

William Shakespeare



KING LEAR

A Restoration of Shakespeare's Original Play

EDITED BY WILLIAM COMSTOCK

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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* by academic institutionalists. From the Victorian era onwards, the quartos and Folio have been treated as sacrosanct objects, like the Holy Prepuce, rather than incomplete and badly damaged secondary sources. He read my work 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 H](#).]

In reimagining how *Lear* was originally conceived by Shakespeare, before the play was subjected to revision and censorship in his own day, and then further damaged by the personal interpretations of 19th century textual scholars such as [William Aldis Wright](#) and [W.G. Clark](#), I was careful to heed the warning Dr. Arrowsmith gives to editors in his 1967 translation of *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.” (“[Introduction to the Bacchae](#)”, p. 142).

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 Pat Lee for his help with [Perplexity](#), and Camille Blinstrub for her unwavering support over the years.

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- Figure 153. 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."
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- Figure 310. Detail from *The Fall of the Titans*, Cornelis van Haarlem, c. 1588-1590, Statens Museum, Copenhagen.
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- Video 1. David Sedley: Plato's Theory of Forms.
- Video 2. Bette Davis sings "I've Written A Letter To Daddy" in Robert Aldrich's classic "Whatever Happened To Baby Jane?" with Victor Buono on the piano. MGM
- Video 3. OAE Principal Trumpet David Blackadder introduces the Baroque or Natural Trumpet.
- Video 4. 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.
- Video 5. Professor William Mahrt demonstrates the solfege technique using the Guidonian hand.
- Video 6. "Going Home". The call of a hunting horn at the end of a hunt.
- Video 7. Leslie Nielsen, dinner at the White House from the *Naked Gun 2 ½: The Smell of Fear*.
- Video 8. "3 BEST ways to Eat Herring in Amsterdam"
- Video 9. Willow song (from *Othello, Act 4, Scene 3*) performed beautifully by Alfred Deller and lutenist Desmond Dupré. See "[Shakespeare's Saddest Song](#)."
- Video 10. "Peek A Boo" | @CoComelon Nursery Rhymes & Kids Songs.
- Video 11. Peter Brook's 1953 production with Orson Welles.
- Video 12. 1916 Vintage Silent Pie Fight with Charlie Chaplin, an example of "Innocent Bystander" Lazzo.
- Video 13. Laurence Olivier and John Hurt in Act I scene v (43:01 to 45:12) from an Emmy award winning television production of King Lear directed by Michael Elliott.
- Video 14. Manny Pacheco on Comedy: Value of the Straight Man.
- Video 15. Swashbuckler Errol Flynn in *The Sea Hawk* (1940). Note that the English privateers onboard ship descend on ropes wearing swords.
- Video 16. OAE musician Adrian Woodward introduces us to the original all-in-one portable dance band, the hurdy gurdy.
- Video 17. The scandalously low-cut dresses of the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts!
- Video 18. Ian McKellen in the Royal Shakespeare Company 2008 production directed by Trevor Nunn (3:51-4:36).
- Video 19. Roger Allam as King Lear performing "Blow, winds" as one might an internal monologue or a sonnet. The stage effects are incidental.
- Video 20. Wind machine/Aeoliphone by ArborPercussion.
- 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.
- Video 22. Three cow horn trumpets (also known as blowing horns or blast horns), of different sizes, and a ram's horn.
- Video 23. Professional fur handling, Part 1, how to skin a red fox. (Video not suitable for children and animal lovers.)
- Video 24. "Tour of my skinning shed!!!"
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- Video 29. Sophie Matthews demonstrates the sound of the shawm.
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- Video 32. Inishmaan and the Darnel Project: A short film highlighting the history & ecology of Darnel (*Lolium temulentum*) and the work to save it.


- Video 33. The amazing Buster Keaton doing a pratfall known as a "108" among clowns. Buster was in his 50s when this was filmed.
- Video 34. Traditional Accents and Dialects of South East England: Kent.
- Video 35. Sir Laurence Olivier performing Lear's famous "mad scene" as [Romantic Realism](#) in Granada's 1983 TV production (1:47:31 to 1:151:00).
- Video 36. Gregory S. Aldrete demonstrating Roman Oratorical Gestures in an ancient theatre at Ostia using a speech of Cicero's.
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- Video 38. "If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes" with James Earl Jones and Paul Sorvino, NYC Shakespeare Festival, 1974 (2:19:39)
- Video 39. "How to Block Felt Hats."
- Video 40. [Westcountry Yap](#).
- Video 41. Barbara Billingsley (AKA June Cleaver), the whitest woman in America, translates "jive" to an English speaking-only flight attendant in the movie *Airplane!*
- Video 42. "20 British Accents." Edgar is probably affecting a conservative English accent signaling his high breeding.
- Video 43. English civil war drum calls, played by the drummers of the [Marquess of Winchesters Regiment](#).
- Video 44. "Bagpipes of War"
- Video 45. Shakespeare was devastated by Giordano Bruno's death | "The Phoenix and the Turtle" explained.
- Video 46. The Sounding of Assisi's Medieval Trumpets.
- Video 47. Video, OAE Principal Trumpet David Blackadder introduces the Baroque or Natural Trumpet.
- Video 48. "The World Turned Upside Down," English Folk Ballad.
- Video 49. Video. [John Tyson](#) on polyphony and improvisation in the Renaissance.
- Video 50. Raaven - John Dowland/ Flow my tears & The Earl of Essex his Galliard.
- Video 51. Video on "Improvisation Around 1600" by [Elam Rotem](#), [Early Music Sources](#). Illustration above, "Sylvestro Ganassi, Opera intitulata Fontegara (Venice, 1535).
- Video 52. Jonathan Winters "The Stick" Apr 1964 Jack Paar.

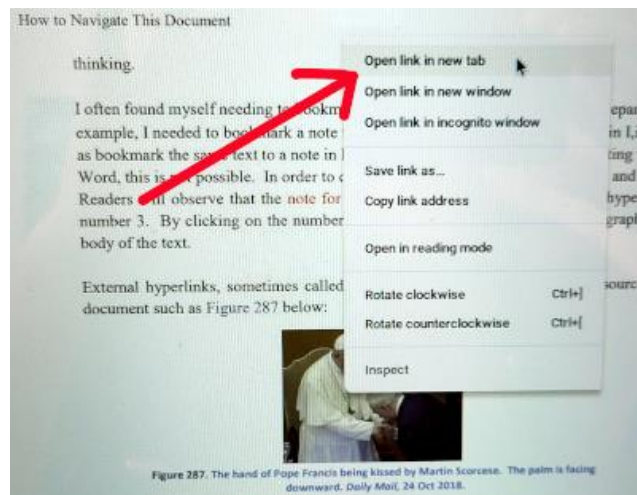
How to Navigate This Document

This version of *Lear* was designed to be “interactive”, encouraging readers to think outside the linear format of a book. The document was created in **MS Word** largely for its ability to create **bookmarks** and **hyperlinks**. “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 ... and locations within the document.” ^[19]

The 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.” ^[4] In most cases, internal links in the document are linked to the play-text, and explain archaisms or controversial passages. They are highlighted in light blue to be as unobtrusive as possible. 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 line “*pray you*” takes you to note of explanation in the back of the document. To return to the place you were reading (i.e., here), simply click back on the text.

Because MS Word was not designed to bookmark a word or phrase twice, it was necessary to bookmark line numbers such as **3**. S.D. “*Exeunt two of Cornwall’s knights.*” By clicking on the number “3” in this example, the reader is directed to my note in the back, not the play-text. To return to your place in the document that you were reading from (i.e., here), just click back on the line number “3.” I had to do the same with stage directions that I gave at the top of a scene that were not assigned line numbers. For instance, by clicking on **S.D.**, “*wearing spectacles*” the reader is directed to my explanation in the Notes. To return, just click back on “S.D.”

External hyperlinks, sometimes called outbound links, lead to a page or resource outside the document such the word **Interregnum**. 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 a note about the English Interregnum at Wikipedia. In order not lose 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 above.



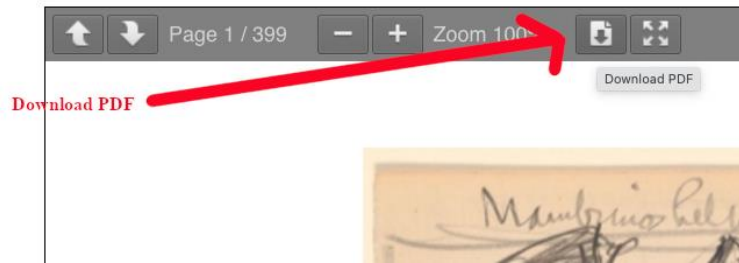
Some examples of external links in this document are:

- [F, 2543-45](#), hyperlinked to the Old Spelling transcription of the Folio I, 1623 at InternetShakespeareEditions
- [Q1, 2341.2-2347.9](#), hyperlinked to the Old Spelling transcription of the Quarto 1, 1608 at InternetShakespeareEditions
- [Q2, 874](#) hyperlinked to the Old Spelling transcription of the Quarto 2, 1619 at InternetShakespeareEditions
- *“Tearing off his Coaths”*, hyperlinked to a facsimile copy of *The works of Mr. William Shakespear; in six volumes. Adorn'd with cuts. Revis'd and corrected, with an account of the life and writings of the author.* By N. Rowe, Esq. London: Jacob Tonson, 1709. (Boston Public Library, InternetShakespeareEditions.)
- H.H. Furness's *New Variorum Edition*
- Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*

My edition uses extensive use of Wikipedia, a free online encyclopedia, created and edited by volunteers around the world and hosted by the Wikimedia Foundation. Wikipedia is a valuable starting point for students who want basic information about what the [Reformation](#), for example, and may or may not want to read [Diarmaid MacCulloch's book](#) on the subject.

All small, *low-res* thumbnails of paintings, engravings, wood-cut illustrations and so on are hyperlinked to their original sources, for instance [Figure 81](#). “Young Knight in a Landscape, with a hand-kerchief in his codpiece, Vittore Carpaccio (c. 1505). Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.” The reader can view the high-res version of the copyright holder by clicking on the image. Likewise, thumbnail screenshots are hyperlinked to Youtube, such as [Video 28](#), “Skinning, Fleshing, and Boarding a Fox (K9) for a Wall Hanger (Full Process)”, or [Video 33](#), Buster Keaton doing a pratfall known as a “108”, or [Video 27](#), “The Dead Parrot Sketch” by Monty Python’s Flying Circus. Again, it is important to remember press and hold the **Ctrl key** (⌘ **cmd key** on a Mac) and then click the link in your browser.

In order to preserve the document formatting when I posted it online, I converted 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 an emendation of my own making. Not only does it diverge from what is published in the quartos and Folio, but it is in general disagreement with orthodox editions of the play. 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 internally hyperlinked to a note in the back of the document explaining my reasons for adding it. The direction is not meant as gospel but to highlight important matters of debate. The color serves as a warning to stop reading and start thinking. I am not able to be physically present to engage readers in the traditional Socratic method of self-questioning. Unless they are directly asked to do so, they will not take a second to think about Lear’s costume and why it matters in the narrative mode of the story. They have been taught by pedagogues to believe that what they see published in the name of Shakespeare is sacrosanct, and not open to question.

Introduction: 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

A quick search for *King Lear* on Google reveals that there is no extant holograph manuscript. Over the centuries, the play has been 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).

Beginning with [Lewis Theobald’s Shakespeare Restored](#) (1733), modern editions of *Lear* are collations or “conflations” of the quartos and Folio. [Grace Ippolo](#) 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 many other characters, creating a counterfeit and non-Shakespearean foundation upon which only the most limited literary interpretation and meaning can be built.’” (qu. Michael Best, “[Ibid](#)”).

Actors and directors, of course, are free to make whatever use they want to of these corrupted sources. Audiences don’t know or care what Shakespeare wrote as proven by the success of Tate’s long-running version, and the many acclaimed productions afterwards that are neither complete nor “historically informed.” In *The Empty Space*, [Peter Brook](#) termed historical approaches to drama “deadly theatre.” Unlike performers, the goal of editors is to restore the play to something approaching its original form, before it was subjected to revisions by the [Master of Revels](#), the [sharers](#), the players, and the typesetters. It does not occur to ordinary readers (or even brainiacs like [Tolstoy](#) and [Orwell](#)), to question if restorations of the play were botched by authorities. Is it possible that Shakespeare’s editors were prejudiced by their own ideas of Tragedy, and fouled up?

In his [Introduction to *The Bacchae*](#), William Arrowsmith writes, “the reader who is not willing to follow where the play, rather than his prejudice, leads him forfeits his quarry.”

The theory of [authorial intent](#) in literature and drama is as thorny as criminal intent in Law. There are, of course, no empirical means of knowing what Shakespeare had in mind when he originally wrote the play. Due to the lack of any [direct evidence](#) to tell us what he intended, or what his “motives” were, readers have to approach the narrative as [Sherlock Holmes](#) would a crime scene. The case of *Shakespeare v Shakespeare’s Editors* rests entirely on [circumstantial evidence](#). To reach a final theory requires [inductive reasoning](#).

“[Holmes] observed the scene, noticed certain jewelry on the woman’s body had been recently cleaned, except for her wedding ring. That forced him to ask the question, *Why*? Why would she clean everything except her wedding ring? Holmes induced that the woman did not commit suicide. In part, because she was traveling to London for one day, she packed an overnight bag—and had a secret meeting before returning home. The secret meeting and wedding ring, all allowed Holmes to continue to probe the none obvious, asking questions along the way but never forming a final opinion. Sherlock Holmes behaves like an annoying child who continually asks, *Why*. The “*whys*” stack upon one another, and before too long, they allow Holmes to form a pattern to reach a hypothesis and then a final theory” (The Daily Coach, “[The Power of Inductive Reasoning](#),” 2019).

Because the quartos and folio cannot be trusted as accurate sources, valid interpretations of the text must be constrained by the narrative structure of the work, the established theatrical conventions of Elizabethan dramatists, and the literary, cultural and political context it was written in. Definitive answers to hypotheticals cannot be stated with authority, so all any responsible editor can do is put questions to readers about the inconsistencies and vagaries in the sources. What story is Shakespeare telling? What perspective is it being told from? The better the editor, the better the *questions* they will put to readers. “There are no right answers to wrong questions,” says Ursula K. Le Guin. “Only the one who does not question is safe from making a mistake.” says Albert Einstein.

The greatest challenge for any editor of *King Lear* is determining the relationship of the text to performance. In a Tragedy, the “action”—the fundamental element of the plot, —is not limited to words. A playwright uses dramatization as well as words to communicate meaning, as Aristotle observes when he compares Epic to Tragedy in *The Poetics* ([Chapters XXIII-XXVI](#)), Modern readers have come to expect publishers (like [New Directions](#)) to include stage directions. [Tennessee Williams](#), for example, gives a 330-word description of the opening of Act 1 scene one in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In *Lear*, however, directions explaining the action were not published in the quartos and Folio with consistency. The relationship between the text and performance often reads like there is none.

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**,”^[5] provided Restoration audiences what they wanted to see: “love triumphant, and a [Protestant] monarch rightfully restored to his throne.”^[6] Lear lives to reign as king, and Gloucester survives the shock of learning the identify of Edgar. Only the “villains” die. The play ends with Edgar marrying Cordelia, and joyfully declaring that “truth and virtue shall at last succeed.”

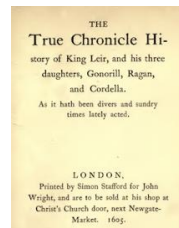


Figure 1. *The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordelia* by Anonymous.

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 1.] **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.

Alexandra E. LaGrand writes, “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.”^[5] **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. **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 in the early 17th century. (“William Charles Macready and the restoration of William Shakespeare’s ‘King Lear’”)



Figure 2, *T. Rex*, Chicago's Century of Progress, The Sinclair Exhibit, 1933

The central hypothesis of my restoration is that *King Lear* was conceived as a satire of [Puritanism](#); an *hilarotragedy* (Ἰλαροτραγῳδία lit. '[cheerful tragedy](#)')^[1]; a farce that goes horribly awry. Upon review by the [Master of Revels](#), likely [George Buck](#), the play was deemed blasphemous, and revised before it was ever staged. There is strong circumstantial evidence that many elements of the narrative were censored to avoid offending leaders in Parliament and the Church sympathetic to Puritan causes. These include changes in the plot, changes in line ascriptions, and the omission of stage directions. Any material that might be considered offensive had to be approved by the Master of Revels, including the costumes. A whole a pattern of omissions is discernable that results in shifting the mode of the narrative from what the audience sees happening *outside* of Lear's thoughts and emotions, to the conflict going on *inside* of it.

The orthodox version of *King Lear*, as the narrative is represented through the centuries, is an ideological "construct" that "experts" on Shakespeare agree upon as the story he is telling, and the perspective from which it is being told. Like the wrong-headed [Apatosaurus](#) displayed for nearly half a century at the [Carnegie Museum](#), modern restorations of *King Lear* are not shaped mainly by objective evidence.

"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. Now lest the reader too hastily dismiss this "constructivist" claim, let me point out that some scientific episodes do raise doubts about scientific objectivity and rationality.

One major incident occurred at [Carnegie Museum of Natural History](#). From 1934 to 1979, the museum displayed one of its prize dinosaur specimens with the wrong head, an incident as potentially shocking as if a horse skeleton were to be topped with a giraffe's skull. During those 45 years the museum's great *Apatosaurus louisae* was displayed with a head that is now regarded as belonging to *Camarasaurus*—a very different sort of dinosaur. This error supports the constructivist view. For 45 years Carnegie Museum of Natural History, and the world, believed in a creature that never

existed. Of course, we now know that the Apatosaurus that was accepted for 45 years was a construct, a figment of scientific imagination. But if this could happen at one of the world's great natural history museums, and, even worse, be accepted by the whole paleontological community, who is to say that the world's museums are not still full of such chimeras? (Keith M. Parsons, "The Wrongheaded Dinosaur":



Figure 3. John Bull holds the head of Napoleon Bonaparte in an 1803 caricature by James Gillray.

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*.)

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.



Figure 4. Prometheus Bound, Anonymous German or Austrian, 19th-20th Century.

As the story of *King Lear* is read in the quartos and Folio, without stage directions, the focalization or the perspective from which a narrative is told, 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.) The late Christopher Plummer echoes the words of Charles Lamb when he states that “Lear is the storm.” ^[4]

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 listeth, at will upon the corruptions and abuses of mankind. (*Prose Works*, p. 121, ed. 1836.)

Joseph Wood Krutch writes in “The Tragic Fallacy”, “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.” It is worth mentioning that in *The Romantic Approach to 'Don Quixote': A Critical History of the Romantic Tradition in 'Quixote' Criticism*, Anthony Close examines why the novel “was given a sentimentalised and seriously philosophical interpretation by the German Romantics. Dr Close is essentially concerned with the question why this unhistorical and subjective reading of the novel prevailed, first in Europe, then in Spain. He examines the stages by which, from 1860, it progressively supplanted in Spain the hitherto dominant neo-classical interpretation, and shows how this process kept pace with increasing identification with movements of intellectual history, aesthetics, literary criticism and scholarship in Europe.”

For Anthony Close, the tendency of *Don Quixote* criticism since 1800 to idealize the protagonist, to deny the satiric purpose of the novel, and to interpret its symbolism in modern (that is, anachronistic) terms demonstrates the impact and continuing influence of German Romanticism” (Edward H. Friedman).



Figure 5. 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"

Victorian society was deeply prejudiced by the ideals of masculinity, imperialism, and womanhood. Kathryn Hughes writes that “During the Victorian period men and women’s roles became more sharply defined than at any time in history.” (“Gender roles in the 19th century,” *The British Library*). Many Victorian males viewed themselves as mighty kings in their own homes, inherently deserving of entitlement simply because they were born English (white) and had a penis. They were Romantic nationalists who believed in the superiority of English language, the supe-

riority English customs, the superiority English Institutions, and the superiority of English culture, spearheaded by Shakespeare.



Figure 6. An anti-suffragette Victorian postcard depicting a dim-witted English woman with the racial features of an Africa tribesman who practices teeth filing.

Victorian males didn't want to see a didactic play that satirized ideas of masculinity, the English language, religion and justice. What they expected from Tragedy was a cathartic purging of *emotions*. When Lear exclaims, "*How sharper then a Serpents tooth it is,/ To have a thanklesse Childe*" (F, 802-3), they wept tears of pity for themselves in identification. They didn't want to see an anti-hero, like Don Quixote, but an all-giving parent who becomes a victim of females and the State, i.e., liberal government. Feminism in the UK began in this era, and Englishmen felt threatened, especially by the women's suffrage movement. Their ideals of hegemonic masculinity and the "Cult of Domesticity" were being challenged by women's rights advocates like Mary Wollstonecraft. "Beware; for I am fearless, and therefore powerful," writes her daughter Mary Shelley. "I will watch with the wiliness of a snake, that I may sting with its venom. Man, you shall repent of the injuries you inflict."

In the 19th century, *King Lear* was staged as a self-pity fest for middle aged Tories. Producers, operating on basic principles of supply and demand, took a naturalistic / realistic approach to performance. It didn't matter how plays were staged in London's open-air public theatres, like the Curtain, the Rose, the Swan, the Red Bull Theatre, the Globe Theatre, the Hope Theatre, and the Fortune Playhouse. *King Lear* was presented as a classical Aristotelian tragedy inside a *proscenium*; the sort of drama Bertolt Brecht criticized "for its preference for dramatic narratives that please but do not instruct or provide real learning about the source of human suffering. Brecht attacks Aristotelian catharsis as a kind of 'opium of the masses' arguing that empathizing with characters prevents viewers from reflecting critically on the social causes of human suffering." (Angela Curran, "Brecht's Criticisms of Aristotle's Aesthetics of Tragedy," 2003.)



Figure 7. *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.

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*. [See Figure 7.] Tocqueville writes in his book *Democracy in America*, "There is scarcely a pioneer's hut where

one does not encounter some odd volumes of Shakespeare.” 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.”)

The doctrine of Manifest Destiny 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*.” In his 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.

America was founded by Puritan fanatics. My own family is haunted by the ghost of [Anthony Comstock](#), the notorious Victorian-era anti-vice crusader. “Comstock moved to New York City in 1871 where, according to [Margaret Anderson](#), ‘he was appalled by the flourishing traffic in what he termed pornography: sexually risqué books, adventure stories for children, and tawdry pamphlets and pictures.’” With the support of the President of the [Young Men's Christian Association](#) (YMCA) he formed the [New York Society for the Suppression of Vice](#) and the [Society to Maintain Public Decency](#).” “He took credit for arresting thousands and driving at least 15 people to suicide through his anti-vice crusades.”^[7] In 1920, publisher [Raymond D. Halsey](#) was arrested for selling the "obscene" novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* by [Théophile Gautier](#), which depicted adultery and homosexuality. Publisher [Bernarr Macfadden](#) was targeted by the NYSSV for producing "pornographic" posters to promote one of his Physical Culture Exhibitions”.^[39] Joyce’s *Ulysses* was declared obscene and banned in the United States. In 1927, [Mae West](#) spent ten days in jail at [Jefferson Market Women’s Prison](#) for her starring role on Broadway in the play *Sex*. [George Bernard Shaw](#) claimed he originated the term “Comstockery”, “the world's standing joke at the expense of the United States,” in 1905 after Comstock worked to remove *Man and Superman* from the New York Public Library.



Figure 8. Editor William Comstock archiving memorabilia owned by Mae West for auction at Butterfields, September 25, 2000.

In the 20th century, “the [Child Protection and Obscenity Enforcement Act](#) of 1988, signed by President Reagan as a rider to the [Anti-Drug Abuse Act](#) of 1988, amended Sec. 305 of the [Tariff Act](#) of 1930, a provision of the Comstock Act, as well as adding new provisions to chapter 71, title 18, United States Code, all in aid of helping prosecute child pornography.”^[note 2] In the 21st century, following a landmark decision by the infamous [Roberts Court](#) in [Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization](#) (2022), “the Comstock Act has become increasingly discussed by anti-

abortion groups and public figures as being a means by which abortion access in the United States could be curtailed without the need for new federal legislation.”



Figure 9. 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).

King Lear is among Shakespeare’s most didactic plays like the satires of Ben Jonson. 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).

Lear is *phallocentrism* gone mad. His tragic flaw or “*hamartia*” is his masculine pride. His actions are driven by testosterone, not his wits, as the Fool jests:

Foole. If a mans braines were in's heeles, wert not in danger of kybes?

Lear. I Boy.

Foole. Then I prythee be merry, thy wit shall not go
slip-shod. (F.882-84)

Lear’s rashness is juxtaposed with the *stoicism* of Edgar/The King of France. Stoicism “teaches the development of self-control as a means of over-coming destructive emotions.” France remains calm in the midst of Lear’s anger, and asks to know the reason why Cordelia suddenly fell from his liking. Likewise, Edgar keeps his wits about him when Edmund warns him of a deadly plot against him. He does not run off in a fit of anger to defend his innocence, like a macho man. As Seneca writes, “If you want to determine the nature of anything, entrust it to time: when the sea is stormy, you can see nothing clearly.” Edgar waits to see things clearly before making his move: “*the readinesse is all*”, as Hamlet says (F, 3671).

In *Lear*, Shakespeare appears to have been influenced by [Justus Lipsius](#) who wrote a series of books “designed to revive ancient Stoicism in a form that would be compatible with Christianity.” Lipsius's principal philosophical work is *De Constantia Libri Duo* ('Two Books on Constancy'), published in 1584. The title is borrowed from Seneca's dialogue *De Constantia Sapientis* ('On the Firmness of the Wise.') This work was immensely popular and went through numerous editions. It was translated into English four times between 1594 and 1670.

Lipsius has been described as the greatest Renaissance scholar of the Low Countries after Erasmus. The role that he played in the revival of interest in Stoicism during the late Renaissance was similar to that performed by [Marsilio Ficino](#) with regard to Platonism and [Pierre Gassendi](#) with regard to [Epicureanism](#). As such, he stands as a key figure in the history of Renaissance philosophy and the Renaissance revival of ancient thought. ^[5]

The subject of male rage was as timely in ancient Greece and Rome as it is today where 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.



Figure 10. 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 *I 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.*)

Totus mundus agit histrionem

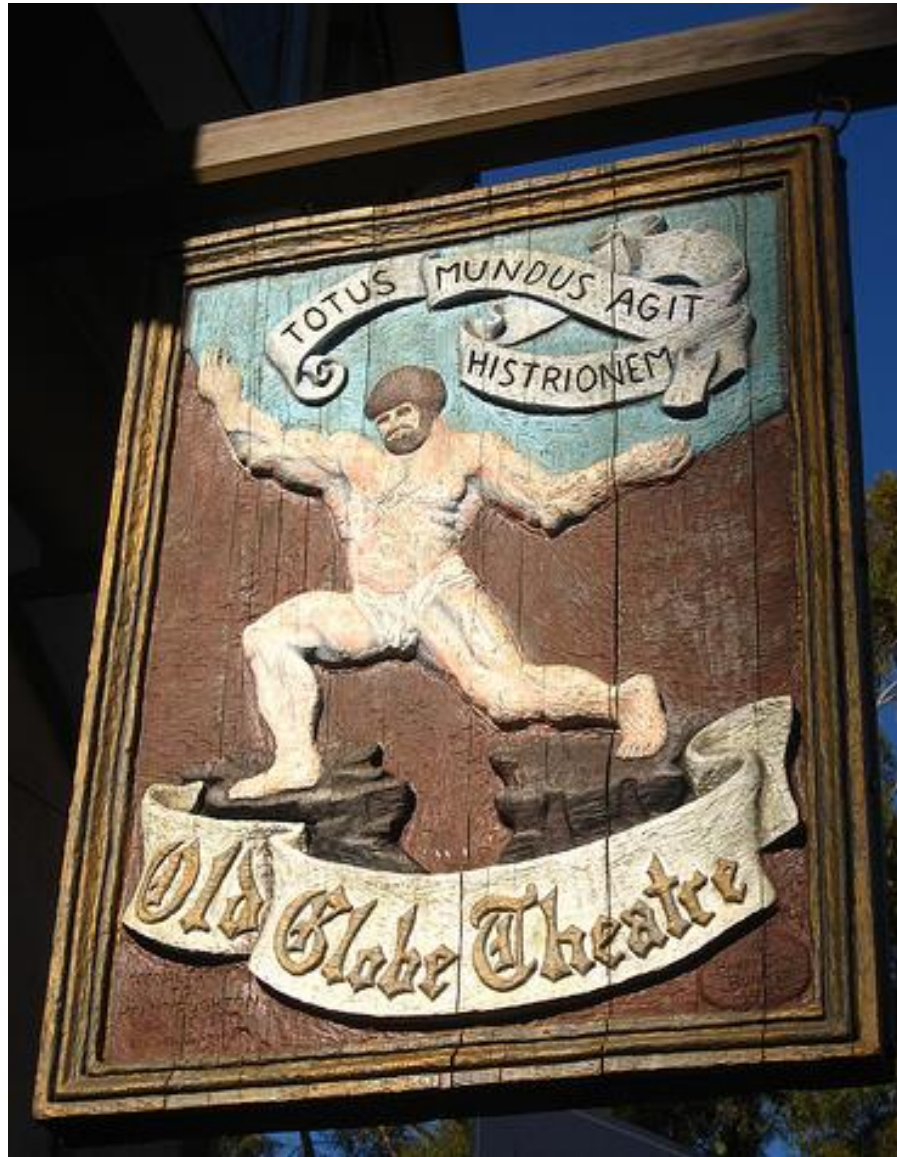


Figure 11. A crest depicting Hercules bearing the globe on his shoulders together with the motto "*Totus mundus agit histrionem*" (the whole world is a playhouse) is thought to have been displayed at the entrance to the Globe Theatre.

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 Personae] There is no *Dramatis Personae* 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 12.] 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), etc. What is problematic for readers is knowing who’s who among the *tertiary* players with speaking roles. 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.



Figure 12. *Dramatis Personae* from *King Lear. A Tragedy*, edited by Nicholas Rowe, 1709.

Michael Best writes, “Many of the changes to speech prefixes are relatively minor: a Servant in Q [1.584] becomes a Knight in F [1.583], a Gentleman in Q [1.921] becomes a Messenger in F [1.921], a Doctor in Q [1.2761] becomes a Gentleman in F [1.2762], and so on. Changes of this kind carry meaning and have an influence on staging and costuming, but they make no change to the major roles in the play. There are a total of 45 changes involving minor characters of this kind.”^[40] In my version, several of the “minor” characters, and even background actors, form an essential part of the narrative. Their interactions are a crucial element in defining the nature and motivations of the “major” characters.^[8] They drive the plot forward by creating conflict, and help set the overall tone of the story. “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).

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. We first see him in II,i, when he brings Edmund news of the unexpected arrival of Cornwall and Regan. He reenters the same scene with the “*Servants with Torches*” (F, 970) that attend Gloucester. The character is ordered by his lord to “*Dispatch*” (F,995) in haste to proclaim Edgar an outlaw. (See note II,i,58, “*dispatch.*”) 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). The role of this character is essential in the narrative because he 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 feels a closeness with Edmund?

ALBANY’S SQUIRE. Albany’s Squire is a conflation of parts arbitrarily 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 induced 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 “Herald’s wand” or a *caduceus*—hence his possession and knowledge of unguents which he applies to 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*.”)

We next see him in IV,ii where he is identified as a “*Gentleman*” (Q, 2313) / “*Messenger*” (F, 2312) who gives an eye witness account of Gloucester’s blinding to his Lord and his wife. He carefully avoids mentioning Goneril’s and Regan’s complicity for fear of incurring the former’s wrath. As the saying goes, “no one loves the messenger who brings bad news.”

ALBANY’S SQUIRE is logically the unnamed actor in scene 22 whom Edmund tells to summon the Duke: “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). ALBANY’S SQUIRE is logically the same character as the “*Gentleman*” (F, 3169) or the “*one with a bloody knife*” (Q, 3169) who returns horrorstricken 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.

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). (It is the inexperienced young SQUIRE who reads Albany’s paper. The Squire appears to know nothing at all about heraldry or chivalry, because he has to be told exactly what to say and when to say it by his Lord. See note V,i,107, “*Come hither, Herald.*”)



Figure 13. Thirteenth century Spanish depiction of a pair of *buisines*, also called a herald's trumpet.

LEAR’S KNIGHT. LEAR’S KNIGHT is a conflation of parts ascribed variously to “a *Knight*”, “a *Gentleman*”, “a *Messenger*”, “a *Servant*” and to Kent in the quartos and folio (See note I,iv,47,

“*Lear’s Knight*”). The Knight’s Code of Chivalry, inspired by the *Song of Roland*, referenced by Edgar (F, 1966), is a central theme of the play, and one of its most important images, culminating in a duel between Edgar and Edmund in the form of a [medieval trial by combat](#). One of Tolstoy’s main objections to *Lear* is that it does not adhere to conventions of [theatre realism](#). “The action of *King Lear* takes place 800 years b.c., and yet the characters are placed in conditions possible only in the Middle Ages.”^[50] Thus, it cannot be overstated that *King Lear* takes the form [metatheatre](#). Shakespeare mixes elements of [Graeco-Roman paganism](#), [English Puritanism](#), [Medieval chivalry](#), and [Elizabethan Poor Laws](#) as freely as a child plays with Civil War soldiers, GI Joe Action toys, and Godzilla collectables. Metatheatre creates a richer, more immersive experience of the story than realism because it engages the spectator’s imagination by blurring the boundaries between what is real and what is fiction.

“Metatheatre” is a convenient name for the quality or force in a play which challenges theatre’s claim to be simply realistic -- to be nothing but a mirror in which we view the actions and sufferings of characters like ourselves, suspending our disbelief in their reality. Metatheatre begins by sharpening our awareness of the unlikeness of life to dramatic art. It may end by making us aware of life’s uncanny likeness to art or illusion. By calling attention to the strangeness, artificiality, illusoriness, or arbitrariness -- in short, the theatricality -- of the life we live, it marks those frames and boundaries that conventional dramatic realism would hide. It may present action so alien, improbable, stylized, or absurd that we are forced to acknowledge the estranging frame that encloses a whole play.”^[21]

CORNWALL’S KNIGHT. In the quartos and Folio, the brave young knight who comes to the aid of Gloucester in III,vii is identified as a “*Servant*” (F, 2145)—a title that can be applied equally to the Lord Chamberlain as it can a [gong farmer](#). In keeping with the theme of chivalry, I have given the character the name of 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 from the dialogue 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. Regan and the duke are being sarcastic when they refer to him as a “*peasant*” and a “*villain*.” Irony is one of the principal devices in *King Lear*. The character’s commanding physical presence first caught our attention in II,i when he arrived with Cornwall and Regan as one of their personal bodyguards. In my version, 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* character; like those in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a 14th-century chivalric romance.

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. (See [note I,i,189](#). “*France*.”) 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.

CORDELIA | THE FOOL. I concur with Alois Brandl that the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were doubled, and performed by the same boy player. (See note I,iv,86,S.D., “*Enter Fool.*”) The important thing for the audience to see is that the roles of parent and child are inverted. The FOOL is essentially CORDELIA’s *doppelgänger*, her double. 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.” The metaphysical conceit is that Cordelia and the Fool are one Platonic Form. [See video 1, “David Sedley: Plato’s Theory of Forms.”]



Video 1. Video, David Sedley: Plato's Theory of Forms.

BAGPIPE PLAYER. See note INTERMEZZO, S.D., “*Bagpiper plays.*”

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 14. 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
5 values most, for equalities are so weigh'd that curiosity
6 in 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-wombed, 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 metal 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 steps between them.]
Kent. Good my Liege—
 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 *[To Cordelia.]* 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—
Lear. The bow is bent and drawn; make from the **shaft**.
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.
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 motive.
Lear. Out of my sight!
Kent. See better, Lear, and let me still remain
 159 The true blank of thine eye.
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?
 195 *Bur.* **Most** royal Majesty,
 I crave no more than hath your Highness offer'd,
 196 Nor will you **tender** less.
 197 *Lear.* Right noble Burgundy,
 When she was dear to us we did hold her so,
 198 But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands.
 199 If **ought** 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.
 203 *Bur.* I know no answer.
 204 *Lear.* **Sir**,
 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?
 208 *Bur.* Pardon me, royal Sir;
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**
 238 Which often leaves the **history** unspoke
 239 That it intends to do?—My Lord of Burgundy,
 240 What say you to the lady? Love's not love
 241 When it is mingled with **regards** that stand
 242 Aloof from **th'entire point**. Will you have her?
 243 She is herself a dowry.
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
 249 That you must lose a husband.
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;
 253 Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd!
 254 Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon.
 255 Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
 256 Gods, gods! 'Tis strange that from their cold'st neglect
 257 My love should **kindle to inflam'd respect.**

258 Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,
 259 Is Queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.
 260 Not all the dukes of *wat'rish* Burgundy
 261 Can buy this *unpriz'd* precious maid of me.
 262 Bid them farewell, Cordelia; though unkind,
 263 Thou lovest here, a better where to find.
 264 *Lear.* Thou hast her, France. Let her be thine, for we
 265 Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
 266 That face of hers again. Therefore be gone
 267 Without our grace, our love, our *benison*.—
 268 Come, noble Burgundy.

*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 *duty*.
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.

Music still. Exeunt France and Cordelia.

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 you,
 304 let us hit together. If our father carry authority with such
 305 dis-position as he bears, this last surrender of his will
 306 but 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
62 his; 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
68 be fit that, sons at *perfect* age, and fathers *declin'd*, the
69 father should be *as ward to the son*, and the son manage
70 his 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 the 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.
 108 It 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 treachers 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
 158 you 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.*

1 *Gon.* Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his
2 Fool?

3 *Osw.* Ay, Madam.

4 *Gon.* By day and night he wrongs me! Every hour
5 He flashes into one gross **crime** or other
6 That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it.
7 His knights grow riotous, and himself **upbraids** us
8 On every **trifle**. When he returns from **hunting**
9 I will not speak with him. Say I am sick.
10 If you **come slack of former services**,
11 You shall do well. The fault of it I'll **answer**.

[Horn within.

12 *Osw.* He's coming, Madam; I hear him.

13 *Gon.* Put on what weary negligence you please,
14 You and your fellows; I'd have it *come to question*.
15 If he *distaste* it, let him to my sister,
16 Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
17 Not to be over-rul'd. *Idle* old man,
18 That still would manage those authorities
19 That he hath given away. Now, by my life,
20 Old fools are babes again, and must be us'd
21 *With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abus'd.*
22 Remember what I have said.

Osw. Well, Madam.

23 *Gon.* And let his knights have colder looks among you.
24 What grows of it, no matter. Advise your fellows so.
25 I would breed from hence **occasions**, and I shall,
26 That I may speak. I'll write **straight** to my sister
27 To **hold my very course**. Prepare for dinner.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT I, SCENE IV.—[A Hall in the same.]
[The Platform and the Lords Rooms.]

Tucket within. Enter Kent, disguised.

1 *Kent.* If but as well I other accents borrow,

2 That can my speech defuse, my good intent
3 May carry through itself to that full issue
4 For which I raz'd my likeness. Now, banish'd Kent
5 If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
6 So may it come, thy master, whom thou lov'st,
7 Shall find thee full of labors.

Enter Lear, Lear's Knight, and Knights from hunting. Domestic Servants of the castle in attendance.

8 *Lear.* Let me not stay a jot for dinner.—Go, get it ready.—
[Exit Servant.]

A banquet is served in. Solemn music.

9 How now, what art thou?

10 *Kent.* A man, Sir.

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

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

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 Knight.]*

Re-enter Oswald, with a bowl of pease porridge.

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.—

[Exit a Knight.

71 Go you, call hither my Fool.— *[Exit a Knight.*

Re-enter Oswald, with stone jugs.

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 hunting crop.

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.* [*Draws his sword.*] Come, sir, arise. Away! I'll teach
82 you differences. Away, away! If you will measure your
83 lubber's length again, tarry. But away! Go to. Have you
84 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 then 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 *[Sings.] 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 *[Sings.] 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—*[Pricks 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.
 242 *Gon.* You strike my people, and your disorder'd rabble
 243 Make servants of their betters.

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.* 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.—*[Striking his head.]*

O Lear, Lear, Lear!

 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 *[Kneels.]* 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, Lear's Knight, 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.— *[To Goneril.]* 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 wolvisish 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*—*[Trumpets Sound.*

335 *Alb.* Well, well; th'event. *[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 soft music 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.

1 *Edm.* Save thee, *Curan*.
2 *Curan*. And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given
3 him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his
4 Duchess will be here with him this night.
5 *Edm.* How comes that?
6 *Curan*. Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad? I
7 mean the whisper'd ones, for they are yet but ear-
8 kissing arguments.
9 *Edm.* Not I. Pray you, what are they?
10 *Curan*. Have you heard of no likely wars toward 'twixt the
11 Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?
12 *Edm.* Not a word.
13 *Curan*. You may do then, in time. Fare you well, sir. [*Exit*.]
14 *Edm.* The Duke be here tonight. The better! Best!
15 This weaves itself perforce into my business.
16 My father hath set guard to take my brother;
17 And I have one thing of a queasy question,
18 Which I must act. Briefness and Fortune, work!—
19 Brother, a word. Descend! Brother, I say!

Enter Edgar, descends from above with a rope.

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

Edg. I am sure **on't**, not a word.

Trumpets within.

28 *Edm.* I hear my father coming. Pardon me.
29 *In cunning* I must draw my sword upon you.
[Draws his sword.]

30 Draw. Seem to defend yourself.
[Edgar draws and parries Edmund's attacks.]

31 Now quit you well.—
 Yield! Come before my father. Light, ho! Here!

32 Fly, brother.—Torches! Torches!— So, farewell.
[Exit Edgar.]

33 Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion
 34 Of my more fierce endeavor.—*[Wounds his arm.]*
 I have seen drunkards
 35 Do more than this in sport.

Edmund hides his rapier.

—Father! Father! —

36 Stop, stop!—No help?

*Enter Gloucester, Curan,
 and armed Knights, with torches.*

37 Glou. Now, Edmund, where's the villain?
 38 Edm. Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,
 39 Mumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon
 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.'

78 *Glou.* O strange and *fast'ned* villain!
 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. [*Trumpet. 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. Come your
 36 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!

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.
 Oswald draws his sword.*

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
72 passion
73 That in the natures of their lords rebel;
74 Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;
75 Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
76 With every gale and vary of their masters,
77 Knowing nought, like dogs, but following.—
78 A plague upon your epileptic visage!
79 Smile you my speeches, as I were a Fool?
80 Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,
81 I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.
82 *Corn.* What, art thou mad, old fellow?
83 *Glou.* How fell you out? Say that.
84 *Kent.* No contraries hold more antipathy
85 Than I and such a knave.
86 *Corn.* Why does thou call him knave? What is his fault?
87 *Kent.* His countenance likes me not.
88 *Corn.* No more, perchance, does mine, nor his, nor hers.
89 *Kent.* Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain.
90 I have seen better faces in my time
91 Than stands on any shoulder that I see
92 Before me at this instant.
93 *Corn.* This is some fellow,
94 Who, having been prais'd for bluntness, doth affect
95 A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb
96 Quite from his nature. He cannot flatter. He,
97 An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth;
98 And they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.
99 These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
100 Harbor more craft and more corrupter ends
Than twenty silly-ducking observants,
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.
 130 Corn. Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and honor,
 131 There shall he sit till noon.
 132 Reg. Till noon? Till night, my Lord, and all night too.
 133 Kent. Why, Madam, if I were your father's dog,
 134 You should not use me so.
 Reg. Sir, being his knave, I will.
 135 Corn. This is a fellow of the self-same color
 136 Our sister speaks of.—Come, bring away the stocks.
 [Exit Cornwall's Knight.]
 137 Glou. Let me beseech your Grace not to do so.
 138 His fault is much, and the good King his master
 139 Will check him for't. Your purpos'd low correction
 140 Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches
 141 For pilf'rings and most common trespasses
 142 Are punish'd with. The King must take it ill
 143 That he, so slightly valued in his messenger,
 144 Should have him thus restrained.

Corn. I'll answer that.

*Reenter Cornwall's Knight, with Servants
carrying stocks.*

145 Reg. My sister may receive it much more worse
146 To have her gentleman abus'd, assaulted,
147 For following her affairs.—
[*To Cornwall's Knight.*] Put in his legs.

Kent is put in the stocks.

148 Corn. Come, my good lord, away.
[*Trumpet. Exeunt all but Gloucester and Kent.*

149 Glou. I am sorry for thee, friend; 'tis the Duke's pleasure,
150 Whose disposition, all the world well knows,
151 Will not be rubb'd nor stopp'd. I'll entreat for thee.

152 Kent. Pray do not, Sir. I have watch'd and travell'd hard.
153 Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle.
154 A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.
155 Give you good morrow!

156 Glou. The Duke's to blame in this; 'twill be ill taken.
[*Exit. Soft music.*

157 Kent. Good King, that must approve the common saw,
158 Thou out of heaven's benediction com'st
159 To the warm sun! [*He takes a letter out of his purse.*
—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.]

A hurdy-gurdy plays. 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 **Hurlygurd!** Poor Tom"
21 That's something yet. Edgar I nothing am. *[Exit.]*

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

*Enter Lear, Lear's Knight, and Fool,
playing a pipe and tabor.*

1 *Lear.* ‘Tis strange that they should so depart from home,
2 And not send back my messenger.
Lear’s Knight. As I learn’d,
3 The night before there was no purpose in them
4 Of this remove.
Kent. Hail to thee, noble master!
5 *Lear.* Ha!
6 Mak’st thou this shame thy pastime?
Kent. No, my Lord.
7 *Fool.* Ha, ha! He wears cruel garters. Horses are tied by the
8 heads, dogs and bears by th’neck, monkeys by th’loins,
9 and men by th’legs. When a man’s overlusty at legs then
10 he wears wooden nether-stocks.
11 *Lear.* What’s he that hath so much thy place mistook

12 To set thee here?

13 *Kent.* It is both he and she,
14 Your son and daughter.

15 *Lear.* No.

16 *Kent.* Yes.

17 *Lear.* No, I say.

18 *Kent.* I say, yea.

19 *Lear.* No, no; they would not.

20 *Kent.* Yes, yes, they have.

21 *Lear.* By Jupiter, I swear, no!

22 *Kent.* By Juno, I swear, ay!

23 *Lear.* They durst not do 't,
24 They could not, would not do't. 'Tis worse than
25 murder,
26 To do upon respect such violent outrage.
27 Resolve me, with all modest haste, which way
28 Thou might'st deserve, or they impose, this usage,
29 Coming from us.

30 *Kent.* My Lord, when at their home
31 I did commend your Highness' letters to them,
32 Ere I was risen from the place that show'd
33 My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,
34 Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting forth
35 From Goneril his mistress salutations;
36 Deliver'd letters, spite of intermission,
37 Which presently they read: on whose contents
38 They summon'd up their meiny, straight took horse;
39 Commanded me to follow and attend
40 The leisure of their answer; gave me cold looks:
41 And meeting here the other messenger,
42 Whose welcome, I perceiv'd, had poison'd mine,
43 Being the very fellow which of late
44 Display'd so saucily against your Highness,
45 Having more man than wit about me, drew.
46 He rais'd the house with loud and coward cries.
47 Your son and daughter found this trespass worth
48 The shame which here it suffers.

49 *Fool.* Winter's not gone yet if the wild-geese fly that way.
50 *Fathers that wear rags*
51 *Do make their children blind,*
52 *But fathers that bear bags*
53 *Shall see their children kind.—*
54 *Fortune, that arrant whore,*
55 *Ne'er turns the key to th' poor.*
56 But for all this thou shalt have as many dolors for thy
57 daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

58 *Lear.* O! how this mother swells up toward my heart;
59 *[Pointing to his liver.*
60 *Hysterica passio! Down, thou climbing sorrow!*

56 Thy **element's** below.—Where is this daughter?
 57 *Kent.* With the Earl, Sir; here within.
 58 *Lear.* Follow me not. Stay here. *[Exit.*
 59 *Lear's Knight.* Made you no more offence but what you speak of?
 60 *Kent.* None.
 61 How **chance** the King comes with so small a number?
 62 *Fool.* And thou hadst been set i'th'stocks for that question,
 63 thou'dst well deserv'd it.
 64 *Kent.* Why, Fool?
 65 *Fool.* We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's no
 66 laboring i'th'winter. All that follow their noses are led
 67 by their eyes but blind men, and there's not a nose among
 68 twenty but can smell him that's stinking. Let go thy hold
 69 when a great wheel runs down a hill lest it break thy neck
 70 with following; but the great one that goes upward, let
 71 him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better
 72 counsel, give me mine again. I would have none but
 73 knaves follow it, since a Fool gives it.
 74 *That **sir** which serves and seeks for gain,*
 75 *And follows but for form,*
 76 *Will **pack** when it begins to rain*
 77 *And leave thee in the storm.*
 78 *But I will tarry; the Fool will stay,*
 79 *And let the wise man fly.*
 80 *The knave turns fool that runs away;*
 81 *The Fool no knave, **perdy**.*
 82 *Kent.* Where learn'd you this, Fool?
 83 *Fool.* Not i'th'stocks, Fool.

Re-enter Lear, with Gloucester.
 84 *Lear.* **Deny** to speak with me? They are sick! They are
 weary!
 85 They have travell'd all the night! Mere **insolence**,
 86 The **images** of revolt and **flying off**.
 87 Fetch me a better answer.
 88 *Glou.* My dear Lord,
 You know the fiery **quality** of the Duke;
 89 How **unremovable** and fix'd he is
 90 In his own course.
 91 *Lear.* Vengeance! Plague! Death! Confusion!
 92 '**Fiery**'! What '**quality**'? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester!
 93 I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.
 94 *Glou.* Well, my good Lord, I have inform'd them so.
 95 *Lear.* 'Inform'd them'? Dost thou understand me, man?
 96 *Glou.* Ay, my good Lord.
 97 *Lear.* The King would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
 98 Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends
 service;
 99 Are they 'inform'd' of this? My breath and blood!

100 'Fiery'! the 'fiery' Duke! Tell the *hot* Duke that—
 101 No, but not yet. Maybe he is not well.
 102 Infirmary doth still neglect all *office*
 103 Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves
 104 When Nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind
 105 To suffer with the body. I'll forbear;
 106 And am fall'n out with my more *headier* will,
 107 To *take* the indispos'd and sickly fit
 108 For the sound man.—*[Looking on Kent.]* Death on my
 state! Wherefore
 109 Should he sit here? This act persuades me
 110 That this *remotion* of the Duke and her
 111 Is *practice* only. Give me my servant forth.
 112 Go tell the Duke and's wife I'd speak with them;
 113 Now; presently. Bid them come forth and hear me,
 114 Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum
 115 Till it cry sleep to death.
 116 *Glou.* I would have all well betwixt you. *[Exit.]*
 117 *Lear.* O me! My heart, my *rising heart!* *[Clutching his heart.]*
 But, down!
 118 *Fool.* Cry to it, Nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when
 119 she put 'em i'th'paste alive. She *knapp'd* 'em o'th'
 120 coxcombs with a stick, and cried, 'Down wantons,
 121 down!' 'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to his
 122 horse, *buttered his hay.*
 Enter Cornwall and Regan, above.
 Reenter Gloucester with Knights.
 123 *Lear.* Good morrow to you both.
 Corn. Hail to your Grace!
 [Kent is set at liberty.]
 124 *Reg.* I am glad to see your Highness.
 125 *Lear.* Regan, I think you are. I know what reason
 126 I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad,
 127 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 deprav'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'rful sun,
164 To fall and **blister**!
165 *Reg.* O, the blest gods! So will you wish on me,
166 When the rash mood is on.
167 *Lear.* No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.
168 Thy **tender-hafted** nature shall not give
169 Thee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce, but thine
170 Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
171 To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,
172 To bandy hasty words, to scant my **sizes**,
173 And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt
174 Against my coming in. Thou better know'st
175 The **offices** of Nature, **bond of childhood**,
176 **Effects** of courtesy, dues of gratitude.
177 Thy half o'th'kingdom hast thou not forgot,
178 Wherein I thee endow'd.
Reg. Good sir, to th'purpose.

179 *Lear.* Who put my man i'th'stocks? *[Tucket within.*
 Corn. What trumpet's that?
 180 *Reg.* I know't, my sister's. This approves her letter,
 181 That she would soon be here.

Enter Oswald.

—Is your Lady come?
182 *Lear.* This is a slave, whose *easy-borrow'd* pride
183 Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.—
184 Out, varlet, from my sight!
Corn. What means your Grace?
185 *Lear.* Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have good hope
186 Thou didst not know on't. Who comes here?—

Enter Goneril, above.

O Heavens,
187 If you do love old men, if your sweet sway
188 *Allow* obedience, if you yourselves are old,
189 Make it your cause; send down and take my part!—
190 *[To Goneril.]* Art not asham'd to look upon this beard?

Goneril *takes* Regan by the hand.

191 O Regan! Will you take her by the hand.
192 *Reg.* Why not by th'hand, Sir? How have I offended?
193 All's not offence that indiscretion finds
194 And dotage terms so.

Lear. O sides, you are too tough!
Will you yet hold?—How came my man i'th'stocks?
Corn. I set him there, Sir; but his own disorders
Deserv'd much less advancement.

Lear. [To Regan.] You? Did you?

198 *Reg.* I pray you, father, being weak, seem so!
199 If, till the expiration of your month,
200 You will return and sojourn with my sister,
201 Dismissing half your train, come then to 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.* [*To Goneril.*] 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.

229 *Reg.* Not altogether so.
 230 I look'd not for you yet, nor am provided
 231 For your fit welcome. Give ear, Sir, to my sister;
 232 For those that **minge reason with your passion**
 233 Must be content to think you old, and so—
 234 But she knows what she does.

234 *Lear.* Is this well spoken?
 235 *Reg.* I dare avouch it, Sir. What? Fifty followers?
 236 Is it not well? What should you need of more?
 237 Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger
 238 Speak 'gainst so great a number? How, in one house,
 239 Should many people, under two commands,
 240 Hold amity? 'Tis hard; almost impossible.

240 *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—
 248 *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 l
 253 *Lord.* No more with me.
 254 *Lear.* Those wicked creatures yet do look **well-favor'd**
 255 When others are more wicked. Not being the worst
 256 Stands in some rank of praise. [*To Goneril.*] I'll go
 257 with thee.
 258 Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,
 259 And thou art twice her love.

259 *Gon.* Hear me, my Lord.

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

Reg. What need one?

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

A noise of distant thunder heard, then music.

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

Distant thunder, and music still.

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

Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, and Fool.

286 *Corn.* Let us withdraw, 'twill be a storm.
287 *Reg.* This house is little. The old man and's people
288 Cannot be well *bestow'd*.
289 *Gon.* 'Tis his own blame; *hath* put himself from *rest*,
290 And must needs taste his folly.
291 *Reg.* *For his particular*, I'll receive him gladly,
292 But not one follower.
Gon. So am I purpos'd.
293 Where is my Lord of Gloucester?
294 *Corn.* Follow'd the old man forth.

Re-enter Gloucester.

—He is return'd.

295 *Glou.* The King is in high rage.
 Corn. Whither is he going?

296 *Glou.* He calls to horse; but will I know not whither.
 297 *Reg.* 'Tis best to give him way. He leads himself.
 298 *Gon.* My Lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

Storm and tempest.

299 *Glou.* Alack! The night comes on, and the bleak winds
 300 Do sorely ruffle. For many miles about
 301 There's scarce a bush.
 302 *Reg.* O Sir, to wilful men,
 303 The injuries that they themselves procure
 304 Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors.
 305 He is attended with a desperate train,
 306 And what they may incense him to, being apt
 307 To have his ear abus'd, wisdom bids fear.
 308 *Corn.* Shut up your doors, my Lord. 'Tis a wild night.
 My Regan counsels well. Come out o'th'storm.
[Exeunt.]



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; 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.
 16 *Kent.* Who is with him?
 17 *Lear's Knight.* None but the Fool, who labors to outjest
 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 hath borne
 28 Against the old kind King, or something deeper,
 29 Whereof perchance these are but furnishings—
 30 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 *Lear's Knight.* I will talk further with you.
 44 *Kent.* *No, do not.*
 45 For confirmation that I am much more
 46 Than my outwall, open this purse, and take
 47 What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia—
 48 As fear not but you shall—show her this ring,
 49 And she will tell you who that fellow is
 50 That yet you do not know.— *[Storm and Tempest.*
 51 *Fie on this storm!*
 52 I will go seek the King.
 53 *Lear's Knight.* Give me your hand.
 54 Have you no more to say?
 55 *Kent.* Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet:
 56 That when we have found the King—in which your
 pain
 That way, I'll this—he that first lights on him
 Holla the other. *[Exeunt severally.*

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 Sing 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.

The codpiece that will house

Before the head has any,

The head and he shall louse;

So beggars marry many.

The man that makes his toe

What he his heart should make,

Shall of a corn cry woe,

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.

Lear. Let the great Gods,
51 That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads
52 Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
53 That hast within thee undivulged crimes
54 Unwhipp'd of Justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand,
55 Thou perjur'd, and thou simular of virtue
56 That art incestuous. Caitiff, to pieces shake,
57 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.

75 Fool. *He that has and a little tiny wit,*
76 *With hey, ho, the wind and the rain*
77 *Must make content with his fortunes fit,*
78 *Though the rain it raineth every day.*
79 Lear. True, boy.—Come, bring us to this hovel.
[Exeunt Lear and Kent.]
80 Fool. This is a brave night to cool a courtesan.
81 I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:
82 *When priests are more in word than matter;*
83 *When brewers mar their malt with water;*
84 *When nobles are their tailors' tutors;*
85 *No heretics burn'd, but wenches' suitors;*
86 *When every case in law is right;*
87 *No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;*
88 *When slanders do not live in tongues;*
89 *Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;*
90 *When usurers tell their gold i'th'field;*
91 *And bawds and whores do churches build—*
92 *Then shall the realm of Albion*
93 *Come to great confusion—*
94 *Then comes the time, who lives to see't,*
95 *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
11 now bears will be revenged **home**. There is part of a
12 power already footed. We must **incline to** the King. I will
13 look him and privily relieve him. Go you and maintain
14 talk with the Duke, that my charity be not **of** him
15 perceiv'd. If he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. If I

16 die for it, as no less is threatened me, the King my old
 17 master must be reliev'd. There is strange things toward,
 18 Edmund. Pray 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.
Lear. Let me alone.
 4 *Kent.* Good my Lord, enter here.
Lear. Wilt break my heart?
 5 *Kent.* I had rather break mine own. Good my Lord, enter.
 6 *Lear.* Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
 7 Invades us to the skin. So 'tis to thee.
 8 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'ldst meet the bear i'th'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. *[Looking on the Fool.]*
 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'th' straw?
43 Come forth.

Thunder and Lightning. Sound of wind.

*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!
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 in 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.

109 *Swithold* footed thrice the '*old*;
110 He met the *Nightmare*, and her *nine-fold*;
111 Bid her *alight*,
112 And her troth *plight*,
113 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,

125 *Horse to ride, and weapons to wear,*
126 *But mice and rats and such small deer*
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. [*Exeunt. Storm continued.*]

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*.

6 *Edg.* [*Belches.*] Frateretto calls me and tells me Nero is an
7 angler in the Lake of Darkness.—

[Gloucester *readjusts his spectacles to look at Edgar.*]

8 Pray, **innocent**, and beware the foul fiend.

[*Exit Gloucester.*

9 *Fool.* Prithee, Nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a
10 gentleman or a yeoman?

11 *Lear.* A King, a King!

12 *Fool.* No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son; for
13 he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before
14 him.

Lear draws open the curtains, and discovers a dead fox hanging up for skinning. Animal pelts of different kinds are lying about.

15 *Lear.* [*Drawing his sword.*] To have a thousand, with red burning spits
16 Come hizzing in upon 'em!

17 *Edg.* The foul fiend bites my back.

18 Fool. [*Aside.*] He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf,
19 a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

Lear. It shall be done. I will arraign them straight.—
 [To Edgar.] Come, sit thou here, most learnèd
 justicer.—
 [To the Fool.] Thou, sapient sir, sit here. —Now,
 you she-foxes!
 Edg. [To a pelt.] Look where he stands and glares!
 Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam?
 Fool. [Sings.] Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me—
 [Aside.] Her boat hath a leak,
 And she must not speak
 Why she dares not come over to thee.
 Edg. The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a
 nightingale.—Hobberdidance cries in Tom's belly for
 two white herring. Croak not, black angler, I have no
 food for thee.
 Kent. How do you, Sir? Stand you not so amaz'd.
 Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?
 Lear. I'll see their trial first. —Bring in their evidence.—
 [To Edgar.] Thou robèd man of justice, take thy
 place.—
 [To the Fool.] And thou, his yokefellow of equity,
 Bench by his side.—[To Kent.] You are o'th'commission,
 Sit you too. [Kent fetches a joint-stool and sits.
 Edg. Let us deal justly.
 Fool. [Sings.] Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
 Thy sheep be in the corn,
 And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,
 Thy sheep shall take no harm.
 Edgar. [To the pelt.] Purr!
 Fool. The cat is grey.
 Lear. [Taking the joint-stool Kent is sitting on.] Arraign her
 first—'tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this
 honorable assembly, she kick'd the poor King her father.
 Fool. Come hither mistress. Is your name Goneril?
 Lear. She cannot deny it.
 Fool. Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint stool.
 Lear. And here's another, whose warp'd looks proclaim
 What store her heart is made on.—
 Gives the unskinned fox to Kent who tosses it aside.
 Stop her there!—
 [Draws on Kent.] Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption
 in the place!—
 False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?
 Edg. Bless thy five wits!
 Kent. O pity! Sir, where is the patience now
 That you so oft have boasted to retain?
 Edg. [Aside.] My tears begin to take his part so much,
 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.
 98 *Kent.* Oppressed nature sleeps.
 99 This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews
 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.

1 *Corn.* *[To Goneril.]* Post speedily to my Lord your husband.
 2 Show him this letter. The army of France is landed.—Seek
 3 out the traitor Gloucester.
[Exeunt two of Cornwall's knights.]
 4 *Gon.* Hang him instantly.
 5 *Reg.* Pluck out his eyes.
 6 *Corn.* Leave him to my displeasure.—Edmund, keep you our
 7 sister company. The revenges we are bound to take upon
 8 your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise
 9 the Duke, where you are going, to a most festinate
 10 preparation. We are bound to the like. Our posts shall be
 11 swift and intelligent betwixt us.—Farewell, dear sister.—
 12 Farewell, my Lord of Gloucester.
Enter Oswald.
 13 —How now! Where's the King?
 14 *Osw.* My Lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence.
 15 Some five or six-and-thirty of his knights,
 16 Hot 'questrists after him, met him at gate;
 17 Who, with some other of the lord's dependants,

Are gone with him toward Dover, where they boast
To have well-armed friends.

Corn. Get horses for your mistress.
[Exit Oswald.]

Gon. *[To Cornwall and Regan.]* Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

Reg. Edmund, farewell. *[She kisses him vehemently.]*
Exeunt Goneril and Edmund, accompanied by Albany's knights.

Corn. Go seek the traitor Gloucester,
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.
Exeunt two more of Cornwall's knights.

Though well we may not pass upon his life
Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men
May blame but not control.—
Re-enter knights, with Gloucester wearing his spectacles.

Who's there? The traitor?

Reg. Ingrateful fox! 'Tis he.

Corn. Bind fast his corky arms.

Glou. What means your Graces? Good my friends, consider
You are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends.

Corn. Bind him I say!

Reg. Hard, hard! O filthy traitor!

Glou. Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.
Cornwall lays his hand on his sword.

Corn. To this chair bind him!! *[Knights tie him to a chair.]*
—Villain, thou shalt find—
Regan plucks Gloucester's beard.

Glou. By the kind Gods, 'tis most ignobly done
To pluck me by the beard.

Reg. So white, and such a traitor!

Glou. Naughty lady,
These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,
Will quicken and accuse thee. I am your host.
With robbers' hands my hospitable favors
You should not ruffle thus. *[Cornwall draws his dagger.]*
—What will you do?

Corn. Come, Sir, what letters had you late from France?

Reg. Be simple-answer'd, for we know the truth.

Corn. And what confederacy have you with the traitors
Late footed in the kingdom?

Reg. To whose hands
You have sent the lunatic King. Speak!

Glou. I have a letter guessingly set down,
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 dire 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.

81 *Reg.* *Where is thy lustre now?* *Out, vile jelly!*
 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.
 85 *Reg.* Out, treacherous villain!
 86 Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he
 87 That made the overture of thy treasons to us,
 88 Who is too good to pity thee.
 89 *Glou.* O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd!
 90 Kind Gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!
 91 *Reg.* Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
 92 His way to Dover.— *[Exit two with Gloucester.*
 93 *Corn.* I have receiv'd a hurt. Follow me, Lady.—
 94 Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave
 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.
 98 *Squire.* If she live long,
 99 And in the end meet the old course of death,
 100 Women will all turn monsters.
 101 *Curan.* Let's follow the old Earl, and get the Bedlam
 102 To lead him where he would. His roguish madness
 103 Allows itself to anything.
 104 *Squire.* Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs
 To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help him!
[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?
 25 *Edg.* [*Aside.*] O Gods! Who is't can say 'I am at the worst'?
 26 I am worse than e'er I was.

Curan. 'Tis poor mad Tom.

27 *Edg.* [*Aside.*] And worse I may be yet. The worst is not
 28 So long as we can say 'This is the worst.'

29 *Curan.* Fellow, where goest?

Glou. Is it a beggar-man?

30 *Curan.* Madman and beggar too.

31 *Glou.* He has some reason, else he could not beg.
 32 I'th'last night's storm I such a fellow saw,
 33 Which made me think a man a worm. My son
 34 Came then into my mind, and yet my mind
 35 Was then scarce friends with him. I have heard more
 since.

36 As flies to wanton boys are we to th'Gods;
 37 They kill us for their sport.

38 *Edg.* [*Aside.*] How should this be?
 Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,

39 Ang'ring itself and others.—Bless thee, master!
 40 *Glou.* Is that the naked fellow?
 41 *Curan.* Ay, my Lord.
 42 *Glou.* Then, prithee, get thee away. If, for my sake,
 43 Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain
 44 I'th'way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;
 45 And bring some covering for this naked soul,
 Which I'll entreat to lead me.
 46 *Curan.* Alack, sir! He is mad.
 47 *Glou.* 'Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind.
 48 Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;
 49 Above the rest, be gone.
 50 *Curan.* I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,
 Come on't what will. *[Exit.*
 51 *Glou.* Sirrah, naked fellow—
 52 *Edg.* Poor Tom's a-cold.—*[Aside.]* I cannot daub it further.
 53 *Glou.* Come hither, fellow.
 54 *Edg.* *[Aside.]* And yet I must.—Bless thy sweet eyes, they
 bleed.
 55 *Glou.* Know'st thou the way to Dover?
 56 *Edg.* Both stile and gate, horseway and footpath. Poor Tom
 hath been scar'd out of his good wits. Bless thee, good
 57 man's son, from the foul fiend. Five fiends have been in
 58 poor Tom at once; as Obdidicut, of lust; Hobberdidance,
 59 prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder;
 60 Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing, who since
 61 possesses chambermaids and waiting women. So bless
 62 thee, master!
 63 *Glou.* Here, take this purse, thou whom the heav'ns plagues
 64 Have humbled to all strokes. *[Giving him a purse.*
 That I am wretched
 65 Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still!
 66 Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
 67 That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
 68 Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly;
 69 So distribution should undo excess,
 70 And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?
 71 *Edg.* Ay, master.
 72 *Glou.* There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
 73 Looks fearfully in the confined deep.
 74 Bring me but to the very brim of it,
 75 And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
 76 With something rich about me. From that place
 77 I shall no leading need.
 78 *Edg.* Give me thy arm.
 Poor Tom shall lead thee. *[Exeunt.*

ACT IV, SCENE II.—[The Duke of Albany's Palace.]
[The Platform.]

Tucket within. Enter Goneril and Edmund.

1 *Gon.* Welcome, my Lord. I marvel our mild husband
2 Not met us on the way.

Enter Oswald, severally.

—Now, where's your master?

3 *Osw.* Madam, within; but never man so chang'd.
4 I told him of the army that was landed.
5 He smil'd at it. I told him you were coming.
6 His answer was 'The worse.' Of Gloucester's
 treachery,
7 And of the loyal service of his son,
8 When I inform'd him, then he call'd me *sot*,
9 And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out.
10 What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;
11 What like, offensive.

Gon. [To Edmund.] Then shall you go no further.
It is the cowish terror of his spirit
That dares not undertake. He'll not feel wrongs,
Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way
May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother;
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers.
I must change arms at home and give the distaff
Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
Shall pass between us. Ere long you are like to hear,
If you dare venture in your own behalf,
A mistress's command. Wear this. Spare speech.

[Gives him a glove.]

Decline your head. This kiss, if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.

[Gives him a glove.

22 Decline your head. This kiss, if it durst speak,
23 Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.

[She kisses him vehemently.

24 Conceive, and fare thee well.

25 *Edm.* Yours in the ranks of death.

Gon. My most dear Gloucester!
/Exit Edmund.

26 O, the difference of man and man.
27 To thee a woman's services are due.
28 A fool usurps my bed.

Osw. Madam, here comes my Lord.
[Exit.]

Enter Albany.

29 *Gon.* I have been worth the whistle.

Alb. O Goneril!

30 You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
31 Blows in your face. I **fear** your disposition.
32 That nature which contemns **its** origin

33 Cannot be border'd certain in itself;
 34 She that herself will *sliver* and *disbranch*
 35 From her *material* sap, perforce must wither
 36 And come to deadly use.
 37 *Gon.* No more. The *text* is foolish.
 38 *Alb.* Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile.
 39 *Filths savor but themselves.* What have you done?
 40 Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd?
 41 A father, and a gracious aged man,
 42 Whose reverence even the *head-lugg'd* bear would lick,
 43 Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you *madded*.
 44 Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
 45 A man, a prince, by him so benefited.
 46 *If that the heavens* do not their *visible* spirits
 47 Send quickly down to tame the vile *offenses*,
 48 It will come.
 49 Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
 50 Like monsters of the deep.
 51 *Gon.* *Milk-liver'd man,*
 52 That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;
 53 Who has not in thy brows an eye discerning
 54 Thine honor from thy suffering; that not know'st
 55 Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd
 56 Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?
 57 France spreads his banners in our *noiseless* land,
 58 With plumed helm *thy state begins to threat*,
 59 Whil'st thou, a *moral* fool, sits still, and cries
 'Alack! Why does he so?'
 60 *Alb.* See thyself, devil!
 61 Proper deformity shows not in the fiend
 So horrid as in woman.
 62 *Gon.* O vain fool!
 63 *Alb.* Thou *changed* and *self-cover'd* thing, for shame.
 64 Bemonster not thy *feature*. Were't my *fitness*
 65 To let these hands obey my *blood*,
 66 They are *apt* enough to dislocate and tear
 67 Thy flesh and bones; *howe'er* thou art a fiend,
 68 A woman's shape doth shield thee.
 69 *Gon.* Marry, your manhood—*mew*.
 70 *Trumpet. Enter Albany's Squire.*
 71 *Alb.* What news?
 72 *Squire.* O my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead—
 73 Slain by his servant, going to put out
 74 The other eye of Gloucester. [*Goneril frowns at him.*]
 75 *Alb.* Gloucester's eyes?
 76 *Squire.* A servant that he bred, *thrill'd* with *remorse*,
 77 Oppos'd against the act, *bending* his sword
 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'dst the King,
 96 And to revenge thine eyes.—Come hither, friend.
 97 Tell me what more thou know'st. *[Exeunt.]*

ACT IV, SCENE III.—[The Same. A Tent.]
 [The Platform.]

*Enter, with drum and colors, Cordelia, Doctor, and
 French Soldiers. She is holding Lear's doublet.*

1 *Cor.* *[To Doctor.]* Alack! 'tis he. Why, he was met even now
 2 As mad as the vex'd sea, singing aloud;
 3 Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,
 4 With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,
 5 Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
 6 In our sustaining corn. —A century send forth.
 7 Search every acre in the high-grown field,
 8 And bring him to our eye. *[Exit a French Officer.]*
—What can man's wisdom
 9 In the restoring his bereaved sense?
 10 He that helps him take all my outward worth.
 11 *Doct.* There is means, Madam.

12 Our foster nurse of nature is repose,
 13 The which he lacks; that to **provoke** in him,
 14 Are many **simples** operative, whose power
 15 Will close the eye of anguish.
Cor. All bless'd secrets,
 16 All you unpublish'd **virtues** of the earth,
 17 Spring with my tears! Be **aidant and remediate**
 18 In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him,
 19 Lest his ungovern'd **rage** dissolve the life
 20 That wants **the means** to lead it.

Enter Lear's Knight.

Lear's Knight. News, Madam.
 21 The British powers are marching hitherward.
 22 *Cor.* 'Tis known before. Our **preparation** stands
 23 In expectation of them.—O dear father!
 24 It is thy business that I go about;
 25 Therefore great France
 26 My mourning and **importun'd** tears hath pitied.
 27 No **blown** ambition doth our arms incite,
 28 But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right.
 29 Soon may I hear and see him! [*Drum sounds. Exeunt.*]

ACT IV, SCENE IV.—[A Room in Gloucester's Castle.]
 [The Lords Rooms.]

Enter Regan and Oswald, above.

1 *Reg.* But are my brother's powers set forth?
 Osw. Ay, Madam.
 2 *Reg.* Himself in person there?
 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.

23 *Osw.* Madam, I had rather—
24 *Reg.* I know your Lady does not love her husband.
25 I am sure of that; and at her late being here,
26 She gave strange *æilliads* and most speaking looks
27 To noble Edmund. I know you are of *her bosom*.
28 *Osw.* I, Madam?
29 *Reg.* I speak in understanding. Y'are, I know 't.
30 Therefore I do advise you, *take this note*:
31 My Lord is dead. Edmund and I *have talk'd*
32 And more *convenient* is he for my hand
33 Than for you Lady's. *You may gather more*.
34 If you do find him, pray you, give him *this*—
35 *[Gives him a glove.*
36 And when your mistress hears *thus much* from you,
37 I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.
38 So, fare you well.
39 If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
40 Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

1 *Osw.* Would I could meet him, Madam. I should show
2 What party I do follow.

3 *Reg.* Fare thee well. *[Exeunt.*

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

*Soft Music. Enter Gloucester, with a staff,
and Edgar, wearing a kilt.*

1 *Glou.* When shall I come to th'top of that same hill?
2 *Edg.* You do climb up it now. Look how we labor.
3 *Glou.* Methinks the ground is even.
4 *Edg.* Horrible steep.
5 Hark, do you hear the sea?
6 *Glou.* No, truly.
7 *Edg.* Why then, your other senses grow imperfect
8 By your eyes' anguish.
9 *Glou.* So may it be, indeed.
10 Methinks thy voice is alter'd, and thou speak'st
11 In better phrase and matter than thou didst.
12 *Edg.* Y'are much deceiv'd. In nothing am I chang'd
13 But in my garments.
14 *Glou.* Methinks y'are better spoken.
15 *Glou.* Come on, Dir. Here's the place. Stand still. How fearful

12 And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
 13 The crows and *choughs* that wing the midway air
 14 Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down
 15 Hangs one that gathers *sampire*—dreadful trade!
 16 Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
 17 The fishermen that walk upon the beach
 18 Appear like mice, and yond tall anchoring *bark*
 19 Diminish'd to her cock, her *cock* a buoy
 20 Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
 21 That on th'*unnumber'd* idle pebble chafes
 22 Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
 23 Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
 24 Topple down headlong.
Glou. Set me where you stand.
 25 *Edg.* Give me your hand. You are now within a foot
 26 Of th'extreme verge. For all beneath the moon
 27 Would I not *leap upright*.
Glou. Let go my hand.
 28 Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a *jewel*
 29 Well worth a poor man's taking. [*Gives him a purse.*
Fairies and Gods
 30 Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off.
 31 Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.
 32 *Edg.* Now fare ye well, good Sir.
Glou. With all my heart.
 33 *Edg.* [*Aside.*] Why I do trifle thus with his despair
 34 Is done to cure it.
Glou. O you mighty Gods,
 35 This world I do renounce, and in your sights
 36 Shake patiently my great affliction off.
 37 If I could bear it longer, and not fall
 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.

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

57 *Edg.* From the dread summit of this chalky *bound*.
 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.

Edg. As I stood here below methought his eyes
 70 Were two full moons. He had a thousand noses,
 71 Horns *wherk'd* and wav'd like the *enridged* sea.
 72 It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy *father*
 73 Think that the *clearest* Gods, 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!

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 not ague-proof.

108 *Glou.* The *trick* of that voice I do well remember.

109 Is't not the King?

Lear. Ay, every inch a king.—

[Gloucester topples over. Lear remains standing.]

110 *[Aside.]* When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

111 I pardon that man's life. —What was thy cause

112 Adultery?

113 Thou shall not die. Die for adultery? No.

114 The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly

115 Does lecher in my sight.

116 Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son

117 Was kinder to his father than my daughters

118 Got 'tween the lawful sheets. To't! Luxury, pell-mell!

119 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.* [*Aside.*] 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 **lame** 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;
The bounty and the benison of Heaven
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.

229 *Glou.* Now let thy friendly hand
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.

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

234 *Osw.* Let go, slave, or thou di'st.

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.
 252 *Glou.* What, is he dead?
 253 *Edg.* Sit you down, father; rest you.
 254 Let's see these pockets. The letters that he speaks of
 255 May be my friends.— *[Goes through his pockets.]*
 256 He's dead. I am only sorry
 257 He had no other deathsman.—Let us see.
 258 Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not.
 259 To know our enemies' minds, we rip their hearts;
 260 Their papers is more lawful.
 261 *[Reads.]* Let our reciprocal vows be remembered.
 262 You have many opportunities to cut him off. If your
 263 will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offer'd.
 264 There is nothing done if he return the conqueror; then
 265 am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail; from the
 266 loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the
 267 place for your labor.
 268 Your wife, so I would say—
 269 Affectionate servant,
Goneril.
 270 O indistinguish'd space of woman's will!
 271 A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,
 272 And the exchange my brother!—Here, in the sands,
 273 Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified
 274 Of murderous lechers; and in the mature time
 275 With this ungracious paper strike the sight
 276 Of the death-practis'd Duke. For him 'tis well
 277 That of thy death and business I can tell.
 278 *Exit* Edgar, carrying off Oswald's body. *Soft music within.*
 279 *Glou.* The King is mad. How stiff is my vile sense
 280 That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling
 281 Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract.
 282 So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,
 283 And woes by wrong imaginations lose
 284 The knowledge of themselves.
 285 *Edg.* Give me your hand.
 286 *Glou.* No further, sir; a man may rot even here.
 287 *Edg.* What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
 288 Their going hence, even as their coming hither.
 289 Ripeness is all. Come on.

287 *Glou.* And that's true too.
 288 *Edg.* Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
 Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.
Gloucester rises with assistance. Exeunt
Edgar with his father in his hand.

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.
 7 *Cor.* Be better suited.
 8 These weeds are memories of those worser hours.
 I prithee, put them off.
 9 *Kent.* Pardon, dear Madam.
 10 Yet to be known shortens my made intent.
 11 My boon I make it that you know me not
 12 Till time and I think meet.
 13 *Cor.* Then be't so, my good Lord.—
 [To the Doctor.] How does the King?
 14 *Doct.* Madam, sleeps still.
 15 *Cor.* O, you kind Gods,
 16 Cure this great breach in his abusèd nature!
 17 Th'untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up
 Of this child-changed father.
 18 *Doct.* So please your Majesty
 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 *Kent.* 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.
 25 *Cor.* Very well.
Enter Lear in a chair carried by Servants.
 26 *Doct.* Please you, draw near.—Louder the music there.
 [Music still.]
 27 *Cor.* O my dear father! Restoration hang
 28 Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
 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.
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.
Drum afar off.
 'Tis time to look about.
 101 The 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.

[Exit Albany's Squire.

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,

22 With others whom the rigor of our state

23 Forc'd to cry out. **Where** I could not be honest,

24 I never yet was valiant. For this business,

25 It **touches** us as France invades our land,

26 Not bolds the King, with others, whom, I fear,

27 Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

28 *Edm.* Sir, you speak nobly.

Gon. Why is this reason'd?

29 Combine together ‘gainst the enemy;

30 For these domestic and particular broils

31 Are not the question here.

Alb. Let's then **determine**,

32 With th'ancient of war on our proceeding.

33 *Edm.* I shall attend you **presently** at your tent.

34 *Gon.* Sister, you'll go with us?

35 *Reg.* No.

36 *Gon.* 'Tis most convenient. Pray you go with us.

[She takes her by the hand.

37 *Reg.* O, ho! I know the riddle.—I will go.
As they are going out enter Edgar, wearing a hooded cloak.

38 *Edg.* If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,
39 Hear me one word.
Alb. I'll overtake you.—
Exeunt all but Albany and Edgar.

40 *Edg.* Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
[Giving him Goneril's letter.]
41 If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
42 For him that brought it. Wretched thou I seem,
43 I can produce a champion that will prove
44 What is avouched there. If you miscarry,
45 Your business of the world hath so an end,
46 And machination ceases. Fortune love you!
47 *Alb.* Stay till I have read the letter.
Edg. I was forbid it.
48 When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,
49 And I'll appear again.
Alb. Why, fare thee well.
50 I will o'erlook thy paper.
*As Edgar is leaving, Edmund reenters
with a map. They exchange glances.*

51 *Edm.* The enemy's in view. Draw up your powers.
52 Here is the guess of their true strength and forces
53 By diligent discovery. But your haste
54 Is now urged on you.
Alb. *[Taking Edmund's paper.]* We will greet the time.
[Exit.]

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.]



INTERMEZZO

*Alarum within. Bagpiper plays. Enter with Drum and Colours,
Cordelia with her father in her hand,
Kent, 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 holding hands,
guarded by two Soldiers, 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 guilded 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.
- 21 *Edm.* Take them away.
- 22 *Lear.* Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
- 23 The Gods themselves throw incense. [*She weeps.*]
- 24 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. *[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'lt 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.
Alb. Sir, by your patience,

61 I hold you but a subject of this war,
 62 Not as a brother.
Reg. That's as we **list** to grace him.
 63 Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,
 64 Ere you had **spoke so far**. He led our powers,
 65 Bore the commission of my place and person,
 66 The which **immediacy** may well stand up
 67 And call itself your brother.
Gon. Not so hot.
 68 In his own grace he doth exalt himself
 69 More than in **your addition**.
Reg. In my rights,
 70 By me invested, he **compeers** the best.
 71 *Gon.* That were the most, if he should husband you.
 72 *Reg.* **Jesters do oft prove prophets**.
Gon. Holla, holla!
 73 That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint.
 74 *Reg.* Lady, I am not well, else I should answer
 75 **From a full-flowing stomach**.—[*To Edmund.*] General,
 76 Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony.
 77 Dispose of them, of me; **the walls are thine**.
 78 Witness the world that I create thee here
 79 My lord and master.
Gon. Mean you to enjoy him?
 80 *Alb.* **The let-alone** lies not in your good will.
 81 *Edm.* Nor in thine, Lord.
Alb. **Half-blooded fellow**, yes.
 82 *Reg.* [*To Edmund.*] Let the drum **strike**, and prove my title
 thine.
 83 *Alb.* Stay yet.,Hear reason.—Edmund, I arrest thee
 84 On capital treason, and, in thy **attaint**,
 85 This **gilded** serpent. [*Pointing to Goneril.*
 —For your claim, fair sister,
 86 I bar it in the interest of my wife.
 87 'Tis she is **subcontracted** to this lord,
 88 And I, her husband, contradict your **banes**.
 89 If you will marry, make your loves to me.
 90 My lady is bespoke.
Gon. An **interlude**!
 91 *Alb.* Thou art arm'd, Gloucester. Let the trumpet sound.
 92 If none appear to **prove upon thy person**
 93 Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
 94 There is my pledge.
 [*Throws his gauntlet down at Edmund's feet.*
 I'll **make** it on thy heart
 95 Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
 96 Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

Regan falls down in a swoon.

97 *Reg.* Sick, O, sick!
 98 *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
 100 That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.
 101 Call by the trumpet. He that dares approach,
 102 On him, on you, who not? I will maintain
 102 My truth and honor firmly.
 103 *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.
 106 *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 [*To Herald Trumpeter.*] Come hither, herald.—
 [*To Squire.*] Let the trumpet sound,
 108 And read out this. [*Hands his Squire 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' trumpet.
 120 *Squire.* What are you?
 120 Your name, your quality, and why you answer
 121 This present summons?
 122 *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.

125 *Alb.* Which is that adversary?

126 *Edg.* What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloucester?

127 *Edm.* Himself. What say'st thou to him?

128 *Edg.* Draw thy sword,
That, if my speech offend a noble heart,
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.

142 *Edm.* In wisdom I should ask thy name,
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.

155 *Alb.* Shut your mouth, dame,
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.]*
157 No tearing, lady. *[She tears it.]* I perceive you know it.
158 *Gon.* Say if I do. The laws are mine, not thine.

159 Who can arraign me for't?
160 *Alb.* Most monstrous! O!
161 Know'st thou this paper?
162 *Gon.* Ask me not what I know. *[Exit.*
163 *Alb.* *[To Squire.]* Go after her. She's desperate. Govern her. *[Exit Albany's Squire.*
164 *Edm.* *[To Edgar.]* What you have charg'd me with, that have I
165 done,
166 And more, much more. The time will bring it out.
167 'Tis past, and so am I. But what art thou
168 That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
169 I do forgive thee.
170 *Edg.* Let's exchange charity.
171 I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
172 If more, the more th'hast wrong'd me.
173 My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
174 *[He puts up his beaver.*
175 The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
176 Make instruments to plague us.
177 The dark and vicious place where thee he got
178 Cost him his eyes.
179 *Edm.* Th'hast spoken right, 'tis true.
180 The wheel is come full circle. I am here.
181 *Alb.* Methought thy very gait did prophesy
182 A royal nobleness. I must embrace thee.
183 Let sorrow split my heart if ever I
184 Did hate thee or thy father.
185 *Edg.* Worthy prince, I know't.
186 *Alb.* Where have you hid yourself?
187 How have you known the miseries of your father?
188 *Edg.* By nursing them, my Lord. List a brief tale,
189 And when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst.
190 The bloody proclamation to escape
191 That follow'd me so near—O, our lives' sweetness,
192 That we the pain of death would hourly die
193 Rather than die at once—taught me to shift
194 Into a madman's rags, t'assume a semblance
195 That very dogs disdain'd, and in this habit
196 Met I my father with his bleeding rings,
197 Their precious stones new lost; became his guide;
198 Led him, begg'd for him, sav'd him from despair;
199 Never—O fault—reveal'd myself unto him
200 Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd.
201 Not sure, though hoping of this good success,
202 I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last
203 Told him my pilgrimage. But his flaw'd heart,
204 Alack, too weak the conflict to support,
205 'Twix two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
206 Burst smilingly.

200 *Edm.* This speech of yours hath mov'd me,
 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.
 205 *Edg.* This would have seem'd a period
 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 transc'd.
 219 *Alb.* But who was this?
 220 *Edg.* Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise
 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!
 223 *Edg.* What kind of help?
Alb. Speak, man.
 224 *Edg.* What means this bloody knife?
 225 *Squire.* 'Tis hot, it smokes.
 It came even from the heart of—O, she's dead.
 226 *Alb.* Who dead? Speak, man.
 227 *Squire.* Your lady, sir, your lady; and her sister
 By her is poison'd. She confesses it.
 228 *Edm.* I was contracted to them both. All three
 229 Now marry in an instant.
 230 *Edg.* Here comes Kent.
Enter Kent.
 231 Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead.
 232 *[To Squire]* This judgment of the heavens, that makes us
 tremble,
 Touches us not with pity. *[Exit Squire.*
 —O, is this he?
 233 The time will not allow the compliment
 234 Which very manners urges.
Kent. I am come

235 To bid my King and master aye good night.
 236 Is he not here?
 Alb. Great thing of us forgot!—
 237 Speak, Edmund. Where's the King, and where's Cordelia?
*The bodies of Goneril and Regan are brought in,
 by Albany's Squire and others.*
 238 Seest thou this object, Kent?
 239 Kent. Alack, why thus?
 Edm. Yet Edmund was belov'd.
 240 The one the other poison'd for my sake,
 241 And after slew herself.
 242 Alb. Even so.—Cover their faces.
 243 Edm. I pant for life. Some good I mean to do
 244 Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,
 245 Be brief in it, to th'castle, for my writ
 246 Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.
 247 Nay, send in time.
 Alb. Run, run! O, run!
 248 Edg. To who, my Lord?—[To Edmund.] Who has the office?
 Send
 249 Thy token of reprieve.
 250 Edm. Well thought on. Take my sword.
 251 Give it the captain.
 Edg. Haste thee, for thy life.
[Exit Albany's Squire.]
 252 Edm. He hath commission from thy wife and me
 253 To hang Cordelia in the prison, and
 254 To lay the blame upon her own despair,
 255 That she fordid herself.
 Alb. The Gods defend her!
 256 Bear him hence awhile.—
Edmund is borne off.
 257 You lords and noble friends, know our intent.
 258 What comfort to this great decay may come
 259 Shall be appli'd. For us, we will resign,
 260 During the life of his old Majesty,
 261 To him our absolute power.—
[To Edgar and Kent.] You, to your rights,
 262 With boot and such addition as your honors
 263 Have more than merited.—All friends shall taste
 264 The wages of their virtue, and all foes
 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.

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.—

Kent. Is this the promis'd end?
Edg. Or image of that horror?
Alb. Fall and cease!
Lear takes a feather from his bonnet.

Lear. This feather stirs. She lives! If it be so,
 It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
 That ever I have felt.
Kent. [*Kneeling.*] O, my good master—
Lear. Prithee, away.
Edg. 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.
Lear. A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
 I might have sav'd her. Now she's gone forever.—
 Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha!
 What is't thou say'st?—Her voice was ever soft,
 Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.
 I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.
Off. 'Tis true, my lords, he did.
Lear. Did I not, fellow?
 I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion,
 I would have made them skip. I am old now,
 And these same crosses spoil me.—
 [*To Kent.*] Who are you?
 Mine eyes are not o'th'best, I'll tell you straight.
Kent. If Fortune brag of two she lov'd and hated,
 One of them we behold.
Lear. This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?
Kent. The same.
 Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?
Lear. He's a good fellow, I can tell you that.
 He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.
Kent. No, my good Lord. I am the very man—
Lear. I'll see that straight.
Kent. That from your first of difference and decay,
 Have follow'd your sad steps.
Lear. You are welcome hither.
Kent. Nor no man else. All's cheerless, dark, and deadly.
 Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,
 And desperately are dead.
Lear. Ay, so I think.
Alb. [*To Edgar.*] He knows not what he says, and vain is it
 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.—
Drums. 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 & Museum. 1986.1704. Bequest of Gordon N. Ray, 1987. Photographic credit: The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Cover design by Pat Lee.



Figure 15. 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, son 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 15, 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 usually at the globe on the Banksyde.’” (*King Lear: The Arden Edition of The Works of Shakespeare* by Muir, Kenneth, p. xvii).



Figure 16. 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. Scene locations are not given in Quarto 1 and Quarto 2 nor in the First Folio. [See Figure 17]. Shakespeare’s audience, of course, could easily infer the settings from the dialogue and action. This is not true for modern readers, most of whom have no direct experience of hunting or hunting lodges, and won’t be able to infer where III,vi is taking place. [See note S.D.” *A Hunting Lodge.*”] They are more likely to breed

foxes as pets than kill them as vermin. For consistency's sake, it is imperative for editors to add scene locations.

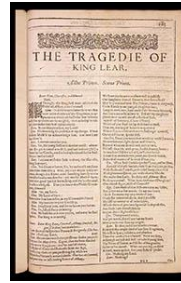


Figure 17. *The Tragedie of King Lear, Actus Primus, scæna prima* as it appears on page 283 in the First Folio, 1623. InternetShakespeareEditions.

S.D. **The Platform**] Ed. Not in Q, F. *King Lear* takes the form of [metatheatre](#) where the boundaries are always shifting between the fictional world of the story and the reality of its theatrical presentation. In this edition, therefore, I ask readers to consider the question of where the action took place at the Globe Theatre. Drama is inherently spatiotemporal. The way characters move and interact within the space is a crucial element of the storytelling

One of the central images in the play is the “[Wheel of Fortune](#)”, a symbolic representation of the unpredictable and ever-changing nature of fate, where the life of an individual can go from top to bottom. Based on the dialogue, Shakespeare uses the physical structure of the Globe to communicate character and themes in the play. Action takes place on every level of the theatre: the platform, the balcony, the third level, the Heavens, the yard, and the cellar beneath the stage. Even the “hut” was used to raise Lear’s throne in I,i, and fire the canon in III,ii.

Like Elizabethan society, the Globe was distinctly stratified into social classes, with kings at the top and beggars at the bottom. Hundreds of [groundlings](#) or “penny stinkards” stood “below” the stage in the open air, while a few expensively dressed “Lords” were seated comfortably “above” in the “[Lords Rooms](#)” making a vain show of their wealth and hauteur. [See [Figure 16](#).] There was no [proscenium](#), no “[fourth wall](#)” separating the audience from the actors; they shared the same light. As [Marianne Wynne-Davis](#) explains^[4], men and women “went to the theatre for many reasons, only one of which seems to have been to watch the play.” Some gentlemen paid to sit on stools directly on the stage to fraternize with the boy actors, get a better view of the audience, and to draw attention to themselves in the hope of having a sexual encounter.^[13] At any moment a spectator might be distracted from the story by a besotted gentleman or lady gesturing suggestively at them. We know alcohol was provided. (See “[Boozing With The Bard](#).”)

What can be said with absolute certainty about The Globe is that it was no place to take the wife and kids. The theatre was situated the [District of Southwark](#), an area that might be compared to Times Square in the 70s and 80s before Disney sanitized the place. In Shakespeare’s time, it was “ground zero” for the Puritan’s war against vice; “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).

In 1642, London theaters would be shut down by the Puritan-led [Long Parliament](#) due to the outbreak of the [First English Civil War](#) and the Puritans’ view of theaters as centers of ungodliness. The order cited the current “times of humiliation” and “sad and pious solemnity”, a zeitgeist incompatible with “public stage-plays”, which were representative of “lascivious Mirth and Levity”.^[1] Inevitably, the satirical elements of the play will not have the immediacy to English people in the 21st century as it did in 1606, as a significant portion of the population identifies as non-religious, with less than half now identifying as Christian.^[19] In America, however, a country founded by [Pilgrims](#) and [Puritans](#), fanatical forms of Christianity continue to dominate the country’s politics and culture. The play’s central themes of [Puritanism](#) and [Divine Providence](#) are more timely than ever. [See [Gore Vidal’s note](#).]

S.D. *Trumpets Sound*] Ed. Not in Q, F. At the Globe Theatre, it has been established that trumpets were sounded to announce to the audience that the play was starting.^[18] In this version of *King Lear*, I hypothesize that music is being used consistently to signal the beginning of a scene or its ending.

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



Figure 18. 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 18.] Compare Robert Davenport, *A New Tricke to Cheat the Divell* (1625), III,i, “Enter the Divell like a Gentleman, with glasse eyes.” The first thing the audience notices about the Earl of Gloucester are his unnatural-looking [bow spectacles](#). He brags to Kent about his sexual exploits like a lewd *vecchio* stock character in *Commedia dell’arte*,—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). 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).

It is only by means of his spectacles that Gloucester is able to “see”. His eyesight is as poor as a “*Mouse*” (F, 2536). [See note I,ii,33, “*If it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.*” (F, 369-70)]. 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*”). Ironically, Cornwall stomps on them before putting out the first of his eyes. “*Upon these eyes of thine I’ll set my foot.*” (F, 369-70). The major story

subplot of Gloucester centers on the paradox of “blindness”. (See [note III,vii,65,S.D.](#), “*Stomps on “Gloucester’s spectacles.”*”)

What is important about this scene is its introduction to the major theme of adultery. Adultery is held a sin by the Church, and deserving of punishment—a fact Lear addresses in his diatribe on injustice in Act IV. (See [note IV,v,113](#). “*Die for adultery?*”). Here, 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).

[S.D. reading a map](#)] Ed. Not in Q, F. It is a matter of 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. Just how much greater is it? He wants to 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).

Maps and map-making played a crucial role in showcasing England's scientific advancements, with figures like [Christopher Saxton](#) and [John Speed](#) making significant contributions. Hypothetically, Edmund has been appointed map-bearer, and is reading it as he enters. The play begins with Kent asking him about the map (see [note I,i,S.D. To Edmund](#)). Lear points to Edmund when he says, “*Giue me the Map there,*” (F, 42). When I contacted [A.L. Rowse](#) about the appropriateness of Edmund's serving as an attendant, 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.”



[Figure 19](#). 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.

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 19.] That is, a colored map large enough for the audience to see how small Goneril's and Regan's portions are in comparison to Cordelia's.

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 20.



Figure 20. 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 21.] 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 21. 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. 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."

A born seducer, Edmund knows that Kent has taken an interest in him. And 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 knows from his own experience. The three "villains" share a common bond of not being loved equally by their fathers. The causality of events leads him take bold steps in the next scene to undo his brother and his father.

Although there is no external documentation to tell us which of the [Principall Actors](#) in Shakespeare's company played the parts of Edmund and Edgar, based on the characters of Iago and Cassio in *Othello*, written in 1604, they were most likely performed by [John Lowin](#) and [Henry Condell](#) respectively. Both were 30 years of age in 1606 when *Lear* was performed, and routinely typecast, as was [Armin](#).

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). The proxemics of the actors (together with other nonverbal forms of communication) must always be considered when interpreting the style and meaning of the text. 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).

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. Edmund is intently studying the map, and Kent wants to "break the ice." Gloucester does not give his son an opportunity to answer before comically stepping in between them.

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 22](#).]



Figure 22. 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 locker room talk when they read *Lear* 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 based on his handsome appearance. Edmund recognizes the personal nature of his interest, and uses it to his advantage. He does this by appealing to the latter’s sense of being manly. He shows 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 word which occurs in stage-directions in the plays of the Elizabethan dramatists, and is used to denote that a particular fanfare is to be played. It is a technical term, and what particular notes were played is now unknown. A Sennet was distinguished from a Flourish, as is proved by a stage-direction in Dekker’s *Satiromastix*,

‘Trumpets sound a flourish, and then a sennate.’ (Nares’ *Glossary*.) [App. p.792 “It should be added that the name is probably derived from Seven, and may indicate a flourish of seven notes, as suggested in *Stainer and Barrett’s Dictionary of Musical Terms*.”] (Wikisource)

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 23. 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. Oscar Wilde writes, “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” (*Shakespeariana*, “Shakespeare and Stage Costume”, p. 265).



Figure 24. 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.”

There are no directions describing Lear’s costume in the First or Second Quartos or the First Folio. It can only be induced that Shakespeare had him dressed in grossly outmoded *Tudor period* clothes with an emblematic codpiece, “*as massie as [Hercules’] club*” (*Much Ado About Nothing*, F, 1461-63). Sherlock Holmes used inductive reasoning to solve crimes, just as readers must do in the *Case of Shakespeare vs. The Cambridge Shakespeare*. Holmes would gather specific observations and clues (the data) and then draw general conclusions or theories (the hypothesis) based on the accumulated evidence.

The evidence that Lear is incongruously dressed is 1) the play’s *metatheatrical* form and bawdy, *ironic* style; 2) the *phallocentric* mindset of the character; 3) the play’s major theme of masculinity; 4) the certain offense the costume would have given English Puritans; 5) the profound influence of *Renaissance Neoplatonism* on the playwright, and lastly, the reference to a codpiece in the spoken dialogue. [See note III,ii,40., “*grace and a codpiece*”] Unlike

deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning doesn't guarantee the truth of a conclusion, but rather provides a probable or likely conclusion based on the evidence.



Figure 31. Philip Stubbes (Stubbes) (c. 1555 – c. 1610) was an English pamphleteer.

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 is implicit that Lear has not changed his style of dress since he was a lusty young man, when the codpiece was de rigueur. [See Figure 24.] Tudor male clothing was characterized by its lurid colors, excessive ornateness, and exaggerated masculinity. My hypothesis is that it was the original intent of the author for Lear to first appear on stage in solid red like a cock. [See Figure 25.] His costume was meant to cartoonishly juxtapose with the sophisticated *Stuart* period fashions worn by the other characters. The story arc takes the King from foolishness to wisdom, not from high to low. In IV,v (scene 20), Lear is presented as a quixote anti-hero battling the injustice of the world. [See note IV,v,80. S.D., "*camouflaged in weeds.*"] The Master of Revels (George Buck) nixed the idea presumably to avoid the same backlash from Puritans as Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (1605) received. [See note II,iv,264. S.D. "*To Regan.*"]



Figure 25. Tudor Man in Red. The Royal Collection: Portrait of a Man in Red - German/Netherlandish School, 16th century (artist) Creation Date: c. 1530-50.

Shakespeare was a mischievous playwright, and would have delighted in the consternation Lear's brightly colored, ostentatious, blatantly sexualized costume would have caused Puritans, like the English academic John Rainolds, the Puritan party's spokesman at the Hampton Court Conference. The Bard famously satirizes them through the sober and self-righteous character of Malvolio in *Twelve Night* (a part identified with Richard Burbage) by having him smile, and dressing him in yellow cross-garted stockings (II.v,F, 1173-74). (See "Malvolio's Cross-Garted Yellow Stockings" by MC Linthicum, 1927.) In *The Alchemist* (1610), Ben Jonson reserves his harshest satire for the hypocritical Puritan character Ananias who denounces Surly as the Anti-Christ for style of dress: "*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). 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 30. Larry Yando as Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, 2008-09 CST.

“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 Attire.” 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).

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).



Video 2. Bette Davis sings “I’ve Written A Letter To Daddy” in Robert Aldrich’s classic

Masculinity was big in 16th 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-16th century the codpiece reached epic (if not priapic) proportions. No expense was spared: codpieces were made in luxury silk velvet, bejewelled or embroidered. Even young boys were obliged to wear them. (*What Goes Up Must Come Down: A Brief History of the Codpiece.*)

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 15th century manuscript entitled *Detti 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 26. *L'Escole des Filles ou la Philosophie 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.

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 27. 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.

Frank Kermode said that “for everybody, *King Lear* is the greatest and most inclusive of tragedies.” The obvious question for Kermode is what does he mean by “Tragedy”: “*Tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited*”? (F, 1445-47). It is the question Lionel Abel asked of *The Tragical Hiftorie of Hamlet*. To better describe the form of the play, which incorporates both “tragic” and “comic” elements, he coined the word “Metatheatre”—“the quality or force in a play which challenges theatre’s claim to be *simply*

realistic — to be nothing but a mirror in which we view the actions and sufferings of characters like ourselves, [suspending our disbelief](#) in their reality.” Abel’s theory of metatheatre rests on two basic postulates: “First, the world is a stage; second, life is a dream” (*Metatheatre*, p. 163).

Like Don Quixote, who Abel considered the prototypical metatheatrical character, Lear struggles to distinguish illusion from reality starting with his view of himself. He is the most blatantly histrionic character in Shakespeare; the personification of “*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 playwright uses every tool in his arsenal of “[metatheatrical devices](#)” to make the audience aware that Lear is not a real person but an actor in a play, most notably in III,ii where he [breaks the fourth wall](#) by addressing the stage hands creating the storm effects in the Heavens. (See [note III,iv,1, S.D.](#), “*Burst of horrid thunder.*”)

Cervantes’ eponymous novel was published on January 16, 1605, about two years before *King Lear* was staged at Whitehall as part of the Christmas festivities. 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. *Don Quixote* was an immediate success upon publication. Shakespeare appears to have taken to it because when the book was translated into English in 1612 by [Thomas Shelton](#), he 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 28. 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.

A quick search of Cervantes and Shakespeare in [Perplexity](#) or Google substantiates the theory that *Commedia dell'arte* influenced the style of both authors, such as their use of easily recognizable [stock characters](#), their use of physical comedy and slapstick, their use of music and interludes, and the distinctive contrast between scripted and unscripted dialogue. The authors’ storytelling is marked by their use of different perspectives within the main plot and several subplots to create complex, [multi-leveled](#) narratives. In both *Don Quixote* and *King Lear*, there is an absurd [dialectic](#) between the imagination and reality deeply rooted in classical [Platonism](#). 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 28.](#)]



Figure 29. 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 dialectic of reality and illusion is central to Shakespeare's works as well. The best-known example is *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Nick Bottom (another "poor player" hypothetically performed by Burbage) is transformed into something other than the personification of masculine beauty and love Titania imagines him to be. [See Figure 29.] When the play is read in a book, there is no ambiguity about Bottom's costume. There's a stage direction indicating "Enter Píramus with the Asse head" (F, 927). In *Lear* there is not an explicit direction stating that the eponymous King is wearing a huge codpiece. It can only be induced that he dressed like an ass from the narrative and narrative structure of the work.

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). In my version, Lear theatrically bestows small coronets on Goneril and Regan as a confirmation of the two equal territories he is giving them. They are relatively small by comparison with Cordelia's, which the audience sees drawn on a colored map, like "King Henry's Map of the British Isles." [See Figure 19.] They are carried in on cushions by coronets bearers, as in *Lust's Dominion*, "bearing the crown on a cushion" (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 63). Lear wants to show his favorite daughter, and the world, 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, euery inch a King" (F, 2554). The stage business is a reflection of Lear's histrionic nature. He is the archetypical "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*. In my version, we first observe Lear's Knight in I,i. He is standing beside Kent, near to the king, signaling his high place in court. He exemplifies the nobility and mannerliness of the "Knights and Squires" (F, 750) in Lear's consort, qualifying what Goneril and Regan consider "insolent" (F, 713) and "riotous" (F, 1033) behavior.
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."
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]." Logically, Lear's throne, which is

attached to a dais, would have been part of the “preset”. [See Figure 32.] Heavy furniture like this was stored in the “hut”, and moved using a rudimentary fly system of ropes and pulleys. “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) See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*: **throne, chair of state** (pp. 228-29). In *Lear*, the audience is distracted from the sound by 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*”).



Figure 32. Frontispiece to Simonds D'Ewes “Journals of all the Parliaments during the Reign of Queen Elizabeth” [1682].

32. S.D. *assisted by Kent*] Indicating to 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. 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*.” See also *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, “what letter are you reading *there*” (F, 353).
37. *fast*] fixed, settled.
40. *Unburden’d crawl towards death*] *King Lear* is a didactic play that teaches young men how to control anger within the context of Stoicism. Lear’s *hamartia* or “tragic flaw” is his masculine pride or *machismo*. 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”). No background is given on Lear’s martial history, but in Act III,ii and IV,v he takes on the role of battlefield commander, a role expected of English kings up until the *Battle of Dettingen*.

When we first meet Lear, he is repressing the depression he feels about losing Cordelia to marriage. In a rare moment of self-pity he claims that he wants to “*Vnburthen'd cawle toward death*” (F, 46). While the image is laughable considering his tantrummy and wrath, it

reflects his “*true need*” (F, 1570) to be cared for like an infant, a dynamic we see played out in his relationship with the Fool, a part doubled with Cordelia. Perhaps the theme in *Lear* with the most resonance is the inversion of parent and child.

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

44. **The Princes France and Burgundy]** *King Lear* was performed in the Banqueting Hall of Whitehall Palace on St Stephens Night in 1606. The venue was first built by Queen Elizabeth I in 1581 at a cost of £1,744, to host Francis, Duke of Anjou, during marriage negotiations.

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

50. **Which of you shall we say doth love us most]** How do men know love? Is it something that can be measured by modern science and geometry, like the boundaries of a kingdom? [See Figure 22.] 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*). *King Lear* is essentially a metaphysical play just as “*The Phoenix and the Turtle*,”—is a “metaphysical poem.”^[1] It describes the death of the ideal love shared by the phoenix and the turtle-dove, and gives Reason’s reaction to this love. “[I]n sounding out the limits of metaphysical reason, Shakespeare’s poem allows for poetry to think in a way that metaphysics cannot. ‘The Phoenix and Turtle’ ends in mourning: for the death of phoenix and turtle, and for the demise of the metaphysical transcendentals they seemed in hindsight to uphold.” (Ted Tregear, “Shakespeare’s Metaphysical Poem: Allegory, Metaphysics, and Aesthetics in ‘The Phoenix and Turtle’”.)



Figure 33. Plato & Aristotle as central figures in Raphael's *The School of Athens* (1510). Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican Museum

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 33], 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 34.] “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 34. Title Page from *The Advancement of Learning* by Francis Bacon

The Age of Enlightenment emphasized reason, observation, and empirical knowledge, laying the foundation for scientific advancements. During the Victorian era, 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). [See Figure 36.] 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 35.] 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 35. 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* : (The metamorphoses of Ovid) by Johan Ulrich Krauss, c. 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 36. 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**] By “Nature”, Lear is referring to the great *Mother Goddess*. [See Figure 37.] He is expressing his belief that Nature demands empirical proof of deserving. Ironically, in the next scene, Edmund calls on her to justify his own deserving, and offers his outward physical appearance and cunning as proof: “*Thou Nature art my Goddess, to thy Law/ My services are bound*” (F, 335-6). [See note I,ii,1, “Nature”.] In I,iv, Lear appeals to **Nature** to punish Goneril for her hardness. See IV,iv, “*Heare Nature, heare deere Goddess, heare*” (F, 789).

Aristotle distinguishes between particular law and universal law in *Rhetoric*: “Universal law is the law of Nature” (1373b). “Arguments about justice or fairness have a long tradition in Western civilization. In fact, no idea in Western civilization has been more consistently linked to ethics and morality than the idea of justice. From the *Republic*, written by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, to *A Theory of Justice*, written by the late Harvard philosopher John Rawls, every major work on ethics has held that justice is part of the central core of morality.” (*Markkula Center for Applied Ethics*, “Justice and Fairness”, 2014.)

The classical ideal of justice remained vibrant in the Middle Ages because it was embodied in the surviving texts of Roman law, the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*. From there, it entered canon law, where it gained strength from its association with the divine giver of justice. Justice in the classical tradition was an ideal of distributive justice, a socially fair allocation of things, rendering to each his due. (“Justice in Renaissance Philosophy”, Thomas J. Kuehn.)



Figure 37. Emblema II. “Nutrix ejus terra est.” (His nurse is the earth), Michael Maier - *Atalanta Fugiens* (1617).

52. **doth with merit challenge**] F, 58. *Where merit doth most challenge it*, (Q, 58). The idea of who *merits* what is the main throughline of the story. The theme is first stated here, and ends with Albany’s assuring everybody that “*All Friends shall / Taste the wages of their vertue, and all Foes / The cup of their deservings*” (F, 3274-76),—which is no sooner pronounced than Lear enters with Cordelia dead. (See note V,i,263-65, “*All friends etc.*”)

What does Lear want by asking Cordelia to prove her love for him by words? What is the

likely outcome? From what he reveals about his relationship with her on their way to prison, he has happy memories of engaging her in difficult questions of philosophy. (See [note V,i,16](#), “*mystery of things*.”) The physical and metaphysical are important matters to Lear, as we observe when he pulls “poor Tom” aside in IV,iv to consult with him about the “*cause of Thunder*” (F, 1933). (Presumably, he imagines him to be a follower of [Diogenes of Sinope](#). See [note III,iv,159](#), “*noble philosopher*.”) Before ordering Cordelia to speak, he tells her that her suitors are only courting her for profit. (See [note I,i, 85](#), “*Strive interest*”) Should he have cause to renege on the agreed upon dowry, it can be expected they will refuse her. The result? She will remain a husbandless virgin, doting on her adoring father for the rest of his life.

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 observes that she finds him more interesting to look at than the map. Her attention does not go unnoticed by Regan, nor by Edmund, who immediately sees an 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](#).] Lear’s decision to give Cordelia the remainder of his kingdom appears not to have been part of her “*Dowrie*” (F, 264). It seems he made the decision rashly, in a moment of anger, without consulting his closest adviser, namely Kent. The Fool also suggests that Lear alone made the decision to part with his entire kingdom (Q, 670.00-05) . Rather than embrace the reality of being old and his daughter grown to be a woman, he succumbed to his anger, and came up with a foolish scheme to keep Cordelia for himself.

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.

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. [See Figure 77.] 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). Hypothetically, the part of Burgundy was played by an apprentice in the company rather than the of the Principal Actors.
85. **Strive interest**] Ed. Strive to be interest. (F, 91). Not in Q. To have a share of. Lear implies 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*."



Figure 38. Anne Askew by Hans Eworth (1560).

In *Lear*, Cordelia is a figure of allegory, like the turtle-dove in "[The Phoenix and the Turtle](#)", but this doesn't make her less interesting as a charaction in a drama. It may be that Shakespeare drew real-life inspiration from the story of [Anne Askew](#) in *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*." The playwright is thought to have drawn on episodes in the book for the second and third parts of *Henry VI* and an incident in *Henry VIII*. "Foxe's work, while hardly an evenhanded account, is fundamental to almost any study of the [English Reformation](#). First published in English in 1563, it recounts the fate of 300 English Protestants put to death during the restoration of Catholicism under [Queen Mary](#), sometimes called Bloody Mary, in a five-year reign that ended in 1558." [21]

Anne was an English writer, poet, and Protestant preacher who was condemned as a heretic during the reign of [Henry VIII](#). "Known by many as 'the Faire Gospeller,' [she] was a witty, well-informed, attractive, independent modern woman in a male-dominated early modern world." [8] Her *Examinations* "defies the constraints of gender and hierarchy, and attempts to expose patriarchal insecurity surrounding female involvement in traditionally male religious subjects." [9] At age 25, she was tortured and burned to death for arguing with her Catholic husband about the meaning of [transubstantiation](#). (See Carole Levin, "*Women in The Book Of Martyrs as Models of Behavior in Tudor England*", 1981.) [See Figure 39.]

Anne was known for speaking “plain”—a term Kent uses in II,ii (F, 1166). “Under questioning from the bishop [Edmund Bonner](#), who commanded her repeatedly to ‘utter al thynges that burdened [her] conscience,’ Anne answered in unembellished language blended with Scriptural teachings: ‘God hath given me the gifts of knowledge, but not of utterance. And Salomon sayth, that a woman of few words, is a gift of God’ (Sirach 26:14).” ^[13]



Figure 39. The Burning of Anne Askew and others. John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, 1663 ed. The British Museum.

“Philosophy is for posh, white boys with trust funds”—or so write [Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) and [Claire Shaw](#) in *The Guardian*. “A recent [report by the Equality Challenge Unit](#) found that, among non-STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects, philosophy is one of the most male-dominated, with men accounting for 71.2% of the profession.” Thus, when Cordelia refuses to renounce her beliefs about the [nature of Love](#), many male readers might presuppose that she’s being perversely willful and stubborn; that she is bound by Nature and [Patriarchy](#) to submit to her father’s demands. Metaphysics is not a subject for women.

Since the days of the ancient Greeks, philosophers have been attempting to define [Love](#), but at no time in human history was its meaning so contentious as during the [European Reformation](#). “Luther’s rediscovery of the primacy of *agape* was the linchpin of the Reformation and the rediscovery of genuine Christian ethics.” (G. Meilaender and W. Werpehowski, *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, 2007, p. 456.). Cordelia’s interpretation of Love is no less valid. In an engaging lecture given at Yale University, Professor [Paul Fry](#) addresses how much the interpretation of words mattered to people during the Restoration:

What gave rise in the Western world to what is called “[hermeneutics](#)” was in fact the Protestant Reformation. And there's a lot of significance in that, I think, and I'll try to explain why. You don't really puzzle your head about questions of interpretation, how we determine the validity of interpretation and so on, until A) meaning becomes terribly important to you, and B) the ascertainment of meaning becomes difficult. You may say to yourself, "Well, isn't it always the case that meaning is important and that meaning is hard to construe?" Well, not necessarily. If you are a person whose sacred scripture is adjudicated by the Pope and the occasional tribunal of church elders, you yourself don't really need to worry very much about what scripture means. You are told what it means. It goes without saying therefore what it means. But in the wake of the Protestant Reformation when the question of one's relationship with the Bible became personal and everyone was understood, if only through the local minister, to be engaged with coming to an understanding of what is after all pretty difficult--who on earth knows what the Parables mean and so on, and the whole of the Bible poses interpretative difficulties--then of course you are going to have to start worrying about how to interpret it. Needless to say, since it's a sacred scripture, the meaning of it is important to you. You do want to know what it means. It can't mean just anything. It's crucial to you to know exactly

what it means and why what it means is important. (“[Introduction to Theory of Literature: Lecture 3 Transcript](#)” by Paul Fry, Yale University, 2009.

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 utter despair Lear is feeling giving her away in marriage, 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).

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

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 40. Jupiter castrates Saturn eating his children. French, Anonymous, c. 1501. Jupiter's castration of Saturnus is combined with Saturnus' (Cronos) 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 40.]
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 41. 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. Kent remains in front of her. See I,i, "*The bow is bent & drawne, make from the shaft*" (F, 152)
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.
129. S.D. **To Cordelia**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
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).
133. **hundred knights**] Goneril refers to Lear's 100 followers as "*Knights and Squires*" (F, 750) as does Lear himself (F, 141). These men are not "*gilded Butterflies*" (F, 2953) but skilled warriors. "It was common for the kings of medieval England to retain a small number of knights in their personal service, as part of the royal household. These knights provided a core of loyal and talented men on whom each king could rely for military and political support" (Matthew Hefferan, *The Household Knights of Edward III: Warfare, Politics and Kingship in*

Fourteenth-Century England. In 1509, King Henry VIII formed the Troop of Gentlemen “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 42.] Lear’s Knight is an example. Regan makes a point to mention in II,i that Edgar was part of Lear’s company: “*Was he not companion with the riotous Knights/ That tended vpon my Father?*” (F, 1033-34). At the end of Act I scene i when Goneril confides that she fears that her father might suddenly change his mind, and take back his kingdom, she has reason for concern.



Figure 42. The Meeting of Henry VIII and the Emperor Maximilian I circa 1513.

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 (F, 1371).

143. **shaft**] arrow See *OED*, 2.a. “An arrow. **cloth-yard shaft**.” “Thou wounded heart..alas, the shaft sticks still in thee, or if that bee shaken out, the head.” Bishop J. Hall, True Peace-maker 14.

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.; unbefitting 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. In II,iii, Macbeth uses the words “*unmannerly*” and 23 lines later “*manly*”: *their Daggers / Vnmannerly breech’d with gore*” (F, 881), and “*Let’s briefly put on manly readinesse*” (F, 904). As we see from the gauche codpiece Lear is wearing, his masculine ethos is the driving force of the character, which is what Kent is appealing to, not his sense of propriety. Kent 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**] to guard, to keep safe, to preserve. (Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, p. 966.) Cf., “*sense to ecstasy was ne’er so thrall’d / But it reserved some quantity of choice*” (*Hamlet*, Q2, 2455.3-4.)

154. **Reverb**] reverberate

155. **a**] Q, 166. Not in F.

156. **wage**] stake, make war

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, which is not the case. Albany is just by nature. In I,iv,243, he attempts, albeit futilely, to get to the bottom of Lear's rage in order to adjudicate his dispute with Goneril. In IV,ii, when he next appears, he chastises his wife for her wickedness and cruelty. In IV,vii, he asserts his authority over Edmund in the battle, and in V,i, challenges him to a trial by combat. After Edgar proves victorious, Albany's intent is to restore moral order to the kingdom by returning Lear to the throne. The Duke of Cornwall, on the other hand, is sluggish by nature, and carries no authority of his own. Kent likens him to Ajax, a pompous dimwit in *Troilus and Cressida*. (See note II,ii,122, "*Ajax is their fool*.") Lear mocks Cornwall's "*Fiery*" humor (F, 1371). Unlike Albany, Cornwall is completely dominated by his wife, as proven by his cringeworthy passivity and submissiveness in II,i, and II,ii and III,vii. Here, Albany's impulse to step forward and intervene on Kent's behalf proves the true mettle of the character, as Cornwall's act of doing nothing shows his.
162. **Dear sir, forbear!**] F. Not in Q
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 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.



Video 3. OAE Principal Trumpet David Blackadder introduces the Baroque or Natural Trumpet.

188. S.D. **Flourish**] F, 202. Not in Q. Trumpet fanfare. (See Video 3. OAE Principal Trumpet David Blackadder introduces the Baroque or Natural Trumpet, 1:27-2:04.) “Trumpets became very much a status symbols. They were played when some member of the nobility arrived. The number of trumpet players you had sort of equals today what kind of car you drive so trumpet players were the sort of Ferrari’s of the 17th century. 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).
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.



Figure 43. Lady Fortune with Reynard the Fox as Pope and Anti-Christ

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.*”) His doing so logically 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).

A central symbol theme in *Lear* is **Rota Fortunae**, or the Wheel of Fortune, representing the unpredictable, capricious nature of fate. The wheel is governed by the goddess **Fortuna**, who spins it at random, causing people to rise or fall in status, fortune, and happiness without regard to merit or virtue. “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.”^[17]

When the part of Edgar is doubled with the King of France, the audience first sees the actor at the very top of **Fortune’s Wheel**. [See Figure 43.] 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 also immediately 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 44](#)]



Figure 44. "King James I of England," attributed to John de Critz (c. 1605). Museo del Prado.

The important idea in the scene is a didactic one. Shakespeare is contrasting Lear's anger and loss of control with the cool head of France. Rather than leaving in a fit of pique, France calmly asks what caused Lear to change his mind. When he discovers the truth, he is so smitten by Cordelia's virtue that he weds her without a dowry. "*She is herselfe a Dowrie*" (F, 264). In the character of France, Shakespeare is showing us [Stoicism](#) in action, as he does with Edgar. The most important lesson for the Stoic is to focus on what you can control, and accept what you cannot. This principle, often called the "[dichotomy of control](#)," is emphasized across the teachings of the great Stoic philosophers such as [Epictetus](#), [Marcus Aurelius](#), and [Seneca](#). It teaches that while we cannot control external events, we always have control over our own thoughts, judgments, and responses. Stoicism also rests on four cardinal virtues: courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom. These virtues guide how to act in the areas of life you can control, ensuring your responses are virtuous and aligned with reason.

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. [See [Figure 77](#).] 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 murther 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.
268. S.D. **Music**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Logically, the music served the practical purpose of diverting the audience's attention from the "**creaking throne**" being hoisted from the stage following Lear's exit. See Prologue from *Every Man in His Humour*. It is nondiegetic.
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

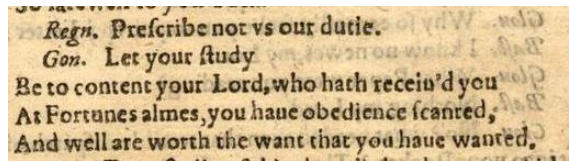


Figure 45. Regan's and Goneril's speeches as published in Facsimile Viewer: First Folio (Brandeis University) lines 301-05. InternetShakespeareEditions.

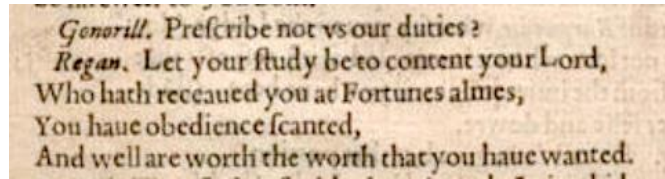


Figure 46. Regan's and Goneril's speeches as published in Facsimile Viewer: King Lear, Quarto 1 (Halliwell-Phillipps) lines 301-05. InternetShakespeareEditions

278. **Gon**] *Gonorill*. (Q, 301). *Regn*. (F, 301). [See Figure 45 from Quarto 1, 1608.]

278. **Reg**] *Regan*. (Q, 302). *Gon*. (F, 302). [See Figure 46 from Quarto 1, 1608.]

278. **duty**] *dutie*. (F, 301); *duties?* (Q, 301). Characteristically, Goneril takes moral offense at Cordelia's reproach.



Figure 47. "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). 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 47.] It's one of Regan's snarkiest remarks, and she has a great many. The line must stand alone to pack a punch.

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 43.]

280-81. **Gon. You have obedience scanted . . . wanted**] F, 30-4. As part of Goneril's speech (Figure 45, lines F, 304-305); as part of Regan's speech (Figure 46, lines Q, 304-305.) This line is a restatement of Goneril's previous words, "*Prescribe not us our duties*" (Q, 301). It spoken directly to Cordelia again, but this time to change the subject from sex back to her sister's moral duty. Goneril is indirectly rebuking Regan for her lewdness. 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 lines are

performed in a staccato manner.

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. **Music still**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (pp. 146-48): **music**. As noted above, time is needed to raise the “creaking throne.”

284. S.D. **Exeunt France and Cordelia**] *Exit France and Cor.* (F, 309). *Exit France & Cord.* (Q, 309).

284. **my**] (F, 309). Not in Q.

285. **not little**] (F, 310). *not a little* (Q, 310)

290. **not**] (Q, 316). Not in F.

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 48.] “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).



Figure 48. Ruins of forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, where “know yourself” was once said to be inscribed.

295. **rash**] hasty, hot-headed.

297. **long-engrained**] 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 you, let's hit together]** *pray you let vs sit together* (F, 328); *pray lets hit together* (Q, 329). 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 91.] 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 49. 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**] In the previous scene, Lear justifies the trial of his daughters in the name of “Nature” (F, 58), who he says demands empirical proof of deserving. Here, the bastard Edmund justifies his plot to ruin his “legitimate” brother because he thinks himself better fit to hold the title the “Earl of Gloucester” by **natural selection**, the **Law of Nature**. The idea of natural selection has been with us long before Darwin and Herman Spenser who coined the term “**survival of the fittest.**”

“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 (Aeneadum genetrix) but also as the veritable mother of nature (Alma Venus).

Edmund's speech raises the question of [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,"^[17] it might be thought that Edmund's deeds are "determined" by his being born a bastard. The same question might be asked of Oswald. Were the choices the Steward made to advance himself in society "determined" by his being born poor,—a fact the disguised Earl of Kent rubs unmercifully in his face in II,ii (F, 1075-1203)? 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). [See note V,i,244, "[nature](#)."] Does Edmund know that he is what forensic psychologist [Robert Hare](#) might clinically term a [psychopath](#), —a person who by nature is incapable of feeling empathy or remorse? (See Alexandra Junewicz and Stephen Bates Billick, "[Preempting the Development of Antisocial Behavior and Psychopathic Traits](#)", *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law Online*, January 2021.)

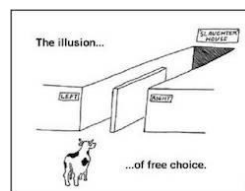


Figure 56. What is Determinism?

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."¹⁷ One of Aristotle's students, [Theophrastus](#), was probably the first to write about them, calling them "the unscrupulous."¹⁸ 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 thinkes 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**] (F, 355). *tooth*’ (Q, 355). *Top the* Capell. Meaning “*go to* the legitimate.” 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. “The senses and uses of *to* may be arranged in various ways, every way having its peculiar difficulties owing to cross-currents of history and usage. Old English and the West Germanic Languages had two prepositions with the sense of modern *to*, viz. *tó* and *óð*; the second of these always expressed motion reaching its object; it is therefore probable that *tó* had originally the sense of ‘direction towards’, without any implication of reaching; and in a truly historical account of the word, it would perhaps be necessary to start with the two main divisions of ‘toward’ and ‘actually to’. But even in the earliest written Old English this distinction had, so far as concerns *tó*, faded away, and in the various transferred and later senses it could not be successfully carried out. Even the later distinction between *to* as a preposition implying motion, and *to* representing the dative inflection, can, from the falling together of these notions, only be partially exhibited. The arrangement here followed is thus largely tentative and practical, and not in every case historical” (*OED*, **Preposition**, in ordinary use, before a noun.)
22. S.D. **Enter Gloucester**] (Q, 337), (F,337).



Figure 52. Portrait of Thomas More wearing bow spectacles. Flemish School, circa 16th century. Musée 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 52. 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. It is 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 note I,i,87, “*Nothing*.” Shakespeare’s use of irony is the principal stylistic feature of the play. Edmund’s understanding of “Nature” appears to come from the *De rerum natura*, a didactic poem by the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius. “*Thou Nature art my Goddess, to thy Law/ My seruices are bound*” (F, 335-6). See note I,ii,1, “*Nature*.”
32. **terrible dispatch**] fearful haste.



Figure 53. 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 54. 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 53](#).] 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**] See *Much Ado About Nothing*, I,i, "I can see yet without spectacles" (F, 184) Shakespeare is using the prop to symbolize the artificial nature of the character's sight. Ironically, Cornwall stomps on them before putting out the first of his eyes: "Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot." (F, 369-70).

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 15th and 16th 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 17th 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.



Figure 55. Tudor casement windows at The Folk of Gloucester,.

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). The line could hold a clue to the meaning of Edgar's "descent" in II.i. (See note II.i,19, S.D., "*descends from above with a rope.*")

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 17th century. They present an "obstacle" for the actor who has to 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 things straight. (See 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. Hypothetically, 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

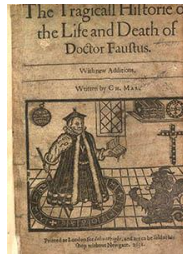


Figure 56. *Doctor Faustus conjuring Mephistopheles from a trap door on the Frontispiece of the 1631 edition of Marlowe's play.*

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 57. *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**.) *King Lear* takes the form of **metatheatre**. One of the main devices of metatheatre is its acknowledgment of the fact that the people performing are actors and not actually the characters they are playing. By doubling the actor in the parts of France and Edgar, the audience certain qualities of the former to the latter. We also see the actor at the top of **Fortune's Wheel**, which Edmund alludes to when he lies dying at the end of the play, "*The Wheele is come full circle*" (F, 3136).



Video 4. "Every Inch an Actor." 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.

Edgar is not a real person. He is a construct of the playwright. It is significant that Edmund mocks Shakespeare for his formulaic techniques in plotting the character when his brother first appears: "*Pat: he comes like the Catastrophe of the old Comedie*" (F, 463). What distinguishes Edgar conceptually is the fluidity of his identities. 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.) He plays the parts of the

King of France, a Bedlam beggar, a Doverman who speaks [Estuary English](#), a West Countryman with a [Somerset accent](#), and finally a Knight who speaks [Queen's English](#). It is not until he vanquishes his brother in a trial by combat that he speaks again in his “real” voice.

In modern editions of the narrative (biased by conventions of [realism](#)), Edgar is not adequately represented as a character of stature before his dramatic reversal of fortune ([peripeteia](#)). Readers naturally assume he was not present in the first scene because he wasn't important enough to be there. Edgar's entrance in I,ii is greeted with laughter upon seeing Edmund scornfully mimic Bedlam beggars for singing for almes: “*my Cue is villanous Melancholly, with a sighe like Tom 'Bedlam*” (F, 464-5). This is hardly the introduction needed to establish the mettle of the [deuteragonist](#) in the story. As noted below, he is likely “*unbrac'd*” (F, 974), like Hamlet in II,i, in contrast to Edmund who is still wearing the stylish costume he wore at court (indicating that their encounter happens later that evening). Judging by their outward appearances, Edmund looks the part of an Earl.

Lear is a didactic play that teaches men and boys how [Stoicism](#) can help them control anger and manage adversity. Edgar is the embodiment of these ideals, especially the “[discipline of assent](#).” The Stoic philosopher [Epictetus](#) taught the importance of internal control over external events and emotions; to question the validity of immediate judgments and embrace a more mindful approach to perception. Like France in the scene before, who calmly asks Lear why he was revoking Cordelia's dowry, Edgar does not act on his righteous anger when learning he has falsely been accused of plotting the death of his father. He waits to assess the true nature of the situation, which is not revealed to him until IV,i when he sees his father blinded. Had he rushed off in anger to protest his innocence, like a macho man, he likely would have been killed.

Stoics like [Seneca](#) wrote that one should endure all things with fortitude, as everything is determined by a chain of causes, and that the timing of death is settled at birth. Edgar's line In IV,v. “*Ripenesse is all*” (F, 2935), like Hamlet's “*the readinesse is all*” (F, 3671), resonates with Stoic philosophy, [Stoicism](#) teaches acceptance of fate, readiness for death, and equanimity in the face of fortune's changes.

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 59. 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 (hypothetically) 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 60.] (Compare *Hamlet*. II,i, “Lord *Hamlet* with his doublet all **vnbrac'd**” (F, 974); *What You Will*, by John Marston. I,i,21, S.D., “Enter *Jacomo*, unbraced, and careless dressed”; III,i,,S.D., “Enter *Francisco*, half-dressed, in his black doublet and round cap.”) 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 *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 60. 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 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 Appendix A.)

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 role 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 take the form of Tom of Bedlam. [See Figure 1.]



Figure 61. 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 5. 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 61.] 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**] Hypothetically, Edgar sees Edmund contemplating the letter written to undo him; hence the necessity of Gloucester's giving it back to him. (See [note I,ii, 94](#). S.D. "*Gives him back the letter.*") 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 loving Sister, well be-met*" (F, 2865).
- 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 that the audience knows is inaccessible without **a key** (like the costume room). Edgar next appears upon Edmund's command in II,i, to "*descend*" (F, 949) onto the platform. It could be that he

makes his entrance from a great **casement** window on the *third* level of the tiring house, which was kept locked. See note, II,i,19,S.D. “*descends from above with a rope.*”

158. **stir abroad**] go out

158. **go arm’d**] *goe arm’d.* (F, 491). Not in Q. Evidently, Edgar is not 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)

166. **brother noble**] Compare *Othello*, I,iii, “*Cassio’s a proper man*” (Q, 738)

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 is not a costume direction in the quartos or Folio indicating the fashion of Goneril’s costume. Presumably, London audiences in Shakespeare’s day would have viewed the narrative through the lens of **puritanism**, as Broadway audiences in 1986 saw *Into the Woods* through the prism of **AIDS**. The Globe Playhouse was located in the district of Southwark, —ground zero in the Puritans’ war on vice. The severe manner and strict moral principles Goneril affects in the first two Acts, especially the asceticism she demands of her father during the banquet in I,iv, and her feigned disapproval of Regan’s allusion to sex (see note I,i,280-81, “*Gon. You have obedience scanted . . . wanted.*”), is a caricature of an English Puritan.

It is now widely established that *King Lear* takes the form of “**metadrama**” or “**metatheatre**”, where “the boundaries between the play as a work of self-contained art and life are dissolved” (Calderwood, *Shakespearean metadrama*, 1971 p. 4). Theatrical conventions permitted actors to be costumed in fashions of their own time, and the many explicit references to items of Tudor and Stuart clothing in *Lear* is evidence that they were. What is being dramatized in this scene is the incongruity between Goneril’s puritanical beliefs and her father’s “**Epicurisme**” (F, 753). As implied by the Fool’s speech at the conclusion of I,v, the banquet was written as satire, like Act 3, Scene 7 in Jonson’s *Volpone*; not to effect some sort of weepy catharsis for

Lear. Hypothetically, the king is wearing lurid Tudor period fashions with a gross codpiece. Goneril, in contrast, is modestly dressed, in styles worn by Puritans. (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.

In *The City Match* by Jasper Mayne, there is a direction “*Enter Dorcas out of her Puritan dresse*” (IV,iii). What precisely does it mean to be wearing the clothes of a Puritan? “Puritans advocated a conservative form of fashionable attire, characterized by [sadd colors](#) and modest cuts. Gowns with low necklines were filled in with high-necked smocks and wide collars. Married women covered their hair with a linen cap, over which they might wear a tall black hat. Men and women avoided bright colours, shiny fabrics and over-ornamentation. Contrary to popular belief, most Puritans and [Calvinists](#) did not wear black for every day, especially in England, Scotland and colonial America. Black dye was expensive and faded quickly. Therefore, black clothing was generally reserved for the most formal occasions (including having one's portrait painted), for elders in a community and for those of higher rank. Richer puritans, like their Dutch Calvinist contemporaries, probably did wear it often but in silk, often patterned. Typical colours for most were brown, murrey (mulberry, a brownish-maroon), dull greens and tawny colours. Wool and linen were preferred over silks and satins, though Puritan women of rank wore modest amounts of lace and embroidery as appropriate to their station, believing that the various ranks of society were divinely ordained and should be reflected even in the most modest dress. [William Perkins](#) wrote “...that apparel is necessary for Scholar, the Tradesman, the Countryman, the Gentleman; which serveth not only to defend their bodies from cold, but which belongs also to the place, degree, calling, and condition of them all” (*Cases of Conscience*, 1616). (“1600–1650 in Western fashion.”)

[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 63](#).] Regan, in contrast, is no Puritan, which is evident by the deep décolletage of her dress, exposing her bosom. See [note I,v,11-12](#), “*for though she's as like this, as a Crabbe's like an Apple*” (F, 889-90).



Figure 63. 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.

S.D. *Steward*] “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.) It can be induced from the dialogue that Oswald is a youth from the lower classes, if not an orphan as in “Feste’s Song” in *Twelfth Night*. (See note I,iv,79, “*football player*.”) It is, of course, impossible for readers to know how the role was originally cast. If he is in his teens 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 boy 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’s pretty looks were a prerequisite for advancement.

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 64. A 17th print showing young football players inflating an animal bladder with a woman looking on admiringly.

Of course, if Oswald is cast as a middle-aged ninny, like Malvolio (the Steward to Olivia in *Twelfth Night*), their relationship has completely different connotations. So, too, there will be no undercurrents of sexuality in Kent’s visceral hatred of the lad if he is read as physically undesirable. The disguised earl’s excessive abuse of the Steward goes far beyond the small slight he gives the king bringing out dinner in I,iv. “*The lady doth protest too much, methinks*” (*Hamlet*, Q2, 2098).

The Female Tatler constructs men's beauty and fashionability as dangerous and problematic. Disguised as “*Caius*” (F, 3249), Kent commends himself to Lear by telling him he is no cock-sucker in reference to Oswald, who is bringing out a plate of fish. [See note I,iv,16, “*eate no fish*.”] The show “*of man*” (F, 1196) he subsequently displays by tripping and humiliating the good-looking boy proves so much to Lear’s liking that Kent is immediately hired and rewarded with money. (See note I,iv,79, S.D., “*Kent trips up his heels*.”) In II,ii, the disguised Earl takes Oswald’s words “*if thou lou'st me, tell me*” (F, 1080) as a sexual proposition. He then

berates and beats him for curling hair and having a clean-shaven face and being a whore. As Gore Vidal writes in a personal communication:



Figure 65. 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."

[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 66. *The Bath House*, n.d. Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528 Nuremberg), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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). 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 church-man 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."

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 67. *Adolescens, 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. If not a lavish gift from Goneril, his sword is hypothetically one of very low quality, bought second-hand, like his clothes. In IV,v, 242, Edgar quickly disarms him with his father’s wooden staff. [See note IV,v,242.,S.D.,“*They fight.*”] Ironically, Oswald is killed with his own weapon because he couldn’t afford to be taught how to use it. The dichotomy between vanity are “*true need*” (F, 1570) is a central motif in the play.

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 6](#). "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. Compare I.i, “*You haue obedience scanted,/ And well are worth the want that you haue wanted.*” (F, 304-5). It’s the voice of a moral scold.

25. **occasions**] opportunities

26. **straight**] immediately

27. **hold my very course**] follow my lead

27. S.D. *Exeunt*] (F, 528). *Exit*. (Q, 528).

ACT I, SCENE IV. *Scena Quarta*. (F, 529). Scene 4 in Quarto.



Figure 68. Jakob Seisenegger, "Portrait of Charles V with a Hound," 1532,- Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Bilddatenbank.

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. **Tucket within**] Ed. *Horns within*, after *labors*, line 7 (F, 538). Not in Q, F. Not in Q, F. "A fanfare played on a trumpet usually when nobility enter, each nobleman having his own call" (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **tucket**, p. 239. It's like custom ringtones for specific contacts on Android and iOS devices to identify who is calling. In this instance, the tucket in I,iv is hypothetically the set up for a gag in II,iv. Instead of trumpeter players to identify the King's arrival, it is marked by the pipe and tabor played by the Fool, as though Lear has been reduced to a clown's status in his travels hither and thither. The reference is to "Nine Days Wonder", in which Will Kempe famously **morris danced** from London to **Norwich**, to music on a pipe and tabor. (See note II,ii, S.D., "*playing a pipe and tabor*."") The horn in the previous scene is a different instrument, with an entirely different meaning. [See note I,ii,11. S.D., "*Horn within*."] As always, music, whether diegetic or non-diegetic, signals the end of one scene and the beginning of the next.

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. **Enter Lear**] *Enter Lear and Attendants*. (F, 538). *Enter Lear*. (Q, 539). Lear is still wearing Tudor period fashions but ones suitable for hunting. This matter is essential because it determines what items of clothing the actor can practically "tear off" in the storm. In my telling of Shakespeare's story, Edgar puts on the king's fancy riding cloak concomitantly, when he sees it lying unwanted on the ground. (See III,iv,99.,S.D., "*Lear tears off pieces of his costume*."")

It can be induced from the dialogue that Lear enters in I,iv wearing his signature "*codpiece*"

(F, 1692), leather “*boots*” (F, 2615), a riding crop (F, 640), and an ostentatious, “*Persian*” (F, 2037) riding-cloak. Lear is said to be “*unbonneted*” (Q, 1622.7), so it must be that he is now wearing a hat. There are no known portraits of 16th century kings dressed for hunting, including Francis I of France, who was as passionate a hunter as James I. We can expect Lear’s costume to include detachable **doublet sleeves** as in Figure 168, collar and cuffs, and very wide breeches covering his hips and upper thighs. (See Figure 174., “Tudor gentleman with a cape giving alms to a beggar.”)

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 “*Our selfe by Monthly course,/ With reseruatiō of an hundred Knights,/ By you to be sustain’d,*” (F, 140-42).
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.



Figure 69. Attendants serving King James and Spanish Ambassadors (1624) by Melchior Tavernier.

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 70. 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. “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.) “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.) [See Figure 69.]



Video 7. Leslie Nielsen, dinner at the White House from the *Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear*.

Reading the scene without knowing what visual and auditory elements accompany the dialogue is as fruitless as reading David Zucker's and Pat Profit's screenplay for the banquet at the White House in *Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear* (pp.1-7) without action lines. [See Video 7.] The scene is conventionally staged as "tragedy" such as Peter Brook's famous 1553 television adaption with Olson Wells (14:53-26:29); Michael Elliott's acclaimed 1983 adaption for Granada Television with Laurence Olivier (29:41-42:38); Trevor Nunn's 2008 adaption with Ian McKellan (28:07-45:52), and so on. Of course, directors and actors are free to interpret the action any way they want, but Shakespeare's editors don't have the same license. Their interpretations are constrained by the play's historical context. Their aesthetic judgments must be based on close reading of the play itself, without doctrinal bias. They must examine the work's artistic narrative structure, which includes its "metatheatrical" *form*, and the ironic *style*.

The influence of Plautus and *Commedia dell'arte* on Shakespeare's is well established in the literature. Verbal and visual *lazzi* are markedly present in *King Lear*. The playwright mixes humor that relies on wit, irony, and observation with toilet, schoolboy jokes and violent slapstick, notably Kent's abuse of Oswald. In his Introduction to the Penguin *Comedy of Errors* (1972), Stanley Wells offers a useful definition of farce which "includes" absurdities of plot, stylization of action, subordination of character to plot, and *dissociation of response* [italics mine] in which violence evokes laughter rather than pity."^[19] Brecht, too, saw farce as a tool for having a *distancing effect*. He uses it in *Epic Theatre* as a technique that encourages audiences to be critical and detached from the action on stage.

The central thesis of my work is that *King Lear* was written as political satire. It parodies the hypocritical moral and religious zeal of Puritans. From the mid-16th century Elizabethan play-goers were on the receiving end of Puritan attacks, culminating in the closure of all theaters in London in 1642 for their "lascivious mirth and levity."^[5] 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).



Figure 71. Duccio di Buoninsegna: Appearance While the Apostles are at Table / Wikimedia Commons

As indicated by the Fool's couplet at the conclusion of I,v, the banquet scene was written to get laughs: "*She that's a Maid now, & laughs at my departure,/ Shall not be a Maid long, vnlesse things be cut shorter*" (F, 923-4). It creates an absurd dichotomy between Lear's stereotypical masculine behavior and Goneril's puritanical ideals of temperance, moderation, and self-restraint. 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. [See Figure 71.] 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 Dietaries and the Plays*, Joan Fitzpatrick, University of Northampton, 2007, p. 28).



Figure 72. 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.

8. S.D. *Solemn music*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Just as there is no stage direction in the quartos and folio indicating that a banquet is served, nothing is published in the quartos or Folio about any music. Music, however, typically 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 plays. 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.)

In the scene before, Goneril instructs Oswald to order the domestic attendants serving dinner to be negligent of her guests. Within the diegesis of the story, therefore, we can expect her to have given similar orders to the musicians. Rather than setting a lively tone suitable for feasting and merry-making, they have been instructed to play music appropriate for *The Last Supper* or a funeral. [See Appendix E: The Incidental Music in *King Lear*.]



Figure 73. The children of the chapel detail from *The funeral procession of Queen Elizabeth I to Westminster Abbey, 28th April 1603*. (Wiki)

- 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.



Figure 74. "Fleisch 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.

- 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 to serve her father as a metaphor for his 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 8. "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 15th 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 75. 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 75.]

16. **eat no fish**] A double entendre referring both to the unappetizing plate of “poor-John” Kent refuses to eat, and to Oswald himself. That is, he will not “eat” (i.e. perform fellatio) the lad. 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). 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 1) the type of fish being served and 2) 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.)

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 have been 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 a Knight**] Ed. *Attendant*. Dyce. Not in Q, F. Presumably, one of Lear’s Knights who returns with the Fool. Lear does not trust Goneril’s attendants.
41. S.D. **Re-enter Oswald**] Ed. *Enter Steward*, after line 43 *daughter*, Q, 575 and F, 573.
41. S.D. **with a bowl of pease porridge**] Pease porridge was a familiar Lenten food in England. “*Got's-will, and his passion of my heart: I had as lief you would tell me of a messe of porridge*” (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*, F, 1212-13). “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 72** appear to be eating pease pottage with spoons.
43. **So please you—**] Over the course of the play, Shakespeare builds sympathy for the character beginning with the casting of the actor. Oswald is hypothetically a teenager, and sexually desirable. The playwright makes it a point to show Goneril ordering him to neglect her father at dinner (F, 519-28). The beating he receives from Lear and Kent in I,iv is presented as slapstick, like the beatings of servants in **Plautus** and *Commedia dell’arte*, where the violence serves to highlight social hierarchies. In II,ii, the disguised earl berates the boy for his affections of nobility, the quality of his wardrobe, his unmanly face and hairstyle, and for wearing a sword as a status symbol. (See Peter Tonkin, “**Elizabethan Swordplay - The Rise and Rise of the Rapier**”.) A real gentleman like **George Villiers** or himself would not be caught dead in second-hand clothes or dining on leftovers with servants in the kitchen. We laugh when the Steward sticks his tongue out at Kent in II,ii. We laugh when the Steward sticks his tongue out at Kent in II,ii. (See note II,ii,75., “*Epileptic visage*.”) We are sympathetic when Goneril implicitly faults him for being an unsatisfying lover. (See IV,ii, 26., “*O, the difference of man and man*.”)

Oswald’s “**hamartia**”, if one can think of secondary characters in a Tragedy as having a tragic flaw, is that he was born poor, and wants to advance beyond his station. “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**). When Oswald attempts to collect the large bounty on Gloucester’s head, he is not motivated by a malevolent nature to kill him, but by a desire for success in life. We are sorry to see him die, as is Edgar who says he regrets being his “*Deathsman*” (F, 2711). [See note IV,v,254, “*I am only sorry he had not other Deathsman*.”]

The ideas of [freewill](#) and [determinism](#) are central themes in *King Lear*. Were poverty and low birth factors in the choices Oswald made about how best to survive in the world? 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.” (See note I,iii, S.D., “*Steward*.”)



Figure 76. An Interior View of a Jamaica House of Corrections.

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 I,i,133., “*hundred knights*.”) In my version, “*Lear’s Knight*” is a conflation of parts ascribed variously to “*a Knight*”, “*a Gentleman*”, “*a Messenger*”, “*a Servant*” and to *Kent* in the quartos and folio:

- *Knigh.* (F, 580). *Kent.* (Q, 580).
- *Knigh.* (F, 583, F, 586, F, 593, F, 602) / *servant* (Q, 584, 586, 593,602) in I,iv;
- *Gent.* (F, 921), *Servant.* (Q, 921) in I,v;
- *Knigh.* (Q, 1275), *Gen.* (F, 1273) in II,iv;
- *Gentleman.* (Q, 1615), *Gentleman.* (F, 1615) in III,i;
- *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).

These speeches share a distinct manner of speaking. Logically, they were written to individuate a single character. It makes no dramatic sense to parcel them out to “at least four different knights,” as R.A. Foakes does in *The Arden Shakespeare King Lear*, p. 156. Hypothetically, we first observe Lear’s Knight in I,i, where he is standing next to Kent, near to the king, signaling his high place in court. He is given lines in I,iv, I,v and II,iv, where he indicates his distrust of “*Caius*” who plainly lied to Lear about why he was put in the stocks. (F, 1333-34). This is why Kent has a such hard time convincing him in III,i that he is trustworthy. [See Appendix D.]

Lear’s Knight next appears in IV,iii (F) / scene 18 (Q) where Cordelia instructs him to search for her father. He succeeds in doing so in IV,v, upon which Lear gives him a king’s ransom to let him go free. He disappears from the story after IV,vi in which he discusses the logistics of the battle with Kent. If anybody cares to wonder what happened to him, it can be presumed

he was killed in combat. The character no longer serves any function in the narrative except to show “*The friend hath lost his friend*” (Q, 2997.1)

There is a [scene 17](#) in the quartos (not published in the Folio) in which “*a Gentleman*” (Q, 2347.1) gives Kent an uncharacteristically florid, sentimental description of Cordelia’s beauty and virtue, evoking the submissive [Philoclea](#) in Philip Sydney’s *Arcadia*. Because the basic plot structure is disjointed by the scene, and results in glaring inconsistencies in the dialogue, I have placed in it an Appendix for readers to analyze. [See [Appendix C: Scene 17 \(Quartos\)](#).] The goal of an editor is not to conflate corrupted, secondary sources licensed by the Master of Revels, but to *restore* the the play to its original in as far as that’s possible. Facsimiles of scene 17 are conserved at the [Internet ShakespeareEditions](#) for anybody to see.

49, 52, 59, 68. **Lear’s Knight**] Ed. *Knight* (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 73](#) and [Figure 77](#).]



[Figure 77](#). 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. An extra. This is not Lear’s Knight because the latter to witness the violent attack on Oswald. It explains why he doubts she explanation “*Caius*” gives for being stocked. See note II,iv,59, “*Made you no more offence but what you speak of?*”

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.

71. S.D. **with stone jugs**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *Taming of the Shrew*, I,ii, “*she brought stone-jugs, and no seal’d quarts*” (F, 241). Goneril is serving her father and his knights **small beer**,—watered down alcohol for consumption by children and servants. Of course, it is impossible

to know what props were originally used for the banquet. The action has be imagined by the readers. What they must be told is that the form of *King Lear* is **metatheatre** not **realism**. The style of Shakespeare's writing is marked by irony and **Plautian** farce—a “dissociation of response in which violence evokes laughter rather than pity”^[19] I,iv, Shakespeare is parodying Puritanism: “The haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy” (H.L. Mencken).

77. **bandy**] exchange, as in a game of tennis.

77. S.D. **Striking him with his hunting crop**] Rowe *subst.* Not in Q, F. (See **strike**, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, p. 219.)

78. **strucken**] struck



Figure 78. Uncredited illustration at CNN of a game of Real Tennis played during the time of Henry VIII.

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 79. 1612 woodcut from the *Minerva Britannia* by Henry Peacham. Source: The Fellows' Library, Winchester College.

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 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. [See Figure 80.] His beating supports Goneril's claim that her father and his men are unruly and ungracious.

“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 80. President Gerald Ford tripping up Chevy Chase.

81. *Draws his sword*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

81-2. *I'll teach you differences*] I'll teach you your proper place as a low-born servant.

83. *lubber*] "An inferior servant, drudge, scullion" (*OED*, 1.†c): "Mediastinus, a drudge or lubber, which doth in the howse all maner of vyle service, as swepe or clense the house, carie wodde to the kytchen, and other like drudgery. T. Elyot *Dict.*, 1538.

83. *length*] height, "extent from end to end, contrary breadth" Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, p. 642. That is, if Oswald wants to keep possession of his legs, he'll depart.

83-4. *have you wisdom*] 'Are you in your senses?' My guess is that Oswald's sword is an obstacle in his leaving. He has no idea how to carry it properly.

84. S.D. *Exit Oswald*] Theobald. Not in Q, F.

84. *So*] An expression of approbation of Oswald's departure. See Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, p. 1081). Kent likely sheaths his sword in accompaniment.

85. *earnest*] earnest-money, a small sum paid to secure a bargain, hansel.



Figure 81. 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, Orenge, 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 82. *The Funny Dreams of Pantagruel* (1565), illustrator thought to be François Desprez.

86. S.D. *Enter Fool*] (Q, 624) (F, 624). Robert Armin is widely credited by scholars and theatre historians as the original performer of the Fool. There is no evidence to support this hypothesis, however. [See [Appendix G: Robert Armin in the Role of Gloucester](#).] The idea that needs to be communicated in the relationship between Lear and the Fool is that the roles of parent and child are *inverted*. The Fool's love for the King denotes feelings associated with a mother. German philologist Alois Brandl was the first to propose that the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were written to be performed by the same player. (*Shakespeare*, E. Hofmann & Co, 1894, Berlin). The physical evidence that the parts were double cast is supported by the fact that 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). [See [Figure 77](#).] 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).

The Fool functions as Cordelia's **doppelgänger**. In ancient Greece, a spirit double would be referred to as an *eidolon* (εἰδωλον), which translates to “image, idol, double, apparition, phantom, or ghost”. Ghosts, or eidola, were used in ancient Greek literature and drama to offer wisdom and advice.^[47] “In Irish folklore, ‘*fetch*’ refers to the apparition of one's double or mirror-image, rather like the German doppelgänger, which reveals itself as an omen of one's imminent death. Hence the encounters between **Carson's**, **Shelley's**, and **Lincoln's** just before their respective dooms.”^[8] In Shakespeare's day, **John Donne** is said to have seen his wife's doppelgänger in Paris in 1612 upon the still birth of their son.^[9] The concept of alter egos and double spirits has appeared in the folklore, myths, religious concepts and traditions of many cultures throughout human history.”^[7] As noted in I,ii,97, superstition was rife in England all through Middle Ages and beyond. It was even more of “a driving force in the Renaissance than the rational Humanism of Erasmus”, according to Frances Yates^[9] A superstitious person in

the early 17th century might regard the Fool as a portent of death when the parts is doubled with Cordelia. (See note V,i,306, “*And my poor fool is hanged.*”)



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.

The crucial metaphysical idea being dramatized that Cordelia and the Fool are one Platonic Form. [See Video 1. David Sedley: Plato's Theory of Forms.] This important concept is not implied if Armin played the part of the Fool.



Figure 87. David playing the harp before Saul, Rembrandt, c. 1630, Städel Museum, Frankfurt

86. *with lute*] Ed. Not in Q, F. [Compare note I,v,S.D. *with lute*.] There are no stage directions in the quartos or Folio indicating that the Fool is carrying a lute. We have only the slightest textual intimation of his doing so when Lear asks, “*When were you wont to be so full of songs, sirrah?*” (F, 684), 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 might 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). As a practical matter, there are many sizes and shapes of lutes and other instruments that the actor might be using. [See Figure 85.] 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 99b.]



Figure 85. Lutes – Plate XVI from Michael Praetorius, Syntagma Musicum, 1619.

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.*” Richard Dutton writes, “One consistent thread runs through the records of the boy players, and

that is musical accomplishment. 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, 2766.1 (*Shakespeare's Theatre: A History*.) See S.D., "Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute" (Q1, 2828.2).



Figure 86. In *Pericles*, V,i, Lysimachus visits Pericles' ship and sends for Marina, whose music he thinks will revive the grief-stricken king. "Marina singing before Pericles", Thomas Stothard, 1825, Folger Shakespeare Library

The real clincher for adding the direction comes in the next scene where music is needed to communicate emotions that words alone cannot achieve. The melody is being used as a storytelling tool, providing continuity and subtext. Hypothetically, it is the tune of popular lullaby a mother might sing to a wailing child to soothe him. The scene alludes to the biblical story of the teenaged David who plays his harp for Saul to heal his troubled soul. (1 Samuel 16:14-23). [See note I,v,5. S.D. *The Fool plays soft music on his lute.*"]

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 87.]



Video 9. Willow song (from *Othello*, Act 4, Scene 3) performed beautifully by Alfred Deller and lutenist Desmond Dupré. See “Shakespeare’s Saddest Song.”

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 87.] Its meaning derives from the foolishness of the bird’s mating rituals, and has obvious phallic symbolism.

The Fool proffers his coxcomb to Kent upon seeing the king give him money from a purse he is carrying inside his codpiece. 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 metaphor: the analogy between his *coxcomb* and Lear’s *codpiece*. He is implying that both are emblematic of their respective characters—tokens of foolishness.



Figure 87. Detail of a coxcomb. ‘Trivulzio Book of Hours’, Flanders ca. 1470 (Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, SMC 1, fol. 110v).

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,55 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)

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 the disguised earl 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. (See note III,vi,12., "*to his son.*")

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**] Lear brandishes his hunting crop, which we just saw him use 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 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 play, it cannot be ruled out that it refers to some bit of food *lazzi*, such as Lear's spitting out weak ale. Oswald has, hypothetically, only minutes before, set out the drinks. See note I,iv,71. S.D. "*with stone jugs.*"

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**] i., save money.

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.

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 *Worlde of Wordes*. (*OED*, 1)

144. **egg**] probably referring literally to a dish of hard-boiled eggs. By the 16th 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 [Video 10](#).] 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 10. “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 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?")

168. And] If

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 16.] 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. (See note II,ii,33, “*Vanity the puppet's part*”.) The blocking gives a dramatic form to her vanity and *hauteur*. Most importantly, Goneril wishes to avoid a tête-à-tête. 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 her giving directives to him from “above” like a puppeteer. 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.*”

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 murderous look to Albany's Squire, aka the “*Messenger*” in IV,ii (F, 2312), when he reports the news of Cornwall's death. See IV,ii,72, S.D., “*Goneril frowns at him*”]

170-80. **an O without a figure**] nothing.

181. S.D. **To Goneril**] Not in Q, F.

182. **so your face bid me**] Goneril is looking at the Fool with murder in her eyes.

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.



Figure 88. “*Peas were on the menu for James I during his stay at Hoghton Tower, in Lancashire, where there massive meals were prepared for dinner, supper and breakfast the next day*” (*The Sun*).

186. **sheal'd peascod**] i.e. Lear's codpiece. Logically, the remark is an extremely unsubtle double entendre, as shealed peas are among the dishes served for dinner. [See Figure 88.] 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 Galloway, “What’s the Difference Between Snow Peas, Snap Peas, and Garden Peas?”)

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.

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 89](#).]

198. **tender**] delicate care for

198. **wholesome**] healthy

198. **weal**] body politic



Figure 89. 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 Fool is mocking her austerity (F, 726-29). 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)

203. S.D. *Sings*] Ed. Not in Q, F. The words, “so out went the Candle, and we were left darkling”

(F, 728-9) sound like a snatch from an old nursery rhyme, like “Jack Be Nimble” or “Oranges and Apples”, evoking a child’s fear of the dark.

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 Donkey.” “In this fable a man and his son 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 criticised 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. ^[1]



Figure 90. Ox whipping men. From *The World Turned Upside Down*.

211. S.D. **Sings**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

211. **Whoop, Jug! I love thee**] This is thought to be the snippet of some bawdy song. In one sense, he seems to be asking Goneril to do him no harm for mocking her. Goneril is frowning menacingly at him, 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: Iump-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*, F, 2016-25.)



Figure 91. From the *Punch and Judy* script, illustrated by George Cruikshank, 1827.

One of many meanings of the word “Jug” is a nickname for Joan, the original name of Punch's

wife in **Punch and Judy** puppet plays. 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 92. **JUGGS**; *The World's Dirtiest Tit-Mag* Vol. 12, No. 07 / May 1993.

Common sense tells us that the word “Jug” is related to the size of Goneril’s breasts because the Fool alludes to them in the next scene. See note I,v,12, “*she's as like this, as a Crabbe's like an Apple*” (F, 889-90). “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. Hypothetically, Oswald served Lear and his knights ale from stone jugs. (Compare *Taming of the Shrew*, I,ii, “*she brought stone-Iugs, and no seal'd quarts*” (F, 241). My guess is he is saluting Goneril’s big tits, setting up the joke about Regan’s being flat. Today, in the United States, there is a softcore pornographic adult magazine called **Juggs** that specializes in photographs of women with large breasts. [See Figure 92.] What is a male repast without jokes about cleavage?

214. **notion**] intellectual power.

215. S.D. **Pricks 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, epitomized by the dismantling of his costume in III,iv to suffer the lashing of the storm. See note III,iv,99. S.D., “*Lear tears off pieces of his costume*.”

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 diametric opposition to each other, the perspective through which the audience sees the action switches from the emotional *interiority* of the king to the *exteriority* of Albany, who tries in vain to discover why the king is angry, presumably to help resolve the problem. What Shakespeare is showing us is a character so blinded with rage that he only succeeds in making things worse for himself, a fact that the Fool harps on about in I,v and III,ii. Lear is an exemplar of how men ought NOT to behave when they get angry, at least according to Seneca in *De Ira* “a work that defines and explains anger within the context of **Stoic philosophy**.”

When we read Lear's speeches in the quartos and Folio, such as his mighty curse on his daughter, “*Heare Nature, heare deere Goddess, heare*” (F, 789), the **narrative mode** is ambiguous. It is easy to forget that Albany is the foil. **Charles Lamb**, intoxicated by **Romanticism**, presents Shakespeare's poetry as “**internal**,” reflecting the subjective inner emotions of the king. “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.”^[17] When considering **authorial intent**, as editors must do when they set about restoring the play to something its author might recognize as having written, a better narrative hypothesis is that the focalization shifts from “**internal**” to “**external**”. The dramatic poetry, which is inarguably among the most powerful ever written for the stage, has the effect of counter-productive, histrionic bluster, “*full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing*.” (*Macbeth*, F, 2348-49). Compare III,ii,1, “*Blow, winds and crack your cheeks!*”



Video 11. Peter Brook's 1953 production with Orson Welles “Hear, Nature” (23:08-24:11)

Throughout this version I stress the necessity for readers to think actively about the blocking for themselves. Theatre is a spatiotemporal medium. Where characters are in relation to one another is decisive in the message being communicated. In movies and television, the audience's POV is determined by the director, such as **Peter Brook's** 1953 film with **Orson Welles**. In I,iv, for example, the presence of Albany is completely mooted in the editing to create a sense of pathos (23:08-24:11).

243. S.D. **above**] Ed. The first question readers must ask themselves in this scene is where Albany is standing in relation to Lear and Goneril? My hypothesis is that he finds himself in the middle 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 enraged father. Thus, Lear’s imprecations all hit her well-intentioned husband. Goneril is not in our range of view. 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 12. 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. **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.
262. S.D. **Kneels**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare note II,iv,150, S.D., “*Kneeling.*”
262. **Nature**] Lear is praying to **Lady Justice**, known as *Iustitia* or *Justitia* in ancient Roman, and the goddess Thémis in ancient Greece. He wants to see Goneril punished for her hardness. Compare I,i,52., “*Nature*”, and I,ii,1., “*Nature*”. “Aristotle (384–322 BCE) held that what was ‘just by nature’ was not always the same as what was ‘just by law,’ that there was a natural **justice** valid everywhere with the same force and “not existing by people’s **thinking** this or that,” and that appeal could be made to it from positive law” (*Britannica*).
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, Lear's Knight, and Knights**] Ed. *Exit*. (F, 803). Not in Q. The all-knowing Fool does not stop dining because he knows Lear will be returning shortly, which he does.

279. **disposition**] humor

280. S.D. **Re-enter Lear**] *Enter Lear*. (F, 808). Not in Q.

283. S.D. **To Goneril**] Theobald. Not in Q, F.

285. **perforce**] Compare I,v,33 note

287. **Th'untented woundings**] viz., his bleeding tears. See *The Winter's Tale*, V,ii, "*Bleed Teares*" (F, 3096-7). 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 93. 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 "*other eye*" (F, 2315) in III,vii is not simple melodrama to thrill the audience, but an elemental part of her character. (See note III,vii,80,SD, 80. "*She plucks out his other eye.*")

397. S.D. **Exit**] (F, 829) Upon Lear's departure, Goneril steps forward, in front of her husband, to summon Oswald.

299. **I bear you—**] Goneril cuts him off in mid-sentence.

301. S.D. **To the Fool**] Johnson. Not in Q, F.

304. **fox**]

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.
330. **at task**] F, 867; attastk (Q1, 867); alapt (Q2, 867)
331. **harmful mildness**] dangerous lenity
334. **then**] Goneril would keep arguing
334. **Trumpets Sound**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
335. **th'event**] Let us see what happens.
335. **Exeunt**] (F, 872); (Q, 872).

ACT I, SCENE V.] *Scena Quinta* (F, 873). Scene 5 in Quarto.

*In sweet Musicke is such Art,
Killing care, & grieve of heart,
Fall asleepe, or hearing dye.*
~ *Henry VIII* (F,1620-31)

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).



Figure 94. *David Plays the Harp for Saul*, by Rembrandt van Rijn, c. 1650 and 1670. Mauritshuis.

S.D. **with lute**] Ed. Not in Q, F. (See note I,iv,86,S.D., *with lute*.) The Fool's intent in this scene is connected structurally with Cordelia's in IV,vi by the music. Without it, there is nothing to glue the scenes together thematically. [See note IV,vi,25., "music."] The action is based on the legend of David and Saul (1 Samuel 16:14-23) in which the 10-15 year old David is summon-ed to soothe the troubled king by playing music on his harp.



Figure 95. 1596 Caravaggio, *The Lute Player*, New York.

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 96. Facsimile Viewer: Actus Primus, Scena Quinta, First Folio (New South Wales).

5. S.D. *The Fool plays soft music on his lute*] Ed. The stage direction is **red marked** to indicate that readers need to think critically about the text and use their imaginations. (See “Active vs. Passive Reading,” Excelsior University.) Active readers don't just passively absorb information. They ask questions about the author's purpose, the text's organization, and the author's arguments. The issues in this scene are particularly complex. They involve the use of instrumental music in English stage plays in the early 17th century (for which there is no direct evidence), as well as Shakespeare's use of improvisation as a technique in his playwriting (for which there is no direct evidence).

The first question readers must ask themselves is the one **Stanford Meisner** would ask: what are the actors *doing*? There is nothing published in either the quartos or the Folio indicating that the Fool is carrying a lute and playing on it. [See Figure 96.] It cannot be presupposed that the absence of evidence is evidence of absence—an informal fallacy. In performance, the scene is traditionally staged as it reads in the copy text. The lute is not thought to be a narrative element, as demonstrated by **Michael Elliott**'s Emmy-winning TV production of *King Lear* from 1983 with **Laurence Olivier** and **John Hurt** as the Fool. [See Video 13.]



Video 13. Laurence Olivier and John Hurt in Act I scene v (43:01 to 45:12) from an Emmy award winning television production of *King Lear* directed by Michael Elliott

One of the central themes in *King Lear* is the foolish and deceitful nature of words. In *The Psalter of Henry VIII*, there is a miniature for Psalm 52 that depicts a dichotomy between words and music. “The Psalm is accompanied by an illustration of Henry sitting in his Privy Chamber and playing a harp to identify him with the Psalmist. He is accompanied by his jester **Will Somers**, with whom he enjoyed a close relationship for more than two decades. Appearing rather dejected, the royal Fool looks out of the picture towards the first verse of the Psalm, which tells us ‘The fool says in his heart, “There is no God”’. ^[30] [See Figure 97.]



Figure 97. Henry VIII in the likeness of King David, playing the harp: Royal MS 2 A xvi, f. 63v.

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). One of the overarching themes in *Lear* is the inversion of the roles of parent and child. This central idea is **meta-communicated** in performance by the double casting of Cordelia and the Fool, and the music. Unfortunately, like the instrumental music in Greek and Roman drama, “Not a single note of instrumental music from the Shakespeare plays has been preserved, with the possible exception of the witches’ dances from *Macbeth*, which are thought to have been borrowed from a contemporary masque. Even descriptions of the kinds of music to be played are sparse. Trumpets sounded ‘flourishes,’ ‘sennets,’ and ‘tuckets.’” [30]



Figure 98. Roman marble mosaic of Orpheus taming wild animals with music. A.D. 194; Eastern Roman Empire, near Edessa, shows him seated and playing a lyre or cithara, wearing a Phrygian cap.

What the Fool wants in I,v is what Cordelia wants in IV,vi: to “winde vp”... “Th’vntun’d and iarring senses”... “Of this childe-changed Father” (F, 2726-66). [See note IV,vi,16., “untuned.”] In my version of the story, the melody is used as a **leitmotif** — “a short, recurring musical phrase” [2] associated with the idea of the love a mother has for her child. Logically, the Fool is playing the tune of a popular lullaby a mother might hum to a wailing infant to stop them from crying. See Kathleen Palti, “Singing Women: Lullabies and Carols in Medieval England, 2011.) Musicians in Middle Ages would frequently repeat and vary short melodic phrases (motifs) to create a recognizable musical theme throughout a piece. “It is important to note that most secular music was of folk origins. This means that most secular music was created, performed, and passed down orally by traveling musicians.” Recurring melodic patterns and phrases were often used to create a sense of unity and structure within the composition.” (study.com.) It is in this tradition, for example, that Bach uses the secular love song “Mein G’müt ist mir verwirret” (“I’m all mixed up”) by Hans Leo Haßler (c. 1600) as a leitmotif of **agape** in his sacred oratorio *Matthäus-Passion*, “O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden.” The music Ophelia plays on her lute in *Hamlet* (Q1, 2766.1) serves as a significant thematic device, as does Desdemona’s “Willow Song” in *Othello*, Act 4, Scene 3. It is repeated by Emilia (F, 3545) before she commits suicide.



Figure 99. Orazio Gentileschi, *The Lute Player*, c. 1612/1620, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

I,v has the *feel* of being improvised, not scripted. There are no empirical means of knowing to what degree improvisation was involved in the composition of *Lear*, or to what extent the *King's Men* embraced a culture of collaboration. Gerald Eades Bentley writes, “Precisely what the procedure was in the judging of new manuscripts offered for production cannot yet be determined.” The process was fast-paced, and certainly involved working within tight deadlines and budgets. “The repertory of the Lord Chamberlain's/King's Men was huge by the standards of any modern repertory theater: the actors performed as many as 30 different plays in a single theatrical season. Of those plays, at least 15 would be new that year (including, on average, two by Shakespeare); the company added a new play to its repertory about once every two weeks. Rehearsal periods must have been relatively brief.”^[9]

I,v, might be taken as a *double act* in the tradition of British *music hall* or American *Vaudeville*. Lear acts the part of a “straight man” while the Fool plays calming music on his lute in counterpoint to his riddles. [See Video 14, Manny Pacheco, “Value of the Straight Man.”] The style of Act I, and indeed most of the play, is bawdy. It abounds with comedic farce elements characteristic of *commedia*. For confirmation of this, at the end of Act I, the Fool looks for a “*Maid*” (F, 923) in the audience, and warns her that if she is so naive to think Lear’s antics are funny, she will be soon robbed of her virginity . . . if she haven’t been already (F, 923-24).



Figure 99c. Folio 110 from the McGill *Feather Book* depicts a 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 Francesco Gabrielli with his wife Spinetta.

The proxemics of the actors is essential to the meaning of the scene. As I imagine it preformed, Lear is alone downstage on the platform facing forward; the Fool/Cordelia is upstage quietly playing his lute. As the scene moves forward, 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. Their proximity makes him uncomfortable for obvious reasons. (Compare 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?”



Video 14. Manny Pacheco on Comedy: Value of the Straight Man.

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 have observed that Regan is as flat as a boy in I,i to make any sense of the Fool’s joke. Compare note II,iv,265, “*If only to go warm were gorgeous.*”
12. **this**] Goneril



Figure 99d. Cimon and Pero, Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1630, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

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 99d and Figure 171.]
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.”
- 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 perforce**] 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 perforce,/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. *Servant* (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/musician 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 99e. 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, seuerally.* (F, 927). *Enter Bastard, and Curan meeting.* (Q1, 928). *Enter Bastard, and Curan meetes 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). 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. (Edgar is in hiding.) 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, Curan reenters in II,i with “*Gloster, and Seruants with Torches*” (F, 970), and is commanded by his lord to “*Dispatch*” (F, 995) (i.e., “be quick, make haste”), and issue a proclamation ordering Edgar’s arrest. (See note 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). It places him among those present at Gloucester’s trial. (See note III,vii,96. “*Curan.*”) 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 been a vassal of 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 looks to see his reaction when he witnesses Edmund’s betrayal of his father. It was Curan who wrote the proclamation declaring Edgar an outlaw. More importantly, how does Edmund meet Curan’s gaze? Guilt? Defiance? Indifference? See note I,ii,1., “*Nature.*”

2, 6,10,13. **Curan**] (Q, 930); *Cur.* (F, 929)

7-8. **Ear-kissing**] (F, 936) eare-bussing (Q, 936)

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 of descending.

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. Not in Q, F. 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 hypothesize it is from “a casement” window on the **third level** of the *mimorum aedes* (Latin for “players house”) above the Lords Rooms.



Figure 100. *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 16.] In de Witt's drawing, details of the third level are concealed by the roof overhanging the platform. Thus, it is not known if it 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”). In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Borachio might be referring to an over-hanging structure when he says, “Stand thee close then vnder this penthouse” (F, 1431).



Figure 101. King John's Hunting Lodge, Axbridge, Somerset, a 15th 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 101), 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 ships. 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 15. 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.
27. S.D. **Trumpets within**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare *Othello* (Q1, 950)
29. **In cunning**] "for purposes of deceit; skilful deceit, craft, artifice" (*OED*, 5a); i.e., to play along with it.
29. S.D. **He draws his sword**] Ed Not in Q, F.
30. **Edgar draws and parries Edmund's attack**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Edgar's half-hearted sword play does not convince the audience that he is a strong fighter.

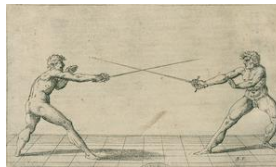


Figure 102. *Scola, overo teatro* by Nicoletto Giganti - Figure 2.

30. **quit you well**] acquit, give a good account of yourself, fight well. Muir quotes *1 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).

35. S.D. **Edmund hides his rapier**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare, “*In the act-time De Flores hides a naked rapier*”, *The Changeling* (p. 42). Edmund wants his father to think he was defenseless when Edgar attacked him. See “*My vnprovided body*” (F, 988).
36. S.D. **Enter Gloucester**] *Enter Gloster*, (F, 970) *Enter Glost.* (Q, 971).
36. S.D. **Curan**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
36. **and armed 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 52.] 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.
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); not in Q. Tuckets are unique musical signatures on a trumpet (F, 1469) or trumpets (F, 1017) identifying a royal person. In accordance with the farcical style of *King Lear*, Cornwall's tucket likely reflects his pomposity: florid and overblown. He has evidently employed at least two trumpeters.
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. 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 (see note III,vii,91), and two more are needed to lead Gloucester out after he is blinded (see note III,vii,94). 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 fatuous 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 his practice**] Edmund uncovered Edgar's scheme. The word **Bewray** is obsolete. See *OED*, 2.a., "To expose (a person), by divulging his or her secrets, or telling something that one knows to his or her discredit or harm. Hence passing into, To expose or reveal (the unknown doer of an act.)" Compare III,vi,111, "*bewray*" (Q1, 2056.15).
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.
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 103. 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 the Steward’s nose in the fact that he is nothing but a common household drudge or “*lubber*” (F,620). Hypothetically, Oswald comes from a poor family, if not a church parish. His clothes look like poor hand-me-downs to the Earl of Kent; and 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 103 and 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. (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.
8. **Tisbury pinfold**] Ed. *Lipsbury Pinfold* (F, 1083); *Lipsburie pinfold* (Q, 1082); *Lipsbury pinfold* (Q2, 1083). I hypothesize 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: the cartographer or engraver clearly having mistaken a long ‘s’ (*f*) for an ‘l’. [Figure 104.] Dr. Douglas Bruster argues in the September 2013 issue of *Notes and Queries*, that misspellings and bad handwriting are trademarks of the playwright.



Figure 104. Detail of 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.

No such place as “Lipsbury” or “Lipsbury pinfold” has been identified, but the meaning is clear enough: if Oswald was confined to a pound, like the animal he regards him as, Kent would butcher him like a piece of meat. Throughout the play, Kent looks upon Oswald as something to be eaten: “*eate no fish*” (F, 548); “*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).



Figure 105. *The Butcher's Shop*, Annibale Carracci, c. 1582, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX.

The meaning of “*Lipsbury*” has been rendered sheer nonsense by Shakespeare’s lexicographers, as anybody can see for themselves by Googling the word or reading H.H. Furness’s note in *King Lear: A New Variorum Edition*, pp. 114. Dan Piepenbring writes in *The Paris Review*, “I have no way of divining what ‘Lipsbury pinfold’ might be—a wrestling variant, something akin to boxing’s Marquess of Queensberry rules? *The New York Times* says it means ‘between the teeth’; the *Independent* says it means oral sex; less reputable quarters of the internet say it’s ‘a very fine weave cloth, possibly with a narrow pinstripe on it.’”



Figure 106. Built in 1279, the magnificent tithe barn in Tisbury has been repurposed as an arts venue.

Tisbury, Wiltshire 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. [See Figure 106.] While a tithe barn is not literally a “*pinfold*” or an animal pound, it was used to hold livestock before slaughtering them, which is precisely what Kent is threatening to do Oswald if given the opportunity. Compare II,ii., “*if I had you vpon Sarum Plaine,/ I'd driue ye cackling home to Camelot*” (F, 1156-57).

Could it not be that Kent is being ironic by alluding to the magnificent tithe barn in Tisbury as a “pinfold”? Irony is the principal stylistic feature of *Lear*. “In Shakespeare’s England everyone 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 Tipe [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). Some sort of restoration of the tithe barn was likely carried out during Shakespeare’s lifetime as the west side is remarkable for its Tudor arched double planked doors.



Figure 107. Driving to Stonehenge located on Salisbury Plain from Westminster Cathedral.

The proximity of Tisbury to Salisbury Plain or “*Sarum plain*”, as Kent calls it, provides another clue. The County of Wiltshire 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, which he would prod without mercy all the way, and then pluck and cook for dinner.



Figure 108. Wiltshire, England, Britannica.

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,124. “*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-stocking**] 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 109.]



Figure 109. 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 109.] “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 110. 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 from the middle ages 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. 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). Don Quixote famously attacks the marionets in Master Peter’s puppet show in Chapt XXIV, Book Two of the eponymous novel. [See Figure 110.] 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 111. Ox turned butcher. From *The World Turned Upside Down*.

- 35-6. **come your ways**] Get moving

38. **Stand**] R.A. Foakes thinks that by “*Stand*” (F, 1114), Kent means, stop your retreat: “Oswald wears a sword, but refuses to draw it, and backs away rather than stand” (*The Arden Shakespeare*, p. 227). Compare *Romeo and Juliet*, “*to be valiant, is to stand*” (F, 13). However, it cannot be ruled out that the young Steward tripped on his own sword while backing away, and that Kent is commanding him to stand up and fight. The point Shakespeare is making is not that Oswald is a coward but he doesn’t know how to use a sword. (See IV,v, 226. S.D. “*Drawing his sword.*”) Unlike the Earl of Kent or Lear’s Knight, Oswald grew up in poverty, a fact that “Caius” rubs mercilessly in the boy’s face. Oswald could not afford to attend fencing school or wear beautifully tailored clothes. Kent is outraged that he presumes to be a gentleman.

Determinism was a significant topic of discussion during the Renaissance, particularly regarding the debate between free will and the idea of a predetermined fate. Pietro Pomponazzi’s *De fato, de libero arbitrio et de praedestinatione* (*Five Books on Fate, Free Will and Predestination*), “is regarded as one of the most important works on the problems of freedom and determinism in the Renaissance. Pomponazzi considers whether the human will can be free, and he considers the conflicting points of view of philosophical determinism and Christian theology.” Determinism is still an active topic of discussion today. Teachers might ask their students if they think Edmund’s fate was determined when he was born a bastard. Was Oswald’s fate determined by poverty, like the innocent child in Feste’s song “*When that I was and a little tiny boy*” at the conclusion of *Twelfth Night* (F, 2560)?

The young actor playing Oswald is skilled in physical comedy, as we saw in I,iv, when Kent tripped him. Falling over his own sword II,ii is going to get a laugh in keeping with the broad,

farcical style of the play. Rowe adds the stage direction “*Beating him*” at line 39 but there is no support for this in the text.

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, Cornewall, 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. See note III,vii, 69,73,76,78., “*Cornwall’s Knight*.”
43. S.D. **Oswald draws his sword**] Ed. Not in Q, F.
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 /r/ 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 112, “Vain wagtails get into a flap over car wing mirrors”, *The Daily Mail*.]



Figure 112. “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 113. "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. **Renege]** 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]** Oswald is holding back his convulsive laughter, if not sticking out his tongue, as in Figure 114. Presumably, only Kent and the audience can see his face.



Figure 114. Marginal image from the Goresdon Psalter. Source: British Library.

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 115. 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 pompous dimwit: “*Why he stalkes vp and downe like a Peacock, a stride and a stand: ruminates like an hostesse, that hath no Arithmatique but her braine to set downe her reckoning: bites his lip with a politique regard, as who should say, there were wit in his head and twoo'd out; and so there is: but it lyes as coldly in him, as fire in flint, which will not shew without knocking*” (F, 2108-14). See note III,vi,22,S.D., “*Exeunt two more of Cornwall’s knights.*” [See also note II,iv,92, “*Fiery.*”]



Figure 116. 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](#)”). [Corporal punishment](#) is a major theme in the play.

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. **Exit Cornwall’s Knight**] Ed. *Stocks brought out*. Pope. *Stocks brought out*. After “*I will*” (F. 1217). Not in Q.

139. **check**] rebuke

144. **answer**] be answerable for.

144. **Reenter Cornwall’s Knight, with Servants carrying stocks**] Ed. Not in Q,F.

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. **Trumpet**] 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. **rubbed**] 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.

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,45, “*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 Shakespeare’s design.

165. **enormous**] exceedingly wicked

165. **state**] kingdom.

169. **Fortune**] A frequent motif in the play. “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 118.] Shakespeare is using the metaphor to qualify the meaning of Edgar’s entrance from below. See note II,iii,S.D., “*from under the stage.*”



Figure 118. “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. 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.



Figure 118. Marginal illustrations of a pipe and tabor, and chifonie or symphonia (hurdy-gurdy) from The Luttrell Psalter, c. 1330-40 (GB_lbl Add. 42130, f176r).

S.D. *A hurdy-gurdy plays*] Ed. Not in Q, F. The sound of the hurdy-gurdy is first heard in connection with Fortune’s “wheele” (F, 1250). It is non-diegetic, meaning that the audience can hear it but Edgar can’t. This ancient folk instrument is being used to convey the theme of the lowest class of beggars, like three French Horns signify “the Wolf” in Sergey Prokofiev’s “Peter and the Wolf.” It has other connotations besides. The etymologists at the *OED* maintain that the word “hurdy-gurdy” was not used in England until 1749, but the evidence seems to suggest that the instrument was common in Shakespeare’s day, and closely associated with beggars. *Wikipedia* notes that “the term is thought to come from the Scottish and northern English term for uproar or disorder, hirdy-girdy or from hurly-burly,^[7] an old English term for noise or commotion. According to the *OED*, “hirdy-girdy” was first used as a noun and adverb in 1568 to mean, “Uproar, confusion, disorder.” The word “hurly-burly” is said to come into use c. 1440 meaning “Commotion, tumult, strife, uproar, turmoil, confusion.” See note II,iii,20, “Hurlygurd.”

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. 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, hypothetically 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 characters 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.)

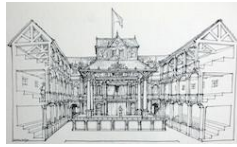


Figure 119. Conjectural drawing of the Fortune by C. Walter Hodges. The Folger Digital Image Collection.

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. **Hurlygurd**] Ed. *Turlygod* (F, 1271), *Turlygod* (Q1, 1271), *Turlygod* (Q2, 1271). I hypothesize that "*Turlygod*" is a misprinting of **Hurdygurd**, a neologism, for a hurdy-gurdist—a beggar who begs for alms on a hurdy-gurdy. As with the word "*Lipsbury*" (F, 1083), the meaning of "*Turlygod*" (F, 2071) has been rendered unintelligible by Shakespeare's lexicographers, as we see in H.H. Furness's note in *King Lear: A New Variorum Edition*, pp. 137-38. Stanley Wells adopts "*Truelygod*" in *The Oxford Shakespeare* (p. 163), saying "the word is otherwise unknown. Editors usually adopt Qb's alternate '*Turlygod*', but neither word has meaning, the choice is immaterial."



Figure 120. 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.

The idea that needs communicating here that Edgar is going to disguise himself as the lowliest beggar known to man, such as a Tom o' Bedlam or a Hurdy-Gurdy player painted by Georges de la Tour in *Le Vieilleur au chapeau* (English: *The Hurdy-Gurdy Player*, 1620). "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 symphonie 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](#).”)

Prasad Mahabal at [ElizabethanEnglandLife.com](#) maintains 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.” As [Adrian Woodward](#) discusses below [[Video 16, “Introducing the Hurdy Gurdy”](#)], “in the 1500s it would have been played alone and also alongside cheap and lowly instruments such as the donkey’s jawbone, the deer’s antlers and the bagpipe in community plays celebrating religious high days such as “mystery plays.” Later on, musical tastes changed and the hurdy-gurdy was relegated to the lowest social classes of peasant and beggars.”



Video 16. OAE musician Adrian Woodward introduces us to the original all-in-one portable dance band, the hurdy gurdy.

[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 certainly correct that a case for emending the text cannot be based on units of sound. It is likely that the typesetter of the [1608 Quarto](#) never even heard “Hurlygurd” spoken, but was merely arranging blocks of type based on what he read, or thought he was reading, from a hard-to-read, hand-written manuscript given to him by a copyist. As I note in my emendation of “*Lipsbury*” to “*Tisbury*”, [Douglas Bruster](#) from the University of Texas at Austin believes that misspellings and bad handwriting are Shakespeare’s trademarks. It’s impossible to know under what circumstances the play came to be published. We have only

the narrative to go by.

The most important consideration when making a judgment about the reading is the **throughline** or “spine” of the play. The key idea in *Lear* is social injustice, “not poverty as a virtue.” Why would the playwright introduce the subject of **Turlupins**, a sect of 14th century revolutionary fundamentalist nudists in France who are said to have worn few clothes as an expression of the vow of poverty? Practicing **naturism** is emphatically not what Edgar is doing when he disguises himself as Tom o’Bedlam, “*the basest, and most poorest shape/ That euer penury in contempt of man, / Brought neere to beast*” (F, 1258-60). There is no ideological connectedness between Turlupins and Abraham-men. [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.*”]



Figure 121. A 17th century Dutch drawing of a beggar couple, the man accompanying his companion's singing on the 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. **Enter Lear, Lear's Knight, and Fool**] Ed. *Enter Lear, Foole, and Gentleman.*(F, 1273). *Enter King.* (Q1, 1273); *Enter King, and a Knight* (Q2, 1273).



Figure 122. William Kemp, Kemps nine daies vvonder (London, 1600).

S.D. **playing a pipe and tabor**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Fanfare trumpets are ordinarily played in Shakespeare when royal figures enter, such as the tucket announcing the arrival of the Duke of Cornwall in II,i (F, 1014), II,iv (F, 1466), and Goneril in II,iv (F, 1466). In my version, Lear's arrival at Gloucester's castle is made known by the Fool on his **pipe and tabor**. The editors of *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, write that the pipe and tabor is a “poor man's orchestra” (**tabor**, p. 225), and cite several examples. The comic stage business alludes to Will Kempe's “Nine Days of Wonder” in 1600, when he **morris**

danced s from London to Norwich (110 miles), accompanied by a pipe and tabor. [See video “The Green Man’s Jig” with Andy Richards on pipe and tabor.] Lear, like Kempe, has been reduced to an impoverished clown. The Fool is veritably a one-man band. Medieval minstrels, jesters and troubadours often used an assortment of musical instruments including small tabor pipes, Irish tin whistles and recorders. It is possible that the Fool has a stringed instrument strapped on his back. (See Ian Pittaway, “The evidence for straps used with medieval, renaissance and baroque musical instruments”, 2023).

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.
18. **Lear. No, no; they would not**] Q1, 1294. Not in F
19. **Yes, yes; they have**] *New Camb.* (*conj. Maxwell*). Yes they haue. (Q1, 1294). Not in F.
21. **By Juno, I swear, ay!**] (F, 1296). Not in Q
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. 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*. Lear’s 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 127.]

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 36.] 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](#).”) Parenthetically, 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 'hysteria' 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.*)

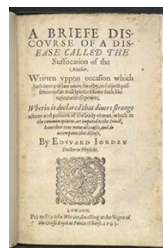


Figure 124. A Briefe Discourse of a Disease called the Suffocation of the Mother by Edward Jorden, 1603.

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.
59. **Made you no more offence but what you speak of?]** The young lord’s question serves to remind the audience of “Caius’s” gross insult to the Duke of Cornwall. Gloucester himself thinks “*His fault is much*” (Q, 1221). In the next scene, Kent is compelled to prove to the Knight that he is a man of his word. (See note III,i,18., “*the warrant of my note.*”)
60. **None.]** The audience knows Kent is lying, 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. **insolence]** Peter W.M. Blayney *conj.* Iustice (Q, 1363). Fetches (F, 1363). Stanley Wells

notes in *The Oxford Shakespeare*, “Q’s ‘Iustice’ is obviously wrong and could not represent F’s ‘Fetches’. HallioQ also accepts BlayneyQ’s emendation” (p. 166). Compare “*The insolence of Office*” (*Hamlet*, F, 1727); “*queazie with his insolence already*” (*Antony and Cleopatra*, F, 1772); “*he already is too insolent*” (*Troilus and Cressida*, F, 836); “*you whoreson insolent Noysemaker, we are lesse afraid to be drownde, then thou art*” (*Tempest*, F. 52-3)

86. **images**] signs, symbols

86. **flying off**] revolt, desertion.

88. **quality**] nature, disposition.

89. **unremovable**] immovable

92. **‘Fiery’**] *Fiery?* (F, 1371); *what fierie 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*”—a “*purblind Argus, all eyes and no sight.*” (F, 187-88); “*slow as the Elephant*” (F, 180) and “*beefe-witted*” (F, 782). Cornwall’s humoral nature is a critical factor when analyzing which character Shakespeare intended to put out the second eye of Gloucester, — Cornwall or Regan. Cornwall has a phlegmatic humor, and slow to act. Regan is choleric; quick thinking, “angry, reactive and impulsive.”^[12]



Figure 126. Four heads of men who each exhibit one of the four temperaments in an 18th century woodcut: phlegmatic, choleric, sanguine and melancholic.

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.

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 hypothetically 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." Lear shows signs of shortness of breath, and has difficulty speaking: "*I can scarce speake to thee*" (F, 1414). 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 Cornewall, 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 some 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 because it gives more prominence to the character on stage. For the same reason, the second is "Cornwall's Knight", the chivalrous young man Regan murders during Gloucester's trial. It helps create a stronger impression of the character before he is unchivalrously stabbed in the back by the duchess. The stocks are presumably carried off from the platform by Gloucester's servants 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. Compare note I,iv,262, S.D., "*Kneels.*")
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. The trumpets signal the arrival of Goneril.
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.*” Characteristically, it is always the Puritan hypocrite Goneril who first extends her hand.
192. *Reg*] Ed. Gon Q,1485; F, 1485. This is one of many speeches said by Regan that have been misassigned in the copy sources based on analysis of the characters. Her speeches are marked by sarcasm and cruelty. Referring to her father as a “dotard” (F, 1487) is a vicious taunt; not something her self-righteous Puritanical sister would say publicly. (See note I,i,278-9, “*Let your study be etc.*”)
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.
215. S.D. *To Goneril*] Ed. 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*] Hanmer. Not in Q, F.
259. *follow*] be your attendants.

262. **Are in the poorest thing superfluous**] See note III,iv,35, “superfluous”.

264. S.D. **To Regan**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Regan is not a Puritan, as Goneril affects to be, and this is reflected in her dress. Hypothetically, she is costumed voguishly in a low-cut dress like [Anne of Denmark’s](#) or [Frances Howard’s](#) or [Lady Elizabeth Pope’s](#) or [Lady Elizabeth Grey’s](#). Queen Elizabeth I was also known to wear low-cut dresses, even during formal meetings with officials like her French Ambassador [Michel De Castlenau](#), who provides scholars with exceptionally reliable written sources on Elizabeth I. For example, when he first met Elizabeth I during a bureaucratic meeting, he describes the front of her dress as follows:

"She kept the front of her dress open, and one could see the whole of her bosom, and passing low, and often she would open the front of this robe with her hands as if she was too hot."



Video 17. “The scandalously low-cut dresses of the Elizabethan and Jacobean courts!” (Facebook)

“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.) The Fool alludes to Regan’s being flat when he remarks “*she's as like this, as a Crabbe's like an Apple*” (F, 889-90). (See note I,v,12., “*crab's like an apple.*”) This joke is only funny if the audience has taken notice of her small breasts in I,i from the low or scooped neckline of her costume. Regan is as flat as a boy (which he was). In contrast, Goneril’s neckline is high, and the actor would likely have had his chest padded to look as if the character had double D titties.



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.

Regan’s low-cut costume brought to my mind the masque costumes of [Inigo Jones](#). [See [Figure 130.](#)] 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." One of the principal objections to this festive masque was its celebration of Christmas.



Figure 130. Examples of Masque Costume in the late 16th & Early 17th Centuries by Inigo Jones

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](#)”)

In the following year, a few months before *King Lear* was staged for James I and Anne of Denmark, “[vpon S. Stephans night in Christmas Hollidayes](#),” the Puritan-controlled English Parliament passed a censorship law, the [Act to Restrain Abuses of Players](#). 38 years later, on June 8, 1647, the [Long Parliament](#) passed “[An Ordinance for Abolishing of Festivals](#)” including Christmas and Easter celebrations. As noted in IV,v,80,S.D., “[camouflaged with weeds](#)”, Lear takes the stage in a costume that strongly evokes the [Green Man](#) in English folklore, a figure associated with the celebration of [May Day](#). (The allusions to springtime in flora indicates that the play takes place around the [Vernal Equinox](#) into May.) Like’s Lear’s Tudor period costume with its lurid codpiece, it would be inferred that his costume in IV,v, which amounts to something a mummer might wear in a May Day parade, constitutes political satire. Though Puritanism is non-specific in *Lear*, it is “[meta-communicated](#)” by the costumes of Lear, Goneril and Regan.



Figure 131. 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 poshly dressed. Lear is using costume as a metaphor to distinguishes between vanity and “true need.” The question of “true need” is arguably the most important one in the play. [Spoiler: it is kindness; hence the epithet “Kind” Lear in an [elegy for Richard Burbage](#). See

note III,iv,101. S.D. "*Lear tears off pieces of his costume.*"]



Figure 132. Chloris: Alternative Sketch for Henrietta Maria, by Inigo Jones, c.1631

267. **true need**] As far as the reader knows, Lear grew up in a sumptuous palace surrounded by every comfort, and has never seen or experienced the ravages of poverty, and has no idea of what “true need” is. While there's no evidence that Shakespeare had any knowledge of the legend of Prince Siddhartha embarking on a trip out of the palace, against the backdrop of the pleasure forest, “a version of the biography of the Buddha known as the story of [Barlaam and Josephat](#) was disseminated widely in medieval Europe” ([Britannica](#)). “[It] was popular in the Middle Ages, appearing in such works as the *Golden Legend*, and a scene there involving three caskets eventually appeared, via [Caxton](#)'s English translation of a Latin version, in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (Wiki).



Figure 133. Prince Josaphat greets the leper and the crippled. Illustration from a 14th-century copy of Vincent de Beauvais' *Speculum Historiale*.

267. S.D. *A noise of distant thunder heard*] Ed. At this pivotal moment of the story, Lear, who has wanted for nothing in his life, finds himself not knowing what true need is. 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.*”] Here, sound effect is ironic. Is it a portent of the terrors he 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).

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: *Actus Tertius. Scena Prima*.]

- 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.
- 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). Lear's Knight is logically the same character who engages with Lear, Kent and the Fool in Acts I and II. It also logically follows that he is the "*Gentleman*" (Q, 1615) (F, 1615) in III,i because Kent recognizes who he is. He trusts him to deliver urgent letters to Cordelia, and gives him his precious signet ring. See *Dramatis Personæ*.
- 4-15. **Contending with the fretfull Elements...take all**] Until now, the Knight's words are markedly free of poetry. They are characterized by brevity, and a punctilious respect for protocol. His narrative description of Lear "contending with the fretful elements" is closer in style to the Gentlemen's florid and sentimental account of Cordelia in scene 17 and how it came to be written needs to be questioned. Lear's Knight and the flowery "*Gentleman*" are decidedly not one character. See Appendix C.
4. **elements**] (F, 1619); element (Q, 1619)
6. **main**] land
- 7-15. **tears...all**] Q, 1622.1-1622.8. Not in F.



Figure 134. A painting by Nicholas Hilliard of Henry Percy, 9th 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*.

10. **little world of man**] The Knight's allusion to the "*little world of man*" (Q, 1622.3) suggests a metaphysical relationship between Lear and the cosmos that is dramatized in the next scene. "The notion of the **microcosm** dates, in Western philosophy, from Socratic times (**Democritus** specifically referred to it)—*i.e.*, from the 5th century BC. Propagated especially by the Neoplatonists, the idea passed to the **Gnostics**, to the **Christian** scholastics, to the Jewish Kabbalists, and to such Renaissance philosophers as **Paracelsus**" (*Britannica*). In Nicholas Hilliard's cryptic miniature of Henry Percy the Ninth Earl of Northumberland (1564-1632), the weight of the globe is equal to a feather in Giordano Bruno's multiverse. See note IV,v, 33-4. "*Why I do trifle thus with his despair/ Is done to cure it.*"
12. **cub-drawn**] A mother bear with her cubs. "The fierce and protective maternal instinct in different animal species is at least equal to, and in some cases maybe even stronger than humans'."^[5] Shakespeare depicts Goneril and Regan as more unnatural than ferocious animals. "*If Wolves had at thy Gate howl'd that sterne time,/ Thou should'st haue said, good Porter turne the Key:/ All Cruels else subscribe*" (F, 2135-37).
15. **Who**] *But who* (F, 1623). *But who* (Q, 1623)
18. **the warrant of my note**] Compare *Measure for Measure*, V,i, "*I warrant your honor*" (F, 2447). Kent has to guarantee Lear's Knight that the information he has received is reliable. The latter is a man of high rank, presumably a young lord, whose only direct interaction with "Caius" was when the latter blatantly lied to him about the reason he was put in the stocks. (See note II,iv,59, "*Made you no more offense...*") Kent has to persuade him rhetorically that he is a man of "breeding", hence the complex syntax of his speech. See Appendix D: Actus Tertius. Scena Prima.
19. **Commend**] entrust
19. **a dear**] a precious
24. **speculations**] *OED*. †3†b. "An observer or watcher; a spy. *Obsolete. rare.*"
25. **Intelligent**] *OED*. 2.†4. "A bringer of news or information; an intelligencer; a spy. *Obsolete.*"
26. **snuffs**] *OED* I.a. "An (or the) act of snuffing, esp. as an expression of contempt or disdain."
26. **packings**] *OED*. I. 2. "To plot (something); to contrive or plan in an underhand way. Also (occasionally) *intransitive. Obsolete.*"
29. **furnishings**] *OED*. 3. †a. "Unimportant appendages; mere externals."
30. **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.
23. **power**] an armed force.
31. **scatter'd**] divided

- 32. **Wise in]** knowledgeable about
- 32. **feet]** That is, foothold
- 33. **at point]** in readiness
- 34. **open banner]** That is, their banner openly
- 35. **credit]** credibility



Figure 135. Dover guards the Straits of Dover, the narrowest part of the English Channel.

- 36. **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.)
- 37. **making just report]** That is, for making a true report
- 38. **bemadding]** maddening
- 39. **plain]** complain about
- 34. **office]**
- 42. **No, do not]** Kent is not interested in having a conversation with Lear’s Knight. His mind is pre-occupied with serving Lear. Compare V,i, “*I am come / To bid my King and Master aye good night. / Is he not here?*” (F, 3189-91).
- 45. **outwall]** outward appearance
- 45. **purse]** Men wore purses and pouches on their belts from the 14th to 17th century. [See Figure 136.] Presumably, this is where Kent keeps the letter from Cordelia he alludes to in II,ii,159 (F, 1242), and other valuable items.



Figure 136. Rat catcher wearing a purse. The famous Ratketcher, with his trauels / into France, and of his returne to London, to the tune of Joviall Tinker. Imprinted at London for Iohn Trundle, and are to be sold at/ the signe of the No-body in Barbican.

- 47. **show her this ring]** Kent cannot be wearing the ring on his finger because he wants to keep his identity a secret. Hypothetically, the audience first saw Lear’s Knight standing next to Kent in Act I scene i, indicating that the characters are personally acquainted with each other despite the disparity in their ages. It would be assumed that they joined Lear on his hunts, at meals, and other royal entertainments. Presumably, he immediately recognizes Kent upon seeing his signet ring, and does not need telling from Cordelia who “Caius” really is. Perhaps they embrace. He wants to talk further but Kent tells them there’s no time. The two men do not speak together again until IV,vi. [See Appendix C.]



Figure 137. A rare Tudor gold signet ring, believed to have belonged to a member of the Boleyn family. (Image: © Historic Royal Palaces/3004593)

49. S.D. *Storm and Tempest*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Kent refers directly to the storm effect, “*Fie on this storm!*” (F, 1546).

55. *Holla*] “A shout to excite attention” (*OED*, 2). See note III,ii,41, *Holla*.

55. 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.

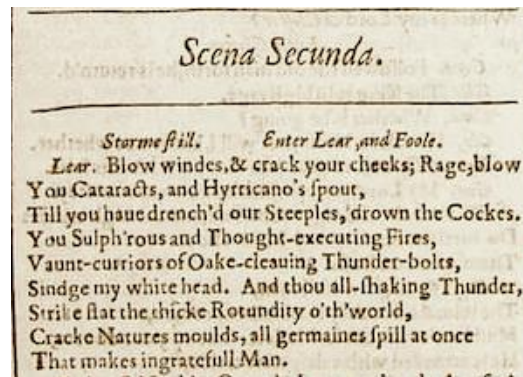


Figure 138. Facsimile of First Folio (New South Wales), p.296. InternetShakespeareEditions

S.D. *Lear and Fool enter*] Ed. *Enter Lear and Foole*. (Q, 1655) *Enter Lear, and Foole*. (F, 1655).

As a side note, the last we saw of the Fool in II,iv, he was carrying a pipe and tabor, and possibly had a small stringed instrument strapped to his back. At the conclusion of III,vi, he hypothetically plays the same melody on his pipe/recorder that he did in I,v on his lute. As discussed above, music is as integral a part of Shakespeare's storytelling as it is in cinema; it is being used to connect themes, and add emotional depth to characters. The storm in *Lear* 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 Fool fully acknowledges his role as an actor, and the plot as a fiction. (See III,ii,81, “*Merlin's Prophecy.*”)

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 138.] 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 what is being communicated to the audience. “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.)

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 less manly, less existentially alone, if the Fool is fawning over him throughout the opening dialogue as in [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.*")

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 mindset here to his entrance in IV,v, where he enters camouflaged with weeds in preparation for the battle he is leading against his "*sonnes in law*" (Q2, 2629).
1. **crack your cheeks**] Aeolus, the Greek god of winds is depicted as puffing out his cheeks as he blows. [See [Figure 139](#).] This line is logically the cue for the stage hands to discharge the cannon situated in the attic above the Heavens.



[Figure 139](#). Aeolus, keeper of the violent storm winds in Greek mythology.

1. S.D. **Burst of horrid thunder.**] Ed, *Storme still*. (F, 1655). Not in Q. There are no stage directions in regard to the storm effects in either [Quarto 1](#), 1608 or [Quarto 2](#), 1619. The direction "*Storme still*" (F, 1655), published in the Folio, gives readers no indication of how the effects are articulated and cued. [See [Figure 138](#)] Lear's words, "*Blow, winds and crack your cheeks*" etc., reads on paper like a self-contained "speech", but it is? Might not his words

take the form of dialogue with the “*Twelve-penny Hirelings [making] artificiall Lightning in their Heavens?*”^[7] [Compare note IV,v,83-94, Lear’s opening dialogue.] As always, the most important question for readers concerns the form of the play, and the style Shakespeare is using to tell the story—its *narrative mode*.



Video 19. Roger Allam as King Lear performing “Blow, winds and crack your cheeks” as an interior monologue.

Over the past 30 years, it has been widely established that the play takes the form of “*meta-theatre*”. The many devices Shakespeare uses to keep spectators from suspending their disbelief in the narrative of *King Lear* are textbook examples of meta-theatricality. Lear, the most histrionic character in drama, is best described by Macbeth: “*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 as important as it is to comedy. When it occurs *after* this line, as I have indicated, it appears completely contrived. Obviously, in real life, bolts of thunder cannot be summoned by man’s willing them. “In meta-theatrical works, the play itself acknowledges its own theatricality, openly discussing and exploring the artificiality of the dramatic medium”^[8], like Edgar’s entrance in I,ii, where Edmund criticizes Shakespeare and *Aristophanes* for being formulaic playwrights. (See note I,ii, 125, “*pat he comes.*”) In John Melton’s satire *The Astrologaster* (1620), there is a passage referring to the storm effects in *Christopher Marlowe’s Doctor Faustus*: “*Drummers make Thunder in the Tiringhouse, and the twelve-penny Hirelings make artificial Lightning in their Heavens.*”^[7] 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.)

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 24, 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

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.

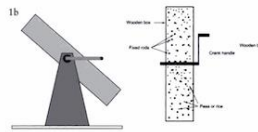


Figure 140. “Rain-Box.” John A. Leonard, “History of Theatre Sound”, p.7.

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.

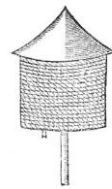


Figure 141. "How to make a swevel" from THE SECOND BOOKE. Teaching most plainly, and withall most exactly, the composing of all manner of Fire-works For Triump and Recreation (The Project Gutenberg Ebook, The Mysteryes of Nature and Art by John Bate)

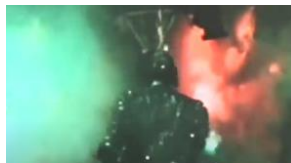
6. S.D. *A flash of lightning*] Ed. Not in Q, F. According to Gwilym Jones ("Storm Effects in Shakespeare", *Shakespeare’s Theatres and the Effects of Performance*, edited by Farah Karim Cooper, Tiffany Stern. p. 35) “The main way of creating lightning effects on the stage was through using what was 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 stouple 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.⁴⁶ 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 phallogentric imagery 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. Audiences will laugh at the actor's timing and kinesics.
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.
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 living with lice. "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.) See Gargantua and His Son Pantagruel, Chapter

3.VIII.—"Why the codpiece is held to be the chief piece of armour amongst warriors."



Figure 142. 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).

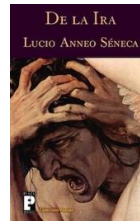


Figure 143. "Anger, if not restrained, is frequently more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it." – Seneca.

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 144. 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 "*twelve-penny Hireling*"^[7] to rebuke the Fool's jest, not to simulate reality. The "Heavens" do not tolerate jokes.

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**] The Fool is referring to the grace and person of the King and his signature codpiece. Compare “*the Grace, and Person of my Master*” (F, 1210). A gargantuan codpiece is as emblematic of Lear as the coxcomb is of the Fool. “Your Grace” was the title used to address kings and queens, particularly in England before Henry VIII.”
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,55 (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 haue 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.
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. 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, Shakespeare uses Kent as a foil to Lear’s “madness”. See note III,iv,62, “*He hath no daughters, sir.*”
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). See note IV,vi, note IV,vi, 40., “*straw.*”

75-8. **He that has but . . . every day]** Men must make the best of 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 145. The Dance of Death (1493) by Michael Wolgemut, from the Nuremberg Chronicle of Hartmann Schedel.

79. S.D. **Exeunt Lear and Kent]** 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 Fool. The "Heavens" hate jokes.

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]** F, 1750. Not in Q.

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. The use of the Lords Rooms here, and in III,v and IV,v, conveys the idea of secrecy and duplicity. 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 146. 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*.”) It is possible that the actors enter from a side door in the yard, as in C.W. Hodges’ sketch of *The Fortune Playhouse* in *The Globe Restored* (p. 175). [See Figure 119]. In Elizabethan public theatres like the Fortune and the Globe, which 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 entrances into the yard. Hodges hypothesizes that there were entrances into the yard at the Fortune, 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*.) He writes, “it 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).

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 maxumus rather than ushered on to 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 of *Antony and Cleopatra* jotted down the direction, “*Cleopatra, and her Maides aloft*” (F, 2996) he could have meant that they are on the platform: “Antony is borne through the yard ‘below’ and hoisted ‘above’ to Cleopatra.” (*Ibid*, p. 50). This is the most dramatic scene in the play, and it needs to take place downstage. The “*Monument*” (F,3627), alluded to in the text could be a metaphor for the platform stage, as it is when Lear says, “*This’ a good block.*” (F, 2625). (See note IV,v, 181., “*block.*”)



Figure 147. Stairs used in a masque. Detail from *The Portrait of Sir Henry Unton* by Unknown artist, c. 1596, National Portrait Gallery.

It is also possible that Lear, Kent and the Fool enter from the large center opening in the tiring-house, and go down stairs placed at the front of the platform to ground level. Stairs leading from the yard to the platform need not be considered a permanent fixture in *English public theatres*, but pieces of movable furniture. In the masque of *Mercury and Diana*, illustrated in the *Portrait of Sir Henry Unton*, stairs are positioned at the front of the platform, with the musicians and masquers performing “below”. [Figure 147.] Henslowe’s inventory lists ‘one pair of stairs for Phaeton.’” In *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, the authors’ warn that “each use of the term [‘**stairs**’] may denote something different” (p. 213). What is important for readers to think about in regard to the original staging, is how the different levels of the *Globe Theatre*, which were stratified into social classes, are being used to convey an idea rather than a scenic environment.

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.
25. S.D. ***Looking on the Fool***] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare II,iv,108,S.D., “*Looking on Kent.*”
26. S.D. ***To the Fool***] Johnson. Not in Q, F.
27. S.D. ***Exit Fool***] After *poverty* (F, 1807). Not in Q.
26. **houseless poverty**] In Act III, Lear is consumed by the idea of injustice owing largely to the guilt he feels for having banished Cordelia. (See note IV,vi, 47, “*wheel of fire.*”). Here, he repents of his pride, and exhorts rich people to rid themselves of their wealth, and give to the needy: “*Take physic, Pomp;/ Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,/ That thou mayst shake the superflux to them/ And show the heavens more just.*” Compare *Matthew 19:21*: “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.” The idea is reiterated in IV,i by Gloucester

after he too loses everything, including his eyes: “*Let the superfluous, and Lust-dieted man,/ That slaues your ordinance, that will not see/ Because he do’s not feelee, feelee your power quickly:/ So distribution should vndoo excesse and each man have enough* (F, 2252-56).

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).



Figure 148. 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).

28. **naked**] Compare note III,iv,99, “*unaccommodated.*”
31. **looped**] filled with loopholes. [See Figure 174.]
33. **Take physic**] cure yourself;
33. **Pomp**] Compare Psalm 49:20: “Man in his pomp yet without understanding is like the beasts that perish.”



Figure 149. "Dives and Lazarus" by (c. 1700), Paolo Pagani. Pushkin Museum of Art.

35. **superflux**] A word Shakespeare appears to have coined himself from the Latin *superfluxus*: “An unnecessary or excess amount of something; a surplus” (*OED* 1.) The word “superfluous” is first spoken by Lear at the conclusion of Act II in relation to the “gorgeous” (F, 1568) costume Regan is wearing : “*our basest Beggars / are in the poorest thing superfluous.*” (F, 1564-65).
36. **show the Heavens more just**] Lear repents of his pride. In the style of metatheatre, he directly addresses the groundlings he is standing among, and asks how they manage to protect themselves from severe weather. Compare “*Thou wert better in a Graue, then to answeere with thy vncover'd body, this extremitie of the Skies*” (F, 1881-82). He exhorts the gentry and privileged classes in the comfortable seating areas of the playhouse to get rid of what they don’t truly need in the name of mercy and justice. The word “just” (F, 1817) is the cue for Edgar to blow his ox horn. The timing is completely contrived for its narrative effect, like Edgar’s entrance in I,ii, “*Pat: he comes like the Catastrophe of the old Comedie*” (F, 463).
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). This is, hypothetically, the first of four times Edgar winds it. See also III,iv,91; III,vi,72; and IV,i,24. The musical principle is similar to the leitmotif known as “Siegfried's Horn Call.” See note III,iv,90.S.D., “*Winds his horn.*”



Figure 150. Siegfried, as portrayed by Arthur Rackham, revels in his strength and masculinity.

36. S.D. *from under the stage*] Ed. Not in Q, F.

37. **Fathom and half**] Edgar is calling *the depth* of the rainwater, using his horn as a boatswain does 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 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**] Compare note IV,vi, 40., “*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 151. 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 151.] Not in Q, F. Bedlam beggars are first referred to in the play 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). They are also highlighted in the title: "M. William Shak-speare: *H I S 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*" (Quarto 1, 1608). Presumably, madness, and the cause of madness, was a popular subject, and a draw for Londoners to see the play.



Figure 152. 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.

"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").

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 151.
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.)

43. 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*.
44. **Away! The foul fiend follows me!**] A reference to the storm. Note that the storm is being anthropomorphized. It’s character changes from person to person. For Edgar, it takes the form of demons.



Figure 153. 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.
46. **Humh**] F, 1828. Not in Q. A grumbling sound.
46. **Go to thy cold bed and warm thee**] Q1, 1828-29. “cold” omitted in Folio. Compare *Taming of the Shrew*, I.i, “go by S. Ieronimie, goe to thy cold bed, and warme thee” (F, 11-12). In Thomas Kyd’s play *The Spanish Tragedy*, “St. Jerome” refers to Hieronimo (played by Richard Burbage), the protagonist, who is often depicted as a figure of grief and revenge, mirroring the biblical figure of St. Jerome, known for his teachings on Christian ethics. Edgar is referring to Lear’s preceding speech, .
- 51-2. **knives under his pillow**] Referring to Harsnett’s *Declaration*. See Furness, *Variorum Edition of King Lear*, pp. 186-67.
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.

Lines 1839-43 in the Folio and quartos deleted by editor. “O do,de,do,de,do de, blisse thee from Whirle-Windes, Starre-blasting, and taking, do poore Tom some charitie, whom the foule

Fiend vexes. There could I haue him now, and there, and there againe, and there." (F. 1839-43). *"blesse thee from whirle-winds, starre-blusting, and taking, doe poore Tom some charitie, whom the foule fiend vexes, there could I haue him now, and there, and and there againe* (Q1, 1840-43). See Appendix F: "Edgar's Ox Horn."

57. **pass**] predicament

59. **reserv'd**] kept, retained

59. **else**] otherwise



Figure 154. 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 154.]

61. **fated**] fatefully, ominously

62. **He hath no daughters, Sir**] In Act III, Kent plays the part of "the straight man" in a comedy. He is used to dichotomize what is real from what is not. Like Shakespeare's editors, he is Lear's ever-faithful literalist for whom metaphor is inaccessible. The audience laughs at his inability to understand what is being said.

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.

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.



Figure 155. A naked woman on a flying penis, marginalium image from *Decretum Gratiani* by Bartolomeo da Brescia.

76. **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 156.]



Figure 156. In *The Madhouse* — Plate 8, *A Rake's Progress*, William Hogarth.

Sex was on everybody's mind at the Globe Theatre 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 157. 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 158. 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 159. 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,109 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 160. 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 160.]

76. **curl'd my hair**] See note II,ii,30, “*barber-monger*”.

77. **wore gloves in my cap**] wore favors from his mistress. See IV,iii,21 note; IV,v,33. [See Figure 229.]



Figure 161. 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.

81. **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 161.]

82. **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).

82. **light of ear**] Ready to listen to gossip

86. **plackets**] openings in petticoats or in skirts.

87. S.D. **Sound of scolding wind**] Ed. Not in Q, F. From a wind machine in “The Heavens”.

88. **Still “through the hawthorn blows the cold wind”**] Presumably a fragment of the same ditty he sang at line 46 (F, 1827-28).

89. **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.

90. **Dolphin**] a name for the horn, which is bottle-nosed like a dolphin.

90. **my boy:**] *my boy*, (Q1, 1897). *my boy*, (Q2, 1879). *Boy* (F, 1880).

90. S.D. **Winds his horn**] Ed. Not in Q, F. The repetition of the sound effect links Lear's pivotal speech, “*Is man no more than this?*” (F, 1881-89) with his earlier exhortation to “*shew the Heauens more iust*” (F, 1817). Practically speaking, it summons Shakespeare's easily distractible audience at The Globe Theatre to pay attention to what is about to happen. [See Appendix

F: Edgar's Ox Horn.]

91. **Sessa**] *Sesey* (F, 1880). *caese* (Q1, 1879) *cease* (Q2, 1879). Compare III,vi,72, *sesa*” (F, 2031). An interjection said upon blowing a horn. Compare III,vi,72, *sesa*” (F, 2031). Sly uses the term in *The Taming of the Shrew* 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)

In *King Lear*, “*Sessa*” is followed by the words, “*poore Tom thy horne is dry*” (F, 2032). It is preceded by “*Do, de, de, de*” (F, 2031), “*loudla doodla* (Q1, 2031) and “*loudla doodla*” (Q2, 2030), which, by simple logic, are music cues for the actor to wind his horn, not non-lexical vocables, or nonsense syllables, such as those in “*De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da*” by The Police. The musical effect, as demonstrated by Corwen Broch in Video 22, is very dramatic. Shakespeare is using the horn call as a *leitmotif*, as in opera and movie music. (See note III,iv, 36. S.D. “*Edgar winds his horn*”.) At the conclusion of III,vi, Edgar alludes to “*Childe Rowland*” (F,1966), who is best remembered for blowing his famous Olifant at the Battle of Roncevaux Pass. Battle of Roncevaux Pass. (See note III,iv,169., “*Child Rowland*”.) Also, in English folklore, Jack the Giant Killer awakes the giant Cormoran by blowing his horn. (See note III,iv,170, “*His*”.) The horn and its sounding are important narrative elements in the play as discussed in Appendix F: Edgar's Ox Horn.

91. **Let him trot him**] i.e. the foul fiend in the form of the “Storm.”
91. 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 162. A vagrant is tied and whipped through the streets on his way to the gallows, c.1567.

- 92-3. **Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies**] Toxic masculinity and uncontrolled male anger, are arguably the most compelling themes in *King Lear*. It is within the context of “being a man” that readers must interpret the king's action in this scene. Lear is constitutionally incapable of showing kindness directly. See note IV,v,174, “*If thou wilt weep my Fortunes, take my eyes*” (F, 2618). He is appalled by the suffering of poor Tom, who he says here is better dead than being without clothes in the storm. However, rather than follow through on his words, as one would expect, and show kindness by giving him his riding cloak to wear, Lear responds as he does when he sees Gloucester's eyes poked out: he intellectualizes. (See note IV,v,93-94., “*Bring up the brown bills*”). “In psychology, *intellectualization* is a defense mechanism by which reasoning is used to block confrontation with an unconscious conflict and its associated emotional stress—where thinking is used to avoid feeling.”

“Men are supposed to be bold, strong, fearless, and brave, which doesn't translate very

well into showing your feelings of 'weakness' when you have them. [See note I,i,40., “*death.*”] Men are seldom encouraged to express their emotions outwardly. Men grow up with low exposure to a range of emotions than girls. Mostly, anger is emphasized (perhaps even nurtured), and vulnerable emotions are suppressed.” (Mansi More)



Figure 163. A public whipping with rods in Fulham, 1558, from Foxe's Book of Martyrs. “A Grim And Gruesome History Of Public Shaming In London: Part 2” by Dr. Matthew Green.

Kindness and empathy are stereotyped as traits belonging to women, not Kings of England who were expected to lead their troops into battle. Lear switches the subject from the personal to the philosophical, noting that his own “*sophisticated*” clothes have no intrinsic belonging. Believing himself the guiltiest man alive for having banished Cordelia (see note IV,vi, 47, “*wheel of fire*”), he thinks it only “*just*” (F, 1817) that he and Tom feel the scourge of Heaven in equal measure. He casts aside his cloak, and begins tearing off his shirt, to expose his back to the storm’s whipping. (He does not give his cloak directly to Edgar; the latter picks it up when he sees it lying unwanted on the ground.) The gesture is the most extreme example of the character’s many histrionic outbursts. Lear’s inspiring influence seems to be [Diogenes of Sinope](#), the most theatrical philosopher of the ancient world, who is said to have lived like a beggar and walked around naked in public. (See “[5 Sharp Quotes From Diogenes, the Funniest Ancient Greek Philosopher.](#)”) The effect is ironic.



Figure 164. “Diogenes”, Engraved by Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, After Parmigianino, ca. 1527. The Met.

The spine of the play is just deserts. The idea here is that Poor Tom is being lashed by the storm, a common punishment for beggars and vagabonds as illustrated in [Figure 163](#). “In the United Kingdom, judicial corporal punishment generally was abolished in 1948; however, it persisted in prisons as a punishment for prisoners committing serious assaults on prison staff (ordered by visiting justices) until it was abolished by section 65 of the [Criminal Justice Act 1967](#). The last ever prison flogging happened in 1962. In the United States, judicial flogging was last used in 1952 in Delaware when a wife-beater got 20 lashes. In Delaware, the criminal code permitted floggings until 1972.” ([Wiki](#)). According to award-winning journalist [Erin Blakemore](#), “The widely circulated image of [Whipped Peter](#) “helped fuel the fires of [abolition during the Civil War.](#)” [See [Figure 165](#).]



Figure 165. "Whipped Peter," An escaped enslaved man named Peter showing his scarred back at a medical examination in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1863.

We know from the stocking of Kent in II,ii that Shakespeare was familiar with English Poor Laws. (See note II,ii,122, "*Stocks*.") Henry VIII's *Vagabonds Act 1530*, authorized "the whipping of thieves, blasphemers, poachers, men and women guilty of minor offenses, and even the insane. Victims were tied to the end of a cart until the 1590s, when the whipping post was introduced." (*Flogging, Britannica*). 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).



Figure 166. *Flagellation of Christ* by Peter Paul Rubens, 1617.

93-4. **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 167. *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, after losing his children and his property, rends his mantle, and says, "*Naked* came I out of my mother's womb, and *naked* shall I return thither" (Job 1:20). [See Figure 168.]



Figure 168. 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.

99. **lendings**] “Something lent” (*OED* 2).

99. **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.]

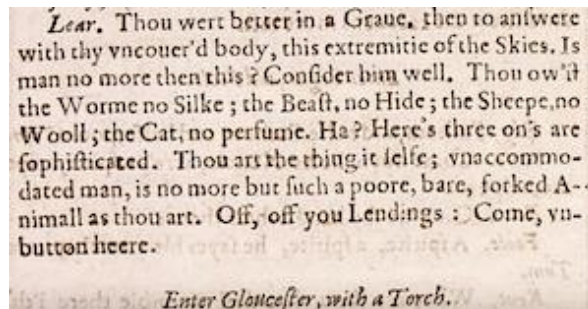


Figure 169. Facsimile Viewer: First Folio (New South Wales).

99. 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.”] Unsurprisingly, there is not a costume direction in the quartos and Folio telling us what Lear is wearing in this scene. [See Figure 169.] It can be inferred that he is outfitted for riding because he arrives at Gloucester’s castle in Act II on horseback. Based on what is said in the dialogue, and our knowledge of Tudor fashions, it stands to reason that his original costume included a “codpiece” (F, 1692), leather “boots” (F, 2615), a doublet closed by “buttons” in the front (F, 1889), detachable doublet sleeves as in Figure 161, collar and cuffs, very wide breeches covering his hips and upper thighs, and completed with an exquisitely wrought, silken riding-cloak (F, 2037). [See Figure 174.] 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 170, “Procession portrait of Elizabeth I of England.”]

“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 170. Procession portrait of Elizabeth I of England, c. 1601.

The idea that the action of this unit is limited to Lear's "*Tearing off his Coaths*" derives from Nicholas Rowe having seen Tate's version performed by Thomas Betterton in the 17th century. Rowe's emendation was subsequently interpolated by Lewis Theobald in his seminal collection of Shakespeare's plays (p. 166), and added by most editors as if it was an established fact of the plot. Most recently, the direction was given in the *Arden Performance Edition of King Lear*, "*Tearing at his clothes*" (p. 234). Stanley Wells writes of the action in *The Oxford Edition* (2000) that "Lear tries to strip down to nothing." (p. 191), and states with authority that the word "*Persian*" (Q1, 2039) is "ironical since Edgar wears only a blanket" (p. 202). In not one modern edition is it proposed that "poor Tom" puts on the king's discarded cloak concomitantly.

Readers grow up believing that Lear's gesture is absolute based entirely on what they are told by "experts," the [argument from authority](#). They don't bother thinking about the action for themselves. For example, in his vituperative "[Essay on Shakespeare](#)", Tolstoy (a [Christian anarchist](#), "who freed his serfs, renounced his titles, gave money away to peasants, tried to give his estate to the poor, promoted vegetarianism and progressive education, wrote stories for peasants, ... and wanted to place his works in the public domain for 'all people of the world.'"') accepts "the unbuttoning of Lear's button"^[96] as an incontrovertible fact of the narrative, and damns the playwright as a sophist:

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.^[87]



Figure 171. Caravaggio, "The Seven Works of Mercy, ca. 1607.

Marvin Rosenberg writes in *The Masks of King Lear* that only a "sentimental" Lear would explicitly give his cloak to a beggar as depicted in popular subjects of the European Renaissance like Caravaggio's "[The Seven Works of Mercy](#)" or El Greco's [Saint Martin and the Beggar](#): "he wishes to "shed" not "share" his clothes." He is wrong. The "metatheatrical" style of Elizabethan drama (and its point of view paradigm), is anything but "sentimental;" the audience is always aware that it is watching a play. The events of the story are dialecticized, as in *Don Quixote*, where reality and idealism are placed side-by-side for contrasting

effect. Lear's impractical idealism is being juxtaposed with a beggar's "*true need*" to cover himself in the storm. Shakespeare is ridiculing the idea that man is nothing but a "*featherless biped*," as argued by Plato. [See Figure 172.] "When Plato gave Socrates's definition of man as 'featherless bipeds' and was much praised for the definition, Diogenes plucked a chicken and brought it into Plato's Academy, saying, 'Behold! I've brought you a man.' After this incident, 'with broad flat nails' was added to Plato's definition." (See "*Diogenes versus Plato*" by Phil Somers, 2015.)



Figure 172. "*Diogenes*", Engraved by Giovanni Jacopo Caraglio, After Parmigianino, ca. 1527. The Met.

The metatheatrical form of *Lear* invites 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*)."

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 putting on 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 173. El Greco, *Saint Martin and the Beggar*. c. 1597-99, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

99. S.D. *Edgar puts on the king's discarded riding-cloak*] Ed. In the quartos and Folio, there is, predictably, no *explicit* costume direction indicating that Edgar puts on Lear's discarded cape when he sees it lying unwanted on the ground. [See Figure 169.] However, the action can be

induced from the “through-line of action”, i.e., the major themes in the play. [See note III,iv, 36., “*show the heavens more just.*”] At the end of Act II, Lear contrasts Regan’s posh, low-cut dress with the shabby clothes beggars wear to stay warm, and postulates that human needs are not limited to worldly things. His thought, however, is broken by the sound of approaching thunder, leaving the audience to ponder the metaphysical question of “*true need—*” (F, 1570). For Socrates true need for man is self-knowledge. For Lear, it is kindness. See note II,iv,267. S.D., “*A noise of distant thunder heard.*”



Figure 174. Tudor gentleman with a cape giving alms to a beggar.

After the king “tears off pieces of his 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 his riding-cloak 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 cape 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 190.] When poor Tom exclaims, “*The foule fiend bites my backe*” (Q1, 2014.1), he is logically referring to the meretricious cape he is now wearing.



Figure 175. (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).

Needless to say, the king’s riding 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 is no more serviceable in a hurricane than haute couture by Viktor & Rolf. [See Figure 176.] Its impracticality is underscored by the farcically contrived entrance of Gloucester in a heavy woolen outer garment. See note III,iv,101.S.D., “*muffled in a voluminous, hooded cloak.*” [Compare *The Shoemakers’ Holiday*, wln 0745, S.D. “*Eyre puts it on.*” (The Folger Shakespeare Library)].



Figure 176. From the Spring/Summer 2022 collection of Victor and Rolf. Victor Boyko/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images.

The saying “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 Elizabethan 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.)

100. **be contented**] viz., enough already; stop with the cloak! But Lear is determined to expose his back to the storm, and take the same whipping as poor Tom. He likely succeeds in casting off other detachable pieces of his costume (such as a sleeve or a cuff or a collar) before he begins undoing a few of the buttons on his **doublet**. [See Figure 168.] Troilus gives Cressida a sleeve as something to remember him by: “*Weare this Sleeue*” (F, 2458).



Figure 177. Members of the Royal Australian Air Force diving naked into a river, 1943.

- 100-01. **swim in**] viz., go naked, as one does when going out for a refreshing swim. [See Figure 177.] The Fool is making a joke. He knows as well as the audience that Lear’s objective is simply to give his cloak to poor Tom, but, like many men, is afraid he will seem soft-hearted by taking pity on another man. This hypothesis is confirmed when the king quiets down the moment he sees Edgar put on the cloak. There is no way that Kent could restrain him from tearing off his shirt otherwise. Lear is strong. In V,i, he says that he slayed the man who hung Cordelia: “*I kill’d the Slaue that was a hanging thee*” (F, 3238).
101. S.D. **Enter Gloucester**] after *here* (F, 1890). *Enter Gloster*, after *fire* (Q, 1894).
101. **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 178. The Misanthrope, Bruegel, 1568.

101. 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 178.] 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?”)
105. **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**] “During medieval and Tudor times, people used a curfew at night to help prevent fires in the home. As can be seen at the Merchant’s House, one of the sites at the [John Moore Museum](#), the fire was often set directly on the floor in the centre of the main living area.” (Angela Dunsby, “The History of the Curfew.”) See [Curfew bell](#).
106. **web and the pin**] “Cataráttá..called a *Cataract* or a pin and web.” (*Queen Anna’s New World of Words*, J. Florio, 1611.) Gloucester, as noted, is extremely far-sighted, and wears bow spectacles at all times, which he keeps balanced on his nose. [See Figure 52.] “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](#)).
107. **squinies the eye**] Uncorrected far-sightedness may cause you to squint or strain your eyes to maintain focus.
107. **mildews**] “To affect or taint with mildew” (*OED*, 1.a), much as a cataract “mildews” the eye.
- 107-8. **white wheat**] *OED*, “any variety of wheat with light-coloured grains.” J. Fitzherbert Bk. *Husbandry* f. xviii^v “White whete is lyke polarde whete..but it hath anis, and..wyll make white bredde. And in Essex they call flaxen whete white whete.” (?1523). Cordelia speaks of “sustaining Corne” (F, 2356).
109. **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 Figure 179, “Decapitated Head of St. Vitalis, Patron Saint of Genital Disease, To Be Sold At Auction.” (Could it be the lost skull of William Shakespeare instead?)



Figure 179. Skull of St. Vitalis of Assisi in Reliquary box.

109. **‘old]** wold, open country

110. **Nightmare]** Gloucester looks both sinister and ridiculous in his hooded over coat and bow spectacles.

110. **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.

111. **alight]** dismount, descend. Gloucester is hypothetically above them on the platform.

112. **plight]** Pledge

113. **aroint]** begone. Cf. *Macbeth*, I,iii, “*Aroynt thee, Witch*”(F, 104).

115. S.D. **Pointing to Gloucester]** Ed. Not in Q, F.

119. **water]** i.e. water newt

120. **sallets]** tasty things

121. **ditch-dog]** dead dog thrown in a ditch

122-3. **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 tithe 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 bloudye, 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.)

124. **three suits]** Compare II,ii,14, “*three-suited*”

126. **deer]** animals

127. 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.

128. **Beware my follower]** i.e. the “storm.”

128. **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”.

133. **gets]** begets. Something about poor Tom brings Edgar to Gloucester’s mind that unsettles him. As he tells Curan in IV,i: “*I’t’last nights storme, I such a fellow saw;/ Which made me thinke a Man,a Worme. My Sonne/ Came then into my minde, and yet my minde/ Was then scarce Friends with him. I haue heard more since*” (F, 2216-20.) See note IV,v,7., “*Methinks thy voice is*

altered.”

135-6. **suffer/ T’ obey**] Tolerate obeying

142. S.D. **To Edgar**] Ed. Not in Q, F.



Figure 180. Greek or Roman bronze statuette of a draped man, 1st century BCE–1st century CE, The Met.

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 180.] 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 181.] Whatever else might be said of Diogenes, he was indisputably the most histrionic philosopher in the ancient world.



Figure 181. Alexander the Great meeting Diogenes, Anonymous, 1580-1640. Metropolitan Museum

145. **your study**] The specialty you study. See note V,i,16, “*mystery of things*.”

146. **prevent**] forestall

146. **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 Penbrokeshire (1892) 268. [See note III,vi, 23. S.D. To the pelt. ”]

147. S.D. **They talk aside**] Not in Q, F.

148. **Importune**] implore, beg

154. **outlaw’d**] from my blood: disinherited; condemned as an outlaw

157. 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!”

158. **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.

158. S.D. *To Kent*] Ed. Not in Q, F,

158. **Cry you mercy**] excuse me. Lear is angered by Kent. Compare note III,vi,56, “*why hast thou let her ‘scape?’*”

159. **Noble philosopher**] Edgar reminds Lear of **Diogenes of Sinope**, who is reputed to have gone naked in public.

163. **keep still**] continue to stay

164. **soothe him**] indulge.

165. **Take him you on**] bring him along.

167. **Athenian**] philosopher. See line 144 above, “*Theban.*”

169. **Child Rowland**] Edgar’s horn evokes the sounding of Olifant at the **Battle of Roncevaux Pass**.

[See Figure 182.] 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 183.] 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).

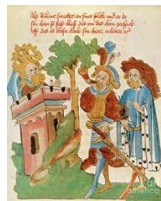


Figure 182. “The Song of Roland.” Charlemagne hears Roland blow his Oliphant. Image from Stricker’s *Karl der Grosse*, manuscript of Bonn, 1450.

170. **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 183. Chapbook for Jack the Giant Killer.

173. **word]** motto

170. **Still]** always

170. **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.

171. S.D. **Drum and Trumpet within]** Ed. Not in F, Q.

171. 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. In *Lear*, the small space allotted to players in the Lords Rooms is used to quality secrecy and deception. Compare 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. S.D. **Exeunt]** (F, 1995). Exit (Q, 1996).

23. S.D. **Storm continued]** Ed. Not in Q, F.

ACT III, SCENE VI. *Scena Sexta* (F, 1996). Scene 13 in Quarto.

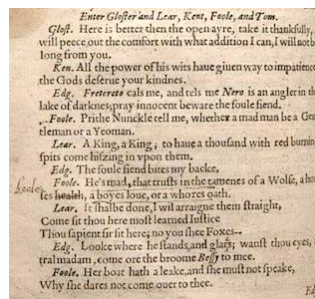


Figure 184. Facsimile of Quarto 1 (1608). There are no stage directions describing the action.

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 to what they are referring. [Figure 184.] 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 venery, 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.

The most important question for editors to put to readers concerns the nature of Lear’s sudden exclamation, “*To haue a thousand, with red burning spits Come hizzing in upon ‘em*” (F, 2013-14)—a reference to the practice of smoking *foxes* out of their burrows by fire. Is he referring to something immaterial that pops into his mind from the depths of his unconscious, or is he referring to real stage props he discovers when he draws open the *curtains*—“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.” 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 textual evidence that a hidden scene is revealed in III,vi comes from the dialogue when Lear tells Kent to “*draw the Curtaines*” (F, 2041).



Video 23. Professional fur handling, Part 1, how to skin a red fox. (Video not suitable for children and animal lovers.)

One hypothesis to test, given the *narrative mode* of the story, is that Lear draws the curtains open and “discovers” a dead fox strung up for skinning, together with the pelts of vermin and other hunting paraphernalia. [See Video 23.] Lear mistakes them for his vixen daughters, and straightaway conducts a trial to prove them guilty of hard-heartedness. The style of the scene is incongruous (i.e., absurd) as 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. [See Figure 185.] Obviously, the props in III,vi will immediately signal the whereabouts of Lear and his party to hunters or anybody familiar with a skinning shed.



Figure 185. 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.

It is interesting to compare the images of foxes, polecats, and dogs in III,vi to The Earl of Shaftesbury's description of "the great hall" at Woodlands Manor, the "man cave" or mantuary of Henry Hastings in Mere, Wiltshire—a conspicuously masculine space.

"The great hall [was] strewn 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, 1st Earl of Shaftesbury, *Fragment of Autobiography*, c. 1675, p. 23)



Figure 186. Postcard of Woodlands Manor, Mere, Wiltshire, England.

The thought occurred to me that Henry Hastings was Shakespeare's model for the character of Lear. (See Jonathan Law, "Henry Hastings, the Wodwo of Dorset".) There is, however, no evidence that the men were personally acquainted. Little is known about the playwright's "Lost Years," but it seems possible that they might have crossed paths, as Shakespeare 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 4th Earl of Huntingdon, and the nephew of Henry Hastings 3rd Earl of Huntingdon, "considered by some as a potential successor to Elizabeth I." Records indicate that James I knew Hastings, as the former conveyed Puddletown Manor in Dorset to him in 1611 and 1614. Through his marriage to Dorothy Willoughby in 1587, second daughter and coheiress of Sir Francis Willoughby, he acquired Woodlands Park, near Horton, Dorset.



Figure 187. 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 188. [Ilsington House \(Puddletown Manor\)](#)

Had King James I been to Woodlands Manor and seen "the great hall"? 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](#)."

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 Elizabethan

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 189](#).] 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](#).



[Figure 189](#). [Queen Elizabeth I preparing to slit the throat of a stag](#), from [Turberville, 'Noble Art of Venerie', 1575](#).

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 (Appendix I), [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 I](#).] 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*.

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](#), 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*”). 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). 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](#).]



Video 25. "The noble art of the belch."

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 heavily improvised (as do many other scenes 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](#).")

6. **Frateretto**] 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 190](#).] 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 190. Emperor Nero on Horseback, Antonio Tempesta, 1596. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

7. S.D. *Gloucester readjusts his spectacles to look at Edgar*] Ed. Gloucester has cataracts, which can make it more difficult to read and see facial expressions. As in I,ii,63,S.D., where he readjusts his bow spectacles to scrutinize the handwriting of Edmund's letter, he readjusts them here to get a better look at Edgar's face, prompting the Fool to ask Lear "*whether a madman be a Gentleman, or a Yeoman*" (F, 2007-8). (See note I,ii,63. S.D., "*Readjusting his spectacles.*")
8. **innocent**] He means *innocent* in the sense of *unsuspecting* or naive; a natural fool. The line is spoken directly 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.
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) Compare "And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have *turned the world upside down* are come hither also;" (Acts:17:6)
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. Hypothetically, Lear draws open the "*curtains*" (F, 2041-42), and discovers the carcass of a fox strung up for skinning. (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 185.]
- 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). Lear uses the same metaphor when he 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.



Figure 191. Master Peter's Puppet Show. Illustrator not credited.

17. **The foul fiend bites my back**] In reference to the riding cloak he is now wearing. The words are probably accompanied by some funny business, like putting it on the wrong way.
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 192. "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 192.]

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.

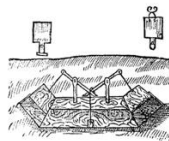


Figure 193. From L. M[ascall] *Sundrie Engrines and Trappes to take polecats, and all Kinds of vermin* 1550.

23. S.D. **To a pelt**] Ed. Not in Q. See note III,vi, S.D. *Hunting Lodge*. Logically, the pelt of a polecat. [See Figure 196.] 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,146](#). "*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 271](#).]

23. **he**] i.e. Lear

24. **Want'st thou eyes at trial madam**] Addressed to the polecat. [See [Figure 185](#).] Compare III,vii: "*Plucke out his eyes*" (F, 2064). The eyes are removed when the animal is skinned. "Skinning the eyes can be tricky. It is VERY easy to cut and screw up the eyes. The skin binds to the skull and you have to know where to cut. When skinning it, cut horizontally behind the eyeball where my knife is pointing until the membrane thins and you can see the eye. Practicing this on furbearers can hone your skills for doing a perfect job on trophy big game animals when it really counts!" (Tyler Freel, "[How To Skin A Fox](#)" by *OutdoorLife*).



[Figure 194](#). "Skinning the eyes can be tricky," *Outdoor Life*.

The meaning of this scene qualifies the next in which Gloucester is interrogated and blinded for treason. Ironically, Regan alludes to the old earl as an "*Ingratefull Fox*" (F, 2020) when he is first brought in for questioning. In the narrative sequencing of events, Shakespeare asks the question which of the two trials is madder? Its structure is roughly comparable 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.”

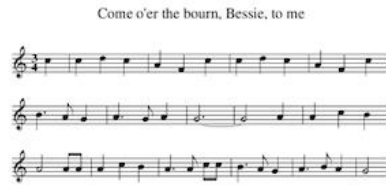


Figure 195. Found in “Come O'er the Bourn Bessie to Me” from the Traditional Tune Archive abc collection. [Click to play.](#)

25. **bourne**] Stream, brook.

25. **Bessy**] is the name for a vagrant whore. See “the *cat* is grey.” [See Figure 271.]

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 196. 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 no chance 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 Hobbididence (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 are typically illogical as in riddles. The gestures don’t make sense to the mind immediately.

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.

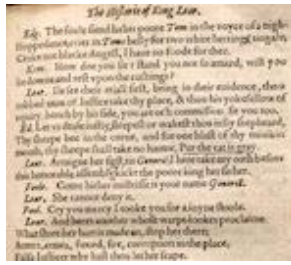


Figure 197. From *King Lear*, Quarto 1 (InternetShakespeareEditions).

34. **cushions.**] There are no stage directions in the quartos indicating the nature of the “*cushions.*” (As noted above, lines 2014.1-30 were omitted in the First Folio.) 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 literal-mindedness contrasts with Lear’s imaginings. He acts the part of a Straight man or a stooge. [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.



Figure 198. Edmund Joseph Sullivan, “Mambrino's Helmet,” c.1920s. The Morgan Library Museum.

36. S.D. **To Edgar**] Capell. Not in Q.
36. **robed**] Referring literally to the exquisite “robe” he discarded, which Edgar is wearing. See note III,iv,103,S.D. *Edgar puts on the discarded cloak.*



Figure 199. 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 200. 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 200.]



Figure 201. 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*”, nursery rhymes are used by parents to communicate nonverbally with infants and toddlers. (See note I,iv,165, “*play bo-peep.*”)

41. S.D. **Sings**] Ed. Not in Q. 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 201.] 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).

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 imaginary dogs chasing Lear. It is a central paradigm of *King Lear* that what first presents as farce 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). [See Figure 185a.]

46. **Fool**] Ed. Ascribed to Edgar in (Q, 2014.21).

46. **cat**] Referring to the skinned polecat or “*Fitchew*” (F, 2565) as in Figure 185. A cat is also a cant term for a prostitute. [See Figure 248.]

46. **grey**] He probably means that her physical appearance is invisible, 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 202. Buster Keaton, the King of Pratfalls, in a promotional still for *The Cameraman*, 1928.

Shakespeare’s set-up of this joke is worth noting. 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 essay included in *The Folger Library King Lear: “King Lear: A Modern Perspective.”* Sadly, Synder does not apply the same logic to “the cushions”, “Bessy” or “Regan” because there is no theatrical precedent to support the hypothesis.
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 187.] Compare *Macbeth*, III,iv, “*When all's done/ You looke but on a stoole*” (F, 1336-36).
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). [See Figure 203.] 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). To what else could Lear be imagining as “Regan” but the carcass of a fox? Hence Kent's wanting not to touch it. [See Video 28.]

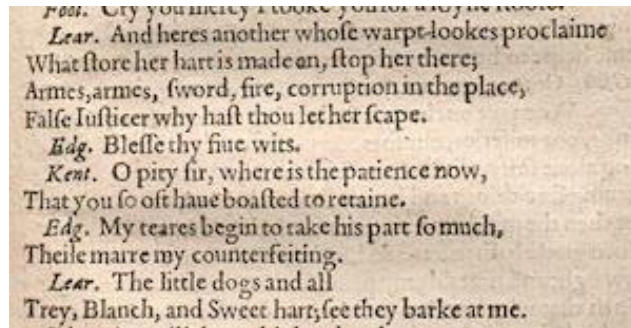


Figure 203. Excerpt from scene 13 in *King Lear*, Quarto 1, 1608 (Halliwell-Phillipps), InternetShakespeareEditions.

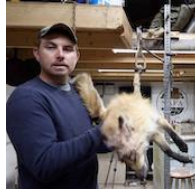
It should come as no surprise that Shakespeare's audience at the Globe, traumatized by war, syphilis, and the harangue of Puritans, would be amused by **black comedy**, as television viewers were in 1969 when **John Cleese** and **Michael Palin** argue whether or not a parrot was purchased dead. [See 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 get away.
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 204. “Actaeon Killed by His Dogs” from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Antonio Tempesta, 1606.

62. **The little dogs**] Lear imagines himself being the quarry of a hunt, pursued by barking dogs. 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 204.] 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
- 66. **poisons if it bite**] Rabies is potentially fatal
- 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 205. *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). See Appendix F: Edgar's Ox Horn.



Figure 206. "The meafures of blowing, fet downe in the notes for the more eafe and ready helpe of fuch as are defirous to learne the fame: and they are fet downe according to the order which is obfervcd at thefe 281arc 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. See note III,iv,122-3., "*tithing to tithing*."
- 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. In III,iv, we saw him urge Gloucester to placate the King by allowing him to bring mad Tom with them. Compare III,iv,164., "*Soothe him*."
- 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**] One sense of the word "*hard*" is "*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 Ploughman.*” (F, 89-93). Here, Shakespeare is punning both figuratively and literally on the meaning of “hard,” as in *rigor mortis*, which causes muscles to become hard. “Postmortem rigidity is the third stage of death. The answer to Lear’s question is self-evident from the visual appearance of the carcass, and gets a laugh. See [note III,vii,31](#), “*Hard, hard.*”

78. S.D. **To Edgar**] Capell. Not in Q, F.

79. **fashion**] It is possible that the word connotes both the ostentation of the cloak, and its being worn backwards by poor Tom.

80. **Persian**] Expensive, prestigious. Lear is referring literally 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.*”)

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, the Fool is playing the same simple melody he introduced in I,v. Hypothetically, he is carrying a tabor piper when he enters with Lear in II,iv (F, 1273). [See [note II,iv, S.D.](#) “*playing pipe and tabor.*”] Variations of melody are played by the consort musicians in IV,vi, “*louder the musicke there*” ([Q1, 2775.2](#)). *Lear* is a **complex narrative**, involving multiple intertwined plotlines, intricate characters, and non-linear sequences of events. Music is absolutely essential to connect the story, like the *ritornellos* and *motifs* in *Claudio Monteverdi*’s opera *L’Orfeo* (1607). Shakespeare uses music in *Lear* as a storytelling tool. Not only does it set the tone of the action and enhance emotions, it provides important narrative cues that guide the audience’s interpretation of the story, such as the overarching theme of the love a mother feels for her child. [See [Appendix E: The Incidental Music in King Lear](#).]



Figure 207. Flute Player, Hendrick ter Brugghen, 1621. Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel..D.

The leitmotif is one the most elemental concepts in film scoring, as discussed by [The Blind Mole](#) in his YouTube video, “A Quest! To find the greatest short leitmotif in movie music.” Though no full musical scores for Greek and Roman plays exist, it is only logical to assume that the same basic principles of “movie music”, were used in drama from its early beginnings. [Timothy J. Moore](#) proposes that musical repetition in Euripides’s play *Medea* was used to underline key themes. “At the core of my work at [The Center for Hellenic Studies](#) were two Euripidean plays, the very early *Medea* (431 BCE), and *Orestes*, from late in Euripides’ career (408 BCE). I had already observed before my time in Washington that *Medea* offered a significant musical surprise followed by significant musical repetition. In an unexpected move, *Medea* delivers *anapests* early in the play, and then *anapests* return at important moments

throughout the play. The surprise and repetition reinforce the audience's sense of Medea's power as she plots and carries out her revenge." ("Unheard Melodies: Music and Meaning in Ancient Greek and Roman Theater").

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 208. Gentleman peeking 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 208, *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 sweet music on his lute." (See Appendix E: Incidental Music in *King Lear*.)

If we restrict our interpretation of the action entirely to what can be seen published in the quartos and Folio (as Gloucester does the meaning of Edmund's forged letter in I,ii), the Fool takes his exit from the play with the line, "And Ile go to bed at noone" (F, 2043). This quip is no more expressive of the character's feelings, or of translating his thoughts, than his riddles in I,v. The joke functions as comic relief, without advancing the plot, and depends entirely on its **timing** by actors to be funny. (See note III,vi,85. "I'll go to bed at noon.") (See Furness's *New Variorum Edition*, p. 214.) III,vi the actor's last scene as the Fool before returning to his role as Cordelia, and the music anticipates her reappearance.

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). See *Macbeth*, I,vi, "*Hoboyes*" (F, 431). 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., Lear's sufferings are so much greater by virtue of his age. He 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; throw off his disguise.

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.



Figure 209. Opening of Act III,vii as published in First Folio (InternetShakespeareEditions).

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).

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. *Seruants* (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"). Shakespeare's audience would have been able deduce what role they serve from their costumes and weapons. [See Figure 210.] However, modern readers must be told that the extras in this scene are men-at-arms lest they wrongly be imagined domestic "*Seruants*." 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. It should be axiomatic that readers *never* assume that what is published in the quartos and Folio is accurate, especially problematic line ascriptions. [See Figure 209.] The meaning of these words has completely different connotations depending on which of the sisters is speaking them. Goneril is a no-nonsense character, and wants Gloucester executed immediately for siding with the French, whose reasons for invading England are left uncertain until IV,iii, where they explicitly stated by Cordelia. See Appendix C. Note that Albany's Squire, who gives a convoluted account of the incident to his lord in IV,ii, is standing close by Goneril, and hears everything she says. See note IV,iv,ii,68.S.D., "*Enter Albany's Squire*."

5. **Reg]** Ed. *Gon.* F, 2064, Q, 2064. When this line is said by Regan, as emended, the implicit message is that she wants her weak and ineffectual husband to pluck out Gloucester's eyes: a deed she ultimately accomplishes herself. (See note III,vii,80.,S.D., *She plucks out his other eye.*) In IV,iv, she reproaches herself for not following Goneril's advice, and killing the earl outright: "*It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out / To let him live.*" (F, 2394-95).
- 6-7. **our sister]** Goneril
7. **revenges]** Standing by Edmund is Curan, the Chamberlain we were introduced to in II,i who was commanded by Gloucester to issue an arrest warrant for Edgar with "*dispatch*" (F, 995). Can Edmund bear to look at the old man? Does he meet his gaze with defiance and contempt? Or does he feel no empathy at all, like a **psychopath**? In a novel, their interaction would be given a written account. In a play, it is dramatized. The reader has to imagine it for themselves.
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). *Questrits* (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 gloat about her sudden opportunity to have sex with Edmund. 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 is fueled by sexual jealousy. She becomes a "*greene-ey'd Monster*" (F, 1781), maddened by the thought of her sister being alone with Edmund. [See note IV,vii, 35., "*Reg.*"]
21. **She kisses him vehemently]** Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare "*She Kisses him vehemently*" in *The Sodered 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 a cuckold of her husband before his knights. The Duke responds to her 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).



Figure 210. 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.

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. 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.
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 have returned with him here, in a manner that exactly fits the occasion, like Edgar’s “*pat*” (F, 463) entrance in I,ii. Instead, 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 made a cuckold by his wife, and issues a threatening command establishing his position of authority. His directive proves redundant, however, because this second group of knights bumps into the first group of knights on their way back with Gloucester. Their running into to one another is farcical, like a caper in the **Keystone Kops**. Cornwall appears like a bumbling fool, needlessly ordering his men around.
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). Just as the guards in *The Winter’s Tale* are reluctant to lay hands on **Hermione**, Cornwall’s knights do not lay their hands on Gloucester until they are physically threatened to bind him on their lord’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 important idea being dramatized is that his knights or bodyguards do not respect their lord’s authority. See also note III,vii,38, “*host.*”
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. They are the reference in Cornwall’s line, “*Upon these eyes of thine I’ll set my foot*” (F, 2140). [See Figure 52.]



Figure 211. Quinten Matsys, “Tax Collectors” (c. 1525), Liechtenstein Collection, Vaduz.

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 hardened nature of Gloucester’s heart, as Kent uses the word in “*this hard house, / (More harder then the stones whereof ’tis rais’d*” (F, 1717-18). Cf. also *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 his command to bind the old Earl. 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. See note III,vii,77. S.D., “*He falls into Cornwall, stabbing him.* ”
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 212. 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. Here, Regan is deriding the sex of the earl. Women don’t wear beards, as Cornwall’s Knight makes a point of observing, “*If you did weare a beard vpon your chin, / I’d shake it on this quarrel*” (F, 2150-51). She is also characteristically emasculating the duke her husband, who is formally the man in charge of the inquisition. [See note II,ii,132., “*Till noon?* ”]
36. **naughty**] wicked
38. **quicken**] come to life
38. **host**] *Hospitiumis* “the ancient Greco-Roman concept of hospitality as a divine right of the guest and a divine duty of the host.” “The red wedding” in George R.R. Martin’s *A Storm of Swords* draws on this concept. “The Greeks believed that hospitality was a reciprocal relationship between guest and host and involved certain obligations and responsibilities for both

parties. However, *The Odyssey* explores what happens when these rules of hospitality are ignored or violated. There are instances in which guests or hosts violate these rules. Their violations often lead to suffering or consequences” (“The Consequences of Violating Hospitality in ‘The Odyssey’”). In Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, “The misfortunes of Thebes are believed to be the result of a curse laid upon Laius for the time he had violated the sacred laws of hospitality.” See note III,vii, 26. S.D. “*Re-enter knights.*”

- 39. **hospitable favors**] features of your host
- 40. **ruffle**] bully, treat roughly
- 40. S.D. **Cornwall draws his dagger**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Cornwall uses the threat of violence to get Gloucester to talk. Compare note III,vii,31.S.D., “Cornwall *lays his hand on his sword.*”
- 40. **What will you do?**] Gloucester is reacting to the Duke’s stage action.
- 41. **late**] recently
- 42. **simple-answered**] direct in answering
- 44. **footed**] landed
- 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 213.]



Figure 213. A Chained Bear, Agostino Carracci (1557-1602) Courtland Institute of Art, London.

- 55. **anointed**] with holy oil at his coronation
- 56. **Stick**] *sticke* (F, 2130); *rash* (Q, 2130). To trust in: “*Thou stick'st a dagger in me, I shall neuer see my gold againe*” (F, 1321-2). (Schmidt, *Shakespeare lexicon and quotation dictionary*, Vol II. p. 1122.)
- 58. **buoy'd up**] risen up and extinguished the stars
- 58. **stelled fires**] fiery stars
- 59. **holp**] assisted
- 60. **dire**] Ed. *dearne* (Q, 2135); *sterne* (F, 2135). “Dreadful, dismal, mournful, horrible, terrible, evil in a great degree” (*OED*, a). Compare “*Knocke at his study where they say he keepes, / To ruminat strange plots of dire Reuenge*” (*Titus Andronicus*, F. 2289). Cf also “*vnsex me here, / And fill me from the Crowne to the Toe, top-full / Of direst Crueltie*” (*Macbeth*, F, 392-4).
- 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 214. The blinding of Gloucester and death of Cornwall's Knight ("Seru") as published in the First Folio (InternetShakespeareEdition).

65. **these eyes**] Unsurprisingly, there are no stage directions in the sources to indicate if Cornwall is referring *literally* to Gloucester's eyeballs or *metaphorically* to his spectacles. [See Figure 214.] In a personal communication, Alan Dessen takes an empiricist approach to the line, relying on theatrical precedent to answer hypotheticals: "I see no reason to restage/rewrite the blinding in 3.7 or introduce Gloucester's spectacles (some Cornwall actors have gouged out the eye with the toe of their boot or a spur.)" Actors and directors, of course, are free to stage the play anyway they want. Shakespeare's editors, on the other hand, do not have the same license. Their interpretations must be constrained by the work's narrative and narrative structure. This is because most readers presuppose when they buy book that it is what Shakespeare wrote, as determined by expert authorities. They falsely assume, as Tolstoy did, that what they are reading is a "restoration" of the work, not a conflation of corrupted secondary sources by biased editors. [See Tolstoy's "Critical Essay on Shakespeare."] It is incumbent upon editors and textual scholars, therefore, to explain how they arrived at their decisions, to encourage critical thinking.

The blinding of Gloucester is a matter of utmost importance thematically, and one of the most indelible visuals in the play. What message is the action communicating? Is Shakespeare making a didactic statement about the nature of sight and knowledge, or just assaulting the senses of the audience with gratuitous gore? The form of the play is metatheatre, not melodrama. Its salient stylistic feature is irony. The main theme of the subplot is the paradox of blindness. Gloucester's spectacles give him a means to see the words of Edmund's letter, but not 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.*"] In *King Lear*, Shakespeare totally debunks empiricism as a means of true knowledge: "*Get thee glasse-eyes, and like a scurvy Politician, seeme to see the things thou dost not*" (F, 2612-14).

Glasses have been used as a signifier in all forms of theatre, doubtlessly from the time they were invented in Italy in the 13th century. Shakespeare saw them worn by the character Pantaloone, as proven by Jacques in his description of the sixth age of man in *As You Like It*: a "*leane and slipper'd Pantaloone, / With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side*", (F, 1136-38). Sophocles' ironic treatment of the theme of sight in *Oedipus Rex* is probably the best known

to students of drama and literature. 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 35.] 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 215. “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 glasses in English literature is in *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens. [See Figure 215.] 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*, with its famous shot of the nurse, open-mouthed, bloody, and with broken glasses [Figure 216], and 2) the famous close-up of a shattered pair of glasses in *The Birds*. Morbidly, Hitchcock makes it a point to show us that they were not broken by the girl’s fall, but by a beak. [Figure 217].



Figure 216. Still from *Battleship Potemkin*, Sergei Eisenstein, 1925. Eisenstein uses glasses as a symbol throughout the film.

65. *Stomps on Gloucester’s spectacles*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Nicholas Rowe was the first to add the stage direction “*Glofter 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; nor is any explanation why Shakespeare intended “*these eyes*” to be taken in a literal sense.



Figure 217. A chilling still from Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* where the broken glasses of a schoolgirl are used as a symbol.

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) in contrast with Regan's plucking out the "other eye" (F, 2326) with her nails. [See Figure 224.]



Figure 218. Detail from *The Blinding of Samson*, Rembrandt (1636), Städel, Frankfurt am Main.

69,73,76,78. *Cornwall's Knight*] Ed. *Servant*. (Q, 2145). *Serv*. (F, 2145). *First Servant*. Capell. The staging of the Knight's death together with the Duke of Cornwall's wounding are matters of critical importance in the development of Shakespeare's central theme of **chivalry** and male honor: at the play's climax, the guilt or innocence of Edmund is decided by **judicial combat**, as in Ridley Scott's, *The Last Dual*. 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 Commandments" is the code "Thou shalt respect all weaknesses and shalt constitute thyself the defender of them."



Figure 219. 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.

The theme is not at all clear at all to modern readers for two reasons. The character is given the generic name *Servant* in the quartos and Folio. They cannot see what the character is wearing, which signals his rank. Secondly, they naturally presuppose from their own experience, especially from movies and television, that the setting and costumes must conform to conventions of "realism". They believe **suspension of disbelief** is a prerequisite of good drama. One of Tolstoy's main objections to the narrative, for example, is that "The action of *King Lear* takes place 800 years b.c., and yet the characters are placed in conditions possible only in the Middle Ages: participating in the drama are kings, dukes, armies, and illegitimate children, and gentlemen, courtiers, doctors, farmers, officers, soldiers, and knights with vizors, etc." [50].

“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 220. “The Knight’s Tale” from the Ellesmere Chaucer (Huntington Library, San Marino).

69. **Hold your hand]** stop, refrain

70. **I have serv’d you ever since I was a child]** In contrast to Curan, who states that his family has been in Gloucester’s household for generations, it must be induced from the actor’s age and bearing, his costume, the fearsome weapon he is carrying, his courtly manners and refined speech, that the character was brought into the duke’s service as a **page**, promoted to be a squire, and from that status advanced to a knight. [See Figure 221.]



Figure 221. Portrait of Alof de Wignacourt with his Page, Caravaggio (c. 1607-1608), Louvre.

The fact that he has been in Cornwall service from a young age suggests that he is in his early 20s. Hypothetically, the part would have been performed by an apprentice player, not a Principal actor in the *The King’s Men’s* company. In my version, the audience first lays eyes on the character in II,i,85, where he stands out physically among the other background actors. (See note II,i,85, “*attended by Cornwall’s Knight and four other bodyguards.*”) He also plays a role in the release of Kent, supporting him offstage with Lear’s Knight. (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 him. Obviously, his death is not going to have the same emotional impact if is he some anonymous “extra” who just now appears on the scene.

73. **beard]** Cornwall’s Knight is responding directly to Regan’s Gloucester’s beard. [See note III,vii, 33. S.D. “*Regan plucks Gloucester’s beard.*”] He implies that she is unmanly.

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?**] Ed. As part of the “Servant’s” speech in (F, 2151), (Q1, 2151), (Q2, 2151). [See Figure 214.] Regan is outraged by the Knight’s insult to her character and gen-

der.

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).

Again, one of the many problems with reading a play is that there is no way of knowing whether or not a character is being ironic when they speak, as when Kent refers to [the great tithe barn in Tisbury](#) as a “*pinfold*” (F, 1083) or when Lear refers to the duke as “*fiery*” (F, 1371). When Cornwall and Regan refer respectively to the Knight as a “*vilain*” (F, 2152) and a “*peasant*” (F, 2154), their words by no means indicate that he necessarily is one. [See [Figure 214](#).] 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*”.

Shakespeare’s audience would have induced that Cornwall’s Knight was tenured in [Chivalry](#). [See [note III,vii, 70](#). “*I have serv’d you ever since I was a child.*”] “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 pompous and slow-witted to draw his sword.
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 is also an instance of “**dual dialogue**,” and have inserted a dash. Regan is so blinded by rage at the Knight’s insult to her personally 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). [See [Figure 222](#).] 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. In fact, it is possible that they are too dumbfounded by the events to think to defend the duke. (Compare I,i, “*who stirres?*” (F, 134), where none of Lear’s attendants immediately fetch France and Burgundy as commanded. Meanwhile, the audience, like Albany in IV,ii, is kept in suspense as to what will happen to Gloucester’s “*other eye*” (F, 2326).

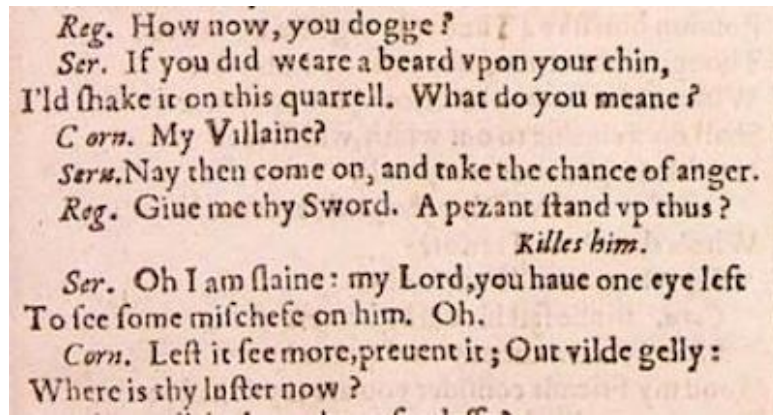


Figure 222. "Out vilde gelly," *King Lear*, III,vii. Facsimile copy of First Folio (New South Wales), InternetShakespeareEditions.

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). [See Figure 223.] Note that 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.

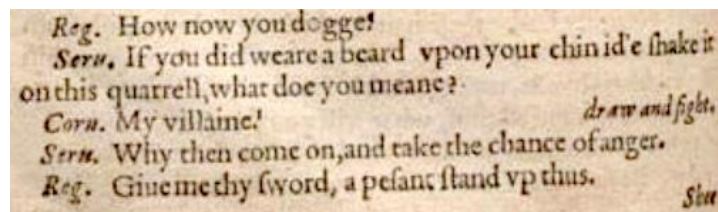


Figure 223. S.D., "Draw and fight", Quarto 1 (InternetShakespeareEditions).

The idea that that there is any sort of sword play 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 have time to intercede; and, most importantly, 4) *diverts our attention from Regan*. The scene is written around her. 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 224. 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 in the account given by the "Messenger" (F, 2312), it must be that Cornwall puts out the second eye. Or perhaps he thinks 2 *Servant* (Q, 2176.3) and *Gentleman* (Q, 2313) / *Messenger* (F, 2312) are not the same character. In my restoration, 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 her husband, it must have been sheer torture 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 him down, she does not hesitate to put out the "other eye" (F, 2326), dispensing with humanmade tools like knives or pokers. The melodramatic quality of the gesture does not take precedence over characterization when performed by Regan. Rather, it epitomizes her savage disposition, 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). Regan's like a wild animal; something less than human, like the dead fox Lear uses as a signifier in the preceding scene.

Shakespeare depicts Cornwall as a weak and ineffectual character, a man who lives in fear of his domineering wife. In the context of medieval *humorism*, he fits the profile of a phlegmatic male: *watery*. Lear speaks ironically of his "fiery" humor (II,iv,92, F, 1371). [See note II,iv,92, "quality."] 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). [See note II,ii,122, *Ajax*.]

Regan overrides the duke'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 her husband that she wants Gloucester blinded, not killed as Goneril advises, presumably because of the greater pain and humiliation he will suffer. [See note III,vii, 81., "Where is thy lustre now?"] No sooner is the earl bound to a chair than she

begins plucking his beard (F, 2100-01). She then usurps the duke as the man appointed to lead Gloucester's interrogation, and subsequently becomes so aggressive in her questioning that Cornwall begs her to slow down: "*Wherefore to Dover. Let him answer that*" (F, 2125). She does not give her husband the chance to defend his honor when challenged to a sword fight, but murders the chivalric 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 our every expectation of the character. [See Figure 224.]

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 something 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.

83. **sparks**] Used of the stars: "*The Skies are painted with vnnumbred sparkes*" (*Julius Caesar*, F, 1271). Schmidt, *Shakespeare lexicon and quotation dictionary*, Vol II, p. 1095.

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**] attend, wait on. See Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*, Vol I, p. 432. 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. The music helps muffle the noise they are making, and provides a **sound bridge**, as in movie music. It is being performed by the consort musicians in the gallery. It is not part of the diegesis.

96. **Curan**] Ed. *Servant*. (Q, 2176.1). *Second Servant*. Capell. See note *Dramatis Personæ*, "Curan."



Figure 225. "Young Squire with Man in Armour". Giorgione. Ca. 1501-1502, The Uffizi.

97. **Squire**] Ed. 2. *Servant* (Q, 2176.3). *Third Servant*. Capell. 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]lle fetch some flaxe and whites of egges to apply to his bleeding face" (Q, 2177.8-9). His knowledge and possession 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 226. The Squire in the Ellesmere manuscript of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

Readers of [Geoffrey Chaucer](#), of whom Shakespeare was 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 bacheler ... of greet strengthe ... fressh as is the monthe of May ... embroidered like a meadow bright." The character of the Squire in *The Squire's Tale* contrasts with that of his father in *The Knight's Tale*. A similar dynamic comes to mind in the relationship between the Duke of Albany and his Squire, who, too, is being taught the ways of chivalry and manhood. [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").

The Squire's somewhat effeminate behavior looked on with disapproval by his patriarch. Albany is impatient with the boy's convoluted, emotional account of Gloucester's blinding in IV,ii. He is not given a straight answer to his question about the "other eye" (F, 2315), and has to ask him a second time what happened it: "Lost he his other eye?" (F, 2326). 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. Albany reproaches the lad for feeling pity. "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. 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 316](#).] One of the central themes of the play is what it means to be a man. The final couplet in the play is hypothetically addressed to Albany's Squire: "The oldest hath borne most, we that are yong, / Shall neuer see so much, nor liue so long." (F, 3300-01). We

are left pondering what *choices* the boy will make on his road to becoming a man. [See [note V,i,32,SD.](#), “*To Albany’s Squire.*”]

Parenthetically, I hypothesize that this good-looking young actor with a “*clouen chin*” (F, 274) would go on to be cast as Troilus in *Troilus and Cressida* (1609), which Shakespeare based on Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*. In the play, Troilus is regarded as a paragon of youthful male beauty. Pandarus (played by Armin?) says Troilus “*has not past three or foure haire on his chinne*” (F, 266-67). He tells Cressida that Helen praised his dark complexion above Paris’s. The character of Troilus is represented as an idealist lover, who has not come of age (F, 240).

100. **Curan**] Ed. *1 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. 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 151.](#)] It is not until he blows it that his presence is detected 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. Compare *Measure for Measure*, III,i, “*The miserable haue no other medicine/ But onely hope*” (F, 1205-6).

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.*”

10. **Poorly**] “in a mean and beggarly manner” (Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and*

Quotation Dictionary: poorly.)

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 who holds of another, vassal, servant.” See Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary: tenant*.
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. 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 226. 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 it is going to make. One possibility is that the clothes are not the right size. In *MacBeth*, Angus alludes to MacBeth’s title of King “*hang[ing] loose about him, like a Giants Robe*” (F, 2199). In the *Winter’s Tale*, IV,iii, Autolycus (played by Robert Armin?) changes garments with Florizel. Later in the scene, the Shepherd remarks, “*His Garments are rich, but he weares them not*

Handsomely” (F, 2630-31). Armin is known to have been short in stature, and obviously the prince’s clothes don’t fit him properly. Alternatively, Curan might be referring to a braw Scottish Breacan an Fhéilidh or great *kilt*. (See note IV,v,S.D., “*Enter Edgar, wearing a kilt.*”) Proper Englishmen don’t wear dresses; hence the caveat. (See “*Blunting Lances and Razing Towers: Masculine Performance and Early Tudor Reforms*” by Jacob Burt, Chapel Hill, 2006). [Figure 227].



Figure 227. Earliest illustration of a belted plaid c. 1600.

“Curran is an Irish and also a Scottish surname. According to [Word Finder](#), “The name derives from the 10th century Gaelic name O’Corraidhin, meaning “the male descendant of Corraidhin” a personal name which comes from “corradh”, a spear. (Origin Celtic).” (Might not the etymology of the name derive from the striking red hair of the family? *Curran* is Gaelic for wild carrot.) “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.”

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.



Figure 228. Woodcut of the Devil Tempting a Woman's Vanity with a Mirror.

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.”

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). It seems a tradition of symbolists in the Renaissance for rich old men carry to coin pouches with them, probably to signify their foolishness because it is a sure invitation to thieves, as in Breugel's painting "The Misanthrope" and Bosch's "The Conjuror." Gloucester gives Edgar another coin bag in IV,v,30 containing a valuable jewel (F, 2465). [See note IV,v,29.S.D., "Gives him a purse."]

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 feelee, / 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. **Tucket within**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, **within**, p. 253. A signature call on a trumpet (F, 1469) or trumpets (F, 1017) identifying the arrival of a royal person.

S.D. **Enter Goneril and Edmund**] Theobald; *Enter Gonorill and Bastard*. (Q, 2267); *Enter Gonerill, Bastard, and Steward*. (F, 2267).

1. **Welcome**] Goneril and Edmund arrive together at Albany's castle. She is welcoming him to her home. See "**Welcome**", Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare Lexicon*, pp.1349-50.

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 229. 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 cockscomb.

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. This is not an arbitrary matter because it concerns the style of Shakespeare’s narrative, which must be addressed by the editor. For the gesture to be ironic, Goneril has to give Edmund **a glove** because Regan gives Oswald the same token to bring to him in IV,v,33: “*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 229 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). 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.

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).



Figure 230. *Man with a Glove*, Titian, c. 1520, Louvre.

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 doubtfull 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. Unfortunately, they have to be imagined by the reader due to the absence of stage directions. 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 231. *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 (Q1, 2303.1); it (Q2, 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 232. *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 232.]

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."^[325] (John Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, 1611) Compare note III,vi,45, "Purr".



Figure 233. Old Soldier Turned Nurse. From *The World Turned Upside Down*.

68. **Trumpet**] Ed. Not in Q, F. The trumpet serves as a sound bridge, and calls attention to the rank of Albany's Squire.

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 uncertain. In my restoration, the "Messenger" (F, 2312) or "Gentleman" (Q, 2313) in this scene is the "2 *Seruant*" (Q, 2176.3) and 2 *Ser.* (Q, 2176.8) in III,vii who I have given the name "Albany's Squire." He was an eye witness to Gloucester's blinding, who afterwards dressed his wounds. The character was sent with Goneril by Albany to bring him news back of the rumored war with France. The Squire naturally encounters his lord on his return, and is asked for information.

Here, what Albany's Squire is saying is less meaningful than what he's NOT saying. He conspicuously avoids any mention Goneril's or Regan's complicity in Gloucester's trial. In my version of the plot, the audience sees him standing right next to Goneril when she advises Cornwall to execute the earl: "*Hang him instantly*" (F, 2063). (See note III,vii,4. *Gon.*) No one loves the messenger who brings bad news," writes Sophocles in *Antigone*. Goneril is doubtlessly glowering at him now, with murder in her eyes, as she did the Fool in I,iv., 183., "*so your face bids me*" (F, 708-9). (See note I,iv,176., "*frontlet*.") Fearing the wrath of the duchess, the Squire says nothing about her presence, and gives a blatantly false account of the Knight's death, implying that he died bravely in a sword fight with the duke (F, 2317-20). The audience knows exactly how he met his end: he was stabbed ignominiously in the back by Regan. He tells Albany that Cornwall met his end "*going to put out/ The other eye*"

(F, 2314-15) He neglects to say if he succeed in doing so. Again, the audience knows but not Albany, who has to ask his Squire *again* what happened to it. “*Both, both,*” he replies fearfully before giving Goneril a letter: “*’Tis from your Sister*” (F, 2329). The Squire’s speech is a classic example of Shakespeare use of **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*).

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.

78. **This shows you are above**] Compare IV, 45-50., “*If that the heavens ... like monsters of the deep.*” Puritans in England, like **Philip Stubbs**, were staunch believers in divine retribution, and the character of Albany represents their views. It is the reason he leaves it to the gods to decide Edmund’s guilt in a trial by combat, because he believes them to be the ultimate arbiters of justice. See Appendix A.

79. **justicers**] judges.



Figure 234. 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 rightly 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**] Exit (Q, 2334). Not in F.

90. **back**] on his way back.

97. S.D. **Exeunt**] (F, 2347). *Exit.* (Q, 2347).

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)

S.D. **She is holding Lear's doublet**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Hypothetically, Lear was costumed in solid red in I,i. (See note I,i,32,S.D., “wearing a king-size codpiece”.) He next appears in I,iv dressed for hunting, presumably in solid green, like **Henry Hastings**. Cordelia recognizes the doublet as belonging to her father from its outmoded style and color, and, inferentially, from having seen him wear it.



Figure 235. Green doublet: silk, metallic thread, brass, ca. 1580. Catharine Breyer Van Bomel Foundation Fund, 1978, The Met.

1. S.D. **To Doctor**] Ed. Not in Q, F. If it is worth going to the expense of costuming the actor as a Doctor, it is important to establish the authority of the character. See IV,iii,11., *Doct.*
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 maketh 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*)

It is said the favorite food of the turtledove is fumitory, an indicator for rich, cultivated lands. If the land were healthy and bountiful, it would likely be full of fumitory—and turtle doves. The only European dove that migrates to winter in northern Africa, they are one of the latest migrants to appear in Europe at the end of April, drawing our first symbolic tie to spring. The turtle dove’s diet of wildflower seeds fortifies its connection to springtime. ^[20]

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 236. 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 compositional error for *burdock*. In the Spring, Burdock produces spiky purple flowers in the shape of orbs, similar to thistles.
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 237. 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 237.]
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 238. 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. [See [Figure 238](#), “Polebrook farm, Kent”.] 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*.)
8. S.D. ***Exit a French Officer***] Malone (subst). Not in Q, F. The actor appears again in IV,v with Lear’s Knight and a French Soldier.
8. **What can man’s wisdom**] human knowledge
9. **In the restoring**] to restore
9. **bereaved**] robbed, impaired.
10. **helps**] cures
10. **worth**] possessions.
11. **Doct**] Q1, 2361; *Gent.* (F, 2361). See note IV,vi,12. S.D., “*To the Doctor.*”
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. The sound of the drum is diegetic. See IV,iii, S.D., "*Enter, with drum and colors.*"
- 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 16.]

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) In IV,vii (scene 22), 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. **æilliads**] 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 229.]
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. This allows the consort in the music gallery to change the tonality, which is melancholic or “sad” in contrast to the farcical scene in the Lords Rooms before it. The music is nondiegetic.

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 239. A romanticized Victorian-era illustration of a MacGillivray clansman wearing a kilt and 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. From R.R. McLan, *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands*.

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), hypothetically, a belted plaid, the precursor of the modern kilt. [Figure 210 and Figure 239]. (See note IV,i,50., “*Come on’t what will.*”) Later in this scene, Lear pays Edgar with a thistle to hire him in his mercenary army. The thistle is Scotland's national flower. (See note IV,v, 86-7.S.D., “*Gives Edgar a thistle.*”)

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 240. Actors wearing hats. Francis Kirkman, *The Wits* (1662). From *Shakespeare's England* (1917).

If Edgar is outfitted like a Scot, his costume would be topped with a traditional “blue bonnet” (*OED*, 1.a) or Balmoral hat “dating to at least the 16th century.”^[21] 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.” [See [Figure 240](#).]

Lear takes the form of “metatheatre” or “metadrama,” not realism. The costumes are contrived to be theatrical, and look absurd. [See [note IV,v,81](#), “*The safer sense will ne’re accommodate His Master thus*” (F, 2528-29)]. Edgar is strangely dressed in the manner of a Scottish clansman with a kilt and blue bonnet. Lear is camouflaged in “weeds” in preparation for his stealth attack on “*these sonnes in law*” (Q2, 2629). Gloucester’s eyes are bloody and bandaged, and he cannot walk without assistance. The scene seems almost prescient of [Samuel Beckett’s](#) *Endgame* with the blinded Hamm, and Nagg and Nell who have no legs and live in a dustbin. “Nothing is funnier than unhappiness,” says Nell. “It’s the most comical thing in the world.” Of course, the effect of the costume is absurd and metatheatrical.



Figure 241. Mark Rylance as Hamm, Tom Hickey as Nagg and Miriam Margolyes as Nell in Samuel Beckett's "Endgame" directed by Simon McBurney at the Duchess Theatre in London. (Photo by robbie jack/Corbis via Getty Images).

7. **Methinks thy voice is altered]** Even now, Gloucester is suspicious of the identity of “mad Tom”. (See note III,iv,133., “*gets.*”) Here, he dramatically puts Edgar on the defensive: “*Me thinkes thy voyce is alter'd, and thou speak'st/ In better phrase, and matter then thou did'st*” (F, 2440-41). After hearing him speak the word *Father*” (F, 2666) later in the scene, he gets further agitated. See note IV,v, 218, “*What are you?*”
11. **Here's the place]** Edgar gives his father a 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). Much like the photo of the Earth from Apollo 8, “There is perhaps no better a demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world.”—Carl Sagan. [See Figure 242.] This important speech serves the scene as a backdrop.



Figure 242. The Earth from Apollo 8 as it rounded the dark side of the moon. Photograph: Nasa/AFP/Getty Images.

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 243.]



Figure 243. 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 33](#).] [Robert Armin](#), a protégé of [Richard Tarlton](#)’s, was so good at pratfalls that one was 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 Appendix G: Robert Armin in the Role of Gloucester.]



[Video 33](#). Buster Keaton doing a pratfall known as a “108” among clowns. Buster was in his 50s when this was filmed.

28. **jewel**] A fish is suddenly transformed into a “Rubie Ring” in Robert Armin’s metaphysical poem “The Italian Taylor, And His Boy” (Cant. 4). See [note IV,v,93](#). “*giant.*”
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.*”
29. 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 Pantalooene, / With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side.*” (F, 1137-38). Gloucester appears to be carrying several coin pouches. See [note IV,i,64](#).
33. S.D. **Aside**] Capell.



[Figure 244](#). *The Ambassadors* (1533) is a painting by Hans Holbein the Younger.

- 33-4. **Why I do trifle thus with his despair/ Is done to cure it**] Edgar wants to teach his father that how men see the world, and their place in it, is like an *anamorphosis*, an illusion created by the vantage point of the viewer. The Renaissance was an age of perspective. In his essay “[Perspectivism of the Renaissance Thought](#)” (*Epistēmēs Metron Logos*, Issue 3. 2020), [David Menčík](#) **discusses** why the Renaissance vision of reality is “multi-perspective” and the Middle-Age vision of reality “mono-perspective.” He gives as paradigmatic examples, [Mirandola](#)’s vision of man, [Giordano Bruno](#)’s vision of the universe, and analyzes several paintings, which he thinks have “philosophical value because they provide a picturesque representation of what the Renaissance ‘world’ was really like.”

There is no historical evidence that Shakespeare was personally acquainted with [Giordano Bruno](#), the *Hermeticist* who proposed the concept of a *multiverse*—a theory that the universe is infinite and contains an infinite number of worlds. However, the playwright is widely thought to be familiar Bruno's ideas. [Hilary Gatti](#)’s *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge* lists over thirty-one books since 1846 that have explored the relationship between Bruno and Shakespeare - in particular *Hamlet*. [Julian Strand](#) states in his essay “[The brave new world of Giordano Bruno](#)” that “the Bruno-Hamlet connect is so great I’ve chosen to focus on that play

alone which, upon examination, is steeped in Bruno and his ideas; in addition, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, dates 1600-01, appeared on the scene soon after Bruno was burned at the stake." Some believe that "The Phoenix and the Turtle" was written as a memorial to Bruno, who was burned at the stake in Rome in 1600. ^[9] See note III,i,10. "*little world of man.*"



Figure 245. Bruno's trial in Rome lasted for 7 years in which he was held in confinement. The numerous charges against him included heresy, blasphemy, immoral conduct, which were made worse not by the basic doctrines of his cosmology and philosophy, but by his lack of tact, such as calling Christ a "wretch" and declaring himself as an enemy of the Mass."

Linear perspective in Art is thought to have been devised about 1415 by Filippo Brunelleschi, and has dominated Western painting until the end of the 19th century, such as Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow* [Figure 246]. "As the limitations of linear perspective became apparent, artists invented additional devices (e.g., foreshortening and anamorphosis) to achieve the most-convincing illusion of space and distance," such as Holbein's *The Ambassadors* [Figure 244]. In literature, perspectivism—"the epistemological principle that perception of and knowledge of something are always bound to the interpretive perspectives of those observing it" (Wiki), is the hallmark of *Don Quixote* (published a few months before *King Lear* was performed at Whitehall). Cervantes takes a "relativist, critical stance toward empirical reality....[he] challenges the reliability of determinism, objectivity and literalism" (Cory A. Reed, "Chaotic Quijote: Complexity, Nonlinearity, and Perspectivism," 1994).

The onset of the industrial revolution was the era in which the empiricist and other philosophers of the concrete, such as the positivists, stressed the importance of naming things scientifically. The linguistic history of mankind tells us how strong and steady is man's tendency to classify, to distinguish and to put labels to the tangible and the intangible. It is a question of security, an urgent need to establish patterns and principles to which he can relate and feel grounded. While we know that all these labels spring from conventions and private invention, future generations, although they unquestionably would accept what their forefathers had decided upon, could change them. Within this perspective of change, every name and word depend on the relativity of our knowledge; therefore, persons or things can never be named in a fixed, unchangeable way. Miguel de Cervantes was well aware of this and he took a stand against the then-current traditionalistic trend. Departing from such conventionalities he takes hold of other conventions, expanding the possibilities of meaning in multiple perspectives. ("Onomastic Perspectivism of Don Quijote", Arsenio Rey, *Literary Onomastics Studies* (1980): Vol. 7 , Article 21. LOS 257.)



Figure 246. *Hunters in the Snow*, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1565, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. One man carries the "meager corpse of a fox." Bruegel shows us man's world as it might look from a crow's eye.

34. **O you mighty Gods]** In both quartos there is a stage direction, *He kneels*. (Q, 2472). The

direction is not given in F. How the pratfall is performed, and the audience's reaction to it, all depends on the actor's skill at physical comedy. See [Video 33](#). The staging would need to be approved by the [Master of Revels](#) before it could be performed for James I at Whitehall, and licensed for publication.

Suicide was regarded as a heinous crime in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, a kind of murder committed at the instigation of the devil. Suicides were tried posthumously, and if they were found to have been sane when they took their lives, they were severely punished. Their moveable property was forfeited to the crown or to the holder of a royal patent; their bodies were buried profanely, interred in a public highway or at a crossroads, pinioned in the with a wooden stake. (Michael MacDonald, "The Medicalization of Suicide in England: Laymen, Physicians, and Cultural Change, 1500-1870", University of Michigan.)

38. **opposeless**] irresistible

39. **snuff**] the smoldering wick of a candle. It is nearly burnt out.



Figure 247. 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 attention back him, "*Now Fellow, fare thee well*" (F, 2480): A sneeze? A burp? A snort, —as though he dozed off from boredom listening to his maudlin 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. Here, Shakespeare is parodying his own theatrical style just as Edmund does in I,ii when Edgar enters on cue. (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 *crepitum 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 248. 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 attempt to kill himself takes the form of the absurd. The effect is one of laughter, not pathos. Susan Synder writes of the stunt in her essay “*King Lear: A Modern Perspective*”: “when physically acted out [it] becomes something like a clown’s pratfall.” It recalls suicide lazzi in *commedia dell’arte*. (See note IV,v,27, “*leap upright.*”)
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 in story the characters are supposed to be, and draws further attention to Edgar’s being an actor, not a “real” person. [See Video 34.] 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. **bourn**] 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. Hypothetically, 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**] An old man commanding respect (*OED*, 6a)
73. **clearest**] pure and luminous



Figure 249. 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.

80. *Enter Lear*] *Enter Lear*. (F, 2526). *Enter Lear mad.* after *thus* (Q, 2526). [See note IV,v,11., “*Here’s the place.*”]

80. S.D. *camouflaged with weeds*] Ed. Not in Q. F. *Fantastically dressed with wild flowers*. Capell. There are no stage directions in the *quartos* or *Folio* to indicate what Lear is wearing. Thus, the first question readers must ask themselves about his costume is what are the character’s “objectives” in the scene? The foundation of acting is the reality of *doing*,” as Sanford Meisner taught. What does Lear want to *do*? I think there is a relationship between Lear’s kingly mindset in III,ii, where he takes the stage shouting martial orders to “The Heavens,” and his entrance here, where he is recruiting soldiers for war. Up until the *Battle of Dettingen* in 1743, it was expected of British monarchs to personally lead troops into battle, like Henry V at the battle of Agincourt. (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 coyning, I am the King himselfe*” (Q1, 2530). [See note IV,v,83, “*coining.*”]



Figure 250. Henry V at the battle of Agincourt. Illustration from *History of England* by Henry Tyrrell (c 1860).

It can be inferred that Lear has been “*coining*” weeds into money in order to recruit an army. Evidently, since arriving in Dover, he has been hiring every able-bodied man he meets with a freshly minted weed, as we see him do with Edgar. We learn in a backwards manner at the conclusion of his speech, that he is planning to lead a stealth attack on his “*sons in law.*” This explains the function of his costume: it serves as camouflage 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. Until then, the audience has no idea why he is dressed as he is. The costume is absurd, like Edgar’s kilt and blue bonnet.



Figure 251. 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.

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,” like a mummer dressed as [The Green Man](#) at a May Day celebration, “*a poore Player*” (F, 2345). [See [Figure 251](#).] One of the meanings of weeds is an item of clothing (*OED*, 1.a). “*Be better suited,/ These weedes are memories of those worser hours*” (F, 2753-4).

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. Rather than a verdant symbol of rebirth and resurrection associated with Spring vegetation deities, 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. [See [Figure 256](#).]

"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](#).)

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 252. 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.



Figure 253. *Bal des Ardents* from Froissart's *Chronicles*. Four of the dancers disguised as Wild Men, mythical beings often associated with demonology, were killed in a fire caused by a torch. Wild men were commonly represented in medieval Europe and documented in revels of Tudor England.

Lear’s costume in IV,v is the antithesis of “*sophisticated*” (F, 1886) fashion. It looks like something “*country folk*” might wear at a mummers parade. “‘Momerie’ was a popular amusement between the 13th and 16th century” (*Britannica*). Hypothetically, the costume takes its inspiration from pagan fertility festivals in the UK that mark the beginning of Spring such as *Ēostre*, *Beltane* and *May Day*, which, together with Christmas, were all banned by Puritans during the *English Interregnum*. It is as subversive in its intent as the lurid Tudor period costume we first saw him wearing in I,i with its *priapic* codpiece. Needless to say, the costume is not designed after any specific character in folklore, such as The *Green Man*, *Jack in the Green*, or the *Wild Man* [Figure 253], but a mishmash of them all. I suspect the origin of the costume dates back to the *phallika* in ancient Greece lead by *Dionysus*, and his companion and tutor, the hairy woodland deity “Daddy” *Silenus*. [Figure 254.]



Figure 254. *Silenus*, Paestan red-figure bell krater C4th B.C.

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, his costume is remarkable for its *imaginative* quality, like the those you might see at a mummers parade.

81. **accommodate**] Dress.

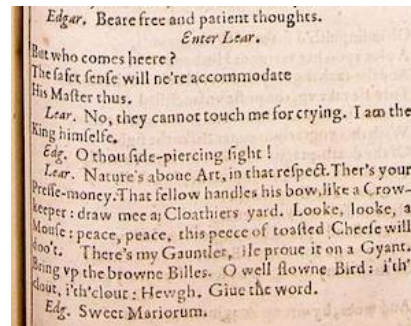


Figure 227. Facsimile of First Folio (1623).

83-94. Lear’s opening dialogue. [See Figure 227.] In the quartos and Folio, lines F, 2530-39 read like a self-contained, interior monologue—“a narrative technique that exhibits the thoughts passing through the minds of the protagonists.”^[3] When approaching the opening of this critically important scene the first question for readers to ask themselves is this: is Lear talking to himself or is he directly addressing Edgar and Gloucester? It is the same question we asked ourselves when Lear enters in III,ii. Is the narrative focused on Lear’s inner thoughts and feelings, or is he addressing the “*twelve-penny Hireling*” making artificial lighting in “*their Heavens*”?^[7] [Compare Figure 138.] The question concerns the play’s basic form of *meta-theatre*, drawing attention to its nature as drama.

Since Rowe’s version published in 1709, the lines have been represented as loosely related thoughts passing through Lear’s mind approaching *free association*. 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 prejudiced by Romanticism with its preferred taste for pathos, interiority and subjectivity: “*we see not Lear, but we are Lear, — we are in his mind*” (Furness qu. Lamb, p.421). The only evidence to support it, apart from the absence of stage directions in the copy text, is theatrical precedent: all actors of renown have performed the lines as a monologue as 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).

If, on the other hand, we hypothesis that Shakespeare intended Lear to be talking to his scene partners, the *focalization* shifts from the internal to the external. We are looking at Lear from

outside his mind, in relation Gloucester, who takes the meaning of his words and actions in their ordinary **literal** sense, which, of course, is not at all what Lear means. Gloucester is as utterly bewildered by the king's doings as Kent is during Lear's trial of Goneril and Regan in III,vi. Here, Shakespeare is dramatizing the key idea that words have no intrinsic meaning. They are artificial as the clothes a person wears. His diatribe against injustice, which follows his puzzling reaction to seeing Gloucester's eyes gouged out, "*Bring vp the browne Billes*" (F, 2538), is a parody of rhetoric and oratory. It is mad and offensive, mixing elements that make sense with some that do not, "*matter, and impertinency mixt,/ Reason in Madnesse*" (F, 2616-17). It has the effect of **minstrel humor**, best known today as **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.

83. **coining**] He is minting weeds. 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 **Sinope** 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). It also evokes IV,iv in *The Winter's Tale* where Perdita, costumed as a shepherdess—who Florizel explicitly compares to "*Flora/ Peering in Aprils front.*" (F, 1799-1800)—welcomes guests to the sheep-shearing festival by handing out spring flowers and herbs: "*Here's flowres for you:/ Hot Lauender, Mints, Sauory, Mariorum*" (F, 1916-17).



Figure 256. Cosiddetta Flora from the Villa di Arianna in Stabiae near Pompeii, 1st century Roman.

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 H), 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). [See Appendix I.]



Figure 257. 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.

86. **Nature's above Art in that respect**] Cf. *The Winter's Tale*, IV,iv, "*The Art it selfe, is Nature*" (F, 1908). Lear thinks a common thistle created by Nature (as in Figure 257 above) is a superior form of currency than costly metal "thistle dollars" forged by James VI of Scotland (as in Figure 258 below). "Coins known as "thistle dollars" were in use in Scotland during the 16th and 17th centuries." (Wiki) The difference between the "natural" and the "artificial" was discussed and contested in the ancient, medieval and early-modern periods of Western history. Central to the story is the role of **alchemy** as a focus of this debate over artifice and nature. See William R. Newman, *Promethean Ambitions: Alchemy and the Quest to Perfect Nature*.



Figure 258. Two Merks or Thistle Dollar. National Museum of Scotland. The coin was worth 26 shillings and eight pence Scots. National Museum of Scotland.

86-7. S.D. *Gives Edgar a thistle*] Ed. Not in Q, F. The “*Presse-money*” (F, 2534) he gives to Edgar is hypothetically 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 236.] The reason Lear wants Gloucester to remove his boots at the end of the scene recalls the legend of the *Scottish thistle*. Lear plans to launch a surprise attack on his “*sons in law*,” and wants to remove his boots to move quietly and stealthily through the brush. See note IV,v,171. S.D. “*Gloucester removes Lear’s boots*.”

“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 259. 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 260, 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*, β , 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 260. 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**] The audience/reader has no idea why Lear is dressed as he is until he explains that he is planning a stealth attack on “*these sons in law*” (Q2, 2629). Our only hint before then is when we see him hiring soldiers for some reason, and rejects Gloucester for not passing the physical exam. (See note IV,v,89, “*draw mee a Cloathiers yard*” (F, 2535). Press-money is “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). 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 261. Blind crippled beggar. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, c. 1566.

88. **crowkeeper**] Gloucester is leaning against his staff, “*Skaring the Ladies like a Crow-keeper*” (F, 461), i.e., a scarecrow. (See Alexander Schmidt, *Shakespeare-lexicon* (a Complete Dictionary Vol.1.) p. 261. Hypothetically, he 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 crows.’” qu Furness p. 276. [See Figure 261.] The words “*Mouse*” (F, 2536), “*peece of toasted Cheese*” (F, 2536), “*Gauntlet*” (F, 2537) and “*Gyant*” (F, 2537) interconnect kinesthetically with the actors’ body movements.



Figure 262. “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 262.]
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 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.)

It is believed that Robert Armin was cast in the role of Mouse in *The King’s Men* revival of *Mucedorus*. If Armin also played the part of Gloucester, one of the many meanings of the word “*mouse*” is metatheatrical, referring to Armin’s indelible pratfall. [See Appendix G: Robert Armin in the Role of Gloucester.]

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.” [See Appendix I.]

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 after smelling it first.
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 at this moment, *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. (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. Compare *Troilus and Cressida*, V,v, “*That stole old Mouse-eaten dry cheese, Nestor*” (F, 3341-42). He knows from having just 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 mise*” (Q, 2452-53). Compare note IV,v, 28., “*jewel.*”
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 261.]



Figure 263. 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**] Upon discovering that Gloucester’s eyes were gouged out, he summons forth his billmen or foot troops to prepare for battle. [See Figure 263.] “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. Bills are still used by peasant for weapons to the present day as we see in [Sebastião Salgado’s](#) photo. [See Figure 264.]



Figure 264. "The icons of victory," photo by Sebastião Salgado, 1998.

The subject of Lear's following *diatribe* is the injustice and inhumanity of Gloucester's blinding. The literal-minded earl has no idea if the king recognizes him or not until the latter explicitly says so at the conclusion of their dialogue, "*I know thee well enough, thy name is Glouster*" (F, 2619)—but the omniscient audience does. See note IV,v, 175, "*I know thee well enough, thy name is Gloucester.*" (F, 2619). If Lear's mind is so completely dissociated from social reality that he doesn't recognize his loyal friend, our first impression of him is that he has lost the capacity to feel pity or respond emotionally to the pain of others. Everything he says rings hollow. What Shakespeare appears to be dramatizing is the manner in which Lear's pity for Gloucester is being expressed. As we observed in Act III,iv, when Lear is moved by pity for mad Tom, he casts off his riding cloak but doesn't give it to him directly. Instead, he intellectualizes about the nature man. For Lear, showing pity has no place in his construct of being macho: it is a sign of being unmanly and weak. (See note III,iv,101., S.D., "*Lear tears off pieces of his costume.*")

Though Lear's battle history is not described in the play, it can be supposed that he was reared from childhood like a Roman soldier. (His uncontrollable anger invites comparison to Coriolanus's.) It is the sight of the earl's suffering causes the battle with his "*sonnes in law*" (Q2, 2629) to take on sudden urgency in his mind. Rather than give Gloucester a big hug and offer his condolences like a "*girlie man*", he launches into a quixotic *diatribe* on the nature of justice. Not only is Gloucester guilty of treason but he is an avowed adulterer. Under the *Law of Moses*, the punishment for adultery is death (*Leviticus 20:10*). At its conclusion of the *diatribe*, when he sits on the ground down next to Gloucester, he expresses regret that he cannot show his feelings of pity directly, and wishes he could give him his own eyes to weep: "*If thou wilt weepe my Fortunes, take my eyes*" (F, 2618).

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 265. 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 266.] 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 266. 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 assumes a kneeling position, 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 meta-theatrical. Robert Armin was around 38 when he hypothetically 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 she knelt before him in I,i,54.
- 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.

109. 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."](#)]
109. S.D. *Lear remains standing*] Ed. Not in Q, F. The question of *how* true knowledge is come by is taken up in the first scene where Lear orders his daughters to empirically quantify how much they love him by rhetoric and oratory. The theme comes to a resolution in this scene where Shakespeare uses tools of medieval minstrels ^[31] to parody rhetorical conventions, such as those espoused by John Rainolds' in his [Oxford Lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric](#). (Rainolds was the most prominent representative of the Puritan party at the [Hampton Court Conference](#).)

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 267](#).] "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 267](#). 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. As noted repeatedly, *King Lear* takes the form of metatheatre. Lear is the archetype of "*a poore Player*" (*Macbeth*, V,v, F, 2345).



[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 of his diatribe that he addresses its subject: Gloucester's blinding.



Figure 268. Rostra (left) and the Arch of Septimius Severus.

Lear's hand gesturing (termed *chironomia*) is as vulgar as his rhetoric. [See Figure 269.] "[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 269. *Chironomia, or, The art of manuall rhetoric*, 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 272, "Treatment of prolapse of uterus", 1559), or demonstrate the game of handy-hand? (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.)

Back in the 16th 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 270. 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. S.D. **Aside**] Ed. Not in Q, F. In the style of [metatheatre](#), Lear switches back and forth between addressing the audience directly and the actor.

110. **quakes**] topples over. Compare the stage direction, “*Fall down and quake*” in [Mucedorus](#), p. 62.

111. **cause**] charge, offence

113. **Die for adultery?**] “In an attempt to discredit Jesus, the [Pharisees](#) brought a woman charged with adultery before him. Then they reminded Jesus that adultery was punishable by stoning under [Mosaic law](#) and challenged him to judge the woman so that they might then accuse him of disobeying the law. Jesus thought for a moment and then replied, ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her ‘ ([John: 8:7](#)). The people crowded around him were so touched by their own consciences that they departed. When Jesus found himself alone with the woman, he asked her who were her accusers. ‘She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.’ ([John: 8:11](#))

116. **Gloucester’s bastard son**] Lear does not address Gloucester by name until the very end of his diatribe. (See [note IV,v,175.](#), “*Gloucester.*”). Codes of masculinity strictly forbid boys and men from showing grief or vulnerability. 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: “*If thou wilt weepe my Fortunes, take my eyes*” (F, 2618).



Figure 271. 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.

119. **For I lack soldiers**] Lear is saying that since relinquishing his kingship, he lacks the means to change the law, which is why he is now recruiting mercenary soldiers. See [note IV,v,184.](#), “*sons in law.*”

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 271.]

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 272. “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 ‘displeasent 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 273. 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 274. 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.”) Edgar refers to his father as “innocent” in III,vi,8. (F, 2005) Daisies symbolize innocence in Shakespeare. See

Hamlet, IV,v, “*There’s a Daysie*” (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*). 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.
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 before giving it to Gloucester at the top of the scene, and knows it reeks of mold, like a “*piece of toasted cheese*” (i.e., **blue Stilton**). He does not need to smell it here. See *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642*, p. 124-25, **kiss**.
135. **ruined piece of Nature**] Lear’s hand. Cf. IV,v, 88: “*This **piece** of toast’d cheese*.”



Figure 275. The hand of Pope Francis being kissed by Martin Scorsese. 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 275.] “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 sobs into it.



Figure 276. 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. 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 16th 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 276.] 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. See *Much Ado About Nothing*, I,i, “*hang me vp at the doore of a brothel-house for the signe of blinde Cupid*” (F, 244-5).



Figure 277. “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 hypothesis is that after inappropriately kissing Lear’s hand *physically*, that Gloucester clings on to it, like a frightened child. He asks the king, “*Do’st thou know me?*” (F, 2579), hoping for some sort of recognition, some emotional support, some show of pity, as one might expect from a father figure. However, rather than react in a manner congruent with the sympathy the audience is feeling, Lear takes the physical kiss of his hand as a sexual proposition, “*No, doe thy worst blinde Cupid, Ile not loue*” (F, 2581-2). In effect, Shakespeare turns the action into burlesque. The forlorn earl thinks the king has lost his mind completely, and begins sobbing in despair, still clutching on to Lear hand. Edgar’s remark, “*I would not take this from report,/ It is, and my heart breakes at it*” (F, 2585-6) prolongs the time and significance of Gloucester’s weeping. [See note IV,v, 174. “*If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.*”] It is not until Lear turns his palm *upward* and demands Gloucester “*read*” his “*challenge*” (F, 2587) that the latter stops crying and lets go. I wish to stress that Lear does not pull his hand away from Gloucester while the latter is clinging on to it. He shifts 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*. Shakespeare’s father was a glover. (See note IV, ii,21,S.D., “*Gives him a glove.*”)



Figure 278. 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**] See note IV,v,92., "*my gauntlet*." Lear's "*challenge*" is not something that can be seen with the eyes. It must be *felt*. (See note IV,v,183, "*felt*.") "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). Compare "Touch Me and see" (Luke 24:39); "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands" (John 20:27). Jeremiah 5:21, "*Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not*". At this moment, Lear turns his hand with the palm facing upward for Gloucester to "*read*", as in Figure 279. Alternatively, given the parodical 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 279. 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 sense of feeling. Compare "*Speake what we feele*" (F, 3299)

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 academic 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 vpward*” (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. [See note IV,v, 178. S.D., “*He stands.*”] 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 soft music on his lute.*”



Figure 280. Huntsman wearing riding boots. From *The Noble Art of Venerie or Hunting* (p. 130).

171. **boots**] His over-the-knee riding boots. [See Figure 280.]

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 (16th Century Boots). [See Figure 281.]



Figure 281. 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). It is only now that the audience can induce why he is covered himself with weeds: to camouflage himself for battle.

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**] The important question for readers is at what

moment in the scene Gloucester weeps, the reference in this line. A linear or literalist interpretation suggests that Lear is reacting to Gloucester's weeping at that very moment in time, as in Peter Brook's 1953 production with Orson Welles (1:00:21); Michael Elliot's 1983 production with Laurence Olivier (1:57:40); Trevor Nunn's 2008 production with Ian McKellan (2:14:12), and all the rest.



Video 38. "If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes" from *King Lear* with James Earl Jones and Paul Sorvino, NYC Shakespeare Festival, 1974 (2:19:39)

Scholars today are in general agreement that *King Lear* was conceived by Shakespeare as 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](#)). If Gloucester is not weeping here, but fumbling around trying to remove the king's boots, it appears that Lear is answering the former's question from before, *Do'st thou know me?*" (F, 2579). Using the same logic, line 174 can be taken as a delayed reaction to the pity he felt upon seeing Gloucester weep. [See [note IV,v,138, S.D.](#), "*Gloucester sobs, still holding Lear's hand.*"'] As we observed in III,iv, when he dismantled his costume, the codes of masculinity he lives by cause him to repress feelings that might make him look soft-hearted.

If one's aim is to restore the play to something approaching its original form, editors must be guided by the narrative structure of the work itself, and the theatrical manner and style of the era in which it was conceived. As William Arrowsmith writes in his Introduction to *The Bacchae*, "the reader who is not willing to follow where the play, rather than his prejudice, leads him forfeits his quarry."^[8] From a **structuralist's** point of view, Lear's diatribe is a parody of **rhetoric**, as in [Quintilian's five canons of rhetorical delivery](#). The theme of rhetoric is first stated in the opening scene, where Lear judges the truth of his daughters' love for him by their skill at words. Rhetoric is a common theme in Shakespeare. "*Words, words, words*", says Hamlet (F, 1230). "*Words, words, meere words, no matter from the heart*", says Troilus (F, 3322-3). In the penultimate couplet of *King Lear*, Edgar says "*Speake what we feelee, not what we ought to say*" (F, 3299). Compare IV,v,148, "I see it *feelingly*."

The **Trivium** and the **Quadrivium** are not part of the curriculum in public schools today. Elizabethan scholars, on the other hand, had grammar, logic and rhetoric beaten into them starting in grammar school (as least those whose parents could afford to send them to one). They would be quick to spot the satirical nature of Lear's oratory from experience. Obviously, there are elements of pathos in IV,v, but overall, it was written for its comic effect, exemplified by Gloucester's suicide **lazzo**. The style of the speech is best compared to **literary nonsense** or a **riddle**. Aristotle rightly 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). Sometimes, Lear’s actions make no sense until later on, as when he smells his hand. [See note IV,v,90-1, “*piece of toast’d cheese*.”] The omniscient spectator has never doubted that Lear is fully aware of Gloucester’s identity. The king considers hiring him as a bowman in his army, refers to him as a “*Mouse*” (F, 2536), and has a second “mini” heart attack upon seeing him blinded. He then launches into a diatribe against injustice, which takes the blinding of Gloucester as its *implicit* subject. (“*O well flowne Bird: i'th' clout, i'th'clout,*” F, 2548-49). [See note IV,v,93-4, “*Bring up the brown bills*” (F, 2538)].

175. **I know thee well enough**] Lear answers Gloucester’s question from before, “*Dost thou know me?*” (F, 2579).

175. **Gloucester**] Only now does Lear personalize the subject of his diatribe. The audience saw him respond in the same manner to the suffering of poor Tom in III,iv—by *intellectualizing*. “In psychology, intellectualization is a *defense mechanism* by which reasoning is used to avoid feeling.”

178. **preach**] A reference to his standing liker a preacher.

178. S.D. **He stands**] Ed. Not in Q, F. See note 170. S.D. “*Sitting beside Gloucester.*”

181. **stage of fools**] “*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 Ideot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing*”). 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.)

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). “*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, viz., people should mold their lives on the tears we cry when we are born

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 16.] 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).

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).

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, Wellesley College.)

Of course, the audience is not supposed to make any sense of Lear's closing words except that he is fighting mad, and on his way to battle. Regrettably, when the text is paraphrased into words by Kinbotean editors such as myself to make it "understandable" to student readers, its meaning is destroyed, like the completely incompressible dialect Edgar uses to address Oswald later in this scene. [See Video 40, [Westcountry Yap](#).] As E.B. White said, "Explaining a joke is like dissecting a frog. You understand it better but the frog dies in the process."

182. **delicate stratagem**] A tricky business.



Figure 282. 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 282.] 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 283.] 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 283. 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*).



Video 39, "How to Block Felt Hats."

183. **felt**] (F, 2627). *Fell* (Q, 2627); *fell* (Q2, 2626). 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 attyreth 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). *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 284. "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 284.] 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 paid Edgar to join 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 285. *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 285.] Compare *Macbeth*, III,iv, "*With twenty trenched gashes on his head*" (F, 1286). As a humorous side note, great advancements had been in medicine during the Tudor Age, including brain surgery. For 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 286. *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).
201. S.D. **Aside]** Ed. Not in Q, F.
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). Compare IV,v,72, “*father.*” But clearly, something about the 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. At the beginning of IV,v, he challenges poor Tom 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).
218. **what are you?**] Gloucester has long sensed that “mad Tom” and his new guide from Dover are not who they claim to be, and explodes with impatience. His agitation is sparked by the word “*father,*” which Edgar is using as “a title prefixed to the name of an older man, or one who commands respect,” i.e., not in the sense of a parent (*OED*, 6a). The next time Gloucester hears Edgar speak the word “*father,*”, he finally sees the truth. [See note IV,v, 288., “*father.*”]
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, who 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
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 the *Queen’s English*, it ceases to sound like nonsense. As E.B. White said, “Explaining a joke is like dissecting a frog. You understand it better but the frog dies in the process.”



Video 40: Westcountry Yap.

Edgar's speech further devaluates the "art of rhetoric" parodied 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* 11.3.65-184³²). 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 doesn'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*.



Video 41. Barbara Billingsley (AKA June Cleaver), the whitest woman in America, translates "jive" to an English speaking-only flight attendant in the movie *Airplane!*

Tom Eatsleepdreamenglish runs through some of the more common accents currently heard in the UK in Video 42. One can only imagine the varied dialects spoken in Southwark and across the British Isles in the 15th and 16th centuries. 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*).



Video 42. "20 British Accents." Edgar is probably affecting a conservative English accent signaling his high breeding.

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 immediately disarms Oswald with Gloucester's wooden staff, and, without any ado, uses the Steward's precious 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**.

243. **purse**] Oswald keeps his money in a purse. The letter from Goneril he has hidden in his pocket.

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 Figure 287.].



Figure 287. *The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula* by Caravaggio (1610), Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano, Naples.

248. S.D. **He dies**] (Q, 2703). Not in F.

253. **pockets**] Oswald is probably wearing sewn-in pockets. [Figure 288.] "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 (Rebecca Unsworth, "Hands Deep in History: Pockets in Men and Women's Dress in Western Europe, c. 1480–1630", p. 151.)



Figure 288. 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.

254. S.D. **Goes through his pockets**] Ed. Not in Q, F. In addition to Goneril's letter, does he find the unpaired-glove Regan ordered Oswald to give to Edmund?

254. **I am only sorry**] The character of Oswald was written to be sympathetic. We are sorry to see him die, as is Edgar. (See note I,iv,43. "So please you.")

255. **deathsmen**] 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. ***Soft 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). **Stoicism**, a Hellenistic philosophy, teaches acceptance of fate, readiness for death, and equanimity in the face of fortune's changes. Stoics like **Seneca** wrote that one should endure all things with fortitude, as everything is determined by a chain of causes, and that the timing of death is settled at birth. Hamlet's line resonates with the same Stoic ideals as Edgar's.

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 because what the audience is hearing are the *palliate* sounds of music coming from Cordelia’s camp. (See note IV,vi,S.D., “*Soft music.*”) Lear’s reconciliation with his daughter occurs days after we left him in IV,v. The drums Edgar is referring to in line 288 happen shortly before the battle, when Albany’s enters with “*Drumme and Colours*” (F, 2845) in IV,vii (Act V, scene i in the Folio, scene 22 in the quartos). The music bridges the jump in time, as in movie narratives. It helps connect the scenes storywise, and creates emotion. [See note IV,vii,17.,S.D. “*Enter, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril, Albany’s Squire, and Soldiers.*”]

288. **father**] Edgar uses the word “*father*” in the sense he used it before. For reasons unknown, Gloucester, suddenly recognizes the identity of his son in a classical moment of *anagnorisis*. [See Appendix B.]

288. **friend**] i.e. Edgar. See Appendix B.

288. S.D. ***Gloucester rises with assistance***] Ed. The important question for the reader is when does Gloucester rise? Is it after hearing Edgar’s extended metaphor, or upon recognizing his son’s voice when he hears the word “*father*” spoken for a last time. In the final scene, what compels Edmund to tell Albany of his order to have Lear and Cordelia murdered in prison is the sight of Goneril’s and Regan’s corpses, not Edgar’s speeches. Similarly, Lear’s Knight is not convinced by “*Caius*”’s words to bring letters to Cordelia. He agrees to go only after Kent shows him his signet ring.

288. S.D. ***Exeunt Edgar with his father in his hand***] Ed. *Exeunt*, F. Exit. Q. Compare INTERMEZZO, S.D., “*Cordelia with her father in her hand.*”

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***] Capell. Not in Q, F. See “*louder the musicke there*” (Q, 2775.2). Logically, the melody is a variation on the one the Fool played in I,v and III,vi. It functions as a “*leitmotif*” for the infrangible love Cordelia has for her father, which evokes the stereotypical bond a mother has for her child. (Goneril, Regan and Edmund were not graced to be so loved by their fathers.)

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).

S.D. ***Lear’s Knight***] Ed. Gentleman, F. Not in Q.

7. **weeds**] clothing. See note IV,v, 80. S.D. “*camouflaged with weeds.*”

9. **shortens my made intent**] interferes with the plan I have made.



Figure 289. Portrait de Michel de Nostre-Dame (Nostre Dame), dit Nostradamus, astrologue (1503-1566), detail, Maison de Nostradamus, Salon de Provence, Bouches du Rhone.

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 289.]
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. **Kent**] Ed. *Gent.* (Q, 2774); *Gent.* (F, 2771). When spoken by Kent, the line is more than a literal statement of fact. It has a rich subtext.
22. **We**] Kent and Lear’s Knight, who are standing next to one another.
22. **fresh garments**] Kent is letting her know that the King is appropriately attired to receive an audience. My guess is that he has been dressed as he would want to be seen, in the hyper-masculine Tudor fashions he identifies with. Lear is too proud to appear publicly in a night-gown and nightcap as in 2 *Hen IV*, Q1, 1421.1, “Enter the King in his night-gowne.” See note V,i,285, “I haue seene the day, with my good biting Faulchion / I would haue made him skip” (F, 3241-42).
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. Compare *Othello*, V,ii, “Enter Lodouico, Montano, Iago, and Officers, Cassio in a Chaire” (Q, 3582.1). Presumably a sedan chair, like the one made for Charles V below.



Figure 266. 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. 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. [See Appendix E: The Incidental Music in *King Lear*.])
28. **there**] Logically, the musicians are in the "music gallery" (or perhaps the "**Orchestia**" in the pit) at the Globe. Here, the sound is part of the *diegesis*.
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 291. 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 292 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 guilt he is feeling for unjustly banishing Cordelia 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 not shown but narrated in the final scene, is comparable *emotionally* to what the audience sees dramatized between Lear and Cordelia. In Gloucester's case, his guilt is too much to endure, and his heart, "Twixt two extremes of passion, ioy and greefe, / Burst[s] smilingly." (F, 3161-2). Note how Shakespeare compresses time theatrically. Lear is wakened by Cordelia in IV,vi, days after he left the stage in IV,v. Gloucester is not reunited with Edgar until after the battle, some "*halfe houre*" (F, 3156) before the latter is summoned by the Herald Trumpeter.

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 293. 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 86-93** (Q, 2843.2-2843.9) have been transposed from scene 17 in the first and second quartos. See Appendix C.
86. **Kent**] Q. 2347.2. Not in F.
- 86-7. **Why the King of France ...reason**] This exchange serves to identify the King of France and Edgar as two different people in the fictional world of the story. The audience knows they are played by the same actor with the effect of metatheatre. See Appendix C.
88. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Gent.* Q, 2347.4. Not in F.
89. **imports**] portends
92. **Kent**] Q. 2347.8. Not in F.
93. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Gent.* (Q, 2347.9). Not in F.
92. **The Marshall of France Monsier la Far**] Q, 2347.9. Not in F.
92. **Holds it true sir that the Duke of Cornwall was so slain**] Q, 2843.1. Not in F.
92. **Kent**] Q. 2347.9. Not in F.
93. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Gent.* Q. 2347.10. Not in F.
93. **The Marshall of France, Monsieur La Far**] Q, 2843.1. Not in F. Lines Q, 2843.1-2843.11 were deleted in the Folio.
- 93-4. **Holds it true**] is it still accepted.
95. **Kent**] Q, 2843.2. Not in F.
96. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Gent.* Q, 2843.3. Not in F.
96. **conductor**] leader, general. See Appendix C.
95. **Kent**] Q, 2843.4. Not in F.
98. **Lear's Knight**] Q, 2843.5-6. Not in F.
100. S.D. **Drum afar off**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare "*A drum a farre off*" (Q1, 2739).
100. **Kent**] Q, 2843.7-8. Not in F.
102. **Lear's Knight**] Ed. *Gent.* Q, 2843.9.
102. **arbitrement**] decisive encounter
103. **Kent**] Q, 2843.10 Not in F.
103. S.D. **Exit**] Theobald. Not in Q, F.
104. **Kent**] Q, 2347.51. Not in F.
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. Not in F.

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 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. See 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. *Exit Albany’s Squire*] Ed. *To an Officer; who goes out.* Capell. Not in Q, F. Hypothetically, Albany’s Squire 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 her conversation with Oswald in 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).

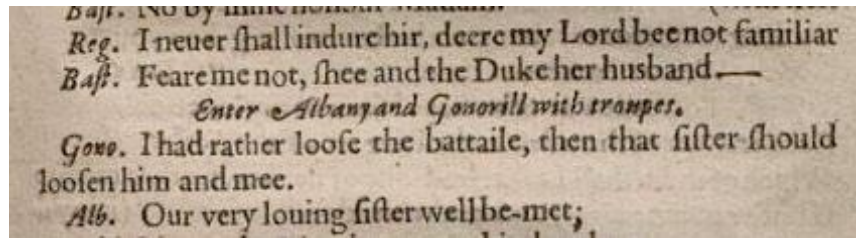


Figure 294. “I had rather lose the battle” ascribed to Gonoril in the quartos. The line was omitted in the Folio. InternetShakespeareEditions.

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 Albany’s 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.

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

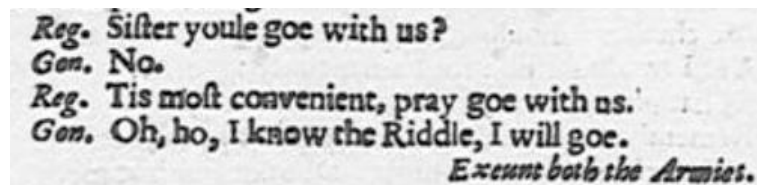


Figure 295. Facsimile copy of Second Quarto (New South Wales).

34. **Gon**] Ed. *Reg.* (Q, 2875) *Reg.* (F, 2875). Goneril does not have the opportunity to leave with Edmund. She is stuck with her husband as long as he lives.

35. **Reg**] Ed. *Gon.* (Q, 2875), *Gon.* (F, 2875). Regan’s husband is dead. She is free to go with Edmund wherever she wants. She has now an obvious advantage in the rivalry between the sisters. 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. The human hand is a salient motif in the play. See note IV,ii,21 S.D., “*Gives him a glove.*”
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).
37. S.D. *wearing a hooded cloak*] Compare *Coriolanus*, IV,iv, “*Enter Coriolanus in meane Apparrell, Disguisd, and muffled*” (F, 2621-22) “[T]o enter muffled is to appear with one’s face concealed by a garment” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*, **muffled**, p. 164.) 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—the dialect he used to address Oswald in IV,v. [See Video 40, *Westcountry Yap*]. Edgar is probably speaking in conservative English, signaling his high breeding. Edmund only accepts his challenge because “*thy out-side looks so faire and War-like,/ And that thy tongue (somesay) of breeding breathes*” (F, 3098-99).
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. In I,ii, Edgar enters to see Edmund looking at the letter he forged to undo him.
44. **avouched**] maintained.
44. **miscarry**] lose the battle, and perish
48. **Herald**] Herald Trumpet
50. **o’erlook**] peruse
50. S.D. *As Edgar is leaving*] Ed. Exit (Q, 2894); Exit (F, 2894)
50. S.D. *Edmund reenters*] Enter Edmund (F, 2895); Enter Edmund (Q, 2895)
50. S.D. *with a map*] Ed. Not in Q, F. A map of the battlefield. Compare I,i,S.D., “*reading a map.*”
50. S.D. *exchange glances*] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare IV,ii, “*glances on Jane Shore while reading.*” Thomas Heywood, *1 Henry VI.* p. 63.
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.
- 55-69. **To both these sisters...**] This speech is delivered with the same familiar, engaging tone as Edmund’s speech addressed directly to the audience in I,ii where he shares his plan to ruin his brother and make himself the legitimate heir of Gloucester. In the same manner, by letting us in on his sinister plot to have Lear and Cordelia murdered after the battle, he makes us fellow conspirators. Legal theorists today refer it as **Accomplice Liability**. As noted in Appendix B, on the surface, Edmund is an attractive, seductive character, and odds are we are charmed by

him. Robert Hare, an expert in [psychopathy](#), describes psychopathic individuals as “social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life Completely lacking in conscience and empathy, they selfishly take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of regret.”^[9]

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*, p, 243). “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 43. English civil war drum calls, played by the drummers of the Marquess of Winchesters Regiment.

INTERMEZZO] Ed. *Scena Secunda*. (F, 2917). Scene 23 in Quarto. There is compelling evidence that the dialogue in “V,ii” was interpolated. [See [Appendix B](#).] Hypothetically Shakespeare’s original intent was to give the battle the artistic form of an *intermezzo* or *intermedio*,— terms indicating that music is performed between acts. Obviously, Edmund cannot logically 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). 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).

“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. The six *intermedi* staged in Florence for the wedding of banking mogul Cosimo de’ Medici in 1539, at a cost far exceeding the grossest modern bonus, were spectacular. By the end of the century, the play itself was little more than a pretext for these super-opulent ‘middle’ pieces.” (Stephen Johnson, “What is an intermezzo?” *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.



Video 44. “Bagpipes in War”

S.D. *Bagpiper plays*] Ed. Not in Q, F. While the intermezzo is being used as a plot device to signal the passage of time, arguably its most important function is to create emotion. [See Appendix E: The Incidental Music in *King Lear*.] There is nothing in the stage directions to indicate that Shakespeare originally called for a bagpipe, as there is, for example, in *Captain Thomas Stuckeley* (1596), “*Drum soundeth and a Bagpipe*”. We know it only by first principles of music and drama. The bagpipe was primarily a peasant instrument during the Middle Ages.^[93] From the 14th century, bagpipes were used as an incentive to battle, “Pipers were not only soldiers, but morale boosters. Thousands of pipers died while playing their men into battle, as they could not carry a weapon and their pipes at the same time. This was a great act of bravery.”^[7] William Millin, commonly known as Piper Bill, was a Canadian-born Scottish bagpiper, famous for playing “*Highland Laddie*”, “*The Road to the Isles*”, and “*All The Blue Bonnets Are Over the Border*” as his comrades fell around him on *Sword Beach*.” The haunting sound of the bagpipe in *King Lear* is meant to awakens memories of a distant past. It likely would have resonated with Shakespeare’s audience, especially James VI and I who was Scottish. The musical effect expresses the gravitas of the battle, and the moral bravery of Cordelia’s doomed army. The playwright describes the sound “*as Melancholly as a ... a Louers Lute...or the Drone of a Lincolnshire Bagpipe*” (*Henry IV, Part 1*, F, 184-87.) The bagpipe is a folk instrument with certain social and political connotations, like the ram’s or cattle’s horn Edgar winds in his disguise as a Bedlam beggar throughout Acts III and IV (F, 2032), and the motif of a hurdy-gurdy we first hear in II,iii. [See note II,iii, S.D., “*A hurdy-gurdy plays*.”]

[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.”)

The editors of *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* (p. 164) cite the use of a bagpipe or **pipe** in *Captain Thomas Stukeley*, “*Drum soundeth and a Bagpipe*” (Internet Archive). Compare “Soone after by his **bagpipers** [he] sounded the retraite.” (Holland tr. W. Camden *Britannia*. II. 136, 1610).



Figure 296. “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.

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. *Kent*] Ed. Not in Q, 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 ouer the stage*, (Q1, 2917-19). *Enter the powers of France ouer 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.



Figure 297. 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*] 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 enters on the sly with Lear and Cordelia in tow, probably

through one of the two side doors as he did in IV,vii. (See note IV,vii, S.D., “*Enter Edmund and Regan from one door.*”) He certainly does not want to call attention to the whereabouts of his captives or risk his murderous conversation with the Captain being overheard. The showy entrance with drum and colors is made by Albany *et al* through the large central opening in the tiring house,—what was called the “*porta regia* in Roman theatre. He, and not Edmund, is the one leading the English forces, as the duke is quick to remind him. (See note V,i,40,S.D., “*Enter, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril, Albany’s Squire, and Soldiers.*”)

S.D. **holding hands**] Ed. Not in Q, F. Compare “*her father in her hand* (Q1, 2919). Compare also *Coriolanus*, “*Holds her by the hand silent*” (F, 3544). The human hand is a central motif in *Lear*. See note IV,ii, 21. S.D. “*Gives him a glove*”

S.D. **guarded by two Soldiers, Captain**] Ed. *Enter in conquest with Drum and Colours, Edmund, Lear, and Cordelia, as prisoners, Souldiers, Captaine.* (F, 2938-39). Edmund orders two soldiers to escort Lear and Cordelia to prison, leaving him alone on stage with the brutish Captain.

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**] flitty, 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 “*gilded butterflies*” (F, 2953), but also talking about the male-dominated subject of philosophy. “The Renaissance, that is, the period that extends roughly from the middle of the fourteenth century to the beginning of the seventeen century, was a time of intense, all-encompassing, and, in many ways, distinctive philosophical activity.”

^[14] As we saw in III,iv, Lear is so smitten with abstruse questions of love, language, justice and being that he tries to strip off his shirt in the storm. Afterwards, he absurdly draws mad Tom aside to discuss an urgent question of natural philosophy as though the latter was Diogenes of Sinope. See note III,iv, 144, “*Theban.*”



Figure 298. *Diogenes* (1873), by Jules Bastien-Lepage.

17. **God’s spies**] Ed. Gods Q, F. Spies of “*high-iudging Ioue*” (F, 1522); 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 299. *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 300.]
18. **great ones**] like Socrates, Hypatia, Seneca, Boethius, John Ball, Galileo, William Tyndale, and Giordano Bruno,—“great ones” who were sent away to prison. [See Figure 299.]



Video 45. Shakespeare was devastated by Giordano Bruno's Death. 'The Phoenix and the Turtle' explained.

19. **ebb and flow by th'moon**] 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.”
20. **such sacrifices**] i.e., as in the sacrifice you made to help me



Figure 300. *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. Is she crying because she's afraid of going to prison, as Lear supposes, or because she failed to protect her father, who seems to have regressed into a state of childness? The action is ambiguous.
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**] *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). Alternatively, R.A. Foakes notes that ‘good years’ might connote time. “As long as Lear can be with Cordelia, the years, as he images them, will be good” (*The Arden Shakespeare: King Lear*, p. 366) See note V,i,19, “*ebb and flow by th'moon.*”
24. **flesh and fell**] flesh and skin, i.e. altogether.
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]** What it means to be a man is a central question 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 does not care that her husband 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. His choices are 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]** banns of marriage
90. **interlude]** viz., a joke. See Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, "Interlude 1" (p. 243). 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. Compare *Henry VI, Part 3*, IV,vii, "Throwes downe his Gauntlet" (F, 2585). "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 301. 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), “*Sutble falls down in a swoon*” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642*. p. 223).



Figure 302. *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 302.] 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 administrating 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 16th 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., reciprocation, 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 paramount, 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 46. The Sounding of Assis’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 46.]

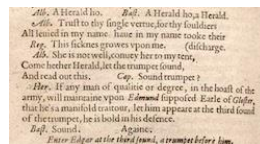


Figure 303. “A Herald ho,” Quarto 1 (Halliwell-Phillipps), Internet Shakespeare Editions.

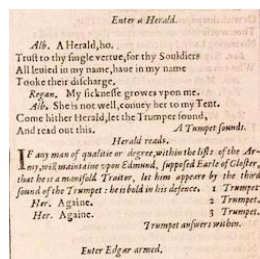


Figure 304. “A Herld ho,” Folio (Halliwell-Phillipps), Internet Shakespeare Editions

106. *Enter a Herald Trumpeter*] Ed. *Enter a Herald.* after “firmly” (line 102) (F, 3050); not in Q. “[S]ometimes the musician playing the trumpet is specified” (*A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580-1642* p. 239 . See *Coriolanus*, I,v, “*Enter Martius, and Titus with a Trumpet*” (F, 574). [See Figure 303 and 304.]

106. S.D. *Exit Regan, led*] Theobald. Not in Q, F.

107. S.D. *To Herald Trumpeter*] Ed. 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” cannot sound his *buisine* and read Albany’s paper at the same time; and because the “Herald” 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) the paper to read, in which Edgar is commanded to appear by the sound of the third trumpet.



Video 47. Video, OAE Principal Trumpet David Blackadder introduces the Baroque or Natural 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 obviously has no knowledge of what a Herald is supposed to do.

108. S.D. *Hands his Squire a paper*] Ed. 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 17th century. [See Video 47.]

109. S.D. **Trumpet sounds**] (F, 3058). Not in Q. The Herald trumpeter skillfully sounds a call on the instrument. Compare *Troilus & Cressida*, IV,v: “*Thou, Trumpet, ther's my purse;/ Now cracke thy lungs, and split thy brasen pipe:/ Blow villaine, till thy sphered Bias cheeke/ Outswell the collicke of pufte Aquilon:/ Come, stretch thy chest, and let thy eyes spout bloud*” (F, 2555-59).

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**] *I 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 *buisine*.
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 305. 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 306. 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 307. 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. Hypothetically, 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.

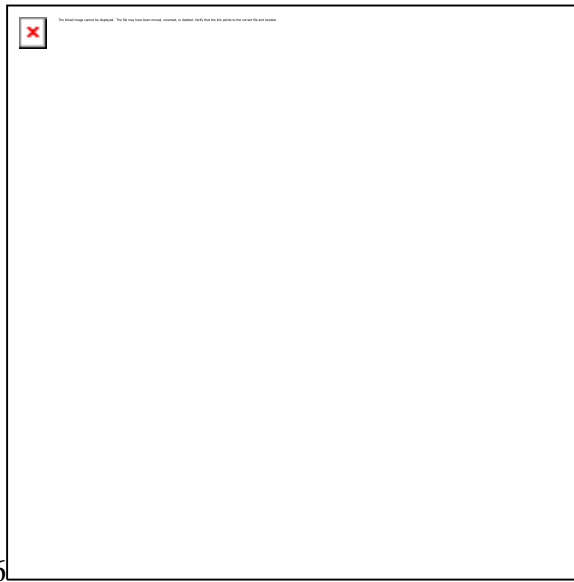
151. S.D. **She rushes to Edmund's side**] Ed. Not in Q, F.

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.

155. **stopple**] Stople (Q1, 3114); stop (Q2, 3113); (F, 3113). A stopple is something that stops or closes. Compare "Which might serve for a sufficient stopple for the Doctors mouth, to keep in his Doctrine of Necessity." In Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (1659)



(OED, I,1,b)

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*. Compare “*She snatches them and tears them*” [*King Leir* (1595), V,x, p. 104]. Cf also *1 Henry VI*, III,i,, “*Gloster offers to put vp a Bill: Winchester snatches it, teares it.*” (F, 1303-4).
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*).
169. 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**] Under the Law of Moses, the punishment for adultery is death (*Leviticus 20:10*). Compare note IV,v.113., “*Die for adultery?*” (F, 2557). Edgar’s words are a prelude to Albany’s proclamation in which he intends to restore moral order to the kingdom by doing right by the gods. “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do righteous judgment?*” (*Gen. 18:25*). [See Appendix A.]
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 do good]** “Perchance”? What is keeping Edmund from revealing his plot then and there? For the Bastard, Death is the only effective **mode of persuasion**. Edgar’s words 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 despite his “*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*.”

See note V,i,243., “Some good.”

221. **Enter Albany’s Squire, with a bloody knife]** Ed. *Enter one with a bloody 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 lack of pity is being juxtaposed with his young Squire’s abundance of it.

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 308. 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 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*. 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 belov'd**] "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

244. **Despite**] In defiance. Cf. *Taming of the Shrew*, "An Onion ... Shall in despite enforce a waterie eie" (F, 137-9)

244. **nature**] "Natural feeling or affection, originally esp. that between parent and child" (*OED* II.6). Compare *Macbeth*, "top vp th'accesse, and passage to Remorse, / That no compunctious visitings of Nature / Shake my fell purpose" (F, 395-97). See note V,i,200., "And shall perchance do good." For Edmund, Death is the only effective **mode of persuasion**. Edgar's words do not cause him 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 despite his "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."

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). Compare Malcolm's speech restoring moral order as the end of *Macbeth*, F, 2513-28. [See Appendix A.]

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.

263-65. **All friends shall taste the wages of their virtue...deserving**] In both the quartos and the Folio, these lines are spoken directly before Lear's final speech where they suggest that Cordelia will taste the "wages of her virtue" in Heaven. (F, 3268-76.) [See Appendix A.]

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 309. 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 16th 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 beeweene 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.

272. **promis'd end**] the Last Judgment, the end of the world.

273. **Fall and cease**] Albany's believe in providential justice is by shattered by the death Cordelia. He looks to the Heavens and curses the gods. [See Appendix A.] His words allude 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 310. Detail from *The Fall of the Titans*, Cornelis van Haarlem, c. 1588-1590, Statens Museum, Copenhagen.

273. 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 311.] “The unbanned 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*). Only in Act III does Lear go “unbanned” (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 311. Charles Blount, Duke of Devonshire, c.1603/6, British Museum.

In keeping with Lear’s histrionic nature, 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 a feather as a symbol in his miniature of Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland. Hanging from a branch in the background is a globe 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 134.]

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. **I have seen the day**] Compare *Othello*, V,ii, “*I haue seene the day,/ That with this little Arme, and this good Sword,/ I haue made my way through more impediments/ Then twenty times your stop.*” (F, 3561-64)

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 *Shakespeare’s 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 is soon to die himself, which is why he alone is welcome. The scene is no place for the living.



Figure 312. 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 Capitaine.* (Q1, 3265). *Enter Captain.* (Q2, 3265). *Enter a Messenger* (F, 3264)

304. **Squire**] Ed. *Capt.* (Q1, 3265). *Cap:* (Q2, 3266). *Mess.* (F, 3265).

304. **That's but a trifle here**] Albany's words show him a changed man. In IV,ii he was preaching divine retribution as vigorously as the Puritan propagandist Philip Stubbs. (See note IV,ii,46-50, “*If that the heauens ... like monsters of (the deepe)*” (Q1, 2302.15-17). See also note IV,ii,78-80, “*This shewes you are aboue / You Iustices, that these our neather crimes / So speedily can venge*” (F, 2323-25). In the final scene, he subjects the claims of Edgar and Edmund to a trial by combat leaving it to the gods to choose the righteous winner. He takes the news of Goneril's and Regan's deaths as acts of Providence: “*This iudgement of the Heauens that makes vs tremble. / Touches vs not with pitty*” (F, 3185-86). [See Appendix A.]

305. **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 317.]

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 313. 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?](#)"

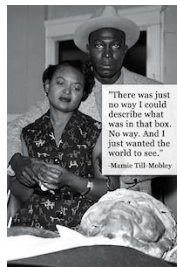


Figure 314. Mamie Till insisted on her son's casket being open so that the world "could see what they did to my baby." Photo by David Jackson.

- 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. 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 in Mississippi. 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 314.] 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**] I hear the penultimate couplet said as a *self-reproach*. He is not rebuffing the duke. Earlier in the scene, Edgar takes the blinding of his father as a divine judgment for the sin of committing adultery. (See note V,i,170-73, "*The gods are just...*") Presumably, the final denouement changes his mind about God's protective care of mankind, as it did Albany's. It proved Gloucester right: "*As Flies to wanton Boyes, are we to th'Gods, / They kill vs for their sport.*" (F, 2221-22). Certainly, Edgar is aware that had he postponed the narration of his own story until after Lear and Cordelia had been released from prison, they might still be alive. "*Words, words, words*", says Hamlet (F, 1230). As a theoretical matter, based on the research of G.E. Bentley (*The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's time, 1590-1642*), it might be in *King Lear* that the only roles played by the "Principall Actors" listed in the First Folio were Lear (Burbage), Gloucester (Armin), Edgar (Henry Condell), Edmund (John Lowin), Kent, and the dukes of Albany and Cornwall. The rest of the parts were likely assigned to apprentice players. It is conceivable that William Shakespeare cast himself as Albany.

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 315. "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*—a symbol of innocence that has not been corrupted. As the bodies of Lear and Cordelia are put on a bier, the audience is left pondering the Squire's future, and what *choices* he will make on his road to becoming a man.



Figure 316. 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. Compare *Romeo and Juliet*, III,ii, "*And thou and Romeo presse on heauie beere*" (F, 1710)

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 315.] See Henry Chettle, *The Tragedy of Hoffman*, Actus tertus, "Exeunt carrying the dead bodies." See *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV,15, "Exeunt, bearing of Anthonies body" (F, 3107).
326. S.D. *Exeunt, with a dead march*] (F, 3302). Not in Q.
326. S.D. **FINIS**] (Q, 3302), (F, 3303).



Figure 317. 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. (See [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 moralistic speech moments before Lear dies, after telling his Squire (aka “*a Messenger*”, F, 3264) 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 as in lines 6-14 highlighted in red below. 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. As scholar and playwright [William Gibson](#) puts it, “the transposition of the speech keeps the character from being an idiot” (Personal communication, 1978). Albany’s words are not ironic, they are “idiotic,” to quote Gibson.

1	<i>Edm.</i>	He hath commission from thy wife and me
2		To hang Cordelia in the prison, and
3		To lay the blame upon her own despair,
4		That she fordid herself.
	<i>Alb.</i>	The Gods defend her!
5		Bear him hence awhile.—
		<i>Edmund is borne off.</i>
6		You lords and noble friends, know our intent.
7		What comfort to this great decay may come
8		Shall be appli’d. For us, we will resign,
9		During the life of his old Majesty,
10		To him our absolute power.—
		<i>[To Edgar and Kent.]</i> You, to your rights,
11		With boot and such addition as your honors
12		Have more than merited.—All friends shall taste
13		The wages of their virtue, and all foes
14		The cup of their deservings.
		<i>Re-enter Lear, with Cordelia dead in his arms.</i>
		— O, see, see!
15	<i>Lear.</i>	Howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones!
16		Had I your tongues and eyes, I’d use them so
17		That heaven’s vault should crack. She’s gone forever.
18		I know when one is dead and when one lives.
19		She’s dead as earth. <i>[He lays her down.]</i>
		—Lend me a looking glass;

20 If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
21 Why, then she lives.—

Kent. Is this the promis'd end?

22 *Edg.* Or image of that horror?

Alb. Fall and cease!

It cannot be presupposed that the received placement of Albany's speech is what Shakespeare intended solely because it was published that way in the quartos and Folio. Editors are obligated to consider if it was censored for blasphemy. They must consider the form and style of the work in making a judgment. It is now well established that the play takes the form of [metatheatre](#). Not only is the timing of Lear's entrance with Cordelia dead as theatrically contrived as Edgar's entrance in I,ii ("*Pat: he comes like the Catastrophe of the old Comedie.*" F, 463), it disrupts the audience's emotional engagement with the story and characters. Shakespeare presents the dénouement from Albany's POV. Character is a fundamental and crucial element in a narrative. Beginning in IV,ii, the Duke is the voice of [Divine judgment](#). He warns his wife that the gods judge people based on their actions and merits: "*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 aboue / You Iustices, that these our neather crimes / So speedily can venge*" (F, 2323-25). In the final scene, he subjects the claims of Edgar and Edmund to a [trial by combat](#), believing the gods to be the ultimate arbiters of truth and justice. Albany is utterly disillusioned with the gods upon seeing Cordelia's dead, and renounces his belief in them: "*Fall and cease*" (F, 3226). The words he says afterwards are few, and display a genuine awareness of the tragedy, as well as his own role in it. He does not moralize when told of Edmund's death, as he did 32 lines earlier when the bodies of Goneril's and Regan's are brought out: "*This iudgement of the Heauens that makes vs tremble. / Touches vs not with pitty*" (F, 3185-86). He disregards the news as "*a trifle*" (F, 3268). It is Lear, not Albany, who responds to the news by comparing it with Cordelia's death as in line 3 below. In the end, her virtue meant nothing more to the gods than Edmund's villainy. Their deaths show the audience, "*As Flies to wanton Boyes, are we to th'Gods, / They kill vs for their sport.*" (F, 2221-22).

Enter Albany's Squire.

[illegible]

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*” [italics mine]. Jonathan Bate writes in *How the Classics Made Shakespeare*, (pp. 2-3).



Figure 318. 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 1597, Thomas Beard, the schoolmaster of Oliver Cromwell first published, *The Theatre of Gods Judgements*, an exposition of the workings of Providence against sinners and persecutors called “theatrical moralism”.^[10] In it first appeared an account of Christopher Marlowe's death [in 1593] by stabbing; Beard takes Marlowe to be the first modern atheist.^[11]



Figure 319. 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[n]ifest 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[pe]are, 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 Judgements*, p. 92-93.)

In Shakespeare’s time, all plays had to be approved by the Master of Revels. From 1579-1610 this was Edmund Tylney or Tilney. “Tylney’s abiding claim upon our attention is that he was in virtual control of the spoken word on the stage at a time when the English language was reaching a sublime height” (*Proceedings of the Leatherhead & District Local History Society*, Vol 1, no. 5, p. 21). In June 1603, a grant of the reversion of the office of Master of the Revels was made to George Buck. “Buck was thus responsible for censoring, among other works, Shakespeare's later plays, and for supervising performances of them and of any earlier Shakespeare plays revived for court performance, which he had to re-censor, due to the regulations added against blasphemy in 1606”—when the English Parliament passed “*The Act to Restrain Abuses of Players.*” The Act

received Royal Assent on 27 May 1606, around the time the Children of Paul's staged *The Puritan Widow, or, The Widow of Watling Street* by Thomas Middleton.^[19]

"The 'Acte to retain Abuses of Players' of 1606 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' . . . [E]vidence in manuscripts and in post-1606 editions of plays suggests that dramatists, playhouse bookkeepers or the Master of the Revels did in fact censor texts in deference to the terms of the Act." Janet Clare, *Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority: Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*, p. 124.

It remains unknown who among the influential anti-theatre members of Parliament was responsible for this Law. At the time *Lear* went into production, John Rainolds was the figurehead of the Puritan movement. His steadfast commitment to Calvinism attracted the attentions and suspicions of Elizabeth I. She co-opted him in the Anglican episcopate in order to "neutralize" him and appointed him Bishop of Lincoln in 1579.^[30] Following her death in 1603, he was one of the leading Puritans of the Millenary Petition, and a leading Puritan at the Hampton Court Conference. Today, he is less remembered for his role in initiating the Authorized Version of the Bible, than for playing the female role of Hippolyta in a performance of the play *Palamon and Arcite* at Oxford. His book *Th' Overthrow of Stage Plays* is essentially a 56,000 word diatribe against cross-dressing.

[T]he putting of Womens attire vpon men, may kindle sparkes of lust in vncleane affections: I saide not, in all mens affections, but in some; not in sanctified, but in vncleane. What? And doe you graunt, that you, and your youth, haue vncleane affectiōns, to the intent you may blame my speech? If not, why tell you me, that the putting of womanlie raiment vpon men, hath not stirred any such beastlie thought in any of you; whē I spake expreslie of vncleane affections? Besides, can you accuse your selfe, or anie other, of anie wanton thought stirred vp in you by looking on a beautifull Woman? If you can; then ought you beware of beautifull boyes transformed into womē by putting on their raiment, their feature, lookes and facions. For men may be ravished with loue of stones, of dead stuffe, framed by cunning grauers to beautifull womens likenes; as, in Poets fables appeareth by *Pygmalion*, by *Venus Gnidia* in stories: and *Chaerea*, araied like an Eunuch onely, did mooue the beastlie lust of him who was lasciviously giuen in the Comedie. If you can not: then doe you both me, your selfe and others, iniurie in cōcluding, that therefore you should most vncharitably be wronged, if your putting on of Womanly raiment, should either directlie or indirectlie be referred to the commaundement, *Thou shalt not cōmit adulterie*. (pp. 34-35).

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks." In addition to his zealous opposition to stage plays, Rainolds appears to have been against Christmas and other Christian holiday celebrations. George Gillespie, an orthodox Puritan theologian, cites Rainolds in *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies Obtruded on the Church of Scotland*.

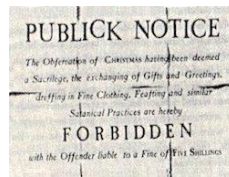
According to a Stationers' Register entry note, *Lear* was given before James I on 26 December 1606, St. Stephens Night. I assume his wife, Anne of Denmark (a "Theater Pioneer & Patron of the Arts"), was present with him. On Twelve Night the year before, the queen consort had created a scandal as one of the performers in Ben Jonson's court masque, *The Masque of Blacknesse*

(1605). The outrage was not caused by the stereotyping of Africans, as modern readers might presume. Puritans objected to celebrations at Christmas. Was the 1606 *Act to Restrain Abuses of Players* aimed indirectly at Queen Anne and her enjoyment of lavish Christmas festivities?



Figure 320. Inigo Jones, Queen Anne as the Daughter of Niger for 'The Masque of Blackness', 1605, disegno (Devonshire, Chatsworth House Collection).

William Shakespeare died in 1616, decades before the First English Civil War, and the order by the Long Parliament to close London theatres. “[It] cited the current ‘times of humiliation’ and ‘sad and pious solemnity’, a zeitgeist incompatible with ‘public stage-plays’, which were representative of ‘lascivious Mirth and Levity’”.^[1] The Parliamentary victory at the Battle of Naseby in June 1645, cemented Puritan dominance in Parliament, and in 1647 they passed the “Ordinance for Abolishing of Festivals” (1647). The Ordinance banned Christmas and other celebrations including Easter, Whitsun, Beltane, and May Day. The ban was hugely unpopular, as decried in the folk ballad, “The World Turned Upside Down” (sung to the tune of “When the King enjoys his own again”).



Video 48. “The World Turned Upside Down,” English Folk Ballad.

Of course, Shakespeare knew nothing of events to come. Like Philip Sidney, Christopher Marlowe, John Webster, and Ben Jonson, he opposed the extreme and fanatical aspects of Puritanism, and parodies them in his plays. For instance, the austere Puritan character of Malvolio in *Twelve Night* (a part created by Richard Burbage) is made to constantly smile, and dressed in yellow cross-garte’d stockings (II,v, F, 1173-74).

The central thesis of my restoration is that *King Lear* was conceived as a satire of Puritanism. It takes the form of an *hilarotragedy* (Ἰλαροτραγωδία lit. ‘cheerful tragedy’)^[1]; a farce that goes horribly awry. The character of Lear is the personification of Macbeth’s “poore Player” (F, 2345). Driven to madness by uncontrolled anger, he comically takes it upon himself to redress the world’s Injustice. Puritans of the day would have regarded him as the “Antichrist” in his lurid Tudor period costume with its indecent codpiece. (See Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, 4.7.46-55). In I,iv, Lear’s “epicurism” (Q1, 754) is absurdly juxtaposed with the austerity of his Puritan daughter Goneril, whose frowning face is an important element in the narrative. [See note IV,ii,72., S.D. “Goneril frowns at him.”] The banquet she serves him emasculating. Feasting, drinking strong ale, singing, merrymaking are strictly prohibited. Nothing that is served tastes good; meals are attended by dour servants, and dinner conversation is as boring as it is at the White House in *Naked Gun 2½*:

The Smell of Fear.

I wrote to [John Andrews](#) in March 1980 for his opinion about the received location Albany's speech, and if it might not have been censored for blasphemy. I was well aware that my own opinions aren't "worth a straw among the Renaissance drama folk," and that the case needed to be argued by find "somebody whose knowledge matters to others," [See Appendix H: Correspondence with William Arrowsmith.] Andrews declined to do so, but found the question serious enough to put to the Editorial Board of *Shakespeare Quarterly* for their opinions. "If there is general agreement that your argument should be aired in the pages of this journal, I'll be more than happy to publish it as soon as is feasible." There was, of course, no agreement.^[23] 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 321. "Allegory of the sinking of painting," Circle of Jacques de Gheyn III (Dutch, 1596 - 1644).

As Gibson implies, the orthodox methods of textual reconstruction disallow hermeneutics and [inductive reasoning](#). The case of where Shakespeare originally intended Albany's speech to be delivered is based entirely on 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](#) best 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.)

Appendix B: Scene 23 (Q1, Q2). Act V,scene ii (F)

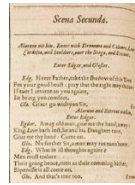


Figure 322. Scena Secunda. Facsimile Viewer: First Folio (New South Wales). Internet Shakespeare Library.

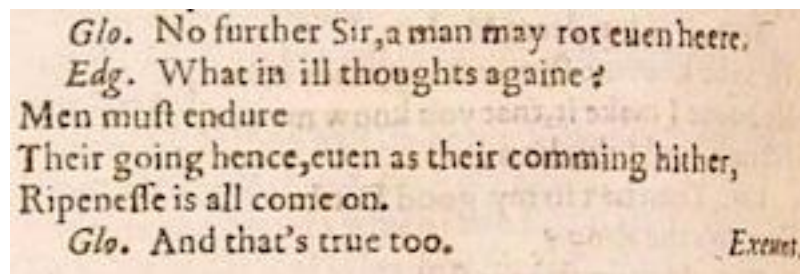
[illegible]

Figure 323. Lines 2931-36 in the First Folio (New South Wales). Internet Shakespeare Editions.

The fundamental problem with “V,ii” is that it keeps the actor playing Gloucester from having an anagnorisis upon hearing Edgar say, “*Come Father, Ile bestow you with a Friend*” (F, 2472). [See note IV,v,288., “*friend*.”] The performer must interpret the word “friend” as somebody other than his son because he reenters not knowing his identity. 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).

The question of *how* true knowledge is come by is taken up in the first scene where Lear orders his daughters to empirically quantify how much they love him by rhetoric and oratory. The theme come to a resolution in IV,v, in which Shakespeare uses tools of medieval minstrels^[31] to parody rhetorical conventions, such as those espoused by John Rainolds’ in his *Oxford Lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric*. (Rainolds was the most prominent representative of the Puritan party at the Hampton Court Conference.) Just as Lear puts his trust in words to reveal the truth, in I,ii Gloucester takes the words he sees written in a letter as truth, and ends up banishing the son who loves him. Had either one used their intuition, there would have been no tragedy. It is at the end of IV.v that Gloucester has a classical moment of *anagnorisis* where he finally realizes the identity of Edgar by instinctive *feeling* rather than *logos* [λόγος].

From Act III onwards, the central *dramatic question* of the subplot is when and *by what means* it will come about. The moment he first lays eyes on mad Tom in IV,iv, Edgar comes into his mind (F, 2217-18), but he can’t see why, even with his spectacles. [See note III,vi,7,S.D., “*Gloucester readjusts his spectacles to look at Edgar.*”] The audience is lead to anticipate the discovery by Shakespeare’s *basic techniques of building suspense*. At the onset of IV,v, Gloucester is troubled by the changed manner of speaking of his guide (F, 2440-41), and doubts he’s the person he claims to be. Later in the scene, he gets agitated when Edgar speaks the word “*Father*” (F, 2666) and demands to know, “*What are you?*” (F, 2667). When he hears “*Father*” (F, 2742) said a last time, the truth finally dawns on him. [See note IV,v,217, “*father.*”]

As the play is published in the quartos and Folio, Edgar provides the audience with a perfunctory, narrative exposition of what happened to Gloucester. It serves the same purpose as an info-dump, like what happened to the King of France and who’s leading the French army. The Gentleman says more about Cordelia’s tears in Q, 2347.11-33 than Edgar does the death of his father, which totals a mere seven lines (F, 3155-3162). He spends more time talking about his reconciliation with Kent, which he tells us was even more affecting. (Q1, 3168.1-3168.10). Edgar’s speeches merely prolong the audience’s suspense about the outcome of Lear and Cordelia. We are well aware that Edmund has sent a *Captain* to murder them, and the expository dialogue only fuels our impatience. Cannot all this talk wait until after the release of the captives, as initially demanded by Albany (F, 2984-88)? Until Kent enquires about their whereabouts, they are completely forgotten. Cordelia might have been saved if the duke had *acted* expeditiously on their behalf, and not allowed himself to get side-tracked by his masculine honor. At the end of the play, Edgar reproaches himself for talking so much, and tells Albany to shut up. [See note V,i,324., “*Speak what we feel.*”]

Arguably, the strongest textual evidence that the scene underwent a revision is the *extended metaphor* at the conclusion of IV,v, in which Shakespeare compares a man’s life to the life cycle of fruit. The words “*fruitfully*” (F, 2718), “*mature*” (F, 2728) , “*rot*” (F, 2931), and “*ripeness is*

all" (F, 2935) create a nexus of images. Logically, they were composed in a sequential order. [Shakespeare uses a similar metaphor in scene 16 (Q1, 2303.1-4)].

1 [Reads.] Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have
2 many opportunities to cut him off. If your will want not,
3 time and place will be *fruitfully* offer'd. There is
4 nothing done if he return the conqueror; then am I the
5 prisoner, and his bed my jail; from the loathed warmth
6 whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your
7 labor.
8 Your wife, so I would say—
9 Affectionate servant],
10 Goneril.
11 O indistinguish'd space of woman's will!
12 A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,
13 And the exchange my brother!—Here, in the sands,
14 Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified
15 Of murderous lechers; and in the *mature* time
16 With this ungracious paper strike the sight
17 Of the death-practis'd duke. For him 'tis well
18 That of thy death and business I can tell.

Exit Edgar, carrying off Oswald's body.
19 Glou. The king is mad. How stiff is my vile sense
20 That I stand up, and have ingenious feeling
21 Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract.
22 So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,
23 And woes by wrong imaginations lose
24 The knowledge of themselves.
25 Edg. Give me your hand.
26 Glou. No further, sir; a man may *rot* even here.
27 Edg. What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
28 Their going hence, even as their coming hither.
29 *Ripeness* is all. Come on.
30 Glou. And that's true too.
31 Edg. Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
32 Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend. [Exeunt.

A critical, unbiased analysis of the plot—which Aristotle defines as “the arrangement of incidents” (*Poetics*, Chpt VI)—indicates that it was constructed in the order it is so that Gloucester’s sudden knowledge of Edgar’s identity is linked associatively with the reconciliation of Lear and Cordelia. In one deft stroke, Shakespeare resolves the two main storylines *emotionally* by means of the sequence of events, the skill of the actor playing Gloucester, and the instrumental music. [See Appendix E: The Incidental Music in *King Lear*.] Presumably, Gloucester’s anagnorisis is subtle and restrained in contrast to Lear’s reconciliation with Cordelia, which is characteristically histrionic. [See note IV,vi, 47., “*wheel of fire*.”] Gloucester gives no indication to Edgar that he knows the truth. The character immediately suppresses his knowledge because the guilt he feels is too painful to admit to consciously. In fact, shortly before the sound of Trumpet in Act V, when he is

forced to confront the reality of Edgar's identity, his heart breaks "*Twixt two extremes of passion, ioy and greefe*" (F, 3161).

The important idea Shakespeare is dramatizing in IV,v is *how* Gloucester comes about his discovery. Is it explained to him in words, or is it the result of a sudden *intuitive* grasp of reality? His *anagnorisis* is comparable to Oedipus's in Sophocles eponymous play, but with an important difference. Oedipus discovers the truth about his birth from a herdsman. Gloucester's discovery is "*felt*" (F, 2593). It results from *feeling*—"According to the *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, a feeling is "a *self-contained* phenomenal experience." It is not based on what the Greeks called *logos* or conscious reasoning. Paradoxically, now that he is "blind," he is able to "see". This concept is central to the meaning of the play.

It is impossible to know if *King Lear* was subjected to revisions before it was approved for performance by the *Master of Revels*. The only beacon we have in our search for the author's intent, is the narrative coherency of the action. Gloucester enters IV,v so racked with guilt and despair for having banished his son, that he wants to kill himself. His mood worsens when he encounters the king who seems to him to have gone completely mad. He is then informed by Oswald that a bounty has been set on his head, and begs the Steward to kill him: "*Now let thy friendly hand / Put strength enough too't*" (F, 2681-82). Gloucester has given up hope, and wants to die on the spot: "*No further Sir, a man may rot euen here*" (F, 2931). Who can blame him?

"V,ii" consists of two *units of action*. In the first, Edgar attests to man's moral nature. He offers an empty prayer affirming the virtue and righteousness of Cordelia's cause, "*pray that the right may thriue*" (F, 2922). His prayer offsets the effect of Edmund's speech at the end of Act IV, which is addressed to the audience in the same spirit of camaraderie as his speech in I,ii where he lets us in on his plan to ruin his brother. [See note IV,vii,55-69., "*To both these sisters.*"] There is not any trace of Shakespeare's writing style in lines 2921-30. Edgar leaves his father sitting under a "*Tree*" (F, 2921) or by a "*bush*" (Q, 2921) and goes off to join the march of the French army around the stage.

In the second unit, a retreat is sounded awakening Gloucester from oblivion. Edgar reenters to tell him that the battle is over and Lear and Cordelia taken prisoners. Much like Albany's speech in "V,iii" (F, 3268-76), lines 25-30 (F, 2931-36) do not suit the circumstances. Gloucester makes no distinction between his own misfortunes and the calamity that has just befallen the king. We find him unchanged from IV,v, complaining about the "*ingenious feeling Of my huge Sorrowes*" (F, 2734-35), and wishing he was mad. He expresses not one word of pity for Lear, who offered to give him his own eyes "*If thou wilt weepe my Fortunes*" (F, 2618). The result? The audience feels no pity for Gloucester. He takes his exit from the stage as blind as he was in the beginning. Paul Werstine, the co-editor of the *Folger Library Edition of KING LEAR* notes in a personal communication, the "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.” Is there any wonder why?

I hypothesize that the battle between the French and English armies originally took the form of an *intermezzo* or *intermedio*, and had no dialogue. The music was accompanied by a procession and show of colors. 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, its most elementary function was to communicate the passage of time. 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 intermezzo, 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).

I believe 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 ouer the stage, Cordelia with her Father in her hand.*” (Q2, 2918-2918.1) As artificial as an *intermedio* 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 147](#).]

When I brought this matter to the attention of Alan Dessen, co-author of *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama 1580–1642*, he was of the opinion that Gloucester does not experience an anagnorisis upon hearing the word “*father*” at the end of IV,v (F 2742). He writes, “Edgar’s use of ‘father’ does not reveal his true identity to Gloucester (it’s a generic term used to address an older man) and that reunion-recognition is reported, not seen, in 5.3, just as the battle in 5.2 is reported, not seen. Why do we need to see that battle given the original stage limitations and the length of this script – and I find the Spedding ^[8] comment preposterous given the comparable example in Act 3 of *Antony and Cleopatra* with the crucial battle of Actium, the turning point of that play. A key element in any playwright’s tool-kit is knowing what to display vs. what to report given the resources available and the issue of running time.”

An intermedio is not the same as a scene. Formally, “V,ii” has absolutely nothing in common with the battle of Actium dramatized in [Act III, scenes 7-13 in *Antony and Cleopatra*](#). The linguistic meaning of words is constantly shifting in *Lear*. The sense in which Gloucester hears the word

Appendix C: INTERMEZZO

“father” is not monosemic. It is only because the earl reappears in “V,ii” not know the identity of Edgar that anybody questions who he is referring to.

Appendix C: Scene 17 (Quartos)

The plot of the story is disjointed and confused by the introduction of “*a Gentleman*” (Q, 2347.1) in [scene 17](#) (the scene was cut in the Folio) primarily because he doesn’t know who “Caius” really is. At the end of the scene Kent says, “*When I am knowne aright you shall not greeue, / Lending me this acquaintance*” (Q, 2347.54-5). In III,i, Kent gave his signet ring to “*a Gentleman*” (F, 1615) to present to Cordelia, saying, “*she will tell you who your fellow is / That yet you doe not know*” (Q, 1645-46). (See [note III,i,47.](#), “*show her this ring.*”) It must be induced that the two are different characters.

As noted in the Dramatic Personae, it was not customary for copyists ^[21] to give individual names to tertiary characters. Their lines are typically prefixed with generic *titles*, such as Knight, Gentleman, Servant, Attendant, Messenger, Captain, etc. Adding to the confusion in the narrative, the assignment of their titles is not consistent in the quartos and Folio. For example, a “*Servant*” in Q [L.584] becomes a “*Knight*” in F [L.583], a “*Gentleman*” in Q [L. 921] becomes a “*Messenger*” in F [L.921], a “*Doctor*” in Q [L.2761] becomes a Gentleman in F [L.2762], and so on. ... There are a total of 45 changes involving minor characters of this kind.” ^[40]

Over the centuries, editors have made perfunctory attempts to distinguish individuated characters from nameless functionaries. In the venerated *Arden Shakespeare*, for example, R. A. Foakes correctly prefixes the lines ascribed to a “*Knight*” and a “*Gentleman*” in Acts I, II and III to a single character: Knight. He notes “Q and F have ‘*Gentleman*’ in the speech prefixes, as Q does for the ‘*Knight*’ in 2.2, but, since Kent recognizes him [“*I know you*” (F, 1618)], and he has been with Lear, he appears to be the knight who came on with Lear in 2.2, and is best played by the same actor” (p. 259).

In my restoration, Foakes’ “Knight” is given the name “Lear’s Knight” to distinguish the character from “Cornwall’s Knight”, the Duke’s chivalrous bodyguard who is murdered by Regan coming to defend Gloucester. His character is prefixed with the name “*Knigh*” (F, 580) in I,iv, “*Gentleman*” in I,v (F, 921), “*Gentleman*” in II,iv (F, 1273), “*Gentleman*” in III,i (F, 1615), “*Gentleman*” (F, 2630) in IV,v, and “*Gentleman*” (F, 2762) in IV,vi. Hypothetically, the audience first observes him in I,i, standing next to Kent, near to the throne, signaling his high position in court and favor with the King. He marches beside Kent in the solemn “Intermezzo” between Acts IV and V. [See Appendix B.] When he does not reappear in the final scene, it is inferred that he was killed in the battle. The narrative is structured to establish an emotional connection between the audience and Lear’s Knight. Shakespeare gives us a face to go with Edmund’s statement, “*friend hath lost his friend*” (Q, 2997.1)

Lear’s Knight is an exemplar of Lear’s “*hundred Knights and Squires*” (F, 750), who Goneril describes as “*Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd, and bold, / That this our Court infected with their manners, / Shewes like a riotous Inn*” (F, 751-53). Like Edgar, who Regan says was “*companion with the riotous Knights / That tended vpon my Father*” (F, 1034-5), he is of royal birth. He supports

Lear's claim that "*My Trainee are men of choice, and rarest parts, / That all particulars of dutie know, / And in the most exact regard, support / The worships of their name*" (F, 776-79). The Knight's speeches are brief, and marked by their punctilious respect for protocol. In medieval times, becoming a knight involved a long and demanding process that emphasized discipline in all aspects of life."^[6] In modern terms, it might be said he carries himself like a cadet at [West Point](#).

The voice of the Gentleman in scene 17 is completely different. This character, who the audience has not seen before now, waxes poetic to "Caius" about Cordelia's femininity and devotion to her father. It is recited in the style of dramatic poesy, like Hamlet's "*Why let the stricken Deere go weepe*" (F, 2143). The picture he draws of her evokes the beautiful and dutiful [Philoclea](#) in [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). The scene does not advance the narrative. It functions only to give the actor more stage time, and the opportunity to emote. His words are sentimental to the point of bathos.

Logically, the plot of the story was arranged as it is 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 first audiences would have presupposed that she wishes to make herself queen of England. It is not until she tells us herself in [scene 18](#) that we know what her intentions are: "*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 Gentlemen removes all suspicions about Cordelia's having political ambitions of her own, like [Eleanor of Aquitaine](#).

The most obvious problem with scene 17 is that the whereabouts of the King is yet unknown when Kent tells the flowery Gentleman, "*Well sir, ile bring you to our maister Lear, / And leaue you to attend him*" (Q, 2351.51-52). Who is this "Gentleman" that Kent is trusting to attend the King, and where exactly is he bringing him to? Nobody knows where Lear is. In the next scene ([scene 18](#) in the quartos, [Act IV, scene iii](#) in the Folio), Cordelia sends some men to go look for her father: "*seeke, seeke for him*" (F, 2368).

The only information of any consequence in [scene 17](#) concerns the whereabouts of the King of France and Edgar (lines Q, 2347.1-09). (Their exchange was cut in the Folio.) Shakespeare has to give an explanation for France's absence even though the audience knows the reason: the parts are played by the same actor. Their dialogue reinforces the fiction that France and Edgar are two different people. The logical time to bring up the matter is at the conclusion of [scene 21](#), when Kent and a character prefixed as a "Gentleman" (Q, 2843.1) are discussing the logistics of the battle, such as who is leading the Duke of Cornwall's forces in the wake of his death. In my restoration, I have transposed lines Q, 2347.1-09 from [scene 17](#) to [IV,vi](#). Where France has gone is logically the first question the audience asks of the storyteller when Cordelia and Lear leave the

stage. The Gentleman's lines are said by Lear's Knight. His line "*They say Edgar his banish sonne is with the Earle of Kent in Germanie*" (Q, 2843.5-6) is his report of what's being said, not ignorance of his Kent's identity. It makes not dramatic sense to introduce a third Gentlemen to the plot who doesn't know Kent.

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.*

It is, of course, pure speculation what changes were made in *King Lear* before it reached the stage. 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. [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*, pp. 38-40)

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"

My guess is that Shakespeare was told to add the part of a Gentleman to allow a skilled actor to get "*Halfe a share*" (F, 2151), or maybe even "*A whole one*" (F, 2152), as Hamlet says after staging "*The Mouse-trap*" (F, 2105). He thinks himself so ingenious to "*get me a Fellowship in a crie of Players*" (F, 2149-50). The actor playing Lear's Knight was likely written for an apprentice, and paid a few shillings, if anything at all. ^[19]

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.**
 16 *Kent.* But who is with him?
 17 *Gent.* None but the fool, who labors to outjest
 18 His heart-strook injuries.
 19 *Kent.* Sir, I do know you;
 20 And dare, upon the warrant of my note,
 21 Commend a dear thing to you. There is division,
 22 Although as yet the face of it is cover'd
 23 With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall;
 24 Who have—as who have not, that their great stars
 25 Thron'd and set high?—servants, who seem no less,
 26 Which are to France the spies and speculations
 27 Intelligent of our state. What hath been seen,
 28 Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,
 29 Or the hard rein which both of them have borne
 30 Against the old kind king, or something deeper,
 31 Whereof perchance these are but furnishings—
 32 **But true it is from France there comes a power**
 33 **Into this scatter'd kingdom; who already**
 34 **Wise in our negligence, have secret feet**
 35 **In some of our best ports, and are at point**
 36 **To show their open banner. Now to you.**
 37 **If on my credit you dare build so far**
 38 **To make your speed to Dover, you shall find**
 39 **Some that will thank you, making just report**
 40 **Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow**
 41 **The king hath cause to plain.**

42 I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,
43 And from some knowledge and assurance offer
44 This office to you.

45 *Gent.* I will talk further with you.

46 *Kent.* No, do not.

47 For confirmation that I am much more
48 Than my outwall, open this purse, and take
49 What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia—
50 As fear not but you shall—show her this ring,
51 And she will tell you who that fellow is
52 That yet you do not know.—Fie on this storm!
53 I will go seek the king.

54 *Gent.* Give me your hand.

55 Have you no more to say?

56 *Kent.* Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet:
57 That when we have found the king—in which your
58 pain
59 That way, I'll this—he that first lights on him
60 Holla the other. *[Exeunt several]*

I have red-marked the lines omitted in the Folio (1623) that were published in the First (1608) and Second (1619) quartos. The speech of the Gentleman (AKA Lear's Knight) is expanded by nine lines (Q, 1622.1-8) as well as Kent's (1638.1-1638.12).

Kent's objective in III,i, is to convince Lear's Knight (a young lord) to deliver an urgent message to Cordelia. The latter only knows him as "*Caius*" (F, 3249), a roughneck without a family name, who blatantly lied to him about why he was put in the stocks (F, 1333-35). Kent uses two methods of persuasion. The first is rhetorical. The convoluted style of his speaking is one that only an educated person would be able to devise, proving him to be a man of high breeding. His complex syntax is as tortuous as his lines in II,iv,162-166, "*Cordelia ... remedies*" (F, 1243-47). Kent's words alone, however, are not enough to convince the Knight to travel to Dover. His primary mode of persuasion is presenting him with physical evidence that he is "*much more / Than my out-wall*" (F, 1641-42). What ultimately convinces the Knight to bring a message is Cordelia is seeing Kent's **signet ring**. Hypothetically, the former was standing next to Kent in I,i, near the throne. The audience logically inferred from the blocking that the two of them are favorites with the King, and known to one another, if not friends. When Kent produces his ring, the Knight immediately sees through his disguise. The scene between them is paradigmatic of the limited scope of rhetoric and its effectiveness in the art of persuasion. Notably, in the final scene, it is only by seeing the bodies of Goneril and Regan that Edmund tells Albany that he has ordered Lear and Cordelia to be murdered in their prison cell. Edgar's discourse was not the motivating force.

Kent's speech functions as a red-herring. Shakespeare's first audiences were not expecting Cordelia to die at the end. They knew the story from [Geoffrey of Monmouth's](#) account of [King Leir](#) in which she leads an army back to Briton, successfully overthrows her sisters and restores her father to the throne, succeeding him as Queen of England. 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 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 1.]

Kent does not give the audience any definitive explanation what Cordelia’s motives are for bringing a French army in England—just “*whisper’d*” (F, 935) rumors and “*ear-kissing arguments*” (F, 936) that keep first audiences guessing. He 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. It is not until IV,iii in the Folio (scene 18 in the quartos) that Cordelia tells us herself what she’s doing in England.

Today, Shakespeare’s version is so well established, is unthinkable that she might political harbor ambitions, like [Eleanor of Aquitaine](#), Queen of France from 1137 to 1152 as the wife of [King Louis VII](#), and Queen of England from 1154 to 1189 as the wife of [King Henry II](#). Her bringing the [Duchy of Aquitaine](#) into the possession of the English crown was a key factor leading to the [Hundred Years' War](#). Shakespeare’s “[St. Crispin’s speech](#)”, set at [Battle of Agincourt](#) in [Henry V](#) (F, 2262-2310), is one of his most famous. Kent’s speech in III,i creates no suspense as it does if the audience is not certain of the outcome.



Figure 324. Battle of Agincourt. D'Azincourt à Marignan. Chevaliers et bombardes, 1415-1515, Paris, Gallimard / Musée de l'armée, 2015, p. 18-19.

When analyzing the speech, it is important to remember that *Lear* was written in the baroque era. The speech is extremely long and must be delivered at a reasonably quick tempo in few breaths. If the words are not enunciated precisely or performed too slowly it will lose cohesion, and become dull. The same is said of the aria “[Possente Spirto](#)” from [Claudio Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo](#) (1607).^[7] In my judgment, much of the appeal of Kent speech is the technical difficulty of delivering it. See Appendix C: Scene 17. (Quartos).

Appendix E: The Incidental Music in *King Lear*.

The evolution of music from the [early Renaissance period](#) to the [Baroque](#) is a subject far beyond the scope of this note. What is most important to understand is that the music in *Lear*, “as in the other arts ... was significantly influenced by the developments which define the [Early Modern period](#): the rise of [humanistic](#) thought; the recovery of the literary and artistic heritage of [Ancient Greece](#) and [Ancient Rome](#); increased innovation and discovery; the growth of commercial enterprises; the rise of a [bourgeois](#) class; and the [Protestant Reformation](#)” (Wiki). Martin Luther writes in his Letters:



Figure 325. “Luther playing the lute to his family” by Gustav Adolph Spangenberg (1866), Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, Germany.

“I firmly believe, nor am I ashamed to assert, that next to theology no art is equal to music; for it is the only one, except theology, which is able to give a quiet and happy mind. This is manifestly proved by the fact that the devil, the author of depressing care and distressing disturbances, almost flees from the sound of music as he does from the word of theology. This is the reason why the prophets practiced music more than any art and did not put their theology into geometry, into arithmetic, or into astronomy, but into music, intimately uniting theology and music, telling the truth in psalms and songs.” (The [Puritan Board](#))

While the lyrics to many songs in Shakespeare's plays are discussed by scholars, the original melodies and musical arrangements are lost to time. The same is true of the incidental music. No scores exist for Elizabethan and Jacobean plays.^[45] “Not a single note of instrumental music from the Shakespeare plays has been preserved, with the possible exception of the witches’ dances from *Macbeth*, which are thought to have been borrowed from a contemporary masque. Even descriptions of the kinds of music to be played are sparse. Trumpets sounded ‘flourishes,’ ‘sennets,’ and ‘tuckets.’ A flourish was a short blast of notes. The words *sennet* and *tucket* were English manglings of the Italian terms *sonata* and *toccata*.”^[30] The only direct evidence for the use of incidental music in English plays from Shakespeare’s era 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.)

King Lear was performed in the [Banqueting Hall of Whitehall Palace](#) on St Stephens Night in 1606. The venue was first built by [Queen Elizabeth I](#) in 1581 at a cost of £1,744, to host [Francis, Duke of Anjou](#), during marriage negotiations. The structure was timber-framed with canvas painted to resemble stone, featuring a ceiling decorated with Elizabeth’s heraldic symbols and motifs of fertility. [James I](#) replaced it in 1607 after dissatisfaction with its limitations for court masques. The 1607 structure burned down in 1619, leading to [Inigo Jones](#)’s [Palladian Banqueting House](#) (completed 1622), which survives today.

[Historic Royal Palaces](#) notes that masques were a significant form of entertainment for the Stuarts, particularly during the reigns of James I and his wife, [Anne of Denmark](#). These masques were elaborate theatrical performances that combined music, acting, dancing, poetry, and stunning costumes. The year before, in the same venue, the [Queen consort](#) had created a scandal in [Ben Jonson](#)’s *The Masque of Blackeness*, which set a precedent for extravagant theatrical productions, possibly resulting in the “[Act to Restrain Abuses of Players](#)”, a censorship law passed by English Parliament. [See Appendix A.] Like *King Lear*, *The Masque of Blackeness* was performed as part of the lavish Christmas festivities, but on [Twelve Night](#). The music was written by [Alfonso Ferrabosco the younger](#), an English composer of Italian descent who collaborated with Jonson on several court other masques for Queen Anne. It can be reasonably presumed that Ferrabosco was well-versed in contemporary Italian music, including the work of [Jacopo Peri](#), who wrote what is considered the first opera, the mostly lost *Dafne* (c. 1597), and also the earliest extant opera, *Euridice* (1600). Peri is known for using recurring musical themes in his operas, where melodies were used to convey the emotions of the characters. At the same time [Claudio Monteverdi](#) was revolutionizing music for the stage. “When Monteverdi composed *L’Orfeo* (1607) he had a thorough grounding in theatrical music. He had been employed at the Gonzaga court for 16 years, much of it as a performer or arranger of stage music, and in 1604 he had written the ballo *Gli amori di Diane ed Endimone* [now lost] for the 1604–05 [Carnival at Mantua](#).” ^[18]

It is impossible to believe that the [incidental music](#) in *Lear* was limited to trumpets and drums, the only musical effects indicated in the quartos and Folio. Shakespeare’s company needed to better Ferrabosco’s to hold the attention of his audience, both at court and at the Globe. Music was expected as part of the theatrical experience, with productions using period instruments like [lutes](#), [recorders](#), [natural trumpets](#), [sackbuts](#), [shawms](#), [vignals](#) and [percussion intruments](#) to underscore dramatic moments, royal entrances, and emotional climaxes. In my version, *King Lear* is ground breaking in its challenging of conventional narrative structures but especially for its use of incidental music, which is remarkably prescient of modern [film scoring](#). “Soundtracks act as the soul of a film or video, weaving through scenes and dialogues to touch the heart of storytelling. They are not merely an addition to the visual experience but a fundamental element that bridges the gap between the audience and the narrative, creating a richer, more immersive experience.”^[5]



Figure 326. A broken consort of young men.

The theatrical music from this era straddles the [Renaissance](#) and [Baroque](#). One of the key differences between these periods lies in the expanded size, range, and complexity of instrumental performance during the Baroque era with its emphasis on dramatic expression and emotion. The current thinking is that incidental stage music in *King Lear* was performed by a “[broken consort](#),” such as that illustrated in the [Portrait of Sir Henry Unton](#), where the latter is shown “presiding over a banquet, while a masque of Mercury and Diana is performed, accompanied by musicians.” [See

[Figure 147.](#)] Another famous example is given 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, The Fovrth Daies Entertainment.* (Book 4.) (London, 1591), sig. E1-E1V, from [Music in English Renaissance Drama](#), edited by John H. Long, p. 53.

Stuart masques were always elaborate spectacles, and typically involved sumptuous scenic display and glittering costumes, as well as music provided by consorts of lutes, viols, and wind instruments, and actors and singers to perform the written text. Every performance used a sizeable company of professional artists. For *Love Freed* (1611), the musicians consisted of twenty-four lutenists (twelve of whom sang dressed as priests), fourteen violins, thirteen oboes and sackbuts, and fifteen other instrumentalists – all at a total cost of £90 (see [Masque Archive](#), *Love Freed*, 4).^[45]



[Video 49.](#) John Tyson on polyphony and improvisation in the Renaissance.

The obvious reason why no scores exist for Shakespeare’s plays is that the musicians didn’t use them. Professional musicians in those days were expected to be accomplished improvisers. In the early history of Western music, particularly during the Medieval and Renaissance periods, [polyphony](#) was often improvised rather than written down. [John Tyson](#) says, “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 49](#), 3:37 – 1:07:22.]

“[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.)



[Video 50.](#) Raaven - John Dowland/ Flow my tears & The Earl of Essex his Galliard.

It is unknown how musicians at the Globe knew at what particular moment to play music, or what melody to play. It is thought that actors were given “[cue scripts](#)” ^[32] which contained only their own lines, their entrances and exits, and the cue—the last few words spoken by another actor—before each of their lines. “*Were it my Cue to fight, I should haue knowne it / Without a Prompter*”

(*Othello*, F, 302-3). In Shakespeare's plays some form of "spotting" must have been conducted. Spotting is a word used in filmmaking, referring to "the process of identifying and marking specific moments in a film where music, sound effects, and other audio elements should be placed. It is typically done in a *collaborative session* with the director and composer." [See note I,v,5. S.D. "*The Fool plays soft music on his lute.*"] For example, the trumpeter(s) in *Lear* needed to know exactly when to sound the "*Tucket*" (F, 1014) in II,I, announcing the arrival the Duke of Cornwall, and to what effect. Was it farcically overblown, signaling the pomposity of character, or as expressionless as a doorbell? The decision had to have been made by the author(s).

Nobody really can say for certain how productions were managed by the *King's Men*. Most modern assumptions come from two 20th century articles with the same title: "*Did Shakespeare produce his own plays?*" by Alfred Hart (Modern Language Review, 1941), and "*Did Shakespeare produce his own plays?*" by David Klein (Modern Language Review, 1962). "The two articles reach radically different conclusions from a casual atmosphere in which actors directed themselves as a collaborative ensemble to extensive daily rehearsals led by senior company members and the development of methods to help actors constantly develop their abilities. The positions that Shakespeare did (Hart) and did not (Klein) direct and produce his own plays are equally defensible and until more information from the period comes to light it is impossible to describe with certainty what the Lord Chamberlain's Men/King's Men rehearsal processes would have looked like." [35]

I hypothesize that the music was "spotted" by Robert Armin. If he did not mostly ad-lib the part of the Fool in rehearsal (which cannot be ruled out), he certainly worked closely with Shakespeare on the composition. [See Appendix G: Robert Armin in the Role of Gloucester.] Though the reasons why he replaced *Will Kempe* can never be known, what is certain is that his arrival in 1599 coincided with a significant increase in the number of songs and lines of singing in Shakespeare's plays. Armin was "known for his musicality." [34] There is no evidence that he composed music himself in the way *Robert Johnson* did. The songs performed during Armin's tenure are thought to have come from popular songs and ballads, in the manner of a medieval minstrel. [23] He would have been able to tell the ensemble players what melodies needed playing, and how to articulate them.

Broken consorts of the day had no formal leader like a conductor in an orchestra today. It was performed like *chamber music*, where ensembles function through close collaboration and non-verbal communication. "Each performer plays a unique part, and the group collectively makes interpretive decisions during rehearsal, often through discussion and experimentation." Improvisation is a characteristic feature of polyphonic American jazz. For example, "*My Heart*", comes from a melody written by *Lil Hardin Armstrong* and improvised by *Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five*.



Video 51. “Improvisation Around 1600” by Elam Rotem, Early Music Sources. Illustration above, the frontispiece of Andrea Antico’s *Frottole intabulate da sonare organi libro primo* (1517) features a woodcut of a player improvising music from his heart at a harpsichord, a singer holding a score, and a monkey playing a lute.

Elam Rotem discusses the grey line between composition and “improvision” in Video 51, “Improvisation Around 1600.” He notes, “Stemming from the beginning of the 16th century, the genre of the *fantasia* was very popular both in written form but also in reports of live improvisations...An important treatise in general, but especially in this regard, is Santa Maria’s “*Arte de Tañer Fantasia*”, “The Art of Playing Fantasia.” Notice that it’s not “the art of composing or improvising fantasia.” The verb “playing”, according to Santa Maria, includes both composing and improvising, and not merely “executing.” Rotem emphasizes that *fantasias* have no text. “This is an important point, as the rules for how to set text in vocal music in the 16th century were probably more strict than in any other period. So, working without a text was a great way to explore contrapuntal imitative technique in a way, that was on the one hand advanced and comprehensive, and on the other hand, free of the limiting requirement of setting a text. Improving complex fugal polyphonic pieces based on a given theme may be considered as the height of this art, that was definitely possessed by the great players of keyboard and plucked in instruments of the 16th and 17th century.”

Appendix F: Edgar's Ox Horn

In my version of story, Edgar first blows his horn in III,iv following Lear's words, "*And shew the Heuens more iust*" (F, 1817). [See [note III,iv,37.](#), "[Fatham and half.](#)"] The dramatic timing of the effect, like the timing of the storm effects in III,ii, is [metatheatrical](#). In real life, things don't happen on cue. Edmund makes a point of this in I,ii when he mocks the formulaic quality of Shakespeare's playwriting. [See [note I,ii,125.](#), "[pat he comes.](#)"] The completely unexpected, contrived, theatrical nature of the sound effect shakes the audience out of its emotional stupor, and causes them to *think* about the meaning of Lear's preceding exhortation. Technically speaking, the winding of the horn has a [distancing effect](#), much like Bertolt Brecht's use of music in [Epic Theatre](#). "The use of music to distance the audience from the plot was an aspect of Brecht's theory of epic theater, which he contrasted with dramatic theater in the program notes for *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (1930), another collaboration with Kurt Weill." (Pericles Lewis, "[Bertolt Brecht.](#)")

Sixty-three lines later, Edgar winds the horn again, as indicated by his use of the word "*Sessa*". [See [note III,iv,91.](#), "[Sessa](#)".] The sound of the instrument is being used to connect important themes, like a [leitmotif](#) in opera and [movie music](#). [See [note III,iv, 36.](#) S.D. "[Edgar winds his horn](#)".] Here it links the dismantling of Lear's costume, "*Off, off you Lendings*" (F, 1888) with his earlier exhortation to "*shake the superflux to them, / And shew the Heuens more iust*" (F, 1816-17). It qualifies the meaning of this pivotal gesture as an ethical one. Lear want to "*feel*" the storm's lashing as a shirtless beggar does. [Just desert](#) is the central [through line of action](#), not [naturism](#).

In III,vi, Edgar blows it a third time to call back the hunting dogs Lear imagines are chasing him, also evidenced by his use of "*Sessa*" (F, 2031). In IV,i, Edgar blows it a fourth and final time, 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). He is standing in the yard, and his father, led by Curan (aka *Old Man*), are on the platform. The sound of the horn alerts them to his presence, "*How now? who's there?*" (F, 2206). [See [note IV,i,24.](#) S.D., "[Edgar winds his horn](#)".] In IV,v, he blows a raspberry after his father's words, "*If Edgar liue, O blesse him*" (F, 2479). (See [note IV,v,40.](#)S.D., "[blows a raspberry.](#)")

The horn and its sound are loaded with symbolism. (See "[Horn](#)" (pp. 151-52) and "[Music](#)" (pp, 223-25) in Juan Cirlot's *Dictionary of Symbols*.) In the Bible, the horn of an ox or a ram is often used as a metaphor. In [Psalm 92:10](#), the psalmist writes

10 You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox;
I have been anointed with fresh oil.

Shara Drimalla & BibleProject Team write of "[The Horn of Psalm 148,](#)" *BibleProject*, "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. When this metaphor means victory (Psalm 89:24, 112:9; Zechariah 1:21), and when God 'exalts the horn' of someone, he is bringing victory to the oppressed. In 1 Samuel 2, we find Hannah rejoicing in song after the birth of her son Samuel. After years of infertility, Hannah rejoices because "in the LORD [her] horn is lifted high. A prominent idea in Hannah's song is God's righteous judgment. She rejoices that he brings down the proud and exalts the humble (verses 6-8). And she concludes her song by asking God to judge all of creation, calling for the reign of God's Kingdom on the earth (verse 10) —to 'exalt the horn' of his anointed one, the Messiah."

The ram or cattle horn Edgar is blowing is one of "several cheap and lowly instruments,"^[61] such the hurdy-gurdy and the bagpipe, which I hypothesize were also employed in the original production of *Lear* to evoke the lowest social classes of peasants and beggars. (See note II,iii, S.D., "*A hurdy-gurdy plays*.") They contrast dramatically with the sophisticated, Baroque instruments developed for Court masques.

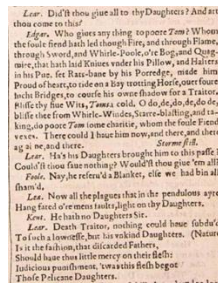


Figure 227. III,iv. "O do,de,do,de,do de." Digital copy of First Folio (New South Wales).

This takes us to the subject of the omission of the words "*O do,de,do,de,do de*" (F, 1839) shown in Figure 298 above, which were not published in the quartos, Q1, 1840; Q2, 1839. Edgar's winding the horn so soon after his doing so at line F, 1818 undercuts its effectiveness as a *leitmotif*. It has no more narrative purpose than a repetition encore in a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta like "*To sit in solemn silence in a dull, dark dock*". Hearing the actor blow the ox horn was popular the first time he blew it, so why not repeat it?

The gratuitous nature of the effect forces us to question the authority of the remainder of his speech, "*blisse thee from Whirle-Windes,Starre-blasting, and taking, do poore Tom some charitie, whom the foule Fiend vexes. There could I haue him now, and there, and there againe, and there*" (F, 1840-43) (Q1, 1840-43) It, too, serves no narrative purpose. In fact, the play is more coherent without it. [See Figure 328 below.] The audience already knows that Tom imagines the foul fiend takes the physical form of the storm, and doesn't need to see him act out the idea ad nauseam. The desire of many actors to draw attention to themselves is as old as Western drama. Aristotle writes in *Poetics* that "Mynniscus used to call Callippides 'ape' on account of the extravagance of his action" (XXVI). In terms of the narrative, it is absolutely critical that Edgar NOT explicitly beg Lear for charity given the later developments in the scene. When Lear tears off his cloak, the gesture cannot be perceived as an overt act of charity. His impulse is to feel the storm as a naked wretch does. (See note III,iv,99, S.D, "*Edgar puts on the king's discarded riding-cloak*.")

Edg. Away! The foul fiend follows me!
Through the sharp hawthorn blow the cold winds.—
Humh.— Go to thy cold bed and warm thee.

Lear. *Didst* thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?

Edg. Who gives anything to poor Tom, whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge; made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inch'd bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor.

Storm still.

—Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold.

Lear. What, has his daughters brought him to this pass?
Couldst thou save nothing? *Would'st* thou give 'em all?

Fool. Nay, he reserv'd a blanket, else we had been all *sham'd*.

Lear. Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air
 Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

Kent. He hath no daughters, sir.

Figure 328. Edgar's speech in F, 1840-43 as emended in this reconstruction.

Appendix G: Robert Armin in the Role of Gloucester



Figure 329. THE History of the two Maides of More-clacke, VVith the life and simple maner of IOHN in the Hospitall. ROBERT ARMIN, seruant to the Kings most excellent Maiestie.

Robert Armin is listed in the First Folio as one of the company's "Principall Actors". Unlike Richard Burbage, for whom accounts exist of various roles he played ^[7], there are no records of what parts Armin performed. He was known for his singing, his quick-wit, his skills at wordplay, and bawdiness, which is why he is assumed to have played the Fool in *Lear*. This hypothesis is often stated as an incontrovertible fact by authorities in general sources of reference, including The Editors of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as recently as 2025. However, 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.)

Alois Brandl was the first to propose that the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were doubled. His main argument is that the two characters never appear on stage at the same time, and that they are both described in ways that suggest youth and slowness, and that they both speak the truth. He does not convince us, however, why the doubling of the parts is a core element in the narrative and narrative structure of the play. A central theme in *King Lear* (that can only be fully communicated to an audience in performance) is the inversion of the roles of parent and child. Shakespeare accomplishes this by devices of *metatheatre*, specially, the doubling of the roles, and the use of music, which aims for both emotional and intellectual engagement.

In the ancient world, music was widely believed to have healing properties. The most famous example in literature is the biblical legend of David and Saul, where the young shepherd boy David plays his harp to relieve the King's troubled spirits. (1 Samuel 16:14-23) There is not a stage direction in I,v indicating that the Fool is playing a lute, as there is in *Hamlet*, "Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute" (Q1, 2828.3). The action must be induced from the character's objective, which is to "winde vp" ... "Th'vntun'd and iarring senses" ... "Of this childe-changed Father" (F, 2726-66). This is Cordelia's stated objective in IV,vi by calling for music: "louder the musicke there" (Q, 2775.2) [See note IV,vi,16., "untuned."] Needless to say, the use of the lute is much more than a literary allusion. The music functions dramatically to enhance the emotional impact of the scene, and to shape the audience's perception of the story and characters. It provides a gentle counterpoint to the Fool's bitter riddles, expressing the idea of the unconditional love a mother has for her child, —a combination of what the Greeks termed *storge* and *agape*. Logically, the Fool is playing the

tune of a popular lullaby a woman might hum to her wailing infant to stop him from crying. [See note I,v,5,S.D., “*The Fool plays soft music on his lute.*”]

Armin was renowned for his singing and musicality, but no evidence directly links him to instrumental performances. Catherine A. Henze “explores the idea that the boy(s) singing the roles of Ophelia and Desdemona may have been Armin’s apprentices, either formally, or, more likely, informally. There is external evidence: Armin had himself been an apprentice (known to have later taken at least one apprentice) There is also internal evidence: both Ophelia’s and Desdemona’s singing resemble Armin’s method of musical scripted improvisation.” (“[Armin’s Possible Apprentices: Ophelia and Desdemona](#)”, *Robert Armin and Shakespeare’s Performed Songs*, 2017.

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”).²⁶ 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*). Armin wrote the play “*The Italian Taylor and his Boy*”, which was part of the [Lord Chamberlain’s Men](#)’s repertoire in 1603. The story features Maestro Lattanzio, an Italian tailor, and his apprentice Dionigi. It reflects Armin’s own family background as the son of a tailor. Armin performed the part of the Tailor, not the Boy. [See [Figure 77](#).]

The Fool functions as Cordelia’s [doppelgänger](#). In ancient Greece, a spirit double would be referred to as an [eidolon](#) (εἰδωλον), which translates to “image, idol, double, apparition, phantom, or ghost”. The crucial metaphysical idea being dramatized by doubling the parts is that Cordelia and the Fool are one [Platonic Form](#): agape love. [See note I,iv, 86. S.D. “*Enter Fool.*”] In drama, casting plays a crucial role in shaping the meaning of the dialogue. How an actor looks affects how the audience perceives and interprets the story, its themes, and the motivations of the characters. Armin was 38 years of age when *King Lear* was performed in 1606. Thus, he was a too old to be cast as Cordelia’s “double.” He appears to have been regularly typecast by the [King’s Men](#) in the parts of licentious and/or morally compromised characters, such as Polonius, a “fishmonger” (F, 1212) in *Hamlet*; Pompey, a pimp, in *Measure for Measure*; Pandarus, a pimp, in *Troilus and Cressida*; Autolycus, a pimp in *The Winter’s Tale*, Lavatch, the Countess of Roussillon’s lascivious Fool in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, the prurient Fool in *Timon of Athens*, the intoxicated Porter in *Macbeth*, and the morally ambivalent parts of Feste in *Twelfth Night* and Touchstone in *As You Like It*. Presumably, he carried an air of debauchery about him, like his mentor [Richard Tarlton](#) whose image adorned both “jakes” and ale-house signs for decades, even centuries, after his death. ^[32]

The only evidence we have that Armin performed as an actor in *Lear*, is in the role of Gloucester, whose adultery is a driving element of the plot. “*Adultery? Thou shalt not dye: dye for Adultery?*”

(F, 2557) The actor's distinctive persona strengthens the character of Gloucester because the audience associates him with amoral roles, and underscores the central idea that he was *deserving* of being blinded under Mosaic law. "*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). The textual evidence for his playing Gloucester comes from Lear's exclamation "*Looke, looke, a Mouse*" (F, 2535-6), which can be interpreted as an intertextual reference to Armin's role of Mouse in *The King's Men* 1606 production of *Mucedorus*. (See note IV,v, 89-90, "*Look, look, a Mouse.*") "**Intertextuality**" is a word coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 to describe the relationship between literary texts. "Her notion of Intertextuality refers to the literal and effective presence in a text of another text." [5] Richard Dutton notes that Armin took over the part of Mouse from Will Kemp, who left the *Chamberlain's Men* in early 1599.

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 [the year *King Lear* was performed for James I], 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*.)



Figure 331. This is the third quarto of *Mucedorus*, the most frequently reprinted play of the early modern period.

Why the casting is an essential matter in any valid restoration of *King Lear* is because it defines the form and artistic structure of the play. Is it **metatheatre**, drawing attention to the theatrical nature of the story, or **realism**, which revolts against theatrical artifice? Readers today, especially young students whose experience of drama comes from movies and television, expect to be immersed in a story without being distracted by reminders of its artificiality. According to Matt Ray, "one difference between a good movie and a great movie is the movie's ability to willingly suspend our disbelief." [40] If Cordelia and the Fool are played by the same actor, the illusion that the characters are "real" is broken. Dr Alannah Halay writes, "Portraying to the audience that the actor is also merely an actor stops the audience from getting lost in the performance and finding cathartic release as they typically would from traditional theatre and self-indulgent acting. Instead, they are constantly reminded that this is a performance and, so, are alienated from the events on stage, constantly reminded they are watching an actor." [5]

“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 332. Peeter van Bredael, *Commedia dell'arte Scene in an Italian Landscape*, 17th/18th

Armin's fingerprints all over the part of the Fool as well as the plot of the story. Language is as central and multifaceted a theme in *Lear* as it is Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605).^[41] It is deeply intertwined with broader themes such as the nature of reality, narration, and the contrast between illusion and truth. We laugh at the incongruous juxtaposition of Lear's histrionic speech “*Blow windes, & crack your cheeks; Rage, blow*” (F, 1656), which was manifestly scripted by the author, and the pragmatic, quick-witted Fool's, whose lines have the effect of being extemporaneous: “*O Nunkle, Court holy-water in a dry house, is better then this Rain-water out o' doore*” (F, 1665-66). Likewise, in *Don Quixote*, the lofty posey of the Knight's is contrasted with the pragmatism and banality of Sancho Panza's. In these two contemporaneous works, language is used for comedic and thematic effect, highlighting the gap between what is imagined by their protagonists and reality.

“Cervantes uses both speeches and improvisation to create a rich tapestry of characters and narrative. While Don Quixote's speeches are often elaborate, almost theatrical, and rooted in his idealized vision of chivalry, Sancho Panza and the other characters engage in more spontaneous, improvisational dialogue, reflecting their grounded, practical perspectives. The novel contrasts the structured, sometimes pretentious, speeches of Don Quixote with the ad-hoc, relatable exchanges of the other characters, showcasing the humor and complexity of their interactions.”^[24]

Since Victorian times, it has been posited that the Bard worked from his desk alone, as in the 19th century engraving of “William Shakespeare Writing In His Office.” A quick Google search on the matter yielded: “Many famous playwrights worked independently at their desks, developing their plays alone. While some playwrights collaborate with actors and directors, the core work of script creation often happens in solitude. William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, Eugene O'Neill, and Arthur Miller are examples of playwrights known for their independent work.” It is, of course, impossible to disprove this hypothesis, like the now unstoppable juggernaut that Shakespeare's plays were written by Edward de Vere. A more rational theory is that he worked in a highly collaborative environment, akin to a modern-day “writers' room”. [See Figure 99a.] It cannot be ruled out that the part of the Fool may have been improvised by Armin himself from a scenario, as in *commedia dell'arte*, and performed by an apprentice actor. It is well-established that Shakespeare collaborated with other playwrights, actors, and poets such as George Peele, Thomas Nashe, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Middleton, George Wilkins, and John Fletcher. So

it may be that he collaborated with Robert Armin on *Lear*. He was not credited as a writer because he literally didn't "write" anything.



Figure 99a. "What's a Typical Week For a Writer at SNL?" by Sam Parr. *The Hustle*.

There are no empirical means of knowing to what degree improvisation was involved in the composition of *Lear*, or to what extent the *King's Men* embraced a culture of collaboration. Gerald Eades Bentley writes, "Precisely what the procedure was in the judging of new manuscripts offered for production cannot yet be determined." The process was fast-paced, and certainly involved working within tight deadlines and budgets. "The repertory of the Lord Chamberlain's/King's Men was huge by the standards of any modern repertory theater: the actors performed as many as 30 different plays in a single theatrical season. Of those plays, at least 15 would be new that year (including, on average, two by Shakespeare); the company added a new play to its repertory about once every two weeks. Rehearsal periods must have been relatively brief."^[9]

Robert Armin was known for his skill at improvisation. He was recognized as a solo improvisatory comedian and was noted for his ability to perform comedic acts that he later turned into pamphlets.^[39] His background as an improvisatory artist influenced the way songs and comic moments were integrated into Shakespeare's plays, sometimes incorporating what appeared to be spontaneous interruptions or revisions, even when these were actually scripted to give the impression of improvisation.^[39] Armin's style, like his mentor Richard Tarlton's, evoked the legacy of the medieval minstrel.

"One of the most remarkable aspects of the minstrel's performance was their ability to improvise. Minstrels were often called upon to perform at feasts and celebrations, and they would have to be prepared to entertain on the spot. Improvisation was a vital skill for the minstrel, allowing them to tailor their performance to the audience and the occasion. They would often improvise new verses and melodies, adapting their performance to the mood of the moment."^[14]

The recent discovery of the *Heege manuscript*^[34] by Dr. James Wade in 2023 sheds new light on the devices of medieval minstrels. (See "*Entertainments from a Medieval Minstrel's Repertoire Book*", *The Review of English Studies*). "In the year 1,480, a household cleric and tutor to a noble family named Richard Heege went to a feast where there was a minstrel performing a three-part act. Heege recorded as much as he could remember, opening with "By me, Richard Heege, because I was at that feast and did not have a drink."^[35] [See Figure 300.] The texts include a burlesque romance (*The Hunting of the Hare*), a mock sermon, and an alliterative nonsense verse (*The Battle of Brackonwet*), all filled with bawdy humor, political satire, and absurdity.

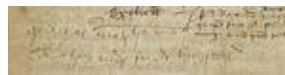


Figure 300. In the Heege manuscript, an English tutor may have copied the text of a medieval minstrel's repertoire book. National Library of Scotland.

Wade's discovery "changes the way we should think about English comic culture between Chaucer and Shakespeare." [36] Matthew Rozsa writes, the surprising conclusion from Hegge's document 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 . . . [they 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." [3] Wade says that "echoes of minstrel humour can be found 'in shows such as *Mock the Week*, situational comedies and slapstick.'" [4]

As the medieval period transitioned into the Renaissance, the traditions of minstrels and other traveling entertainers began to be formalized into a more professional theatre form, resulting in *Commedia dell'arte*. Performances were characterized by music, improvisation, stock characters, acrobatics, and physical comedy (*lazzi*) including slapstick. Flaminio Scala's and his troupe I Gelosi, performed *commedia dell'arte* from 1569 to 1604 throughout Europe, including England. *Il Cavadente* (The Tooth-drawer), published in 1611, is a *scenario* for a *commedia dell'arte* performance which contains both scripted and improvised portions. [10] "It was the actors who gave the *commedia dell'arte* its impulse and character, relying on their wits and capacity to create atmosphere and convey character with little scenery or costume." [25]

Shakespeare is widely thought by scholars to have taken direct inspiration from the conventions, stock characters, and scenarios of this Italian theatrical tradition. Robert Henke, a noted professor of Drama and Comparative Literature, and Director of Graduate Studies in Performance Studies at Washington University, examines the dramaturgy of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* in the context of sixteenth-century Italian tragicomedy. [43] His book *Pastoral Transformations: Italian tragicomedy and Shakespeare's late plays*, inspects the theories and practices of Giovanni Battista Giraldi, Torquato Tasso, and Giovanni Battista Guarini, as well as experiments of the *commedia dell'arte*. He demonstrates the presence of independent yet parallel historical and dramaturgical developments in the Italian and Shakespearean theaters. In an interview with "The Ampersand", he discusses the influence of *commedia dell'arte* in Shakespeare's comedies, and discusses the Italian plays and novellas at the heart of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*." [3]

Jumping ahead 400 years, "In the dynamic landscape of film and television production, collaboration stands as the cornerstone of creativity and innovation. From script development to post-production, the art of bringing stories to life relies heavily on the synergy between talented individuals and teams." (Vitrina) Sarah Schneider views her relationship with her writing partner Chris Kelly on *Saturday Night Live* as fundamental to her creative process. "In comedy, there's a natural heightening that occurs around the setup of a joke that builds on the exchange of ideas, dialogue, and banter. It's the same with collaboration. There's a natural elevation of an idea that can only happen from having a back and forth exchange." [4] Steven W Thrasher writes in *The Guardian*, "SNL was a great place to learn about writing, listening and timing, but also to school myself about the ruthlessness of entertainment even when trying to make people laugh. After the writers wrote overnight on Tuesdays, there would be an enormous table read late Wednesday

afternoon. Then, all 100 or so members of the company would read every sketch written aloud, which would go on for about four hours. Two hours' worth of show material would be selected, to be performed at a dress rehearsal from 8-10 Saturday night.”^[3]

The late [Robert Altman](#) was known for his collaborative approach and embrace of improvisation in filmmaking, allowing actors significant creative freedom and character input. This led to a unique style characterized by overlapping dialogue, multiple storylines, and a focus on the process of filmmaking rather than just the final product. His musical comedy drama movie *Nashville* is a [metadrama](#) that deliberately calls attention to its own fictional nature in a way that emphasizes the artificiality of its world. “By concentrating on the unsystematic comings and goings of these people and stoking the improvisational instincts of his actors to construct moments of true, character-shaping spontaneity, Altman rejected any semblance of a tight and traditional narrative and shaped a genuine cinematic rarity in the process: a film that is truly a living, breathing entity.”



Video 52. Jonathan Winters "The Stick" Apr 1964 Jack Paar.

Returning to Armin, his improvisational style of performance can, of course, be taken as pure funny business, like [Jonathan Winters](#)' "The Stick" on the [Jack Parr Show](#). However, it can also be understood as addressing philosophical questions about the arbitrary nature of language and the boundaries of reality and imagination. In his recent book *Signifying Nothing in Fourteenth Century England* (2021), Jordan Kirk argues that “nonsense was structurally important to medieval intellectual culture. In the Middle Ages writers, poets, and thinkers explored language that either appeared to lack meaning or deliberately played with the boundaries of sense and nonsense. This concept is not merely about ‘absurdity’ or ‘gibberish’ as in modern usage, but is deeply tied to medieval theories of language, signification, and the mystical or spiritual dimensions of communication.”

In *Lear*, themes and plot are deeply intertwined. The plot serves to illustrate and develop the theme, and the theme provides the context and purpose for the plot. In essence, the plot is the vehicle through which the theme is conveyed and explored. In the first scene of the play *Lear* orders his daughters to empirically quantify how much they love him by rhetoric and oratory. In the next, Gloucester sees false words written in a letter, and ends up banishing the son who loves him. Had either one used their intuition, there would have been no tragedy. The theme comes to a resolution in [IV,v](#), where *Lear* proves words to be utterly useless in communicating [Truth](#), namely, how [Love](#) and [Desert](#) are known. It is at the end of this pivotal scene that Gloucester has a classical moment of [anagnorisis](#) where he finally realizes the identity of *Edgar* by instinctive *feeling* rather than *logos* [λόγος]. Words have absolutely nothing to do with his sudden knowledge. [See Appendix B.]

Appendix H: 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 exgetical 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 I: Email from Paul Werstine

On May 14, 2019, at 5:23 PM, Paul Werstine <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.

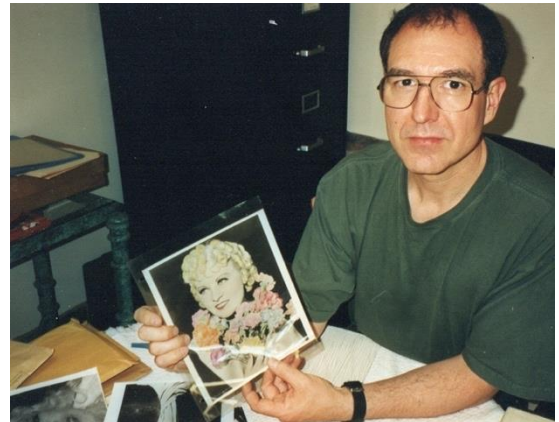
All best wishes,
P
aul Werstine

About William Barr Comstock

William Barr Comstock (“Wild Bill”), is a renowned digital photographer in the bodybuilding and fitness industry. He began his work as a still photographer shortly after his arrival in Southern California in 2000 shooting mega-promoter Jon Lindsay’s NPC regional bodybuilding contests for the now defunct [graphicmuscle.com](#), a bodybuilding website he co-founded with the legendary [Mickey Hargitay](#). The site was subsumed by IRONMAN MAGAZINE, where Comstock worked closely with Publisher/photographer John Balik and journalist/celebrity emcee Lonnie Teper in providing contest coverage. He later worked with MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE and FLEX Magazine. Additionally, Comstock contributed to RX MUSCLE. His professional activities frequently centered around [Gold's Gym](#) in Venice, an iconic location in bodybuilding culture often referred to as “The Mecca” of the sport. This positioning allowed him to develop relationships with elite athletes such as Chris Cormier, Charles Glass, Kai Greene, Dexter Jackson, Cody Montgomery, Lee Priest, Shawn Ray, Shawn Rhoden, Hidetada Yamagishi, and many other IFBB pros and top amateurs. His pics present a raw and authentic portrayal of people and event training regimens without the use of artificial lights, fake weights, and contrived poses for the camera.



Comstock was born in 1951, and raised in a prominent family of academics. His great grandfather was [John Dewey](#), “a major voice of progressive education and liberalism.” His grandfather’s brother, [Daniel Frost Comstock](#), was a member of the faculty at MIT in theoretical physics, and invented [Technicolor](#). He given the middle name Barr after [Stringfellow Barr](#) (his 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. His maternal grandmother was the Headmistress at [Deerfield Academy](#), one of the oldest prep schools in the country. His 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.



Comstock was sent to elite private schools: [St. Edmund’s Academy](#) in Pittsburgh, and the [North Shore Country Day School](#) in Winnetka. He made a poor scholar, however, having suffered a brain injury as a 4 year old that resulted in [aphasia](#), a language disorder that makes it difficult to communicate through speech. He recalls being sent to the hall every day in the 4th grade for

disruptive behavior. He says the only reason he was not kicked out of North Shore was because the Headmaster, [Nathaniel French](#), was a family relation. Eventually, he was expelled in 1968 for hooliganism, and sent to [New Trier West](#), a public school, where he graduated the following year. His SAT and ACT scores were so low that he was not accepted into a university.



In 1970, Comstock read *King Lear* for the first time. He had consumed a quart of gin, and was struck by a vision of the play that looked nothing like the one he was reading in *Shakespeare The Complete Works*, edited by [G. B. Harrison](#). He believed he had been contacted by Shakespeare himself, and sent on a divine mission to restore the play back to its original form. Comstock moved to New York City in 1976, and worked with [Michael Moriarty's](#) Shakespeare Company, "[Potter's Field](#)."

By March 22, 1979, he was habitually drunk, and taken to AA. His sponsor made it a condition that he never talk about *King Lear*. After a few years of constantly attending meetings, he 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, Comstock 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, he produced the lesbian dance festival *Turn Out*, which [Jennifer Dunning](#) cited in *The New York Times* as one of the year's best dance events. It was in that year that he shot the video *Soup of Evening*, a graphic depiction of the horror of AIDS in NYC in the early 90s. The video portrays a bleak and absurdist view of human existence that is mitigated only by the kindness of other people and a Form of Platonic Beauty and Goodness.



A few years later he 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' daughters!*" wrote Gary Morris at the [Bright Lights Film Journal](#). For Comstock, it was a short from the drag queens at the Pyramid to the line-up of musclemen at the Mr. Olympia. What it means to be a man is the central theme of his work including *King Lear*, where he posits that Lear's fatal flaw or hamartia is his masculine pride. Comstock currently resides in Hollywood, and has been clean and sober since March 22, 1979.