderly father on foot. When both ride, they are berated for overburdening their beast. In later versions the father then exclaims that the only option left is to carry the donkey on his back; in others he does so, or father and son tie the donkey to a pole which they carry on their shoulders. This action causes general mirth and has an unhappy outcome, resulting in the donkey's death through one cause or another (Wikipedia).



Figure 95. Ox whipping men. From *The World Turned Upside Down*.

211. **Whoop, Jug! I love thee**] This is thought to be the snippet of some bawdy song. He seems

to be asking Goneril to do him no harm for mocking her. Goneril is frowning menacingly at him from above, as she does Albany's Squire in IV,ii,72. Compare *The Winter's Tale*, 4,iv, "Whoop, doe mee no harme good man" (F, 2024-25):

*Ser.* He hath songs for man, or woman, of all sizes: No Milliner can so fit his customers with Gloues: he has the prettiest Loue-songs for Maids, so without bawdrie (which is strange,) with such delicate burthens of Dildo's and Fadings: Lump-her, and thump-her; and where Some stretch-mouth'd Rascall, would (as it were) meane mischeefe, and breake a fowle gap into the Matter, hee makes the maid to answere, *Whoop, doe me no harme good man*: put's him off, slights him, with *Whoop, doe mee no harme good man.*" (*The Winter's Tale*)

"Jug" is a nickname for Joan, the original name of Punch's wife in *Punch and Judy* puppet plays. She is an abusive nag. See note I,i,301: "let us *hit* together."

"The Punch and Judy show has roots in the 16th-century Italian *commedia dell'arte*. The figure of Punch derives from the Neapolitan stock character of Pulcinella or Punchinello. He is a manifestation of the Lord of Misrule and Trickster figures of deep-rooted mythologies. Punch's wife was originally called "Joan." The figure who later became Mr. Punch made his first recorded appearance in England in May 9, 1662, which is traditionally reckoned as Punch's UK birthday." (Puppet Wikia.)



Figure 96. From the *Punch and Judy* script, illustrated by George Cruikshank, 1827.

In the next scene, the Fool alludes to the large size of Goneril's breasts (see note I,v,12, "*she's as like this, as a Crabbe's like an Apple*" (F, 889-90). Common sense tells us that the word "Jug" is related to her big tits. Today, in the United States, there is a softcore pornographic adult magazine called *Jugs* that specializes in photographs of women with large breasts. "The sexual/scatological lazzi, the so-called 'stage crudités' of the *Commedia*, were among the most popular routines, although they remain the least analyzed by scholars." (See "Looking to Measure Her" in *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia dell'Arte*). The Fool is at the dinner table, and very likely drinking from a "jug"—a "vessel with a swollen belly" suggestive of a woman's bosom as in Figure 97. What is a male repast without jokes about women's cleavage? [See Video 11, *The Naked Gun 2 1/2 - The Smell of Fear*.]



Figure 97. "Soudic mij met drincken vergheten/ Die kat zou mijn pensen eten" [If the drink makes me forget/ the cat will eat my meat] woodcut illustrating "Der dieren palleys" (Antwerp, 1520).

214. **notion**] intellectual power.

215. S.D. *Pinches himself*] Ed. not in Q, F. Lear's theatrics are an essential part of his character. He is the prototype of Macbeth's "poore Player." (F, 2345).
215. **waking?**] Am I awake?
221. **Which**] i.e. *whom*, relating to the 'I' of Lear's speech.
223. **admiration**] affected astonishment.
224. **other your**] other of your
224. **pranks**] theatrics, showing off. Goneril is referring to Lear's ham-handed theatricality; specifically, pricking himself to see if he's awake. Regan says the same thing in II,iv when she refers to his "tricks" (F, 1438) (he kneels and begs forgiveness). Everything Lear does is overly histrionic.
228. **disorder'd**] disorderly.
228. **debosh'd**] a variant of debauched.
230. **Shows**] appears
230. **Epicurism**] gluttony, riotous living.
232. **grac'd**] honorable, the abode of stately decorum.
233. **desir'd**] requested.
235. **disquantity**] reduce the size of.
236. **remainders**] those who remain.
236. **depend**] attend you as dependents.
237. **besort**] suit
243. S.D. *Enter Albany*] (F, 768). *Enter Duke*. (Q, 768). There is no reason for Shakespeare to have included Albany in this scene except as a narrative foil for Lear. By placing the two characters in dialectical opposition to each other, the perspective through which the audience is seeing the action is not limited to the king's inner thoughts and emotions. We also see it from Albany's POV, who tries in vain to discover what the matter is, presumably to help resolve the problem. Shakespeare is dramatizing the idea that Lear's angry speeches are counter-productive, histrionic bluster, "full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing." (*Macbeth*, F, 2348-49).
243. S.D. *above*] Ed. One of the problems when we read a play, especially one by Shakespeare where many essential stage directions were not published in the quartos and Folio, is that we have to think imaginatively about the staging as it can change the meaning of what is being spoken. Unlike a novel such as *Don Quixote*, *King Lear* is spatiotemporal by design, and the proxemics of the actors is absolutely essential to the meaning-making. The first question readers must ask themselves in this scene is where is Albany standing in relation to Lear and Goneril? It appears he finds himself in the thick of their quarrel, as when Il Capitano intercedes in a fight between Arlecchino and Pendolino and ends up receiving most of the blows himself. Being on the upper balcony or the "Lords Rooms" makes it easy to switch the audience's focus from Goneril to Albany because the space allocated to actors is quite restrictive. Upon his entrance, she has merely to take a quick step behind him to place him in diametrical opposition to her wrathful father. When the king departs from the stage, she returns to her former position at the balcony's edge.
244. **Woe that too late repents**] Lear's curse hits Albany directly, like a pie in the face. It is a classic example of what is known in *Commedia dell'arte* as "innocent bystander lazzo". As

Friedrich Dürrenmatt writes, "Shakespeare's tragedies are already really comedies out of which the tragic arises." (Friedrich Dürrenmatt. "Problems of the Theatre". *The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*. Grove Press, 1964. pp. 30–31.)



Video 15. 1916 Vintage Silent Pie Fight with Charlie Chaplin, an example of "Innocent Bystander" Lazzo.

245. S.D. *Exit Lear's Knight*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear commands the young Knight to prepare his horses (F, 770). He reappears in I,v,41.
249. S.D. *To Goneril*] Rowe; not in Q, F.
249. **kite**] a hawk. Armstrong, *Shakespeare's Imagination*, 1946, pp. 12, 17, points out that to Shakespeare the kite 'is a despicable creature symbolic of cowardice, meanness, cruelty and death' (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 47).
250. **choice**] choicest, the superlative being understood from 'rarest'.
- 252-53. **And in the most exact regard support ... name**] and are most particular in living up to the honorable reputation they have earned.
252. **in ... regard**] the smallest details
253. **worships**] honor
257. S.D. *Striking his head*] Pope, not in Q, F. See note I,iv,216, S.D., "*Pinches himself*."
259. **Go, go, my people**] The several knights Lear has honored to sit with him at dinner stand in amazement at the events. They are too dumbfounded to move, and don't leave until line 277. Compare "*Who stirs?*" (F, 134) in Act I scene i. The all-knowing Fool does not stop dining because he knows Lear will be returning shortly, which he does.
262. **Nature**] Compare I,i,52. "*Nature*" and I,ii,1, "*Nature*."
267. **derogate**] debased, degraded.
268. **teem**] have offspring.
269. **child of spleen**] a child consisting only of malice
270. **thwart**] cross-grained, perverse
270. **disnatur'd**] without natural affection
272. **cadent**] falling
272. **fret**] wear away
273. **her mother's pains**] Goneril's maternal cares
276. S.D. *Exeunt Lear, Kent and Knights*] Ed. *Exit*. (F, 803). Not in Q.
279. **disposition**] humor
280. S.D. *Re-enter Lear*] *Enter Lear*. (F, 808). Not in Q.
285. **perforce**] Compare I,v,33 note
287. **Th'untented woundings**] viz., his bleeding tears. In surgery, a "tent" is "A roll or pledget, usually of soft absorbent material, often medicated, or sometimes of a medicinal substance, formerly much used to search and cleanse a wound, or to keep open or distend a wound, sore, or natural orifice." (*OED*, 2): "Hauing cleansed the soare by tying a *taint* of flaxe or fine linnen cloth. 1610 G. Markham *Maister-peece* ii. cxiii. 407.

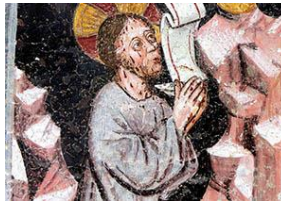


Figure 98. Christ bleeding tears while praying in the garden of Gethsemane, from the gothic Tabernakelbildstock in Taisten, Leonhard of Brixen (15th century).

288. **fond**] foolish

293. **comfortable**] comforting, ready to give comfort

294-5. **with her nails/ She'll flay thy wolvis visage**] Note how Regan's bestial nature is represented in the imagery. Her plucking out Gloucester's second eye in III,vii is not simple melodrama to thrill the audience, but an elemental part of her character. See note III,vii,80, S.D., "*She plucks out his other eye.*"

397. S.D. **Exit**] (F, 829) Upon Lear's departure, Goneril steps forward beside him.

299. **I bear you—**] Goneril cuts him off in mid-sentence.

301. S.D. **To the Fool**] Johnson. Not in Q, F.

304. **fox**] See note III,vi,S.D. *A Hunting Lodge*

306. **Should sure**] should certainly be sent.

308. S.D. **Exit**] (F, 841). Not in Q.

311. **At point**] in armed readiness.

312. **buzz**] rumor

313. **enguard**] protect

314. **in mercy**] in jeopardy.

316. **still**] always

317. **Not fear still to be taken**] rather than continue in the fear of our safety.

320. S.D. **Re-enter Oswald**] Collier. *Enter Steward.* (F, 856). Not in Q.

324. **particular**] own, personal, individual.

326. **compact**] confirm, make substantial, fortify.

327. S.D. **Exit Oswald**] Collier. Not in Q, F.

328. **This milky gentleness and course of yours**] viz., womanly.

331. **harmful mildness**] dangerous lenity

335. **th'event**] Let us see what happens.

335. **Trumpets Sound**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

335. **Exeunt**] (F, 872); (Q, 872).

ACT I, SCENE V.] *Scena Quinta* (F, 873). Scene 5 in Quarto.

And the Mountaine tops that freeze,  
Bow themselues when he did sing.  
To his Musicke, Plants and Flowers  
Euer sprung; as Sunne and Showers,  
There had made a lasting Spring.  
Euery thing that heard him play,  
Euen the Billowes of the Sea,  
Hung their heads, & then lay by.  
In sweet Musicke is such Art,  
Killing care, & grieffe of heart,  
Fall asleepe, or hearing dye.

- *Henry VIII* (F,1620-31)



Figure 99. Roman marble mosaic of Orpheus, A.D. 194; Eastern Roman Empire, near Edessa, shows him seated and playing a lyre or cithara, wearing a Phrygian cap. Wiki

S.D. **Court before the Same.**] Capell; not in Q, F

S.D. **The Platform]** Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool]** (Q2, 874). *Enter Lear.* (Q1, 874). *Enter Lear, Kent, Gentleman, and Fool.* (F, 874).

S.D. **with lute]** Ed. Not in Q, F. Cf. S.D., “*Enter Quadratus, Phylus following him with a lute*” (*What You Will*, I,i, Marston). The narrative in I,v, is drawn from the biblical legend of David and Saul. According to 1 Samuel 16:14-23, “an ‘evil spirit from God’ plagued King Saul, who summoned the 15 year old David to play soothing music for him on his harp. “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”



Figure 100. David Plays the Harp for Saul, by Rembrandt van Rijn, c. 1650 and 1670. Mauritshuis.

Music has long been believed to have a healing effect on the spirits. Pythagoras observed that certain tunes and rhythms can calm the mind and the soul (Porphyry, *On the Life of Pythagoras*, Chapter XXV). Plato writes in *Timaeus*, § 47,

*Attunement*, having motions akin to the circuits in our soul, has been given by the Muses to the intelligent user of the arts not for mindless pleasure, as it is fashionable to assume, but as an aid to bringing our soul-circuit, when it has gone out of tune,



into order and harmony with itself. And rhythm likewise, in view of the unmeasured and graceless condition than comes about in most of us, was bestowed by them for the same purpose" (qu. Martin West, *Music Therapy in Antiquity*, 2000, p.58.)



Figure 101. "Thou lovest all devoring words, O thou deceitful tongue" (Psalm 52:4, JKB). Like King Saul, whose mental/spiritual distress was treated by David's playing a harp, Henry VIII is shown playing the harp with his Fool Wil Somers at his side. Somers represents the foolish and deceitful nature of men's words, which Henry is depicted turning away from. The King Psalter (52), 16<sup>th</sup> century, BL Royal 2 A XVI, f. 63v, British Museum.

In I,v, the Fool's objective is to *re-tune* Lear's mind, just as Cordelia uses music in IV,vi to wind up his "*untuned and jarring senses*" (F, 2765). In his essay "Music and the Soul in Stoicism," Paul Scade "examines Stoic thought on the psychological effects of music, arguing that music has a rational structure and that its effect on the soul is rational. It claims that the ratio-based structure of music is able to encode and communicate tensional ratios. In this way it can represent the structure of the things in the world in a manner that is direct and unmediated by verbal language." (*Selfhood and the Soul: Essays on Ancient Thought and Literature in Honour of Christopher Gill*, 2017). [See Figure 101.]

1. **Cornwall**] Cambridge, 1960. *Gloster* (Q, 876) *Gloster* (F, 875). In Act II, both Kent and Lear speak of travelling first to Cornwall's castle where they are told the duke and duchess have removed themselves to Gloucester's.
1. **these letters**] this letter
3. **than comes from her demand out of the letter**] than the perusal of the letter suggests to her to ask you. 3. **demand**] question. 3. **out of**] suggested by.
5. S.D. *Exit*] Ed. *Exit*. (Q, 881). *Exit*. (F, 881).



Figure 102. Orfeo by Cesare Gennari

5. S.D. *The Fool plays a sad tune on his lute*] Ed. See note I,iv,S.D., *lute*. "Sad music" is cited in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 147, **sad music**. The central idea being dramatized in this scene is the inverted role of parent and child, a recurrent theme in Shakespeare's works. (See "Parent-child relationships in Shakespeare's plays".) Here, the concept is being signaled to the audience nonverbally by the double-casting of the parts of Cordelia and the Fool, as well as the choice of music. Logically, the Fool is playing the tune of a nursery lullaby a mother might sing to a wailing infant to stop them from crying. (See Kathleen Palti, "Singing Women: Lullabies and Carols in Medieval England, 2011) As neuro-scientists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century might say, the Fool is speaking to Lear's *primal* brain

through the use of music and nonsense. Shakespeare understood that people communicate with each other on a level far below the rational mind, before words are understood. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, he terms it “the *primall state*” (F. 474). The tune is likely used again in scene 13 and scene 21 as a sort of *leitmotif* for the love a parent has for a child. Claudio Monteverdi characterizes protagonists and the action in *L’Orfeo* (1607) with particular motifs.

In *Lear*, Shakespeare draws on many comedic genres to get laughs from the audience, both “high-brow” and “low-brow”. We find instances of his debt to the bawdy phallic processions in ancient Greece, “the *old Comedie*” (F, 463) of Aristophanes, the stock characters of *Atellan Farce*, the slapstick gags in Plautus and Terence, and even the outlandish costumes of English mummers in May Day pageants. Robert Henke shows how Shakespeare was influenced by *commedia dell’arte* in *Shakespeare, Italy, and Transnational Exchange* (2017). This particular scene appears have been largely retro-scripted, like III,vi.

In a recent paper entitled “Entertainments from a Medieval Minstrel’s Repertoire Book” published in *The Review of English Studies* (31 May 2023), James Wade presents evidence from the Heege Manuscript to suggest that *Lear* might have been influenced by the traditions of travelling minstrels who performed in England throughout the Middle Ages. “A surprising conclusion is that medieval minstrels were offering comic performances, rather than the kinds of material we usually associate with medieval minstrelsy, such as Robin Hood ballads, tales of chivalry, and accounts of great battles,” Wade writes in a correspondence with Matthew Rozsa in *Salon.com*. “[Wade] later added that these comedians had, ‘the instinct to self-ironize, to use crude bodily humor, to use slapstick and situational comedy, and the willingness to make the audience the butt of the joke.’” (“Scholars may have an authentic manuscript of a medieval comedy show — and it’s pretty funny” (June 24, 2023).



Video 16. Manny Pacheco on Comedy: Value of the Straight Man.

What is remarkable about this little scene is its comic form. It could easily be mistaken for a double act in the tradition of British music hall or American Vaudeville, without any psychological or metaphysical intentions at all. In it, Lear acts the part of a “straight man” feeding lines to the Fool. [See Video 13, Manny Pacheco, “Value of the Straight Man.”] Martin Esslin cites Shakespeare as an influence on Theatre of the Absurd, —which “deliberately attempts to renew the language of drama and to expose the barrenness of conventional stage dialogue” (Martin Esslin, “The Theatre of the Absurd, 1960, p. 10).

The words spoken by the Fool take the form of riddles, which further subvert conventions of language. “A fascination with non-literal language, how it works and what effects it has on hearers and readers, goes a very long way back. In the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, it was associated with the study of rhetoric; in particular, with figures of speech (or tropes), including metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy and irony, and how they can be used to make a

text or a public speech more effective, attractive and convincing to its recipients.” (Robyn Carston, "[Grecian pragmatics and non-literality.](#)")

The early definitions identify the riddle with metaphor. Aristotle was probably the first to define the riddle in this way. In this classical tradition fall definitions similar to the one proposed by [Gaston Paris](#). He defined the riddle as “a metaphor or group of metaphors, the employment of which has not passed into common use, and the explanation of which is not self-evident. Another observation concerning the formal characteristics of riddles drew attention to the frequent presence of an apparently irreconcilable contradiction or incongruity. Once again, Aristotle was one of the first to comment on this: “The very nature indeed of a riddle is this, to describe a fact in an impossible combination of words (which cannot be done with the real names for things, but can be with their metaphorical substitutes) . . . .” Alan Dundes, "[Toward a Structural Definition of the Riddle](#),” 1963

The proxemics of the actors is a decisive factor in apprehending the meaning of the underlying subtext. As I see it, Lear is alone downstage on the platform facing forward; the Fool/Cordelia is upstage quietly punctuating his riddles on his lute, playing some well-known lullaby. The scene moves forward, and so does the Fool until he is standing by Lear’s side. When the two are physically at their closest, Lear’s Knight enters and the king bolts. His proximity to Fool/Cordelia makes him uncomfortable for obvious reasons. (Compare also [note IV,v,170. S.D.](#),“*Sitting beside Gloucester.*”) This leaves the Fool alone downstage to ruminate on the nature of comedy. See “[Why Do Men Struggle to Express Their Feelings?](#)”



**Figure 103. Folio 110 from the McGill Feather Book: Scene from a comedy by Nicolò Barbieri showing Spineta serenaded by the masked Schapin (Scapino). The large number of instruments hanging from the tree suggest the player is the commedia dell'arte actor Francesco Gabrielli with his wife Spinetta.**

7. **kibes]** chilblains, chapped heels.
9. **thy wit shall not go slipshod]** That is, “Your wits are in no danger of slipping because the kibes they’re going to get will be so painful they’re certain to tread carefully.” Compare [III,ii.31-4 note](#). “For the folklorists and linguists who are serious students of what has been designated ‘a minor genre,’ the riddle far from being merely the witty bit of entertainment it is commonly supposed to be, is, in fact, a complex linguistic and aesthetic structure that, when subjected to systematic and scientific study, reveals a great deal about the major human systems—such as language, culture, and art—with which it is inextricably bound up. *The Language of Riddles: New Perspectives*, WJ Pepicello and Thomas A Green
11. **kindly]** in a like manner.
12. **she’s]** i.e., Regan. The audience must already have observed that Regan is as flat as a boy in [I,i](#). to make any sense of the Fool’s joke here. Compare [note II,iv,265](#), “*If only to go warm were gorgeous.*”

12. **this**] Goneril

12. **crab's like an apple**] This joke alludes to the size of their breasts. Though Goneril's are much bigger than Regan's, they will taste just as bitter. The image evokes the **exemplary story** of a woman, Pero, who secretly breastfeeds her father, Cimon, after he is incarcerated and sentenced to death by starvation. "The story is recorded in **Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium** by the ancient Roman historian **Valerius Maximus**, and was presented as a great act of **pietas** (i.e., filial piety) and Roman honour. A painting in the **Temple of Pietas** depicted the scene. Among Romans, the theme had mythological echoes in Juno's breast-feeding of the adult Hercules, an Etruscan myth." (Wikipedia, Roman Charity.) [See Figure 104 and Figure 163.]



Figure 104. Cimon and Pero, Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1630, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

16. **on's**] of his."

18. **of**] on

18. **side's**] side of his

25. **put's**] put his.

27. **I will forget my nature**] i.e. "kind." See III,iv,101.,S.D., "*Lear tears off pieces of his costume.*"

29-30. **the seven stars**] the Pleiades.

30. **mo**] more.

30. **pretty**] apt, neat

33. S.D. **Begins to weep**] Ed. not in Q, F.

33. **To take it again performe**] i.e. his manhood. He has begun weeping again. See I,iv, 284-87, "*I am ashamed/That thou has power to shake my manhood thus;/That these hot tears, which break from me performe,/Should make thee worth them*" (F, 814-17).

41. **in temper**] in my normal condition.

41. S.D. **Enter Lear's Knight**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear commanded the actor to prepare his horses in the previous scene. See I,iv,246. S.D. "*Exit Lear's Knight*".

42. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Seruant* (Q, 921). *Gent.* (F, 921)

43. S.D. **Exeunt Lear and Lear's Knight**] Not in Q, F.

44. **maid**] a virgin. "A Lover's Complaint," "*He preacht pure maide,*" (Q, 313). Alexander Schmidt, Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary: **maid**.

45. **things**] The Fool's couplet is addressed directly to the women in the audience. By "*things,*" he is alluding to the *time* of their maidenhood. If it is shorter than *now*, they've already lost it. That is, any virgin who is so naïve to think this departure is funny, is sure to be robbed of her maidenhood, *if she hasn't been already*. The Fool makes riddles about **time** throughout the play, notably in III,ii, 96, "*This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time*" (F, 1749), and again in III,vi,81, "*And I'll go to bed at noon*" (F, 2038). Perhaps the boy

actor uses the finger board of his lute to help communicate the idea of time in the form of a musical joke: a mid-tone signifying “now”, a low note for “long” and a high note for “shorter.” Muir notes ‘the rhyme *departure-shorter* was accurate in Elizabethan pronunciation. The word *departure* is a homonymic pun.’ (*KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 55.)

45. S.D. **Hits a high note on his lute**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

45. S.D. **Exit**] Q. Exeunt. F.



Figure 105. Judith Leyster's androgynous Fool with Lute, after a painting by Hans Hals c. 1623.

**ACT II. SCENE I]** *Actus Secundus. Scena Prima* (F, 926). Scene 6 in Quarto.

S.D. **The Earl of Gloucester's Castle**] Malone, subst.; not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform and Upper Casement in the Tiring House**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See note II,i,19, “Descend.”

S.D. **Enter Edmund and Curan, severally.**] *Enter Bastard, and Curan, severally.* (F, 927). *Enter Bastard, and Curan meeting.* (Q1, 928). *Enter Bastard, and Curan meets him.* (Q2, 927).

1. **Curan**] An aged chamberlain serving the Earl of Gloucester—broadly, “a male personal attendant of a king or nobleman, who waits on him in his bedchamber” (*OED* 1.†a). (See note **CURAN** in *The Dramatis Personae*.) In the seventeenth century, chamberlains sometime bore a key, which actually fitted the door-locks of chamber rooms. It is inferred that the character has just recently been advised of the impending arrival of Regan and the duke. After first apprising Gloucester of the news, he next seeks out Edmund. It is the middle of the night, and Curan knows exactly where in the castle to find him, and has access to the room. The latter welcomes him by his distinctly Gaelic name, and the two of them speak together about sensitive matters of state. Theoretically, he reenters in II,i with “*Gloster, and Seruants with Torches*” (F, 970), and is commanded to “*Dispatch*” (F, 995) (i.e., “be quick, make haste”) to issue a proclamation ordering Edgar’s arrest. (See note II,i,58.S.D., “*To Curan.*”)

Curan is only important in the plot if he is the same character as the “*Servant*” (Q, 2176.1) and “*I Ser*” (Q, 2177.5) in III,vii (lines 2176.1-9 were omitted in the First Folio). [See note III,vii,96. “*Curan.*”] It places him among those present at Gloucester’s trial. The *I Ser* (Q, 2176.1) tells Albany’s Squire (aka *2 Servant*, Q, 2176.3) that he will lead the blinded earl to poor Tom. Following this logic, Curan is the “*Old Man*” in IV,i (Q, 2192) (F, 2188) who says has served the family for generations, and has thus known Edmund from birth: “*O my good Lord, I haue bene your Tenant, / And your Fathers Tenant, these fourescore yeares.*” (F, 2193-



94). (See note IV,i,13, “*tenant.*”) See also note IV,i,9. S.D., *led by Curan.* Thus, the “*Servant*” is not some anonymous bystander, but a man with close personal ties to the earl and his family. The audience naturally turns to see his reaction when Gloucester is betrayed by Edmund. How does the Bastard respond to the look he gives him? Guilt? Defiance? It was Curan who wrote the proclamation declaring Edgar an outlaw. And what must he be thinking as he stands by helplessly and witnesses his lord’s blinding?

2, 6,10,13. *Curan*] (Q, 930); *Cur.* (F, 929)

8. **arguments**] subjects of conversation.

9. **pray you**] please

10. **toward**] at hand

13. S.D. *Exit*] (F, 942). Not in Q.

14. **The better**] so much the better.

17. **of a queasy question**] of a kind that requires careful handling, if he is not to make a mess of it. 17. **queasy**] Delicate, unsettled.

18. **Briefness**] promptitude, immediate action, speed.

19. **Descend**] Edmund is speaking literally.

19. *Enter Edgar*] After line 18 *work* (F, 948). After *hath* (Q1, 946). After *which* (Q2, 946).

19. S.D. *descends from above with a rope*] Ed. Cf. *Claracilla*, F12V *Enter above with a Rope to come down and make his escape*” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 184). It can never be known where exactly Edgar “*descends*” from. From what little we know about the interior of the Globe Playhouse, I theorize it is from “a casement” window on the **third level** of the *mimorum aedes* (Latin for “players house”) above the Lords Rooms.



Figure 106. *De Arte Gymnastica, libri sex, Mercuriale, Girolamo. Apud Iacobum de Puys, 1577.-*

The discovery of Aernout Van Buchel's copy of Johan de Witt's drawing of the Swan playhouse in the University of Utrecht library in 1880 “forms the inevitable basis of any comprehensive account of the main structural features of a [Elizabeth] playhouse” (Chambers, E.K. *The Elizabethan Stage*, 2:527. Oxford: Clarendon, 1923.) [See Figure 27.] In de Witt’s drawing, details of the third level are concealed by the roof overhanging the platform. Thus, it is not known if the “tiring-house” was cantilevered, —a building technique used in medieval timber-frame buildings in which an upper floor projects beyond the dimensions of the floor below. It would make sense if it was. “There are a number of advantages gained from this type of design. It increased the floorspace of upper floors, making the most of available land, as well as providing some cover from the elements next to the building.” (“Jettying – A Unique Architectural Style”).





Figure 107. King John's Hunting Lodge, Axbridge, Somerset, a 15<sup>th</sup> century merchant's house.

The exact height of the Globe Playhouse is also unknown. "If ...the under side of the superstructure was on a plane with the ceiling of the third level of the tiring-house and the top of the spectator-gallery, then the scenic wall was three stories high (32 feet), and the third level of the tiring-house thus included in the visible scene was capable of development as a unit of the multiple stage" (Adams, *The Globe Playhouse*, pp. 298-99). Were Edgar to "descend" from "a casement" window on the third floor (as at King John's Hunting Lodge, Figure 107), it could have been a drop of around 6-7 metres (20-23 ft) to the stage. Thus, his descent represents much more than an ordinary stage entrance: it is a semiotic sign of character's mettle. Climbing and descending a rope requires physical strength and agility. It is a gymnastic feat; something that would be expected of English sailors onboard ship. See *The Art of Manliness*, "How to Climb a Rope Like a Navy SEAL". The whole point of Edgar's "descent", or so it seems to me, is to thrill the audience with his machismo. It is shamelessly theatrical, representing his sudden drop on *Lady Fortune's Wheel*. He next appears in II,iii, crawling out from the "cellar" underneath the stage into the yard. (See note II,iii.S.D. below.)



Video 17. Swashbuckler Errol Flynn in *The Sea Hawk* (1940). Note that the English privateers onboard ship descend on ropes wearing swords.

It is pure theory how this third level was put to use by Shakespeare's playing company: A music gallery? Management offices? A "green room"? Most scholars theorize that it included a secure storage space for costumes, hangings, musical instruments, and other expensive items owned by the King's Men. For obvious reasons, the room would have been locked off to the public, hence the need for Edmund to give his brother a key: "There's my key" (F, 491). Shakespeare's audience would have expected him to need one to enter. (See note I,ii,157, "key".)

24. **i'th'haste**] in great haste.
26. **Upon his party**] Furness quotes Delius, 'In order to confuse his brother and urge him to a more speedy flight, by giving him the idea that he is surrounded by perils, Edmund asks Edgar first whether he has not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall, and then, reversing the question, asks whether he has not said something on the side of Cornwall 'gainst the Duke of Albany.'
- p. 102
27. **Advise yourself**] consider
27. **on't**] of it.
29. **In cunning**] to avoid the appearance of collusion.
29. S.D. **He draws his sword**] Ed Not in Q, F.

30. **Edgar draws and parries**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Edgar's half-hearted sword play does not convince the audience that he is a strong fighter.

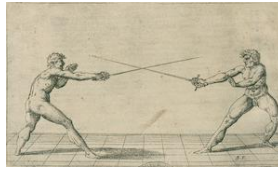


Figure 108. Scola, overo teatro by Nicoletto Giganti - Figure 2.

30. **quit you well**] acquit, give a good account of yourself, fight well. Muir quotes *I Sam.*,iv.9: 'Be strong, and quit yourselves like men, and fight.' (*KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p.57.)
32. S.D. **Exit Edgar**] F, 965. Not in Q.
31. **Yield**] spoken loudly, so as to be overheard.
- 33-4. **beget opinion . . . endeavor**] make people think I have a desperate fight.
34. S.D. **Wounds his arm**] Rowe; not in Q, F.
- 34-5. **I have seen drunkards . . . sport**] Young gallants, under the influence of drink, would wound themselves in order to pledge the health of their mistresses in blood mingled with their drink. See, e.g., Jonson *Cynthia's Revels*, IV.i.200-9: 'I would see how *Loue* could worke . . . by letting this gallant expresse himselfe . . . with stabbing himselfe and drinking healths, and writing languishing letters in his blood.' (qu. Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 58).
36. S.D. **Enter Gloucester**] *Enter Gloster*, (F, 970) *Enter Glost.* (Q, 971).
36. **Curan**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
36. **and Knights with torches**] Ed. *and Seruants with Torches.* (F, 970). Not in Q. The "Seruants" escorting Gloucester are armed household Knights—the kind he sends to escort Lear safely to Dover. The audience can distinguish them from his domestic servants from their costumes.
39. **Mumbling of wicked charms**] Edmund exploits his father's beliefs in the occult.
40. **mistress**] "A woman, goddess, or thing personified as female, which has control over a person or is regarded as a protecting or guiding influence." *Obsolete.* (*OED 3.b*).
43. S.D. **Exeunt some Knights**] Ed. Not in Q, F. The audience is able to identify them from their tabards bearing Gloucester's coat-of-arms.
41. **I bleed**] Edmund provides his father with more empirical evidence of Edgar's treachery. The business draws the audience's attention to Gloucester's need to wear eyeglasses. Apparently, he hadn't seen the wound.
41. S.D. **Gloucester readjusts his spectacles to see the wound**] Ed. Not in Q, F. [Figure 57.] The important idea Shakespeare is representing here is the *artificial* means of Gloucester's vision. He fails to see the true nature of the evidence presented to him. (See note III,vii,65. S.D., "*Stomps on Gloucester's spectacles.*")
45. **that**] when that
46. **bend**] aim.
49. **loathly opposite**] bitterly opposed.
50. **fell**] deadly, fierce.
50. **motion**] thrust—a fencing term.

51. **prepared**] unsheathed and ready.
51. **charges home**] makes a home thrust at.
52. **Unprovided**] unprotected.
52. **lanc'd**] Theobald; lanch'd] Q; latch'd F. pierced, wounded.
53. **alarum'd spirits**] energies roused to action, as by a trumpet
54. **Bold in the quarrel's right**] emboldened by the justice of his cause. (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 59)
55. **gasted**] frightened.
56. **Let him fly far**] however far he flies.
- 57-8. **uncaught and found.** ] Ed. *Vncaught/ And found*; (F, 994-5); *Vncaught and found*, (Q1, 994-5); *vncaught and found*; (Q2, 902-3). Meaning, un-caught and un-found. As David Crystal observes, William Shakespeare “seemed to have had a penchant for using *un-* in imaginative ways.” (*Think on My Words': Exploring Shakespeare's Language*, 2008. p.171.) In today's jargon, “You may want to *find and catch* specific Pokémon to fill up your Pokédex.”
58. S.D. **To Curan**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Curan is given the authority to issue a proclamation, further dramatizing his close connection to Gloucester's household, and his responsibilities. See note II,i,1, *Curan*.
58. **Dispatch**] “To dispose or rid oneself promptly of (a piece of business, etc.); to get done, get through, accomplish, settle, finish off, conclude, execute promptly or speedily” (*OED*, 5.a.). Spoken as an imperative. Compare *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV,ii, “*dispatch.*” (F, 2000).
59. **worthy**] honorable
59. **arch and patron**] chief patron
63. S.D. **Exit Curan**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
65. **pight**] fully determined, from pitched
65. **curst**] sharp, harsh, angry
67. **unpossessing**] incapable of holding property, and so beggarly
68. **would stand**] should stand.
68. **reposal**] placing
69. **virtue, or worth**] or your own virtue or worth.
70. **faith'd**] credited.
72. **character**] handwriting
73. **suggestion**] evil instigation.
73. **practice**] treacherous device.
74. **make a dullard of the world**] suppose everyone to be stupid.
76. **pregnant**] obvious, readily conceivable
76. **potential**] powerful
77. **fast'ned**] inveterate, hardened. Muir says it is probably a metaphor for the hardening of cement. *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 61. Compare note III,vii, 31, “*Hard, hard.*”
78. S.D. **Tucket within**] after *seek it* F (l.1014) F; not in Q. In accordance with the tragicomical style of *King Lear*, the tucket is likely parodical of the duke's pomposity: florid and overblown.

80. **ports**] seaports
85. **capable**] able to inherit. John Guillim notes, *Chassaneus* faith, that Baftards are not capable of their Father's Patrimony, either by Law or Custom, *quia filius Ancillae non erat baeres cum filio Liberae*. See *A Display of Heraldry* (1611), p. 38-39.
85. S.D. **Enter Cornwall, Regan**] *Enter Cornwall, Regan*, (F, 1024); *Enter the Duke of Cornwall*. (Q, 1024).
85. **attended by Cornwall's Knight and four other bodyguards**] *Ed. and Attendants*. (F, 1024). Not in Q. There are rumors of war, and the duke and duchesses are escorted from their castle by armed bodyguards dressed as Knights or soldiers. Conspicuous among them is "Cornwall's Knight" (*Seru. F, 2145*) who fatally wounds the duke in III,vii. It can be induced from the action in III,vii that he is accompanied by four others: two extras are needed to carry his corpse off stage after he is murdered by Regan, and two to lead Gloucester out after he is blinded. They are an intimidating presence on stage, and wear Cornwall's coat-of-arms. There is absolutely no mistaking them for domestic servants.
91. **godson**] Lear was Edgar's sponsor at his baptism.
97. **consort**] set
98. **ill affected**] disloyal
99. **put him on**] incited him to
100. **th'expense and waste**] the privilege of spending and squandering
104. **Nor I, assure thee, Regan**] Cornwall's remark shows his obsequiousness to Regan. She wears the pants in the house. See II,iv,92 note *'fiery'*.
106. **child-like**] filial.
107. **bewray**] discover, disclose
108. **apprehend**] arrest
111. **Be fear'd of doing harm**] be feared, lest he should do mischief.
- 111-12. **Make your own purpose ...please**] 'carry out your plans for his capture, and make what use you like of my authority and resources for that purpose' (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 63)
113. **virtue and obedience**] virtuous obedience
119. **Thus**] Just as Goneril cuts off Albany in mid-sentence (I,iv,299), Regan takes the words out of Cornwall's mouth, showing the audience which of the two is dominate. Compare note III,vii,44. "*kingdom—*"
119. **threading dark-ey'd night**] passing through the middle of the night, as through the eye of a needle.
120. **prize**] importance.
123. **differences**] quarrels
123. **which**] referring to Lear's letter.
125. **attend dispatch**] are waiting to be dispatched.
128. **craves the instant use**] requires to be done at once.
129. S.D. **Flourish. Exeunt**] *Exeunt. Flourish*. (F, 1073). Not in Q.

**ACT II, SCENE II**] *Scena Secunda* (F, 1074). Scene 7 in Quarto.

S.D. **Before Gloucester's Castle**] Capell; not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Enter Kent and Oswald**] Collier. *Enter Kent, and Steward severally.* (F, 1075). *Enter Kent, and Steward.* (Q, 1075).

S.D. **severally**] F; not in Q.

1. **house**] household.

3. **our**] Oswald uses the royal “we”, commonly employed by a person of high office, such as that of a monarch, earl or Pope.

5. **lov'st**] be friends. Compare “*Loue, and be Friends, as two such men should bee*” (*Julius Caesar*, F, 2116) See note IV,iv,21., “*love.*”



Figure 109. Sixteen-year-old Henry Frederick, Prince of Wales, by Isaac Oliver, ca.1610, Victoria and Albert Museum.

6. **I love thee not**] Oswald words, “*If thou lov'st me*” (F, 1070), hit a raw nerve in Kent, who seems to take them as a sexual proposition. He earlier insinuated that Oswald is a cocksucker. (See note I,iv,16, “*eat no fish.*”) Kent's abomination of Oswald appears on the surface to stem from the latter's affections of high birth and masculinity. He unmercifully rubs his nose in the fact that he is nothing but a common household drudge or “*lubber*” (F,620). In theory, Oswald comes from a poor family, if not a church parish. To the Earl of Kent, Oswald's clothes look like poor hand-me-downs; the colors don't perfectly match. He calls Oswald a “*barber-monger*” (F, 1106) for curling his hair. In Shakespeare's day, it was *de rigueur* for fashionable men like Henry Frederick and Henry Wriothesley to have their hair curled with hot irons, but not a domestic servant who eats left-over food (“*broken meats*”, F, 1088) in the kitchen with all the other menial household staff. [See Figure 109.] Perhaps suspecting the sexual nature of Oswald's relationship with Goneril, he calls him a “*bawd*” (F, 1093), and compares his services to a *Winchester Goose's* (F, 1156), the poorest of London's prostitutes. Worst of all, Oswald is wearing a sword as a gentleman would. (See note I,iii, S.D., “*wearing a sword*”). In Kent's mind, Oswald's lower-class status makes him no better than an animal, something to be butchered and eaten. He will make a meal of him: a “*sop of th' Moonshine*” (F, 1105).



Figure 110. The Butcher's Shop, Annibale Carracci, c. 1582, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX.

8. **Tisbury pinfeld**] Ed. *Lipsbury Pinfeld* (F, 1083); *Lipsburie pinfeld* (Q, 1082); *Lipsbury pinfeld*



(Q2, 1083). No such place as “Lipsbury” or “Lipsbury pinfold” has been identified, but the meaning is plain enough: if Oswald was in a pound, Kent would butcher him like a piece of meat. Throughout the play, Kent looks upon Oswald as something to be eaten: “*Lipsbury Pinfold*” (F, 1083); “*sop oth' Moonshine*” (F, 1105); “*carbonado your shanks*” (F, 1111); “*vnboulded villaine*” (F, 1139-40); “*Goose*” (F, 1156). “The terms “pinfold” and “pound” are Saxon in origin. *Pundfald* and *pund* both mean an enclosure. *There appears to be no difference between a pinfold and a village pound.*” (An alternative spelling/pronunciation of pinfold was “poundfield”, which implies a relation to the modern English word “(im)pound” (Plaque on pinfold site in [Higham, Lancashire](#))” (Wiki).

Shakespeare’s misspellings and bad handwriting is a trademark of the playwright. (See note II,iii,20, “*Hurdygurd.*”) They helped Dr. Douglas Bruster identify him as the author of passages in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. His argument, published in the September 2013 issue of *Notes and Queries*, “is that what’s pushed us away from the Additional Passages for so long is their closeness to Shakespeare’s own pen. That is, that what we’ve taken as bad writing comes in part from Shakespeare’s bad handwriting.”<sup>[21]</sup> As readers can see for themselves at [The Internet Shakespeare Library](#), the spelling of words in the quartos and Folio is erratic by 20<sup>th</sup> century standards. My theory is that “*Lipsbury*” is a misspelling of *Tisbury*. In *King Lear*, the “t” in “Felt” (F, 2627) is misprinted as an “l” in the quartos, spelling the word “*fell*” (Q1, 2627), (Q2, 2626). The village of *Tisbury* is also misspelled on John Speed’s map of Wiltshire, where it is recorded as *Tilburye* [Figure 129]: the cartographer or engraver clearly having mistaken a long ‘s’ (*f*) for an ‘l’.



Figure 111. The village of “Tilburye” in the county of “Wiltshire” on John Speed's 'The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine' (1611/12). University of Cambridge Digital Library.

The main grounds for emending the text are narrative. *Tisbury* is 20 km. west of *Salisbury*. (See *Tisbury*, [British History Online](#).) “The village is on the river *Nadder* and, apart from *Mere*, is the most populous place in south-west *Wiltshire*; until the 19th century *Tisbury* parish was the largest in that area.” The village is renowned for its great *tithe barn*, the largest of its kind in England with the largest thatched roof. While a *tithe barn* is not literally a “*pinfold*” or animal pound, it was used to hold livestock before slaughtering them, which is the metaphor Kent is making. Presumably, he is being ironic. This famous medieval structure can hardly be considered a “*pinfold.*” “In Shakespeare’s England every-one was required to give a certain portion of their income (typically 10%) to their local church. These payments, called *tithes*, would have been made by farmers in the form of crops or animals such as pigs and were the source of the local clergyman's income” ([myshakespeare](#)). The OED (1.a) cites W. Langland, *Piers Plowman* (Vernon) (1867) A. VII. l. 85. “For of my Corn and Catel heo Craueþ þe Tīpe [c1400 *Trin. Cambr. R.3.14 tipes*]. In *Romeo and Juliet*, I,iv, *Mercutio* says, “*sometime comes she with a tithe-pig's tail*” (F, 530).





Figure 112. Built in 1279, the magnificent tithe barn in Tisbury has been repurposed as an arts venue.

Some sort of restoration of the tithe barn could have been carried out during Shakespeare’s lifetime as the west side is remarkable for its Tudor arched double planked doors. [See Figure 112.] Of possible significance is the proximity of Tisbury to Salisbury Plain or “*Sarum plain*”, as Kent calls it, which is also located in the County of Wiltshire and stretches into Hampshire, the site of Winchester Cathedral. Hampshire, the capital of Wessex and later of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, was thought by Sir Thomas Malory to be the location of “*Camelot*”. Prostitutes in the District of Southwark were called “*Winchester Geese*” because they were licensed by the Bishop of Winchester to work within the Liberty of the Clink, an area on the south bank of the River Thames, opposite the City of London and outside its jurisdiction. The liberty was within a minute’s walk of Shakespeare’s Globe Playhouse. In lines F, 1156-57, Kent says he will drive Oswald “*cackling*” from Sarum Plain all the way to “*Camelot*” (85 mi or 137 km), a long and miserable journey for a goose that would he would prod mercilessly all the way and then be plucked and cooked for dinner.



Figure 113. Driving to Stonehenge located on Salisbury Plain from Westminster Cathedral.

No documentary evidence exists of where Shakespeare lived between 1585 and 1592—known as the “lost years”—but his familiarity with Wiltshire and its bordering counties of Dorset, Somerset, Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire put it as a logical place to dig. It could be during this “lost” period he befriended Henry Hastings, the second son of George Hastings, 4th Earl of Huntingdon, as discussed in III,iv, S.D. *A Hunting Lodge*.

So how is Shakespeare associated with Wiltshire? The main connection comes through Wilton in the south-east of our county. William Herbert, 3rd Earl of Pembroke, of Wilton House, is famously cited as the ‘Mr W.H.’ to whom Shakespeare dedicated many of his sonnets. The first folio of his works published posthumously in 1623 is dedicated to both William and his brother, Philip, the fourth Earl. Patronage of the arts was important to both Herbert and his wife, Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, the sister of Sir Philip Sidney (himself a famous poet who wrote ‘*Arcadia*’ while staying at Wilton in 1580.) In the first folio the 3rd Earl is thanked for his ‘many favours’ to Shakespeare and his company; in other words, considerable financial support. (“*William Shakespeare in Wiltshire*” by Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre).

- 13. **broken meats**] Somebody who lives on scraps, left-over food.
- 14. **three-suited**] Servants were given only three suits of clothes a year. Compare III,iv,126. “*three suits*”
- 14. **hundred-pound**] cheap. James I sold knighthoods for a hundred pounds. Steevens quotes Middleton, *The Phoenix*, IV,iii,55: ‘How’s this? Am I used like a hundred-pound gentleman?’

Furness, p. 116.

15. **worsted-socking**] Gentlemen wore silk stockings, not cheap woolen material. No one under the degree of knight was allowed silk ‘netherstocks’ under the Proclamation of 1597. [See Figure 114.]



Figure 114. Portrait of Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton (1573-1624), Patron of Shakespeare. Ca. 1600. Artist Unknown. He is wearing silk netherstocks. Private collection; on loan to the National Portrait Gallery, London.

15. **lily-livered**] white-livered, without blood in it, and hence cowardly.
- 15-16. **action-taking**] one who goes to law, instead of fighting
16. **glass-gazing**] vain
16. **super-serviceable**] over officious
17. **finical**] affectedly fastidious
17. **one-trunk-inheriting**] whose sum of possessions can be contain in a single trunk.`
- 18-19. **one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service**] would only perform good service to those who can pay for it, like a prostitute
19. **composition**] compound, mixture
20. **heir**] inheriting the mongrel bitch’s characteristics
22. **thy addition**] the titles I’ve given you.
27. S.D. **Drawing his sword**] Rowe; not in Q, F. He is threatening to chop Oswald up into pieces.
29. **sop o’ th’ moonshine**] A sop is a piece of bread soaked in liquid. Kent means simply that he will soak up the moonshine with Oswald as though he was a sop; i.e. *make a meal of him*. Cf. II,ii,34-5. “*I’ll so carbonado your shanks.*” A milksop is a word still used today to mean somebody without courage. See also II,ii,61, “unbolted”.
30. **cullionly**] rascally, base, vile; from cullion
30. **barber-monger**] a constant patron of the barber’s shop. That is, Oswald keeps his hair curled like a gentleman. Compare “*curl’d my haire*” (F, 1866). [See Figure 114.] “Men had their hair curled with hot irons. To keep the hair in place wax or gum was applied to the hair.” (Elizabethan Hair Styles)



Figure 115. Illustration by Gustave Doré from Chapter XXVI of *Don Quixote*.

33. **Vanity the puppet’s part**] Kent is alluding to allegorical morality or mystery plays where personified abstract qualities such as Death and Vanity are the main characters. In I,iv, the

audience witnessed Goneril commanding Oswald *from above* in the “Lords Rooms” (F, 856-64), as though he were her puppet. Don Quixote famously attacks the marionets in Master Peter’s puppet show in Chapt XXIV, Book Two of the eponymous novel. [See Figure 115.] In the 17th century, troupes of Italian puppeteers travelled around Britain playing at fairs and markets, probably using marionettes, which are operated from above by strings or rods” (Victoria and Albert Museum). A.R. Philpott writes in a *Dictionary of Puppetry* (1969): “Punch and Judy shows were traditionally marionette shows when they were brought over from Italy, but were later reinvented in the glove puppet style to accommodate the characters' violent movements without the obstruction of marionette strings.” See *Hamlet*, III,ii, “I could interpret betweene you and your loue If I could see the *puppets* dallying” (F, 2114-15); *Midsummer Night Dream*, III,ii, “Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you *puppet*, you.” (F, 1322); *Taming of the Shrew*, IV,iii, “*Belike you meane to make a puppet of me.*” (F, 2088).

35. **carbonado**] to scotch, or cut crosswise, a piece of meat before broiling or grilling.



Figure 116. Ox turned butcher. From *The World Turned Upside Down*.

- 35-6. S.D. **Beating him**] Rowe *subst.* after line 39 *strike*. Not in Q, F.
36. **come your ways**] Get moving
38. **neat**] “Of a person or animals: habitually clean and tidy; fastidious.” (*OED*, 4.a.). *Henry IV*, Pt.1.. II,iv, “wherein *neat* and cleanly, but to carue a Capon, and eat it?” (F, 1413-14).
39. **Help**] *helpe*. (Q, 1116). Not in F.
40. S.D. **Enter Edmund, with his rapier drawn**] Furness. *Enter Edmund with his rapier drawne, Gloster the Duke and Dutchesse*. (Q, 1117-18); After “young master”, *Enter Bastard, Cornwall, Regan, Glofter, Seruants* (F, 1117).
41. **matter**] subject of the quarrel.
42. S.D. **To Edmund**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
42. **with you**] i.e. the quarrel is with you.
42. **goodman**] A mock title for someone deemed unworthy of respect.
43. **flesh**] initiate. A hunting term. See Palsgrave, *Lesclarcissement*: ‘Flesche as we do an hounde, when we give him any parte of a wyld beast, to encourage him to run well’. Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 67.
43. S.D. **Cornwall’s Knight and other heavily armed knights**] Ed. *Seruants*. (F, 1117). Gloucester and the duke are accompanied by their armed household knights, not domestic servants. Conspicuous among them is Cornwall’s young Knight or *Serv*. (F, 2145) that Regan stabs in the back in III,vii.
48. **difference**] quarrel.
51. **disclaims in thee**] Nature renounces any claim to have produced you. He is put together by a bad tailor. In Oswald’s defense, he cannot afford a tailor, even a bad one.
60. **Thou whoreson zed! Thou unnecessary letter**] “Zed” is a name for the letter Z. “Around

300 BC, the Roman Censor **Appius Claudius Caecus** removed **Z** from the alphabet. His justification was that **Z** had become archaic: the pronunciation of /z/ had become /t/ by a process called **rhotacism**, rendering the letter **Z** useless.” (Dictionary.com).

61. **unbolted**] coarse flour. “Not bolted or sifted” (*OED*, **unbolted**, adj.2). Kent is once again referring to Oswald as something to be eaten. “Semolato, a kind of course vnbolted bread, full of branne.” (J. Florio, *Worlde of Wordes*). Compare II,ii, 29., “*sop o’ th’ moonshine.*”
62. **jakes**] a latrine, a privy. Figurately, “Something regarded as filthy or disgusting in some way, esp. in being morally corrupt; a source or repository of filth or wickedness.” (*OED*, 1.b). See II,ii,122., “*Ajax*”.
63. **wagtail**] A songbird that incessantly wags its long tail up and down. Wagtails are also known to be obsessed with looking at themselves in mirrors. [See Figure 117, “Vain wagtails get into a flap over car wing mirrors”, *The Daily Mail*.]



Figure 117. “Who’s a pretty boy then? A wagtail inspects himself in a car wing mirror.”

65. **beastly**] beast-like
68. **wear a sword**] See note I,iii,S.D., *wearing a sword*.
70. **holy cords**] natural bonds of affection.
71. **too intrince**] t’intrince (F, 1148) to intrench (Q1, 1148). “Intricate, entangled, involved.” (*OED*).
71. **smooth**] flatter.



Figure 118. “Netherlandish Proverbs” by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1559, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

73. **Bring**] (Q, 1150). Being (F, 1150) See “*Netherlandish Proverbs*” by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1550). “The third proverb is “to carry fire in one hand and water in the other”, which means someone is two-faced.”
74. **Reneg**] deny
74. **turn their halcyon beaks. . . gale**] This refers to the belief that the halcyon, or kingfisher, if hung up by the tail or beak, would turn with the wind. T. Lupton, Tenth Book of Notable Things, says that ‘A little byrde called the King’s Fisher, being hanged up in the ayre by the neck, his nebbe, or bill, will be always direct or straight gainst the wind.’ *Furness* p. 122
75. **gale and vary**] varying gale
75. **epileptic**] Smirking. Oswald is holding back his laughter. As noted above, it is imperative for

readers to imagine the blocking of this scene. Presumably, it is staged in such a way that only Kent and the audience can see the Steward sniggering.

79-80. **Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain . . . Camelot]** Salisbury Plain or Sarum plain is a **remote** region. Kent means simply that if he had Oswald *alone* he wouldn't be smiling.



Figure 119. According to local lore, Crossbones Graveyard was once the final rest place for the Winchester Geese, medieval sex workers licensed by the Bishop of Winchester to work in the brothels of The Liberty of the Clink. The graveyard is a short walk from the Globe Playhouse.

86. **likes]** pleases.

93-4. **constrains the garb ... nature]** forces on himself a demeanor, a character, quite opposed to what is really his (Craig) qu Furness p. 125.

94. **garb]** style, manner

99. **silly ducking]** ludicrously obsequious.

99. **observants]** obsequious attendants.

100. **stretch their duties nicely]** are particular to carry out their courtly duties punctiliously.

102. **allowance]** approval.

102. **aspect]** “Here used in a secondary astrological sense, like ‘*influence*’ in the following line” (Delius) qu. Furness, *A New Variorum Edition*, p. 126. The accent in on the last syllable. Kent is likening Cornwall’s face to a star affecting human destiny

103. **influence]** astrological power exercised by the heavenly bodies.

104. **Phoebus]** Apollo.

104. **front]** forehead.

105. **dialect]** manner of speaking, language (OED, 3a., “By corruption of speech, they false *dialect* and misse-sound it.” T. Nashe *Lenten Stuffe*, 1599.)

108-09. **though I should win your displeasure ... to’t]** Though you should ask me to become a plain knave, I will not be even if it displeases you.

114. **compact]** in league with the King.

115. **being down, insulted]** exulted over me when I was down.

116. **put upon him such a deal of man]** referring to Kent’s toxic masculinity, his sense of being “manly.” See note I,i,145, “*unmanly*.”

117. **worthied him]** won honor for himself.

118. **For him attempting who]** for assailing one who

119. **fleshment]** the action of feeding with flesh. Oswald is comparing Kent to a dog at mealtime. Cf. *Henry IV Part 2*, “*the wild dogge / Shal flesh his tooth on euery innocent*” (F, 2664-65).

122. **But Ajax is their fool]** Kent grossly insults the duke. Ajax is a pun on *a jakes*: a toilet, “a source or repository of filth or wickedness” (OED, 1b). “What vermine, I pray you, is there of Monkes, and Priestes, and all that Cleargie?..that filthie and stinking *iaxe* hath filled the world so full.” L. Tomson tr. J. Calvin *Serm. Epist. S. Paule to Timothie & Titus* 967/1, 1579.



In *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare depicts Ajax as a dimwit, a “*purblinded Argus, all eyes and no sight.*” (F, 187-88). He is “*slow at the Elephant*” (F, 180); “*beefe-witted*” (F, 782). See note III,vi, 22,S.D., “*Exeunt two more of Cornwall’s knights.*” [See note II,iv,92, “*Fiery.*”]



Figure 120. Stocks in Keevil, Wiltshire.

122. **stocks**] The stocks were typically used to punish and shame wandering vagabonds and beggars. In 1495, Parliament passed the *Vagabonds and Beggars Act* ordering that “vagabonds, idle and suspected persons shall be set in the stocks for three days and three nights and have none other sustenance but bread and water and then shall be put out of Town.” According to the historian *Alice Morse Earle*, “Public punishment in the stocks was a common occurrence from around 1500 until at least 1748” (*Curious Punishments of Bygone Days*). The stocks were popular with early American Puritans, who also used them as a punishment for profaning the Sabbath “by lewd and unseemly behavior.” For example, one Captain Kemble, a Boston seafaring man, made the mistake of publicly kissing his wife on returning home on a Sunday after three years at sea, a transgression that earned him several hours of public humiliation in the stocks. (James A Cox, “*Colonial Crimes and Punishments*”). [See note III,iv,94-5, “*Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncover’d body this extremity of the skies.*”]

123. **stubborn**] obdurate

123. **reverend**] aged

128. **grace and person**] i.e. an insult to both his title and Lear personally

132. **Till noon?**] Regan sadistically adds another 24 hours to Kent’s punishment, emasculating her husband by overriding his authority. She is also sending a message to her father by treating his messenger as a derelict vagabond.

134. **should**] would

135. **color**] kind, complexion.

136. **bring away**] bring here, bring along.

136. S.D. **Stocks brought out**] Pope. *Stocks brought out*. After “I will” (F. 1217). Not in Q.

139. **check**] rebuke

144. **answer**] be answerable for.

147. S.D. **To Cornwall’s Knight**] Ed. Not in Q or F. It is necessary for the audience to see Cornwall’s Knight obeying the orders of his lord for it to have meaning when he doesn’t. See III,vii, 69, 73, 76, 78. *Cornwall’s Knight*.

147. S.D. **Kent is put in the stocks**] Dyce.

148. **Come, my good lord, away**] (Q, 1227); *Come my Lord, away*. Assigned to Cornwall (F,



1227).

148. **Flourish**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

148. S.D. **Exeunt all but Gloucester and Kent**] Dyce; *Exit*. (Q2, 1236) *Exit*. (F, 1227); not in Q1.

151. **rubb'd**] impeded, hindered. From *Bowls*: “An unevenness of the ground which impedes or diverts a bowl; the slowing or diversion of a bowl caused by this.” (*OED 2.a*). See *Richard II*, III,iv, *Twill make me thinke the World is full of Rubs, / And that my fortune runnes against the Byas*. (F, 1811-12). Shakespeare characterizes Cornwall as being stupidly obstinate.

152. **watch'd**] gone without help.

155. **Give**] i.e. God give.

156. **taken**] received

156. S.D. **Exit**] (F, 1236). Not in Q.

156. S.D. **Soft music**] Ed. Not in Q, F. The music continues through Kent's speech. It stops when Edgar enters, signaling a change of scenes to the audience.

157. **approve**] confirm

158-59. **Thou out of heaven's benediction . . . sun.**] In other words, “Out of the frying-pan, into the fire. “This proverb, derived presumably from those who leave the shade to go into the hot sun, and so go from better to worse, is to be found in Heywood, *Proverbs*, 1546 (ed. 1874, p. 115): ‘In your running from him to me, yee runne / Out of God's blessing into the warme sunne.’ Furness p. 131

159. S.D. **He takes a letter out of his purse**] Not in Q, F. Only Kent's legs are restrained by the stocks. See note III,i,37, “*purse*”.

159. **thou beacon**] It is still the dark of morning, and Kent awaits the sun so he can read Cordelia's letter.

159. **under globe**] the earth beneath the sun

160. **comfortable**] comforting, helpful.

161-2. **Nothing almost sees miracles But misery**] Not being able to read a single word of the letter in the darkness, Kent images seeing a miracle in his misery.

162. S.D. **Puts away letter**] Ed. Not in Q, F. The night is so black that Kent can't even see the letter. Shakespeare is using poetry to communicate total darkness.

164. **obscured**] in disguise

164. **course**] course of action.

164. **find**] recover or redeem. The obscurity of the sentence (“*Cordelia . . . remedies*”) is discussed in Furness, *A New Variorum Edition*, pp. 132-35. Perhaps the complex syntax is intended to remind the audience of Kent's noble upbringing. He is saying that Cordelia will right the wrongs committed during the time of this current state, which is exceedingly wicked, by seeking to make reparations. The same idea is expressed in simpler words by Lear's Knight in IV,v,202-04, “*Thou hast one daughter / Who redeems nature from the general curse / Which twain have brought her to.*” Kent's syntax is equally convoluted in III,i,11-26, probably by design.

165. **enormous**] exceedingly wicked

165. **state**] kingdom. See III,I,

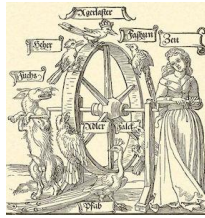


Figure 121. “Time and a Fox Turning the Wheel of Fortune with People of All Ranks to the Right.” *The Michelfeldt Tapestry: Allegory of Social Injustice (series)*, Albrecht Dürer, ca.1526, Rosenwald Collection.

169. **Fortune**] “In medieval and ancient philosophy the Wheel of Fortune, or *Rota Fortunae*, is a symbol of the capricious nature of Fate. The wheel belongs to the goddess *Fortuna* (Greek equivalent *Tyche*) who spins it at random, changing the positions of those on the wheel: some suffer great misfortune, others gain windfalls. The metaphor was already a cliché in ancient times, complained about by *Tacitus*, but was greatly popularized for the Middle Ages by its extended treatment in the *Consolation of Philosophy* by *Boethius* from around 520.” (Wiki). [See Figure 121.] Shakespeare has timed the use of this metaphor to qualify the meaning of Edgar’s entrance from below. See note II,iii,S.D., “*from under the stage.*”

169. S.D. **He sleeps**] *sleepes.* (Q, 1250). Not in F.

**ACT II. SCENE III]** Steevens. *Scena Secunda* (F, 1074). Scene 7 in Quarto. Furness quotes Schmidt, “In the Ff, Scenes ii, iii, and iv of this act form but one” Scene ii; and this indicates the ancient usage. Only with the departure of all the characters did the scenes change” (*A New Variorum Edition*, p. 135).

S.D. **Before a hovel**] Ed.; not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Yard**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Enter Edgar**] (F, 2051); (Q, 2051)

S.D. **below**] Ed. Not in Q, F. “Below can also be synonymous with *under the stage* or *beneath the stage*...in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* [p.235] “*Wife below, Rafe below means*” below the main platform among the audience” (*Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 28-9). It can be induced that Edgar is standing among the groundlings because Cordelia refers to the space when she says, “*And was thou fain, poor father/ To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn/ In short and musty straw?*” (F, 2786-87). The different levels signal to the audience that Edgar is hiding out in some remote, *lowly* place miles away from Kent, who remains on the platform in the stocks *above* him. It also signals the passage of time as some 35 hours elapse before Lear makes it to Gloucester’s castle. Kent is put in the stocks before sunrise on Day 1, and the king does not arrive until late afternoon on Day 2: “*Till noone? till night my Lord, and all night too.*” (F, 1214)

The use of levels at the Globe Playhouse explains how Lear, Kent, Edgar and the Fool can go unobserved by Gloucester for nearly a minute while he wanders about the platform in III,iv looking for them. It is not until he is accosted by Kent from *below* that he becomes aware of their presence. Similarly, in IV,i, Gloucester and Curan enter on the platform, and do not see Edgar until the latter reveals himself from *below* by blowing his horn. See note III,iv.S.D., “*below*”. The last the audience saw of Edgar, he descended dramatically from a casement

window on the third level of the tiring house in II.i. We now see him crawling out from underneath the stage into the yard. Shakespeare is using the physical space of the Globe theatre, rather than scenography, to communicate the philosophy of *Rota Fortunæ*. See note II,ii,169, “*Fortune*.”

According to C. Walter Hodges, “The stage was closed in below, not with boards (as it was at the Fortune) but with hangings” (*The Globe Restored*, 1953, p. 47.) Hodges thinks “a reasonable guess would put the normal stage height for a street theatre playing to standing spectators as somewhere between 5 feet 6 inches and 6 feet above the ground.”

“But what of the visibility of this, when there was a mob of groundlings to shut out the sight of it from the galleries?” writes Hodges. “What, then, was the visibility of similar devices in medieval practice? What problems were raised when the street performers of the Mysteries acted simultaneously between their pageant stages and the street (‘Herod rages in the pageant and in the street also’; and ‘the 3 kings speaketh in the street’ from the Coventry plays)? Presumably, as in the former time, the spectators would be kept away from that part of the ground needed in the action. A part of the yard could be roped off. Perhaps for a play like England’s Joy, which had an unusually high entrance fee, there were no ground spectators at all, and whole portions of the play (there was to have been ‘a great triumph made with fighting of twelve gentlemen at Barriers’, as well as ‘the battle at Sea in ’88 with England’s victor’) might conceivably have taken place in the yard. In any case it need not be supposed that, necessarily, for all plays, the whole of the yard was always occupied by spectators. There is more than a little reason to believe that Elizabethan stage practice did occasionally include, if only for its stunt value, a certain amount of action in the yard. The possibility alone is enough to demand research. Is it possible, for example, that the barge in the last act of Pericles, in which Marina and her attendants were brought out to Pericles’ black-sailed ship, was a practicable boat brought in through one of the gates of the yard and moored alongside the stage, which was the ship? Also, there are a number of references, in early plays, to actors on horseback. (‘Enter a spruce Courtier a horseback’, I Richard II.) Sir Edmund Chambers has suggested that this effect was simulated by the use of hobby-horses on the stage, but surely not is worth investigating the alternative, that there were occasions when real horses were ridden into the yard? It could so easily have been done.” (p. 49). The stage direction “above” needn’t always refer to an upper stage area in the tiring house. “Above” and “below” can refer to the platform and the yard respectively. For example, it is possible that in Antony and Cleopatra, Antony is borne through the yard “below” and hoisted “above” to Cleopatra downstage on the platform. “There is in Middleton’s Family of Love a remark by one of the character who says that he went to a play at the Fortune, where he ‘saw Sampson bear the town-gates on his neck from the lower to the upper stage.’ Perhaps he is not talking about an upper stage on the second level of the tiring house but the platform some six feet “above” yard. (*Ibid.*, 1953, pp. 48-50.)

(See note IV,v,1, “*hill*.”)

2. **happy**] opportune.

3. **port**] seaports

5. **attend my taking**] await to capture me.

8. **in contempt of man**] Man’s mortal condition is such that poverty can reduce him to the state

of an animal.

10. **elf]** tangle into elf-locks; matted hair, caused by neglect was called ‘elf-locks’, and elves were blamed for them.
11. **presented]** exposed to view, as on a stage.
11. **outface]** brave.
13. **proof]** example
15. **mortified]** made insensible to pain.
16. **pricks]** skewers
17. **object]** spectacle
17. **low]** lowly
18. **pelting]** petty, paltry
19. **bans]** curses
20. **Hurdygurd]** Ed. *Turlygod* (F, 1271), *Turlygod* (Q1, 1271), *Turlygod* (Q2, 1271). I theorize that “*Turlygod*” in the quartos and Folio is a misprint for *Hurdygurd*, and have emended it. (See [Furness page 137-8.](#)) Stanley Wells adopts “*Truelygod*” saying “the word is otherwise unknown. Editors usually adopt Qb’s alternate ‘*Turlygod*’, but neither word has meaning, the choice is immaterial” (*The Oxford Shakespeare*, p. 163.) David Crystal writes in a personal communication (6 Mar 2024) that “it not easy to argue for this derivation on linguistic grounds, as the differences are so great - /h/ being heard as /t/ isn’t an attested change, for instance, and the rhythm is different, with no final syllable. Personally, I prefer to see the first part of the word as an allusion to the [Turlupins](#), the derogatory name given to a medieval French heretical sect - possibly a reference to lupin-eaters - which appears in Cotgrave’s 1634 dictionary with one of the meanings being ‘person of no value’. The ‘god’ element is obscure, but if the religious allusion is valid, it could be quite literal, given that there are words like sungod and demigod in English, and thus an allusion (in the French Catholic mind) to the god-defying character of the original heretics.”

Dr. Crystal is correct that a case for emending the text cannot be based on phenomes. It is unknown if the copyist even heard the word “*Turlygod*” sounded. With no autograph manuscript to compare the quartos and Folio to, it can only be guessed what he read or thought he was reading when he typeset the play for publication. [Douglas Bruster](#) from the University of Texas at Austin believes that misspellings and bad handwriting are Shakespeare’s trademarks. (Compare note II,ii,8, “*Tisbury pinfold.*”)

Like “*Lipsbury pinfold*” (F, 1083), the question that needs asking about “*Turlygod*” concerns the narrative: its relation to the plot and the major themes of the play. Why in the world would Shakespeare introduce the subject of [Turlupins](#), a sect of 14th century revolutionary fundamentalist nudists in France who regarded poverty as a virtue? It is said that they wore few clothes as an expression of the vow of poverty. Tom o’Bedlams, however, did not take vows of poverty. They were “*the basest, and most poorest shape/ That euer penury in contempt of man, / Brought neere to beast*” (F, 1258-60). The playwright is not telling us that poverty and suffering are qualities for men to emulate; they are wrongs that must be redressed. The spine of *King Lear* is justice, not [naturism](#). Lear attempts to rip of his shirt in III,iv to

feel the scourge of the storm as a beggar feels it, and "*shew the Heavens more iust*" (F. 1817). "*Thou wert better in a Graue, then to answere with thy vncouer'd body, this extremitie of the Skies*" (F, 1881-82), he says of poor Tom's debased condition. Shakespeare creates an incongruous dialectic between the metaphysical and the physical, as Cervantes does in *Don Quixote* published the year before *Lear* was staged for James I. Lear's wildly impractical, Diogenes-like ideals of man's "*true*" (Q2, 1887) nature are comically juxtaposed with poor Tom's practical need to cover himself in the storm. (See note III,iv,101.S.D. "*Edgar puts on the king's discarded riding-cloak.*")

What Edgar is saying storywise, that he is going to disguise himself as the lowliest beggar known to man, such as a Tom o' Bedlam or a Hurdy-Gurdy player as in Georges de la Tour's *Le Vieilleur au chapeau* (English: *The Hurdy-Gurdy Player*, 1620). I theorize Shakespeare contracted the word Gurly to "Gurd" to preserve the rhythm—hence its being misread as "god" by the typesetter. "In the 16th and 17th centuries the hurdy-gurdy was found both in the hands of beggars and cripples, as well as being played by itinerant musicians and folk musicians. In 1606 Robert Estienne considered it to be an instrument of the blind, as did Antoine Furetière in 1690: "Vielle, Instrument... dont jouent ordinairement de pauvres aveugles. Vieller. Les aveugles sont ordinairement ceux qui gagnent leur vie à vieller". Already known by term 'vielle' since the 15th century, which is still used today, the old name 'symphonie' was remembered for a long time in France and was still used for the beggar's instrument. Both terms were used synonymously: "Un aveugle, expert vielleur, / Joint sa symphone à la leur." The hurdy-gurdy was even associated with blind musicians to such an extent that the young lady in a chanson by Gaultier-Garguille (1632) asks the hurdy-gurdy player whether he lost his sight on account of playing the instrument (Marianne Bröcker, "[Die Drehleier.](#)")

Some people believe that the term hurdy gurdy was not coined in England until the eighteenth century. However, the editors at [ElizabethanEnglandLife.com](#) maintain that "A hurdy-gurdy was a musical instrument which was predominantly played in France during the early 10th century and it was introduced in England in the 12th century. . . When the hurdy-gurdy was introduced in England, the bow which accompanied it was replaced by a set of strings attached to a wheel which was cranked by a handle. It was known as the 'hurly-burly' in England during that time as a sort of derogatory insult to the sounds which the instrument made."

I hypothesize that "Gurdy" derives from the word gourd after the instrument's shape. "Hurdy," which rhymes with "whirly," derives from "whirl" or "whorl" which means "The action, or an act, of whirling; (swift) rotatory or circling movement, rotation, circumvolution, gyration; a (rapid) turn, as of a wheel, around an axis or centre. "Wardly men sum tyme ar castin hie Apon the quhele in grete prosperitee, And wyth a quhirl, vnwarly, or thai wait, Ar thravin down to pure and law estate" (*OED*, 1.a). Andrey Vinogradov's virtuosic recording of a medieval dance being played on a hurdy-gurdy can be seen [here](#).





Figure 122. The Hurdy-Gurdy Player, Georges La Tour, c.1620–1625, Musée d'Arts de Nantes. An impoverished blind beggar singing in the street to the music of his hurdy-gurdy.

21. S.D. *Exit*] (Q, 1272); (F, 1272). Edgar returns from whence he was hiding in the cellar under the stage.

**ACT II. SCENE IV]** Steevens. *Scena Secunda* (F, 1074). Scene 7 in Quarto.

S.D. *Before Gloucester's Castle*] Pope, subst; not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *Tucket within*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare II,i (F, 1014) and II,iv (F, 1466).

S.D. *Enter Lear, Fool, and Lear's Knight*] Ed. *Enter Lear, Foole, and Gentleman.* (F, 1273).

*Enter King.* (Q1, 1273); *Enter King, and a Knight* (Q2, 1273). It is possible that the Fool enters wearing his lute over his back in the tradition of the Medieval wandering minstrel.

2. *Lear's Knight*] Ed. *Gentleman* (F, 1276). *Knight.* (Q, 1276). See note I,iv, 47., “*Lear's Knight*”.

4. **remove**] change of residence.

7. **cruel**] a pun on cruel and crewel, i.e. thin, worsted yarn.

9. **over-lusty at legs**] too much of a vagabond.

10. **nether-stocks**] stockings.

12. **To**] as to.

23. **upon respect**] Upon the respect due to the king's messenger (Johnson) or upon Respect personified (Malone) qu. Furness p. 140.

24. **Resolve**] satisfy, answer.

25. **might'st**] could'st.

27. **commend**] commit, deliver

32. **spite of intermission**] though my business was interrupted and the answer delayed which I was to receive.

33. **presently**] immediately

34. **meiny**] household, servants.

40. **Display'd**] acted ostentatiously.

41. **more man than wit**] he was driven by testosterone instead of reason. Anger = manly. Cf. I,i,144, “*unmanly.*”

42. **rais'd the house**] awakened the servants.

45. **wild-geese**] i.e. south, the direction geese fly as winter approaches to avoid the cold.

48. **bear bags**] bring moneybags.

51. **turns the key**] opens the door

52. **dolors**] with a pun on dollars



52. **for]** on account of, owing to.
53. **tell]** a quibble, the word meaning both *relate* and *count*.
54. **mother]** The *Rising of the Mother* is a condition characterized by the sensation of *suffocation*. His belief that he suffers from *hysterica passio* is equivalent to Falstaff's thinking "green-sickness" is the condition ailing Prince John in *Henry IV, Part 2*, (F, 2329). Francis Grose's 1811 *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* defines "green sickness" as: "The disease of maids occasioned by celibacy." (See note I,iv,8,S.D., "A banquet is served in.")
54. S.D. **Pointing to his liver]** Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear is always indicating in the manner of "a poore Player" (*Macbeth*, F, 2345). "The Greek word *hêpar* (ἥπαρ, "liver") was originally connected to the concept of "pleasure", showing that in antiquity the liver was considered to be the seat of soul and human feelings" (J Hepatol. 2011 Nov; 55(5): 1132–1136). In *Prometheus Bound*, "The liver is seen as the source of passion, or emotion, within Greek mythology and is frequently associated with anger and wrath specifically. Bile, which is produced by the liver, is often said to rise in instances of extreme emotion, principally anger." (LitCharts). [See Figure 144.]
55. **Hysterica passio]** *Hysterica passio* or the **wandering womb** is "the belief that a displaced uterus was the cause of hysteria and other pathologies in women. [See Figure 41.] Since ancient times, women are the ones believed to suffer from hysteria. The name hysteria is derived from the Greek word *hystera* which means uterus. In the earliest known treatise dealing with the complaint—*Kahun papyrus* dating from about 1900 BC—it is attributed to starvation or displacement of the uterus. This theory is repeated by *Hippocrates*, *Plato*, *Celsus*, *Arataeus*, and *Soranus*. *Galen of Pergamon* (AD 129-99) denied the ability of the uterus to move about but agreed that the common factor in most cases was some uterine affection. But he recognized hysteria also in men which he attributed to sexual abstinence, hence to retention of sperm." (Percival Bailey, MD "Hysteria: The History of a Disease.") As an aside, there is "little evidence for gender differences in infant anger or tantrums in the first year of life, although boys generally show more tantrum behavior after 21 months of age (Potegal & Archer, 2004).



Figure 123. A set of drawings of a woman with 'hysterica passio' experiencing catalepsy from an 1893 book.

Harsnett facetiously cites an instance of male "*Hysterica passio*" in *A declaration of egregious popish impostures*. Richard Mainy swears to being afflicted with a "spice of the mother" after dancing too long (and implicitly drinking too much). Mainy claims his brother had the same disease from which he died (implicitly alcohol poisoning). (See *The confession of Richard Mainy Gentleman, written by himselfe, and auouched vppon his oath the sixt of Iune. 1602.*)

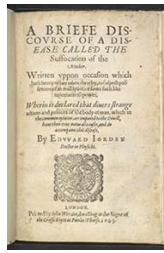


Figure 124. *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother* by Edward Jorden, 1603.

Londoners in the day might have heard the Latin term *Hysterica passio* during the notorious trials of Elizabeth Jackson, an old woman accused of bewitching Mary Glover in 1602, a teenager from a prominent Puritan family. (See “The Politics of Exorcism” in *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London* by Michael MacDonald, pp. xix-xxvi.) “The possession and dispossession of Mary Glover were acted out in a politically supercharged atmosphere. The Church of England was been challenged from within and without by **thaumaturgists** who claimed to have the power to cast out devils, and its leaders had embarked on a campaign to discredit and silence them. Exorcism had been controversial even since the mid-sixteenth century when it was struck out of the English rite by Protestant reformers.”

During Jackson’s court trial, Edward Jorden, an English physician and chemist, used the term to argue unsuccessfully that Mary Glover’s symptoms were natural in origin, and not caused by the Devil. In 1603 he published a pamphlet entitled “*A briefe discourse of a disease called the Suffocation of the Mother, written upon occasion which hath beene of late taken thereby, to suspect possession of an evill spirit, or some such like supernaturall power. Wherin is declared that divers strange act.*” It was in the same year that Samuel Harsnett published his *Declaration*. Both works appear to have been part of a masterly attempt by arch-anti-Puritan Bishop Richard Bancroft (the “chief overseer” of the *King James Bible*) to exploit the division in their ranks known as the **Archpriest Controversy**. At some point in its composition, probably very soon before publication, Harsnett inserted a page extending his attack on Weston and his fellow papists to include the divines who exorcised Mary Glover.



Figure 125. Codex Manesse, UB Heidelberg, Cod. Pal. germ. 848, fol. 14v, Markgraf Heinrich von Meißen.

55. **Down]** Lear is using a metaphor from falconry to describe his anger. He describes it as *rising up* (like a raptor) from his liver to attack his heart. (Cf, note I,iv,54., “*mother*”.) See also IV,v,94 note, “*O well flowne Bird: i'th'clout, i'th'clout*” (F, 2538-39). “Some raptors...suffocate their prey to death in constricting fists” (Ed Yong, “The Violent World of Raptors”).
56. **element’s below]** viz., below in the liver. See note II,iv,131. S.D. *Points to his liver*.
58. S.D. **Exit]** (F, 1332); not in Q.

60. **None.**] The audience knows Kent is not being truthful, as he does himself, which is why he quickly changes the subject.
61. **How chance**] how does it happen that
75. **sir**] man
76. **pack**] be off
81. **perdy**] The corruption of *par Dieu*, by God.
84. **Re-enter Lear, with Gloucester**] Capell. *Enter Lear and Gloster* (Q, 1361); after “perdy” in F, 1358.
84. **Deny**] Refuse
85. **fetches**] tricks, subterfuges, ruses, contrivances.
86. **images**] signs, symbols
86. **flying off**] revolt, desertion.
88. **quality**] nature, disposition.
89. **unremovable**] immovable
92. **‘Fiery’**] *Fiery?* (F, 1371); *what fierce quality*, (Q1, 1370); *what fiery quality*; (Q2, 1370) Lear is being facetious as indicated by his repetition of the word. Kent earlier compared Cornwall to “*Ajax*”. The duke is as “*slow as the Elephant*” (F, 180) and “*beefe-witted*” (F, 782). (See note II,ii,122, *Ajax*.) Cornwall’s humoral nature is a critical factor when analyzing who Shakespeare intended to put out the second eye of Gloucester, —Cornwall or Regan. Cornwall has a phlegmatic humor. Regan is choleric.
92. **What ‘quality’**] *What quality?* (F, 1371) a reference to the four temperaments or humors: sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic. It was believed that these physical qualities determined the behavior of all created things including the human body. Hence the importance of the actor’s outward physical appearance in imagining the character.



Figure 126. Four heads of men who each exhibit one of the four temperaments in an 18th century woodcut: phlegmatic, choleric, sanguine and melancholic.

100. **hot**] hot-tempered, passionate.
102. **office**] duty.
106. **headier**] i.e. what he thinks as opposed to being driven by testosterone.
107. **To take**] for taking
108. S.D. *Looking on Kent*] Johnson. Not in Q, F.
108. **my state**] my royal power.
110. **remotion**] referring to their removal
111. **practice**] craft, trickery
115. **Till it cry sleep to death**] till the noise of the drum has been the death of sleep, so that they give up all idea of sleeping.
116. S.D. *Exit*] (F, 1396). Not in Q.

117. **rising heart**] See note II,iv, 55, “Down”.

117. **Clutching his heart**] Ed. Not in Q, F. This is theoretically the first of two mild heart attacks Lear experiences before dying from cardiac arrest in the final scene. “A non-ST-elevation myo-cardial infarction (NSTEMI) is a type of heart attack that usually happens when your heart’s need for oxygen can’t be met.” Symptoms are “chest pain that may feel like pressure, tightness, pain, squeezing or aching.” See note IV,v,94,S.D., “Clutching his heart.”

119. **knapp’d**] rapped.

120. **Down wantons, down!**] “The traditional eel [pie] is from the Londoners in the early 16th and 17th century, when the Thames was full of eels, and they were cheap,” says Ruth Phillips, owner of Cockney’s Pie and Mash Shop, one of the few remaining eel pie shops in London. . . . was traditionally based on eel broth made from cooking the live eels . . . The liquor is the truly special part. (See “The Hirshon London Eel Pie with Parsley Liquor.”)

121-2. **buttered his hay**] The Fool is being facetious. “A common trick of cheating ostlers was to grease the hay of horses committed to their care; the horses, disliking grease, were kept from feeding, and the ostler could steal their provender. The cockney’s brother, however, did it in all innocence.” (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 85.)

122. S.D. **Cornwall and Regan**] Enter Duke and Regan (Q, 1403). Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloster, Seruants (F, 1403).

122. S.D. **above**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Like Goneril and Albany in I,iv, Cornwall and Regan take their places in the “Lords Rooms,” at the gallery’s edge, in front of the perfumed spectators seated there. This puts the duke and duchess at a safe distance from Lear, who they wish to avoid. The blocking helps qualify their formidable *hauteur*.

122. S.D. **Reenter Gloucester and Knights**] Ed. Gloucester and the armed knights (his own and Cornwall’s) return to the platform. They create a background of menace. Cornwall’s Knight, is prominent among them.

123. S.D. **Kent is set at liberty**] Rowe. Not in Q, F. It is inferred that Kent has been sitting in the stocks from before dawn, when he encountered Oswald, to dusk the next afternoon, perhaps as long as 34 hours: “Till noon? Till night my Lord, and all night too” (F, 1214). Gloucester mentions that Lear arrives in the late afternoon: “Alacke the night comes on” (F, 1603).

128. **Sepulchring**] as being the sepulcher of.

128. S.D. **To Kent**] Not in Q, F.

129. S.D. **Kent is helped off by Cornwall’s Knight and Lear’s Knight**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Kent’s legs are numb, and he needs assistance to walk. It is only logical that Lear’s Knight is one of two men to help support him off stage as Shakespeare establishes a relationship between him and Kent. In my restoration, Cornwall’s Knight is the other. This is the same chivalrous young man Regan stabs in the back during Gloucester’s trial. His death has more emotional impact if the audience has positive feelings about the character. (See note III,vii,70. “I have serv’d you ever since I was a child.”) The stocks are presumably carried off from the platform by Gloucester’s household knights if not “invisibles.” As noted, the role of these “extras” is signaled by their costumes.

131. **like a vulture**] an allusion to Tityos who was tortured by two vultures who fed on his liver.

131. **here**] his liver.

131. S.D. **Points to his liver**] Ed. Not in F, Q. Compare II,iv,54. S.D., *Pointing to his liver*.



Figure 127. Tityos, Jusepe de Ribera, 1632, Museo del Prado.

132. **I can scarce speak**] From shortness of breath; a feeling of suffocation. As noted, he is theoretically having a mild heart attack. Compare note IV,v,94. "*I'th'clout, i'th'clout.*"
133. **quality**] manner, disposition.
144. **confine**] assigned limit
145. **state**] condition of mind; or, your dependent position.
150. S.D. **Kneeling**] Dyce; not in Q, F. Lear's behavior is histrionic.
151. **Age is unnecessary**] Old people are useless.
152. **tricks**] Regan is alluding to Lear's histrionics (his kneeling) just as Goneril did when he pinched himself: "*This admiration, sir, is much o'th'savor/ Of other your new pranks*" (F, 746-7) See note I,iv, 215., S.D., *Pinches himself.*
154. S.D. **Rising**] Dyce. Not in Q, F.
155. **abated**] deprived, curtailed.
159. **top**] head
160. **taking**] infecting, blasting.
163. **fen-suck'd**] sucked up from the fens by the heat of the sun. A fen is "low land covered wholly or partially with shallow water." (*OED*, 1.a.)
164. **blister**] F, 1451; and blast her pride (Q, 1451). Meaning, "to raise blisters on" (*OED*). See *Tempest*, "*A Southwest blow on yee,/ And blister you all ore*" (F. 461-2).
168. **Thy tender-hafted**] *Thy tender-hefted* (F, 1455); *The tēder hested* (Q1, 1455); *The tender hested nature* (Q2, 1455). i.e., Regan's softness/kindness is so firmly *hafted* (fixed) to her nature she will never act hard-heartedly. Compare note III,vi,77, "*hard hearts.*" Regan is arguably the most monstrous character in Shakespeare.
172. **sizes**] allowances.
175. **offices**] duties
175. **bond of childhood**] a child's duty to her parents.
176. **Effects**] workings, manifestations.
179. S.D. **Tucket within**] F, 1466, after "purpose"; not in Q.
180. **approves**] confirms
181. S.D. **Enter Oswald**] Dyce. Enter Steward. after "*that?*" (Q, 1469); after "*stocks*" (F, 1476).
182. **easy-borrowed**] 'borrowed without the trouble of doing anything to justify it.'
186. S.D. **Enter Goneril**] Johnson. after "*grace?*" (Q, 1475), (F,1476).
186. S.D. **above**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Goneril joins her sister and Cornwall in the "Lords Rooms," looking down on her father on the platform.
188. **Allow**] approve of
190. S.D. **To Goneril**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
190. S.D. **Goneril takes Regan by the hand**] Ed. not in Q, F. See II,iv,191, "*O Regan, will you*



*take her by the hand?* (F, 1484). Shakespeare is setting up a joke in IV,vii,36 when Goneril takes Regan by the hand to forcibly keep her from leaving with Edmund. See note I,i,303,S.D. “*She takes her by the hand.*” Naturally, it is always the Puritan hypocrite Goneril who first extends her hand.

193. **finds]** deems

196. **disorders]** misconduct.

197. **advancement]** promotion, honor.

197. S.D. **To Regan]** Ed. Not in Q, F.

206. **wage]** combat, contend.

207. **howl]** Collier. Owle (F, 1503), owle (Q, 1503) . Cf. “*If Wolues had at thy Gate howl'd that sterne time*” (F, 2135).

209. **hot-blooded]** amorous

213. **sumpter]** packhorse, or possibly pack-horse driver.

214. S.D. **Pointing to Oswald]** Johnson, subst; not in Q, F.

221. **embossed]** swollen, tumid, knobbed like the boss of a shield.

224. **thunder-bearer]** Jupiter, also known as Jove in Roman religion, (Zeus in Greek mythology) is the god of the sky and thunder. His identifying implement is the thunderbolt (as Lear’s is his codpiece). [See Figure 128.] Jove became the absolute ruler of the universe after overthrowing his father and by battling the Titans in the [Gigantomacy](#).



Figure 128. Jupiter hurling thunderbolts in “The Battle Between the Gods and the Giants”, Joachim Wtewael, 1600.

225. **high-judging]** that is supreme judge; or ‘judging in heaven’ (Schmidt) qu. Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p.91.

231. **mingle reason with your passion]** Dilute your passionate words with a little common sense, examine them in the cold light of reason (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 91).

242. **slack ye]** come short of their duty towards you.

248. **my guardians, my depositaries]** stewardesses and trustees.

249. **reservation]** a saving clause.

253. **well-favor’d]** good-looking.

255. S.D. **To Goneril]** Hammer. Not in Q, F.

259. **follow]** be your attendants.

262. **Are in the poorest thing superfluous]** See note III,iv,35, “superflux”.

264. S.D. **To Regan]** Ed. Not in Q, F. Regan is no Puritan, as Goneril affects to be, and this is reflected in her dress. “Women of the 1600s, from queens to prostitutes, commonly exposed one or both breasts in public and in the popular media of the day, according to a study of fashion, portraits, prints, and thousands of woodcuts from 17th-century ballads. The finding suggests breast exposure by women in England and in the Netherlands during the 17th century was more accepted than it is in most countries today. Researchers, for example, say Janet



Jackson's Super Bowl baring would not even have raised eyebrows in the 17th century. ("Breast Baring Popular in 1600s" by Jennifer Viegas.) This might explain why the Fool alludes to Regan's being flat in I,v,12, "*she's as like this, as a Crabbe's like an Apple*" (F, 889-90). For the joke to be funny, the audience has to have taken notice of her breasts by the low or scooped neckline of her costume. Young men played the parts of women in Shakespeare's day, and Regan is as flat as a boy (which he was).



Figure 129. Frances (Howard), Countess of Somerset, 1593 - 1632. Daughter of the 3rd Earl of Suffolk; wife of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, National Galleries Scotland.

Queen Anne of Denmark created controversy in 1605 in "[The Masque of Blackness](#)" where she "and some dozen ladies all paynted like Blackamores, face and neck bare, and for the rest strangely attired in Barbaresque mantells to the halfe legge, having buskins all to be sett with jewells, ... it took the King betweene 4 or £5,000 to execute to Queen's fancy".

The masque was criticised heavily for the prominent role women took in its staging. Puritans objected to women performing and thought it degrading to see the Queen performing on stage. They also objected to celebrations at Christmas, which they saw as a Pagan festival. The "Masque of Blackness" seemed to fit with their belief that the country was being corrupted by 'foreign ways.' This 1605 performance would be followed by many more masques in the reign of King Charles I at the Banqueting Hall. These Christmas extravaganzas would continue to be a focal point for increasing Puritan anger. King Charles I's wife, [Queen Henrietta-Maria](#), took a leading role in these masques. As a French, Catholic, she embodied the 'foreign threat' to England that was exemplified by these Christmas 12th Night performances ("[The Controversial Masque of Blackness](#)")



Figure 130. Portrait of Queen Anne of Denmark by John de Critz, 1605.

265. **If only to go warm were gorgeous]** If it were gorgeous merely to be warm, you would not be going bare-breasted.

267. **But, for true need—]** This is a theme statement. Lear, who has wanted for nothing in his life, finds himself unable to explain "*true need*". While searching for an answer to his own question, the sound of the approaching "storm" takes his thoughts back to the present, and he turns his attention to the "Heavens." Lear is soon to discover the meaning of "*true need*" when he encounters a "*naked wretch*" in III,iv (F, 1809). [See note III,iv,43,S.D., "*disguised as*

*Tom o'Bedlam.*”]



Figure 131. Chloris: Alternative Sketch for Henrietta Maria, by Inigo Jones, c.1631.

267. S.D. *A noise of distant thunder heard*] Ed. What would *King Lear* be without the sound of wind and rain, thunder and lightning? Here, the effect is ironic. Is it a portent of the terrors Lear is going to wreck on his daughters or on himself? This is the first time the audience hears the “Storm,” and the effect must be *precisely* timed with the words “*True need*” (F, 1570). (See note III,iv,1, S.D., “*Burst of horrid thunder.*”)
267. S.D. *then music*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Cf. *Birth of Merlin* by William Rowley, V,i.S.D., “*Thunder, then musick*”
268. **You Heavens**] “the name given for the false ceiling over the stage” (bardstage.org).
268. **patience**] OED 1.a. “The calm, uncomplaining endurance of pain, affliction, inconvenience, etc.; the capacity for such endurance.” (See note III,ii,37, “*patience*”.) The Stoic philosopher Seneca writes in *On Anger (De Ira)*, “If you want to determine the nature of anything, entrust it to time: when the sea is stormy, you can see nothing clearly.”
279. S.D. *Distant thunder and music still*] Ed. *Storme and tempest*. (F, 1584), after “weeping”, line 282); not in Q. The placement of the direction in the Folio (F, 1584) is manifestly imprecise. Presumably the effects of a wind machine have been added to the sound of thunder.
284. **Or ere**] before
284. S.D. *Exeunt Lear...Fool*] Ringler. *Exeunt*. (F, 1586); *Exeunt Lear, Leister, Kent and Foole*. (Q1, 1587); *Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, Kent, and Fool*. (Q2, 1587). Lear’s Knight assisted Kent off stage.
287. **bestow’d**] lodged.
288. **hath**] ‘he’ is understood
288. **rest**] repose of mind.
290. **For his particular**] as far as he personally is concerned.
293. S.D. *Re-enter Gloucester*] Dyce. Not in Q, F.
296. **Regan**] *Re*. (Q1, 1601); *Reg*. (Q2, 1598); *Corn*. (F, 1601).
296. **give him way**] give him his own way, let him go.
296. **He leads himself**] He insists on having his own way (Kittredge).
297. S.D. *Storm and tempest*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Gloucester refers to the wind machine or aeoliphone in the next line. “*Alacke the night comes on, and the high windes / Do sorely ruffle, for many Miles about*” (F, 1603-4).
299. **ruffle**] to bluster, to be noisy and turbulent.
303. **with**] by
304. **incense**] provoke, instigate.
307. S.D. *Exeunt.*] (Q, 1613) (F. 1613).

**ACT III, SCENE I]** *Actus Tertia. Scena Prima* (F, 1614). Scene 8 in Quarto. See Appendix D

S.D. **A Heath]** Rowe. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform]** Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Storm still]** (F, 1615). Not in Q. The theatre effects or “Spectacle” builds to a dramatic climax in the next scene. It is arguably the most spectacular storm in the works of Shakespeare. See note III,ii,1,S.D. “*Burst of horrid thunder.*”

S.D. **Enter Kent and Lear’s Knight]** Ed. *Kent, and a Gentleman*, (Q, 1615), (F, 1615).

S.D. **severally]** (F, 1615) *at seuerall doores.* (Q, 1615).

2,4,8,27,34. **Lear’s Knight]** Ed. *Gent.* (F, 1615, 1617, 1619, 1624, 1639, 1648). *Gent.* (Q1, 1615, 1617, 1619, 1624, 1639, 1649).

6. **main]** land

7. **cease]** The Gentleman’s speech continues in the quartos (Q, 1622.1-1622.8.) See Appendix D.

7. **Who]** *But who* (F, 1623). *But who* (Q, 1623)

10. **the warrant of my note]** Kent is guaranteeing the Gentleman that the information he has received is trustworthy. Cf. III,i,35, *credit*.

11. **Commend]** entrust

11. **a dear]** a precious

16. **speculations]** *OED*. †3†b. “An observer or watcher; a spy. *Obsolete. rare.*”

17. **Intelligent]** *OED*. 2.†4. “A bringer of news or information; an intelligencer; a spy. *Obsolete.*”

18. **snuffs]** *OED I.a.* “An (or the) act of snuffing, esp. as an expression of contempt or disdain.”

18. **packings]** *OED I. 2.* “To plot (something); to contrive or plan in an underhand way. Also (occasionally) *intransitive. Obsolete.*”

21. **furnishings]** *OED*. 3. †a. “Unimportant appendages; mere externals.”

22. **True it is]** Ed. *But true it is*, (Q1/Q2, 1638.1), Not in F.

22-34 **True it is . . . offer to you]** Q, 1638.1-12. Not in F. See Appendix D.

22. **power]** an armed force.

23. **scatter’d]** divided

24. **Wise in]** knowledgeable about

24. **feet]** That is, foothold

25. **at point]** in readiness

26. **open banner]** That is, their banner openly

27. **credit]** credibility

28. **Dover]** Dover is a town and major ferry port in Kent, South East England. **Matthew Arnold** writes beautifully of its poetic connotations in his poem, “**Dover Beach.**”

Arnold uses the sea as a symbol for the inevitably negative fate of humanity. Throughout the poem, the sea and waves gain momentum and become more and more rough and violent. The waves come and go, but they ultimately bring the eternal note of sadness. (*Shenandoah*, Volume 72, Number 2, Spring 2023.)



Figure 132. Dover guards the Straits of Dover, the narrowest part of the English Channel.

29. **making just report**] That is, for making a true report
30. **bemadding**] maddening
31. **plain**] complain about
34. **office**]
35. **No, do not**] Kent is not interested in having a conversation with the Lear's Knight. He urgently wants to find the raging King. Compare V,i, "I am come / To bid my King and Master aye good night. / Is he not here?" (F, 3189-91). See Appendix D.
37. **outwall**] outward appearance
37. **purse**] Men wore purses from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century. Presumably, this is where Kent keeps the letter from Cordelia he alludes to in II,ii,159.
39. **show her this ring**] Kent cannot be wearing the ring on his finger because he wants to keep his identity a secret. If not in his purse, he probably keeps it hidden in a small coin pouch. Gloucester carries several coin pouches with him as well (F, 2249, F, 2465).
41. S.D. **Storm and Tempest**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Kent refers directly to the storm effect, "Fie on this storm!" (F, 1546).
47. **Holla**] "A shout to excite attention" (*OED*, 2). See note III,ii,41, *Holla*.
47. S.D. **Exeunt severally**] Theobald. *Exeunt*. (Q, 1654) (F, 1654).

**ACT III, Scene ii**] *Scena Secunda* (F. 1654). Scene 9 in Quarto.

S.D. **Another part of the Heath.**] Capell. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

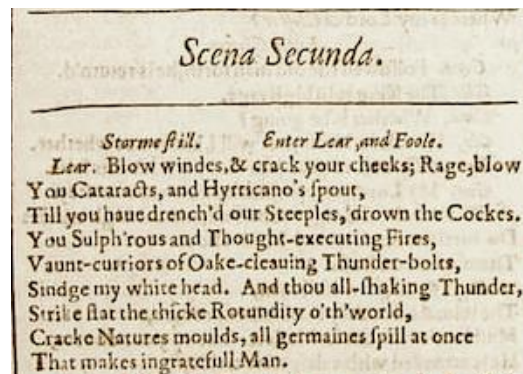


Figure 133. Facsimile of First Folio (New South Wales), p.296. InternetShakespeareEditions

S.D. **Lear and Fool enter**] Ed. *Enter Lear and Foole*. (Q, 1655) *Enter Lear, and Foole*. (F, 1655).

S.D. **and move apart**] Ed. In both the quartos and the First Folio, it appears that Lear and the Fool enter at the same time, presumably from center stage. [See Figure 133.] This does not mean that the characters necessarily stay together. They very likely enter and **part** (see *Dictionary of Stage*

*Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 158). Their proxemics is an essential element of metacommunication and acting. “Research shows that men are more likely to respond more negatively to invasion of space than women” (Knapp, *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction*, p. 153.) Lear’s “toxic masculinity,” as we call it today, is a fatal flaw of the character. Neither Monmouth or Holinshed write about Lear’s military background, but it can be presumed that he was raised to be a warrior, like Coriolanus. Physical closeness makes him uncomfortable, as we observed in I,v when the Fool gets too near him, and again in IV,v when he sits down next to Gloucester. (See note IV,v,170.S.D., “*Sitting beside Gloucester.*”) “Throughout history, many cultures considered military service a rite of passage to adulthood, where men learn toughness, transform bodies, construct masculinities, and eliminate what was considered effeminate” (James J. Do, “I Am a Warrior: An Analysis of the Military Masculine-Warrior Narrative Among U.S. Air Force Officer Candidates” (2020). Lear appears unmanly, less existentially alone, if the Fool is fawning over him throughout his opening dialogue in III,ii. [See Video 18, 3:52-4:26]



Video 18. Ian McKellen in the Royal Shakespeare Company 2008 production directed by Trevor Nunn (3:51-4:36).

At the Globe Playhouse, it was possible for Lear to move downstage on the platform while the Fool hides behind one of the stage posts supporting the roof. Naturally, the latter wants to take cover, as anybody would, in a terrifying artillery assault. Cf. *Devil's Charter*, F3v, “*stands behind the post.*” (C. Walter Hodges discusses the many ways players might have made use of the pillars in *The Globe Restored*, p. 30.) Alternatively, the Fool can remain backstage, and peak his head out from between the center curtains when Lear and the storm appear to have gone quiet. (Compare *The Atheist's Tragedy*, II,v, p. 285, “*Fresco peeps fearfully forth from behind the arras.*”) The main idea here is that “the Heavens” are *aware* of Lear, and making sport of him: “*As Flies to wanton Boyes, are we to th'Gods, / They kill vs for their sport.*” (F, 2221-22).

The romantics, feeble descendants of the tragic writers, to whom they are linked by their effort to see life and nature in grandiose terms, loved to imagine that the sea or the sky had a way of according itself with their moods, of storming when they stormed and smiling when they smiled. But the tragic spirit sustains itself by an assumption much more far-reaching and no more justified. Man, as it sees him, *lives in a world which he may not dominate, but which is always aware of him.* (“The Tragic Fallacy,” Section III, *The Atlantic*, Nov, 1928).

1. **Blow, winds]** Lear takes the stage shouting martial orders to “The Heavens,” as though they were artillery officers under his command. Up until the **Battle of Dettingen** in 1743, it was expected of British monarchs to personally lead troops into battle. Compare Lear’s conduct here to IV,v where he enters camouflaged with weeds in preparation for the battle he is leading against his “*sonnes in law*” (Q2, 2629). (See note IV,v,80. S.D. “*camouflaged in weeds.*”





Figure 134. Aeolus, keeper of the violent storm winds in Greek mythology.

1. **crack your cheeks**] Aeolus, the Greek god of winds is depicted as puffing out his cheeks as he blows. [See Figure 134.] This line is logically the cue for the stage hands to discharge the cannon situated in the attic above the Heavens.



Video 19. Roger Allam as King Lear performing “Blow, winds and crack your cheeks.”

1. S.D. *Burst of horrid thunder.*] Ed, *Storme still*. (F, 1655). The direction “*Storme still*” published in the Folio [See Figure 133] gives readers no indication of how the storm effects are articulated and cued. Lear’s words, “*Blow, winds and crack your cheeks*” etc., reads on paper like a self-contained “speech” or an internal monologue, which is how it is traditionally performed on stage. Echoing the words of Charles Lamb, —“*we are in Lear’s mind*”, — Christopher Plummer declares, “There should be no storm at all really ... Lear is the storm.” Some actors in our own times actually perform lines F, 1656-64 as though Shakespeare conceived them as a soliloquy, like Roger Allam above. [See video, Video 19.]

Of course, actors and directors are free to interpret the play anyway they want to. Audiences don’t know or care what Shakespeare wrote as proven by the success of Tate’s long-running version, William Macready’s stage adaptation (1838), Peter Brooks’ “definitive” filmization with Paul Scofield and Alan Webb (1971) or Michael Elliot’s widely-seen video production with Laurence Olivier and Leo McKern (1983). On the other hand, when lay readers purchase a copy of *King Lear*, they presuppose it to be an unbiased *restoration* of the play, true to the author. In fact, what they are reading is merely a “conflation” of badly damaged secondary sources. Allam’s performance in the video above is a complex evocation of emotions in the style of a 20<sup>th</sup> century stream-of-consciousness novel like *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). His interpretation is completely ahistorical in its focus on the inner thoughts and emotions of the character rather than the absurdity of what Lear is actually doing, —issuing orders to a raging storm, —and the practical consequences thereof.

Over the past 30 years, is now widely established that *Lear* takes the form of *metatheatre*—a term used to describe “the aspects of a play that draw attention to its nature as drama or theatre, or to the circumstances of its performance. ‘*Breaking the Fourth Wall*’ is an example of a metatheatrical device.” Like *theatricalism* in the 20th century, metatheatre turns it back on naturalism and draws its inspiration from the spirit of the theatre itself. “In theatricalist stagings the spectators were expected to accept the frank scenic artifices and conventions laid



before them.” (*Briticanna*).

As noted, the Romantics like Lamb and his successors discovered in the fearsome poetry of Lear’s speeches “a mighty irregular power of reasoning, immethodised 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.”<sup>[17]</sup> In this restoration, however, there is no mistaking Lear for a Romantic hero like Aeschylus’s Prometheus or Milton’s Satan or the terrible “figures of Michelangelo.” Lear is a metatheatrical character, “*a poore Player, / That struts and frets his houre vpon the Stage, / And then is heard no more. It is a Tale / Told by an Ideot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing*” (*Macbeth*, F, 2345-49).

The timing of the thunder effect with Lear’s opening words in III,ii is an essential element of the narrative voice. When it occurs *after* this line, as I have indicated, it appears completely contrived, drawing attention to the artificial nature of the dialogue. It shatters the illusion that the action is realistic. Obviously, in real life, bolts of thunder cannot be summoned by man’s willing them. Typically, the sound of thunder was simulated at The Globe with drums or a rolling cannonball or by waving a piece of sheet metal. (See [demonstration in video](#), 1:17-3:01.) On rare occasions, a cannon was fired from the attic using gun powder held down by wadding. The loud explosion would have shaken the entire playhouse, scaring everybody in the audience. “*Are not you moved, when all the sway of earth/ Shakes like a thing unfirm?*” (*Julius Cesaer*, F, 435-6). Lear’s opening speech is meant to evoke the idea of warfare and battle. If there was ever an occasion to discharge the cannon to represent a blast of thunder, it is here.

I think that it should be made clear that thunder and lightning in an Elizabethan theatre would have been a hugely impressive and noisy affair with rockets, fireworks and squibs providing noise and spectacle. It is probable that a cannon, or some other piece of heavy ordinance would also have been fired to simulate the sound of thunder along with the thunder-run. (Gwilym Jones, “[Thus much show of fire:](#)” *Storm and Spectacle in the Opening of the Globe*”, p.5. *The Spectacular In and Around Shakespeare*, ed Pascale Drouet p.5

Again, the effects in this scene were not designed to create the illusion of a “real” storm. They are no more naturalistic than Edgar’s entrance in I,ii where Edmund draws attention to its being a theatrical contrivance of the playwright. (See note I,ii, 125, “*pat he comes.*”) We see exactly how the effects are being produced. In John Melton’s satirical play *The Astrologaster* (1620), there is a passage referring to the storm effects in Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*: “*Drummers make Thunder in the Tyringhouse, and the twelve-penny Hirelings make artificial Lightning in their Heavens.*” According to Donald McManus, “The stagehands were completely visible to the audience whether they were manipulating huge blue silks to create the illusion of water or pulling rope to make Ariel fly” (*The Routledge Companion to Directors’ Shakespeare*, edited by John Russell Brown, p. 450.)

As a side note, the possibility that the Fool is still carrying a lute on his back cannot be ruled out because the storm was not devised to create the illusion of a real storm as it is in Act I scene i of

*The Tempest* where “*Enter Mariners wet.*” (F, 59). The character fully acknowledges his role as an actor. (See III,ii,81, “*Merlin’s Prophecy.*”) In *Lear*, there is a presumed detachment from the storyworld of both the Fool and the audience.

1. S.D. *Groan of roaring wind.*] Ed. From a wind machine. Not in Q, F. See “*Special Effects | Shakespeare’s Globe.*”



Video 20. Wind machine/Aeoliphone by ArborPercussion.

2. **cataracts**] A violent downpour of water
2. **hurricanoes**] waterspouts
3. **cocks**] weathercocks,
3. S.D. *Sound of scolding rain*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See rain-box. Pebbles/dried beans were shaken or rolled in a bowl for rain by the ancient Greeks.

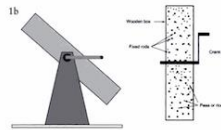


Figure 135. “Rain-Box.” John A. Leonard, “*History of Theatre Sound*”, p.7.

3. **sulph’rous**] “Fireworks, while exciting, were also very odorous. Gunpowder was made with sulphur (think rotten eggs) and saltpeter (which was made from dung). These mixed together would have smelled terrible when set alight” (Posted by u/Abrytan, Reddit.)
4. **thought-executing**] a) happening as quickly as thought; b) killing thought.
5. **Vaunt-couriers**] one of the advance part of an army, i.e. precursors. Lear is shouting orders to the storm as though it was under his command.



Figure 136. “How to make a swevel” from THE SECOND BOOKE. Teaching most plainly, and withall most exactly, the composing of all manner of Fire-works For Triumph and Recreation (The Project Gutenberg Ebook, *The Mysteries of Nature and Art* by John Bate)

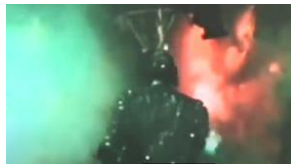
6. S.D. *A flash of lightning*] Ed. Not in Q, F. According to Gwilym Jones (“*Storm Effects in Shakespeare*”, *Shakespeare’s Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, edited by Farah Karim Cooper, Tiffany Stern. p. 35) “The main way of creating lightning effects on the stage was through using what was known as, or at least subsequently came to be called, a swevel. This device is similar to a modern firework rocket, though, as John Bate made clear in 1634, it also had a guiding mechanism.

'Swevels are nothing else but Rockets, having instead of a rod (to ballast them) a little

cane bound fast unto them, where through the rope passeth. Note that you must be careful to have your line strong, even & smooth, and it must be rubd over with sope that it may not burn. If you would have your Rockets to return againe, then binde two Rockets together, with the breech of one towards the mouth of the other, and let the stoupe that primeth the one, enter the breech of the other.”

Andrew Gurr notes that “Lightning was produced from squibs set alight in the heavens” (*The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*).

The squib (sometimes referred to as a serpent, rocket, or fizgig) often produced a quick, bright burst of flame, a powerful stink, and an unpredictable trajectory of motion.<sup>46</sup> Philip Butterworth describes the squib as “a firework that squirmed erratically to produce a fizzing shower of sparks that sometimes ended in a small report.” Squibs produce *an awful smell* through the detonation of gunpowder inside the squib. This detonation produces a powerful physiological response in audiences. (Kevin Matthew Carr, “A Theater of the Senses: A Cultural History of Theatrical Effects in Early-Modern England”, 2013, p.18-19.)



**Video 21.** Michael Jackson suffered from severe burns after a pyrotechnics mishap after a pyrotechnics mishap caused his hair and scalp to catch a fire, in 1984. *the detail.*

The terror experienced by audiences watching III,ii performed at the Globe in 1606 can only be imagined. To the best of my knowledge, no modern theatre producer in the UK would be issued a permit to incite gunpowder under the [Code of Practice 06](#). One has only to think of the horrific burns suffered by Michael Jackson while filming a Pepsi commercial. (See “How Michael Jackson’s Pill Addiction Began.” [Video 21.]

The craze for fireworks in Shakespeare’s day, “reached its peak during the reign of Elizabeth I, which saw the queen appointing an official ‘[Fire Master of England](#)’, and Shakespeare’s Lord Chamberlain’s Men experimenting with the kind of pyrotechnic special effects that would eventually burn down the first Globe theatre in 1613. Thankfully nobody was hurt in the blaze - although one chap’s breeches caught fire, a situation which was resolved, happily, with some quick thinking and a bottle of beer. A much more cautionary tale comes from [Kenilworth Castle](#) in Warwickshire. Elizabeth I’s visit to see her favourite Robert Dudley in 1572 went catastrophically wrong when a mock battle staged for the Queen’s benefit - complete with pyrotechnic dragon effects and fireworks shot from cannons into the sky - resulted in a volley of misdirected fireballs falling on the adjacent town. Several houses were burned to the ground, and tragically at least one man was killed in the blaze ([English Heritage History of Fireworks](#)).

Professor Simon Werrett writes in his engaging essay “[Watching the Fireworks](#)”

"Fireworks of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries [...] amounted to a form of artificial nature, showing suns, stars, comets, fiery exhalations, snow, rain, thunder and lightning. These effects were considered extremely powerful and deeply impressed the princely patrons and courtiers who used them as tools of political distinction. This

distinction hinged on knowledge or experience of pyrotechnics. The gentleman or courtier was expected to be virtuous, partly by the habit of reading, and numerous new books on fireworks were published in the sixteenth century to offer instruction in the creation of pyrotechnic effects. Those who understood or had familiarity with fireworks then experienced them as pleasing diversions, while those who did not were imagined to be terrified as if by natural portents." (The Theatre of Gunpower),

7. **rotundity**] This suggests not only the sphere of the globe, but the roundness of gestation (Delius) qu. Furness p. 172
8. **Crack Nature's molds.**] i.e. destroy the casts from which life is fashioned.
8. **germens**] Seeds. Note the phallogocentric nature of Lear's speech.
9. S.D. **Silence**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Whether by inattention or pure mischief, the "Twelve-penny Hireling" in the Heavens misses his cue, and Lear stands in silence waiting for something to happen. "[A]lthough silences of various kinds are integral to performance, these specific terms are found in only ten plays; most notable is the climactic moment in *Coriolanus* when after Volumnia's pleas in behalf of Rome, Coriolanus '*Holds her by the hand silent*'" (F, 3539) (*Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **silent, silence**, p. 200.) Compare "*He stands silent*" in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*, p. 70). In "**Silence in the Henry VI Plays**," Michael Mannheim writes, "Alwin Thaler nearly a half century ago introduced the idea that Shakespeare, the master of words, achieves some of his most effective and meaningful dramatic moments through the absence of words. See Alwin Thaler, *Shakespeare's Silences*."
10. **O nuncle**—] Ed. *O Nunkle*, (F, 1665). *O Nunckle*, (Q, 1665). "Nuncle" is a British colloquialism for uncle, a man who is regarded with affection. I added the long dash to signal a break in the sentence. How the actor intones the word "O" expresses its meaning. As I hear it spoken, he is indicating hesitation, viz., "Excuse me for interrupting you." Thinking the worst of the storm has passed, the Fool sticks his head out from behind a stage post (or from between the center curtains) to deliver the line, which functions as comic relief. Audiences will laugh at its timing and kinesics; his words are not laugh-out-loud funny in themselves.
10. **Court holy water**] fair words, flattery.
11. **Comes downstage**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Unfortunately, the movements of actors on stage are rarely given in the copy sources. An exception is John Marston's *Histriomastix, or The Player Whipped*, Act 4, "*Enter a sort of fellowes with armour and weapons and crosse the stage crying arme, arme, arme*"
13. **Thunder and lightning**] Ed. Not in Q, F. As always in the theatre, where the actors are in relation to each other is a critical element in what's being communicated. At this moment, the Fool is theoretically standing next to Lear, and uses the king to shield him from the blast of fireworks.
14. **Rumble thy bellyful**] Said in reaction to "the storm."
16. **tax**] accuse
18. **Subscription**] submission, allegiance
21. **ministers**] underlings, agents
23. **high-engendered battles**: heavenly battalions
- 27-30. **The codpiece that will house . . . marry many**]. viz., The man who has a codpiece to cover his genitals before he has a house to cover his head will end up with nothing but lice to

show for it. “There was an important social distinction between being afflicted by lice as opposed to fleas. Fleas were almost unavoidable; everyone had them. But to ‘be lowsie’ was an indicator of poor personal hygiene. According to the Georgian entomologist Thomas Muffet, lice were an embarrassing disgrace.” (*If Walls Could Talk: An Intimate History of the Home* by Lucy Worsley, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012.)



Figure 137. Albrecht Dürer, *Amorous Peasants* (c. 1500).

31-34. **The man that makes his toe . . . to wake]** The Fool is comparing the angry man (who responds to things that displease him by stomping off in a temper tantrum) to one who controls his emotions by holding them in his heart. Compare “*If a mans braines were in's heeles, wert not in danger of kybes?*” (F, 882-3). The same philosophy is expressed by Seneca, who is quoted as saying “Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it.” In *The Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* (Letters from a Stoic), he cautions that “Ungoverned anger begets madness.” (Letter XVIII, On Festivals and Fasting).

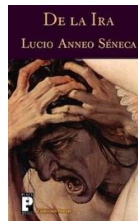


Figure 138. “Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it.” – Seneca.

35-6. **For there was never yet fair woman . . . glass]** A proverbial truth: young women will always practice making pretty faces in the mirror.



Figure 139. Woodcut illustrating the dangers of pride and vanity in calling up the devil represented by looking in a mirror. The picture is entitled: *A Young Woman Combing Her Hair* from the 1493 edition of *The Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry*.

36. S.D. **Thunder and Lightning]**. Ed. Not in Q, F. As before, the effect is created by the “12 penny hireling” to rebuke the Fool’s jest, not to simulate reality. The “Heavens” do not tolerate unscripted jokes by actors.

37-8. **No, I will be the pattern of all patience . . . nothing.]** Where the Thunder and Lightning above was caused by the Fool’s joke, here Lear’s line is a direct response to the effect. It is pure metatheatre, and written for a laugh.

39. S.D. **Within]** Ed. Not in Q, F. “Widely used (roughly 800 examples) to indicate the location of a



**sound** or the presence of a figure *within* the tiring house and therefore offstage out of sight of the playgoer; most of the examples (1) anticipate an entrance” (*Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642, within*, p. 253).

40. **Marry**: a mild oath (originally on the name of the Virgin Mary).
40. **grace and a codpiece.**] i.e., Lear’s grace and the codpiece he is wearing. As noted in I,iv, 87., “*coxcomb*,” Lear’s codpiece is as emblematic of the character as the coxcomb is of the Fool. “Your Grace” was often used long before the time of Henry VIII to address kings as a sort of short form for “by the Grace of God”.
41. **Kent**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
41. S.D. **Within**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
41. **Holla!**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *The Shoemakers’ Holiday*, wln 0539, S.D. “*Halloing within*.” (The Folger Shakespeare Library). Shakespeare sets up the joke at the conclusion of III,i,47 (F, 1651-53). Kent and the Gentleman decide to look separately for the king, and agree that whoever finds him first will shout “*Holla*” to terminate the efforts of the other. Kent has only to hear the word “*codpiece*” to know he has found his man.
41. S.D **Enter Kent.**] Ed. After 36 *glass* (F, 1688). *Enter Kent.* after *patience* (Q, 1689).
42. S.D. **Aside**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
42. **That’s a wise man and a fool.**] Ed. (See note I,iv, 87. “*coxcomb*.”) Kent is wise for following the king and finding him, and a fool for the same reason. Compare “*when a wiseman giues thee better counsel giue me mine againe, I would hause none but knaues follow it, since a Foole giues it*” (F, 1347-49). The joke is metatheatrical in its recognition of the audience’s response to Kent’s “*Holla!*” It is a fool’s profession to get laughs.
45. **Gallow**: frighten, terrify
46. **keep**: stay within
49. **carry**: endure
50. **affliction**] Infliction
51. **pudder**] Pother. Disturbance, commotion, turmoil.
55. **perjur’d**] i.e. perjurer;
55. **simular**] simulator, pretender
56. **Caitiff**] A contemptible or cowardly person
57. **seeming**] hypocrisy
58. **practiced on**] plotted against;
58. **pent-up**] hidden, confined
59. **Rive your concealing continents**] tear open that which contains and conceals you
60. **summoners**] summoners were officers of church courts.
62. S.D. **Storm still**] Ed. Not in Q, F. I have used the direction to indicate the presence of an effect. Note that the literal-minded Kent does not anthropomorphize the storm as Lear and the Fool do. For him, it is just really bad weather. Throughout Act III, Kent serves as a comedic straight man. Compare, “*He hath no Daughters Sir*” (F, 1850). Cf. also, “*will you lie downe and rest vpon the Cushions.*” (Q2, 2014.14-15).
62. **hard**] near
65. **More harder**] Compare III,vi,77, “*hard*”.
- 66-7. **Which even but now . . . come in**] i.e. Goneril and Regan forbade my entrance when I asked



them about your whereabouts.

68. **scanted**] withheld; deficient

70. **straw**] Lear means bedding. It is metatheatrical in that the yard and the “cellar” at the Globe were strewn with “short” (i.e. *chopped*) straw, as Cordelia calls it (F, 2788).

75-8. **He that has but . . . every day**] Men must make the best of what what’s given them. The wind and the rain is a symbol of life’s daily hardships. The Fool’s catch appears to be a reprise of the song “[The Wind and the Rain](#)”, a [Memento mori](#) sung by Feste at the end of *Twelfth Night*.



Figure 140. The Dance of Death (1493) by Michael Wolgemut, from the Nuremberg Chronicle of Hartmann Schedel.

79. S.D. **Lear and Kent exit**] Capell. *Exit*. (F, 1733). Not in Q.

80. **brave**] fine

81. **prophecy**] This speech is a parody of a well-known prophecy known as “Merlin’s Prophecy.” The original, which is called *Chaucer’s Prophecy*, can be Googled online. (See Misha Tera-mura, “Prophecy and emendation: Merlin, Chaucer, Lear’s Fool”, 2019.) It is also cited as a reference in Furness, p. 179. The Fool’s awareness of the presence of the audience, as well as his acknowledgment of the difference between the represented time of the story and the time of its theatrical presentation, are common techniques of *metatheatre*.

92. **Albion**] England

95. **going shall be used with feet**] That men will use their feet for the practical purpose of going someplace instead of storming off to nowhere because they are angry. Cf. I,v.8-9, III,ii,31-34.

95. S.D. **Thunder and lightning**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Again, the intent of the effect is not to mimic a “real” storm, but to censor the actor. The “Heavens” disapprove of improvisation.

96-7. **This prophecy Merlin shall make . . . time**] The Fool blames Merlin for the joke: “As, according to the legend, King Lear was contemporary with Joash, King of Judah” (Moberly) qu. Furness p. 180. Again, the effect is “metatheatrical,” and written for a laugh.

97. S.D. *Exit*]

ACT III, SCENE III] *Scena Tertia* (F, 1751). Scene 10 in Quarto.

S.D. **Gloucester’s Castle**] Capell, *subst*. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Lords Rooms**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Enter Gloucester and Edmund**] (F, 1752) . *Enter Cornewell and Bastard with lights*. (Q1, 1970). *Enter Gloster, and the Bastard with lights*. (Q2, 1751). Lights are not specified in III,v (F) scene 12 (Q), interior scenes that theoretically take place in the Lords Rooms. For the sake of consistency, I have deleted stage directions regarding the use of torches and candles by actors unless explicitly indicated in the spoken dialogue, such as the torches Edmund calls for in II,i (F, 964), and the torch Gloucester is carrying in III,iv (F, 1892-94).

S.D. *above*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Cf. III,v and IV,v. The use of the Lords Rooms here, and in III,v and IV,v, qualifies the idea of secrecy and duplicity, stereotyped attributions of high and mighty lords. It also helps quickens the pace of the staging. Note the short duration of these scenes, and the actors' lack of movement spatially.

2. **leave**] permission

2. **pity**] have pity on

7. **Go to**] an expression of impatience

10. **closet**] *OED*. **4. b.** "A place (whether in the form of a cupboard or of a room) where valuables are securely kept." See *Julius Caesar* III,ii, "But heere's a Parchment, with the Seale of Caesar, / I found it in his Closset, 'tis his Will" (F, 1665-66)

11. **home**] i.e. completely; power: armed force; footed: i.e. landed

12. **incline to**: i.e. take the side of; look: i.e. look for; privily: secretly

14. **of**] i.e.by

17. **toward**] about to happen

18. S.D. *Exit*] (Q, 1770), (F, 1770).

23. S.D. *Exit*] (Q, 1775), (F, 1775).

ACT III. SCENE IV. *Scena Quarto* (F, 1776). Scene 11 in Q.

S.D. *Storm still*] after "endure" (F, 1780). Not in Q.

S.D. *The Heath. Before a Hovel*] Rowe, *subst.* Not in Q, F.

S.D. *The Yard and Platform*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *Enter Lear, Kent, and Fool*] Q, 1778, F, 1777.



Figure 141. 1600's--French--Performance by a mountebank theatre.

S.D. *below*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Kent leads Lear and the Fool into the yard, and takes them to the spot Edgar emerged from in II,iii (F, 1251). (See note II,iii,S.D., "*below.*")

2. **open night**: i.e. night in the open air

3. **nature**: human nature

8. **fixed**] lodged, rooted

15. **as**] i.e. as if

20. **frank**] generous

22. S.D. *Storm still*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare note II,iv,267.S.D., "*A noise of distant thunder heard.*"

26. S.D. *To the Fool*] Johnson. Not in Q, F.

27. S.D. *Exit Fool*] After *poverty* (F, 1807). Not in Q.



Figure 142. After nearly 500 years, the remains of the Red Lion playhouse, which marked the dawn of Elizabethan theatre, may have finally been found." (Stephen White).

27. S.D. **under the stage**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *John a Kent*, Act III, “From under the Stage, the third antique.” (p.33). The Fool crawls down into the dank “cellar” underneath the stage from whence the audience saw Edgar emerge in II,iii (F, 1251).
28. **naked**] Compare note III,iv,99, “unaccommodated.”
31. **looped**] filled with loopholes. [See Figure 161.]
33. **Take physic**] cure yourself;
33. **Pomp**] i.e. you who are vain



Figure 143. "Dives and Lazarus" by (c. 1700), Paolo Paganini. Pushkin Museum of Art.

35. **superfluous**] A word Shakespeare appears to have coined himself from the Latin *superfluous*: “An unnecessary or excess amount of something; a surplus” (*OED 1*.) The word “superfluous” is first spoken in II,iv,261-2 in connection with beggars: “our basest Beggars / are in the poorest thing **superfluous**.” (F, 1564-65). Compare also IV,i,66-70: “Let the **superfluous**, and Lust-dieted man, / That slaues your ordinance, that will not see / Because he do's not feele, feele your powre quickly: / So distribution should vndoo excesse, / And each man haue enough” (F, 2252-56).
37. S.D. **From below**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
36. S.D. **Edgar winds his horn from under the stage**] Ed. Not in Q, F. There are many instances where characters are directed to *wind a horn* cited in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, **horn** (pp. 116-117). We know from Edgar’s words, “Poor Tom, thy horn is dry” (F, 2032) that one was being used as a prop in *King Lear*. “Bedlam beggars wore about their necks a great horne of an ox in a string or bawdrie, which, when they came to an house for almes they did wind, and they did put the drink given them onto this horne whereto they did put a stopple” (Aubrey, *Natural History of Wiltshire*, ed. 1847, p. 93). It makes dramatic sense that Edgar would blow it on occasion. Here, the plangent sound of the horn underscores the importance Shakespeare gives to the words “show the heavens more just.” (F, 1817). This is the first of four times Edgar winds it. See also III,iv,91; III,vi,72; and IV,i,24. Compare also IV,v,40, S.D., “Edgar blows a raspberry.” [See Appendix E: “O do,de,do,de,do de.”]
36. S.D. **from under the stage**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
37. **Fatham and half**] Edgar is calling *the depth* of the rainwater, using his horn as a boatswain uses a whistle—summoning sailors to the “upper deck.” In Heywood’s *Fortune By Land and Sea* (p. 37), Young Forest commands:

“Boatswain with your whistle  
Command the Saylor to the upper deck

To know their quarters, and to hear their charge.”

In Shakespeare’s time, the Globe Playhouse was a mere stone’s throw from the Thames (see Wenceslaus Hollar’s “Long View of London from Bankside”), and likely flooded during heavy rain storms.



Video 22. Three cow horn trumpets (also known as blowing horns or blast horns), of different sizes, and a ram's horn.

38. S.D. **From below**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, p. 28, “Below can be synonymous with under the stage or beneath the stage” (p. 28).
40. **Give me thy hand**] Kent is physically helping the Fool out of the “cellar.” He is not mollycoddling him.
40. S.D. **Reenter Fool**] Not in Q, F.
40. S.D. **from under the stage**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
43. **straw**] Evidently, “short” (cut) straw was strewn about the yard rather than “long” straw. (See “Buying the Right Straw.”) In *Vanity Fair* (p. 256), Thackeray alludes to the practice of laying straw in the streets to muffle sound. Perhaps straw was used at the Globe as an acoustic property as well as to absorb moisture, dirt and bad odors.
43. S.D. **Enter Edgar**] *Enter Edgar and the Fool. after just* (F, 1818). Not in Q, 1608.
43. S.D. **from under the stage**] Ed. Not in Q, F.



Figure 144. Tom o'Bedlam or Abraham-men. Woodcut illustration for an old ballad, National Library of Scotland - Crawford.

43. S.D. **disguised as Tom o'Bedlam**] Theobald. Not in Q, F. [See Figure 144.] The first mention of **Bedlam beggars** in *King Lear* is by Edmund, who mocks the songs they sing for almes: “*my Cue is villanous Melancholly, with a sighe like Tom o'Bedlam*” (F, 464-5). It can be reasonably assumed from the play’s title, that madness, and what causes it, was a popular subject in the day.

“When Henry VIII dissolved the religious orders, he seized the Bethlem Hospital in London, England's only asylum for the mentally ill. However, shortly before he died in 1547 he transferred its control to the Corporation of London. It then became a civic rather than a religious institution. But the City aldermen struggled to keep it running and in 1574, they handed its management to the Bridewell, a hospital for the 'idle poor'. The Bethlem at this time could only hold a maximum of 40 people and was often only half full . . . It was only the handful of people living in the Bethlem who received any sort of institutional care in the 16th and early 17th centuries. In a population of five million, this

meant that large numbers of mentally ill people lived in their communities, usually cared for by their family. Some were on the streets - mentally ill beggars were nicknamed 'Tom o'Bedlams' . . . King James I (1603-1625) instructed the court that 'lunatics be freely committed to their best and nearest friends, that can receive no benefit by their death.' *The care of the mentally ill was essentially a domestic matter* and on the whole, it seems that people were not exploited by the system . . . Mental illness could be seen as both a natural and a supernatural event - a sickness or something caused by devils or astronomical events. People had no difficulty accepting both these explanations at the same time" ("Mental illness in the 16th and 17th centuries").



Figure 145. Richard Napier (c. 1630), British School, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Napier was a clergyman and astrologer who treated thousands of patients worried about their mental health in the 16th century. Their symptoms included suicidal thoughts and self-harm, refusal to pray, inability to feel pious, sexual urges, visions, weeping.

43. S.D. *carrying a horn in a baldric*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare “*poore Tom thy horne is dry*” (F, 2032). See Figure 144.
43. S.D. *Thunder and Lightning*] Ed. Not in Q, F. “[M]ost often the effects [of Thunder and Lighting] are linked to a supernatural figure such as a **devil, spirit, ghost, witch, magician**, or god and accompany descents through the trapdoor into the underworld.” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, p. 230.)
44. **Away! The foul fiend follows me!**] A reference to the storm. Note that the storm is being anthropomorphized (except for Kent who sees it as nothing more than bad weather). It’s character changes from person to person. For Edgar, it takes the form of demons.
44. S.D. *Sound of wind*] Ed. Not in Q, F. The sound of wind from an aeolphone. Cf. III,iv,90.S.D. *Sound of scolding wind*.



Figure 146. Demons tempting suicide. Source not given. "It was customary during the Tudor and Stuart periods for the corpse of a *felo de se* suicide to undergo a form of ritual desecration: defilement of one’s body and living memory, followed by 'profane burial' at a crossroads."

45. **Through the sharp hawthorn...**] Presumably the line from a ballad.
52. **halters**] hangman’s ropes
52. **ratsbane**] white arsenic, the “Poison of Kings” and the “Saviour of Syphilis.”
54. **four-inched bridges**] trot poles
55. **for**] as
55. *Storm still*] F, 1843 (before line 57, “*What, has his daughters*”). Not in Q. The articulation of the storm effects vary as phrases do in music.
56. **Bless thy five wits**] This line is said in response to the stage effects. According to Stephen Hawes in *The Pastime of Pleasure (1509), Cap. XXIV. Of the Five Internall Wittes*, the five wits are



common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation, and memory.

The eyen, the eres, and also the nose,  
The mouth, and handes, inwarde wyttes are none;  
But outwarde offyces, as ye may suppose,  
To the inwarde wyttes, whiche do judge alone;  
For unto them all thinges have gone,  
But these outwarde gates to have the knowledginge,  
By the inwarde wyttes to have decernynge.

56. **Tom's a-cold**] See Appendix E: "O do,de,do,de,do de."

57. **pass**] predicament

59. **reserv'd**] kept, retained

59. **else**] otherwise



Figure 147. Egyptian plague of boils in the Toggenburg Bible from 1411. The image depicts Moses tossing handfuls of soot into the air with two people suffering from the Biblical plague of boils described in Exodus 9:8-9.

60. **pendulous**] pendent, overhanging. "There was a believe that diseases were stored up in the air until it was time for them to be poured down to punish sinners." p. 68 *Oxford School Shak.* [See Figure 147.]

61. **fated**] fatefully, ominously

62. **He hath no daughters, sir**] Kent's deadpan serves as a foil to Lear's "madness," as in III,vi, 34, "Will you lie upon the cushions?" (Q, 2014.15), and III,vi,55, "False Iusticer why hast thou let her scape." (Q, 2014.30).

68. **pelican**] Young pelicans feed by sticking their bills into their parents' throats to retrieve food. In Medieval times, a story was told that after the mother pelican gave birth to a brood of young chicks, they became violent toward the parent that selflessly cared for them, and attempting to peck out her eyes and mutilate her. In anger she retaliated, striking her young dead, but after three days regretted her actions, and pierced her own side with her beak. Her blood revived the chicks, and she died, having made the ultimate sacrifice for her children. See "The Pelican, Self-Sacrificing Mother Bird of the Medieval Bestiary."

68. S.D. **Storm still**] Ed. Not in Q, F.



Figure 148. A naked woman on a flying penis, marginalium image from Decretum Gratiani by Bartolomeo da Brescia.

69-70. **Pillicock sat on Pillicock hill . . . loo!**] Edgar's rhyme is said directly in response to the sound effect, as is the Fool's line, "This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen" (F, 1858). "Pillicock" is an archaic word for "the penis" (*OED* 1. *α.*): in W. Heuser *Kildare-Gedichte* (1904) 171 "Y ne mai no more of loue done, Mi pilkoc pisseþ on mi schone." In its



present context, *Pillicock* appears to be a name given by Shakespeare to a fiend with a propensity for licentiousness. The name is spontaneously suggested by the word “*pelican*” (F, 1856), a bird easily identified by its long massive bill and gular sac. Edgar is imagining the sex Lear enjoyed begetting his daughters. *Halloo* is a common hunting cry used to incite dogs to the chase. Here, his hallooing is salacious, as though he was a witness at a bedding ceremony.

77. **servingman**] a high-ranking servant, such as Oswald. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the First Servingman is a superior servant in the Capulet household, with permission to address Lady Capulet directly. The decline and fall of “poor Tom” is presented as a cautionary tale, like William Hogarth’s *A Rake’s Progress* (1732-34) where Tom Rakewell becomes Tom o’ Bedlam by squandering his inheritance on vice, and becomes a syphilitic lunatic confined in Bethlam Hospital. [See Figure 149.]



Figure 149. In *The Madhouse* — Plate 8, *A Rake's Progress*, William Hogarth.

Sex was on everybody’s mind at the Globe Playhouse in the notorious District of Southwark. Though syphilis is non-specific in *King Lear*, as AIDS is non-specific in *Into the Woods*, Shakespeare’s audience would have presupposed that Tom’s madness was the result of the disease, then incurable, which the playwright himself may have been suffering from when he wrote the play. (See John J. Ross, MD, “Shakespeare’s Chancre: Did the Bard Have Syphilis?”, *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, Volume 40, Issue 3, 1 February 2005, Pages 399–404.) By the 1520’s, it was clear that the disease was contracted and spread by sexual intercourse. In England, Henry VIII tried to close down the ‘stews’, or brothels, and communal bathhouses of London c. 1503. (See “Prostitution in Early Modern England.”)



Figure 150. *Henry vs The Whores*, 3rd April 1546. ‘A good old traditional Southwark brothel, where we have tea with our tits out and everyone looks over the moon to be here...oh and we also collect crockery’.

Syphilis is not the scourge today that it was circa 1495 when it was first reported in Europe. Although it didn’t have the horrendous mortality of the bubonic plague, the symptoms were painful and repulsive: “So cruel, so distressing, so appalling that until now nothing more terrible or disgusting has ever been known on this earth,” says the German humanist Josef Grünpeck, who, when he fell victim, bemoaned how “the wound on my priapic gland became so swollen, that both hands could scarcely encircle it.” The artist Albrecht Dürer, later to use images of sufferers in propaganda woodcuts against the Catholic church, wrote “God save me from the French disease. I know of nothing of which I am so afraid ... Nearly every man has it and it eats up so many that they die.” (“Syphilis, sex and fear: How the French disease conquered the world,” Sarah Dunant, *The Guardian*, 2013.)



Figure 151. Dyce gives Swithold, a contraction of Saint Withold (supposed by Tyrwhitt to mean St. Vitalis), who, as a youth, was licentious and immoral. He was known as a patron against venereal disease.

“The first stage was a chancre on or near the genitals, followed by rashes and open sores during the second. The afflicted would experience pain with erection, swelling of the lymph glands, splitting headaches, and other pains throughout the body. At this point, the soft tissues of the nose and palate could begin to rot, and the teeth and hair would loosen and fall out. Lesions and tumors could consume the nasal bones and the tissues of the face until the flesh was literally falling from the bones, sometimes even leaving the brain exposed to open air . . . Syphilis was treated at the second stage with mercury in every form from enemas, ointments, and pills to steam baths or “sweats” in mercury vapor. This treatment was somewhat successful, although it was known even at the time to cause madness. Less common treatments included confining the afflicted to a sweat room to breathe guaiac vapor, “excising the sores and cauterizing the wounds,” and celibacy aided by the placement of nettles in one’s codpiece” (S is for Syphilis: Genius, Madness, and The Sickness of Naples, by Jessica Cale.



Figure 152. A medical illustration attributed to Albrecht Dürer (1496) depicting a person with syphilis. Here, the disease is believed to have astrological causes.

The subject of sexual promiscuity is first introduced at the very beginning of the play when Gloucester boasts about the bawdy circumstances of Edmund’s birth. In III,iv, Edgar invokes “*Swithold*” (i.e. St. Vitalis of Assisi, the patron saint of persons suffering with venereal diseases) upon the entrance of his father (see III,iv,111 note: *Swithold*). In IV,v,111-132, Lear presupposes Gloucester’s blindness to be a judgment of the gods for the sin of committing adultery (F, 2556-61), as does Edgar in the final scene: “*The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices/ Make instruments to plague us./ The dark and vicious place where thee he got/ Cost him his eyes*” (F, 3130-34).



Figure 153. 16th century engraving by Jan Sadeler showing Girolamo Fracastoro warning a mythic Greek shepherd, Syphilis, not to anger Apollo by Pointing to Venus, the Goddess of Love. ‘A night with Venus, a lifetime with Mercury’ ran the old adage.

“We find that the artists of both the 16th and 17th centuries, while somewhat reticent about syphilis, are nonetheless at pains to suggest that sex is not without its serious side effects. Their artistic exhortations suggest women as the source of the disease, so that we find Venus shown as both ideal love and the source of contamination.” (*Syphilis in art: an entertainment in four parts. Part 1*, Morton RS., *Genitourin Med.* 1990 Feb;66(1):33-40.) [See Figure 153.]

77-8. **curl'd my hair**] See note II,ii,30, “*barber-monger*”.

78. **wore gloves in my cap**] wore favors from his mistress. See IV,iii,21 note; IV,v,33. [See Figure 240.]



Figure 154. Gambling in a Brothel at the time of Queen Elizabeth I. Phillip Stubbes's *Anatomy of the ABUSES IN ENGLAND in SHAKSPERE'S YOUTH, PART I, 1583*. Page 46.

82. **dice**] “Joseph Strutt, writing in 1800, believed that dicing was the oldest amusement of man. Dice were played in England as early as the twelfth or thirteenth century. The seventeenth century was an era of manic dice-playing. Statues against dicing were enacted as early as the reign of Richard II. In an attempt to promote sports and pastimes of a military nature, Henry VII also added dicing to his list of unlawful amusements. These ordinances were loosely enforced under the early Stuarts. James I found games of hazard unappealing, and he was ‘unable to agree with the curiositie of some learned men of our age,’ but he recommend some dicing games to his son as being suitable for ‘foule and stormie weather’” (Vicky Ann Sanderling, “*Games and Gaming of the Stuart Aristocracy*” pp. 200-201). [See Figure 154.]
83. **out-paramoured the Turk**] i.e. had sex with more women than a Turkish pasha with his harem. See III,vi,103, “*Persian*” (F, 2037).
84. **light of ear**] Ready to listen to gossip
88. **plackets**] openings in petticoats or in skirts.
89. S.D. **Sound of scolding wind**] Ed. Not in Q, F. From a wind machine in “The Heavens”.
90. **Still “through the hawthorn blows the cold wind”**] Presumably a fragment of the same ditty he sang at line 46 (F, 1827-28).
91. **Says, “suum, mun, hey no nonny.”**—] Ed. *Sayes suum, mun, nonny*, (F, 1879). *hay no on ny*, (Q1, 1879). *hay no on ny*, (Q2, 1879). Presumably the refrain of a bawdy nonsense song. “[T]hese dauncers sometimes do teach them trickes above trenchmore, yea and sometimes such la voltas, that they mount so high, that you may see their *hey nony, nony nony no*” (*The Wit of a Woman*, 1604, line 430.) The words “*suum, nun*” is probably slang for *Nunquam satis*, a euphemism for a lady's genitals: “I hope I neglect no opportunity to your *nunquam is satis*.” J. Ford, *Loves Sacrifice* i.ii, line 83.
92. **Dolphin**] a name for the horn, which is bottle-nosed like a dolphin.
92. **my boy:**] *my boy*, (Q1, 1897). *my boy*, (Q2, 1879). *Boy* (F, 1880).
92. S.D. **Winds his horn**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Here, the sounding of the horn acts almost like an annunciation of the epiphany Lear is about to have. It summons Shakespeare's easily distractible audience at The Globe Playhouse to pay attention to what is about to happen. The

call resonates with biblical symbolism. “In the climactic conclusion of Psalm 148, we see that Israel should praise God because he has raised a horn of salvation for them: “He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. . . “This metaphor of the ‘exalted horn’ comes from an image of a bull lifting up its horns after winning a battle. The raised horn is a common biblical symbol of victory, especially of being rescued from oppression.” (Shara Drimalla, “The Horn of Psalm 148,” *BibleProject*) In [Psalm 92:10](#): “But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.” In ([Psalm 89:24](#)): “But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.” In ([Psalm 111:9](#)): “He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.” [See Appendix E: “*O do, de, do, de, do de.*”]

93. **Sessa**] *Sesey* (F, 1880). *caese* (Q1, 1879) *cease* (Q2, 1879). An interjection said upon blowing a horn Compare III,vi,72, *Do, de, de, de: sesa* (F, 2031); *loudla doodla* (Q1, 2031); *loudla doodla* (Q2, 2030). It is so used in *The Taming of the Shrew*, where I theorize Sly says “*Sessa*” (F, 9) after belching:

Y'are a baggage, the Slies are no  
Rogues. Looke in the Chronicles, we came  
in with Richard Conqueror: therefore *Pau-*  
*cas pallabris*, let the world slide: [*Belches.*] *Sessa.* (F, 6-9)

“*O do, de, do*” and “*loudla doodla*” are logically cues for the actor to wind his horn. The effect is dramatic, as demonstrated by Corwen Broch in [Video 22](#). (See [note III,iv, 36. S.D. “Edgar winds his horn”](#).) As the company parts at the conclusion of the scene, Edgar alludes to “*Childe Rowland*” (F,1966), who is best remembered for blowing his famous Olifant at the Battle of Roncevaux Pass. (See [note III,iv, 172. “Child Rowland”](#).) Also, in English folklore, Jack the Giant Killer awakes the giant Cormoran by blowing his horn. (See [note III,iv,173, “His”](#).)

93. **Let him trot him**] i.e. the foul fiend in the form of the “Storm.”
93. S.D. **Thunder and Lightning**] Ed. *Storme still.* (F, 1880). Not in Q. The direction in the Folio “*Storme still*” gives the reader no indication how the storm is being articulated. The effect must be severe because it is a causal factor in what Lear is about to do.



Figure 155. A vagrant is tied and whipped through the streets on his way to the gallows, c.1567.

- 94-5. **Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies**] Consumed with guilt for having banished Cordelia (see IV,vi, 47, “*wheel of fire*”), Lear now sees the storm as a scourge of Heaven. He feels he is more deserving of corporal punishment than poor Tom, whose lashing from above seem unjust and cruel to him, like the lashing of “[Whipped Peter](#)”—“Thousands of white people saw in the photo the cruelty of slavery, which “helped fuel the fires of [abolition during the Civil War.](#)” [See [Figure 162.](#)] We know from the stocking of Kent in II,ii that Shakespeare was familiar with [English Poor Laws](#).

(See note II,ii,122, “*Stocks.*”) Under Henry VIII’s [Vagabonds Act 1530](#), beggars were subject to flagellation or whipping, rather than the stocks. [The Poor Relief Act of 1601](#), provided “money to support the poor in the area and to provide work for them. However, those who refused work were whipped and sent to a house of correction. Beggars were whipped until their back bled, and were then sent back to their place of birth” (BBC). It was not until the [Criminal Justice Act of 1948](#) that the power of officials to order whippings was terminated in England, Scotland, and Wales.



Figure 156. *Flagellation of Christ* by Peter Paul Rubens, 1617.

95-6. **Is man no more than this?]** Lear’s words “*Is man no more than this?*” evokes the *Ecce homo* (“Behold the man”), the Latin words used by Pontius Pilate in the Vulgate translation of the Gospel of John, when he presents a scourged Jesus Christ, to a crowd of Jews demanding his crucifixion (John 19:5). The scene is considered part of Jesus’ *passion*, and widely depicted in art during the Renaissance. There can be no mistaking the sight of Poor Tom, whose flesh is mortified with “pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary” (F, 2267), wearing the red or purple robe of a King, as metaphor and allegory. See note III,iv,99,S.D., “Lear tears off pieces of his costume.”



Figure 157. *Ecce Homo*, Caravaggio, 1605, Palazzo Bianco, Genoa.

97. **worm]** Silkworm

97. **cat]** civet cat from whose secretions perfume is made. See IV,v,131.

98. **sophisticated]** not pure or genuine; artificial. The word is ironic because Lear’s lurid *Tudor period* costume is anything but “*sophisticated*”.

99. **unaccommodated]** naked. The action that follows evokes the story of Job in the Bible who rends his mantle, and says, “*Naked* came I out of my mother’s womb, and *naked* shall I return thither” (Job 1:20).



Figure 158. Job tearing his clothes upon the loss of his children and property. “*Naked* came I out of my mother’s womb, and *naked* shall I return thither.” KJV, Job 1:121. Illustration from *Bibel AT, deutsch*, 1477.

100-01. **Off, off, you lendings]** See note 99.S.D., *Lear tears off pieces of his costume.*



101. **unbutton**] *Come, vnbutton here.* (F, 1888-89), *come on.* (Q1, 1888) *come on be true.* (Q2, 1887). Referring to the buttons on his doublet in the First Folio. “The most common upper garment for men was the doublet, a short, stiff, tight-fitting jacket which was made of wool, leather, or thick fabric... The doublet might have sleeves which could be detachable and it was closed using hooks, laces, or buttons.” (Mark Cartwright, “Clothes in the Elizabethan Era,” 2020) [See *Portrait of a Gentleman, probably of the West Family, 1545-60.*]

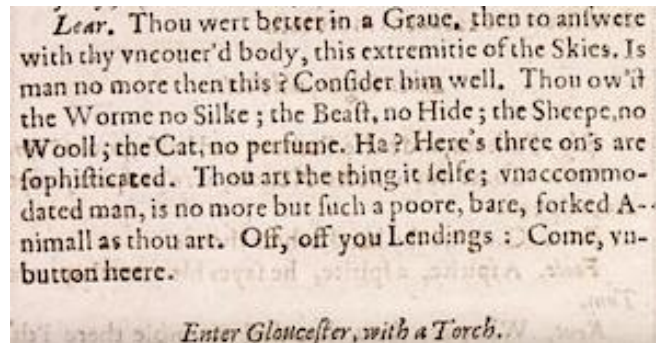


Figure 159. Facsimile Viewer: First Folio (New South Wales).

As readers can readily see for themselves in Figure 159, there is not a stage direction describing what the audience sees happening on stage. Obviously, what Lear is wearing is the decisive factor in forming a valid hypothesis about the action. It can be inferred that he is outfitted for riding because he arrives at Gloucester's castle in Act II on horseback. Based on our knowledge of Tudor fashions, it stands to reason that his dress would include leather boots (F, 2615), a doublet closed by buttons in the front (F, 1889), detachable doublet sleeves as in Figure 158, collar and cuffs, very wide breeches covering his hips and upper thighs, and completed with an exquisitely wrought, silken *riding* cloak (F, 2037). (See Kimiko Small, “What the Tudor Men Really Wore: Doublet sleeves.”) Lear is said to be “*unbonneted*” (Q, 1622.7), so the cloak would naturally be the first thing to go. It was standard for Tudor noblemen to wear short capes or cloaks, such as the one Sir Walter Raleigh is reported to have thrown down to protect the royal feet of Queen Elizabeth I from the mud. [See Figure 160.]

“Some men's cloaks were flung back over the shoulder and draped over their backs. They had long ties to hold them on, which were fastened under the arm and tied across the body in front. . . . Cloaks were full and often fastened with broaches, clasps or gold chains” (Elizabethan Cloaks).



Figure 160. Procession portrait of Elizabeth I of England, c. 1601.

101. S.D. *Lear tears off pieces of his costume*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *The Renegado*, wln, 1653, “*Throws off his cloak and doublet.*” (The Folger Shakespeare Library). *Edward IV, Pt. 2, II, iv*, p. 134: S.D., “*riding-cloak.*” Lear's action is symbolic. J.E. Cirlot writes, “the symbol proper is a dynamic and polysymbolic reality, imbued with emotive and conceptual values: in other words, with true life... This power of the symbol to evince a meaning not only on one



level but at all levels is borne out by all those who have written about symbology, notwithstanding their scientific outlook. Mircea Eliade stresses this essential characteristic of the symbol, emphasizing the simultaneity of its different meanings” (*A Dictionary of Symbols*, pp. xi, xlix). [See Figure 161.]



Figure 161. Tudor gentleman with a cape giving alms to a beggar.

What the audience sees Lear *doing* is attempt to tear his shirt off. He wants to expose *his back* to the lashes of the storm, and feel them as a naked beggar does, "*And shew the Heauens more iust*" (F, 1817). He does not explicitly give his cloak to Edgar as in the legend of Saint Martin and the Beggar or Caravaggio’s “The Seven Works of Mercy. Nor is he stripping down to show himself a “featherless biped,” as Plato facetiously described man. (See “Diogenes versus Plato” by Phil Somers, 2015.) The spine of the play is just deserts, not naturism. Lear, is strong, and Kent is unable to restrain him. (Spoiler: the king slays the man who hangs Cordelia.) It is only when he sees Edgar cover himself with the cloak that he quiets down.



Figure 162. "Whipped Peter," An escaped enslaved man named Peter showing his scarred back at a medical examination in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1863.

There are no existing accounts of the original performance of *King Lear* except for a eulogy for Richard Burbage in which his portrayal of Lear is characterized as “kind.” To what else but the kindness *implicit* in Edgar’s appropriating the cloak can the epithet “*Kind Lear*” possibly refer?

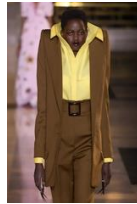
He's gone and with him what a world are dead.  
Which he review'd, to be revived so,  
No more young Hamlet, old Hieronimo  
*Kind Lear*, the Grieved Moor, and more beside,  
That lived in him have now for ever died.

—A Funerall Elegye on the Death of the famous Actor Richard Burbage  
who died on Saturday in Lent the 13 of March 1619, ANONYMOUS POET



Figure 163. Caravaggio, “The Seven Works of Mercy, ca. 1607.

101. S.D. *Edgar puts on the king's discarded riding-cloak*] Ed. Compare *The Shoemakers' Holiday*, wln 0745, S.D. “*Eyre puts it on.*” (The Folger Shakespeare Library). Here, Shakespeare is contrasting the posh, **breast-bearing costume** Regan wears in Acts I and II with Edgar’s “true need” of clothes. Lear tells her, “*Our basest Beggars / Are in the poorest thing superfluous. / Allow not Nature, more then Nature needs: / Mans life is cheape as Beastes. Thou art a Lady; / If onely to go warme were gorgeous, / Why Nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st, / Which scarcely keeps thee warme, but for true need*” (F, 1564-70). [See note II,iv,264.S.D., “*To Regan.*”] Needless to say, Lear’s cloak does not look “gorgeous” on a Bedlam beggar, “*the basest, and most poorest shape / That euer penury in contempt of man, / Brought neere to beast*” (F, 1258-60). It looks like lipstick on a pig. It is no more serviceable in a hurricane than haute couture by **Viktor & Rolf**. [See **Figure 164.**] Its impracticality is underscored by the farcically contrived entrance of Gloucester in a heavy woolen outer garment, made to protect the delicate clothes he is wearing underneath, and, of course, to stay warm as the Fool makes a point to observe. See note III,iv,103.S.D., “*Enter Gloucester.*”



**Figure 164.** From the Spring/Summer 2022 collection of Victor and Rolf. Victor Boyko/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images.

Following the dismantling of Lear’s costume, there are several allusions in the spoken dialogue to Edgar’s wearing an exotic cloak, notably, “*You sir, I entertaine for one of my hundred; only, I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will say they are **Persian**; but let them bee chang'd.*” (F, 2035-28). [See also “*Thou **robéd** man of justice*” (Q, 2014.17)]. Logically, by “*Persian*”, Lear is speaking literally about the costly silk from which the cape was made—imported to England from the Middle East. Patterned silk velvet was considered at the time to be the most expensive and prestigious of all woven textiles. Edgar wears the cloak over his shoulder like a *chlamys*, a type of ancient Greek cloak. This is one of the reasons why Lear mistakes him as a *Greek* philosopher, and why Edgar identifies himself with **Emperor Nero**, who famously dressed himself in a *chlamys*. [See **Figure 179.**] The cloak is theoretically the reference in the line “*The foule fiend bites my backe*” (Q1, 2014.1).



**Figure 165.** (Left) Youth wearing a chlamys, a short cloak worn by Greek men; (center) Tudor period rapier cape; (right) statue of an athlete wearing a chlamys, (Museum of Archaeology, Istanbul, Turkey).

The expression “clothes make the man” is a proverbial expression codified into law in Shakespeare’s day. “[C]lothing was central for the formation and display of identity in Eliza-

bethan England, and sumptuary laws attempted to make sure that the clothes matched the identity of the wearer. Elizabethan society was highly structured and hierarchical, with social and legal mechanisms in place to ensure everyone stayed in their proper place. Sumptuary laws were part of this apparatus; attempting to stop people dressing up as something they were not. Indeed, in a culture where identity is based on outward appearance, if a person wore clothes intended for someone outside of their social station or gender, that person's identity could change with their clothes.” (Dr. Wil Tosh, “Elizabethan sumptuary laws: Fashion policing in Shakespeare’s England”, 2022.)



Figure 166. El Greco, *Saint Martin and the Beggar*. c. 1597-99, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

Shakespeare’s *King Lear* is as baldly didactic as the satires of Ben Jonson. The “meta-theatrical” style of Elizabethan drama (and its point of view paradigm), invite easy comparison with Bertolt Brecht’s *Epic Theatre* (which he preferred to call “dialectical theatre”). According to *Britannica*, Brecht’s intention “was to appeal to his audience’s intellect in presenting moral problems and reflecting contemporary social realities on the stage. He wished to block their emotional responses and to hinder their tendency to empathize with the characters and become caught up in the action. To this end, he used “alienating,” or “distancing,” effects to cause the audience to think objectively about the play, to reflect on its argument, to understand it, and to draw conclusions (*see alienation effect*).” In this scene, Shakespeare juxtaposes the metaphysical with the physical to create dialectical tension.

102. **be contented**] viz., stop with the cloak already! But Lear is determined to expose his back to the storm, and take the whipping. As in Figure 158, he succeeds in casting off other detachable pieces of his costume (such as a sleeve or a cuff or a collar) before he begins undoing the buttons on his **doublet**. Kent tries to restrain him but is unsuccessful. Lear is as strong as his voice, which is powerful. It is only when the latter sees Edgar put on the cloak that he quiets down.

102-03. **swim in**] viz., go naked, as one does when going out for a refreshing swim. [See Figure 167.]



Figure 167. *Naked man swimming, The Golden Age*, Lucas Cranach, 1534.

103. S.D. **Enter Gloucester**] after *here* (F, 1890). *Enter Gloster*, after *fire* (Q, 1894).

103. **with a torch**] F, 1890. Not in Q. “**Torch** – “The most cited property light that be convention can indicate night or darkness on a stage with no variable lighting” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 233).



Figure 168. The Misanthrope, Bruegel, 1568.

103. S.D. **muffled in a voluminous, hooded cloak**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Gloucester looks like a devil “in black robes like a pronontary.” (Cf. Barnabe Barnes, *The Devil’s Charter*, Prologue.) His warm outer garment is the source of the Fool’s joke: “all the rest on’s body cold.” (F, 1893-94). [See Figure 168.] Raincoats did not exist in Shakespeare’s time. “Men, specifically, had a ‘surtout’ or long outer overcoat which could be worn to protect against the rain, and clothing itself was made from material like Flax and Wool which naturally repel water.” (CCash, “Did Shakespeare Have an Umbrella?”)
107. **Flibbertigibbet**] (F, 1895), *Fliberdegibek* (Q1, 1895), *Sirberdegibit* (Q2, 1895). A name for a fiend given in Harsnett, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*. Gloucester does indeed look like a devil in his voluminous, hooded cloak, and unnatural-looking bow spectacles. “Because [spectacles] were seen as being unusual and rare, they were seen as having magical powers,” says Handley. People who wore glasses “were in league with the devil, immoral.” (Neil Handley, museum curator at The College of Optometrists.)
105. **curfew**] This seems to be a reference to Medieval curfew laws requiring people to cover their fires. See *Curfew bell*.
107. **web and the pin**] “Cataráta..called a *Cataract* or a pin and web.” (*Queen Anna’s New World of Words*, J. Florio, 1611.) Clouded vision caused by cataracts can make it more difficult to read and see facial expressions. Gloucester, as noted, is extremely far-sighted, and wears bow spectacles at all times, which he keeps balanced on his nose. [See Figure 57.] “Quite often cataract (partial or full dimness of the crystalline lens) is combined with age-related farsightedness (**presbiopia**). Both of these disorders often develop after the age of 40-45 even in people who has had good vision throughout their life. These two disorders differ in their development mechanism. Even when the cataract has been successfully treated, there still remains presbyopia which means wearing glasses to have vision at close distances” (*Excimer Ophthalmologic Clinic*).
109. **squinies the eye**] Uncorrected far-sightedness may cause you to squint or strain your eyes to maintain focus.
109. **mildews**] “To affect or taint with mildew” (*OED*, 1.a), much as a cataract “mildews” the eye.
- 109-10. **white wheat**] *OED*, “any variety of wheat with light-coloured grains.” J. Fitzherbert Bk. *Husbandry* f. xviii<sup>v</sup> “White whete is lyke polarde whete..but it hath anis, and..wyll make white bredde. And in Essexe they call flaxen whete white whete.” (?1523). Cordelia speaks of “sustaining Corne” (F, 2356).
111. **Swithold**] Furness quoting Dyce gives Swithold, a contraction of Saint Withold (supposed by Tyrwhitt to mean St. Vitalis), who, as a youth, was licentious and immoral. He was known as a patron against venereal disease. The rhyme is suggested by the Fool’s reference to Gloucester’s being an “old Letcher” (F, 1893). See “Decapitated Head of St. Vitalis, Patron Saint of Genital

Disease, To Be Sold At Auction.”



Figure 169. Decapitated Head of "Swithold", Patron Saint of Genital Diseases. Recently sold at auction.

111. **'old]** wold, open country

112. **Nightmare]** Gloucester looks both sinister and ridiculous in his hooded over coat and bow spectacles.

112. **nine-fold]** Cf. *Macbeth*, (F, 130-134):

The weird sisters, hand in hand,  
Posters of the sea and land,  
Thus do go about, about:  
Thrice to thine and thrice to mine  
And thrice again, to make up nine.

113. **alight]** dismount, descend. Gloucester is theoretically above them on the platform.

112. **plight]** Pledge

115. **aroint]** begone

117. S.D. **Pointing to Gloucester]** Ed. Not in Q, F.

121. **water]** i.e. water newt

123. **sallets]** tasty things

123. **ditch-dog]** dead dog thrown in a ditch

125. **tithing to tithing]** Places where tithes are exacted where he might hope to receive alms. Compare III,vi, "*come march to wakes, and faires, and market townes*" (Q1, 2031-32). Foakes notes "Householders were supposed to pay one-tenth or a tithle of their wealth to the Church. A statute of 1598 orders that any vagabond apprehended in a 'Parish or Tything' shall 'be openly whipped until his or her body be bloude, and shalbe forthwith sent from Parish to Parish . . . the next streight way to the Parish where he was borne.'" (*The Arden Shakespeare King Lear*, p. 281.) [See Figure 155.]

126. **three suits]** Compare II,ii,14, "*three-suited*"

126. **deer]** animals

129. S.D. **Thunder still]** Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *Julius Caesar*, I,iii, 540, "*Thunder still.*" Edgar reacts to the sound effect in the next line.

130. **Beware my follower]** i.e. the "storm."

130. **Smulkin, Modo, Mahu]** names of devils in Harsnett's *Declaration*. Interestingly, "Prince Modu" is named by Richard Mainy on the same page that references "the Mother".

136. **gets]** begets. Something about poor Tom brings Edgar to Gloucester's mind. As yet, he can't see the reason why. Shakespeare is building suspense by asking the audience if Gloucester will ever come to recognize his son, and, most importantly, *by what means*. The main philosophical question is, again, how people come to know things. See note IV,v, 288., "*father.*"

138-9. **suffer/ T' obey]** Tolerate obeying

145. S.D. **To Edgar]** Ed. Not in Q, F.



144. **Theban**] Edgar is wearing Lear's discarded cape like a *chlamys*, a short oblong mantle worn by young men of ancient Greece. [See Figure 165.] The scene evokes the meeting of Alexander the Great with Diogenes of Sinope, "one of the most discussed anecdotes from philosophical history." "A student of ancient philosopher and scientist Aristotle, Alexander had a great respect for wise men like Diogenes, so he decided to meet the philosopher for himself. He traveled to Corinth, where Diogenes was living at the time. Based on the accounts of Plutarch, the two men exchanged only a few words. Alexander came upon Diogenes as the philosopher was basking in the morning sunlight. Thrilled to meet the famous thinker, Alexander asked if there was any favor he might do for him. To that, Diogenes replied: "Move a little to the right; you are blocking my sun." (Anna Wichmann, "When Alexander the Great Met Diogenes the Cynic.") [See Figure 170.] Whatever else might be said of Diogenes, he was indisputably the most histrionic philosopher in the ancient world.



Figure 170. *Alexander the Great meeting Diogenes*, Anonymous, 1580-1640. Metropolitan Museum

148. **your study**] The specialty you study. See note V,i,16, "*mystery of things*."

149. **prevent**] forestall

149. **vermin**] Animals such as foxes and polecats which preyed on preserved game, crops etc. See definition and an example from 1603 in the OED, 1.a, "The rest..are rather Vermynne than beastes of game; such is the wild Catte, the Brocke and such like. G. Owen, Description Penbrokshire (1892) 268. [See note III,vi, 23. S.D. To the pelt. "]

150. S.D. **They talk aside**] Not in Q, F.

151. **Importune**] implore, beg

157. **outlaw'd**] from my blood: disinherited; condemned as an outlaw

160. S.D. **Storm and Tempest**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare "*Storme and Tempest*" (F, 1584). Gloucester refers to the sound effect in the next line, "What a night's this!"

161. **Kent**] Ed. As part of Gloucester's speech (F,1951) and (Q,1951). The cause of Lear's sudden outburst of rage in the next line is Kent's *forcible* attempt to pull him away from poor Tom. The incident is recalled by Edgar when he speaks of Kent's shunning "*my abhord society*" (Q, 3168.5-3168.6). Gloucester is lost in remembrance of his banished son, and does nothing to incite Lear's anger. He is also on the platform and the others are below him in the yard.

158. S.D. **He tries to pull Lear away from Edgar**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

159. **Noble philosopher**] Edgar reminds Lear of Diogenes of Synope, who is reputed to have gone naked in public.

161. S.D. **To Kent**] Ed. Not in Q, F,

161. **Cry you mercy**] excuse me. Lear is angered by Kent. Compare note III,vi,56, "*why hast thou let her 'scape?*"

166. **keep still**] continue to stay

167. **soothe**] indulge.



168. **Take him you on]** bring him along.

170. **Athenian]** philosopher. See line 144 above, “*Theban.*”

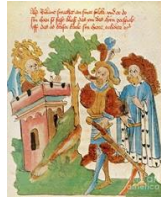


Figure 171. “The Song of Roland.” Charlemagne hears Roland blow his Oliphant. Image from Stricker's *Karl der Grosse*, manuscript of Bonn, 1450.

172. **Child Rowland]** Edgar’s horn evokes the sounding of Olifant at the Battle of Roncevaux Pass. [See Figure 171.] Just as Roland waits for the right moment to blow his horn in the legend, Edgar is waiting for the right time to prove his innocence. Also, in Cornish folklore, Jack blows a loud blast on a horn causing the giant Cormoran to wake and run out of his cave. [See Figure 172.] Edgar’s words forewarn the audience of the approaching tragedy. All the comic shenanigans in III,ii and III,iv make it easy to forget that matters are not funny, as the Fool tells anybody foolish enough to need telling (F, 923-23). Compare Edgar’s ominous words at the end of III,vi: “*Lurk, lurk.*” (Q, 2056.19).

173. **His]** i.e. the Giant’s. “Jack the Giant Killer’ is a Cornish fairy tale and legend about a young adult who slays a number of bad giants during King Arthur’s reign. The tale is characterized by violence, gore and blood-letting.” (Wiki) According to [Joseph Jacobs'](#) account, Jack blows a horn to awaken the giant Cormoran.

So [Jack] got a horn, shovel, and pickaxe, and went over to the Mount in the beginning of a dark winter’s evening, when he fell to work, and before morning had dug a pit twenty-two feet deep, and nearly as broad, covering it over with long sticks and straw. Then he strewed a little mould over it, so that it appeared like plain ground. Jack then placed himself on the opposite side of the pit, farthest from the giant’s lodging, and, just at the break of day, he put the horn to his mouth and blew, Tantivy, Tantivy. This noise roused the giant, who rushed from his cave crying: “You incorrigible villain, are you come here to disturb my rest? (*The Allies' Fairy Book*, “Jack the Giant-killer” by Joseph Jacobs)



Figure 172. Chapbook for Jack the Giant Killer.

173. **word]** motto

173. **Still]** always

173. **Fie foh, and fum]** According to [Wikipedia](#), the words appear “in the pamphlet *Haue with You to Saffron-Walden* (published in 1596) written by Thomas Nashe (who mentions that the rhyme was already old and its origins obscure)

Fy, Fa and fum,  
I smell the blood of an Englishman.

174. S.D. *Drum and Trumpet within*] Ed. Not in F, Q.

174. S.D. *Exeunt*] (F, 1968). Not in Q.

ACT III. SCENE V] *Scena Quinta* (F, 1969). Scene 12 in Q.

S.D. *Gloucester's Castle*] Capell, *subst.* Not in Q, F.

S.D. *The Lords Rooms*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *Enter Cornwall and Edmund*] (F, 1970). *Enter Cornewall and Bastard.* (Q, 1970).

S.D. *above*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See also III,iii and IV,v.

5-6. **provoking merit . . . himself**] Edgar's bad nature together with own cunning.

8. **approves**] proves

9. **intelligent party**] One giving information to France

9-10. S.D. *Gives letter to Cornwall*] Not in Q, F.

18. S.D. *Aside*] Theobald. Not in Q, F.

23. *Drums sound*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

23. S.D. *Exeunt*] (F, 1995). Exit (Q, 1996).

ACT III, SCENE VI. *Scena Sexta* (F, 1996). Scene 13 in Quarto.

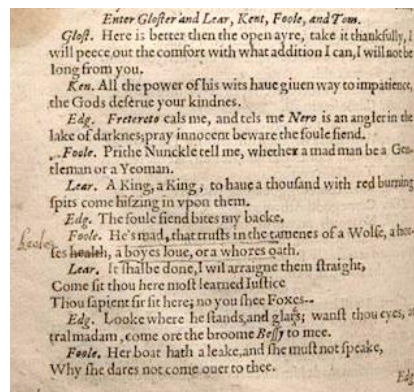


Figure 173. Facsimile of Quarto 1 (1608). There are no stage directions describing the action.

S.D. *A Hunting Lodge*] Ed. Not in Q, F. There are no stage directions in the quartos and Folio telling us where the characters are or what they are doing. [Figure 173.] We know that Gloucester finds Lear out in the wilds of his estate, and takes him to some remote building away from his castle. Logically, this would be one dedicated to ventry, such as a *pavillon de chasse* (French), a *Jagdschloss* (German) or a *hunting lodge*: hunting is arguably the most important metaphor in the play. The lines “*He that parts vs, shall bring a Brand from Heauen, / And fire vs hence, like Foxes*” (F, 2964-65) and “*As Flies to wanton Boyes, are we to th' Gods, / They kill vs for their sport.*” (F, 2221-22) are major theme statements foreshadowing things to come.



Video 23. Professional fur handling, Part 1, how to skin a red fox. (Video not suitable for children and animal lovers.)

The location of the scene is signaled to the audience the moment Lear draws open the curtains and discovers a dead fox strung up for skinning, causing him to cry out, "*To haue a thousand, with red burning spits Come hissing in upon 'em*" (F, 2013-14). The line alludes to the practice of smoking *foxes* out of their burrows by fire. Thereafter, he decides to try his vixen daughters for their hardness, ending with Regan. Based on the narrative voice of the play, whatever he is referring to has a material existence apart from his imaginings. It is markedly incongruous with reality, logically something capable of being dissected and infected with maggots (i.e., a fox's carcass): "*Then let them Anatomize Regan: See what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in Nature that make these hard-hearts*" (F, 2033-35). The audience's POV is omniscient, like the reader's in *Don Quixote: The Second Part, Chapters XXVI*, where the knight destroys the entire set of Master Peter's Puppet Show with his sword imagining the puppets are real people. [See Figure 174.]



Figure 174. In scene 6, *Don Quixote*, convinced that the puppets are real, destroys the puppet theatre. Illustration by Gustave Doré from *Don Quixote*, Book 2, chapter 26.

One can reasonably assume that other props associated with hunting are revealed as well, such as pelts, animal traps and huntsman's poles. The Earl of Shaftesbury writes of Woodlands Manor, the "man cave" or mantuary of Henry Hastings in Mere, Wiltshire:

"The great hall [was] strewed with marrow bones, full of hawks' perches, hounds, spaniels and terriers, the upper side of the hall was hung with fox-skins of this and last years' skinning, here and there a polecat intermixed, guns and keepers' and huntsmen's poles in abundance." (Anthony Ashley Cooper, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, *Fragment of Autobiography*, c. 1675, p. 23)



Figure 175. Postcard of Woodlands Manor, Mere, Wiltshire, England.

It is unknown if Shakespeare was personally acquainted with Henry Hastings or guested in his hall. (See Jonathan Law, "*Henry Hastings, the Wodwo of Dorset*".) Little is known about Shakespeare's "*Lost Years*," but it is certainly possible that the two of them might have crossed paths, as the playwright is familiar with Wiltshire and its bordering counties of Dorset, Somerset, Hampshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Shakespeare and Hastings were

born three years apart, though the latter out-lived him by nearly 40 more. (Shakespeare died at 52, Hastings 89.) Henry was the son of George Hastings 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Huntingdon, and the nephew of Henry Hastings 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Huntingdon, “considered by some as a potential successor to Elizabeth I.” While Henry Hastings relationship to Shakespeare is uncertain, records indicate that he was known to James I, as the latter conveyed Puddletown Manor in Dorset to him in 1611 and 1614. Through his marriage to Dorothy Willoughby in 1587, second daughter and coheir of Sir Francis Willoughby, he acquired Woodlands Park, near Horton, Dorset.



Figure 176. Henry Hastings (c. 1561–15 October 1650), “was the typical country squire of the time, ‘well-natured, but soon angry.’ He always dressed in green, and keeping all sorts of hounds and hawks, devoted himself to hunting. His hall was hung with sporting trophies, while favorite dogs and cats occupied every corner.” (Wiki)

"It has become commonplace to say that *Lear* was inspired in some part by the succession crisis that loomed in the last years of Elizabeth I. As direct descendants of the Duke of Clarence (Malmsey butt guy) and hence of John of Gaunt, the Hastings family stood high in the line of succession and hence featured quite prominently in the fevered discussion of the times. When Elizabeth fell ill in the 1590s, there was some talk of making the 3rd Earl Huntingdon her successor, particularly among those who shared his Puritan views. Similarly, when Elizabeth was near death there were important people who favoured the young 6th Earl (Henry’s nephew) over James of Scotland. Indeed, Henry Hastings was almost certainly aware that there were some Yorkists who regarded his uncle, his father, his older brother, and his nephew as the rightful kings of England (on the premise that Edward IV was illegitimate). Perhaps it is no surprise that he devoted himself to an obscure and reclusive life!

On a point of detail, I am fairly sure that the house described by Shaftesbury is not Ilsington Manor but Woodlands, some miles to the NE, which was where Hastings actually lived. Also, this was not a “hunting lodge” but rather the main residence of a nobleman that Hastings treated as if it were a hunting lodge – hence the element of oddity and surprise in Shaftesbury’s description. (Personal communication with Jonathan Law, June, 2021).



Figure 177. Ilsington House (Puddletown Manor)

Emily Cole, author of “The State Apartment in the Jacobean Country House, 1603-1625”, informed me that there is no evidence in the Royal Works account that James travelled as far as Ilsington/Puddletown, though “he stayed at [Hastings’] house in Leicester (‘Lord’s Place’) on 18-21 August 1612, 18-19 August 1614 and 15-16 August 1616, as part of royal progresses, and was also entertained by Hastings at Ashby-de-la-Zouche on 1-2 September

1617, on his return journey south from Scotland (the King made a Scottish progress in 1617). And the King would always have been keen to see hunting lodges." (June, 2021.) She also notes that detailed academic research into buildings associated with the hunt has not been undertaken, such as where animals were hanged and skinned: "as to hunting lodges and other buildings used for the hunt, I'm afraid there has been very little work done. The fact that this is a bit of an academic 'gap' has in fact been raised by myself and other colleagues – for instance, as part of the work we undertook on *Apethorpe: The Story of an English Country House*, 2016."

The textual evidence that a hidden scene is revealed comes from the dialogue when Lear tells Kent to "*draw the Curtaines*" (F, 2041). We can induce that they were opened by the king himself after the exit of Gloucester. "**Curtain** can designate (1) fabric suspended in front of an opening in the tiring-house wall where figures or scenes were *discovered* ... roughly sixty plays have about ninety directions for a *curtain* of which seventy-eight call for the *curtains* to be **opened** or **closed**; typically several figures and often properties are revealed when a *curtain* is drawn" (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 62). For example, in *The Devil's Charter*, V,vi, "*Alexander vnbraced betwixt two Cardinalls in his study looking vpon a booke, whilst a groome drawth the Curtains.*" In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia says, "*Go draw aside the curtains and discover/ The several caskets to this noble prince.*" (F, 973). In Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, I,i,S.D., "*Here the Curtaines draw, there is discovered Iupiter dandling Ganimed upon his knee.*"

The action in III,vi is disjointed and frenetic like an episode of *Pee-wee's Playhouse* where "Everything is face-paced and really doesn't fit together, and everything in the playhouse looks like something that would happen to your living room during a bad trip." (Mark Myers, *Christmas At Pee-Wee's Playhouse*). The scene gives the impression of being improvised (as do many others in *Lear*), co-mingling elements of gross physical comedy and tragedy. When Lear threatens violence against Kent for allowing "Regan" to escape, the mood changes quickly from comic abandon to pathos. He imagines himself being chased down like the hunter *Actaeon*, who is transformed into a stag and killed by his own hounds. Edgar calls them off by winding his horn. (See note III,vi,62, "*The little dogs.*")



Figure 178. Queen Elizabeth I preparing to slit the throat of a stag, from Turberville, 'Noble Art of Venerie', 1575.

To place the scene in some historical context, "Hunting comes out of late classical culture, and is very important for making aristocratic manhood. It's a form of military training, teaching equestrianism, archery, use of weapons, courage, patience, discipline, essential things for aristocrats that give them this new identity as the ruling class of the West." (Eric J. Goldberg, *In the Manner of the Franks: Hunting, Kingship, and Masculinity in Early Medieval Europe*. 2020.) Lear himself returns to Goneril's castle from hunting in I,iv. [See



note I,iii,8, “*hunting.*”] Henry VIII was an enthusiastic huntsman whose “interest in hunting emerged not only because of personal choice, but because it was expected of him as gentleman and as king but also because it was essential in the projection of his image as a renaissance prince.” (James Williams, “[Hunting and the Royal Image of Henry VIII](#)”). Queen Elizabeth I also loved to hunt. “I may not be a lion, but I am a lion's cub, and I have a lion's heart,” she is ubiquitously quoted as saying. “On horseback, she would hunt deers and stags with her courtiers, and when the unfortunate animal was caught, she would be invited to cut its throat. . . . The Elizabethans had no concept of animal cruelty, and enjoyed a whole manner of violent animal sports, such as bear baiting, cock-fighting, and dog fighting.” (Queen Elizabeth I: [Pastimes](#)). [See [Figure 178](#).] In 1589 she renovated a building commissioned by her father from which to view the deer chase at [Chingford](#). The structure exists today. It functions as a museum called [Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge](#).

In 1532 Henry passed “[The Preservation of Grain Act](#)”. The law was “strengthened by Elizabeth in 1566, [who] made it compulsory for every man, woman and child to kill as many creatures as possible that appeared on an official list of 'vermin'”. A bounty was placed on each creature, ranging from a penny for the head of a kite or a raven to 12 pence for a badger or a fox. The act priced the head of a hedgehog at four pennies - four times that of a polecat, wild cat, stoat or weasel” (Amelia Hill, “[Tudors drove wildlife to the brink](#)”). According to English hunting authority [David C. Itzkowitz](#),

“The practice of hunting foxes for sport really dates from the eighteenth century. Before that time foxes were considered vermin, and an Elizabethan law provided for a bounty to be paid by the churchwardens for the carcasses of dead foxes. It is unlikely therefore, that a Jacobean hunting lodge would contain fox skins for any reasons other than their use as pelts or, perhaps, to keep a rough count of the number of vermin killed. As the description of Hastings hunting lodge suggests, a lodge would, in fact, have bits of all sorts of animal remains lying about. King James I himself was an avid huntsman and delighted in keeping up the medieval tradition of plunging his arms up to the elbow into the carcass of a freshly killed stag and smearing his courtiers with gore. The gamier the lodge, therefore, the more likely it is to be historically accurate” (Personal correspondence from Sept 20, 1978).

“Skinning sheds” are still in common use by hunters here in the United States. In the Netflix docuseries [Murdaugh Murders: A Southern Scandal](#) (2023), [Paul Murdaugh](#) is pictured flaying a hog at his family’s hunting lodge in a “skinning shed”. “The Murdaugh family also had a lot of dogs present at the property because Paul used to go hog hunting. The property had skinning sheds and multiple ponds.” ([Aayush Sharma](#)). For anybody interested, there are many videos about skinning sheds on [YouTube](#), such as [Video 24](#) by [squirrelyoutdoors](#):



[Video 24](#). “[Tour of my skinning shed.](#)”

In an essay on “[Hunting and shooting in the United Kingdom](#)”, it is noted that the hunting



lodge of Queen Elizabeth I's may have had a special room for "hanging game." No further information is given but Sophie Lillington, Museum and Heritage Manager at the Epping Forest Visitor Centre at Chingford, The View, writes in a personal communication that "QEHL is a three story timber framed building with a largish room on each floor; it has a stair tower attached and an L-shaped footprint. Rooms lend themselves to being partitioned in three, and the ground floor, which is described as 'for necessary uses' in one of the 16th century mentions, shows signs in the timbers which suggest it may have been partitioned into three smaller rooms. There are marks on the upright timbers on the ground floor which I have speculated are the sort of 45 degree mark at a couple of feet up you'd get if you were stropping a sharpened blade or knife or some sort on it. This would tie in interestingly with the area set aside for skinning."

In regard to the newness of this theory, as William Arrowsmith queried in his letter of 2.26.76 (see Appendix F), Paul Werstine, the co-editor of the *Folger Library Edition of King Lear* wrote to me in 6.19.19, "I can say that, from working with Richard Knowles on his Variorum edition of *King Lear* for twenty years, no editor from the earlier centuries has thought a hunting lodge the location of 3.6. Yours is a highly original idea." (See Appendix G.) On the other hand, Alan C. Dessen (co-author of *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*) summarily rejects the theory because Shaftesbury's description is suggestive of a "box set," a feature of theatre realism—a movement in theatre that proceeded Shakespeare's staging of *King Lear* by some 250 years. He writes, "I don't buy into a hunting lodge on display at the Globe, but cushions for actors to sit on do turn up in a s.d. for the first Senate scene in *Coriolanus*" (F, 1203). Dr. David C. Itzkowitz, on the other hand, writes "the 'cushions' (Q2, 2014.15) Kent refers to "could have been pillows; they could also have been pelts of all sorts including deer, bear, and wolf." Henslowe's famous prop list includes "j beares skyne".

S.D. **Platform with a Discovery**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Enter Kent, and Gloucester**] (F, 1997). *Enter Gloster and Lear, Kent, Foole, and Tom* (Q, 1998).

5. S.D. **Enter Lear, Fool and Edgar**] (F, 2003). Not in Q.

5. S.D. **wearing Lear's cloak**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See note III,iv,103,S.D. *Edgar puts on the discarded cloak*.



Video 25. "The noble art of the belch."

6. S.D. **Belches**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Edgar lets out a loud belch into the face of his father before the latter makes his exit. The direction is needed to make sense of the line "*Croke not blacke Angell, I haue no foode for thee*" (Q, 2014.13), where Edgar keeps himself from belching. (See note III,vi, 31, "*Croak not.*") In *Lear*, the meaning of words and actions must often be determined by backward induction. The linguistics of the play is an essential element of its stylistics, as when Lear smells his hand (see note IV,v,90.S.D., "*Lear smells his own hand*")

and when Gloucester weeps (see note IV,v,138. S.D., “*Gloucester sobs, still holding Lear’s hand*”). Gross **physical comedy** is one of the hallmarks of the work, starting with Lear’s lurid *Tudor period* costume with its gargantuan codpiece. Edgar’s belch at this time is completely unexpected, and establishes the broad comic tone of the scene. To the present day, the passing of gas continues to be the *ne plus ultra* of farce. [See [video 25](#).]

6. **Fratoretto**] A devil mentioned in Harsnett.

6. **Nero**] Gluttonous emperor of Rome closely identified with wearing a *chlamys*, and known for being a cross-dresser. He is reported to have married at least two males, **Pythagoras**, whom he allegedly wed in a public ceremony in which the emperor took the role of bride, and Sporus, a young slave boy whom he had castrated, and married [See [Figure 179](#).] Dressed in Lear’s ostentatious silk (“*Persian*”) cloak, poor Tom is reminded of Nero, whose eternity in hell is spent singing and looking for something to eat.

Nero himself eventually developed great interest in clothes. It was claimed that he never wore the same garment twice. Devoted to music and likening himself to Apollo, it was natural that he should adopt certain forms of Greek dress. When he returned to Rome from his triumphal concert tour of Greece he entered the capital wearing a purple tunic and a **chlamys** decorated with gold stars. It was Nero who forbade the public use of amethyst-colored dyes or Tyrian purple dyes. Once while performing on stage he noticed a female member of the audience dressed in purple. Fuming with rage he ordered his stewards to drag her out and strip her. ([The Imperial Wardrobe of Ancient Rome](#), Kenneth D. Matthews, PennMuseum, Volume 12. Issue 3, 1970.)

Furness quotes Upton (*Crit. Obs.* p. 235, ed. ii): “Nero was a fiddler in hell [or rather played on a hurdy-gurdy...] as Rabelais tells us, ii,xxx. And Trajan was an angler [for frogs]. . . But players and editors, not willing that so good a prince as Trajan should have such a vile employment, substituted Nero in his room, without any sense or allusion at all.” p. 205



[Figure 179](#). Emperor Nero on Horseback, Antonio Tempesta, 1596. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

7. S.D. ***Gloucester readjusts his spectacles***] Ed. As in I,ii,63,S.D., where Gloucester readjusts his bow spectacles to inspect the handwriting of Edmund’s letter, here he readjusts his glasses to get a closer look at “poor Tom.” Something about his appearance reminds him of Edgar, but as yet he can’t see what it is. Shakespeare is building **narrative suspense** as to when and how the character will recognize his son. From Gloucester’s first encounter with Edgar in the storm (F, 1923-24 and F, 1945-1950), the audience sees him struggle to discover the truth of Tom’s identity. [See Appendix B.]

7. **innocent**] He means *innocent* in the sense of *unsuspecting* or naive; a natural fool. The line is spoken to Gloucester. See note IV,v,133, S.D., “*Gives him a daisy*”.

8. S.D. ***Exit Gloucester***] Ed. *Exit*. after you (F, 2000). Not in Q. Where precisely Gloucester exits, and his interaction with Edgar, qualifies the meaning of the Fool’s gest about a yeoman and a gentleman.

10. **gentleman**] “Originally, gentleman was the lowest rank of the landed gentry of England, ranking below an esquire and above a yeoman” (Wiki).
10. **yeoman**] “is a noun referring either to one who owns and cultivates land or to the middle ranks of servants in an English royal or noble household” (Wiki)
12. **to his son**] as a son. Apparently, the omniscient Fool sees through Edgar’s disguise.
15. S.D. **Lear draws open the curtains, and discovers**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Theoretically, Lear draws open the “curtains” (F, 2041-42), and discovers the carcass of a fox strung up for skinning. It reminds him of his vixen daughters, and he decides to try them for their hardness. The prop instantly signifies to the audience where on Gloucester’s estate the characters are being hidden. (See note III,vi,S.D.,“*A Hunting Lodge.*”)
15. S.D. **Dead fox hanging up for skinning**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See video 23, “Professional fur handling, Part 1, how to skin a red fox.” For at least 250,000 years, hunters have been skinning animals, and the techniques are not likely to have changed very much.
15. S.D. **Animal pelts of different kinds are lying about**] Ed, not in Q, F. See note III,vi,34, “*cushions*” (Q2, 2014.15).
15. S.D. **Drawing his sword**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear cuts the dead fox down with his sword and violently destroys the set, as Don Quixote does Master Peter’s Puppet Show. [See Figure 174.]
- 15-6. **To have a thousand...’em!**] Cf. “fire him out of his hold, as men smoke a Foxe out of his burrow.” Samuel Harsnett in *A Declaration of egregious popish impostures*, p. 97). Shakespeare uses the same metaphor when Lear and Cordelia are being taken away to prison: “*He that parts vs, shall bring a Brand from Heauen,/ And fire vs hence, like Foxes*” (F, 2964-65).
- 17-60. Lines 2014.1-30 in the Quarto are cut in the First Folio.
18. S.D. **Aside**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
19. **horse’s health**] the word of a horse trader about the animal’s health and condition. The Fool is saying that anybody who thinks that taking the king to a skinning shed will bring rest to his over-wrought imagination is mad himself. The joke is similar to the one he tells the audience at the end of I,v,44-5 (F, 923-4). That is, there’s trouble ahead.
20. **arraign**] Matt Simon writes in *Fantastically Wrong: Europe’s Insane History of Putting Animals on Trial and Executing Them*, “This is Europe’s shameful and largely forgotten history of putting animal ‘criminals’ on trial and either executing them or, for plagues of insects, ordering them to leave town not only by a certain day, but by an exact time. Such irrational barbarism is hard to fathom, but as early as 824 all the way up to the middle of the 18th century, animals were held to the same moral standards as humans, suffering the same capital punishments and even rotting in the same jails.”



Figure 180. “The trial of the dog for biting the noble lord.”

ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1379, two herds of pigs at a French monastery grew agitated and killed a man named Perrinot Muet. As was custom at the time, the pigs—the actual murderers and those that had simply looked on—were tried for their horrible

crime, and sentenced to death. You see, with their “cries and aggressive actions,” the onlookers “showed that they approved of the assault,” and mustn’t be allowed to escape justice. (Ibid)

In her essay *When Societies Put Animals on Trial*, Sonya Vatomsky writes that “Domestic animals like pigs, foxes, wolves, goats, asses, bulls, cows, dogs, horses, and sheep fell under the jurisdiction of civil and criminal courts and would have been summarily executed by hanging or burning after a guilty verdict.” [See Figure 180.]

20. **Straight**] immediately. Compare *Merchant of Venice*, I,ii, “*he fals straight a capring*” (F, 252-3). It jokes on the “*warped looks*” (Q, 2014.27) of the carcass. One of the meanings of *strait* is “not crooked” (OED, 2.a) as in Henry V,v,ii, “*a Ryme is but a Ballad; a good Legge will fall, a strait Backe will stoope, a blacke Beard will turne white...*” F, 3147-3154)
21. S.D. **To Edgar**] Capell. Not in Q.
21. **Sit thou here**] Lear brings a bench forward for Edgar and the Fool to sit on. He does not extend the courtesy to Kent, who seats himself on a joint-stool of his own finding.
21. **justicer**] Theobald. *Iustice* (Q, 2014.5); not in F. Compare “*False Iusticer*” (Q, 2014.30)
22. S.D. **To the Fool**] Capell. Not in Q.

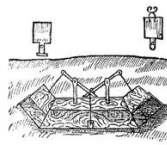


Figure 181. From L. M[ascall] *Sundrie Engrines and Trappes to take polecats, and all Kinds of vermin 1550*.

23. S.D. **To the pelt**] Ed. Not in Q. See note III,vi, S.D. *Hunting Lodge*. Logically, the pelt of a polecat. [See Figure 183.] In Queen Elizabeth’s Act of 1566 “for the Preservation of Grain,” a bounty was put on wild animals listed as “vermin”:

For the Heads of everie Foxe or Gray [badger]  
twelve pence.  
And for the head of every Fitchers [Polecat],  
Polcatte, Wesell, Stote, Fayre Bade [probably  
marten cat] or Wylde Catte, one penny.

Douglas Anderson, “*Noyfull Fowles and Vermyn: Parish Payments for Killing Wildlife in Hampshire 1533-1863*”, p. 120

The remains of polecats are mentioned among the furnishings of Hastings’ great hall. Shaftesbury’s friend and collaborator, John Locke, famously uses polecats and foxes as a metaphor for vermin in his *Second Treatise on Government (Section 93)*: “This is to think, that men are so foolish, that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by *pole-cats*, or *foxes*; but are content, nay, think it safety, to be devoured by lions.” [See note III,iv,149. “*vermin*.”] In the British Isles, the polecat became synonymous with promiscuity in early English literature; hence the Fool’s naming her “*Bessy*,” a term for a vagrant whore. [See Figure 246.]

23. **he**] i.e. Lear
24. **Want’st thou eyes at trial madam**] Addressed to the polecat. [See Figure 183.] Compare III,vii: “*Plucke out his eyes*” (F, 2064). The meaning of this scene qualifies the next in which

Gloucester is interrogated and blinded for treason. In the narrative sequencing of events, Shakespeare asks the question which of the two trials is madder? Its structure might be compared to the [Kuleshov effect](#), a mental phenomenon in film editing “by which viewers derive more meaning from the interaction of two sequential shots than from a single shot in isolation.”

25. **Fool.**] Ed. *Edg.* (Q, 2014.8). The Fool is asking Edgar to give him the pelt so that he can examine her.
25. S.D. **Sings**] Ed. Not in Q.
25. **Come over the bourn, Bessy, to me**] John Payne Collier writes in his edition of 1858 (p. 685), “This, and what follows from the Fool, are certainly parts of an old song, which was imitated by W. Birch, in his “Dialogue with Elizabeth and England,” (printed by W. Pickering without date,) which thus commences;

Come over the bourn, Bessy, come over the bourn, Bessy,  
Sweet Bessy, cover over to me;  
And I shall thee take,  
And my dear lady make  
Before all that ever I see.”

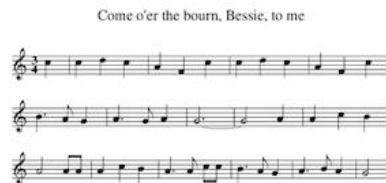


Figure 192. Found in “Come O'er the Bourn Bessie to Me” from the Traditional Tune Archive abc collection. [Click to play.](#)

25. **boorn**] Stream, brook.
25. **Bessy**] is the name for a vagrant whore. See “the *cat* is grey.” [See Figure 246.]
- 26-28. **Her boat hath a leak . . . thee**] The Fool is alluding to the eviscerated state of “*Bessy*.” She does indeed have a “*leak*.”



Figure 183. Pelt of a polecat. “Her boat hath a leak.”

26. S.D. **Aside**] Ed, Not in Q, F. The Fool assures the frightened “maids” in the audience that they need not be scared of the polecat. There is not a chance that it will jump off the stage and bite them.
- 29-30. **voice of a nightingale**] referring to the singing of the Fool.
30. **Hobberdidance**] “Hobberdidaunce”, Harsnett, from “The examination of Sara Williams” in *A declaration of egregious popish impostures*, p. 180. Hoppedance. (Q, 2014.12). Not in F. Compare Hobbididance (Q, 2248.2). Hobberdidance sounds more like utter nonsense than Hoppedance. Compare Flibbertigibbet (F, 1895). Bridget Begg discusses the use of nursery rhymes, folklore and nonsense in her interesting dissertation “Medieval Nonsense Verse: Contributions to the Literary Genre.”



31. **white]** Unsmoked

31. **Croak not]** Edgar belches at the top of the scene but keeps himself from doing so here. [See note III,vi,6.S.D., “Belches.”] In Lear’s “mad” scenes, the connection between words and actions is typically disjointed. The gestures don’t make sense to the mind until after they happen.

31. **angler]** Ed. *Angell* (Q, 2014.13). Nero is the one who’s hungry and angling for fish, not Frateretto. Angels have no need of food. See “*Nero is an angler in the lake of darknes,*” (Q, 2005-06).

33. **amaz’d]** Confused, bewildered.

34. **cushions.]** There are no stage directions in the quartos and First Folio indicating the nature of the “*cushions.*” English foxhunting authority David C. Itzkowitz, writes “The ‘cushions’ (Q2, 2014.15) could have been pillows; they could also have been pelts of all sorts including deer, bear, and wolf.” (See III,vi, S.D., “*Hunting Lodge.*”) As noted in III,ii,65, “*He hath no daughters, sir*” (F, 1850), throughout this Act, Kent functions as a narrative foil to Lear. His deadpan literal-mindedness contrasts with Lear’s imaginings, as Sancho Panza’s do with Don Quixote’s. From its omniscient perspective, the audience can make sense of Lear’s actions, but Kent is utterly clueless. He is the Straight man or a stooge. Compare note III,iv,62, “*He hath no daughters, sir.*” [See Video 26, “The Wonderful Straight Man Zeppo Marx.”]



Video 26. “The Wonderful Straight Man Zeppo Marx.”

35. **I’ll see their trial first]** The word “cushions” means one thing to Kent and quite another thing to Lear and the audience. We laugh at the incongruity, as readers do when Don Quixote imagines an ordinary barber’s basin to be the mythic golden helmet of Mambrino.

36. S.D. **To Edgar]** Capell. Not in Q.

36. **robed]** Referring literally to the exquisite “robe” he discarded, which Edgar wears like a *chlamys*. See note III,iv,103,S.D. *Edgar puts on the discarded cloak.*



Figure 184. *Ecce Homo*, Jusepe De Ribera, c. 1620, Messina Museo Regionale.

37. S.D. **To the Fool]** Capell. Not in Q.

37. **yolkfellow of equity]** Fellow justice in a court of equity

38. **Bench]** Sit on the bench. The bench is probably brought downstage by Lear himself. Note that Kent is not given a seat on it.

38. S.D. **To Kent]** Capell. Not in Q.





Figure 185. Joint-stools in a goldsmith's workshop.

39. S.D. *Kent fetches a joint-stool and sits*] Ed. Not in Q. Kent brings a joint-stool forward, and sits down. [See Figure 185.]



Figure 186. Shepherd playing his horn. The Shepheardes Calendar (November), Edmund Spenser.

41. *Fool*] Ed. *Ed.* (Q, 2014.19). The song is better sung by the Fool/Cordelia as it suggests an inversion of the parent/child relationship. As I discuss in I,v, S.D., “*with lute*”, I believe nursery rhymes have a primal meaning: they are used by parents to communicate nonverbally with infants and toddlers. Edgar mentions that the Fool has “*the voyce of a nigh-(tingale,*” (Q, 2014.11)
- 41-44. *Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd*] These lines echo the nursery rhyme *Little Boy Blue*, who blows his horn. [See Figure 186.] In “*Medieval Nonsense Verse: Contributions to the Literary Genre*” (2013), Bridget Begg argues that although nursery rhymes and nonsense “may initially present as gibberish, the underlying sense-making construction required for the subversion of understood logic allow nonsense to also appear as language-based absurdities.” (p. 97). (See note I,iv,165, “*play bo-peep.*”)
42. *corn*] wheat
43. *minikin*] small, i.e. the mouthpiece of a horn. We are about to hear Edgar wind his horn to call off the dogs Lear hallucinates are barking at him. As always in *King Lear*, what first presents as farce quickly turns to pathos.
45. *Edgar*] See Q, 2019.11-21.
45. S.D. *To the pelt*] Ed. Not in Q. See note III,vi,32.
45. *Purr*] *Pur the* (Q, 2014.21). The sound made by a cat. Edgar commands the polecat to answer the charges brought against her, viz., Speak! Compare “*mew*” (Q, 2311.7.) See note IV,ii,68, “*Mew*”. See also *All's Well That Ends Well*, V,ii, “*Heere is a purre of Fortunes sir, or of Fortunes Cat*” (F, 2660).
46. *Fool*] Ed. Ascribed to Edgar in (Q, 2014.21).
46. *cat*] Referring to the skinned polecat or “*Fitchew*” (F, 2565) as in Figure 183. A cat is also a cant term for a prostitute. [See Figure 246.]
46. *grey*] He probably means that her physical appearance is not important, as in the phrase *all cats are grey* (OED). “*When all candels be out, all cats be grey.*” J. Heywood, *Dialogue Prouerbes Eng. Tongue* (new ed.) i. v. sig. Aviv, 1550. Compare note III,vi,52, “*I took you for a joint-stool.*”
47. S.D. *Taking the joint-stool Kent is sitting on*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear’s mind is drawn to the

oaken (hard) joint-stool Kent is sitting on. He associates it with Goneril, who has been kicking him around like a football. My guess is that it's a trick chair with a loose leg. When Lear grabs it, the leg breaks off, causing Kent to fall to the ground in the style of slapstick. The broken leg is given to the Fool for arraignment. "*Cry you mercy I tooke you for a ioyne stoole*" (Q, 2014.26). (Leg = kick) Chair *lazzo* is common in *Commedia dell'arte*, as when Arlecchino pulls the chair away from the Captain just before he is to sit down.



Figure 187. Buster Keaton, the King of Prafalls, in a promotional still for *The Cameraman*, 1928.

Shakespeare's set-up of this joke is remarkable. The audience logically presupposes that Goneril and Regan will take *vixen* forms. We are caught completely by surprise when Lear identifies a joint-stool as his eldest daughter. The unexpectedness of the action, and Kent's role as the *straight man*, is what makes the gag funny.

48. **Goneril**] "Lear is now himself a source of grotesque comedy, addressing his real grievance against Goneril to a joint-stool and couching it in an absurd image: "*she kickt the poore king her father*" (Q2, 2014.23) writes Susan Snyder in an insightful essay included in *The Folger Library King Lear: "King Lear: A Modern Perspective."*
49. **kick'd**] Alluding to the sport of football. "For boyes affecting foote|bale, will argue peradventure, that seeing such horseplay was vsed by Melanthius, & he might strike Vlysses body with his foote; more lawfull should it bee for them to strike a ball so." (John Rainolds, *Th'overthrow of stage-playes*, p. 117-18.)

"Researchers have found [King Henry VIII] ordered a pair of soccer boots from the Great Wardrobe, the office responsible for supplying his attire, in 1526. The boots were made of leather, hand-stitched by the royal cordwainer, Cornelius Johnson, and cost King Henry the royal sum of four shillings. Dr. Maria Hayward, a clothes historian who discovered the order among records of Henry's wardrobe, says she finds it difficult to believe he played soccer (known simply in Britain and elsewhere in the world as football), but cannot see why else he would have ordered the boots. "Football in Tudor times was a very vicious game with no teams and no rules...It was not a game for gentlemen," Hayward, who works at the textile conservation center at the Winchester School of Art in southern England, told [Reuters](#)."

52. **Cry you mercy . . . joint stool**] "This proverbial expression is found in J. Withal, *Short Dictionary*, 1554: '*Antchac te cornua hacere putabam*, I cry you mercy, I took you for a joyn'd stool.' It was a facetious apology for overlooking a person." (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 126). Compare the phrase "*all cats are grey (in the dark)*" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, P1b.
52. **joint stool**] The joint stool Kent fetched for himself to sit on. [See Figure 185.]
52. **warp'd**] twisted out of its normal shape. An animal's body begins to stiffen immediately after death. Rigor mortis can last up to 72 hours.
54. S.D. *Gives the unskinned fox to Kent . . . aside*] Ed. Not in Q. Unsurprisingly, there are no

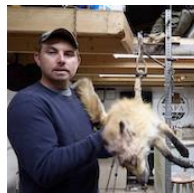
stage directions in the quartos describing the action (Q, 2014.1-30). The words Lear uses to describe “Regan”—“*let them Anatomize Regan: See what breeds about her heart*” (F, 2033-34), suggest that the prop is capable of being *dissected*, and in a state of *rigor mortis*. The trial ends with the open-ended question, “*Is there any cause in Nature that make these hard-hearts*” (2034-35).

It should come as no surprise that Shakespeare’s audience at the Globe, traumatized by war, syphilis, and the harangue of Puritans, would be amused by **black comedy**, as television viewers were in 1969 when **John Cleese** and **Michael Palin** argue whether or not a parrot was purchased dead. [See Video 27.] It is easy to forget that for ticket buyers in Southwark in 1606 the choice see *Macbeth* or bet on **chimpanzees fighting to the death** at the **Beargarden** was not an obvious one. James I was such an aficionado of killing animals that he hosted private shows involving polar bears and lions borrowed from the Tower of London’s animal menagerie.



**Video 27. The Dead Parrot Sketch – Monty Python’s Flying Circus.**

“Along with bear-baiting, the English arenas also hosted a range of animal fights that the scholar Stephen Dickey once called a “carnival of cruelty.” There were rat-baitings, badger-baitings, dogfights, cockfights and other stomach-turning displays such as staged whippings of blind bears. Bull-baiting, in which dogs were set upon chained male cattle, was particularly popular. Audiences delighted in watching the bulls throw the attack dogs into the air with their horns, and it was widely believed that baiting helped make the bull’s beef more tender and safe for consumption. Perhaps the strangest show of all involved a chimpanzee, or “jack-an-apes,” which would be strapped onto the back of a horse and then set loose into the ring to be chased by a pack of snarling dogs. An Italian merchant who once witnessed the spectacle wrote that, “It is wonderful to see the horse galloping along, kicking up the ground and champing at the bit, with the monkey holding very tightly to the saddle, and crying out frequently when he is bitten by the dogs.” (*The Gruesome Blood Sports of Elizabethan England*, Evan Andrews.)



**Video 28. “Skinning, Fleshing, and Boarding a Fox (K9) for a Wall Hanger (Full Process).”**

- 55. **S.D. *Draws on Kent***] Not in Q. Lear draws his sword on Kent for releasing “Regan,” as he did in I,i,161 when Kent gainsays his sentence on Cordelia.
- 55. **Corruption in the place**] Lear considers Kent a corrupt judge for allowing “Regan” to escape.
- 56. **why hast thou let her ‘scape**] The literal-minded Kent discards the maggoty carcass when it is given to him for arraignment. Compare “*He hath no Daughters Sir*” (F, 1850) and “*will you lie downe and rest vpon the Cushions?*” (Q2, 2014.14-5).

60. S.D. *Aside*] Rowe. Not in Q.



Figure 188. "Actaeon Killed by His Dogs" from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Antonio Tempesta, 1606.

62. **The little dogs**] Lear is frightened by the imaginary dogs he hallucinates barking at him. (Obviously, there are not live dogs wandering about the stage.) They evoke in his mind the myth of the hunter Actaeon who was transformed by the goddess Diana into a stag, and hunted down and eaten by his own hounds. [See Figure 188.] Actaeon's dogs are referred to in the broadside ballad "New Mad Tom of Bedlam or, The Man in the Moon drinks Claret, with Powder-Beef Turnip and Carret:"

Poor Tom is very dry-  
A little drink for charity!  
Hark! I hear Actaeon's hounds!  
The huntsmen whoop and hallowe;  
"Ringwood, Royster, Bowman, Jowler,"  
All the chase now follow.

From Anthony Brian Taylor, "Arthur Golding and the Elizabethan Progress of Actaeon's Dogs," p. 23.

64. **throw his head at them**] Referring to the horn he uses as a vessel for receiving almes. "With the semantic development from 'cup, vessel' to 'head' compare French *tête* (see TÊTE n.) and German *Kopf* (see COP n.2 and the discussion at that entry), both now only in sense 'head'; compare COP n.1" (*OED*). The word is intended to sound like nonsense. Shakespeare was not writing his plays for etymologists.

64. **Avaunt**: get away

64. S.D. *Raises horn*] Ed. Not in Q,F.

65. **or black or white**] Either or

68. **brach**] bitch-hound

68. **lym**] bloodhound

69. **Bobtail tike**] dog with its tail cut short

69. **trundle-tail**] long tailed dog.

71. **with throwing thus my head**] viz. by blowing his horn.

72. **hatch**] bottom half of a divided door.



Figure 189. *The Noble art of Venerie or Hunting*, George Turberville, 1611.

72. S.D. **Blows horn**] Ed. *Do,de,de,de*: (F, 2031). *loudla doodla* (Q1, 2031). *loudla doodla*, (Q2, 2030). Cf. *O do,de,do,de,do de*, (F, 1839).



Figure 190. “The measures of blowing, fet downe in the notes for the more eafe and ready helpe of fuch as are defirous to learnc the fame: and they are fet downe according to the order which is obferu’d at thefe 280arc ia this Real me of Great Brittainc, as followeth.” *The Noble art of Vemerie or Hunting*.

73. **Sessa**] Pope. *Sese*: (F, 2031). Not in Q. An interjection said upon blowing a horn. Compare *Sesey* (F, 1880). *Caese* (Q1, 1879). *Cease* (Q2, 1879). See note III,iv,94. H.H. Furness discusses the word in *New Variorum Edition* p. 212.
73. **wakes and fairs**] Places where he might expect to be given food such as Tisbury parish.
75. S.D. **To Kent, who has retrieved the fox**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Kent is as moved by Lear’s emotional breakdown as anybody, and plays along with the fiction by retrieving the carcass.
76. **anatomize**] “To dissect or cut up; esp. To dissect a human body, or an animal, for the purpose of displaying the position, structure, and relations of the various parts; to make a dissection of” (*OED*, 1.a.). “The carkasses of many seuerall beasts, newly by him cut vp and Anatomised,” R. Burton *Anat. Melancholy*, 1621.
76. **Regan**] The fox’s carcass.
76. **breeds**] i.e. maggots. Cf. *Hamlet*, 2.2, “For if the Sun breed Magots in a dead dogge” (F, 1218) An animal’s body begins to decompose immediately after death and will soon begin to attract insects.
77. **hard hearts**] Lear means, “callous” (3.a. *OED*) as in *Troilus*, I,i: “O that her Hand / (In whose comparison, all whites are Inke) / Writing their owne reproach; to whose soft seizure, / The Cignets Downe is harsh, and spirit of Sense / **Hard** as the palme of Plough-man.” (F, 89-93). But Shakespeare is having a laugh with the carcass. “Postmortem rigidity is the third stage of death. The answer to his question is self-evident, and gets a laugh. See note III,vii,31, “Hard, hard.”
78. S.D. **To Edgar**] Capell. Not in Q, F.
80. **Persian**] Expensive, prestigious. Lear is referring to the “gorgeous” silk cloak he rid himself of in III,iv, which Edgar is still wearing. (See note III,vi,102.S.D., “Edgar puts on the king’s discarded riding-cloak.”) “Patterned silk velvet was the most expensive and prestigious of all woven textiles” (Melinda Watt, “Textile Production in Europe: Silk, 1600–1800”). Silk was imported to England from the Middle East by the East India Company founded in 1600. Now that Edgar has no “true need” of the cloak, Lear thinks it serves no purpose but vanity. The line gets a laugh because the garment looks utterly ridiculous on a Bedlam beggar.
80. S.D. **Edgar removes the cape**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Edgar obliges Lear by taking off the cape. When he reappears in IV,i, he is still wearing his filthy blanket and carrying his horn in a baldric.
80. S.D. **Fool plays soft music**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Logically, a variation of the same tune he played on his lute in I,v. Minstrels and jesters often used an assortment of musical instruments including small tabor pipes, Irish tin whistles and recorders. In *The Tempest*, III,ii, “Ariell plaies the tune on a Tabor and Pipe” (F, 1481).





Figure 191. Flute Player, Hendrick ter Brugghen, 1621. Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel..D.

81. S.D. **Takes Lear gently downstage**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Kent escorts Lear to the curtained area at the rear of the platform where the discovery was made.
82. **curtains**] The stage curtains hiding the central entrance of the tiring-house.
83. S.D. **Curtains are drawn close**] Ed. Not in Q, F. That is, Lear exits from view.



Figure 192. Gentleman peeping through curtains. British Museum.

83. S.D. **Reenter Lear, peeping from behind the curtains**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *The Atheist's Tragedy*, II,v, p. 285, "*Fresco peeps fearfully forth from behind the arras.*" See also *Volpone; or, the Fox*, "*Volpone peeps from behind a traverse*" (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **traverse**, p.235).
84. **We'll go to supper i'th'morning**] After disappearing behind the curtains, Lear abruptly sticks his head back out to deliver this line, as though it's something he neglected to tell everybody. [See Figure 192, *The L.Elizabeth before her Sister Q. Mary.*] Lear's unexpected re-entrance is what makes the Fool's remark funny. It's all about the timing.
85. **I'll go to bed at noon.**] According to R.W. Dent, this is a proverbial phrase meaning "I'll play the fool too." (*Shakespeare's Proverbial Language: An Index*, 1981, B197). The utterance is linguistic nonsense. The Fool exists in a liminal, temporal dimensional like noon and midnight. If supper is at 6 am, then bedtime is at 12 pm. The Fool riddles about time elsewhere. "*This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time.*" (F, 1749). Cf. also I,v,44-5. "*She that's a maid now, and laughs at my departure, / Shall not be a maid long, unless things [meaning **time**] be cut shorter.*" (F, 923-24). If shorter than "*now*", she has already lost it. Although "*I'll go to bed at noon*" is the last line **verbalized** by the actor in his role as the Fool, it is the music he continues to play on his instrument that communicates the primary message, logically the nursery tune from I,v,5. S.D. "*The Fool plays a sad tune on his lute.*" See note IV,vi,25., "*louder the music there.*"
85. S.D. **Exit Lear**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
85. S.D. **Re-enter Gloucester**] (Q, 2044). After chang'd (F, 2039).
86. S.D. **To Kent**] Not in Q, F.
86. **Where is the king**] Lear is not visible to Gloucester because he is no longer on stage.
87. **Here, sir**] Sleeping behind the curtains
89. **upon**] against
96. **to some**] quickly take you to where you can find supplies
98. **balm'd**] Soothed; sinews: nerves

100. **Stand in hard cure.**] Are not likely to be cured

100. S.D. *To the Fool*] Theobald. Not in Q.



Video 29. Sophie Matthews demonstrates the shawm. 2:08-3:33

101. S.D. *Music*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Edgar’s speech that follows allows the “invisible” stagehands to clear the platform of all the props. It is likely that the incidental music being played in the gallery includes hoboys or shawms. [See Video 29, “Sophie Matthews demonstrates the shawm. 2:08-3:33.”] “**Hoboy** or ‘hautboy,’ a wooden reed similar to the modern oboe, sometimes called a *shawm* ; the sound of *hoboys* —always plural in directions — can accompany supernatural or sinister events...” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama*, 1580-1642, p, 115). Its use in III,vi presages the sinister events to follow in the next scene. Compare note III,iv,172., “*Child Rowland*”

101. S.D. *Exeunt Kent, Gloucester, and the Fool*] *Exeunt.* (F. 2055). *Exit.* (Q, 2056.5). The audience does not see Lear hauled off stage as indicated by Capell’s S.D. from 1768, *Exeunt Kent, Gloucester, and the Fool, bearing off the King*. The actors leave the stage from “*behind the curtains.*”

101. S.D. *behind the curtains*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

Lines 102-120 (Q, 2056.1-15) were cut in the Folio, which ends after line 2056.

105. **shows**] scenes

110. **He childed as I fathered**] viz., he childed as [I was being] fathered. Lear’s sufferings are so much greater than his own by virtue of his age. Lear was a grown man with children of his own when Edgar was merely a twinkle in Gloucester’s eyes. Regan informs us in II,i that Lear is Edgar’s godfather (F, 1030).

111. **bewray**] reveal

115. **Lurk, lurk**] Beware. Spoken to the audience. Cf. III,iv,177-179. Hence the use of “**hoboys.**” See note III,vi,101.S.D., “*Music*”.

115. S.D. *Exit*] Theobald. Not in Q. It is likely that Edgar too makes his exit behind the center curtains from which Cornwall *et al* immediately make their entrance, as if by magic.

ACT III, SCENE VII. *Scena Septima* (F, 2057). Scene 14 in Quarto.

S.D. *Gloucester’s Castle*] Rowe, subst. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *The Platform*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *Drum and Trumpet*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642.*, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642.*, **drum**, pp. 79-80)

S.D. *Enter . . . Soldiers*] Ed. *Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gonerill, Bastard, and Seruants.* (F, 2058-59). *Enter Cornwall, and Regan, and Gonorill, and Bastard.* (Q, 2058-59).



Figure 193. Attendant soldiers standing behind Titus in the Peacham drawing of *Titus Andronicus* (c. 1595?), the only surviving contemporary illustration from a play by Shakespeare, now in the library of the Marquess of Bath at Longleat.

S.D. *Cornwall's Knight*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See line 69 note.

S.D. *Curan*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See note II,i,1, *Curan*.

S.D. *Albany's Squire*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See line 97 note.

S.D. *armed knights belonging to the dukes*] Ed. *Servants* (F, 2059). According to Mark Cartwright, "The staff of a castle may be divided into two broad groups: men-at-arms and domestic servants" ("The Household Staff in an English Medieval Castle"). An audience can deduce what role they serve from their costumes and weapons. [See Figure 193.] However, modern readers must be told that the extras in this scene are men-at-arms lest they wrongly be imagined domestic "*Servants*." Logically, they consist of Cornwall's knights and the ones Albany sent to escort his wife to Gloucester's castle. The old earl has innocently sent away all of his "Knights" to safeguard the king on his way to join Cordelia in Dover. (See F, 2074-2079.)

1. S.D. *To Goneril*] Furness. Not in Q, F.

1. **Post speedily**] hasten

3. S.D. *Exeunt two of Cornwall's knights*] Ed. *Exeunt some of the Servants*. Capell. Not in Q, F. (See note III,vii,22.S.D., "*Exeunt two more of Cornwall's knights*.")

4. **Gon**] Ed. *Reg*. F, 2063. Q, 2063. The meaning of these speeches has completely different connotations depending on which of the sisters is speaking them. Goneril is all business, and wants Gloucester executed immediately for siding with Cordelia, whose reasons for bringing a French army to England are not explicitly stated until IV,iii. See Appendix C.

5. **Reg**] Ed. *Gon*. F, 2064, Q, 2064. Regan is signaling her wishes to her weak and ineffectual husband to pluck out Gloucester's eyes, a deed she ultimately completes herself. (See note III,vii,80.,S.D., *She plucks out his other eye*.) Cornwall is not man enough to do anything without her approval. In IV,iv, she reproaches herself for not following Goneril advice, and killing the earl outright: "*It was great ignorance, Gloucesters eyes being out / To let him liue*." (F, 2394-95).

6-7. **our sister**] Goneril

7. **revenges**] One of the many things the audience is observing at this moment is the exchange between Edmund and Curan. Can the Bastard bear to look at the old man, or does he meet his gaze with defiance and contempt? In a novel, their interaction would be given a written account. In a play, it is dramatized.

7. **are bound**] are obligated; cannot fail

8-9. **Advise the Duke . . . preparation**] advise Albany when you get there, to make speedy preparation for war

9. **festinate**] speedy

10. **to the like**] to do the same thing

10. **posts**] messengers

11. **shall be swift and intelligent**] will carry intelligence

12. S.D. *Enter Oswald*] Collier. *Enter Steward*. (F, 2072). After *king?* (Q, 2072).
15. **his**] Gloucester's
16. **Hot**] fast
16. **'questrists**] Ed. *questrits* (Q, 2076). *Questrists* (F, 2076), viz., equestrians, skilled horse-back riders. "Questrist" appears to be a word coined by Shakespeare from *equus*, Latin for "horse." Knights were trained horsemen. Oswald implies that Gloucester's "*Knights*" (F, 2076) are riding at a fast pace.
17. **the lord's**] Gloucester's
19. S.D. **Exit Oswald**] Staunton. Not in Q, F.
20. S.D. *To Cornwall and Regan*] Ed. Not in Q, F.
20. **Farewell, sweet lord and sister**] Goneril's farewell is not said as a courtesy but to rub her opportunity to have sex with Edmund in Regan's nose. The situation reverses itself after the death of Cornwall. See note IV,ii, 85, "*building in my fancy*".
21. **Reg**] Ed. Assigned to Cornwall in Q, 2082; F, 2082. Cornwall has already taken leave of Edmund at line 12 (F, 2071). Regan is livid that her husband has given Goneril the chance to be alone with Edmund, and makes a point **not** to acknowledge her sister's farewell. The rivalry between them is what is important to dramatize in the plot because it is from this that the story develops. Furthermore, Shakespeare is suggesting that Regan's fury during the trial owes less to the character's moral outrage at Gloucester's "treason" than sexual jealousy of her sister.
21. **She kisses him vehemently**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare "*She Kisses him vehemently*" in *The Soddered Citizen* by John Clavell, 1326-7, 2233-4 (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, **kiss**, p. 124-125). Regan is responding to Goneril's taunt. She could care less if her kissing Edmund makes Cornwall a cuckold before his knights. The duke responds to the insult by needlessly commanding two more of his knights to bring in Gloucester. See note III,vii,22, "*Exeunt two more of Cornwall's knights*."
21. S.D. **Exeunt Goneril and Edmund**] Dyce. *Exit*. after *sister* (F, 2081). *Exit Gon. and Bast.*, after *sister*. (Q, 2081).
21. S.D. **accompanied by Albany's knights**] Ed. Not in Q, F. The only armed men remaining in the scene belong to Cornwall. The audience recognizes them by their tabards. As noted above, Gloucester has sent all of his household knights away from the castle to protect Lear. The duke's ulterior motive for disposing of Albany's Knights is to avoid any risk of confrontation with them during his interrogation of Gloucester. They owe him no allegiance. As Cornwall tells Edmund, "*the reuenges wee are bound to take vppon your Traitorous Father, are not fit for your beholding*." (F, 2066-68). Neither Curan ("*Seruant*", Q, 2176.1) nor Albany's Squire ("*2 Seruant*", Q. 2176.53) carry weapons, and pose no physical threat to the duke. The former is very old, and the latter very young and functions basically as a **herald**—"originally messengers sent by monarchs or noblemen to convey messages or proclamations—in this sense being the predecessors of modern diplomats."<sup>[12]</sup> [See note V,i,110.S.D., "*Squire reads*."]
22. **Pinion**] bind
22. S.D. **Exeunt two more of Cornwall's knights**] Ed. Not in Q, F. *Exeunt other Servants*. Capell. Cornwall has already commanded two of his knights to apprehend the earl: "*seek the traitor Gloucester*" (F, 2082). They might easily have returned with him here but Shakespeare has Cornwall send off a couple more. Why? The duke is humiliated by Regan's vehement kiss of

Edmund. He wants to distract his men from being a cuckold by establishing his position of authority. He is the one in charge of conducting the inquisition. His directive proves redundant, however, because this second group of knights scarcely have time to exit the stage before Gloucester is brought in by the first group. Under different circumstances, their bumping into to one another might be considered farcical, like a caper in the *Keystone Kops*. In this discrete unit of action preceding the interrogation, Cornwall is characterized as a wuss, lacking any authority. His needless order to his knights dramatizes his ineptitude. He's like Ajax in *Troilus and Cressida*, "a gowtie [gouty] Briareus, many hands and no vse (F, 187-8). See note II,ii,122., "But Ajax is their fool."

23. **pass upon his life**] condemn him to death
25. **do a court'sy**] defer, yield
26. S.D. **Re-enter knights**] Ed. *Enter Gloucester, and Servants.* (F, 2088). *Enter Gloster brought in by two or three. after traitor* (Q, 2088). The knights do not lay their hands on Gloucester until they are physically threatened to bind him on Cornwall's *third* command: (1) "Binde fast his corky armes" (F, 2091). (2) "Binde him, I say!" (F, 2095). (3) "To this Chair binde him!!" (F, 2098). (The punctuation marks are mine.) The audience sees Cornwall's soldiers are hesitant to bind Gloucester. The important idea being dramatized is that they do not respect their lord's authority.
26. S.D. **Gloucester wearing his spectacles**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Gloucester is wearing his bow spectacles on the tip of his nose, as he has been throughout the play. See note III,vii,65. *Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot* (F, 2140). [See Figure 194.]



Figure 194. From the workshop of Hieronymus Bosch, c. 1460 and 1520, Note the nose-spectacled thief on the left robbing a purse.

27. **ingrateful fox**] Regan uses the same metaphor for Gloucester that Lear does for Regan in III,vi: *a fox*. As noted in III,vi,24., "Want'st thou eyes at trial madam?", the meaning of this scene is qualified by the one before it.
28. **corky**] dry and withered
31. **Bind him**] For a second time, Cornwall commands his men to bind Gloucester.
31. **Hard, hard**] This could be a direction to Cornwall's knights to bind Gloucester's arms as tightly as they can. In keeping with the style of the play, however, the word "hard" should be taken as metaphor, echoing Lear's question from the previous scene. [See note III,vi,77, "hard hearts."] That is, Regan is referring to the nature of Gloucester's heart, as in *Timon of Athens*: "Thy Nature, did commence in sufferance, Time / Hath made thee hard in't." (F, 1895-96). Compare note II,iv,168, "tender-hafted."
31. S.D. **Cornwall lays his hand on his sword**] Ed. Compare I,i,161,S.D., "Laying his hand upon his sword." It is only by threatening violence than Cornwall's knights obey the command. Ironically, when Cornwall is challenged by his Knight (*Seru*, F, 2145) to actually use his sword in combat, he is too slow-witted to draw it.



32. **none**] not a traitor

33. S.D. **Knights tie him to a chair**] Ed. Servants bind him to a chair. Rowe. *subst.* Not in Q, F.



Figure 195. Samson and Delilah, Peter Paul Rubens (1609), National Gallery, London.

33. **find**—] (Q, 2099) *finde.* (F, 2099)

33. S.D. **Regan plucks Gloucester's beard**] Johnson. Not in Q, F. The gesture is intended to mock Gloucester's powerlessness. Since the days of Samson, a man's hair has been a symbol of manhood. [See Figure 195.] She is also emasculating the duke her husband who is formally the man in charge of the inquisition. From the start, Regan completely dominates the scene, steamrolling her way over everybody.

36. **naughty**] wicked

38. **quicken**] come to life

39. **hospitable favors**] features of your host

40. **ruffle**] bully, treat roughly

41. **late**] recently

42. **simple-answered**] direct in answering

44. **footed**] landed



Figure 196. A Chained Bear, Agostino Carracci (1557-1602) Courtland Institute of Art, London.

44. **kingdom**—] *Kingdome?* (F, 2112). *king dome?* (Q, 2112) *kingdome?* (Q, 2112) Regan characteristically cuts off her husband mid-sentence. [Compare note II,i,119, “—*Thus out of season.*”]

46. **guessingly set down**] written without certainty

50. **Wherefore**] Why

50. **peril**—] *perill*— (Q, 2121). *perill.* (F, 2123). Cornwall stops her in mid-sentence in the hope of slowing her down.

52. **I am tied to the stake**] I am like a bear in a bear baiting, tied to the stake, facing the attack of dogs. [See Figure 196.]

55. **anointed**] with holy oil at his coronation

56. **Stick**] *sticke* (F, 2130). *rash* (Q, 2130)

58. **buoy'd up**] risen up and extinguished the stars

58. **stelled fires**] fiery stars

59. **holp**] assisted

61. **turn the key**] let them in

62. **All cruel's else subscribed**] Ed. *All Cruels else subscribe*. (F, 2137). *All cruels else subscrib'd*. (Q, 2137). viz., otherwise everything cruel is admissible; there is nothing crueler.
63. **Winged vengeance**] an allusion to the Erinyes, Greek goddesses of vengeance.



Figure 197. Still from *Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925. Eisenstein uses glasses as a symbol throughout the film.

65. **these eyes**] Cornwall is referring metaphorically to Gloucester's spectacles. [See note I,ii,35, "spectacles."] In *Lear*, they are being used as a *symbol* of the artificial nature of his vision. They gave him a means to see the words of Edmund's letter, but not understand their true meaning. Had he followed his heart, he would have known the letter was false. It is only by losing his eyes that he sees the truth: "*Full oft 'tis seen Our means secure us, and our mere defects Prove our commodities.*" (F, 2200-21). [See note IV,i,20. "*our means.*"] Shakespeare uses the same metaphor in Act IV,v, when Lear tells Gloucester, "*Get thee glasse-eyes, and like a scurvy Politician, seeme to see the things thou dost not*" (F, 2612-14).

The first thing the audience observes about Gloucester when he steps foot on the stage in I,i, are his comical-looking spectacles. He could easily exist in the cosmology of *Commedia dell'arte*, a lewd *vecchio* stock character, bragging to Kent about his sexual exploits: a "*leane and slipper'd Pantaloone, / With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side*", as Jacques describes the sixth age of man in *As You Like it*. (F, 1136-38).

Glasses have been used as a signifier in all forms of theatre, doubtlessly from the time they were invented in Italy in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Shakespeare saw them worn by the character Pantaloon as noted above. The Gloucester subplot centers on the paradox of blindness. Sophocles' ironic treatment of it in *Oedipus Rex* is probably the best known to students of drama. The sighted Oedipus is 'blind' to the truth whilst the blind Teiresias (known for being transformed by Hera into a woman for seven years) can see the truth by the gift of divination. [See Figure 43.] The metaphor is used throughout *The Bible*, e.g., "*Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not*" (Jeremiah 5:21 ); "*Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house*" (Ezekiel 12:2); "*Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?*" (Mark: 8:18); "*Touch Me and see*" (Luke 24:39). [See note IV,v,139, "*Mark but the penning of it.*"]



Figure 198. "God bless me, what's the matter." by Phiz (Hablot K. Browne). Household Edition Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*, p. 65. Engraved by one of the Dalziels.

The first great use of them in English literature is in *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. [See Figure 198.] Mr. Pickwick is hilariously voted “*a pair of gold spectacles*” by members of the Pickwick Club for his contribution in “that celebrated scientific discussion so well known to all men, as the Pickwick controversy” (Chap 11). (For other examples, see John Mullen, “Ten of the best pairs of glasses in literature,” *The Guardian*.) The image of smashed or broken spectacles (which I believe Shakespeare deserves credit for), is used as a symbol in William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*: Jack memorably breaks one of the lenses of Piggy’s glasses. According to SparkNotes, “This assault symbolizes savagery and lawlessness attacking order, intellect, and civilization.” Two haunting examples of broken glasses in cinema are in 1) Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (Figure 197), with its famous shot of the nurse, open-mouthed, bloody, and with broken glasses, and 2) the famous close-up of a shattered pair of glasses in *The Birds*. Hitchcock makes it a point to show us that they were not broken by the girl’s fall, but shattered by a beak. (Figure 199).



Figure 199. A chilling still from Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Birds* where the broken glasses of a schoolgirl are used as a symbol.

65. **Stomps on Gloucester’s spectacles**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Nicholas Rowe was the first to add the stage direction “*Gloster is held down while Cornwall treads out one of his Eyes*” in 1709, and it continues to be added by modern editors as recently as 2000 by Stanley Wells in the *The Oxford Shakespeare*, “*Cornwall puts out one of Gloucester’s eyes and stomps on it*” (p. 209). In not one modern edition is it proposed that the line refers metaphorically to Gloucester’s spectacles.

66. **will think**] hopes

67. S.D. **Cornwall puts out Gloucester’s eye**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Likely with a knife (as in Rembrandt’s painting of the blinding of Samson) to contrast with Regan’s plucking out the second eye with her nails. [See Figure 204.]



Figure 200. Detail from *The Blinding of Samson*, Rembrandt (1636), Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main.

69,73,76,78. **Cornwall’s Knight**] Ed. *Servant*. (Q, 2145). *Serv*. (F, 2145). *First Servant*. Capell. “The word knight, from Old English *cniht* (“boy” or “servant”), is a cognate of the German word *Knecht* (“servant, bondsman, vassal”) . . . By the Late Middle Ages, the rank [of knight] had become associated with the ideals of chivalry, a code of conduct for the perfect courtly Christian warrior. Often, a knight was a vassal who served as an elite fighter or a bodyguard for a lord, with payment in the form of land holdings.” (Wiki). In Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales*, the Knight is described in The Prologue as “a worthy man, That fro the tyme that he

first bigan/ To riden out, he loved chivalrie,/ Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.” (*The Canterbury Tales and Other Poems by Geoffrey Chaucer.*)



Figure 201. “The Knight’s Tale” from the Ellesmere Chaucer (Huntington Library, San Marino).

The staging of the Knight’s death together with the Duke of Cornwall’s is of critical importance in the development of Shakespeare’s central theme of chivalry. The plot builds dramatically to a fight between Edgar and Edmund in a *medieval* trial by combat, where Albany leaves the case of guilt and innocence to Divine rather than human judgment (as in Ridley Scott’s, *The Last Duel*). In this scene, CORNWALL’S KNIGHT is acting in accordance with the ideals of chivalry, as summarized in the epic poem “The Song of Roland”—an historical figure alluded to in III,iv,173 “*Childe Rowland*” (F, 1966). One of its “Ten Commandants” is the code “Thou shall respect all weaknesses and shalt constitute thyself the defender of them.”



Figure 202. A 1540s depiction of a judicial combat in Augsburg in 1409, between Marshal Wilhelm von Dornsberg and Theodor Haschenacker. Dornsberg’s sword broke early in the duel, but he proceeded to kill Haschenacker with his own sword.

69. **Hold your hand]** stop, refrain

70. **I have serv’d you ever since I was a child]** Unlike Curan, who states that his family has been in Gloucester’s household for generations, we must induce from the many “signs” Shakespeare gives us in performance, —the clothes he is wearing, the fearsome weapon he is carrying, his courtly manners and refined speech, —that he was brought into Cornwall’s service as a page, promoted to be a squire, and from that status advanced to a knight. [See Figure 203.] The theory that he serves merely as a peasant farmer, as implied by the duke and duchess, is not consistent with the play’s overarching themes. See note III,vii,75, “—*my villaine*”.



Figure 203. Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt with his Page, Caravaggio (c. 1607-1608), Louvre.

The idealism of Cornwall’s Knight suggests that he is young, perhaps in his early 20s. (The part would have been performed by an apprentice player, not a Principal actor in the The King’s Men’s company.) Theoretically, the audience first laid eyes on the character in II,i,85,

where he stood out physically among the other background actors. (See note II,i,85, “*attended by Cornwall’s Knight and four other bodyguards.*”) In addition, he likely plays a role in the release of Kent, supporting him offstage. (See note II.iv.129. S.D. “*Kent is helped off by Cornwall’s Knight and Lear’s Knight.*”) This helps predispose the audience to like the character. His death does not have the same impact on the audience if it is he some anonymous “extra” who just now appears on the scene.

74. **I’d shake it]** I’d defy you openly in this cause. The idea that women are weak and frail is a common stereotype in most cultures. Gallantry to “the fairer sex” is a basic code of chivalry.
74. **Reg]** Ed. *Seru.* (Q, 2151). *Ser.* (F, 2151).
74. **What do you mean?** ] As part of the “Servant’s” speech in (F, 2151), (Q, 2151). Regan is outraged by the Knight’s insubordination, especially his explicit reference to her gender: “*If you did weare a beard vpon your chin, / I’ld shake it on this quarrel*” (F, 2150-51).
75. —**My villain?**] Ed. *My villain?* (F, 5152) *My villain.* (Q, 2152). I believe “*My villain?*” is an instance of what is called today “dual dialogue.” Accordingly, I have put a dash at the beginning of it to indicate that it overlaps with Regan’s line “*What do you mean?*” Their speaking together adds to the sense of disorder and confusion on stage. Characters are known to speak simultaneously in Shakespeare, as in *Anthony and Cleopatra*, IV,iii,S,D., “*Speak together.*” (F, 2495).

Cornwall and Regan respectively refer to the Knight as a “*villein*” (F, 2152), and a “*peasant*” (F, 2154). However, their words by no means indicate that he is one. Gregory Bates observes, the idea that the same message accompanied by different meta-communication can mean something entirely different, including its opposite, as in *irony*”. As noted above, Shakespeare’s audience would have understood the character to be tenured in Chivalry. “In the European feudal system, military duties [were] performed in return for tenures of land. The military service might be required for wars or expeditions or merely for riding and escorting services or guarding the castle” (Knight Service). “Feudal land tenures were divided into *free* and *unfree*. Of the free tenures, the first was tenure in chivalry, principally grand sergeanty and knight service” (Feudal Land Tenure). That is to say, the duke and his wife are grossly insulting the Knight’s position and tenure by suggesting he is nothing more than a peasant farmer or a country laborer. In H.H. Furness’s *New Variorum Edition* p. 226), he notes that Schmidt says the stress should be on “*My.*”

76. **chance of anger]** risks of a sword fight. He is challenging the duke to fight him. Cornwall is too slow-witted to draw his sword. He is utterly confounded.
76. S.D. **He draws his sword against Cornwall]** Ed. Not in Q, F.
77. —**Give me thy sword]** Ed. Giue me thy Sword. (F, 2154). Giue me thy sword, (Q, 2154). I believe this line might also be an instance of “dual dialogue,” and have inserted a dash. Regan is so blinded by rage at the Knight’s defiance that she doesn’t see or hear his challenge to her husband.
77. S.D. **She snatches a sword and runs at him behind.]** Ed. *Shee takes a sword and runs at him behind.* (Q, 2155.) *Killes him.* (F, 2155). Compare *The Elder Brother*, IV,iii,133, *Snatches away Eustace’s sword.* The trial has turned into a veritable “shit show.” It is moving so quickly that Cornwall’s bodyguards don’t have time to intervene. Meanwhile, the audience,



like Albany in IV,ii, is kept in suspense as to what will happen to Gloucester's "other eye" (F, 2326).

77. S.D. *He falls into Cornwall, stabbing him*] Ed. Not in Q, F. See **bleeding, fall, stab** and **sword** in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*. There is a stage direction following "My villain?" in the two quartos, *draw and fight* (Q, 2152). This direction is **not** given in the Folio, and I think correctly. In a frenzy of rage, Regan seizes a sword from one of the guards, and stabs the Knight in the back. Her fatal blow pushes him forward into the duke whom he injures by happenstance with his drawn sword. For all intents and purposes, Regan is the cause of her husband's death. It is an ironic end to the "fiery" Duke of Cornwall.

The idea that that there is a protracted sword fight between the duke and the Knight as indicated in the quartos is entirely gratuitous. It is 1) not consistent with the ironic style of the composition; 2) confuses Shakespeare's characterizations of Cornwall and Regan; 3) explains why none of Cornwall's other bodyguards attempt to intercede; and, most importantly, 4) *diverts our attention from Regan*. She steamrolls her way through the whole scene. The trial reaches an apotheosis of insanity when she plucks out Gloucester's "other eye" (F, 2326) with her nails.

77. *The Duke falls down bleeding*] Ed, Not in Q, F. Cornwall falls to ground bleeding profusely.  
78. **I am slain**] This line is said to Gloucester *after* Cornwall has fallen to the ground.  
79. S.D. *He dies*] Ed. *He dies*. (Q2, 2157). Not in Q1, F.  
80. S.D. *To Regan*] Ed. Not in Q, F.  
80. **Prevent it!**] Ed. *preuent it*, (Q, 2158). *preuent it*; (F, 2158). Cornwall *commands* Regan to put out the eye. He has been dealt a mortal wound in his gut, and is unable to stand without assistance.



Figure 204. Hecuba gouges out the eyes of Polymester for murdering her last surviving child Polydorus. From *Metamorphoses* by Ovid, Antoine Vérard: Paris, 1494. British Library IC. 41148, CLVI.

80. *She plucks out his other eye*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *Antonio's Revenge*, V,iii,64,S.D., "pluck out his tongue." In a letter from March 1979 that I received from Kenneth Muir, editor of *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare* (1951) in regard to the possible corruption of Gloucester's blinding in the quartos and Folio, he replied, "I think it is legitimate for Regan to gouge out Gloucester's other eye (But I doubt if Sh intended this. See the account given to Albany (III,ii,71).)" Muir does not explain his reasons for drawing this conclusion. Perhaps he believes that because Regan is not *explicitly* incriminated by name in the speech, it must be that Cornwall puts out the second eye. In fact, the Squire's eye-witness account of the incident (F, 2312-2329) provides the most compelling evidence that Regan, and not Cornwall, is the culprit. (See note IV,ii,68.S.D., "Enter Albany's Squire.")

From what we have already observed of Regan's need to dominate Cornwall, it must have been unbearable for her to watch him put out the first of Gloucester's eyes, especially when he did so at her suggestion. (See note III,vii,5. "Reg.") With her husband down, she does not hesitate to put out the second eye, dispensing with metal tools like knives or pokers. The gesture epitomizes the savagery of her nature represented throughout the play in the poetic imagery. "With her nailes / Shee'l flea thy Woluish visage" (F, 826-7), says Lear. "Because I would not see thy cruell Nailes / Plucke out his poore old eyes," says Gloucester. (F, 2128-29). Her action does not take precedence over characterization, as it does if Cornwall puts out the second eye. Shakespeare is presenting Regan as something feral; something less than human: a "greene-ey'd Monster" (F, 1781) maddened by the thought of her sister being alone with Edmund.

Cornwall is not written as sadistic character. He is a complete wuss, dominated by his wife. In the context of medieval humoral symptomatology, he fits the profile of a phlegmatic male: *watery*. (See note II,iv,92, "quality.") Lear speaks ironically of his "fiery" humor (II,iv,92, F, 1371). Kent likens him to "Ajax" (II,ii,123, a jakes, F, 1203), "a gowtie Briareus" (F, 187), "slow as the Elephant" (F, 180), "all eyes and no sight" (F, 188). Regan overrides her husband's authority on every occasion. She countermands his sentence on Kent to sit in the stocks till noon (F, 1214), and imposes an even stricter penalty of her own. In III,vii,5, Regan signals to Cornwall that she wants Gloucester blinded, not killed, as Goneril advises. No sooner is the earl bound to a chair than she begins plucking his beard, effectively taking the leading role at the trial (F, 2100-01). She subsequently becomes so aggressive during the interrogation that Cornwall begs her to slow down: "Wherefore to Dover. Let him answer that" (F, 2125). She does not give the duke the chance to defend his honor when challenged to a sword fight, but murders the Knight in cold blood for daring to talk back to her. Unlike Hecuba in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, who uses her hands to gouge out the eyes of Polymester, and is metamorphized into an barking animal, Regan's blinding of Gloucester with her nails fulfills every expectation of the character. [See Figure 204.]

80. **Reg**] Ed. As a continuation of Cornwall's speech (Q, 2158), (F, 2158).

80. **Out, vile jelly**] Ascribed to Cornwall in Q, 2158 and F, 2158.

81. **Where is thy lustre now**] Sarcasm is not a rhetorical device Cornwall has the temperament for, as demonstrated time and again by his slow, dull-witted speeches. (See II,i,104. "Nor I, assure thee, Regan") Regan, on the other hand, is sharp-witted. She is incapable of uttering a single word without a double-edge. We recognize the line "Where is thy luster now" as one of hers by its mocking quality; her need to further taunt Gloucester in his misery.

88. **abus'd**] Wronged

89. **prosper him**] Cause him to flourish

91. S.D. **Exit two with Gloucester**] Ed. *Exit with Gloucester*. (F. 2171). Not in Q. Two of Cornwall's bodyguards.

91. **How look you**] How are you

92. **Follow me**] serve me. See Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*. Cornwall needs Regan's assistance to rise from the ground and exit the scene.

He has been mortally wounded.

93. **This slave**] Cornwall's Knight.

94. S.D. *Two of Cornwall's knights exeunt with the body*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

95. S.D. *Exit Cornwall, led by Regan*] Ed. *Exit.* (Q, 2176). *Exeunt.* (F, 2176).

95. S.D. **Music**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lines 96-104 are omitted in the First Folio. Lines Q, 2176.1-2177.5 serve the practical function of allowing the "invisible" stagehands to clear the platform, hence the music.

96. **Curan**] Ed. *Servant.* (Q, 2176.1). *Second Servant.* Capell. See note *Dramatis Personae*, "Curan."



Figure 205. "Young Squire with Man in Armour". Giorgione. Ca. 1501-1502, The Uffizi.

97. **Squire**] Ed. 2. *Servant* (Q, 2176.3). *Third Servant.* Capell. (See note Albany's Squire in the *Dramatis Personae*.) The audience recognizes the Squire by his youth, and the tabard he is wearing with his lord's coat-of-arms. He arrives in III,vii with Goneril and the group of Albany's armed knights sent to escort her. His job is to bring back news about the impending war with France. Like Curan, he is not carrying a sword. Possibly a caduceus or "herald's wand."

The Squire's empathetic nature is the most important quality of the character, as demonstrated by his bandaging of Gloucester's eyes: "[I]le fetch some flaxe and whites of egges to apply to his bleeding face" (Q, 2177.8-9). His knowledge of unguents is in keeping with his role as a squire: "The innkeeper before giving the sword thrust of knight errant to Don Quixote, advises him to get a **squire** who always carries "bandages and unguents with which to heal" (Chap. III). (See "Home remedies in Don Quixote," by Park Chul.)



Figure 206. The Squire in the Ellesmere manuscript of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Readers of Geoffrey Chaucer, of whom Shakespeare appears to have been one, are sure to recall the youthful and inexperienced Squire in *The Canterbury Tales*. He is described in the *General Prologue* as "twenty yeer of age ... a lovyere and lusty bachelere ... of greet strengthe ... fressh as is the monthe of May ... embroidered like a meadow bright." The Squire's Tale contrasts ironically with that of his father in *The Knight's Tale*. Jacob Hughes writes that "critics such as Donaldson and Anne Thompson have found that Chaucer's thematic influence is rife throughout much of Shakespeare's canon" ("Chaucer Lost and Found in Shakespeare's

Histories”). In *King Lear*, the character of the Squire is juxtaposed with the patriarchal figure of Albany, suggesting that Shakespeare was acquainted with Chaucer’s tale.

The SQUIRE’S behavior is twice made a target of Albany’s disapproval. The first is the duke’s impatience with the Squire’s overwrought, emotional account of Gloucester’s blinding in IV,ii. He gets visibly annoyed when he is not given a straight answer to his question, who put out “*The other eye of Gloucester*” (F, 2315). (See note IV,ii,68. S.D. “*Enter Albany’s Squire.*”). In the final scene, before Lear’s entrance with the body of Cordelia, the SQUIRE reacts with horror and pity on seeing Goneril and Regan dead. Once again, Albany reproaches the boy for getting emotional. “*This iudgement of the Heauens that makes vs tremble. / Touches vs not with pittie*” (F, 3185-86) (See note V,i,231-2.)

Like Chaucer’s Squire, Albany’s Squire is young and idealistic, unjaded by experience of the world. He is a symbol of innocence, like the adolescent girl Paola waving to Marcello on the beach at the end *La Dolce Vita*. [See Figure 329.] As noted in V,i,325, the final couplet in the play is theoretically addressed to him: “*The oldest hath borne most, we that are yong, / Shall neuer see so much, nor liue so long.*” (F, 3300-01).

100. **Curan**] Ed. *I Ser.* (Q, 2176.5). Second Servant. Capell.

101. **Would**] wishes to go.

101. **roguish**] like a vagabond, i.e., as a madman vagabond he can do anything. Anyone else would be punished for helping Gloucester.

103. **Squire**] Ed. *2 Ser.* (Q, 2176.8). Third Servant. Capell.

103. **flax**] linseed or flaxseed oil. Ambroise Paré treated wounds with a mixture of egg yolk, rose oil and turpentine.

104. **Trumpets sound**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, **trumpet** (pp. 237-38). Music signals the break of a scene, and the passage of time.

104. S.D. **Exeunt severally**] Theob. Exit (Q, 2177.5).

ACT IV, SCENE I] *Actus Quartus. Scene Prima* (F, 2177). Scene 15 in Quarto.

S.D. **The Heath**] Capell; not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Yard and the Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Enter Edgar**] F, 2178, Q, 2178

S.D. **still disguised as Tom o’ Bedlam**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **from under the stage**] Edgar emerges from under the stage as he did in II,iii and III,iv, costumed as a bedlam beggar and wearing the horn of an ox. [See Figure 165.] It is not until he blows it that his presence is noted by his father and Curan, the “*Old Man*” (F, 2192).

3. **dejected**] abased, cast down.

3. **of**] at the hands of

4. **Stands still in esperance**] is always in a condition of hope.

6. **returns to laughter**] must inevitably change for the better

9. **Owes**] When a man's debts are paid, he fears no creditors.
9. S.D. **Enter Gloucester**] Enter Gloufter (F, 2188). Enter Glost. After *age* (Q, 2192).
9. **with a staff**] Wells. Not in Q, F. See IV,v. "*That fellow handles his bow like a crowkeeper*" (F, 2535). See also IV,v, "*ice try whither your costard or my ballow be the harder*" (F, 2694). Edgar uses the staff later in the scene to disarm Oswald.
9. S.D. **led by Curan**] Ed. *and an Old man.* (F, 2188). *led by an old man.* After *age* (Q, 2192). If Curan is the same character as the *Seruant* (Q, 2176.1) or "*Second Servant*" (Capell), it follows by simple logic that he is the *Old Man*. See note II,i,1, "*Curan.*"
11. **strange**] unknown
11. **mutations**] changeableness
12. **Life would not yield to age**] men would kill themselves but for the very twists of fate that make us hate the world in the first place. Edgar is basically reiterating what he said before, that hope for change for the better keeps men alive.
- 12, 17, 26, 29, 30, 40, 45, 49. **Curan**] Ed. *Old man.* (Q, 2193). *Oldm.* (F, 2193).
13. **tenant**] one devoted to the services of Gloucester's family. Curan is using the word "tenant" figuratively. *OED*. 3. "*transferred and figurative. One who or that which inhabits or occupies any place; a denizen, inhabitant, occupant, dweller.*" Compare *Hamlet*, V,i, "*for that Frame outliues a thousand Tenants.*" (F, 3232-33). Cf also *Shake-speares Sonnets* (Quarto 1, 1609), Sonnet 46, "*A quest of thoughts, all tennants to the heart.*"
16. **comforts**] attempts to assist me.
19. **I stumbled when I saw**] One of the central paradoxes in the play.
20. **Our means secure us**] Specifically, Gloucester's spectacles, which gave him the means to "see."
21. **Prove our commodities**] Our disadvantages prove advantages.
22. **The food of thy abused father's wrath**] that on which his anger fed, the object of his anger.
24. S.D. **Edgar winds his horn**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Edgar announces his presence by blowing his horn. His father and Curan don't see him because he is standing in the yard. Cf. II,iii; III,iv.



Video 30. Video: Sound of an ox horn.

25. S.D. **Aside**] Johnson; not in Q, F.
27. S.D. **Aside**] Johnson; not in Q, F.
31. **He has some reason**] He has some sensibility
37. S.D. **Aside**] Johnson; not in Q, F.
37. **How should this be?**] i.e., how should I have to come to play the fool to sorrow.



Figure 207. The Parable of the Blind, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1568, Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.



46. **madmen lead the blind**] A reference to the Biblical parable of the blind leading the blind. Matthew 15.14.
48. **the rest**] all
49. **'parel**] apparel. Curan tells Gloucester he will bring poor Tom the finest clothes in his possession . . .
50. **Come on't what will**] . . . but expresses reservations about the impression his best finery is going to make. Perhaps he is worried about the difference in their sizes—Curan might be much smaller or much taller than Edgar, and recognizes that his garments won't fit him properly. I theorize his name gives us a clue. "Curran is an Irish and also a Scottish surname. According to **Word Finder**, "The name derives from the 10th century Gaelic name O'Corraid-hin, meaning "the male descendant of Corraidhin" a personal name which comes from "corradh", a spear. (Origin Celtic)." (My guess is that it derives from the striking red hair of the family, as *curran* is Gaelic for wild carrot.)

At any rate, *King Lear* takes the form of a tragicomedy. Its style is marked irony, exemplified by Lear's macho, Tudor period costume. (See "Blunting Lances and Razing Towers: Masculine Performance and Early Tudor Reforms" by Jacob Burt, Chapel Hill, 2006). If Curan takes pride in the Gaelic history of his family, it might be that he brings "poor Tom" a braw Scottish Breacan an Fhéilidh or great *kilt*. [Figure 208]. "The General Assembly of the **Kirk of Scotland** in 1575 prohibited the ministers and readers of the church (and their wives) from wearing tartan plaids and other 'sumptuous' clothing." Proper Englishmen don't wear dresses; hence the caveat. See note IV,v, S.D. , "Enter Edgar, wearing a kilt."



Figure 208. Earliest illustration of a belted plaid c. 1600.

50. S.D. **Exit**] F, 2239. Not in Q.
51. S.D. **Aside**] Johnson; not in Q, F.
51. **daub it further**] dissemble any more.
53. S.D. **Aside**] Johnson; not in Q, F.
55. **horse-way**] bridle-path.
58. **Hobberdidance**] Ed. Hobbididence (Q1, 2248.2). Not in F. Compare note III,vi,30.
60. **possesses**] "This is generally supposed to have been suggested by the three chambermaids in the family of Mr. Edmund Peckham, mentioned in Harnett's *Declaration*, but Moberly gives it a general reference to chambermaids 'who perform these antics before their mistress' dressing-glass'" (Furness, p. 236). Malone quotes from Harnett's *Declaration* as well: — Make antike faces, grinne, mow and mop like an ape." Cf. III,ii,35-6, "For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a glass."



Figure 209. Woodcut of the Devil Tempting a Woman's Vanity with a Mirror.

64. **Have humbled to all strokes**] Have brought so low as to accept humbly the bitterest strokes of Fortune (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 142).
64. S.D. **Giving him a purse**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *As You Like It*, II,vii, “*The sixth age shifts / Into the leane and slipper'd Pantalooene, / With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side.*” (F, 1137-38). Elizabethan men sometimes carried multiple coin pouches with them, probably to avoid being robbed, as in Breugel’s painting “*The Misanthrope.*” Gloucester gives Edgar another coin bag in IV,v,30 containing a valuable jewel (F, 2465).
66. **superfluous**] pampered, having too much. Compare II,ii, “*our basest Beggars / Are in the poorest thing superfluous.*” (F, 1564-5). Cf. also III,iv, “*Take Physicke, Pompe, / Expose thy selfe to feele what wretches feele, / That thou maist shake the superflux to them, / And shew the Heauens more iust.*” (F, 1814-17).
67. **slaves**] subjugate, enslave
68. **feel**] feel sympathy. Compare note IV,v, 140. S.D., “*Feels Lear’s open palm*”.
72. **bending**] leaning over its base
73. **fearfully**] so as to inspire terror in one who looks over the edge.
73. **in**] into
73. **confined**] restrained, by the cliffs
78. S.D. **Exeunt**] F, 2265. not in Q.

ACT IV, **SCENE II**] *Scene Secunda* (F, 2266). Scene 16 in Quarto.

S.D. **The Duke of Albany’s Palace**] Capell, *subst.* not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Drum and Trumpet within**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, **within**, p. 253.

S.D. **Enter Goneril and Edmund**] Theobald; *Enter Gonorill and Bastard.* (Q, 2267); *Enter Gonerill, Bastard, and Steward.* (F, 2267).

2. S.D. **Enter Oswald**] Theobald, *subst.* *Enter Steward.* (after *master*) (Q, 2269.1). Not in F.

2. S.D. **severally**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

8. **sot**] fool

11. S.D. **To Edmund**] Hanmer. Not in Q, F.

12. **cowish**] cowardly

13. **undertake**] show enterprise or courage, or assume responsibility.

13-14. **He’ll not feel wrong . . . answer**] He will ignore insults that demand a response

14. **Our wishes on the way**] i.e., that she will be rid of Albany, and free to marry Edmund.

15. **May prove effects**] might come true.
16. **musters**] troops
17. **change**] exchange.
17. **arms**] the insignia of our sexes, the sword and the distaff.
19. **like**] likely
21. **A mistress's command**] Goneril is quibbling on the word 'mistress': 1) "A woman who employs others in her service; a woman who has authority over servants, attendants, or slaves" (*OED*, 2.b.); 2) "A woman loved and courted by a man; a female sweetheart" (*OED*, 5.a).



Figure 210. George Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland, Nicholas Hilliard, c. 1590. The glove he has pinned to his hat looks suspiciously like the crown of a cockscorn.

21. S.D. *Gives him a glove*] Ed. Not in Q, F. *Giving a favor*. Johnson. Once again, there are no stage directions in the quartos or Folio describing what favor Goneril gives to Edmund. R.A Foakes inserts the S.D., "*She places a chain about his neck*" in the venerated *Arden Shakespeare King Lear* (p. 311). In accordance with the play's ironic style, I theorize that Regan gives Oswald the same token to bring to Edmund in IV,v,33—a **glove**: "*If you do finde him, pray you giue him **this**; / And when your Mistris heares thus much from you, / I pray desire her call her wisdom to her*" (F, 2420-22). (See note IV,iv,33.S.D., "*Gives him a glove*."). It was the custom to wear gloves in the hat as the favor of a mistress. Portia, in her assumed character, asks Antonio for his gloves, which she says she will wear for his sake (F, 2347); and Henry V gives the pretended glove of Alençon to Fluellen (F, 2683-84), which afterwards occasions his quarrel with the English soldier. The practice is alluded to by Edgar in III,iv,58. "*wore gloves in my cap*." (F, 1866). [See portrait of George Clifford in Figure 210 as to how the glove was worn—like the crest on the top of the head of gallinaceous birds.]

Shakespeare sets up a closely related gag before the battle when Goneril takes Regan by the hand to forcibly restrain her from leaving with Edmund: "*Oh ho, I know the Riddle, I will goe*." (F, 2878). (See note IV,vii,37, *Reg*.) The reader first saw her do so in I,i,303 to indicate that she and her sisters are of one mind and heart. In II,vi,190, Lear's comments on the gesture: "*O Regan, will you take her by the hand?*" (F, 1484). It is interesting to note that Shakespeare's father was a glover.

The human hand is a generative symbol in *King Lear* as it is in *Macbeth*. (See "'What Hands Are Here': The Hand as Generative Symbol in *Macbeth*" by Kathryn L. Lynch.) The word "hand" is spoken 29 times in *King Lear* beginning with "*That Lord, whose **hand** must take my plight*" (F, 108). Theatrical gestures involving the hand or gloves, are among the most indelible in the play, such as 1) Edmund's use of the Guidonian *hand* to assist bedlam beggars in the technique of solfège (see note I,i,128, "*Demonstrating the solfège technique on his*

*hand*"); 2) Regan's use of her naked *hand* to put out Gloucester's second eye (III,vii,80); 3) the stench of Lear's naked *hand* (IV,v,90); 4) Gloucester's feeling Lear's hand (IV,v,140); 5) the unpairing of Goneril's and Regan's gloves (IV,ii,21 and IV,iv,33); 6) Goneril's practice of taking her sister by the *hand* (I,i,301, II,iv,190, IV,vii,36); 7) the use of "gauntlets" by Lear (IV,v,92) and Albany (V,i,94), and so on.



Figure 211. Man with a Glove, Titian, c. 1520, Louvre.

One of the most powerful and mysterious Renaissance portraits is Titian's *Man with a Ripped Glove* (c. 1520-23). In the portrait, a somber young man, his black doublet open to reveal a white shirt, stares to the viewer's right. His right hand is naked, held horizontally across his belly; the index finger, with a signet ring, points. But this masterful hand contrasts striking to the gloved left hand, projecting forward to the viewer. The leather glove that he wears is folded back in a torn, ragged line at the cuff, while the back of the glove is torn in two different directions. Is it his hand or the glove's lining that is revealed through the torn back? Where does the skin of animal end and the skin of human begin? ("Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe" by Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosaline Jones, *Critical Inquiry*, 2001, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 114-132).

23. S.D. *She kisses him vehemently*] Ed. not in Q, F. Compare note III,vii,21, S.D., "*She kisses him vehemently*" i.e., as Regan did in III,vii.
25. S.D. *Exit Edmund* ] Rowe. *Exit*. (after *death*) (F 2293); not in Q.
26. **O, the difference of man and man**] Goneril is referring explicitly to her husband; however, the remark is said within earshot of young Oswald, whose relationship with "his mistress" is implicitly understood by Shakespeare's prurient audience as being sexual in nature. Regan also assumes they are having an affair: "*I know you are of her bosome*" (F, 2413). (Compare "*I am doubtful you haue beene coniunct and bosom'd with hir*" (Q, 2859.1). This helps explain why such a pretty-looking boy from a poor family (if not a foundling) was elevated to a position of high command in Goneril's household. (See "The Steward in Matters Domestical.") It also adds heft to Lear's claim that behind her puritanical facade, she is sexually insatiable: "*The Fitchew, nor the soyled Horse goes too't with a more riotous appetite:*" (F, 2565-67).

Upon Goneril's speaking these salacious lines, the eyes of the audience naturally turn to Oswald, as they did to Edmund in I,i when his father speaks insensitively to Kent about his bastardy. The characters' reactions are an integral part of the message being communicated. It can be naturally assumed that Oswald takes the remark as criticism of his sexual performance, as any teenage boy would. Like Edmund in the first scene, however, he keeps his feelings to himself. He indicates nothing. (Compare note I,i,11, "*conceive.*") This is one of several instances in the play where Shakespeare creates sympathy for the steward.

28. S.D. **Exit**] *Exit Stew.* (Q, 2299). Not in F.  
28. S.D. **Enter Albany**] (F, 2299). Not in Q.  
29. **worth the whistle**] ‘It is a poore dog that is not worth the whistling.’



Figure 212 Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*.

Lines 31-50 (Q, 2303.1-17) omitted in the Folio.

31. **fear**] have fears concerning.  
32. **its**] ith (Q, 2303.1)  
33. **Cannot be border'd certain itself**] cannot be kept within fixed bounds, cannot be trusted not to break the pale.  
34. **sliver**] sear off  
34. **disbranch**] sever, cut off  
35. **material**] forming the substance of a thing, nourishing, essential, necessary.  
37. **text**] on which you have been preaching.  
39. **Filths savor but themselves**] Filth smells only itself. See Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*: **savour**.  
42. **head-lugg'd**] pulled by the head. “To pull, give a pull to, to pull by (the ear, hair, etc.); to tease, worry, bait (a bear, bull, etc.) (*OED* 1.)  
43. **madded**] driven mad.  
45-50. **If that the heavens ... like monsters of the deep**] Compare note V,i,245. “*That’s but a trifle heere*” (F, 3267)  
46. **visible**] in visible form.  
47. **offenses**] offenders  
50. **Milk-liver’d**] white-livered, cowardly  
Lines 54-9 (Q, 2307.1-5.) Omitted in Folio.



Figure 213. Drummer from *Soldiers and Officers*, Jacob de Gheyn II, 1587, The Cleveland Museum of Art.

56. **noiseless**] because no military action has been taken. The reference is to martial music. [See Figure 213.]  
57. **thy state begins to threat**] Jennens; not in F. thy state begin thereat (Q1, 2307.3); thy slaier begins threats (Q2, 2307.3).  
58. **moral**] moralizing  
60-1. **Proper deformity show . . . woman**] Deformity, appropriate to the fiend, seems more horrible in a woman, because of its inappropriateness.



62. **changed**] transformed
62. **self-cover'd**] i.e. covering herself with a woman's shape.
63. **feature**] appearance
63. **Were't my fitness**] if it were proper for me
64. **blood**] instinct, passion
65. **apt**] ready
66. **howe'er**] but although.
68. **mew!**] A sexist insult. Goneril, by imitating a cat's noise, suggests that Albany is a "pussy" or a "Múccia, a kitlin, a *pusse-cat*, a young cat, a pug."<sup>[325]</sup> ( John Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, 1611) Compare note III,vi,45, "Purr".



Figure 214. Old Soldier Turned Nurse. From *The World Turned Upside Down*.

68. S.D. **Enter Albany's Squire**] Ed. *Enter a Messenger*. after *foole* (F, 2312). *Enter a Gentleman*. after *news?* (Q, 2313). As noted in *The Dramatis Personae*, who's who among the tertiary characters in the quartos and folio is a complete train wreck. It is left to readers to identify the bodies, as if they are of no consequence in the story. In my restoration, the "Messenger" (F, 2312) or "Gentleman" (Q, 2313) in IV,ii is the "2 *Seruant*" (Q, 2176.3) and 2 *Ser.* (Q, 2176.8) in III,vii—an eye witness to Gloucester's blinding, who afterwards dresses his wounds. This character was sent with Goneril to bring news of the rumored war with France. He naturally encounters Albany on his return, and is asked for information.

Albany's Squire omits to say anything to his lord about Goneril's complicity in Gloucester's trial. The audience saw him standing right next her when she advised Cornwall to execute the earl: "*Hang him instantly*" (F, 2063). (See note III,vii,4. *Gon.*) No doubt she is glowering at him with murder in her eyes, as she did the Fool in I,iv.,183., "*so your face bids me*" (F, 708-9). As the audience knows, Cornwall's Knight was murdered in cold blood by Regan. The Squire blatantly lies when he tells Albany, "*A seruant that he bred, thrald with remorse/ Oppos'd against the act, bending his sword/ To his great maister, who thereat intraged/ Flew on him, and amongst them, feld him dead*" (F, 2317-20).

The technique Shakespeare is using here is known as *dramatic* or *tragic irony*—"the incongruity created when the tragic significance of a character's speech or actions is revealed to the audience or reader but unknown to the character concerned" (*OED*). The Squire dares not tell Albany the truth in the presence of Goneril fearing he will suffer the same fate as Cornwall's Knight. "No one loves the messenger who brings bad news," writes Sophocles in *Antigone*. Albany has to ask him *twice* what happened to the "other" eye. "*Both, both,*" he replies fearfully before giving Goneril a letter: "*'Tis from your Sister*" (F, 2329)—the only mention he makes of Regan who we know dominated the entire scene.

- 70, 81, 83, 89, 90, 92. **Squire**] Ed. *Gent.* (Q, 2314). *Mes.* (F, 2313).

72. S.D. **Goneril frowns at him**] See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, **frown**, p. 97. The Fool mentions the murderous ferocity of Goneril's frown in I,iv,182, "*so your face bids me.*"
73. **thrill'd**] excited, moved, pierced.
73. **remorse**] compassion.
74. **bending**] directing.
75. **To**] against.
76. **fell'd**] they felled.
79. **justicers**] judges.



Figure 215. God's destruction of Sodom in *The Dore Gallery of Bible Illustrations*, Gutenberg.

79. **nether crimes**] crimes committed here below
82. S.D. **Presents a letter**] Collier. Not in Q, F.
83. S.D. **Aside**] Johnson. Not in Q, F.
85. **building in my fancy**] Goneril correctly imagines the malignant pleasure her sister will take in telling her that she is now a widow, and inferentially available to marry Edmund.
86. **hateful**] her life is hateful because she is married to Albany.
87. S.D. **Exit**] (Q, 2334). Not in F.
90. **back**] on his way back.
97. **Drum and trumpet within**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
97. S.D. **Exeunt**] (F, 2347). *Exit.* (Q, 2347).



Figure 216. Mosaic with mask of Silenus, 1st century AD, The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens. The Festival of Dionysus was the theatrical event of year in 5th century Athens. Every year in the spring playwrights would compete to entertain the masses of Athenian citizenry.

#### ACT IV. SCENE III] Scene 18 in Quarto. See Appendix C.

- S.D. **The Same. A tent**] Capell. A Camp Rowe; not in Q, F.
- S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
- S.D. **Enter, with drum and colors, Cordelia, Doctor, and French Soldiers**] Pope *subst. Enter Cordelia, Doctor, and others. Exit.* (Q, 2350). *Enter with Drum and Colours, Cordelia, Gentleman, and Souldiours.* (F, 2349-50)
3. **Crown'd**] See note IV,v,80., S.D. *camouflaged with weeds.*

3. **rank]** “Chiefly of vegetation: vigorous or luxuriant in growth. In later use usually in negative sense: growing too luxuriantly or rampantly; thick and coarse” (*OED*). “Our vyne waxeth ranke and must nedes be cutte.” W. Bonde. *Pylgrimage of Perfection*, 1526,
3. **fumiter]** fumitory, an Old World plant, often considered a weed, that flowers in early spring. “Fumiter is erbe, I say/ Yt spryngyth i April et [and] in May“ (*Fumitory, Or Earthsmoke, Weeds and wild flowers: their uses, legends, and literature by Lady Caroline Catharine Wilkinson*, p. 88. Chaucer mentions the word “fumeterere” as a laxative in “The Nun’s Priest Tale” which takes place “When that the month in which the world began,/ That highte March, when God first made man,/ Was complete, and y-passed were also,/ Since March ended, thirty days and two.” “Its popular name of ‘beggary’ is perhaps due to the association of this weed with the poorer types of land” (*Fumitory, WSSA*)
3. **furrow-weeds]** “Furrow- weeds” does not refer to a genus of flower but to any unwanted plant that finds its way into “a narrow trench made in the earth with a plough” (*OED*).



Figure 217. In the Spring, Burdock produces spiky purple flowers in the shape of orbs, similar to thistles. Photo Credit Shutterstock.

4. **burdocks]** Hanmer. *Hardokes* (F, 2354). *Hor-docks* (Q, 2354). “Any of various weeds, *spec.* the burdock, *Arctium lappa*. (*OED*). The word “hardocks” is most widely thought to be a compositorial error for *burdock*. In the Spring, Burdock produces spiky purple flowers in the shape of orbs, similar to thistles. Theoretically, Lear alludes to them in IV,v, 86-7. S.D., “*Gives Edgar a thistle.*”
4. **hemlock]** Poison-hemlock starts growing in the early spring. “The plant, called hemlock, has been found in Cornwall in the aftermath of Storm Emma,” which struck Ireland between the 28th of February and the 4th of March 2018. “Joshua Quick, a professional forager, discovered the lethal plant on Porthkidney Sands in Cornwall and warned that even a small amount could easily kill” *The Sun*, Jon Rogers. [See Video 31.]



Video 31. “Identifying Hemlock.” Hemlock grows in the UK from March to September.

4. **nettles]** Perennial nettles (*Urtica dioica*) and the annual nettle (*Urtica urens*) are usually considered to be weeds. “The best time to harvest nettles is the first few weeks of spring when the leaves are young and tender. The plant will be under a foot in height. Read more at Gardening Know How: Stinging Nettle Greens: Tips For Growing Nettle Greens In The Garden by Amy Grant.



Figure 218. Cuckooflower. Photo by J. Patrick Fischer. “Perhaps the best way to define a flower vs a weed is to consider Ian Emberson’s line of poetry: ‘A weed is a flower in the wrong place, a flower is a weed in the right place.’” (Cathy Habas, “Are Daisies Weeds of Flowers?”)

4. **cuckoo-flowers**] Cuckooflowers (also known as Lady Smocke) flower in early spring, from April to June. Its timescale is identical to the arrival and departure of the Cuckoo bird and it is thought this is where the name comes from. “In Folklore, it was said to be sacred to the fairies and brought bad luck if it was taken indoors. It was not included in Mayday garlands for the same reason.” [See Figure 218.]
5. **Darnel**] Darnel is “wheat’s malign twin” and mimics its growing cycle. It can be sown during spring and autumn. “Darnel’s close physical and agronomic resemblance to its host crop, together with its cryptic corruption of the food chain, has led to the weed developing a sinister and subversive reputation. It has been a trope for evil and sedition throughout literary history, and in particular has been used to identify and vilify heterodoxy and heresy (Archer et al. 2014). With distinct roles in classical and Christian traditions, darnel has been used to figure both religious dissent (and scapegoating) and political sedition. For example, the conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, who sought to reinstate Roman Catholicism in the Protestant England of King James I, were accused of sowing “Popish Darnell” (Gamage 1613:sigs A7rA7v). The message did not escape those unable to read: in one of a handful of visual representations of darnel outside of herbals during the early modern period, Gamage’s poetic allusion to o “Popish Darnell” is accompanied by an image depicting the plant burning in place of the martyr at the stake. (*Remembering Darnel, A Forgotten Plant Of Literary, Religious, And Evolutionary Significance*, Howard Thomas, Jayne Elisabeth Archer, and Richard Marggraf Turley, *Journal of Ethnobiology* 36(1): 29–44, 2016, p. 31. [See Video 32.]



Video 32. “Inishmaan and the Darnel Project: A short film highlighting the history & ecology of Darnel (*Lolium temulentum*) and the work to save it.”

5. **idle**] unwanted, worthless; in comparison with corn, which is cultivated and valued.
6. **corn**] “Elizabethan farmers typically grew ‘corn’ which is what they called cereals such as wheat, rye, and barley. They did not grow maize, the type of corn familiar to Americans. Maize could not grow in England because the weather was too cool” (*Elizabethan Home Life*).
6. **century**] a hundred soldiers



Figure 219. The unimproved nature grassland at Polebrook farm (Kent) is thought to have remained unchanged for more than 700 years. Photo: Picasa/Tania Pascoe.

7. **high-grown**] When Cordelia says that the fields are “high-grown”, she is referring to the height of the “weeds,” which are overgrown, and overrun the fields. As noted below, the DIY costume Lear has made for himself in IV,v serves the practical purpose of camouflage in the uncultivated meadows. He is planning a sneak military attack on his “*Sons in Law*” (Q2, 2629). (See note IV,v,80. S.D. *camouflaged with weeds.*) [See Figure 219.]
8. S.D. **Exit a French Officer**] Malone (subst). Not in Q, F. The actor appears again in IV,v,
8. **What can man’s wisdom**] human knowledge
9. **In the restoring**] to restore
9. **bereaved**] robbed, impaired.
10. **helps**] cures
10. **worth**] possessions.
13. **provoke**] induce.
14. **simples**] medicinal herbs
16. **virtues**] beneficial qualities
17. **aidant and remediate**] helpfully remedial.
19. **rage**] frenzy.
20. **the means**] i.e. his reason.
20. S.D. **Enter Lear’s Knight**] Ed. *Enter messenger.* (Q, 2371). *Enter Messenger* (F, 2372).
20. **Lear’s Knight**] Ed. *Mes.* (Q, 2371). *Mes.* (F, 2373). The audience needs to see that Lear’s Knight has made contact with Cordelia to make sense of his appearance in IV,v with French soldiers. (See note IV,v,185,S.D., “*Enter Lear’s Knight.*”)
22. **preparation**] our troops, ready for battle.
26. **importun’d**] importunate
27. **blown**] large; her intent is not to overthrow the government
29. S.D. **Drum sounds**] Ed. Not in Q, F. As noted, music is used to mark the ending of one scene or the beginning of the next. It signals the passage of time.
29. S.D. **Exeunt**] (F, 2381). *Exit.* (Q, 2381).

**ACT IV, SCENE IV**] *Scena Quarta* (F, 2382). Scene 19 in Quarto.

S.D. **A Room in Gloucester’s Castle**] Cap, subs.; not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Lords Rooms**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Regan wants to discuss the subject of Goneril’s letter to Edmund secretly with Oswald, hence her taking him to a private space. As in III,iii and III,v, this scene is short (44 lines). The characters take their positions and talk to each other. Movement is restricted by the “Lords” whose space on the second level of the tiring-house they are sharing. [See Figure 33.]

S.D. **Enter Regan and Oswald**] Steward. Q, 2383. F, 2383

S.D. **above**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Cf. note “above” in III,iii and III,v.

2. **with much ado**] after much fuss and persuasion

6. **What might import . . . him**] It must be induced that Oswald previously told Regan that he had been ordered by his mistress to bring a letter to Edmund.

8. **serious matter**] important business.



9. **ignorance]** folly.
12. **In pity of his misery]** The line is ironic.
13. **nighted]** darkened, because he is blind.
18. **charg'd my duty]** earnestly enjoined me to carry out her instructions.
20. **Belike]** In all likelihood, probably.
21. **some things]** Regan is likely thinking that Edmund is soon to be hers in marriage due to the death of her husband, —a thought she catches herself from saying aloud.
21. **love]** recompense. Compare I,iv, “*Thou seru'st me, and Ile loue thee.*” (F, 618). From this singular sense of the word, her mind switches to the *love* Oswald shares with Goneril who she and the audience assume is sexual. Shakespeare plays on the multiple meanings of *love* in II,ii when Oswald asks Kent if he'll **love** him in II,ii: “*Prythee, if thou lou'st me, tell me.*” (F, 1080) One of the funniest lines in the play occurs after Regan says in an aside to the audience, “*I had rather loose the battaile, then that sister should loosen him nd mee*” (Q, 2864.1-2). Albany greets her with the words, “*Our very louing Sister, well be-met*” (F, 2865). See note IV,vii, 18., “*Reg.*”
25. **œilliads]** Cotgrave defines the word as ‘an amorous look, affectionate wink’. qu Furness p. 264.
26. **of her bosom]** 1) in her confidence 2) her lover. Compare “I am doubtfull that you haue beene coniunct and *bosom'd* with hir” (Q, 2859.1-2). See IV,vii,13 note.
29. **take this note]** take note of what I say.
30. **have talk'd]** have come to an understanding.
31. **convenient]** fitting
32. **You may gather more]** You may deduce more from my hints: that she has had sex with Edmund.
33. **this]** a glove. The same favor that Goneril gave to Edmund in IV,ii,21. The irony has the effect of humanizing these two horrible women, sort of like the Boggart-Banishing spell “Riddikulus” in *Harry Potter*. They are not the evil step-sisters in Gaelic folklore to be feared, but tragically foolish characters to be laughed at and pitied. [See Figure 240.]
33. S.D. **Gives him a glove]** Ed; not in Q, F.
34. **thus much]** what I have told you.
40. **Exeunt]** (F, 2428). Exit. (Q, 2429).

**ACT IV. SCENE V.]** *Scena Quinta* (F, 2429). Scene 20 in Quarto.

S.D. **The Country near Dover]** Theob; not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform]** Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Soft music]** Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *As You Like It*, V,iv, *Still Musicke* (F, 2682). As always, the change of scenes is signaled by the music. Note that it takes Edgar and Gloucester a bit of time to take their positions downstage on the platform, allowing the musicians to change the tonality, which is melancholic or “sad” in contrast to the farcical scene in the Lords Rooms before it.

S.D. **Enter Gloucester]** *Enter Gloucester, and Edgar.* (F, 2430). *Enter Gloster and Edmund.* (Q,

2430).

S.D. *with a staff*] Wells. Not in Q, F. See note IV,i,9.



Figure 220. Actors wearing hats. Francis Kirkman, *The Wits* (1662). From *Shakespeare's England* (1917).

S.D. *wearing a kilt*] Ed. Not in Q, F. *dressed like a peasant*. Theobald. Edgar is wearing the “best Parrell” (F, 2238) owned by Curan (aka “Old Man”, F, 2188), theoretically a belted plaid, the precursor of the modern kilt, with a traditional “blue bonnet” (*OED*,1.a) or Balmoral hat “dating to at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>[21]</sup> [Figure 238]. (See note IV,i, 50., “*Come on’t what will.*”) Andrew Gurr discusses the convention of wearing hats in *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*: “The unbonneted Hamlet familiar to modern audiences is a creation of indoor theatre and fourth-wall staging . . . where everyone goes hatless” Shakespeare was “having a laugh” with the audience, as Ricky Gervais might say, by dressing Edgar in such a fashion. The clothes people wear are as artificial as the words they speak and their dialects. *Lear*, one must always remember, takes the form of “metatheatre,” not theatre realism. One might think from the costumes in IV,v, —the braw Scottish clothes given to Edgar by Curan, the camouflage Lear is wearing in preparation for battle, and the bedraggled Gloucester with his bandaged eyes, —took their inspiration from Beckett’s *Endgame* (1957). In *King Lear*, man’s world is absurd. Recent studies indicate that the style of this scene was influenced by medieval literary nonsense performed by minstrels. (See Sarah Shaffi, ““Mad and offensive” texts shed light on the role played by minstrels in medieval society,” *The Guardian*, 2023.)

The type of kilt that we will begin to encounter in the 16th century is called a *feilidh-mòr* (great wrap), a *breacan-feile* (tartan wrap) or simply a belted plaid. All refer to the same garment. I prefer the latter for ease of use. A plaid or plaide is a length of heavy woolen fabric worn over the body like a mantle or a shawl. It has nothing to do with the modern American usage of the word plaid, except that they were often of a tartan pattern, which “plaid” is synonymous with in America. A belted plaid is simply a very long plaid that had been gathered into folds and belted around the body. It is often called in modern reenactment circles a “great kilt.” Despite what you saw in *Braveheart* the belted plaid was not worn in the 13th and 14th centuries. The belted plaid costumes worn in that movie were not even very good representations of the belted plaids. I honestly do not know how the costumers could have claimed to have done any historical research — they simply designed a garment that they thought looked both Scottish and medieval.

The truth of the matter is that only one document has yet been found that dates from before 1600 and without a doubt describes a belted plaid, the earliest form of the kilt. It is an Irish source, written in Gaelic. In the *Life of Red Hugh O’Donnell* written by Lughaidh O’Clery, we read of a group of hired mercenaries from the Scottish Hebrides, employed by O’Donnell in 1594. “These were recognized among the Irish by the difference of their arms and clothing, their habits and language, for their exterior dress was mottled cloaks to the calf of the leg with ties and fastenings. Their girdles were

over the loins outside the cloaks.” (“Early History of the Kilt” by Rev. Mr. Matthew Newsome)



Figure 221. A MacGillivray clan member wears a feathered bonnet. By the end of the 16th century, bonnets were very fashionable among Scotsmen at the time. It was a simple craft, requiring inexpensive materials and little special equipment. Credit: Mary Evans Picture Library.

1. **hill]** Possibly an allusion to stairs on which they ascend the platform from the yard. (*The Knight of Malta*, IV,v,S.D., “*The Seaffold set out and the staires.*”) At the Globe Playhouse, we know that entrances were not limited to the doorways on the main level of the stage (*scaena*). See *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* [p.235] “*Wife below, Rafe below* means” below the main platform among the audience” (*Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 28-9). It is possible, therefore, that there were entrances in the yard at the Globe, something along the lines of the *aditus maximus* in Roman Theatres, which was typically located between the *cavea* and the *scaena*. It was on either side of the *orchēstra*, and corresponds to the *parodos* in the Greek theatre. (The Ancient Theatre Archive.)

In Elizabethan public theatres like the Fortune and the Globe that were modeled after Roman theatres, two comparatively large doorways might have been located on ground level on either side of the “*mimorum aedes*” (aka the *scaena* or “tiring house”) which could, on occasion, been put to use by actors for grand entrances into the yard. For example, in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, p.117, “**Horses**” are called for in three stage directions. These large animals might have been led through the Globe’s faux *aditus maximus* rather than ushered on the stage itself, such as in the direction, “*Dalua carried vpon a horse couered with blacke: Soldiers after, traylling their Pykes*” (*A Larum for London*). When the copyist tells us that *Cleopatra, and her Maides with Charmian & Iras* are “*aloft*” (F, 2996) he could simply mean, as C. Walter Hodges writes in *The Globe Restored* (p. 50), that they are on the platform: “Antony is borne through the yard ‘below’ and hoisted ‘above’ to Cleopatra.” This is the most dramatic scene in the play, and it needs to take place downstage. The “*Monument*” (F,3627) spoken about in the text is a metaphor for the platform stage, just as it is when Lear says, “*This’ a good block.*” (F, 2625). (See note IV,v, 181., “*block.*”) In *The Globe Restored* (p.27), Hodges writes, “[I]t would be reasonable to assume that there were two *public doors*, one only being used for entrance, but both being flung open at the end of the show. And if there were two doors they would most likely have been placed not facing but flanking the stage and opposite to each other. In some of the black-and-white sketches in this book I have suggested this arrangement for what it is worth; and I think it is at least worth bearing in mind.” (Ibid, p. 27). (See note II,iii,S.D., “*below.*”)

7. **Methinks thy voice is altered]** When *King Lear* is read in a book, it is easy to *see* the change in Edgar’s speech because it takes the form of *blank verse* vs *free verse*. On stage, however, it *sounds* more coherent to Gloucester by virtue of its ordered metrical pattern and the subtle

change in **phonology**. Linguist David Crystal and his son actor/author Ben Crystal say on their original pronunciation website, “It’s important to appreciate that there is no ‘single’ OP.” See “Tom’s whirlwind tour of British accents” in video Figure 307.

13. **Choughs**] jackdaws

15. **sampire**] rock samphire. “Rock Samphire comes into season in spring, from the end of April and lasts through to October/November. Although it is at its best in spring and summer, it can be picked later in the year, more care needs to be taken to pick only fresh young growth as the older growth is stringy or woody” (seedaholic.com). [See Figure 222.]



Figure 222. Rock samphire growing on the cliffs at Dover. Photo by Karen Roe for White Cliffs of Dover.

18. **bark**] “A small ship; in earlier times, a general term for all sailing vessels of small size, e.g. fishing-smacks, xebecs, pinnaces” (*OED*, 1.a). “The Dover Strait, or the Strait of Dover, is a vital maritime route in the Western European region located at the narrowest part of the English Channel. It has been a strategic route since ancient times, and the Romans called it the Fretum Gallicum or Fretum Britannicum or Fretum Morinorum.” [22]

19. **Cock**] cockboat, a small rowing boat

21. **unnumber’d**] innumerable

21. **idle**] “moved by a kind of continual and frivolous agitation to no purpose or effect” (Eccles) q. Furness p. 269.

27. **leap upright**] i.e., “in a vertical direction; vertically upwards” (*OED*, 2.). These words suggest the possibility that the business was staged as “108” pratfall, which requires a clown to flip over and land on their back facing upwards. One is demonstrated by Buster Keaton in Video Figure 253. Robert Armin, a protégé of Richard Tarlton’s, was so good at pratfalls that one was famously added for him in the 1606 production of *Mucedorus*, performed for James I a few months before *King Lear* was staged at Whitehall: “As he goes backwards the Bear comes in, and he tumbles over, and runs away and leaves his bottle of Hay behind him.” (I,3-1 *Mucedorus*.27.) See note IV,v,89, “Look, look, a **Mouse**.”



Video 33. The amazing Buster Keaton doing a pratfall known as a “108” among clowns. Buster was in his 50s when this was filmed.

28. **jewel**] What comes to my mind is the ruby ring in Armin’s poem “The Italian Taylor, And His Boy” (Cant. 4).

29. **Fairies**] Fairies or *aos sí* (in Scottish mythology they are *daoine sìth*) were thought to be especially active during the Spring equinox. See note IV,iii,4, “cuckoo-flowers.”

30. S.D. **Gives him a purse**] Not in Q, F. See *As You Like It*, II,vii, “The sixth age shifts / Into the

*leane and slipper'd Pantaloone,/ With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side.*" (F, 1137-38). Gloucester appears to be carrying several coin pouches. See note IV,i,64. Compare also IV,v, 86-7.S.S. "*Gives Edgar a thistle.*" Material wealth means nothing in *Lear*.

33. S.D. *Aside*] Capell.

34. **O you mighty gods**] In both quartos there is a stage direction, *He kneeles*. (Q, 2472). The direction is not given in F. See note IV,v,27, "*leap upright*". Obviously, how the fall is performed, and the audience's reaction to it, all depends on the actor's skill at physical comedy.

38. **opposeless**] irresistible

39. **snuff**] the smoldering wick of a candle. It is nearly burnt out.



Figure 223. Scene della commedia dell'arte, fine xviii-inizio xix secolo 01, Museo del Teatro alla Scala (Milan).

40. S.D. **blows a raspberry**] Ed. Not in Q, F. There are no stage directions in the quartos and folios indicating what sound Edgar makes that turns Gloucester's head around, "*Now Fellow, fare thee well*" (F, 2480): A sneeze? A burp? A snort, —as though he dozed off from boredom listening to his father's prayer? Any of these sounds would be appropriate *lazzo* to accompany an attempted suicide in *Commedia dell'arte*. In my judgment, his **blowing a raspberry** is the most metatheatrical choice because it refers back to the horn he has been blowing time and again. (See III,iv,37; III,iv,94; III,vi,72; and IV,I,24.) Dante ends *Inferno* 21 [43], "with a burlesque treatment of military behavior as practiced by devils in Hell . . . The devils signal to their leader that they have understood his instructions by pressing their tongues between their teeth. He in turn signals them to depart on their mission with a trumpet blast from his ass" (*Inf.* 21.137-39).

"The humor of crepitation,' observes Jeffrey Henderson, 'is extremely frequent in [sc. Greek Old] comedy.' Karion releases a bit of intestinal gas in front of the Asclepieion in *Wealth* (696). And fart jokes are not rare in Plautine comedy; Gorgylio himself threatens to knock a *crepitem polentarium*, a "pungent fart," out of any Greek philosopher that gets in his way (*Gorgylio* 295). The pun can therefore hardly be accidental here—and a toot from the tibicen, as well as a "Greek" accent, would make the double entendre obvious." ("A Cute Illness in Epidaurus: Eight Sick Jokes in Plautus' *Gorgylio* (*Curculio*)" by Michael Fontaine, pp 35-36.



Figure 224. Flatulentist. A plate originally from *The Image of Irelande* by John Derricke, published in 1581. Note the flatulentists on the right side (h/t the Lavatory Reader).

41. S.D. **He falls**] *He fals*. after "*fare thee well*" (Q, 2480). *He falles*. (Q2, 2480). Not in F. Gloucester's leap to death is suicide *lazzi* (*lazzi di ammazzarsi*), the kind audiences could expect to see performed in *commedia dell'arte*. [See Figure 253.] Susan Synder writes tentatively of the



action in her essay “*King Lear: A Modern Perspective*”: “when physically acted out [it] becomes *something like* a clown’s pratfall.” “Something like?” It is a clown’s pratfall. It was designed to get a big laugh, like the one performed by Mouse in *Mucedorus*. (See note, IV,v.89. “*Look, look, a Mouse.*”)

42. S.D. *Aside*] Capell. Not in Q, F.

42. **conceit**] imagination, delusion

44. **Yields**] consents

46. **Friend**] Edgar assumes yet another dialect, probably the “Dover yawl” as would be expected of someone living in the county of Kent. The accent helps signal where the characters are, and draws further attention to Edgar’s being an actor in a play, not a “real” person. Foakes notes in *The Arden Shakespeare* that the word “*Friend*’ is required for the metre” (p. 330). Compare IV,v,288, “*friend.*”



Video 34. Traditional Accents and Dialects of South East England: Kent.

47. S.D. *Aside*] Not in Q, F.

47. **pass**] die

53. **at each**] one on top of the other

54. **fell**] fallen

57. **bourne**] boundary of the sea, confining it

58. **a-height**] on high

58. **shrill-gorg’d**] shrill-throated

63. **beguile**] cheat

65. S.D. *He helps Gloucester to his feet*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

66. S.D. *He sits*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Theoretically, Gloucester is sitting on his haunches downstage when Lear enters. See note IV,v, 88: “*That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper.*”

71. **whelk’d**] twisted

71. **enridged**] furrowed

72. **father**] old man.

73. **clearest**] pure and luminous

80. **Enter Lear**] *Enter Lear*. (F, 2526). *Enter Lear mad.* after *thus* (Q, 2526). Lear’s entrance has for a backdrop Edgar’s bird’s eye view of the world from the highest cliff at Dover, where “*crows and choughs appear as beetles, fisherman on the beach look like mice, cock-boats buoys almost too small for sight*” (F, 2448-57). From this perspective, man’s travails and suffering appear small and insignificant.

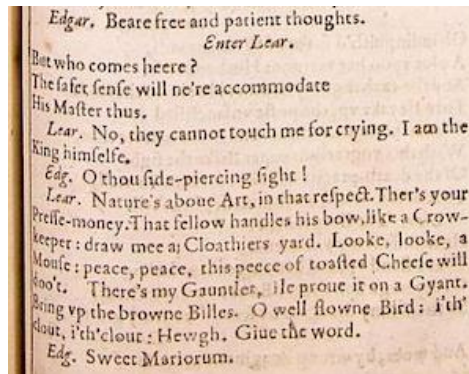


Figure 225. Facsimile of First Folio (1623).

80. S.D. *camouflaged with weeds*] Ed. Not in Q. F. *Fantastically dressed with wild flowers*. Capell. As illustrated in Figure 225, there are no stage directions in the copy text to indicate what Lear is wearing. On paper, the lines read like a self-contained, interior monologue, which is how they have been interpreted since Rowe's version published in 1709. Kenneth Muir explains that "Lear's mad speeches have an undertone of meaning, and although he leaps from one subject to another, it is often possible to see that there is a subconscious connection between them" (*KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 163). This long-standing narrative hypothesis is based on the idea that the focalization of the scene is *internal*, "we see not Lear, but we are Lear, — we are in his mind" (Furness qu. Lamb, p.421). The only evidence in support of this interpretation is theatrical precedent: all actors of renown have performed the lines as a speech—, exemplified by Sir Laurence Olivier in the video below. [See Video 35, 1:47:31 to 1:151:00.]



Video 35. Sir Laurence Olivier performing Lear's famous "mad scene" in Granada's 1983 TV production (1:47:31 to 1:151:00).

In my restoration, the narrative mode is *external* or omniscient, as it is in *Don Quixote* (1605). A better term for it might be "unrestricted," as *Lear* is closer in form to a movie than a novel where the narrative elements are limited to what is read. In theory, Lear's opening words were written as dialogue, like his entrance in III,ii. He takes the stage talking directly to Edgar and Gloucester. His words have the effect of literary nonsense:

"a genre of narrative literature which balances a multiplicity of meaning with a simultaneous absence of meaning. This balance is effected by playing with the rules of language, logic, prosody and representation, or a combination of these. In order to be successful, nonsense must at the same time invite the reader to interpretation and avoid the suggestion that there is a deeper meaning which can be obtained by considering connotations or associations, because these lead to nothing. The elements of word and image that may be used in this play are primarily those of negativity or mirroring, imprecision or mixture, infinite repetition, simultaneity, and arbitrariness. A dichotomy between reality and the words and images which are used to describe it must be suggested. The greater the distance or tension between what is presented, the

expectations that are evoked, and the frustration of these expectations, the more nonsensical the effect will be. The material may come from the unconscious (indeed, it is very likely in many instances to do so), but this may not be suggested in the presentation. (W. Tigges, *An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense*, p.47.



Figure 226. Edmund Joseph Sullivan, "Mambrino's Helmet," c.1920s. The Morgan Library Museum.

The first question readers have to ask about this unit of action concerns the character's "objectives." If "the foundation of acting is the reality of *doing*," as Sanford Meisner taught, what does Lear want *to do*? His entrance is related to III,ii, where he takes the stage shouting martial orders to "The Heavens," as though they were artillery officers under his command. (See note III,ii,1, "*Blow, winds.*") In contrast to I,i, where Lear abdicates the responsibilities of being a King, he now explicitly exerts his rights as one: "*No, they cannot touch me for coining, I am the King himselfe*" (Q1, 2530).

When the dialogue is understood as "literary nonsense" rather than steam of consciousness, we can induce that since arriving in Dover, Lear has been "coining" weeds into money in order to recruit an army. [See note IV,v,83, "*coining.*"] One imagines him stopping every able-bodied countryman he happens upon, and paying him with a freshly minted weed, just the audience sees him do with Edgar. He is planning to lead a stealth attack on his enemies, and has camouflaged himself for the approaching battle on the Kent downs: "*when I haue stole vpon these sonnes in law,/ Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill*" (Q2, 2626-27). Compare *Macbeth* Act 5, scene iv where Malcolm orders his soldiers to hide themselves behind branches of trees from Birnam Wood. (See note IV,v,171.S.D., "*Gloucester removes Lear's boots.*") Lear presents as a quixotic antihero, on a quest to redress the wrongs of the world. The narrative arc of the play takes the character from foolishness to wisdom, not from high to low.



Figure 227. Henry V at the battle of Agincourt. Illustration from *History of England* by Henry Tyrrell (c 1860).

In *The History of King Leir* (scene 24), there is a stage direction "*Enter the King of Gallia, Cordella, and Mumford, with a basket . . . disguised like country folk.*" It is possible that Lear is putting his weed-money into a willow basket, which is easily woven (See "[How to make a simple willow basket](#)"). More likely, he has covered himself with "weeds." One of the meanings of weeds is an item of clothing (*OED*, 1.a). "To my house now, and suite you to your worths; Off with these weeds, and appeare glorious." J. Fletcher *Pilgrim* v.vi, in F. Beaumont & J. Fletcher *Comedies & Trag.*



Figure 228. Costumed people parade through the Old Town during the annual Jack In The Green festival. The event marks the May Day public holiday in Britain. /Credit: Getty.

Logically, the play takes place around the spring Equinox into May. This is signified by the banquet Goneril prepares for her father in I,iv, in which “poor John” or herring is hypothetically served as its main course (a food associated with Lent), but mostly by the type of “weeds” (Q1, 2355) Cordelia describes him gathering, such as cuckoo-flowers, —plants Elizabethans would associate with springtime. Just as Lear’s codpiece was conceived as an ironic symbol of his potency, his getup in IV,v is equally mordant in its evocation of the DIY costumes worn by mummers at May Day fertility festivals [See Figure 228.] Rather than a verdant symbol of rebirth and resurrection associated with Spring vegetation deities, however, his costume suggests the opposite. He is the *anti-Green Man*, the King of Weeds, the Sovereign Lord of the worthless and unwanted. Bedecked with noxious weeds, he is a grotesque inversion of the youthful fertility goddess Flora with her basket of spring flowers. Most importantly, he looks like a *mummer*—“A person who dons a disguising costume, as for a parade or a festival.” That is, Lear is costumed like an amateur actor, “*a poore Player*” (F, 2345).

"Down through the centuries May Day has been associated with fun, revelry and perhaps most important of all, fertility. The Day would be marked with village folk cavorting round the maypole, the selection of the May Queen and the dancing figure of the Jack-in-the-Green at the head of the procession. Jack is thought to be a relic from those enlightened days when our ancient ancestors worshipped trees. These pagan roots did little to endear these May Day festivities with the either the established Church or State. In the sixteenth century riots followed when May Day celebrations were banned. Fourteen rioters were hanged, and Henry VIII is said to have pardoned a further 400 who had been sentenced to death. The May Day festivities all but vanished following the Civil War when Oliver Cromwell and his Puritans took control of the country in 1645. Describing maypole dancing as ‘a heathenish vanity generally abused to superstition and wickedness’, legislation was passed which saw the end of village maypoles throughout the country.” (May Day Celebrations by Ben Johnson.)



Figure 229. 'Schembartlauffer' The 'Wild Man', character in a medieval German morality drama circa 16th century.

Shakespeare, like everybody else in England during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, was well aware of the myth of the “Green Man,” a spirit of vegetation and fertility. “The name ‘Green Man’ was first used by Lady Raglan in March 1939 in an article she wrote for the ‘Folklore’ journal; before this, they had been known just as ‘foliate heads’ and no-one had paid them any particular attention. Lady Raglan suggested that in antiquity, the Green Man was ‘the central figure in the May Day celebrations throughout Northern and Central Europe’. As the

Green Man is also portrayed with acorns and hawthorn leaves, symbols of fertility in medieval times, this would seem to reinforce the association with spring” (The Green Man by Ellen Castelow). There are eight “Green Men” that Shakespeare would have personally seen in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon. Four are high up in the vaulting of the transept crossing, and four are at the bases of the arches as well as a Green Man misericord.



Figure 230. A green man in the misericords of Holy Trinity Church, Coventry.

These remarkable images, with leaves spouting from their faces, can be found virtually everywhere in English medieval churches, from fonts to tombs, corbels and capitals to arm rests. Known in Britain chiefly as the *Green Man*, this often sinister and frightening figure appears among other places, in Exeter, Ely, Lincoln, and Winchester Cathedrals, and in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Coventry, Warwickshire—not a great distance from Shakespeare’s home in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Green Man, although he seems in some ways an odd choice for ecclesiastical ornamentation, in fact embodies a warning against the dark side of man’s nature, the devil within: ‘For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away’ (1 Peter 1:24, KJV) “Macbeth: The Male Medusa” from *Shakespeare’s Ghost Writers*, by Marjorie Garber, Methuen, 1987, p. 137.

81. **safer sense]** Edgar is referring to Lear’s sense of *reason*, not his eyesight. In his *Variorum Edition of King Lear*, Furness quotes Blakeway: “The eye-sight is probably the ‘safer-sense’, in allusion to our vulgar proverb: ‘Seeing is believing.’” Horace terms the eyes *oculi fideles*.” That is, the costume is remarkable for its imaginative quality.
81. **accommodate]** Dress.
83. **coining]** He is making weeds money. Cf. *4Hen1,III,iii*, “How? Poore? Looke vpon his Face: What call you Rich? Let them coyne his Nose, let them coyne his Cheekes (F, 2081-2083). Lear says that it is the right of a King to coin money. It is interesting to note that under the order of Henry VIII, a currency debasement policy was introduced (“The Great Debasement”) in which the amount of precious metal in gold and silver coins was reduced and, in some cases, replaced entirely with cheaper base metals such as copper. Diogenes, who is alluded to in *III,iv*, was banished from Sinopes over debasement of currency. Bertrand Russell, in *A History of Western Philosophy*, called Diogenes “the son of a disreputable money-changer who had been sent to prison for defacing the coinage.” Here, Lear thinks weeds are a better currency than man-made coins. [See note *IV,v*, 86., “*Nature’s above Art in that respect.*”] He gives a thistle to Edgar (“*Ther’s your Press-money*”, F. 2533-4), a daisy to Gloucester (“*There’s money for thee*”, F, 2573) and handfuls of assorted weeds to his Knight (“*You shall haue ransome*”, F, 2635). See note *IV.v*,190. S.D., “*Gives some weeds to Lear’s Knight.*” The scene is reminiscent of Ophelia’s mad scene in *Hamlet IV,v*, where she hands out flowers: “*There’s Fennell for you, and Columbines: ther’s Rew for you, and heere’s some for me. Wee may call it Herbe-Grace a Sundaies: Oh you must weare your Rew with a difference. There’s*



*a Daysie, I would giue you some Violets, but they wither'd all when my Father dyed*" (F, 2932-37).

The association between coinage and Lear's phallus was indelibly planted in the minds of the audience when he ostentatiously brandished money from his codpiece and gave it to Kent. (See note I,iv,86.S.D., "*Takes purse from out of his codpiece and gives money to Kent.*" As discussed in note 83 below, the thistle he gives to Edgar as "*Presse-money*" (F, 2534) has phallic associations because of its milk and its prick: "*there thou prick'st her with a thistle*" (*Much Ado about Nothing*, 3.5.74 ). Kenneth Muir comments that the word "coining" often had a sexual significance. See *Meas.*, II,iv,45; *Edward III*, II,i,258; Tourneur, *The Revenger's Tragedie*, II,ii,60" (*KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 163). In addition to "coining" weeds, Lear is "coining" words as in "To frame or invent a new word or phrase" (*OED*, 5.c): "Taking libertie to coyne, and frame new tearms of Art..to auoide circuite of speech" (F. Bacon, *Of Aduancem. Learning* i. sig. E3, 1605).

In the event that readers are asking themselves how new this all is, a question put to me by William Arrowsmith in a letter of 2.26.76 (see Appendix F), Paul Werstine, the co-editor of *The Folger Shakespeare King Lear* writes in a personal communication, "I'm not aware that in 4.6, when Lear says "There's money for thee," any editor before you has suggested Lear gives Gloucester weeds as money." (19 June 2019).



Figure 231. Mother Nature forging creation on her "anvil of life." From *Romance of the Rose*, about 1405, unknown artist. The J. Paul Getty Museum.

- 86. **Nature's]** as opposed to Art
- 86. **above]** higher than, exceeds
- 86. **Art]** Q, F. as opposed to Nature
- 86. **respect]** in regard to the thistle.



Figure 232. Two Merks or Thistle Dollar. National Museum of Scotland. The coin was worth 26 shillings and eight pence Scots. National Museum of Scotland.

- 86. **Nature's above Art in that respect]** Lear thinks a common thistle created by Nature is a superior form of currency than costly metal "thistle dollars" forged by James VI of Scotland. "Coins known as "thistle dollars" were in use in Scotland during the 16th and 17th centuries." (Wiki) [See Figure 232.] The line is metatheatrical.
- 86-7. S.D. **Gives Edgar a thistle]** Ed. Not in Q, F. The "*Presse-money*" (F, 2534) he gives to Edgar is theoretically a Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) because of the pun on the *thistle-*

*dollar*, a coin minted by James VI worth two marks. [See 221] Cordelia alludes to “*hardocks*” (F, 2354) AKA burdocks, another form of thistle but grown for its roots. [See Figure 217.]

“Like its rough exterior, the meaning of the [thistle] flower is associated with aggressiveness, pain, protection and pride. Since thistle is defined as both a flower and a weed, the exact inference of the bloom can extend from less positive symbolism such as poverty and weakness all the way to qualities of might and brilliance.... The reason [the thistle became the national flower of Scotland] can be traced to a battle fought during the thirteenth century when the Normans initiated a brutal assault on the country. Heavily outweighed and unarmed, the Scottish army believed they were doomed until one night when a band of soldiers snuck through the pasture in order to initiate a surprise attack. It would have worked but the Normans were unfamiliar with the prevalent, prickly plant that grew in abundance in Scotland. When one enemy yelped and cried in pain from being stabbed by the thistle, the Scottish army woke up and was able to protect themselves, conclusively winning the war. From that point on, the thistle became honored and was even written about in sacred documentation. “*Nemo me impune lacesset*” became the Scottish Order of the Thistle which translates into “No one attacks me with impunity”. The flower is also stitched on the Scotland rugby uniforms to stand for fierceness and bravery. (The Meaning of the Thistle Flower by Suzie Canale, 2016)



Figure 233. Thistles on the Dover coast of England. From “Hiking the White Cliffs of Dover”

*Onopordum acanthium* is native to Britain and grows in Dover, England. It flowers in summer, as does the common thistle and burdock. Therefore, it is possible Lear finds the plant dried. [See Figure 234, photographed in late March.] *Onopordum acanthium* grows in Dover, England:

On these bare lofty hills, exposed to every wind that blows, we observed *Spiraea Filipendula*, *Erigeron acris*, *Silene nutans*,  $\beta$ , the variety which grows about the coasts; also *Onopordum Acanthium*, quite at home, but not so stately as in gardens, where it is dignified with the name *Scotch Thistle*, probably because it does not grow in Scotland. . . The cliffs near Dover may be called artificial, for every portion of the earth is the work of the Almighty artificer, though they do not owe their being to human agency. This plant, the Wallflower, has taken a fancy to the Castle Hill, and spreads profusely among the rank growth of Thistles, Helminthias, and other coarse plants.” “Kentish Botany”, *The Phytologist: a botanical journal*, Volume 5, ed. Alexander Irvine, John Edward Taylor Publisher, 1861,p. 243



Figure 234. Dried Thistle by Zina Stromberg, March 28th, 2017.

Symbolism played a major role in art and literature of the Renaissance. As J.E. Cirlot remarks

in the Introduction to *A Dictionary of Symbols*, “the symbol proper is a dynamic and poly-symbolic reality, imbued with emotive and conceptual values: in other words, with true life” (p. xi). In regard to thistle symbolism, the rank growth of thorns and thistles was a part of God’s curse on man for eating from the tree of life:

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and *thistles* shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field’ In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: *for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*” (*Genesis* 3:17-19 (KJV))

87. **press-money**] “Money paid to a sailor or soldier on enlistment, the acceptance of which was held to constitute legal proof of his engagement.” See *OED*, **3.a**: “Souldiers entred of record, and hauing taken prest money. (*Countrey Justice* 247, M. Dalton). As noted, Lear’s “objective” is to raise an army for his approaching battle. See note IV,v,188,S.D., “*To Edgar.*”
88. **That fellow**] i.e. Gloucester.
88. S.D. **To Gloucester**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
88. **bow**] Gloucester’s staff. The prop is explicitly referred to by Edgar, who warns Oswald: “*keep out, che vor’ ye, or ice try whither your costard or my ballow be the harder*” (F, 2694-95). “A *ballow* is a North-country word for pole (Furness, qu. Knight p. 291). Lear also refers to Gloucester as “*blind Cupid*” (F, 2581), a classical god associated with a bow and arrow.



Figure 235. Blind crippled beggar. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, c. 1566.

88. **crowkeeper**] Lear is referring to Gloucester who, theoretically, is sitting on his butt. “In speaking of awkward shooters Ascham [*Toxophilus*, p. 145, ed. Arber] says: ‘An other coureth downe, and layeth out his buttockes, as though he shoulde shoote at crowes.’” qu Furness p. 276. [See Figure 235.]



Figure 236. “The Double-armed Man” from Neades’s *Double-armed Man*, 1625.

89. **Draw me a clothier’s yard**] Gloucester does not appear able-bodied, and Lear doubts his readiness for combat. He demands that he prove his strength as a bowman. *Steward, Textual Difficulties*, p. 84, says that a bowman who could draw a clothier’s yard was one who, when the butt of the shaft was at his nose, had the strength to force the bow out the full length of the arm. [See Figure 236.]

89. S.D. *Gloucester stirs*] Ed. Not in Q, F. The next line is hypothetically said in reaction to something Gloucester is doing on stage that is *mouse-like*, such as feeling the ground with his hands in preparation to stand.
89. **Look, look, a Mouse**] Compare IV,v,17-18: “*The fishermen that walk upon the beach Appear like mice*” (F, 2452-53). Gloucester is, of course, blind as a mouse, and an old lecher. In *Anything for a Quiet Life*, the vagina is referred to as a *mousetrap*. “SAUNDER: “How now, George? How does thy mistress that sits in a wainscot gown, like a citizen’s lure to draw in customers? Oh, she’s a pretty mousetrap! GEORGE: She’s ill-baited though to take a Welshman; she cannot away with cheese” (Act IV, scene i).

"A white mouse, in Suidas (A bad mouse, in Diogenianus) was applied to a lecherous man and one prone to sexual excess, for house mice are very lecherous creatures, and white mice especially. Aelian, book 12 chapter 10, cites authorities to show that the lechery of mice is extraordinary. To much other evidence he adds that of Epicrates in one of his plays where, wanting to convey that a woman is particularly lewd, he calls her *myonia*, a mousehole; and he quotes the proverb A white mouse from a comedy by Philemon. Hence, it seems, came the practice of using as words of endearment between lovers not only ‘lovebird’ and ‘dove’ and others of the kind, but ‘mouse’ as well. Martial: ‘Call me mouse if you will, and the light of your life.’” (*Collected Works of Erasmus*: Adages, II vii to III 100, translated and annotated by RAB Mynors.)



Figure 237. This is the third quarto of *Mucedorus*, the most frequently reprinted play of the early modern period.

Richard Dutton proposes that Robert Armin took over the role of Mouse from Will Kempe in the King’s Men 1606 production of *Mucedorus*.

If frequency of reprinting is any guide *Mucedorus* ... was one of the mainstays of Shakespeare’s company and one of the most popular plays of the whole era. First printed in 1598, it went through no fewer than seventeen imprints before 1668. Of these, the second and third are of particular interest: ‘The new edition of *Mucedorus*, which came out in 1606, contains revision in the epilogue that alter the monarch addressed from a queen to a king, thus implying a performance before King James, perhaps in 1605-06’ (Knutson 1991: 110, citing Thornberry 1977). But the third quarto of 1610 was even more different from its predecessors, as the title page tells us: ‘*Amplified with new additions, as it was / acted before the King’s Majesty at / Whitehall on Shrove- / Sunday night. / By his Highness’s Servants usually playing at the Globe.*’ . . . The role of Mouse, the clown (probably played by Robert Armin, Kemp’s successor), is enhanced to include giving him a bottle [bundle] of hay to carry and different stage business with the bear that pursues him”. [See I,3-1 *Mucedorus*.27: “*As he goes backwards the Bear comes in, and he tumbles over, and runs away and leaves his bottle of Hay behind him.*” (Dutton, *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist*.)

Assuming Gloucester’s failed attempt to kill himself is an example of *suicide lazzi* (*lazzi di ammazzarsi*), with the effect of boisterous laughter from the audience, it must be performed by an actor skilled in the art of clowning. (See note IV,v,27., “*leap upright.*”) One of Shake-

spere's many meanings of the word "mouse", therefore, can be explained as a "metatheatrical" joke, based on the pratfall performed by Mouse in *Mucedorus* early in 1606, and reprised in *King Lear* by Gloucester. If the stunt was difficult to do, like Keaton's "108", it would not be soon forgotten. [See [Video 33](#).] By acknowledging the fact that Armin performed the same stunt only months before in *Mucedorus*, the audience accepts it as a contrivance, as it does Edgar's entrance in I,ii where Edmund makes a point to criticize the artificial nature of Shakespeare's plot: "*Pat: he comes like the Catastrophe of the old Comedie*" (F, 463). We are in on the joke, and accept it for what it is.

I assume the reader is asking themselves how new this interpretation is. Paul Werstine, the co-editor of *The Folger Library Edition of King Lear*, writes, "The identification of the giant and the mouse with Gloucester (in 4.6) is also, as far as I can tell, yours alone. No one else has commented on the giant, and those who talk of the mouse divide between thinking Lear sees an actual mouse and thinking the mouse a figment of Lear's deranged imagination."

90. **Peace, peace**] The line is said to Gloucester who becomes agitated upon hearing Lear's voice, and tries to stand. He obviously needs assistance to get up. Lear offers him his hand.
90. S.D. **Lear smells his own hand**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Based on Shakespeare's style of writing, and what makes a good joke, Lear smells his hand *before* helping Gloucester to his feet, not when the latter asks him to kiss it at F, 2574. Lear's thoughts do not proceed logically in a linear manner. They are oblique, like enigmas or riddles. As Aristotle observes, "Most smart sayings are derived from metaphor, and also from misleading the hearer beforehand. For it becomes more evident to him that he has learnt something, when the conclusion turns out contrary to his expectation, and the mind seems to say, 'How true it is! but I missed it'" (*Rhetoric*, Chapter 11, 6). (Compare note III,vi,6,S.D., "*Belches*.")
- 90-1. **piece of toast'd cheese**] Cf. "*O ruin'd piece of nature*" (F, 2577). Lear gives Gloucester his hand, which is aged and crusty like toasted cheese. He knows from having smelled it that it emits a strong stinky odor which he thinks will appease a Mouse. It is believed that mice love eating cheese. See "[Do Mice Really Like Cheese: Fact or Fiction](#)."
- 91-92. S.D. **Gives Gloucester his hand and helps him to his feet**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
92. **my gauntlet**] my challenge. Compare "*Read thou this challenge*" (F, 2582) Cf. also "*There is my pledge*" (F, 3040). Albany throws his gauntlet down at Edmund's feet as a challenge.
92. **prove**] Demonstrate the proof of. Compare "*If none appear to prove it on thy person*" (F, 3038).
93. **giant**] a giant mouse. "Giant" and "mouse" both refer to Gloucester. Lear is responding to the plurality and mutability of life. Minutes before his entrance in this scene, Edgar shows us men and the world as they might appear from atop the cliffs at Dover where "*The fishermen that walke vpon the beach / Appeare like mice*" (Q, 2452-53).
93. S.D. **Lifting up the bandages**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear lifts up the bandage covering Gloucester's eyes to assess the nature of the injury. [See [Figure 235](#).] Upon discovering that they were poked out, he summons forth his infantry: "*Bring vp the browne Billes*" (F, 2548). The lengthy *diatribe* that follows is a direct response to the punishment he sees was inflicted on Gloucester. Its main subject is the nature of justice and how it is administered. This is why the battle with his "*sonnes in law*" (Q2, 2629) takes on such sudden urgency. He is incensed at the injustice.



Moreover, if Lear's mind is so completely dissociated from social reality that he can't recognize Gloucester, our first impression of him is that he has lost the capacity to feel pity or respond emotionally to the pain of others. The "challenge" (F, 2582) he makes Gloucester "Read" (F, 2578) will mean nothing. See note IV,v,175, "I know thee well enough, they name in Gloucester." (F, 2619).



Figure 238. The Medieval Bill Hook (also called just a "Bill") was a polearm weapon that is a good example of how weapons developed out of farm implements and tools. This is derived from the agricultural bill hook.

93-94. **Bring up the brown bills]** A call for war. Lear summons forth his billmen or foot troops in preparation for battle. "The bill is a polearm weapon used by infantry in medieval Europe. It is similar in size, function and appearance to the halberd, differing mainly in the hooked blade form. The English distinguished between several varieties of bill, including the black, brown and forest bills, but the differences between them are currently not fully understood." (Wikipedia). It seems that a "brown bill" was made from a billhook—a tool used by peasant farmers with a curved or hooked blade at one end, for pruning and cutting. From [Sebastião Salgado's](#) great photo, it appears to be used by farmers as a weapon even to this day. [See Figure 239.]



Figure 239. "The icons of victory," photo by Sebastião Salgado, 1998.

94. **O, well flown bird]** This metaphor comes from the sport of falconry. Hawks were the most popular choice of birds for hunting by Elizabethans. "Accipitrids (eagles, hawks, kites, harriers and the like) have weaker bites than falcons and no 'teeth' – they use their feet to constrict their prey, cutting off its air supply much like a python uses its coils." Lear uses the image to describe the feeling of suffocation he is experiencing upon his discovery of Gloucester's being blinded. He feels like he can't breathe. See Chap II, "Hawks and Hawking," *The Ornithology of Shakespeare* by James Edmund Harting (1864), "Monstrous sightes also, that were seene without the Scottishe kingdome that year, were these.... There was a sparhauke also *strangled* by an owle."



Figure 240. James I of England and VI of Scotland at the age of eight with a sparrow-hawk, artist unknown, National Portrait Gallery. Unlike gyrfalcons or peregrines, hawks will use their strong feet and talons to constrict their prey, effectively cutting off the prey's air supply.

94. **I'th'clout, i'th'clout]** i.e., in the heart. [See Figure 278.] Compare II,iv, "Oh me my heart! My rising heart! But downe." (F, 1397). Lear's feelings of anger, pity and guilt at seeing

what happened to his friend cause him to have a second mild heart attack (aka silent myocardial ischemia).

94. S.D. **Clutching his heart**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare note II,iv,117, S.D. “*Clutching his heart*” and note V,i,311, S.D., “*He dies*”.



Figure 241. XIV Century Archery, Joseph Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, p. 42.

95. **Hewgh**] (F, 2539) Hagh. (Q, 2539). An utterance of the interjection *hewgh* or *whew*. It refers to his being able to breathe again, as in “‘*Whew!*’ *ejaculated Roden, when the danger seemed to be past, and they could breathe again.*” (H. S. Merriman’ *Roden's Corner* xxxii, 1898.) (OED).
95. S.D. **To Edgar**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Edgar moves upstage. Lear and Gloucester remain downstage on the platform.
96. **Sweet marjoram**] The herb was said to be a cure for brain diseases.
98. S.D. **Kneels**] Ed. Not in Q, F. In the first scene of the play, Goneril kneels before Lear when she describes how much she loves him. [See note I.i.54.S.D. “*Kneels.*”] Here, recognizing the king’s voice, Gloucester kneels before him, a traditional sign of respect and allegiance. See **kneel, knee** in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, p. 125-126. “over 200 figures are directed to *kneel/kneel down* (a small percentage of the actual onstage *kneelings*), usually with no further details; *kneeling* can be combined with other actions especially the *kissing* of a *hand*.” See note IV,v, 136., S.D. *Kisses hand*. The line is metatheatrical. Robert Armin was around 38 when he theoretically acted the part of Gloucester in 1606, and was made up to look old. He was obviously wearing a “*white beard*,” as was Burbage who was only 39.
99. **Goneril with a white beard**] Gloucester’s gesture reminds Lear of Goneril when he kneels, except the actor is made up with a white beard.
- 99-100. **like a dog**] as a dog fawns on his master
- 100-101. **told me I had the white . . . there**] told me I had the wisdom of age before I was old enough to grow a beard. Compare *Coriolanus*, II,ii,107-8, “*When with his Amazonian chin he drove / The bristled lips before him.*” Comenius mentions that Coriolanus was “*sixteene yeeres*” old at the time (F, 1301).
102. **divinity**] divination, a forecast of the future.
107. S.D. **Gloucester topples over**] Ed. Not in Q, F. The blinded Gloucester is unsteady, and can’t sustain his courtly kneeling position. He topples over, and resumes listening to the king unceremoniously on his ass. See note IV,v,110, “*quakes.*”]

### **Lear is standing**

Lear MUST be **standing** in order to signify the *rhetorical* nature of his speech, which takes the form of a **diatribe**—a device popular among Stoic rhetoricians and philosophers. Until he sits for a brief moment beside Gloucester (“*Pull off my Bootes*”, F, 2614-15), he is standing above him in the manner of an orator, such as Cicero when he denounced Catiline in the Roman

Senate. [See Figure 242.] "The peculiarity of the diatribe as distinct from other forms of popular moralizing lies in the assumed presence of an opponent. He is not permitted to reply, but his position is indicated by statements or rhetorical questions put into his mouth by the speaker, and thus the introduction of an objection in the form of a question becomes one of the characteristic features of the diatribe. It is evidently a development of the dialogue form, and is usually traced to the Platonic dialogues." (Ethel Ella Beers, *Euripides and Later Greek Thought: A Dissertation* (1914), p. 80.)



Figure 242. Cicero Denouncing Catiline, engraved by B. Barloccini, 1849. After C.C. Perkins / Getty Images.

What is important to note about the style of the diatribe, is its theatricality. "Paul's letters [e.g., "The Epistle to the Romans"] were read out loud by someone—presumably the letter bearer—to an audience. They were performed. In this sense, each letter exists for us rather like the script of an old play—but a script that often preserves only one actor's lines (although an important one). All the explicit stage directions, instructions from the playwright and director, not to mention the original coached performances, have been lost." (Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul*, p. 531.) The literary historian and theorist Mikhail Bakhtin notes that it was "the diatribe, not classical rhetoric, that exercised a defining influence on the generic characteristics of the ancient Christian sermon." *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 1984, p. 120.



Video 36. Gregory S. Aldrete demonstrating Roman Oratorical Gestures in an ancient theatre at Ostia using a speech of Cicero's.

Lear's diatribe breaks every rule of "The Five Canons of Rhetoric" in *De Inventione*, a handbook for rhetoricians that Cicero (whose hands were nailed on the Rostra in the Roman Forum) wrote around 50 BC that Shakespeare is presumed to have studied. (See Kirk Dodd, "Shakespeare and the Universal Topics of Invention", 2019). The "arrangement" of Lear's topics is completely disjointed; his "delivery" is uncouth; his process of "invention" is impertinent, and the non-literal "style" of his speech confounding for the listener. It is not until the very end that he addresses its subject: Gloucester.



Figure 243. Rostra (left) and the Arch of Septimius Severus.

Moreover, Lear's hand gesturing (termed *chironomia*) is as uncouth as his rhetoric. [See Figure 244.] "[I]t is Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* 11.3 that offers the most extensive discussion on orators' nonverbal behaviour. It ranges from observations on ideal postures and delivery tones to instructions on the orator's appropriate use of specific hand gestures, in order

to accompany certain expressions or indicate certain meanings.” (Chrysanthi Demetriou, “The Reception of Quintilian’s Theory of Gesture: Rhetorical Elements in Pantomime Acting”, 2021.) Quintilian writes that “The rules for delivery are identical with those for the language of oratory itself. For, as our language must be correct, clear, ornate and appropriate, so with our delivery; it will be correct, that is, free from fault, if our utterance be fluent, clear, pleasant and ‘urbane,’ that is to say, *free from all traces of a rustic or a foreign accent*” *Institutio Oratoria* 11.3.65-184. (See note IV,v,233., “Chill”.)



Figure 244. *Chironomia, or, The art of manuell rhetorique*, John Bulwer, 1644

For example, what orator at Oxford College in 1606, would hold their nose and make twisted faces when speaking about the smell of a woman’s privates (see Figure 247), or demonstrate the game of handy-handly? (See J Hall, “Cicero and Quintilian on the Oratorical Use of Hand Gestures”: *Classical Quarterly*, 54.1, 143-160, 2004.) (See also Sharice Clough and Melissa C. Duff, “The Role of Gesture in Communication and Cognition: Implications for Understanding and Treating Neurogenic Communication Disorders”, *Front. Hum. Neurosci.*, 2020.) When seen in the context of classical oratory, Lear’s diatribe was plainly written as satire.

Back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the subjects of classical rhetoric and oratory were beaten into every child beginning in grammar school. This certainly included Shakespeare himself who became a master of rhetoric. (See Caroline Roberts, “The Politics of Persuasion: *Measure for Measure* and Cinthio’s *Hecatommithi*”, 2002.)

Rhetoric – the skillful use of language in order to move or persuade – was big business in Elizabethan England judging by the amount of books published on the subject. And although we know very little about Shakespeare’s life, it’s likely that he would have attended the King Edward VI School in his birthplace of Stratford-upon-Avon until his early teens and studied rhetoric there as part of the regular curriculum. Throughout his plays, we can see how Shakespeare was steeped in rhetoric – not just through the linguistic ‘tricks’ and techniques he uses to compose his characters’ speeches, but through the comments the characters themselves make about the art of communication. (Kim Ballard, “Rhetoric, power and persuasion in *Julius Caesar*”.)



Figure 245. Quintilian's statue in Calahorra, La Rioja, Spain.

108. **trick]** intonation, peculiarity

109. **Every inch a king]** A double entendre. When the audience is first introduced to Lear in Act I, he renounces the responsibilities of being a King. Here he is proclaiming himself to be one.

Compare IV,v, “No they cannot touch mee for coyning, I am the king (himself” (Q1, 2530).

110. **quakes**] topples over. Compare the stage direction, “Fall down and quake” in *Mucedorus*, p. 62.

111. **cause**] charge, offence

113. **Die for adultery**] See *Leviticus* 20:10. “And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (KJV)

113. **No**] See *John* 8:3-11, “[Jesus] lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” (KJV)

116. **Gloucester’s bastard son**] Evidently, word of Edmund’s treachery has reached the king.



Figure 246. Illustration “Of the Young Man and the Cat,” from *The Fables of Æsop Paraphras'd in Verse: Adorned with Sculpture and Illustrated with Annotations* by John Ogilby (London, 1665); first state. The British Museum.

118. **luxury**] Lust, lewdness

120. **forks**] legs

120. **snow**] an emblem of chastity. Compare *Coriolanus*, V,iii, “Chaste as the Isicle / That's curdied by the Frost, from purest Snow, (F, 3417-18)

121. **minces**] cuts into pieces.

123. **fitchew**] polecat, a cant term for a prostitute. See III,vi,46: “the cat is grey.” [See Figure 246.]

123. **soiled**] “The feeding of horses on cut green fodder, so as to cause purgation.” (*OED*, †1): “If the Horsse goe to soile in Aprill, after fiue daies..wash him all ouer with Water.” E. Topsell, *Hist. Foure-footed Beastes* 330, 1607



Figure 247. “Returning the Wandering Womb with ‘fetid and rank smells’”.

130. **fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!**] Words to express revulsion and disgust by “the smell of female,” as Russ Meyer memorably put it. “The ‘evil smells’ and ‘displeasant airs’ of Anne of Cleves caused Henry VIII to be unable to consummate his fourth marriage.” (*If Walls Could Talk: An Intimate History of the Home* by Lucy Worsley, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012.) “Shakespeare’s obsessive interest in syphilis, his clinically exact knowledge of its manifestations, the final poems of the sonnets, and contemporary gossip all suggest that he was infected with ‘the infinite malady.’ The psychological impact of venereal disease may explain the misogyny and revulsion from sex so prominent in the writings of Shakespeare's tragic period.” (John J. Ross, “Shakespeare's chancre: did the bard have syphilis?”)

131. **civet**] A civet cat which historically has been the main species from which was obtained a



musky scent used in perfumery. See “*the cat no perfume.*” (F, 1885).



Figure 248. Woodcut of a civet cat. From 'Caroli Clvsii...', 1611. Credit: Wellcome Collection.

133. **There's money for thee]** In my personal correspondence from 2019 with Paul Werstine, he writes, “Again I’m not aware that in 4.6, when Lear says ‘There’s money for thee,’ any editor before you has suggested Lear gives Gloucester weeds as money.”



Figure 249. The White Cliffs of Dover as they may have presented themselves to Shakespeare in May 1606, awash with daisies, red field poppies, crimson clover, yellow rattle and lady's bedstraw. Matt Hayward/National/Trust. (CountryLiving). It is in meadows such as these that Lear seeks to camouflage himself in.

133. S.D. **Gives him a daisy]** Ed. Not in Q, F. (See note IV,v,83, “*coining.*”) Cf. *Hamlet*, IV,v, “*There's a Daysie*” (F. 2935). Daisies symbolize innocence. In *Hamlet* (F, 2935), “Ophelia picks up and sets down the daisy without giving it to anyone. This is interesting because the daisy is the symbol of innocence and gentleness. Evidently Ophelia thought there was no place for innocence in the Danish court anymore.” (*Hamlet Dramaturgy*). Compare “*pray Innocent, and beware the foule Fiend*” (F, 2005-06). There are, of course, other springtime “weeds” Lear might pay Gloucester with instead, such as a dandelion, a buttercup or a cuckooflower. “The distinction between a flower vs. a weed depends entirely on the viewer’s perspective. Perhaps the best way to define a flower vs. weed is to consider Ian Emberson’s line of poetry: “A weed is a flower in the wrong place, a flower is a weed in the right place” (Kathy Habas, “*Are Daisies Weeds or Flowers*”).

133. **O, let me kiss that hand]** When Lear’s hand makes contact with Gloucester’s, the latter asks to kiss it. See note IV,v,98.S.D., “*Kneels.*”

134. **smells]** See note IV,v, 90. S.D. *Lear smells his own hand.* Compare *Macbeth*, V,i, “*all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.*” (F, 2140-41) Lear smelled his hand earlier, and knows it reeks of decay. He does not smell it here.

135. **ruined piece of Nature]** Lear’s hand. Cf. IV,v, 88: “*This piece of toast’d cheese.*”



Figure 250. The hand of Pope Francis being kissed by Martin Scorcese. The palm is facing downward.

136. S.D. **Kisses hand]** Ed. Not in Q, F. See **kiss** in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, p. 124-25, “more than 40 figures are directed to **kiss** a **hand**, sometimes with **kneeling** involved.” A hand-kiss is initiated by the person receiving the greeting by holding out their hand *with the palm facing downward*. [See Figure 250.] “The person kissing bows towards the offered hand and touches the knuckles with their lips, while lightly holding

the offered hand. However, the lips do not actually touch the hand in modern tradition, especially in a formal environment where any intimate or romantic undertones could be vastly inappropriate. The gesture is short, lasting less than a second.” It was once required that office-holders actually kiss the hand of the Sovereign as a symbol of personal fealty and loyalty. Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works of Montaigne* “complains about pretentious people getting carried away with kissing their hands whenever they meet anyone. No one actually makes any contact with anyone or anything when performing this kissing gesture.” See [Elizabethan Manners](#). Here, Gloucester not only kisses Lear’s hand physically with his lips, but doesn’t let go.



Figure 251. A blindfolded Cupid, armed with bow and arrow, by Piero della Francesca, c. 1456.

136. **know**] One of the meanings of “know” is to have sexual intercourse with, as in *Measure for Measure*, V,i, “*I haue known my husband*” (F, 2559). Of course, that is not the sense Gloucester is using it in. Compare note II,ii,6, “*I love thee not.*”
137. **squiny**] squint, i.e. make sexual advances to him. Lear is referring to Gloucester’s *physically* kissing his hand and holding on to it. Sexual relations between men is also the subject of Kent’s quip, “*eat no fish.*” Same-sex sex was as common in Shakespeare’s time as it was in J. Edgar Hoover’s, and part of the spoken universe in *King Lear*. It appears to have been enough of a problem in England in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century that *An Acte for the punishment of the vice of Buggerie* was passed during the reign of Henry VIII. “The Act was repealed in 1553 on accession of the staunchly Catholic Queen Mary, who preferred such legal matters adjudicated in ecclesiastical courts. However, it was re-enacted by Queen Elizabeth I in 1564” (Wiki).
138. **blind Cupid**] A reference to Gloucester’s bandaged eyes and the staff he carries. [See Figure 251.] During the Renaissance, Cupid was most often depicted as a winged child with a bow, sometimes blindfolded. Lear has earlier referenced archery in connection to the staff Gloucester uses to walk with.



Figure 252. "Reach here with your finger, and See my hands." Uncredited illustration.

138. S.D. *Gloucester sobs, still holding Lear’s hand*] Ed. Not in Q, F. There are, unsurprisingly, no stage directions indicating what the actors are doing in performance. My narrative theory is that after physically kissing Lear’s hand, Gloucester doesn’t let go. He asks the king “*Do’st thou know me?*” (F, 2579) hoping for some sort of recognition, some expression of solace from the man he lost his eyes for helping. Instead, Lear takes his hand-kiss as a sexual overture, and continues his diatribe against the injustices of the world. Gloucester thinks the

king has lost his mind completely, and begins sobbing in despair, still holding his hand. Like his attempt at suicide, it is a moment of great pathos presented as farce in the style of the play. It is not until Lear turns his palm *upward* and demands Gloucester “*read*” his “*challenge*” (F, 2587) that the latter stops weeping and lets go. [See note IV,v, 174. “*If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.*”]

Codes of masculinity strictly forbid boys and men from showing grief or vulnerability. [See note I,i,40, “*death.*”] Men from all races and cultures are taught from childhood to suppress feelings of anything but anger and aggression due to the exigencies of warfare. Lear’s response to Gloucester’s hand-kiss, and the earl’s emotional meltdown that follows, is not congruent with the pity the audience is feeling in this moment. That is, the narrative is *focalized externally* on the actions of the characters rather their inner thoughts and emotions. I wish to stress that Lear does not pull his hand away from Gloucester while he’s holding on to it. He changes its position, and thereby the meaning of the gesture. [Compare note IV,v,152, “*handy-dandy.*”] The human hand is one of the most important motifs and symbols in *King Lear*. (See note IV,ii,21,S.D., “*Gives him a glove.*”)



Figure 253. *Incredulità di San Tommaso*, Caravaggio, c. 1602. Sanssouci, Potsdam. "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." John 20:25.

**139. Read thou this challenge]** Compare “Touch Me and see” (Luke 24:39); “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands” (John 20:27). Compare also Jeremiah 5:21, “*Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not*”. The “challenge” Lear issues must be *felt*. (See note IV,v,183, “*felt.*”) Compare “*There’s my gauntlet*” (F, 2527). At this moment, Lear turns his hand with the palm facing *upward* for Gloucester to “*read.*” Lear’s “*challenge*” is not something that can be seen with the eyes. It can be known only by touch—by *feeling*. “Ever since Aristotle first discussed the role of intuition in human knowledge development, philosophers have debated its significance and purpose throughout history. The debate centers around whether or not intuition is a valid source of knowledge.” (“*More Than a Feeling: Metaphysical Intuition in Aristotle and Bergson, Part One*” by Dave Seng, 2019). Again, Lear turns his hand from a downward to an upward position. He might be presenting it to Gloucester for to “read” as in Figure 254. Given the satirical nature of the scene, the actor might be holding it in the *orans* position. “The pagan orant image also symbolized a more general concept of pious familial devotion and intercessory prayer. Even Roman coins utilized the image on the reverse side of the emperor’s image to suggest the love and devotion of the emperor as he interceded with the gods in behalf of his ‘family’, the people of the empire” (Basic Christian Iconography).

**139. Mark but the penning of it]** i.e. the lines in his hand, alluding to chiromancy in one sense.



Figure 254. *The Fortune Teller*, by Caravaggio (1594–95; Louvre).

140. S.D. *Feels Lear's open palm*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear's "challenge" is the *action* of feeling.
141. S.D. *Aside*] Theobald. Not in Q, F.
141. **report**] What he is seeing on stage.
145. **Are you there with me**] Is that what you mean?
148. **feelingly**] by my sense of feeling
152. **handy-dandy**] "A children's game in which a small object is passed between the hands by one of the players, and, the hands being suddenly closed, the other player is required to guess in which hand the object remains, sometimes with the reward for a correct guess of keeping it." (*OED*, 2.a.). In the context of *chironomia*, Lear's hand gesture is satirical. [See YouTube video, "Handy Dandy: High/Low Game for Kindergartners."]



Video 37. Henry Wiemeyer '22: "Chironomia: A demonstration of the language of hand gestures."

156. **creature**] i.e. the beggar
158. **beadle**] parish constable
160. **kind**] manner
161. **the usurer hangs the cozener**] a magistrate who has been guilty of the crime of usury passes sentence on one guilty only of petty cheating.
161. **cozener**] cheat
166. **able**] authorize
170. **Now, now, now, now**] An interjection. Lear, who is "*Fourescore and vppward*" (F, 2815) needs time to sit down. His knees are as spoiled as his arms: "*I haue seene the day, with my good biting Faulchion / I would haue made him skip: I am old now, / And these same crosses spoile me.*" (F, 3241-43). The tone of the scene changes in this moment.
170. S.D. *Soft music*] Ed. Not in Q, F.
170. S.D. *Sitting beside Gloucester*] Ed. Not in Q, F. He sits because he needs Gloucester's help to remove his tightly fitted boots. Note that he doesn't sit next to him for long. Their physical closeness makes him uneasy. The audience first witnessed this discomfort in I,v: he bolted when the Fool's got too near him. See note I,v,5,S.D. "The Fool plays a sad tune on his lute."



Figure 255. Huntsman wearing riding boots. From *The Noble Art of Venerie or Hunting* (p. 130).

171. **boots**] His over-the-knee riding boots. [See Figure 255.]

By the 16th century (leather) boots were worn by the aristocracy for hunting. . . [L]ike the codpiece, boots were distinctively men's fashion. According to Girotti (1997) to make the boots fit tightly around the leg, they were first soaked in water and allowed to dry on the leg. This made it very difficult for the man wearing boots to bend their knees subsequently dismounted horsemen walked with stiffened legs. This may have given rise to a distinctive swaggering gait which was considered very macho at the time. Centuries later Hollywood actor John Wayne adopted a similar gait pattern when playing strong masculine characters on screen (16<sup>th</sup> Century Boots). [See Figure 256.]



Figure 256. John Wayne (left) and Montgomery Clift in *Red River* (1948), directed by Howard Hawks.

171. S.D. *Gloucester removes Lear's boots*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Why does Lear remove his boots? It is because he wants to approach his enemies with stealth in the battle he is commanding: “*when I haue stolne vpon these sonnes in law, /Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill*” (Q2, 2626-27). As noted above, the idea appears to be associated with Thistle Symbolism: “King Haakon of Norway was intent on conquering the Scottish Clansmen. He had his army land on the Coast of Largs in the dead of night to make a surprise attack on the sleeping Scots. Strategic warriors these Norsemen were indeed. They removed their footwear to move quietly and stealthily through the brush. The attack was thwarted when one of the Norsemen stepped on the prickly thistle. He screamed out in pain and which awakened the sleeping Scots. The Scots prevailed and won the day.”
172. S.D. *Aside*] Capell. Not in Q, F.
172. **matter and impertinency**] substance and irrationality.
174. **If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes**] If Gloucester is not weeping at this moment but fumbling around trying to remove the king's boots, it appears that Lear's reference to his crying is from before. [See note IV,v,138,S.D., “*Gloucester sobs, still holding Lear's hand.*”] He is only now getting around to answering Gloucester's question “*Do'st thou know me?*” (F, 2579), and expressing pity for his suffering. Earlier, the omniscient audience witnessed Lear have a second “mini” heart attack upon seeing Gloucester blinded (“*O well flowne Bird: i'th'clout, i'th'clout,*” F, 2548-49), and order his soldiers to take up their battle positions see note IV,v,93-4, “*Bring up the brown bills*” (F, 2538). The lecherous earl is obviously the implicit subject his diatribe against injustice. Not only is Gloucester guilty of treason for taking the king to Dover but he is an avowed adulterer. Under the Law of Moses, the punishment for adultery is death ([Leviticus 20:10](#)).

Today, scholars are in general agreement that *King Lear* is a **metadrama** not a **melodrama**. Like Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1605), it “mixes didactic intent with scenes of tightly constructed comic counterpoise” (The Poetry Foundation). A modern equivalent might be the **Epic Theatre** of Bertolt Brecht in which the events of the narrative are **dialecticized**. “Brecht's intention was to appeal to his audience's intellect in presenting moral problems and reflecting contemporary social realities on the stage. He wished to block their emotional responses and



to hinder their tendency to empathize with the characters and become caught up in the action. To this end, he used ‘alienating,’ or ‘distancing,’ effects to cause the audience to think objectively about the play, to reflect on its argument, to understand it, and to draw conclusions (see [alienation effect](#)).”

In my restoration, I use the same [backwards induction](#) in theorizing where Gloucester weeps as I do where Lear smells his hand. [See note IV,v,90-1, “*piece of toast’d cheese*.”] “In [game theory](#), backward induction is a solution concept. It is a refinement of the rationality concept that is sensitive to individual information sets in the extensive-form representation of a game. The idea of backward induction utilizes sequential rationality by identifying an optimal action for each information in a given [game tree](#).”

175. **I know thee well enough**] Lear answers Gloucester’s question from before, “*Dost thou know me?*” (F, 2579). His diatribe breaks all five of Cicero’s tenets of rhetoric in *De Inventione*, notably its disjointed arrangement. He does not identify the subject—Gloucester—by name until the very end of his speech.

178. **preach**] A reference to his standing liker a preacher.

178. S.D. **He stands**] Ed. Not in Q, F. [See [Figure 242](#).]

181. **stage of fools**] In his work *The Praise of Folly*, first printed in 1511, Renaissance humanist Erasmus asks, “For what else is the life of man but a kind of play in which men in various costumes perform until the director motions them off the stage.” (*The Essential Erasmus*, John Masters, 1956. The New American Library. p. 119. “All the world’s a stage” is the central metaphor in *King Lear*. Lear himself is the prototype of Shakespeare’s “*poore Player, / That struts and frets his houre vpon the Stage, / And then is heard no more. It is a Tale / Told by an Idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing*” (*Macbeth*, V,v, F, 2345-49).

181. **fools: this’ a good block**] *Fooles. This a good blocke.* (F, 2625). *fooles: this a good blocke.* (Q2, 2625). *fooles, this a good blocke.* (Q1, 2626), viz., people should mold their lives on the tears we cry when we are born. “*When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools*” and “*this’ a good block*” are two independent clauses expressing one complete thought; “*this*” refers back to “*cry*” in the previous clause.

The first definition of “block” given in the *OED* is “a bulky piece of wood.” Here, Shakespeare is using it as a metaphor for *the stage itself*. [See [Figure 33](#).] Other senses of the word include “A piece of wood or other substance on which something is moulded, shaped, or fashioned,” such as a felt hat, a leather boot, a horseshoe. According to the *OED*, 9.b, the word “block” was not used in a theatrical sense until the 1960s: “In a stage play the director *blocks* the scene when he designates the position and action of each of the players, as well as the location on stage of all the props.” (A. Berkman, *Singers’ Gloss. Show Business Jargon* 9, 1961).



Video 38, "How to Block Felt Hats."

Blocks were used by felt makers in the construction of hats. (See [Video 38](#), [How to Block Felt](#)

Hats.) Here, the word “block” is being used metaphorically to mean *shape* or *fashion*. The borough of Southwark, where the Globe Playhouse was situated, was the center of felt making in England (See “The Early History of Felt making in London 1250-1604,” Harry Duckworth Professor Emeritus, University of Manitoba.) Though felt was primarily used to fashion hats, it was also used to make shoes. Steevens notes that “in Fenton’s *Tragical Discourses*, 1567 : ‘—he attyareth himself for the purpose in a night gown girt to him with a pair of shoes of felt, Leaste the noise of his feete should discover his going’ (qu. Furness, p. 285).

“Block” is possibly a Scotticism: To BLOCK, v.a. To plan, to devise (John Jamieson, *An Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, Volume 1, p. 229.) “As it may imply the idea of guile, at first view it might seem allied to Isl. *bleck-ia*, decipere *bleke*, fallacia; “*bluagi*, insidiae,” said to be Teut. Gl. Bibb. But it is Alem.; *bluoge*, *pluargi*, id. I prefer Teut. *block-en*, assiduum esse in studiis, in opere, in ergastulo; a sense evidently borrowed from a workman, who *blocks* out his work roughly, before he begins to give it a proper form.”

182. **delicate stratagem**] A tricky business. Shakespeare wraps up Lear’s oration as he began it with what amounts to *literary nonsense*. His words are so overstuffed with word-meaning, he appears to be talking gibberish. As noted above, the “arrangement” of Lear’s words and phrases is *anti-rhetoric*, “with the implication that eloquent language is inherently meaningless (Richard Nordquist, ThoughtCo). “Literary nonsense (or nonsense literature) is a broad categorization of literature that balances elements that make sense with some that do not [*“matter, and impertinency mixt”* (F, 2616)], with the effect of subverting language conventions. Though the most well-known form of literary nonsense is *nonsense verse*, the genre is present in many forms of literature. The effect of nonsense is often caused by an excess of meaning, rather than a lack of it. Its humor is derived from its nonsensical nature, rather than wit or the ‘joke’ of a punchline.” (Tigges, *An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense*, 1988)

Current critical involvement with literary nonsense focuses overwhelmingly on the nonsense of the Victorian era, dominated by the works of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. Often treated as an independent literary phenomenon, this children’s literature actually participates in a much broader literary tradition that emerges from folkloric and medieval nonsense. Overlooking the literary traditions embedded in modern nonsense oversimplifies the genre and inappropriately diminishes the continuing literary relevance of medieval nonsense. (Bridget Begg, “*Medieval Nonsense Verse: Contributions to the Literary Genre*”, 2013, Wellelsey College.)

The audience is not supposed to make any sense of Lear’s closing words; only the actor playing Lear needs to know what the character wants to communicate. Richard Burbage had Shakespeare there beside him to explain the character’s objectives—to lead a charge against injustice. Regrettably, when the text is paraphrased into words to make it “understandable” to readers, its meaning is destroyed. As E.B. White said, “Explaining a joke is like dissecting a frog. You understand it better but the frog dies in the process.”

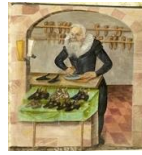


Figure 257. Hans Jamnitzer, depicted in a buttoned jacket, breeches and white collar, stands at his work table and cuts leather with the curved knife. Six pairs of finished shoes with shoe trees are on the delivery table, two pairs of boots hang on the left wall. In the background there are numerous shoe lasts in the wall bracket.

182. **shoe]** *shoo* (F, 2626); *shoot* (Q1, 2627); *shoot* (Q2, 2626). From “block,” Lear’s mind jumps to *lasts*, “a model of the foot made of wood on which boots and shoes are shaped” (*OED*). See *Rom.* I,ii,287. [See Figure 257.] He has just moments before taken off his boots, and is possibly holding them even now. Wooden blocks were also used by blacksmiths to shape horseshoes. [See Figure 258.] Malone cites an instance where horses were shod with felt during a jousting tournament in the time of Henry VIII to prevent them from sliding on the pavement. Lord Herbert’s *Life of Henry the Eighth*, p. 41: “the lady Margaret, . . . caused there a juste to be held in an extraordinary manner; the place being a fore-room raised high from the ground by many steps, and paved with black square stones like marble; while the horses, to prevent sliding were shod with gelt or flocks (the Latin words are *feltre sive tomento*) : after which the ladies danced all night.” qu. Furness, p. 285.



Figure 258. A blacksmith stands at his block, from “The Housebooks of the Nuremberg Twelve Brother Foundations: Digital Development and Edition of Craftsman Paintings of the 15th-19th Century” Amb. 317b.2° Folio 55 verso (Mendel II), Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum.

183. **troop of horse]** A lot of horse men, soldiers. Compare *Macbeth*, V,iii, “*Troopes of Friends*” (F, 2242). “The first medieval knights were professional *cavalry* warriors” (*Britannica*).

183. **felt]** (F, 2627). *Fell* (Q, 2627); *fell* (Q2, 2626). *Felt* is the past tense of *feel*, which has been the subject of Lear’s speech for the last ten minutes. “*Speake what we feele, not what we ought to say*” says Edgar in the penultimate couplet of the play (F, 3399).

184. **stol’n]** *stolne* (F, 2628). *stole* (Q1, 2627). *stole* (Q2, 2526)



Figure 260. “Man of Law” from the Ellesmere Chaucer (Huntington Library, San Marino).

184. **sons in law]** *sonnes in law* (Q2, 2629). *Son in Lawes* (F, 2628). *sonnes in lawes* (Q1, 2628). Namely, barristers and judges. Lear is using “sons” in the sense of men viewed in relation to the Law (*OED* 6a). “The Man of Law’s Tale” is the fifth of the *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. [See Figure 260.] Compare 2 *Henry VI*, IV,ii, “*The first thing we do, let’s kill all the Lawyers.*” (F, 2394).

185. **kill....kill]** a cry of soldiers, viz. “No quarter.” That is, Lear intends to make a lot of noise after

- sneaking up on his enemies. He will be leading the charge himself as was expected of sovereigns.
185. S.D. **Enter Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Enter three Gentlemen.* (Q, 2630). *Enter a Gentleman.* (F, 2630).
185. S.D. **French Officer**] “The French Officer” is the extra spoken to by Cordelia, and sent to look for her father in IV,iii,8.
- 186,190,191,198,201,205,207,211,213,214. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Gent.* Q, F.
188. S.D. **To Edgar**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear has enlisted Edgar in his army, and looks to him for protection.
189. **The natural fool of Fortune**] Born to be Fortune's fool.
190. S.D. **Gives some weeds to Lear's Knight**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Lear gives the actor who first spoke in I,iv (*Knigh*, F, 580), a King's ransom in freshly minted weed-money. I imagine that he tears handfuls of them from his costume. Compare III,iv,102., S.D. “*Lear tears off pieces of his costume.*”



Figure 261. *Tractatus Perutilis et Completus de Fractura Cranei*, (1535, Venice).

191. **I am cut to th' brains**] Lear calls for a brain surgeon, as though he's been wounded in the head in battle. [See Figure 261.] Great advancements had been in medicine during the Tudor Age, including brain surgery. An amusing example: “Andreas Versulius, the anatomist, performed craniotomies and, when physician to the court of Philip the Second of Spain, treated the king's son, who had tripped while chasing the kitchen maid. An operation was recommended to remove an epidural clot, and the patient recovered.” (*The History of Cerebral Trauma*, F. Clifford Rose, p. 26, *Neurology and Trauma*, 2nd Edition, Randolph W. Evans, M.D, 2006. Oxford University Press.) Popular tradition associated madness with a stone lodged in the brain, and trepanation was performed to remove it. “According to the Beatles star [Paul McCartney], Lennon had become interested in trepanning in the '60s. ‘John was a kooky cat,’ he told GQ. ‘We'd all read about it. The 'ancient art of trepanning', which lent a little bit of validity to it because ancient must be good.’” (Rhian Daly, NME).



Figure 262. *The Cure of Folly, or the Extraction of the Stone of Madness*, Bosch, Hieronymus, 1501-1505. The inscription at the top in Gothic script reads, “Meester snijt die key ras” (Master, rid me of this stone soon) and, at the bottom, “Myne name is lubbert das” (My name is Lubbert Das)” Lubbert Das was a comical (foolish) character in Dutch literature.

193. **salt**] Lear feels his tears coming on. Compare “*I am ashamed/That thou has power to shake my manhood thus;/That these hot tears, which break from me perforce, / Should make thee worth them*” (F, 814-17). I guess Richard Burbage was the Beverly Washburn of his day, an actor famous for the ability to cry on cue.
195. **dust**] In a literal sense, causing dust to settle; *Figuratively*, submitting himself to the grave. Compare *Cymbeline*. IV,ii, “*All Louers young, all Louers must, / Consigne to thee and come to*

- dust.*” (F, 2593-94); *All’s Well That Ends Well*, V,iii. “weepe their *dust.*” (F, 2771). See also note IV,v, 86-7. S.D., “Gives Edgar a thistle”.
195. **bravely**] 1) courageously; 2) in smart clothes (ironic).
199. **Then there’s life in’t]** the case is not yet desperate
200. **Sa, sa, sa, sa]** An old hunting cry to urge the dogs forward, from Fr. ça, ça. See note III,iv,94. “Sessa.”
200. S.D. **Exit running. French soldiers follow]** Capell, subst. *Exit King running.* (Q, 2646). *Exit.* (F, 2645).
203. **redeems]** Compare note II,ii,164, “[*Cordelia*] shall finde time / From this enormous State, seeking to giue / Losses their remedies.”
204. **twain]** Goneril and Regan
205. **gentle]** noble
207. **vulgar]** in everyone’s mouth; common knowledge
- 211-12. **The main descry ...thought]** We expect to descry the main body any hour now.
214. S.D. **Exit Lear’s Knight]** Ed. *Gentleman.* Johnson. *Exit.* (Q, 2661). *Exit.* after on (F, 2661).
216. **worser spirit]** evil angel, evil side of my nature. Compare Sonnet 144, “*The better angell is a man right faire: / The worser spirit a woman collour’d il.*” (Q, 2149-50).
217. **father]** An old man commanding respect (*OED*, 6a), but something about the way in which he says word disturbs Gloucester. The first time he laid eyes on “poor Tom”, Edgar came to mind. (“*I had a Sonne...my wits*” F, 1946-50). He continues to be suspicious of Tom’s identity in III,vi, and readjusts his spectacles to get a closer look at him. (See note III,vi,7,S.D. “*Gloucester readjusts his spectacles.*”) At the beginning of IV,v, he challenges his mysterious companion about the change in his voice. “*Y’are much deceiu’d,*” replies Edgar. “*In nothing am I chang’d / But in my Garments*” (F, 2442-43). Now, 221 lines later (F, 2666), Gloucester once again forcefully demands to know who he really is: “*Now good sir, what are you?*” (F, 2667). When the latter repeats the word “*father*” at the conclusion of this scene (F, 2742), Gloucester finally “sees” the truth. See Appendix B.
219. **tame]** As the fierceness of a frightened animal is rendered submissive by the whip.
221. **pregnant]** “Easily influenced; receptive; inclined, ready.” (*OED*, 2. †b).
222. **biding]** abode
223. **benison]** blessing
224. **To boot, and boot]** (F, 2674). *To boot, to boot.* (Q2, 2674). *to saue thee.* (Q1, 2674-5). Compare *Shake-speares Sonnets* (Quarto 1, 1609), 135, “*thou hast thy Will, And Will too boote,*” (Q, 2012-13). Shakespeare is using the word “boot” in two different senses, both now obsolete: 1) To make better; to cure, relieve, heal; to remedy” as in “*The sauour of hym boteth alle syknessis.*” W. Caxton tr. *Hist. Reynard Fox* (1970) 78. (*OED*, †1.) And 2) “To benefit, increase, enrich (*OED*, †4) as in *Antony & Cleopatra*, II.v, “*And I will boot thee with what guift beside / Thy modestie can begge.*” (F, 1115-6).
224. S.D. **Enter Oswald]** Collier. *Enter Steward.* Q, 2675, F, 2675.
226. S.D. **Drawing his sword]** Not in Q, F.
228. **friendly]** because it brings him the death he desires. Gloucester’s mood is even lower after his encounter with Lear, whom he thinks has completely lost his mind. See Appendix B.
229. S.D. **Edgar steps between them]** Johnson, subst. Not in Q, F.



230. **publish'd]** proclaimed



Video 39: Westcountry Yap.

233. **Chill**, etc] Eye-dialect for “I will.” Shakespeare is using non-standard spellings to indicate that Edgar is speaking with a Somerset dialect. Furness quotes Steevens: “When our ancient writers introduce a rustic they commonly allot him this Somersetshire dialect.” (p. 290). According to Wikipedia, West Country English is a group of English language varieties and accents used by much of the native population of South West England, encompassing the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, the City of Bristol, and Gloucestershire. See note II,ii,8, “*Tisbury pinfold*.” Unfortunately, when the speech is translated into “Standard Southern British, its meaning changes. As E.B. White said, “Explaining a joke is like dissecting a frog. You understand it better but the frog dies in the process.”

Edgar’s speech further devaluates the “art of rhetoric” satirized by Shakespeare in Lear’s diatribe. Classical oratory must be “free from all traces of a rustic or a foreign accent,” says Quintilian in *Institutio Oratoria* 11.3.65-184<sup>32</sup>). The Somerset dialect, which dates back to the Anglo-Saxon period, adds a quality of the absurd to Oswald’s death, which is already steeped in irony: he is killed by the same sword he took such pride in wearing but didn’t know how to use. The abrupt switch in Edgar’s dialect further reminds the audience that we are watching a theatrical performance. It draws attention to the actor’s virtuosic skill at speaking with different accents. See note I,i,188, *France*.

235. **volk]** folk.

235-6. **And ‘chud]** if I could.

236. **zwagger’d out of my life]** killed by mere swaggering or blustering.

238-9. **che vor ye]** I warrant you. Craig quotes from *The London Prodigal*, v.i.349, ‘Well, che vor ye, he is changed’ (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 173)

239. **ice]** I shall

238. S.D. **Taking Gloucester’s staff]** Ed. Not in Q,F.

239. **costard]** your head, literally a kind of apple.

239. **ballow]** cudgel, i.e. Gloucester’s staff. Wright, *English Dialect Dictionary*, 1896, shows that in Nottingham a staff beaked with iron was called ‘a ballowe staff’.

240. **Chill]** I will

241. S.D. **He thrusts his sword at Edgar]** Ed. Not in Q, F.

242. **foins]** thrusts

242. S.D. **They fight. Edgar disarms Oswald with Gloucester’s staff, and kills the Steward with his own sword]** Ed. *they fight*. (Q, 2697). Not in F. Edgar deftly disarms Oswald with Gloucester’s wooden staff, and, without any ado, uses the Steward’s own sword to slay him.

243. **Villain]** scoundrel. The word is being used in its usual sense as a term of reproach. See Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*: **Villain**.

247. **Upon]** among

248. **Death.]** Perhaps young Oswald looks at his wound as if he can’t believe what he is seeing: his

own death. See *The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula* by Caravaggio.

248. S.D. *He dies*] (Q, 2703). Not in F.



Figure 263. Robert Peake the Elder, *Henry Frederick Prince of Wales (1594–1612), with Sir John Harington (1592–1614), in the hunting field, 1603*. Oil on canvas, 201.9 × 147.3 cm. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest 1944, 44.

253. **pockets**] Oswald is probably wearing sewn-in pockets. “Bindings and embroidery down the sides of men’s hose were used to frame and advertise the presence of pockets to even greater effect in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as in Robert Peake’s (c. 1551–1619) painting of Henry, Prince of Wales (1594–1612) from c. 1605 [Figure 263] (Rebecca Unsworth, “Hands Deep in History: Pockets in Men and Women’s Dress in Western Europe, c. 1480–1630”, p. 151.)

254. S.D. *Goes through his pockets*] Ed. Not in Q, F. In addition to Goneril’s letter, he finds the unpaired-glove Regan ordered him to give to Edmund.

254. **I am only sorry**] Over the course of the play, the audience has grown to like Oswald. Apart from his youth and sexual desirability, qualities that are always attractive in a person, we feel sorry for the steward when Kent abuses him for affecting the manners of a gentleman, and for wearing a rapier he was not trained to use. (See Peter Tonkin, “Elizabethan Swordplay - The Rise and Rise of the Rapier”.) The earl mocks the poverty of Oswald’s wardrobe, which no real gentleman like George Villiers would be caught dead wearing, and for dining on leftovers in the kitchen with, God forbid, domestic servants. We are sympathetic when Goneril implicitly faults him for being an unsatisfying lover. (See IV,ii,26. “*O, the difference of man and man.*”)

The ideas of **freewill** and **determinism** are central themes in Shakespeare’s plays, and *Lear* is no exception. Oswald’s poverty and low birth might explain the choices he made about how best to survive in the world. (See note I,iii,S.D., “*Steward.*”) One thinks of the “*little tiny boy*” in Feste’s song at the end of *Twelfth Night*, “*The Wind and the Rain,*” whose impoverished beginnings and rejection by society shaped the direction of his life. As the Stoic Marcus Aurelius writes in *Meditations*, “Man is like a dog tied to a moving wagon. If the dog refuses to run along with the wagon he will be dragged by it, yet the choice remains his: to run or be dragged. In the same way, humans are responsible for their choices and actions.”

255. **deathsmán**] executioner.

259. S.D. *Reads*] *Reads the Letter.* (F, 2715). Not in Q.

261. **fruitfully**] (F, 2718) plentifully. This image is the first in a poetic sequence: *mature* (F, 2728), *rot* (F, 2931), *ripeness* (F, 2935). It is the strongest textual evidence that lines V,ii,8-11 in Q, 2931-35, F, 2931-36 were transposed. See Appendix B.

265. **labor**] (F, 2721); *Venter*, (Q1, 2723). *Labour.* (Q2, 2720).

269. **O indistinguish’d space of woman’s will**] O limitless range of women’s lust.

269. **indistinguish’d**] indefinable, beyond the range of sight.

272. **rake up**] cover up
273. **mature**] When time is ripe
274. **ungracious**] without grace, wicked
275. **death-practis'd**] whose death is plotted
276. S.D. **Exit Edgar, carrying off Oswald's body**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Capell inserted the direction "*dragging out the body,*" which continues to be published in modern editions. (See R.A Foakes, *The Arden Shakespeare*, p. 348.) Edgar is strong, and easily lifts Oswald over his shoulders and carries him offstage (called a Fireman's carry.) The character's strength is dramatized when he "*descends*" (F, 949) in II,i. (See note II,i.19.S.D., "*Enter Edgar.*")
276. S.D. **Sad music within**] Ed. Not in Q, F. "Although typically music is played **within**, only rarely is this location specified: '*Musicke sounds within*'" (*Troil*, Quarto 2, page 13). (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642: Music*, p. 147.) Here, Shakespeare is using music to foreshadow narrative developments, *and create emotion*, much as modern filmmakers do. It effectively "glues together" Gloucester's *anagnorisis* (which is unspoken) with the reconciliation of Lear and Cordelia dramatized in the *next scene*. The two main storylines are resolved *emotionally* by the order of events and the music. See Appendix B.
- "Music helps very well to glue scenes together. Rather harsh scene changes can be softened by adding music over the scene change. One of the extremes of these forms are montages which work beautiful with music. Even though we might have a lot of jumps in time/places or even periods, when the montage is covered under one score cue it will at the same time be glued together and understood as a whole." ("What is the function of Film Music" by Robin Hoffmann.)
277. **stiff**] obstinately unbending
278. **vile sense**] "Used as an intensive emphasizing some bad quality or condition; †also, heavy, severe." (*OED*, 6.b.) "*Will he steale out of his wholesome bed To dare the vile contagion of the Night?*" (*Julius Caesar*, II,i, F, 905-6) Kenneth Muir notes that "Gloucester calls his senses vile because they still allow him to be fully conscious of his sorrows, and do not give him the relief of insanity." Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 175. See Appendix B.
278. **ingenious**] conscious
279. **distract**] mad
281. **wrong imaginations**] illusions
- 283-288. **Glou...too**] Ed. See Appendix B.
286. **Ripeness is all**] Cf. *Hamlet*, V,ii, "*the readinesse is all*" (F, 3671).
288. **drum**] There are stage directions in both the quartos and the First Folio "*Drum afar off*" (F, 2737, after "*griefs*"), and "*A drum a farre off*" (Q. 2739, after "*themselves*"). I have omitted the direction in my version because what the audience is logically hearing are the *healing* sounds of music coming from Cordelia's camp. (See note IV,vi,S.D., "*Soft music.*") What Edgar is referring to are the loud war drums the audience hears in "*Actus Quintus. Scene Prima. Enter with Drumme and Colours*" (F, 2844-45). Theatrical time is being warped. Lear's reconciliation with his daughter occurs days after we left him in IV,v.
288. **father**] Edgar means the word "*father*" in the sense he used it 71 lines earlier (F, 2666)—as a

term of respect for an old man. (See note IV,v,217, “*father.*”) Gloucester, however, recognizes the person he has been struggling to identify since he first encountered him in the storm. He realizes that the voice belongs to Edgar in a classical moment of *anagnorisis*. Paradoxically, now that Gloucester is “blind,” he can “see” the truth.

Shakespeare is using the most valuable tool of theatre to tell the story: *good acting*. Gloucester’s discovery of Edgar’s true identity is communicated nonverbally in performance. The sudden rush of pain and guilt he feels is simply too much to give utterance to. [Compare the guilt Lear feels when he is reunited with Cordelia. [See note IV,vi, 47., “*wheel of fire.*”] He quickly suppresses the knowledge from his conscious mind, and makes his final exit in the play on the arm of his son, keeping his emotions in his heart. Gloucester gives Edgar no indication that he has discovered the truth. Only the audience knows, as it does when Lear recognizes the earl without saying his name. [See note IV,v,93.S.D., “*Lifting up the bandages.*”] The narrative is communicated by the performer, the sequence of events and the music. Gloucester’s reconciliation with Edgar (not to be confused with his *anagnorisis*) is not dramatized. The event is *narrated* to Albany in the final scene (F, 3155-62). Throughout *King Lear*, characters typically reveal more to the audience by attempting to hide their feelings than they do by indicating them.

288. **friend**] i.e. Edgar. See Appendix B.

288. S.D. *Exeunt*] F. Exit. Q

**ACT IV, SCENE VI.]** Ed. *Scæna Septima* (F. 2743). Scene 21 in Quarto.

S.D. **A Tent in the French Camp**] Steevens, after Capell. Not in Q,

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Soft music**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See “*louder the musicke there*” (Q, 2775.2). *Soft music playing*. Capell. Logically, it is a variation of soothing lullaby the Fool played in I,v and III,vi. It evokes the bond a parent has with their child.

S.D. **Enter Cordelia, Kent, Doctor, and Lear’s Knight**] Ed. *Enter Cordelia, Kent, and Gentleman*. (F, 2744). *Enter Cordelia, Kent and Doctor*. (Q, 2744).



Figure 264. Portrait de Michel de Nostre-Dame (Nostradamus), dit Nostradamus, astrologue (1503-1566), detail, Maison de Nostradamus, Salon de Provence, Bouches du Rhone.

7. **weeds**] clothing.

9. **shortens my made intent**] interferes with the plan I have made.

12. S.D. **To the Doctor**] Theobald, subst. Not in Q, F. Furness quotes Malone: “In the Ff all of the speeches are given to ‘the Gentleman’ which in the Qq are divided between ‘the Physician’ and ‘Gentleman.’ I suppose from a penury of actors it was found convenient to unite the two characters, which were originally distinct.” More likely, it was done to cut costuming expenses. In the version performed for James I, the Doctor was probably costumed in something similar to

that worn in portraits of Nostradamus, with a signature hat and gown donned by physicians. Costumes are a major element in the Spectacle of Elizabeth drama, and certainly in *King Lear*. [See Figure 264.]

13. **Doct**] *Doct.* (Q, 2761); *Gent.* (F, 2762)

16. **untuned**] Cf. IV,iii,39. Plato writes in *Timaeus* that "Attunement, having motions akin to the circuits in our soul, have been given by the Muses . . . as an aid to bring our soul-circuit, when it has gone out of tune, into order and harmony with itself." (West, Martin. "Music Therapy in Antiquity." *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy since Antiquity*. Peregrine Horden. Ashgate Publishing, 2000, p. 58.

16. **wind up**] "Simply winding a lute up to a higher pitch can cause serious structural damage, and tuning it down to a lower pitch can make it very difficult to play cleanly" (Lynda Sayce, *The Lute Society*).

17. **Doct**] (Q, 2765); *Gent.* (F, 2767).

21. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Gent.* (Q, 2774); *Gent.* (F, 2771).

22. **We put fresh garments on him**] Is Lear now outfitted in Stuart period fashions or the Tudor clothes he has been wearing? My guess is the latter.

23. **Doct**] (Q, 2771); *Gent.* (2774-75).

24. **temperance**] sanity, normality

24. S.D. **Enter Lear in a chair carried by Servants**] F. Not in Q. Presumably a sedan chair, like the one made for Charles V below.



Figure 265. Sedan chair of Charles V, *Illustrated History of Furniture (Chpt III)* by Frederick Litchfield.

25. **Doct**] (Q, 2776). Not in F.

25. **music**] (Q, 2775.1-2775.2); not in F. I believe it is impossible to overstate the importance of music and sound as a texture of Elizabethan drama. There are over six hundred stage directions alone relating to music cited in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 146-148. Cordelia's intent in this scene parallels the Fool's in I,v: they both want to retune Lear's "un-tuned" spirit. "In its most cherished formative texts, both sacred and secular, the medieval world encountered the notion that music had measurable therapeutic value. From the story of *David and Saul*, perhaps the oldest account of applied music therapy that we possess, through *Cato*, *Cicero*, *Macrobius*, and of course *Beothius*, music was viewed as an integral element of the healing arts." (*Music in Medieval Medical Practice: Speculations and Certainties*, Christopher Callahan, College Music Symposium, Published by: College Music Society Vol. 40 (2000), pp. 151-164. The melody is probably the same in both I,v, III,vi and IV,vi as a sort rudimentary "leitmotif" of their inverted parent-child relationship, manipulating the emotions of the audience.

In fact, even the earliest great opera composer, *Claudio Monteverdi*, used a version of leitmotifs, albeit a relatively rudimentary one, in his masterpiece, *L'Orfeo* (1607), in the early 1600s; there is a *ritornello* that is first heard at the end of Act II and then again at



the start of Act V that is said to represent the “power of music.” Trevor Gillis, “Leitmotifs,”

28. **there**] Presumably the musicians are in the “music gallery” at the Globe.

26. S.D. **Music Still**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

29. S.D. **Kissing Lear**] Not in Q, F.

30. **White flakes**] snowy locks

31. **challenge**] claim

33. **deep**] bass

33. **dread-bolted**] furnished with the dread thunder-bolt

35. **perdu**] a sentry in a perilous position.

38. **Against**] before, opposite to.

39. **rogues**] vagabonds

40. **short**] cut short

40. **musty**] mouldy, stale

40. **straw**] Alluding to the straw strewn about the yard, which is different from the rush matting on the stage. See *Rushes on the Floor* by Sarah Woodbury.



Figure 266. Queen Elizabeth and the Ambassadors, attributed to Levina Teerlinc, c. 1560.

42. **all**] together

43. **Doct**] (Q, 2791); *Gen.* (F, 2791)

46. **bliss**] “Mental, ethereal, spiritual: perfect joy or felicity, supreme delight; blessedness” (*OED*, 2.b). *Hen VI Pt. 1. V.v.*, “Whereas the contrarie bringeth blisse, / And is a patterne of Celestiall peace. (F, 2886-7)



Figure 267 Gallonio, the Rev. Father: “Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs”, p, 66 (1903), Translated from the Latin by A.R. Allison, 1591.

47. **wheel of fire**] Lear is likening the shame and self-reproach that he is feeling to being burned alive by his own tears. The wheel of fire refers to an actual torture device where a person was bound to a wheel mounted on an A frame and roasted alive. “Hence it came about sometimes that, binding them to wheels having sharp spikes affixed all round, and placed over a fire burning below, they would revolve the same round and round and round at high speed. Wherefore, in just the same fashion as joints on the spit and set to the fire be roasted and cooked, so where these turned about and roasted, that they might become fine bread of Jesus Christ.” (*Tortures and Torments of the Christian Martyrs*, From the “DS SS. Martyrum Cruciatibus of the Rev. Father Gallonio, trans A.R. Allison p. 70.) It is implied by the sequence of the plot that the reconciliation between Gloucester and Edgar, which is narrated succinctly in the final scene, is comparable to

- what the audience sees dramatized between Lear and Cordelia. (See note IV,v, 288, “*father.*”)
47. **that]** so that.
50. **wide]** i.e. wide of the mark, delusional
51. **Doct]** (Q, 2801); *Gen.* (F, 2801-02).
53. **abused]** deluded. He thinks Cordelia must be an hallucination.
55. S.D. **Pricks himself]** Not in Q, F. Lear’s histrionics are an essential part of his character.
57. S.D. **She kneels]** Not in Q, F. We last saw Cordelia kneel before her father in I,i,87.
58. S.D. **Lear kneels]** Not in Q, F. Compare *Coriolanus* V,iii, 3397-3406. Coriolanus kneels before his mother, who tells him to rise, and she kneels before him. Here, Lear kneels before Cordelia and begs forgiveness, thus “inverting the orthodoxy whereby children would kneel nightly to their parents and ask for blessing” (Jonathan Bate, *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*, p. 2). As the two of them are being led away to prison at the beginning of V,i, he tells Cordelia, “*When thou dost aske me blessing, Ile kneele downe / And aske of thee forgiuenesse*” (F, 2950-51).



Figure 268. David Allan, *Volumnia Pleading with Coriolanus*, c. 1769 National Galleries Scotland.

60. **fond]** doting, tender. Compare *Romeo and Juliet*, II.ii., “In truth faire *Mountague* I am too **fond:**” (F, 896)
64. **this man]** Kent
65. **mainly]** entirely
77. **abuse]** deceive
78. **Doct]** (Q, 2837); *Gent.* (F, 2837)
78. **rage]** frenzy, delirium
80. **even o’er]** fill up the gap in; to smooth over, render what had passed unbroken in his recollection (Wright) qu. Furness p. 304.
82. **Till further settling]** till he is calmer.
83. **walk]** withdraw
85. S.D. **Music still]** Not in Q, F.
85. S.D. **Exeunt Lear, Cordelia, Doctor, and Attendants]** *Exeunt. Manet Kent, and Gent.* (Q, 2842). *Exeunt.* (F, 2843).
- Lines 86-96** (Q, 2843.1-2843.11) have been transposed from Scene 17 in the first and second quartos. Scene omitted in the First Folio.
86. **Kent]** Ed. See Appendix C.
- 86-7. **Why the King of France ...reason]** Because the parts of Edgar and France are played by the same actor. Kent has had no direct personal communication with Cordelia up until this scene, and has only now learned of France’s abrupt departure. See Appendix C.
- 88,93,96,98,102. **Lear’s Knight]** Ed. *Gent.* (Q, 2347.1). Not in F.
92. **Kent]** Ed. Q, 2347.1. Not in F.
93. **The Marshall of France, Monsieur La Far]** Q, 2347.1. Not in F. Lines Q, 2843.1-2843.11 were deleted in the Folio/
89. **imports]** portends

94. **Kent**] Ed. Q, 2347.1. Not in F.

93-4. **Holds it true**] is it still accepted.

96. **conductor**] leader, general

102. **arbitrement**] decisive encounter

103. S.D. **Exit**] Theobald. Not in Q.

104. **My point and period**] Kent has dedicated his life to serving the king, and recognizes that the death of his lord and master is nigh. J. Stephen Roberts discusses the knight's chivalric code and his attitude toward death in his YouTube video "How did a medieval knight prefer to die?" According to the [American Heart Association \(AHA\)](#), "broken heart syndrome, or takotsubo cardiomyopathy, is a reaction your heart has to a surge of stress hormones caused by an emotionally stressful event. Broken heart syndrome causes the heart to stop operating normally, resulting in heart failure. During these situations, the body releases an increase of hormones, which temporarily paralyzes your heart and limits its standard functionality." ("Can You Really Die From a Broken Heart?")

105. S.D. **Exit**] Q.

ACT IV. **SCENE VII**] Ed. *Actus Quintus. Scena Prima* (F, 2844). Scene 22 in Quarto. See Appendix B.

S.D. **The British Camp near Dover**] Capell, subst. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. **Enter severally**] Ed, Not in Q, F. Albany's Squire enters from behind the center curtains;

S.D. **Enter Edmund and Regan from one door**] Ed. *Enter with Drumme and Colours, Edmund, Regan, Gentlemen, and Souldiers*. (F, 2845-6). *Enter Edmund, Regan, and their powers*. (Q, 2845). Regan and Edmund enter from one of the doors on the side of the "tiring-house." They are alone together, signaling nonverbally to Shakespeare's prurient audience that they have just been fornicating, which is why she is nagging him about the nature of her relationship with Goneril. Compare her conversation with Oswald in IV,iv,21, "*some things*." Cf. also note IV,vii,8, "*but then*." Moreover, Edmund is not in command of the English forces. See note V,i, S.D. "*Enter Edmund, with Lear and Cordelia guarded by two officers, Captain*."

S.D. **Albany's Squire from behind the arras**] Ed. **Arras** is "an alternative term for *curtain/hangings* suspended in front of the tiring-house wall, which, like *hangings*, usually occurs in conjunction with *behind*" p. 12 See *The Honest Man's Fortune*, III,i, "*Enter Lamira behind the Arras*", p 247.

1. **His last purpose**] i.e. to fight.

2. **advis'd**] induced.

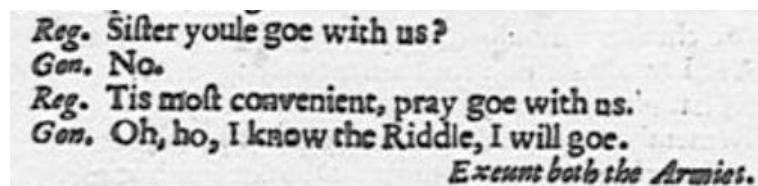
3. **alteration**] vacillation.

4. **self-reproving**] self-reproach, conscientious scruples.

4. **constant pleasure**] fixed decision.

4. S.D. **To Albany's Squire, who exits behind the curtains**] Ed. *To an Officer; who goes out*. Capell. Not in Q, F. Theoretically, he exits behind the center curtains which he is standing in front of.

5. **man]** Oswald
5. **miscarried]** come to harm.
6. **doubted]** feared.
7. **intend upon you]** mean to confer upon you, i.e., make him her husband.
8. **but then]** Regan is being indirect. She can scarcely contain her jealousy. Compare note IV,iv,21, “*some things.*”
9. **honor’d]** honorable.
11. **forfended]** forbidden.
12. **doubtful]** fearful
13. **bosom’d with her]** embraced her, breast to breast. Cf. IV,iv,26 note.
13. **as far as]** She worries that he has gone “all the way” with Goneril.
17. S.D. **Enter, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril, Albany’s Squire, and Soldiers]** Ed. *Enter with Drum and Colours, Albany, Gonerill, Soldiers.* (F, 2845-46). *Enter Albany and Goneril with Troupes.* (Q, 2845).
18. **Reg]** Ed. *Gono.* (Q, 2864.1). Not in F. (The line “*I had rather loose the battaile, then that sister should loosen him nd mee*” (Q, 2864.1-2) was deleted in the First Folio.) If spoken by Goneril, there is no irony and the line won’t get a laugh. Ditto line 36 below.
18. S.D. **Aside]** Theobald, not in Q, F.
20. **very loving]** As in I,ii,129, “*How now Brother Edmond, what serious contemplation are you in?*” (F, 467-8), Albany’s greeting of Regan (line 20) is not intended to be ironic but it has that effect: the audience knows more than the characters. Shakespeare is focalizing the narrative from the *omniscient POV*.
20. **bemet]** met
22. **rigor of our state]** harshness of our rule.
23. **Where]** in a case where.
24. **For]** as for.
25. **touches]** concerns
30. **and particular broils]** and private quarrels.
31. **determine,]** comma added by Ed. *determine* (Q, 2873), (F, 2873). *viz.* conference with each other.
32. **th’ancient of war]** the banner of war. His words are metaphorical. He means they will be guided by military considerations only.
33. **presently]** at once



Reg. Sister youle goe with us?  
Gen. No.  
Reg. Tis most convenient, pray goe with us.  
Gen. Oh, ho, I know the Riddle, I will goe.  
*Exeunt both the Armiest.*

Figure 269. Facsimile copy of Second Quarto (New South Wales).

34. **Gon]** Ed. *Reg.* (Q, 2875) *Reg.* (F, 2875). Goneril does not have the opportunity to leave with Edmund. She is stuck with her moralistic husband.
35. **Reg]** Ed. *Gon.* (Q, 2875), *Gon.* (F, 2875). Regan’s husband is dead, and she is free to go

wherever she wants. She has the clear advantage in their game of one upmanship for Edmund.

See note III,vii,21, *Reg.*

36. **Gon]** Ed. *Reg.* (Q, 2876), *Reg.* (F, 2877).

36. **convenient]** befitting

36. S.D. ***She takes her by the hand]*** Ed. Not in Q, F. Goneril forcibly restrains her sister from leaving with Edmund.

37. **Reg]** Ed. *Gon.* (F, 2878). Not in Q

37. **riddle]** She understands that Goneril wants to prevent her from being alone with Edmund.

37. S.D. ***As they are going out enter Edgar]*** Theobald subst. *Enter Edgar.* (Q, 2880). *Exeunt both the Armies; Enter Edgar.* (F, 2879-80).



Video 40. “20 British Accents.” Edgar is probably affecting a conservative English accent signaling his high breeding.

37. S.D. ***wearing a hooded cloak]*** Here, the tone of the play shifts from farce to bitter irony. Edgar is no longer dressed in Curan’s “*best ‘parel.*” Albany mentions being impressed with his “*Royall Nobelenesse*” by his “*very gait*” (F, 3137-38), so presumably he is wearing a short hooded cloak concealing his face. However, what commands Albany’s attention most of all is Edgar’s *manner of speaking*. The duke would not give him the time of day if he spoke with a Somerset “West Country” accent. [See Video 39 *Westcountry Yap*]. He is probably speaking in conservative English, signaling his high breeding. Edmund accepts Edgar’s challenge because “*thy out-side looks so faire and Warlike,/ And that thy tongue (somesay) of breeding breathes*” (F, 3098-99). Tom Eatsleepdreamenglish runs through some of the more common accents currently heard in the UK in Video 40. One can only imagine the dialects spoken in Southwark and across the British Isles in the 15th and 16th centuries. As noted in my Introduction, George Bernard Shaw famously wrote: ‘it is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him’. This quote is a testament to the power of accents to position us in the social world by communicating information about our background, our upbringing and the communities we belong to” ([AccentBiasBritain](#)).

39. S.D. ***Exeunt all but Albany and Edgar]*** *Exeunt.* (Q, 2882, after word). Not in F.

40. S.D. ***Giving him Goneril’s letter]*** Ed. Not in Q, F. Does he also give him the glove Regan gave to Oswald to give to Edmund?

44. **avouched]** maintained.

44. **miscarry]** lose the battle, and perish

50. **o’erlook]** peruse

50. S.D. ***Drum within]*** Ed. Not in Q, F.

50. S.D. ***As Edgar is going out, he exchanges looks with Edmund]*** Ed. *Exit.* (Q, 2892, after again). *Exit.* (F, 2894). *Enter Edmund* (Q, 2896), *Enter Edmund.* (F, 2896). In I,ii, Edgar enters to find Edmund contemplating the letter he forged to ruin him: “*How now Brother Edmond, what serious contemplation are you in*” (F, 466-7). The situation is now reversed.

51. **powers]** troops



53. **By diligent discovery**] obtained by careful reconnoitering
54. **greet the time**] meet the emergency
54. S.D. *Taking Edmund's paper*] Jennings, *subst.* Not in Q, F.
54. S.D. *Exit*] (F, 2901). Not in Q.
56. **jealous**] suspicious
61. **carry out my side**] make my game, succeed in my ambitions.
63. **countenance**] authority, credit.
65. **Taking off**] killing.
68. **Shall**] they shall
68. **state**] high place. Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*
69. **Stands on**] Stands upon, to be of consequence to. Alexander Dyce, *A General Glossary to Shakespeare's Works*
69. **defend**] maintain by force. Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*.
69. **debate**] contend with words. Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*
- 68-9. **for my state stands on me . . . debate**] Edmund is saying that his hold of power is consequent on protecting it, not disputation.
69. S.D. *Exit*] (Q, 2917) (F, 2916).
69. S.D. *End of Act IV*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare S.D. *Finis Actus Quarto* in *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, line 470. As all textual scholars know, “The truth, certainly as far as Elizabethan and Jacobean plays are concerned, is that the playwrights did not write [their plays] in five acts – that division was done later by the various editors who worked on their plays.” (“Shakespeare’s Five Act Structure”). [See Appendix B.]



Video 41. English civil war drum calls, played by the drummers of the Marquess of Winchesters Regiment.

**Interlude**] Ed. *Scena Secunda*. (F, 2917). Scene 23 in Quarto. [See Appendix B.] I lifted the term “Interlude” from Beaumont and Fletcher’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, “Interlude 1” (p. 243). What I am calling an “Interlude” in *King Lear* is a colorful march of French soldiers across the stage (or possibly from one of the two comparatively large doorways located on the ground level on either side of the “tiring house”), accompanied by loud drums and a bagpipe player. The music is crucial to the theatrical experience, not only in shaping the emotions of the audience, but as a segue into the final scene: it signals *the passage of time*. Obviously, Edmund cannot leave the stage saying that he is going to murder Lear and Cordelia after the battle (F, 2916), and then immediately turn around with them his captives, the battle fought and won (F, 2940).

“The Italian word *intermezzo* means ‘in the middle’, as does the term *intermedio* that pre-dated it. The first recorded *intermedi* occur in Italian court theatres in the 15th century, where they

served the eminently practical function of smoothing over scene changes, or even simply helping the audience distinguish one act from the next. An early *intermedio* could be just music – offstage for added effect – but soon dance and stage drama (on convenient allegorical themes) were added to the mix. As often happens, though, for many spectators this kind of ‘filling in’ soon began to upstage the main event.” (BBC Music Magazine).

S.D. *Alarum within*] *Alarum within*. (F, 2918); *Alarum* (Q1, 2917) *Alarum*. (Q2, 2917) See What did an ”alarum” sound like? See also “Shakespeare and Music/Use of Musical Stage Directions” by Edward Woodall Naylor.

S.D. *Bagpiper plays*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare stage direction in *Captain Thomas Stukeley*, “*Drum soundeth and a Bagpipe*” (Internet Archive). Cf. also S.D. “*Bagpiper plays*,” James Shirley, *Hyde Park Act IV*. 239. W. H. Grattan Flood writes in the *Story of the Bagpipe*, p. 63, “A French military officer, in 1549, describing the skirmish carried on near Edinburgh in that year, mentions ‘fourteen or fifteen thousand Scots, including the savages that accompanied the Earl of Argyll.’ These ‘wild Scots’ or ‘savages’ as he writes, ‘encouraged themselves to arms by the sound of their bagpipes.’”



Video 42. "Bagpipes of War"

In my judgment, the loud drone of the **Great Highland bagpipe** gives emotional gravitas to the procession of France’s army, as demonstrated in *Bagpipes of War*. [See video 265.] “‘The great pipe’ is a type of bagpipe native to Scotland, and the Scottish analogue to the **Great Irish Warpipes**. It has acquired widespread recognition through its usage in the British military and in pipe bands throughout the world.”



Figure 270. “An armed company of the kerne, carrying halberds and pikes and led by a piper.” *The Image of Irelande*, by John Derrick, published in 1581.

[T]he existence of the bagpipes before the first century is thought to be documented by the Greek playwright Aristophanes in his work “*The Acharnians*” where he wrote, “You pipers who are here from Thebes, with bone pipes blow the posterior of a dog,” there is no other solid indication until the first century when a very famous piper came to rule Rome. Nero considered himself a good piper as well as many other things, he even had the bagpipes put on a coin. “They say he can...play the aulos both with his mouth and also with his armpit, a big bag being thrown under it, in order that he might escape the disfigurement of Athens,” Dio Chrysostom wrote in 115 AD. This was one of the first positive references to the bagpipes. Nero also used bagpipes to inspire his troops before battle. (“*The History of the Highland Bagpipe*.”)

S.D. *Enter with Drum and Colours*] *Enter with Drumme and Colours* (F, 2918). Not in Q.

S.D. *Cordelia with her father in her hand*] “*Cordelia with her Father in her hand*” (Q1, 2918-

19). “*Cordelia with her Father in her hand.*” (Q2, 2918.1). Not in F.

S.D. *Lear’s Knight*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *Soldiers, over the stage, and exeunt*] (F, 2918-19). *Enter the powers of France over the stage,* (Q1, 2917-19). *Enter the powers of France over the stage,* (Q2, 2917) See Appendix B.

S.D. *Alarum and retreat sounded within*] Ed. *Alarum and Retreat within* (F, 2926). *Alarum and retreat.* (Q, 2925). *OED. 5.a.* “The signal to retreat in battle. Also: a drum beat played to keep soldiers in step while retreating. Chiefly in **to sound** (also **blow, hear,** etc.) **the retreat** and variants. Compare “Soone after by his **bagpipers** [he] sounded the retraite.” (Holland tr. W. Camden *Britannia*. II. 136, 1610). **Retreat** is “a frequent direction for **sound** (roughly fifty examples) from a **trumpet** or **drum** within to mark a particular stage **battle**, sometimes called for alone, but more often with **alarum**” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 179). “Retreat” is a musical direction. The actors don’t run back across the stage or whatever.



Figure 271. Sculptured Piper in Melrose Abbey.

**ACT V**] Ed. **SCENE I**] Ed. *Scena Tertia* (F, 2937). Scene 24 in Quarto. See Appendix B.

S.D. *The British Camp near Dover*] Malone; not in Q, F.

S.D. *The Platform*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

S.D. *Enter Edmund, with Lear and Cordelia guarded by two officers, Captain*] Ed. *Enter Edmund, with Lear and Cordelia prisoners* (Q1, 2939). *Enter Edmund, with Lear and Cordelia prisoners* (Q2, 2939). *Enter in conquest with Drum and Colours, Edmund, Lear, and Cordelia, as prisoners, Souldiers, Captaine.* (F, 2938-39).

Edmund does not enter with pomp and ceremony but on the sly. He certainly does not want to call attention to the whereabouts of his captives. He cannot risk his murderous conversation with the Captain being overheard. Furthermore, Edmund is not the one leading the English forces. The showy entrance with drum and colors is made by Albany. (See note V,i,40,S.D., “*Enter, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril, Albany’s Squire, and Soldiers.*”)

2. **greater pleasures**] wishes of the people of greater authority

3. **censure**] judge, pass judgment on.

3. S.D. *To Lear*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

12. **old tales**] improbable fictions of bygone times (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*).

13. **gilded butterflies**] giddy, beautifully dressed courtiers

13. **rogues**] knaves

16. **take upon**] profess to understand and explain.

16. **mystery of things**] i.e., the arcane. Lear wants to comfort his daughter with thoughts of things they loved doing together, like laughing at the flitty fashionista in court, but also inquiring into the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. As we saw in III,iv, Lear is so passionate himself about philosophy that he tries to strip himself naked in the storm. He goes on to discuss natural philosophy with mad Tom as though the latter was Diogenes of Sinope. See note III,iv, 144, “*Theban.*”



Figure 272. Diogenes (1873), by Jules Bastien-Lepage.

17. **God’s spies**] Ed. Gods Q, F. Spies of “high-judging Jove” (II,iv,225); Hermetic occultists and philosophers who seek to penetrate the abstruse secrets of knowledge. “A hymn to Zeus written about 300 BCE by Cleanthes, a Greek poet and philosopher, is a glorification of the god as a benevolent and foreseeing ruler of the world and of humankind. According to Cleanthes, God has planned the world in accordance with this providence: *For thee this whole vast cosmos, wheeling round/ The earth, obeys, and where thou leadest/ It follows, ruled willingly by thee.*” (Encyclopædia Britannica.)



Figure 273. *The Death of Socrates* by Jacques-Louis David (1787). Metropolitan Museum of Art.

18. **packs and sects**] cabals and factions. Words that connote dissenters. [See Figure 274.]  
18. **great ones**] like Socrates, Boethius, John Ball, Galileo, William Tyndale, and Giordano Bruno, “great ones” who were sent away to prison. [See Figure 273.]  
20. **such sacrifices**] i.e., as in the sacrifice you made to help me



Figure 274. *A Catalogue of the Severall Sects and Opinions in England and other Nations: With a briefe Rehearsall of their false and dangerous Tenents*, a propaganda broadsheet denouncing English dissenters from 1647, including Jesuits, Welsh blasphemers, Arminians, Arians, Adamites, Libertines (Antinomians), Antescripturians, Soul sleepers, Anabaptists, Familists, Seekers, and Divorcers.

21. S.D. *She weeps*] Not in Q, F.  
21. **Have I caught thee**] referring to her weeping.  
22-3. **He that parts us . . . foxes**] Cf. note III,vi,15-16, “*To have a thousand, with red burning spits Come hizzing in upon ‘em.*”  
24. **good years**] viz., time. Compare “*Tempus edax rerum*” (Time, that devours all things) in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* Bk XV:176-198 Pythagoras’s Teachings: The Eternal Flux: “Time itself, also, glides, in its continual motion, no differently than a river . . . And Diana, the moon,

can never have the same or similar form, and is always less today than tomorrow if her orb is waxing, greater if it is waning.” **Goodyear** is defined in the *OED* as an obsolete word used “in exclamations and imprecations, apparently as a euphemism for *devil*. (Compare later euphemisms, as *dickens* and *deuce*)” See *Merry Wives of Windsor*, I,iv, “*We must giue folkes leaue to prate: what the good-ier.*” (F, 509)

24. **flesh and fell**] flesh and skin, i.e. altogether.
26. **Drums sound within**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
26. S.D. **Exeunt Lear and Cordelia, guarded**] Theobald. Exit. (F, 2968). Not in Q.
28. S.D. **Giving him a paper**] Malone. Not in Q, F.
33. **sword**] one who wields a sword, a soldier
34. **Will not bear question**] will not admit discussion; either because it must be done promptly, or because it is too delicate a matter to be expressed in words.
35. **Capt**] *Capt.* (F, 2978). *Cap.* (Q, 2978). Shakespeare is a mischievous playwright, and I don’t think he would have been able to resist doubling the parts of the “Captain” with “the Duke of Burgundy.” The casting is a metatheatrical wink at the audience.
36. **write happy**] style yourself happy.
37. **Carry it so**] manage the affair in such a way that it will appear that Cordelia slew herself.
39. **I cannot draw a cart . . . oats**] (Q, 2981.1-2). Not in F. I’m not a horse.
40. **If it be man’s work**] Toxic masculinity is a central theme of the play.
40. S.D. **Exit**] Steevens; *Exit Captaine.* (F, 2981), not in Q.
40. S.D. **Flourish**] F, 2982
40. S.D. **Enter, in conquest, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Albany’s Squire, English Soldiers, Lear’s Knight and other captives**] Ed. *Flourish. Enter Albany, Gonerill, Regan, Soldiers.* (F. 2982) *Enter Duke, the two Ladies, and others.* (Q, 2982).
40. S.D. **their heads and faces bloody and besmeared with mud and dirt**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *Doctor Faustus*, scene xiii (p.67).
41. S.D. **To Edmund**] Not in Q, F.
41. **strain**] disposition
43. **opposites**] opponents, enemies
44. **I do require them of you**] Albany starts out on the right foot by demanding Lear and Cordelia be released at once from prison. Unfortunately, his masculine pride gets the better of him, and he forgets about the captives: “*Great thing of vs forgot*” (F, 3192). Ironically, they might have been saved but for his ritual observances of chivalry—the Catholic Man Show. (See Matthew Mesley, “Chivalry, Masculinity, and Sexuality,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the Crusades*, pp. 146-164.
45. **merits**] deserts
48. **retention**] confinement
49. **Whose**] i.e., Lear’s.
50. **To pluck the common bosom . . . side**] win the hearts of the common people
51. **impress’d lances**] conscripted lances, i.e. soldiers
57. **quarrels**] causes
57. **in the heat**] before passion has cooled. Edmund is implying that Lear and Cordelia would not get a fair trial under the circumstances. (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works*



*of Shakespeare*, p. 190.)

62. **list**] wish.
64. **spoke so far**] said so much
66. **immediacy**] close proximity, propinquity
69. **your addition**] the titles and offices you have bestowed upon him.
70. **compeers**] equals.
71. **Gon**] (Q, 2011). *Alb.* (F, 3012). Goneril implies that she herself is going to be the one to wed Edmund. She seems to have forgot that the duke of Albany is still very much alive and standing right next to her. Compare the vehement kiss Regan gives Edmund in front of her husband and his bodyguards in III,vii,21.
72. **Jesters do oft prove prophets**] There's many a true word spoken in jest. (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p.191)
75. **From a full-flowing stomach**] with a flood of angry words. "Stomach" is being used in the obsolete sense of "Anger, irritation; malice, ill-will, spite; vexation, pique. (*OED*, 8 †c). "Wordes be but winde, to purge his heate, His stomacke to abate." T. Howell *Newe Sonet* (1568).
75. S.D. **To Edmund**] Not in Q, F.
77. **the walls are thine**] referring to walls of Regan's vagina, which surrender themselves like a vanquished fortress. (Schmidt) qu. Furness, p. 322.
80. **The let-alone**] the power of saying 'Thou shalt not'.
81. **Half-blooded fellow**] i.e., bastard. Albany has lost control of his anger, with fatal consequences for Lear and Cordelia. He is being driven by testosterone.
82. S.D. **To Edmund**] Malone. Not in Q, F.
82. **strike**] strike up.
83. **thee**] Albany uses the second-person singular pronoun as a show of contempt
84. **attaint**] impeachment.
85. **gilded**] meretricious; thinly covered with gold leaf or gold paint
85. S.D. **Pointing to Goneril**] Johnson. Not in Q, F.
87. **subcontracted**] † *transitive*. To cause (a person) to become betrothed for a second time. Cf. *contract* v. I.3b(a). Obsolete. rare. (*OED*, 1.)
88. **banes**] bans of marriage
90. **interlude**] *viz.*, a joke. An *interlude* is defined as "A dramatic or mimic representation, usually of a light or humorous character, such as was commonly introduced between the acts of the long mystery-plays or moralities, or exhibited as part of an elaborate entertainment; hence (in ordinary 17–18th century use) a stage-play, esp. of a popular nature, a comedy, a farce" (*OED*, 1.a.). "Our Comedie or *Enterlude* which we intende to play. Is named Royster Doyster in deede. (N. Udall, *Ralph Roister Doister* (?1566) Prol. sig. A.ij).
92. **prove upon thy person**] to evince or establish as a truth, to demonstrate. Cf., IV,v,92, "*I'll prove it on a giant.*" (F, 2537)
94. S.D. **Throws his gauntlet down at Edmund's feet**] Malone, subst. Not in Q, F. "Today the phrase "throw down the gauntlet" means to challenge or confront someone, but in its earliest use it wasn't meant as a metaphor, but was a physical action intended to issue a formal challenge to a duel. The word itself comes from the French word "gantelet," and referred to

the heavy, armored gloves worn by medieval knights” (“What does it mean to ‘throw down the gauntlet?’” by Elizabethan Harrison). The throwing down of Albany’s gauntlet is a gesture indelibly associated with the medieval Christian institution of knighthood and the codes of chivalry. His "wager of battle” (which is as spectacular as any combat staged in Shakespeare), dramatizes the fundamental Christian idea of Divine Providence, a belief the duke espouses in IV,ii. It is "another species of presumptuous appeals to Providence, under an expectation that Heaven would unquestionably give the victory to the innocent or injured party." [Source: 4 William Blackstone, Commentaries.](#)



Figure 275. Single combat subjected to the judgement of God, 15th century (1849). A 19th century version of an original 15th century manuscript illustration in *Conquetes de Charlemagne*, held at the Bibliothèque Royale de Brussels, Belgium. From *Le Moyen Age et la Renaissance*, by Paul Lacroix, Ferdinand Séré and A Rivaud, Volume I (Paris, 1849).

94. *make*] show or allege that something is the case.

96. S.D. *Regan falls down in a swoon*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *The Alchemist* (4.3.62), “*Subtle falls down in a swoon*” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*. p. 223).



Figure 276. *Jeanne III of Navarre Buying Poisoned Gloves from Catherine de Medici's Parfumeur, P.C, Comte, c. 1858.*

96. **Sick, O, sick**] The poisoning of Regan is not dramatized on stage. It is left to the audience to imagine how Goneril accomplished the deed. "Though the history of gloves savors of romance, there is every reason to believe that they have sometimes been used with sinister motives, as a large trade was done at one time in poison gloves, delicately performed, to conceal their deadly purpose” ([Gloves in British fashion history.](#)) A popular rumor in Shakespeare’s time was that [Jeanne d’Albret](#) had been poisoned by [Catherine de’Medici](#), who allegedly sent her a pair of perfumed gloves, skillfully poisoned by her perfumer, [René Bianchi](#), a fellow Florentine. [See Figure 276.] Dessen and Thomson cite instances of poisoned gloves in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **poison** (p. 167) and **glove** (101).

The Borgias specialized in disposing of cardinals, bishops, and nobles by using several kinds of poisons including arsenic, strychnine, cantharidin, and aconite incorporated in drinks, clothes, *gloves*, book pages, flowers, and drugs...A primary reason for the popularity of arsenic as a poison was that it has no flavor or odor and when mixed into food or drink, it is tasteless. It seems that *cantarella* was a complex mixture containing arsenic combined with alkaloids of putrefaction emitted by organic substances in the later stages of decay. (“[Toxicology in the Borgias period: The mystery of Cantarella poison](#)”, Marianna Karamanou et al, 2018.)

It is merely insinuated from the glove/hand motif that Goneril used this method to kill her

sister. Because most poisoners want to go undetected, my thinking is that Goneril would not leave behind any signs of how she went about administering the “*medicine*” (F, 3044). That is to say, Regan would not tear off her gloves as Heracles does the [Shirt of Nessus](#). The latter falls down in a swoon. (See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **swoon, sound**, p. 233.) Dr. Michael F. Hughes, Supervisory Toxicologist of United States Environmental Protection Agency, confirms that “As far as poisoning by arsenic in gloves, I am skeptical if this could occur. While arsenic can be absorbed through the skin, it would take a very large dose and the gloves would have to be worn for days at a time for a lethal effect. Another scenario could be transfer of arsenic from the gloves to the skin, and then hand to mouth activity. This would cause the gastrointestinal distress. But again this would have to be a very large dose.” (Personal communication 11.17.23.) It is now known that d’Albret’s death was the result of tuberculosis.

97. S.D. *Aside*] Rowe. Not in Q, F.

97. **medicine**] Most likely, Goneril poisoned Regan with arsenic, which was used as a medicine in Shakespeare’s day. Among its many applications was to [treat syphilis](#). By the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, white arsenic was widely known as ‘ratsbane’. Edgar refers to it in III,iv,53 as a method of suicide, “*set Rats-bane by his Porredge*” (F, 1836).

98. **exchange**] *viz.*, response.

98. S.D. *Takes up Albany’s gauntlet*] Ed. *Throws down a glove*. Malone. Not in Q, F. Edmund *takes up* the gauntlet. “In an age when chivalry and personal honor [i.e. masculine pride] were para-mount, throwing a gauntlet at the feet of an enemy or opponent was considered a grave insult that could only be answered with personal combat, and the offended party was expected to “take up the gauntlet” to acknowledge and accept the challenge.” (Elizabeth Harrison, [History.com](#).)



**Video 43. The Sounding of Assisi’s Medieval Trumpets.**

102. **A herald, ho!**] (F, 3051); *Bast. A Herald, ho! a Herald*. (Q, 3051). A herald trumpet, *i.e.*, a musician costumed as an actor. (See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **trumpet**, pp. 237-38.) In the Middle Ages the [buisine](#) was commonly used for military and ceremonial purposes. [See [Video 43](#).] In his discussion of “Hired Men” (Chpt IV) Bentley devotes a section to “Trumpeters and Drummers”. He notes that “The music historian, Sternfeld, points out that ‘The trumpeters belonged to a special guild and did not play in combination with other instruments’” (*The Profession of Player in Shakespeare’s Time*, p. 77).

106. *Enter a Herald Trumpeter*] Ed. *Enter a Herald*. after “firmly” (line 102) (F, 3050); not in Q.

106. S.D. *Exit Regan, led*] Theobald. Not in Q, F.

107. **Come hither, Herald.**—] Ed. *Come hether Herald*, (Q, 3058); *Come hither Herald*, (F, 3057). It is uncertain who Albany is addressing: his Squire, a Herald Trumpeter or a “Herald”—a new character charged with formally announcing and conducting the trial by combat like the “Argentan Herald” in *The Last Duel* (YouTube, 0:42/2:10). What is important dramatically at this moment is **The Spectacle**: the loud, virtuosic fanfare, which requires the

skills of a musician. [See note V,i,102, “A herald, ho!”] Since the “Herald” in *King Lear* manifestly knows nothing about heraldry—he must be told exactly what to do and say by the duke—it logically follows that Albany is talking to a Guild musician, who he motions to the center of the stage. He then gives his young Squire (an apprentice actor who knows how to project his voice and enunciate words) a paper to read, in which Edgar is commanded to appear by the sound of the third trumpet.

107. S.D. *To Squire*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

107. **Let the trumpet sound**] Albany is giving orders to his Squire, who then commands the Herald Trumpeter to sound the instrument.

108. **And read out this**] The Squire seems to have no knowledge of what a Herald does, and must be given explicit instructions. Obviously, the Herald Trumpeter cannot play the instrument and read from a paper at the same time.

108. S.D. *Hands him a paper*] Not in Q, F.

109. **Squire**] Ed. *Cap.* (Q1, 3059) (Q2, 3057.1). Not in F.

109. **Sound, trumpet**] *Sound Trumpet?* (Q2, 3057.1). *Sound trumpet?* (Q, 3059). Not in F. David Blackadder discusses the “natural trumpet” that was used by musicians in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in his video below. [See Video 44.]



Video 44. OAE Principal Trumpet David Blackadder introduces the Baroque or Natural Trumpet.

109. S.D. **Trumpet sounds**] (F, 3058). Not in Q. The Herald trumpeter skillfully sounds a call on the instrument.

110. S.D. **Squire reads**] Ed. *Herald Reads.* (F, 3058). Not in Q. *Her.* (Q1, 3060, Q2, 3060).

115. **Squire**] Ed. F, *Bast.* (Q, 3064); not in F.

115. **Sound!**] *Sound? Againe?* (Q1, 3064, Q2, 3064); not in F.

115. S.D. **First trumpet**] *1 Trumpet.* (F, 3063); not in Q.

116. **Squire**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

116. **Again!**] *Againe.* (F, 3064); not in Q.

116. S.D. **Second trumpet**] *2 Trumpet.* (F, 3064). Not in Q.

117. **Squire**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

117. **Again!**] *Againe.* (F, 3065); Not in Q.

117. S.D. **Third trumpet**] *3 Trumpet.* (F, 3065). Not in Q.

117. S.D. **Trumpet answers within**] (F, 3066). Not in Q.

117. S.D. **Enter Edgar in armor, with his beaver shut**] Ed. *Enter Edgar armed* (F, 3067). *Enter Edgar at the third sound, with a trumpet before him.* (Q, 3065). Compare *Richard II*, I,iii, S.D., “Mowbray in Armor” (F, 301-2) In Act V scene iii of John Marston’s play *The Tragedy of Sophonisba* (1606), there is a direction “*Massinissa beaver shut*” (p. 53). Massinissa speaks 22 lines of dialogue with his beaver down, so it can be logically reasoned that Edgar does the same when the character makes his dazzling appearance in armor in *King Lear*—quite a contrast from his entrance in Act I scene ii “unbraced and carelessly dressed.” (See note I,ii,

- 126, S.D., “*reading on a book.*”) He cannot be using his “real” voice because Edmund would recognize it.
117. S.D. *a trumpet before him*] (Q, 3067); not in F. Edgar’s entrance is aggrandized by a trumpeter “*before him,*” as indicated in the quarto, probably another business.
118. S.D. *To Squire*] Ed. Not in Q, F.
119. *Squire*] Ed. *Her.* (Q, 3070); *Her.* (F, 3070).
122. **canker-bit**] eaten by the caterpillar or rose slugs, the larvae of moths and butterflies or sawflies
124. **cope**] encounter.
128. S.D. *He draws his sword*] Not in Q, F.
129. **Behold it is the privilege of mine honors**] It is the privilege of my knighthood to draw my sword, as this which you now behold, for the purpose of challenging a traitor, and it is my privilege to have such a challenge accepted.
130. **My oath and my profession**] of the oath I swore when I was made a knight, and of my knighthood itself.
131. **Maugre**] In spite of
132. **victor**] victorious
132. **fire-new**] straight from the fire or forge
136. **upward**] top
137. **descent**] the lowest part, i.e. the sole
138. **toad spotted**] stained with infamy, as a toad is spotted and venomous.
141. **In wisdom**] because he was not bound to fight with a man of lower rank.
143. **Say**] show
144. **safe and nicely**] cautiously and punctiliously, with the letter of the law on my side.
144. **delay**] refuse
145. **I disdain and spurn**] I scorn to insist on my legal rights under the code of knighthood. Edmund changes the construction in the middle of the sentence (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare* p. 195).
147. **hell-hated**] hated as much as hell.
148. **Which**] these treasons
148. **for**] since.
148. **glance**] glide.



Figure 277. Codex Wallerstein, (Plate 214) showing a half-sword thrust against a Mordau move .

150. **Where they shall rest for ever**] His success in the combat will prove that Edgar is the traitor, and the treasons will remain with the victim (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, p. 196)
150. S.D. *He draws his sword*] Ed. Not in Q, F.
150. S.D. *Alarums. They fight. Edmund falls*] Capell, subst. Alarums. Fights. F (3107). Not in Q.



See What did an "alarum" sound like? See also "Shakespeare and Music/Use of Musical Stage Directions" by Edward Woodall Naylor.



Figure 278. Pollaxe combat depicted in the *Fiore Furlan dei Liberi da Premariacco*, circa 1410.

S.D. *They fight*] Until now, there have been no proper sword fights in the play, and my guess is that the battle between Edgar and Edmund was sensational and bloody. From the many references to chivalry, it would appear that Edgar is wearing armor, and carrying either a poleaxe or a longsword, rather than a rapier. See *Ponderous, Cruel and Mortal: A Review of Medieval Poleaxe Technique from Surviving Treatises of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Brian Price. See also *A Brief Introduction to Armoured Longsword Combat*, Matt Anderson and Shane Smith.

[amandycat](#) writes on Reddit, "We do not know whether sword fights on stage generally attempted to appear convincing and real, or whether stage fighting had its own conventions without any expectation of verisimilitude. (Charles Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous: Swordfighting in Shakespeare's Plays*, 1992.) Few contemporary sources discuss this at all, let alone tell us whether these stage fights were realistic. We do know that some actors, like Richard Tarlton were talented fencers, but have no way of knowing whether this was a talent that was put to use on stage to enhance realism. It is worth bearing in mind that we do know that animal blood was more than likely used on the stage to produce realistic special effects, so there must have been some expectations of realism from the stage in other areas (Farah Karim-Cooper and Lucy Munro, *Shakespeare's Globe Theatre History Seminar Stage Blood: A Roundtable*, 13 July 2006) ... Edelman sees Shakespeare's substantial use of on-stage fencing/sword fighting as particularly unusual for the period. He says; 'However prevalent the tradition of fencing in the playhouse may have been at the time Shakespeare began his career as a dramatist, it borders on the remarkable that he was the first to exploit this tradition to any significant extent. While stage combat certainly existed before Shakespeare, it is also true that most poets, at least as far as can be determined from extant texts, preferred much of their fighting to be done offstage.'" Edelman, *Brawl Ridiculous*, p.11.



Figure 279. Louis de Gruuthuse's copy of the *Deeds of Sir Gillion de Trazegnies in the Middle East*, in French, illuminated manuscript on vellum [southern Netherlands (Antwerp or perhaps Bruges), dated 1464] - Photo Sotheby's.

151. **Gon**] conj. Theobald. *Alb.* (Q, 3107) (F, 3107). When the line is exclaimed by Goneril, the audience presupposes that it takes the form of *pathos*, an appeal to Edgar's emotions. She wants Edmund's life to be spared because she loves him. Theoretically, she runs over to her vanquished lover and kisses him. However, the words she speaks, as he lays dying in her arms, don't exactly tug at the heartstrings. She comforts Edmund with an *enthymeme* based on logic

and rhetoric, like the empty words a lawyer might say to a client: “*By th'law of Warre, thou wast not bound to answer / An vnknowne opposite: thou art not vanquish'd, / But cozend, and beguild.*” (F, 3109-1). They show a complete dissociation of her thoughts and feelings. She appears quite mad.

In defense of the reading in the quartos and First Folio, Samuel Johnson writes that “[Albany] desires that Edmund’s life might be spared at present, only to obtain his confession, and to convict him openly by his own letter” (qu. *Furness, Alb.*, p. 329). However, this interpretation subverts the whole point of a wager of battle which is decided by God. The trial is over. Divine Judgment has been rendered. Albany doesn’t even bother to summon a doctor, but leaves Edmund to bleed to death while he presents Goneril with evidence of her guilt.

151. **To Edgar**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

151. S.D. **She rushes to Edmund’s side**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

151. **practice**] treachery

154. S.D. **She kisses Edmund vehemently**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

155. S.D. **To Edmund**] Ed Not in Q, F.

156. S.D. **To Goneril**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

155. **Hold, sir**] F (1.3113); not in Q (1.3115). Halt, stop. Edmund is kissing Goneril.

156. S.D. **He gives Goneril her letter**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

157. S.D. **She tears it**] subst. Rowe S.D. *Tearing the letter*. Cf. *Troil.* V,3,S.D., “*He tears the letter, and throws it into the wind.*” (Modern, 3234). Goneril doesn’t bother looking at her letter before tearing it up and throwing it into the wind. Albany is being sarcastic when he says, “*I perceiue you know’t.*” (Q, 3115).

160. **Gon**] (Q, 3119). *Bast.* (F, 3119)

160. S.D. **Exit**] *Exit. Gonorill.* (Q, 3119); after *for’t* (line 159) (F. 3117).

161. **To Squire**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

161. S.D. **Exit Albany’s Squire**] Ed. *Exit an Officer.* Capell. Not in Q, F.

162. S.D. **To Edgar**] Not in Q, F.

166. **Let’s exchange charity**] Let me forgive you for your crimes against me, as you have forgiven me for killing you (Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*).

166. S.D. **He puts up his beaver**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, **beaver**, p.24.

170-73. **The gods are just...cost him his eyes**] Edgar attests to the idea that the destiny of human-kind is decided by the gods according to one’s merits and demerits. His words help qualify the meaning of Cordelia death: “*As Flies to wanton Boyes, are we to th’Gods,/ They kill vs for their sport*” (F, 2221-22). See note V,i.325, “*Speak what we feel.*”

172. **got**] begot.

174. **The wheel is come full circle**] See note I,i,189, “*France.*”

175. **gait**] bearing. See note IV,vii,37. S.D., “*wearing a hooded cloak.*”

178. **Worthy**] noble.

182. **O, that my heart may burst**] See Appendix B.

186. **shift**] change.

189. **rings**] sockets

192. **fault**] mistake.
194. **success**] result of an action, either good or bad.
196. **flaw'd**] cracked, damaged by flaw.
203. **dissolve**] melt in tears.
204. **period**] highest point, limit.
205. **but**] only
206. **To amplify too much**] if I were to describe it in detail.
207. **top extremity**] go beyond the extreme limit.
208. **big**] loud
209. **estate**] condition
213. **As**] as if
216. **puissant**] powerful.
216. **the strings of life**] heartstrings. Kent is dying.
218. **tranc'd**] senseless.
200. **And shall perchance to good**] “Perchance”? What is keeping Edmund from revealing his plot then and there? See note V,i,243., “Some good.”
221. **Enter Albany's Squire, with a bloody knife**] Ed. *Enter one with a bloudie knife.* (Q, 3169).  
*Enter a Gentleman.* (F 3169).
- 222, 223, 226. **Squire**] Ed. *Gent.* (Q, 3170). *Gen.* (F, 3170).
224. **heart of—**] (Q, 3175) (F, 3174-75). The young Squire is overcome with pity.
229. S.D. **Enter Kent**] (F, 3182). After *allow* (Q, 3187).
231. S.D. **To Squire**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
- 231-2. **This judgment of the heavens . . . Touches us not with pity**] Albany's complete lack of pity is juxtaposed with his young Squire's unmanliness.
232. S.D. **Exit Squire**] Ed. Not in Q, F. *Exit Edgar.* Malone. *Exeunt Edgar, and Others.* Capell. *Exit Messenger.* Theobald. *Exit a Captain.* Schmidt. *Exit Gentleman.* Cam. See H.H. Furness, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*, p. 337



Figure 280. Detail of a miniature of Dido committing suicide as Aeneas sails away, c 1490 – 1500, Harley MS 4425, f. 117v, *The Roman de la Rose*.

233. **compliment**] ceremony.
236. **forgot**] Albany may have “forgot” Lear and Cordelia, but the omniscient audience hasn't. We know what the duke does not,—that Edmund has issued an order to murder them in prison. From our POV, the trial by combat serves only to procrastinate the first thing that needed *doing*. Albany's priorities were misdirected by anger and masculine pride. See note V,i,44, “*I do require them of you.*”
237. S.D. **The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in**] (Q, 3194); *Gonerill and Regans bodies brought out.* (F, 3184).
237. S.D. **by Albany's Squire and others**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

238. **object**] sight

239. **Yet Edmund was beloved**] “Edmund’s sole thought is of himself. But it is a brilliant stroke to reveal here that Edmund’s career of crime was caused by his feelings that he was not loved” (Heilman, op. cit., p. 234), qu. Muir, *KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare* p. 201.

241. **after**] afterwards

243. **Some good**] For Edmund, Death is the only effective mode of persuasion. Shakespeare makes a point to show that Edgar’s words in themselves do not cause Edmund to reverse his order to have Lear and Cordelia murdered. It is only after he *sees* the dead bodies of Goneril and Regan that he makes the choice to spare them, “*Despight of mine owne Nature.*” (F, 3201). His decision is purely a matter of free will, a subject of philosophical debate since the days of ancient Greece. See note I,ii,1, “*Nature.*”

244. **Despite**] In defiance. Cf. *Taming of the Shrew*, “*An Onion ... Shall in despight enforce a waterie eie*” (F, 137-9)

248. S.D. **To Edmund**] Not in Q, F.

251. S.D. **Exit Albany’s Squire**] Not in Q, F.

255. **fordid**] destroyed

256. S.D. **Edmund is borne off**] Theobald. Not in Q, F.

257-265. **You lords and noble friends . . . see**] Ed. After “*That’s but a trifle here*” (Q1, 3269), (Q2, 3269), (F, 3268).

260. **his**] Ed. *this* (Q, 3270); (F, 3271).

261. S.D. **To Edgar and Kent**] Malone. Not in Q, F.

262. **With boot and such addition**] with such additional titles and rights.

262. **honors**] noble deeds.

263-265. **All friends shall taste the wages of their virtue...deserving**] Compare note I,i,52, “*Where Nature doth with merit challenge.*”

265. **see, see**] Albany reacts like the rest of us, with shock and horror at the revelation of Cordelia’s death. He looks the Heavens, and denounces God: “*Fall and cease*” (F, 3226). “Compare note V,i.310-11, “*Looke on her? Looke her lips,/ Looke there, looke there*” (F, 3282-83).

265. S.D. **Re-enter Lear, with Cordelia dead in his arms**] *Enter Lear with Cordelia in his armes.* (Q, 3216), (F, 3216).



Figure 281. Judi Dench as Hecuba in Branagh's Hamlet (1996).

266. **Howl, howl, howl**] In theory, the allusion here is to Hecuba, whose tragedy came to define the genre in 16<sup>th</sup> century Europe. “Hecuba, a wretch forlorn and captive, when she saw Polyxena first slaughtered, and her son, her Polydorus, on the wild sea-beach next met the mourning woman’s view, then reft of sense did she bark like a dog; such mighty power had grief to wrench her soul.” Dante, *Inferno* Canto xxx, 16-2. (Translation after Cary (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1914). If Shakespeare was not familiar with Dante, he was well versed in Arthur Golding’s translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (1598) where Hecuba’s grief robs

her of human speech, and she barks like a dog:

The Thracians at theyr Tyrannes harme for anger wexing wood,  
Began to scare the Trojane wyves with darts and stones. Anon  
Queene Hecub ronning at a stone, with gnarring seazd theron,  
And wirryed it beetweene her teeth. And as shee opte her chappe  
To speake, in stead of speeche shee barkt. (Page:Metamorphoses (Ovid,  
1567).djvu/356)

“Hecuba features especially prominently in Shakespeare’s writings [i.e., “What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,/ That he should weep for her?” says Hamlet (*Hamlet*, II.ii.1599-1600)]; he alludes to her fifteen times by name, as well as once by status (“the Queene of Troy”, *Titus Andronicus*, F, 159) and once indirectly through a page’s misidentification, “Marry (my Lord) *Althea* dream’d, she was deliuer’d of a Firebrand” (F, 871-2). (“Shakespeare’s Myths”, Tanya Pollard.)

“*Hecuba* was the first Greek tragedy to be translated into Latin (with fragments as early as c. 1362), and is the only extant tragedy demonstrably studied prior to the sixteenth century (see Mossman 1995; 220-221). Erasmus’ 1506 translation made it the first Greek tragedy to be printed in Latin alongside his *Iphigenia at Aulis*. Erasmus’ accessible translation facilitated the first known post-classical production of *Hecuba* at the Collège du Porc, Belium c. 1514, and inspired a proliferation of Latin and vernacular translations across Europe. *Hecuba* became the Renaissance’s most frequently translated and printed Greek tragedy, as well as operating as a key reference in discussions of drama (Mossman 1995: 220-221; Heath 1987: 40-43). As Malcolm Heath puts it, ‘[f]or the critics in the Renaissance, Hecuba was indeed a paradigmatic tragedy, perhaps the outstanding piece in the Greek tragic corpus.’ (1987:40). In consequence, as Pollard shows, Hecuba functioned culturally as “an icon of tragedy” (2012: 1060). In England’s grammar schools, the Hecuba of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (Book 13) was required reading, where she was memorized, internalized, translated, and dissected at length” (*A Handbook to the Reception of Greek Drama*, edited by Betine Van Syl Smit.)

270. S.D. ***He lays her down***] Foakes. Not in Q, F.

271. **stone**] a mirror of polished stone or crystal.



Figure 282. A painting by Nicholas Hilliard of Henry Percy, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northumberland, c. 1590-1595, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Hanging from a branch behind him is a globe of the earth balanced with feather. The Latin word ‘TANTI’ written beside it implies that man’s rational, scientific knowledge of the world is equal to a feather (viz. *nothing*). See note V,i,273, feather.

272. S.D. ***Lear takes a feather from his bonnet***] Ed. Not in Q, F. It was standard for gentlemen to wear hats outdoors and indoors during this period. [See Figure 283.] “The unbonneted Hamlet familiar to modern audiences is a creation of indoor theatre and fourth-wall staging . . . where everyone goes hatless” (Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*). It is only throughout Act III that Lear goes “*unbonneted*” (Q, 1622.7) or “*bare-headed*” (F, 1714).



Gloucester tells Regan, “*The Sea, with such a storme as his bare head, In Hell-blacke-night indur'd*” (F, 2130-31).



Figure 283. Charles Blount, Duke of Devonshire, c.1603/6, British Museum.

In keeping with Lear’s histrionic characterization, he uses a feather to test to see if Cordelia is still alive. (Cf. 2 *Hen IV*. Folio 1, ll.5254-5255 “*by his Gates of breath, There lyes a dowlney feather, which stirres not.*”) It is worth noting that Nicholas Hilliard uses the image as a symbol in his miniature of Henry Percy, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northumberland. Hanging from a branch in the background is a globe of the earth balanced with feather. The Latin word ‘TANTI’ written beside it implies that man’s scientific knowledge of the world is equal to *nothing*. [See Figure 282.]

272. **promis’d end**] the Last Judgment, the end of the world.

273. **Fall and cease**] Albany looks to the Heavens and curses the gods. The injustice of Cordelia’s death causes him to renounce his belief in Divine Providence. He henceforth stops moralizing, and tacitly stands aside in a state of utter disillusionment. But isn’t this open blasphemy? The remark can be explained as an allusion to the Titanomochy, the fall of Cronus and the Titans in Greek mythology. Edmund Spenser refers to it in *The Faerie Queene*. (See Jessica Dell, “*Divided They Fall: (De)constructing the Triple Hecate in Spenser's Cantos of Mutabilitie,*” 2012.)



Figure 284. Detail from *The Fall of the Titans*, Cornelis van Haarlem, c. 1588-1590, Statens Museum, Copenhagen.

As a theoretical matter, based the research of G.E. Bentley (*The Profession of Player in Shakespeare’s time, 1590-1642*), it might be that the only roles played by the “Principall Actors” listed in the First Folio were Lear, Gloucester, Edgar, Edmund, Kent, and the dukes of Albany and Cornwall. The rest of the parts were likely assigned to apprentice players. By process of elimination, it can be inferred that William Shakespeare acted the part of Albany.

276. S.D. **Kneeling**] Theobald. Not in Q, F.

281-2. **ever soft, Gentle and low**] These words are likely metatheatrical, and allude to the voice of the boy actor playing Cordelia. It is being contrasted with the high-pitched squeaks of “*little eyases*” referred to in *Hamlet* (II,ii,1386-87) .

285. **falchion**] a light sword, with the point a little bent inwards. Lear’s masculine pride remains undiminished to the end.

286. **them**] (Q, 3242); *him* (F, 3242)

287. **crosses**] his arms.

287. **spoil me**] i.e. as a swordsman

287. S.D. **To Kent**] Not in Q, F.

289-90. **If fortune brag of two . . . behold**] ‘If Fortune . . . should brag of two persons, one of whom she had highly elevated, and the other she had woefully depressed, we now behold the latter’ (Mason). Quoted by Muir in *The Arden Shakespeare*, p. 202.

291. **dull sight**] Lear is referring not only to his failing eyesight but his slowness in seeing the true nature of things.

296. **I’ll see that straight**] *OED*. 2.a. “Not crooked; free from curvature, bending, or angularity.” Compare *Shake-speares Sonnets* (Quarto 1, 1609), “*Beare thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart goe wide*” (Q1, 2100). Compare note III,vi, 20, “*Straight.*”

297. **first**] beginning

297. **difference and decay**] change and decline of fortune

299. **No nor man else**] Kent says he is the only man present who is welcome by Death because he is soon to die himself. The scene is no place for the living.



Figure 285. The Dance of Death, Hans Holbein the Younger. c. 1538.

300. **fordone**] destroyed.

301. **desperately**] from despair.

302. S.D. **To Edgar**] Not in Q, F.

303. S.D. **Enter Albany’s Squire**] Ed. *Enter a Captaine*. (Q1, 3265). *Enter Captain*. (Q2, 3265).  
*Enter a Messenger* (F, 3264)

304. **Squire**] Ed. *Capt*. (Q1, 3265). *Cap*: (Q2, 3266). *Mess*. (F, 3265).

304. **Edmund is dead**] See note V,i,304, “*That’s but a trifle here.*”

304. **That’s but a trifle here**] Compare Albany’s reaction to the news of Edmund’s death with that of Goneril’s and Regan’s: “*This iudgement of the Heauens that makes vs tremble. / Touches vs not with pitty*” (F, 3185-86). Compare also note IV,ii,46-50, “*If that the heauens ... like monsters of (the deepe)*” (Q1, 2302.15-17.)

305. **fool**] In the moments before his death, Lear sees Cordelia and the Fool as one Platonic Form: “divine love,” or what the Greeks called *agape*. (See note I,iv,86, *Fool*.) As noted in I,iv,86,S.D., “*Enter Fool*,” the sighting of a double was regarded as an omen, usually for impending death.

306. **rat**] A rat is more favored than Cordelia because it is alive: “*Ripenesse is all*” (F, 2935).

308. **Never, never, never, never, never**] Shakespeare places great emphasis on the **permanence** of Cordelia’s death: There will be no resurrection; no place for her in heaven; no grace. [See Figure 289.]

309. S.D. **To Edgar**] Ed. *To Kent*. Gill (*Oxford School Shakespeare*). Not in Q, F. Lear summons Edgar to help him unbutton his shirt due to the rising pain in his chest. As noted (I,i,187,S.D., *France*), the role of Edgar is doubled with the King of France. Thus the lifeless body of Cordelia is framed by father and husband, representing *storge* (στοργή) and *eros* (ἔρως). The sole reason for Shakespeare’s moving Edgar over to Lear at this critical juncture is a

metaphysical one: they form a triangle. Kent, Albany, and his young Squire form a second triangle. (See Rebecca Zorach, *The Passionate Triangle*.)



Figure 286. Vitruvian Man, Leonardo da Vinci, c. 1490, Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy.

During the Renaissance, geometric forms and/or ratios were given certain esoteric significance and meanings. The ancient Greeks believed that there is a close association in mathematics between beauty and truth. They believed there to be three "ingredients" to beauty: symmetry, proportion, and harmony. "Beauty was an object of love and something that was to be imitated and reproduced in their lives, architecture, education (*paideia*), and politics." Proportion's relation to beauty and goodness is stressed throughout Plato's dialogues. He writes in (*Philebus*. 64d–65a): "if we cannot capture the good in one form, we will have to take hold of it in a conjunction of three: beauty, proportion and truth. Let us affirm that these should by right be treated as a unity and be held responsible for what is in the mixture, for goodness is what makes the mixture good in itself."

309. **button**] Presumably Lear is wearing a doublet with buttons down the front. A common symptom of a heart attack is constriction in the chest. See notes II,iv,117, "*O me! My heart, my rising heart!*" and IV,v,94: "*O, well flown bird! I'th'clout!*" See "What is Cardiac Arrest?"
- 310-11. **Do you see this? Look on her, . . . there!**] (F, 3282). Not in quartos. Lear does not die blissfully thinking Cordelia is breathing again, imaging an afterlife. Whatever awaits father and daughter after death, he knows there will be no happy reunion; no warm hugging; no kissing. Lear's last words remind me of Mamie Till, the mother of Emmett Till, a 14-year old African-American child who was savagely murdered in 1955 by white supremacists. She demanded a public funeral with an open casket for people *to look* at the life that was lost to her: "I wanted the world *to see* what they did to my baby." [See Figure 21.] That is what Lear wants to *do* at this moment. He wants us *to see* what we have done to his baby.
311. S.D. **Clutching his heart**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See also II,iv,117 and IV,v,94.
311. **O, o, o, o, o**] (Q2, 3283). O, o, o. (Q1, 3281). Not in F.
311. S.D. **He dies**] (F, 3283). Not in Q.
312. **Kent**] (F, 3285) *Lear*. (Q1, 3285) *Lear*. (Q2, 3285)
313. **ghost**] departing spirit
319. S.D. **The bodies of Goneril and Regan are taken out**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Probably on a litter. See *The Prophetess*, I,iii, "Enter ... with Litter." (p.11).
314. **tough**] obdurate
319. S.D. **To Kent and Edgar**] Johnson. Not in Q, F.
321. S.D. **To Albany**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
323. **Edg**] (F, 3298). *Duke*. (Q, 3298). Albany is struck dumb after the revelation of Cordelia's death, and is at a complete loss of words.
323. S.D. **To Albany**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

324. **Speak what we feel]** Edgar feels himself as culpable as Albany does for the deaths of Lear and Cordelia. Had he forgone his protracted narration of events, action might have been taken to save them. (See note V,i, 44. “*I do require them of you.*”) He must also regret ever thinking that the death of his father was “*just.*” (See note V,i,170-73, “*The gods are just...*”) The penultimate couplet is said as a *self-reproach*. He is not rebuffing the duke.

324. S.D. **The bodies of Lear and Cordelia are placed on a bier]** Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare “*Enter Angelina with the bodies of Ferdinand and Violanta on a bier (Four Plays or Moral Representations in One, p. 333.)* See also *Hamlet*, IV.v, “They bore him bare fac’d on the Beer,” (F, 2917).



Figure 287. “The Burial of the Head of the Family” (*Das Begräbnis des Familienoberhauptes*) by Hans Burgkmair the Elder (1473 - 1531).

325. **To Albany’s Squire]** Ed. Not in Q, F. Albany’s young Squire is as important in *King Lear* as the adolescent waitress Paola is in *La dolce vita*—innocence that has not been corrupted. As the bodies of Lear and Cordelia are put on a bier, the audience is left considering the future, and what *choices* the Squire will make on his road to becoming a man.



Figure 288. Paola waving to Marcello at the end of *La Dolce Vita* by Fellini.

325. **The oldest hath bourn most]** “*Weight*” (F, 3298) and “*borne*” (F, 3300) are suggested by the business of bearing the weight of the bodies off stage.

326. S.D. **The bodies of Lear and Cordelia are borne off by Edgar, Kent, Albany and Albany’s Squire]** Ed. Not in Q, F. “A funeral procession sometimes includes the bearing of a body” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642, bear, bearing, borne, p.22*). It is common for kings to be carried by an even number of bearers (between two and eight, but most commonly four) on their shoulders, by means of a pole projecting fore and aft. [See Figure 287.]

326. S.D. **Exeunt, with a dead march]** (F, 3302). Not in Q.

326. S.D. **FINIS]** (Q, 3302), (F, 3303).



Figure 289. The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb, Hans Holbein, ca. 1520-22. Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basel

## Appendix A: “You lords and noble friends etc”.

V,i,257-65. “*You lords and noble friends . . . see*”] Ed. After “*That’s but a trifle here*” (Q1, 3269), (Q2, 3269), (F, 3268). The “spine” of *King Lear* is just deserving. The play begins with Lear giving the largest portion of his kingdom to the daughter who can prove herself most deserving of it, and ends with Albany distributing rewards and punishments according to desert. (Compare note I,i,52, “*Where Nature doth with merit challenge.*”) As the play was performed and published under the watchful eye of George Buck, *Master of the Revels* to James I, the duke delivers this speech moments before Lear dies, after telling his Squire that the news of Edmund’s death is “*but a trifle heere*” (F, 3267).

First principles of drama demand us to ask if the speech was not written to be said *before* the revelation of Cordelia’s death. No sentient human being would ever say such a thing after Cordelia, the epitome of virtue, has been found murdered; her grieving father in the throes of death at their feet. Nor would Albany prattle on about just deserts after just telling his Squire to shut up. As scholar and playwright William Gibson bluntly puts it, “the transposition of the speech keeps the character from being an idiot” (Personal communication, 1978). Indeed, Albany’s words are not ironic, they are “idiotic,” to use Gibson’s word:

1                    *Alb.* He knowes not what he saies,and vaine is it  
2                    That we present vs to him.

*Enter a Messenger.*

3                    *Edg.* Very bootlesse.  
4                    *Mess.* Edmund is dead my Lord.  
5                    *Alb.* That's but a trifle heere:  
6                    **You Lords and Noble Friends,know our intent,**  
7                    **What comfort to this great decay may come,**  
8                    **Shall be appli'd. For vs we will resigne,**  
9                    **During the life of this old Maiesty**  
10                    **To him our absolute power, you to your rights,**  
11                    **With boote,and such addition as your Honours**  
12                    **Haue more then merited. All Friends shall**  
13                    **Taste the wages of their vertue,and all Foes**  
14                    **The cup of their deseruings: O see,see.**  
15                    *Lear.* And my poore Foole is hang'd: no,no,no life?  
16                    Why should a Dog,a Horse,a Rat haue life,  
17                    And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,  
18                    Neuer,neuer,neuer,neuer,neuer. (F, 3262-3280)



Figure 290. 18th century woodcut showing a man suspected of witchcraft being subjected to the "sink or swim" proof. All hands are raised in expectation of a divine judgement.



In a part that might have been played by Shakespeare himself, the principal spokesperson for Divine judgment is the duke of Albany, who has been preaching it to the wicked since IV,ii: “*If that the heauens doe not their visible spirits / Send quickly downe to tame the vild offences, it will come*” (Q1, 2303.15-16). When given the news of Cornwall’s death, he replies: “*This shewes you are aboute / You Iustices, that these our neather crimes / So speedily can venge*” (F, 2323-25). Perhaps the character was modelled after the Puritan moralist [Thomas Beard](#). “Beard's exposition of the workings of Providence against sinners and persecutors has been called ‘theatrical moralism’. It was in the [Theatre of Judgement](#) that first appeared an account of Christopher Marlowe's death by stabbing; Beard takes Marlowe to be the first modern atheist.” (Wiki)



Figure 291. Anonymous portrait, possibly Marlowe, at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

But see what a hooke the Lord put in the nostrils of this barking dogge: so it fell out, that as he purposed to stab one whom he ought a grudge unto, with his dagger, the other party perceiving, so avoyded the stroke, that withall catching hold of his wrest, he stabbed his owne dagger into his own head; in such sort, that notwithstanding all the means of surgery that could be wrought, he shortly after died thereof: the manner of his death being so terrible (for he even cursed and blasphemed to his last gaspe, and together with his breath an oath flew out of his mouth) that it was not onely a ma|nifest signe of Gods judgement, but also an horrible and fearefull terrour to all that beheld him. But herein did the justice of God most notably ap|peare, in that he compelled his own hand which had written those blasphemies, to be the instrument to punish him, and that in his braine, which had devised the same. (*Theatre of Judgement*, p. 92-93.)

Theatre-goers in Southwark would not soon have forgotten the English clergyman [John Field](#) who saw the collapse of Bear Garden in 1583 as God’s judgment on fun-lovers: “the yeard, standings and galleries being ful fraught, being now amidst their joilty, when the dogs and Bear were in the chiefest Batel, Lo the mighty hand of God uppon them. This gallery that was double, and compassed the yeard round about was so shaken at the foundation, that it fell (as it were in a moment) flat to the ground, without post of peere, that was left standing, so high as the stake whereunto the Beare was tied”. ([The Shakespeare Blog](#) by Sylvia Morris.)



Figure 292. Sabbath Breakers. Puritan Boys Playing Football On A Sunday Are Drowned in An Instance of Divine Retribution. Woodcut from *Divine Examples of God’s Severe Judgments on Sabbath-Breakers*, 1691.

In keeping with Albany’s deeply held conviction that the gods are enforcers of moral law, he relies on them to judge the truth of the accusations against Edmund in a trial by combat. Edgar’s victory appears certain proof that they act justly. It is simply unthinkable to him that they could allow harm to come to Cordelia, the embodiment of virtue and love (*storgē*). Thus, in my restored version of the original play, Albany gives this critically important speech *before* the fate of Cordelia



When the speech is whispered softly by the actor in its received location so that nobody will listen to what it being said, the revelation of Cordelia's death is stripped of the dramatic irony on which the narrative structure and style of the play is built on. As the scene is now read, the duke does not explicitly repudiate his belief in God's Providence. On the contrary, he implies that everybody will get what's coming to them, if not in this life, in the next: Cordelia's virtue will be rewarded in heaven; Goneril, Regan and Edmund will be condemned to hell. As [Jonathan Bate](#) writes in *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*, (pp. 2-3):

Sometimes 'this great stage of fools' upon which we are born has an audience. 'The gods look down,' says Coriolanus as his mother kneels to him . . . 'and this unnatural scene / They laugh at' (F, 3542-3). These gods are plural because this is a play set in a polytheistic world of antiquity, but Shakespeare lived in a society where everybody, with a few wildcard exceptions such as the alleged atheist Christopher Marlowe, believed that the world was looked down on upon a singular God—albeit with aspects three-in-one and one-in-three. . . There were strict laws proscribing stage blasphemy. Marlowe's fate hung over the stage-play world like an admonitory shadow"

I brought this critical matter to the attention of [John Andrews](#) at *Shakespeare Quarterly* in March 1980 but he felt the question did not rise to the standards of peer review. As playwright [William Gibson](#) wrote to me in May, 1979, "In production, you know, directors move bits like this around all the time, and it's only on the printed page that the text is regarded as sacrosanct. But I suppose, if there is to be any standard text, there must be a more objective precedent - as, in *Hamlet*, the 1603 quarto – and not every editor's subjective sense of fitness."



Figure 293. "Allegory of the sinking of painting," Circle of Jacques de Gheyn III (Dutch, 1596 - 1644).

As Gibson implies, the received placement of the speech rests not on the narrative structure and style of the play (i.e., [inductive reasoning](#)), but the *argumentum ad ignorantiam*—the idea that the "absence of evidence is evidence of absence," a [fallacy in informal logic](#) in which ignorance represents a lack of contrary evidence. It asserts that a proposition is true because it has not yet been proven false or a proposition is false because it has not yet been proven true." What is notable about this argument is that it completely disallows critical thinking. In the words of [Carl Sagan](#), the appeal to ignorance is "the claim that whatever has not been proved false must be true, and vice versa (e.g., *There is no compelling evidence that UFOs are not visiting the Earth; therefore UFOs exist—and there is intelligent life elsewhere in the Universe. Or: There may be seventy kazillion other worlds, but not one is known to have the moral advancement of the Earth, so we're still central to the Universe.*) This impatience with ambiguity can be criticized in the phrase: absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." ([The Demon-Haunted World](#), 1995, p. 213).

Over the past 50 years, when I have queried experts about unaddressed textual problems in *King Lear*, the "absence of evidence" is used together with the *argumentum ab auctoritate* (argument from authority) to avoid their having to make critical judgments about the text and the basic story

Shakespeare is telling. For example, James Siemon, the distinguished head of the Shakespeare department at BU, and editor of *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Jew of Malta*, writes in a personal communication from 2019, "a host of editors and textual scholars have spent lifetimes carefully considering the enormous complexities presented by the multiple texts of *King Lear*, its extremely demanding stage elements and its difficult mix of cross-generic currents. I am not an expert on *Lear*, and really have no basis on which to assess your conjectures about staging and editing the play" (March, 2019). Arthur Schopenhauer summarizes how this argument is used by academics to stifle debate and put a stop to critical thinking:

Those who are so zealous and eager to settle debated questions by citing authorities, are really glad when they are able to put the understanding and the insight of others into the field in place of their own, which are wanting. Their number is legion. For, as Seneca says, there is no man but prefers belief to the exercise of judgment—*unusquisque mavult credere quam judicare*. In their controversies such people make a promiscuous use of the weapon of authority, and strike out at one another with it. If any one chances to become involved in such a contest, he will do well not to try reason and argument as a mode of defence; for against a weapon of that kind these people are like Siegfrieds, with a skin of horn, and dipped in the flood of incapacity for thinking and judging. They will meet his attack by bringing up their authorities as a way of abashing him—argumentum ad verecundiam, and then cry out that they have won the battle. ("On Thinking for Oneself" from *The Art of Literature*, trans. T. Bailey Saunders, 1891, p. 69.)





two main storylines *emotionally* by means of nonverbal communication, the sequence of events, and the music. (See note IV,v,276,S.D, “*Sad music within*”.) The **plot**—which Aristotle defines as “the arrangement of incidents” (*Poetics*, Chpt VI)—is constructed in the order it is so that Gloucester's sudden awareness of Edgar is linked associatively with the reconciliation of Lear and Cordelia. It is thus that Shakespeare effortlessly resolves the two main story lines with the effect of **catharsis**, as described by Aristotle in *Poetics* (Chapters XXIII-XXVI).

As the work is published in the quartos and folio, Gloucester enters in “V,ii” still not knowing the true identity of his companion. [See Figure 336.] There is no classical **anagnorisis** resulting in **peripeteia**, a reversal from blindness to sight, as in *Oedipus*. Both the audience and the actor inevitably assume that the “*friend*” Edgar refers to is somebody *other* than himself. Kenneth Muir, who performed the part of Gloucester in a college production, notes that Shakespeare does not explain “how the fugitive Edgar has got in touch with a friend” (*KING LEAR: The Arden Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, 1966, p.175). R.A. Foakes also notes that “No more is heard of this friend” (*King Lear (Arden Shakespeare: Third Series*, p. 349).

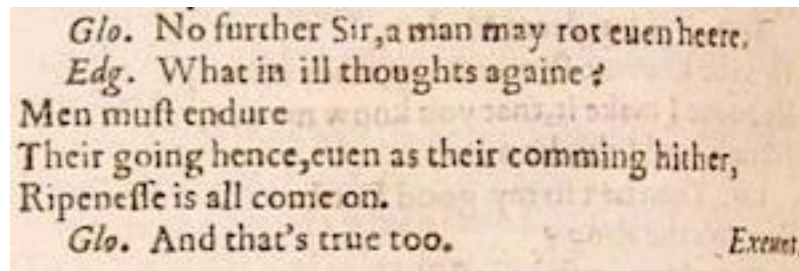


Figure 295. Lines 2931-36 in the First Folio (New South Wales). Internet Shakespeare Editions.

The idea Shakespeare is dramatizing in IV,v is *how* Gloucester comes about his knowledge of Edgar’s identity. Is it explained to him in words, or is it the result of a sudden *intuitive* grasp of reality? If we go by what is literally read in the copy sources, Gloucester's change from ignorance to knowledge is *narrated* in a perfunctory description totaling seven lines (F, 3155-3162). By Edgar’s own account, the anagnorisis of his father is less affecting than Kent’s discovery (Q1, 3168.1-3168.10), which he says “*top[s] extreamitie*” (Q, 3168.3). Edgar’s verbal description of his long-anticipated reconciliation with his father is simply not inadequate in creating an emotional (*cathartic*) theatrical experience for the audience. Shakespeare is just tying up loose ends of the story, like what happened to Gloucester, and how Kent came to learn of Edgar’s identity. More time is given to a description of Cordelia’s tears in Q, 2347.11-33 than Gloucester’s anagnorisis, an “essential part of the plot of a tragedy” (Britannica).

Worst of all, Edgar’s narration is addressed to Albany, a well-meaning but morally judgmental character who feels no pity when given the news of his wife’s suicide. That is, he is not someone to arouse the audience’s sympathy. Based on his admonishment of Goneril in IV,ii, the duke is probably thinking that Gloucester got what’s coming to him for committing adultery, as Edgar himself does when he tells Edmund: “*The Gods are iust, and of our pleasant vices/ Make instruments to plague vs:/ The darke and vitious place where thee he got, Cost him his eyes*” (F, 3131-34). (Both characters reverse their belief in Divine judgment upon the revelation of





## Interlude

In my judgment, the only vestige of authorial intent in V,ii is the stage direction, “Enter with drum and colors, Lear, Cordelia, and soldiers; [they pass] over the stage, and exeunt” (F1, 2918-19). “Alarum. Enter the powers of France over the stage, Cordelia with her father [Lear] in her hand. [They pass over the stage and exeunt.]” (Q1, 2918-19). “Alarum. Enter the powers of France over the stage, Cordelia with her Father in her hand.” (Q2, 2918-2918.1) As artificial as an *entr’acte* might seem to those of us accustomed to techniques of theatre realism, it was conventional in Shakespeare’s time for players to march across the stage to the sound of music. For example, in the portrait of Sir Henry Unton at the National Portrait Gallery, Unton presides over a banquet, while a masque of Mercury and Diana proceeds across the stage, accompanied by music. [See Figure 338.] See “**march, marching**” in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p.140.)



Figure 297. A masque of Mercury and Diana is performed, accompanied by musicians.

In Elizabethan drama, the stage direction “**music** is sometimes signaled for *entr’acte* entertainment” (*Ibid.* p. 146). John Florio defines “*Intermedio*” as “an Intermedium, the musike that is, or shewes that are betweene the acts of a play” (*Queen Anna's New World of Words*, 1611). In this instance, an *entr’acte* or *intermezzo*, with a show of colors, is being used to shape the emotions of the audience and to communicate the passage of time which is indeterminate. The battle might have occurred in a few hours or over days. Obviously, Edmund cannot leave the audience at the end of one scene saying that he is going to murder Lear and Cordelia *after* the battle, and then reappear seconds later with them his captives. The battle takes place during the Interlude and “the imagination, having leisure to fill with anxiety for the issue, it rises into its proper importance as one of the great periods and passages of the story, and a final crisis in the fortunes of Lear.” (James Spedding, qu. *Furness, King Lear: A New Variorum Edition*, pp. 312-315).

## Appendix C: Scene 17 (Quartos)

In the *First* (1608) and *Second* (1619) quartos there is a scene 17 in which “a Gentleman” (F, 2347.1) rhapsodizes about the love Cordelia has for her father. It was cut in the Folio, presumably to shorten the length of the play. The problem with the scene centers on the narrative. This “Gentleman” can be none other than “Lear’s Knight,” a young nobleman who is given a few short lines in I,iv; I,v; II,iv, III,i; IV,v; and IV,vi. The character is marked by his straightforwardness, his brevity and constrained discretion. Notably, he makes no comment when “Caius” (F, 3249) blatantly lies to him about why he was put in the stocks (F, 1333-35).

Thus it comes as a complete shock to critical readers when the actor suddenly switches his manner of speaking in scene 8 and scene 17, and waxes into poesy in the style of Philip Sydney’s pastoral romance, *The Arcadia*: “her teares came dropping downe like raine in Sunshine, and she not taking heede to wipe the teares, they ranne downe vpon her cheekes, and lips, as vpon cherries which the dropping tree bedeweth.” (*The Third Booke of the Covntesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* (1590), Chap. 5.1.) His long and florid speeches, contrived to stir the emotions of the audience, can be contrasted with Enobarbus’s description of Queen Cleopatra on her barge in *Antony and Cleopatra* (F, 901-956). The latter is a trusted confidant of Antony and free to have opinions. Lear’s Knight is not. He is suspicious of “Caius,” and Kent must prove to him that he is more than his “out-wall” (F, 1642).

Moreover, the plot is structured to build suspense about Cordelia’s motives for landing a French army in Dover. (See Appendix D.) Based on Geoffrey of Monmouth’s and Holinshed’s accounts of *Leir of Britain*, together with the popular pre-Shakespearean drama of 1594 written by Anonymous, “*The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordelia*,” Shakespeare’s audience would have assumed a priori that she wishes to restore her father to the throne, and make herself queen after his imminent death. It is not until she tells us herself in scene 18 that we can be certain of her motives: “*No blowne Ambition doth our Armes incite, / But loue, deere loue, and our ag'd Fathers Rite*” (F, 2379-89). Scene 17 is basically a spoiler.

The only information of any consequence in scene 17 concerns the whereabouts of the King of France (lines Q, 2347.1-09). Shakespeare has to give an explanation for his absence even though the audience knows the real reason: the part is doubled with Edgar. The logical time to bring up the matter is at the conclusion of scene 21, when he and Kent are discussing the logistics of the battle, such as who is leading the Duke of Cornwall’s forces in the wake of his death. Where France has gone is the first question the audience is asking themselves when Cordelia and Lear leave the stage. (Their exchange was cut in IV,vi in the Folio.)

*Music still.*

*Exeunt* Lear, Cordelia, Doctor, and Attendants.



- Kent.* Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back, know you no reason?
- Lear's Knight.* 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 requir'd and necessary.
- Kent.* Who hath he left behind him general?
- Lear's Knight.* The Marshall of France, Monsieur La Far.  
Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was so slain?
- Kent.* Most certain, sir.
- Lear's Knight.* Who is conductor of his people?
- Kent.* As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.
- Lear's Knight.* They say Edgar, his banish'd son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany.
- Kent.* Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about. The powers of the kingdom approach apace.
- Lear's Knight.* The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir. *[Exit.*
- Kent.* My point and period will be thoroughly wrought,  
Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought. *[Exit.*

Given that lines 3-10 (Q, 2347.1-09) fit more logically in this location, and the ease of transposing them, the arrangement of the narrative has to be questioned. Was scene 17 part of the playwright's original design or does it represent a revision? Nobody doubts that Shakespeare wrote it, but why? and under whose directive? It serves only to give the actor playing Lear's Knight more stage time, and the opportunity to show off his skill at reading dramatic poetry. It is, of course, impossible to know what constraints were put on the playwright. Perhaps Shakespeare was asked by one of "the sharers" to beef up the part of Lear's Knight so as to entitle the actor to "*Halfe a share*" (F, 2151); maybe even "*A whole one*" (F, 2152).

As Gerald Eades Bentley writes, "Precisely what the procedure was in the judging of new manuscripts offered for production cannot yet be determined. . . [The sharers] could even have been consulted about particular scenes or characters or stagings while the new manuscript was in process of composition (pp. 38-40) . . . [T]he prompter had to see that any corrections, deletions, or revisions required by the Master [of Revels] were made in the prompt copy in the sides of the several players." (*The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's time, 1590-1642*, p. 83)

Philip Henslowe . . . refers in his Diary to the half shares of certain players. On the first of June 1595 he loaned to his improvident and frequently imprisoned nephew, Francis Henslowe, "...In ready money to lay down for his half share with the company which he doth play withal to be paid unto me when he doth receive his money which he lent to my lord Burt or when my assigns doth demand it . . . £9" (*Ibid*, p. 36).

## Appendix D: Actus Tertius. Scena Prima

*Actus Tertius. Scena Prima.* (F, 1614)*Storm still. Enter Kent and a Gentleman, severally.*

- 1        *Kent.* Who's there, besides foul weather?  
 2        *Gent.* One minded like the weather, most unquietly.  
 3        *Kent.* I know you. Where's the king?  
 4        *Gent.* Contending with the fretful elements;  
 5                Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,  
 6                Or swell the curlèd waters 'bove the main,  
 7                That things might change or cease; **tears his white hair,**  
 8                **Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage,**  
 9                **Catch in their fury, and make nothing of;**  
 10                **Strives in his little world of man to out-storm**  
 11                **The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.**  
 12                **This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,**  
 13                **The lion and the belly-pinched wolf**  
 14                **Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,**  
 15                **And bids what will take all.**
- Kent.*    But who is with him?  
 16        *Gent.* None but the fool, who labors to outjest  
 17                His heart-strook injuries.
- Kent.*    Sir, I do know you;  
 18                And dare, upon the warrant of my note,  
 19                Commend a dear thing to you. There is division,  
 20                Although as yet the face of it is cover'd  
 21                With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;  
 22                Who have—as who have not, that their great stars  
 23                Thron'd and set high?—servants, who seem no less,  
 24                Which are to France the spies and speculations  
 25                Intelligent of our state. What hath been seen,  
 26                Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,  
 27                Or the hard rein which both of them have borne  
 28                Against the old kind king, or something deeper,  
 29                Whereof perchance these are but furnishings—  
 30                **But true it is from France there comes a power**  
 31                **Into this scatter'd kingdom; who already**  
 32                **Wise in our negligence, have secret feet**  
 33                **In some of our best ports, and are at point**  
 34                **To show their open banner. Now to you.**  
 35                **If on my credit you dare build so far**  
 36                **To make your speed to Dover, you shall find**  
 37                **Some that will thank you, making just report**  
 38                **Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow**  
 39                **The king hath cause to plain.**

40 I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,  
 41 And from some knowledge and assurance offer  
 42 This office to you.  
 43 *Gent.* I will talk further with you.  
*Kent.* No, do not.  
 44 For confirmation that I am much more  
 45 Than my outwall, open this purse, and take  
 46 What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia—  
 47 As fear not but you shall—show her this ring,  
 48 And she will tell you who that fellow is  
 49 That yet you do not know.—Fie on this storm!  
 50 I will go seek the king.  
*Gent.* Give me your hand.  
 51 Have you no more to say?  
 52 *Kent.* Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet:  
 53 That when we have found the king—in which your  
 54 pain  
 55 That way, I'll this—he that first lights on him  
 56 Holla the other. *[Exeunt severally]*

I have red-marked the lines omitted in the Folio (1623) that were published in the First (1608) and Second (1619) quartos. They include nine lines (7-16) of florid dramatic poetry added to the “*Gentleman’s*” speech (1621.1-1621.8), evoking pity for Lear. They are out of character, causing us to ask why. Until now the Knight’s speeches have been laconic and restrained. These lines are similar in style to his bathetic description of Cordelia in scene 17, which I theorize is the result of a revision. See Appendix C.

Kent’s speech (18-42) is also expanded in the quartos (1638.1–1638.12), where his syntax is as tortuous as his lines in II,iv,162-166, “*Cordelia...remedies*” (F, 1243-47). (See note II,ii,164., “*find*”.) Presumably, its convoluted style serves to remind anybody in the audience who’s forgot that Kent is a high-born Earl. Only an educated person, taught the art of rhetoric and oratory would be able to communicate in such an unintelligible manner. Here, Kent wants to impress on Lear’s Knight that he is “*much more / Then my out-wall*” (F, 1641-42).

Kent’s speech serves as a red-herring to keep the audience interested in the plot. He does not give us any definitive explanation for what’s happening in the kingdom—just “*whisper’d*” (F, 935) rumors and “*ear-kissing arguments*” (F, 936), to use Curan’s words in II,i. Kent tells Lear’s Knight that there may be something more sinister to the war than what appears on the surface. Spies may have informed France of a rift between Albany and Cornwall, and notes that beneath the “*snuffes, and packings*” (F, 1635) of the dukes there may be “*something deeper*” (F, 1637), namely, that they are secretly plotting against each other for rule of the country—a reasonable assumption given English history and audience expectations of the story. Does Cordelia want to restore her father to the throne and succeed him as Queen of England as in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account of King Leir? In Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, the English forces are defeated: “Leir rules for two years before his death and is succeeded by Cordelia, who rules for a subsequent five years.” So the story also

## Appendix D

goes in the pre-Shakespearean drama of 1594 written by Anonymous, *“The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordelia.”* [See Figure 13.] In Shakespeare’s version, readers are kept in the dark about Cordelia’s motives until IV,iii in the Folio (scene 18 in the quartos) when she tells us herself what she’s doing in Dover with a French army. Only modern audiences know that she is murdered at the end.

What strikes me most of all about Kent’s speech is extraordinary breath control required of the actor to deliver it quickly, and still enunciate the words. It suggests to me that the actor playing the part was a superb vocal technician, and must have been one of the “Principall Actors” listed in the Folio.

## Appendix E: "O do, de, do, de, do, de"

In the Folio there is a speech (lines 10-14 red-marked below) which theoretically begins with Edgar's blowing his horn, "O do,de,do,de,do de." In my judgment, his doing so here is an artless overuse of the effect, and I have deleted the cue in my restoration together with the rest of his speech (F, 1839-43).

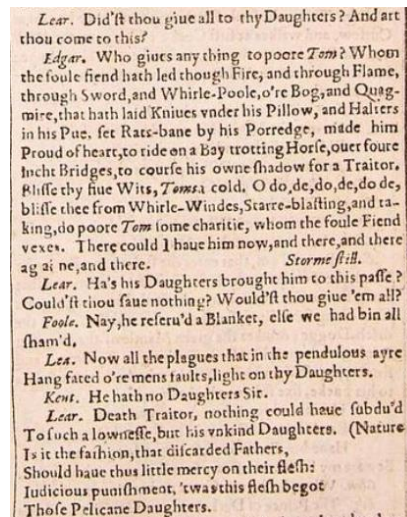


Figure 298. III,iv. "O do,de,do,de,do de." Digital copy of First Folio (New South Wales).

- 1                                   Lear. Did'st thou giue all to thy Daughters? And art  
2                                   thou come to this?  
3                                   Edgar. Who giues any thing to poore Tom? Whom  
4                                   the foule fiend hath led though Fire, and through Flame,  
5                                   through Sword, and Whirle-Poole, o're Bog, and Quag-  
6                                   mire, that hath laid Kniues vnder his Pillow, and Halters  
7                                   in his Pue, set Rats-bane by his Porredge, made him  
8                                   Proud of heart, to ride on a Bay trotting Horse, ouer foure  
9                                   incht Bridges, to course his owne shadow for a Traitor.  
10                                  Blisse thy fiue Wits, Toms a cold. O do, de, do, de, do de,  
11                                  blisse thee from Whirle-Windes, Starre-blasting, and tak-  
12                                  ing, do poore Tom some charitie, whom the foule Fiend  
13                                  vexes. There could I haue him now, and there, and there  
14                                  againe, and there. Storme still.  
15                                  Lear. Ha's his Daughters brought him to this passe?  
16                                  Could'st thou saue nothing? Would'st thou giue 'em all?  
17                                  Foole. Nay, he reseru'd a Blanket, else we had bin all  
18                                  sham'd.  
19                                  Lea. Now all the plagues that in the pendulous ayre  
20                                  Hang fated o're mens faults, light on thy Daughters.  
21                                  Kent. He hath no Daughters Sir.

Common sense tells us that "O do, de, do, de, do de" is a music cue written by the copyist to indicate that Edgar winds the "horn" he speaks of wearing in III,vi (F, 2032). (The cue is not given in the



quartos, Q1, 1840-43; Q2, 1839-40). In theory, he first blows it in III,iv following Lear's prayer, "*Poore naked wretches . . . And shew the Heauens more iust*" (F, 1809-17). Its bellowing sound punctuates Lear's prayer for the poor. The effect ought to give the audience goosebumps. [See note III,iv, 37. "*Fatham and half.*"]

It can be logically induced that he blows in again in III,iv—preceding the epiphany that results in the dismantling of Lear's garments. Here, the horn call resonates with biblical symbolism. "In the climactic conclusion of Psalm 148, we see that Israel should praise God because he has raised a horn of salvation for them. "[The] metaphor of the 'exalted horn' comes from an image of a bull lifting up its horns after winning a battle. The raised horn is a common biblical symbol of victory, especially of being rescued from oppression." (Shara Drimalla, "[The Horn of Psalm 148](#)," *BibleProject*) In Psalm 92:10: "But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil." In (Psalm 89:24): "But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted." In (Psalm 111:9): "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour."

Linked to the action is the word "*Sesey*" (F, 1880) or "*Sessa*", used as an interjection upon blowing a horn. [See note III,iv,93, "*Sessa*".] In *Taming of the Shrew*, Sly uses it after belching in I,i:

Y'are a baggage, the Slies are no  
Rogues. Looke in the Chronicles, we came  
in with Richard Conqueror: therefore *Pau-*  
*cas pallabris*, let the world slide: [*Belches.*] *Sessa*. (F, 6-9)

"*Dolphin*" (F, 1879) is logically a name he has given his horn, which is bottle-nosed like a dolphin. The name "Dolphin" is almost certainly a play on *olifant*, the horn carried by "*Childe Rowland*" (F, 1966) in the *Song of Roland*, which Edgar makes reference to in the same scene. (See note III,iv,169, "*Child Rowland.*")

In III,vi,90, Edgar winds his horn to call off the dogs Lear thinks are barking at him: "*Do,de,de,de: sese: Come, march to Wakes and Fayres, And Market Townes: poore Tom thy horne is dry*" (F, 2031-32). [See note III,vi,73, "*Sessa*".] Still disguised as Tom o Bedlam, he blows it a last time in IV,i after Gloucester's speech, "*Oh deere Sonne Edgar, / The food of thy abused Fathers wrath: / Might I but liue to see thee in my touch, / I'd say I had eyes againe*" (F, 2202-05). [See note IV,i,24. S.D., "*Edgar winds his horn*".]

In all four of these instances, Edgar's horn call is shamelessly contrived to be dramatic—which it is. Shakespeare pokes fun its orchestrated effect in IV,v, when Edgar "*Blows a raspberry*" after Gloucester's speech, "*If Edgar liue, O blesse him*" (F, 2479). [See note IV,v,40. S.D. "*blows a raspberry.*"] It is part of the same metatheatrical paradigm in which Shakespeare mocks his own formulaic plot structure. (See note I,ii, "*Pat: he comes like the Catastrophe of the old Comedie*" (F, 463).

In my restoration, “*do,de,do,de,do de*” (F, 1839), “*Do,de,de,de*” (F, 2031), and “*loudla doodla*” (Q1 2031) are treated as stage directions, not spoken words. If voiced by the actor, Tom comes across as antic, not the character described in the play’s title who is said to assume a “sullen” humor. The word **sullen** is defined by Alexander Schmidt in his *Lexicon* as “sad, melancholy, dismal.” Among the examples he cites are “[Y]ou shall hear the surly *sullen* bell give warning to the world,” (*Sonnets*. 71, 2); “be thou the trumpet of our wrath and *sullen* presage of your own decay,” (*King John*, I,I, F, 32-3); “our solemn hymns to *sullen*, dirges change” (*Romeo and Juliet*, IV,v, F, 2668).

I have also deleted the remainder of the speech (F, 1840-43). They do not fit within the narrative structure of the work. It is absolutely critical that Edgar NOT beg Lear for charity given the later developments in the story. (See note III,iv, 99. S.D. “*Edgar puts on the king’s discarded riding-cloak.*”) Actors being actors, it is possible the lines were improvised in a classic moment of scene stealing. His antic gesturing is completely superfluous and carried to excess. Aristotle writes in *Poetics* that “Mynniscus used to call Callippides ‘ape’ on account of the extravagance of his action” (XXVI).

## Appendix F: Correspondence with Dr. William Arrowsmith



BOSTON UNIVERSITY

270 Bay State Road, Boston, Massachusetts 02215  
THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS

Dear Mr. Comstock:

2.26.76

I've read your interesting, often illuminating, comments on the exegetical blocking--that seems a fair way of putting what you're doing--of King Lear, and I wish I knew how to help. The problem is simply that Shakesperean staging is not a matter I know a great deal about---you exaggerate, I fear, what either Dick Lattimore or I could do for you--and I don't know to whom you ought to be referred. But I do think you've got to make contact with somebody in Elizabethan drama, somebody who will be open-minded but still can read your work with a sense of what has been done, and what has not. I can say that I learned something, say, from your comments about Lear's archery-references, but then I don't know how new all this is, whether the scholars haven't already mined it (I'm prepared a priori to suppose that they've ignored the essentials, simply on the basis of the way scholars in my field have read Greek tragedy). You've got to find somebody who knows, and whose knowledge matters to others. (My opinion isn't worth a straw among the Renaissance drama folk). At the risk of sounding as though I were passing the buck, let me suggest several names (without suggesting that my referral will mean a great deal to them):

Dr. Eugene Waith  
Dept. of English  
Rutgers University (I don't know him personally, while I admire his work on the Heraclean hero in Chapman, Shakespeare, etc)

Prof. R.J. Kauffman  
Dept. of English  
University of Texas  
Austin, Texas 78712 (an "authority" on Elizabethan-Jacobean drama)

Prof. Richard Hosley  
Dept. of English  
University of Arizona  
Tucson, Arizona (an expert on the Elizabethan theater)

I do wish I could be more helpful, since I have some idea of the difficulties under which you're working and since it's obvious that you both love Shakespeare and know a great deal about him. You read closely, very, and, I would have thought, very accurately and well.

Auguri,

William Arrowsmith

## Appendix G: Email from Paul Werstine

On May 14, 2019, at 5:23 PM, Paul Werstine <[werstine@uwo.ca](mailto:werstine@uwo.ca)> wrote:

Dear Bill Comstock,

I've read the piece you sent me, thanks; but I'm not sure how much good I can be to you. It's not clear to me that when you speak of King Lear you are conceiving of it as a performance, or a film, or an edition, or perhaps all three.

For example, when you discuss 3.6, you argue it is set in a hunting lodge. Since editions have not noted fictional scene locations for a long time, here you do not seem to have in mind an edition; it would be hard to realize this location on the stage with all the gore you suppose, so I gather that here you may have in mind a filmic rendering of the play. Am I right? I can say that, from working with Richard Knowles on his Variorum edition of King Lear for twenty years, no editor from the earlier centuries has thought a hunting lodge the location of 3.6. Yours is a highly original idea.

Again I'm not aware that in 4.6, when Lear says "There's money for thee," any editor before you has suggested Lear gives Gloucester weeds as money. Here you are presenting King Lear as an edition with commentary notes.

The identification of the giant and the mouse with Gloucester is also, as far as I can tell, yours alone. No one else has commented on the giant, and those who talk of the mouse divide between thinking Lear sees an actual mouse and thinking the mouse a figment of Lear's deranged imagination.

In an edition of 1910, S.E. Goggin in his commentary suggested that Goneril gives Edmund a glove or jewel.

As we both know, reassigning speeches is not infrequent in editions, but an intervention that has Regan, in killing the servant who seeks to oppose Cornwall, inadvertently cause Cornwall to be killed, and has Regan, rather than Cornwall, remove Gloucester's second eye is unusual, indeed unprecedented in the editorial tradition, although I can imagine that perhaps a director might like such a staging. Likewise the transposition of most of one of Albany's speeches from 5.3.

I'm not sure we can know that the text as it's come down to us is the one that was played only at the Globe and without intervals between the acts, such as were observed at the Blackfriars. After all, the F text is divided into acts.

Your aversion to 5.2 has a long history. Charles Kean (1858), Edwin Booth (1878), Henry Irving (1892), and even John Houseman as late as 1950 all cut it in productions.

Hope this helps. I'm sorry not to have more to say in response.

All best wishes,  
P  
aul Werstine



## About William Barr Comstock

I am an autodidact who comes from a prominent family of academics. My great grandfather was [John Dewey](#), “a major voice of progressive education and liberalism.” My grandfather’s brother, [Daniel Frost Comstock](#), was a member of the faculty at MIT in theoretical physics, and invented [Technicolor](#). I was given the middle name Barr after [Stringfellow Barr](#) (my father’s favorite cousin). Barr was a historian, author, and president of [St. John’s College](#) where he, together with [Scott Buchanan](#), instituted the *Great Books* curriculum. My maternal grandmother was the Headmistress at [Deerfield Academy](#), one of the oldest prep schools in the country. My father, Alex Barr Comstock (who was teased as a child for being a smart aleck) chose to go by his middle name. He was sent to [Browne & Nichols School](#), and went on to [Harvard University](#) where he graduated in 1940 with [John F. Kennedy](#). During the war, he served as a Lieutenant in the US Navy.

It was the hope of my parents that I would follow in the family footsteps, and make something of myself; maybe even become a [Rhodes Scholar](#) like my namesake. I was sent to elite private schools, [St. Edmund’s Academy](#) in Pittsburgh, and the [North Shore Country Day School](#) when my father was transferred to [Winnetka](#) in 1956. As fate would have it, I was not cut out for academic success. I suffered a brain injury as a 4 year old that resulted in mild aphasia, a language disorder that make it difficult to communicate through speech. After the injury, I started stuttering and developed dyslexia. I had trouble paying attention in school, and became the class clown. I recall being sent out to the hallway by my 4th grade teacher nearly every day for being disruptive. I assume the reason I was not kicked out of the school was because the Headmaster, [Nathaniel French](#), was a family relation. Eventually, I was expelled in 1968 for hooliganism, and sent to [New Trier West](#), a public school, where I graduated the following year. My SAT and ACT scores were so low that I was not accepted into a university. No career path lay before me, especially one requiring language skills. Luckily, 1969 was the year the Selective Service started the draft lottery, and I drew a very high number. I was not sent to Viet Nam as I feared.

It was around this time that I read *King Lear* for the first time in [Shakespeare The Complete Works](#) edited by [G. B. Harrison](#), —not as an assignment for school, but out of primal curiosity. Reading it was a road to Damascus experience for me. I was struck by a vision of the play that looked nothing like the one in Harrison’s edition. I believed I had been contacted by Shakespeare himself, and sent on a divine mission to restore the play back to its original form. It was an *idée fixe*, and I could think of nothing else.

I immediately began researching the publishing history of *Lear*, and the methods used by [Shakespeare’s editors](#) in establishing the narrative. The internet did not exist until 1983, and textual scholarship was limited to college libraries. I moved from my family’s home into an apartment in [Evanston](#), within walking distance to the spanking new [library](#) at [Northwestern University](#), where I did all of my early research. My father gave me a fancy IBM Executive typewriter from his office, and I fastidiously typed up the version of the play I saw in my revelation. I mention the divinatory beginnings of this edition because the question of how knowledge is come



by is the main philosophical subject of the play.

I moved to New York City in 1977, and worked with [Michael Moriarty's](#) Shakespeare Company, “[Potter's Field](#).” By March 22, 1979, I had become so manic that a friend took me to AA. After a few years of constantly attending meetings, my obsession with *Lear* began to dissipate. I enrolled at [Fordham College at Lincoln Center](#) in 1982 as an adult student, and then transferred to [NYU | Tisch School of the Arts](#). From 1990-92, I produced *Channel 69* with [Linda Simpson](#), a weekly television series on [Manhattan Cable Television](#) featuring live drag shows from The [Pyramid Club](#). In the fall of 1992, I produced the lesbian dance festival *Turn Out*, which [Jennifer Dunning](#) cited as one of the year's best. It was in that year that I shot the video *Soup of Evening*, which showed the horror of AIDS in NYC in the early 90s. A few years later I produced *Sons of Hercules* with MGM Archivist [John Kirk](#). It was presented at gay film festivals around the world. “*These mincing musclequeens might as well be Hercules' daugh-ters!*”

In the hope of expanding our Sword and Sandal presentation into a feature documentary, I moved to California in February 2000, where I co-founded the now defunct website [graphicmuscle.com](#) with [Mickey Hargitay](#) and [Gordon Mitchell](#). I was later hired as staff photographer for commercial bodybuilding magazines *Iron Man Magazine*, *FLEX*, and *Muscular Development*. I retired in 2016, and resumed work on *Lear*.