

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

KING LEAR

FULLY ANNOTATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY BURTON RAFFEL

WITH AN ESSAY BY HAROLD BLOOM



THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE

King Lear



William Shakespeare

Edited, fully annotated, and introduced by Burton Raffel

With an essay by Harold Bloom

THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE

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ABOUT THIS BOOK



Abandoned to a raging storm, in act 3, scene 2, Lear speaks these memorable lines:

Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes,
Unwhipped of justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand –
Thou perjured – and thou simular man of virtue
That art incestuous. Caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Hast practiced on man's life. Close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.

This was perfectly understandable, we must assume, to the mostly very average persons who paid to watch Elizabethan plays. But who today can make full or comfortable sense of it? In this very fully annotated edition, I therefore present this passage, not in the

bare form quoted above, but thoroughly supported by bottom-of-the-page notes:

Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pudder¹ o'er our heads,
Find out² their enemies now. Tremble thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipped of³ justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand –
Thou perjured – and thou simular⁴ man of virtue
That art incestuous. Caitiff,⁵ to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
Hast practiced on man's life. Close pent-up guilts,
Rive⁶ your concealing continents,⁷ and cry
These dreadful summoners grace.⁸ I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.

Without full explanation of words that have over the years shifted in meaning, and usages that have been altered, neither the modern reader nor the modern listener is likely to be equipped for anything like full comprehension.

I believe annotations of this sort create the necessary bridges, from Shakespeare's four-centuries-old English across to ours. Some readers, to be sure, will be able to comprehend unusual, historically different meanings without any glosses. Those not fa-

1 pudder = turmoil, uproar

2 find out = discover

3 by

4 simulating, pretending

5 villain, wretch

6 tear apart, split, destroy

7 contents

8 cry these dreadful summoners grace = cry/beg for grace from these terrible bailiffs/arresting officers

miliar with the modern meaning of particular words will easily find clear, simple definitions in any modern dictionary. But most readers are not likely to understand Shakespeare's intended meaning, absent such glosses as I here offer.

My annotation practices have followed the same principles used in *The Annotated Milton*, published in 1999, and in my annotated editions of *Hamlet*, published (as the initial volume in this series) in 2003, *Romeo and Juliet* (published in 2004), and subsequent volumes in this series. Classroom experience has validated these editions. Classes of mixed upper-level undergraduates and graduate students have more quickly and thoroughly transcended language barriers than ever before. This allows the teacher, or a general reader without a teacher, to move more promptly and confidently to the nonlinguistic matters that have made Shakespeare and Milton great and important poets.

It is the inevitable forces of linguistic change, operant in all living tongues, which have inevitably created such wide degrees of obstacles to ready comprehension—not only sharply different meanings, but subtle, partial shifts in meaning that allow us to think we understand when, alas, we do not. Speakers of related languages like Dutch and German also experience this shifting of the linguistic ground. Like early Modern English (ca. 1600) and the Modern English now current, those languages are too close for those who know only one language, and not the other, to be readily able always to recognize what they correctly understand and what they do not. When, for example, a speaker of Dutch says, “Men kofer is kapot,” a speaker of German will know that something belonging to the Dutchman is broken (“kapot” = “kaputt” in German, and “men” = “mein”). But without more linguistic awareness than the average person is apt to have, the

German speaker will not identify “kofer” (“trunk” in Dutch) with “Körper”—a modern German word meaning “physique, build, body.” The closest word to “kofer” in modern German, indeed, is “Scrankscoffer,” which is too large a leap for ready comprehension. Speakers of different Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian), and all other related but not identical tongues, all experience these difficulties, as well as the difficulty of understanding a text written in their own language five, or six, or seven hundred years earlier. Shakespeare’s English is not yet so old that it requires, like many historical texts in French and German, or like Old English texts—for example, *Beowulf*—a modern translation. Much poetry evaporates in translation: language is immensely particular. The sheer *sound* of Dante in thirteenth-century Italian is profoundly worth preserving. So too is the sound of Shakespeare.

I have annotated prosody (metrics) only when it seemed truly necessary or particularly helpful. Readers should have no problem with the silent “e” in past participles (loved, returned, missed). Except in the few instances where modern usage syllabifies the “e,” whenever an “e” in Shakespeare is *not* silent, it is marked “è.” The notation used for prosody, which is also used in the explanation of Elizabethan pronunciation, follows the extremely simple form of my *From Stress to Stress: An Autobiography of English Prosody* (see “Further Reading,” near the end of this book). Syllables with metrical stress are capitalized; all other syllables are in lowercase letters. I have managed to employ normalized Elizabethan spellings, in most indications of pronunciation, but I have sometimes been obliged to deviate, in the higher interest of being understood.

I have annotated, as well, a limited number of such other mat-

ters, sometimes of interpretation, sometimes of general or historical relevance, as have seemed to me seriously worthy of inclusion. These annotations have been most carefully restricted: this is not intended to be a book of literary commentary. It is for that reason that the glossing of metaphors has been severely restricted. There is almost literally no end to discussion and/or analysis of metaphor, especially in Shakespeare. To yield to temptation might well be to double or triple the size of this book—and would also change it from a historically oriented language guide to a work of an unsteadily mixed nature. In the process, I believe, neither language nor literature would be well or clearly served.

Where it seemed useful, and not obstructive of important textual matters, I have modernized spelling, including capitalization. Spelling is not on the whole a basic issue, but punctuation and lineation must be given high respect. Neither the Quarto nor the Folio uses few exclamation marks or semicolons, which is to be sure a matter of the conventions of a very different era. Still, our modern preferences cannot be lightly substituted for what is, after a fashion, the closest thing to a Shakespeare manuscript we are likely ever to have. We do not know whether these particular seventeenth-century printers, like most of that time, were responsible for question marks, commas, periods, and, especially, all-purpose colons, or whether these particular printers tried to follow their handwritten sources. Nor do we know if those sources, or what part thereof, might have been in Shakespeare's own hand. But in spite of these equivocations and uncertainties, it remains true that, to a very considerable extent, punctuation tends to result from just how the mind responsible for that punctuating *hears* the text. And twenty-first-century minds have no business, in such matters, overruling seventeenth-century ones. Whoever the

compositors were, they were more or less Shakespeare's contemporaries, and we are not.

Accordingly, when either of the original printed texts uses a comma, we are being signaled that *they* (whoever "they" were) heard the text, not coming to a syntactic stop, but continuing to some later stopping point. To replace commas with editorial periods is thus risky and on the whole an undesirable practice. (The dramatic action of a tragedy, to be sure, may require us, for twenty-first-century readers, to highlight what four-hundred-year-old punctuation standards may not make clear—and may even, at times, misrepresent.)

When the printed texts have a colon, what we are being signaled is that *they* heard a syntactic stop—though not necessarily or even usually the particular kind of syntactic stop we associate, today, with the colon. It is therefore inappropriate to substitute editorial commas for original colons. It is also inappropriate to employ editorial colons when *their* syntactic usage of colons does not match ours. In general, the closest thing to *their* syntactic sense of the colon is our (and their) period.

The printed interrogation (question) marks, too, merit extremely respectful handling. In particular, modern editorial exclamation marks should very rarely be substituted for seventeenth-century interrogation marks.

It follows from these considerations that the movement and sometimes the meaning of what we must take to be Shakespeare's play will at times be different, depending on whose punctuation we follow, *theirs* or our own. I have tried, here, to use the printed seventeenth-century texts as a guide to both *hearing* and *understanding* what Shakespeare wrote.

Since the original printed texts (there not being, as there never are for Shakespeare, any surviving manuscripts) are frequently careless as well as self-contradictory, I have been relatively free with the wording of stage directions—and in some cases have added brief directions, to indicate who is speaking to whom. I have made no emendations; I have necessarily been obliged to make choices. Textual decisions have been annotated when the differences between or among the original printed texts seem either marked or of unusual interest.

In the interests of compactness and brevity, I have employed in my annotations (as consistently as I am able) a number of stylistic and typographical devices:

- The annotation of a single word does not repeat that word
- The annotation of more than one word repeats the words being annotated, which are followed by an equals sign and then by the annotation; the footnote number in the text is placed after the last of the words being annotated
- In annotations of a single word, alternative meanings are usually separated by commas; if there are distinctly different ranges of meaning, the annotations are separated by arabic numerals inside parentheses—(1), (2), and so on; in more complexly worded annotations, alternative meanings expressed by a single word are linked by a forward slash, or *solidus*: /
- Explanations of textual meaning are not in parentheses; comments about textual meaning are
- Except for proper nouns, the word at the beginning of all annotations is in lower case

- Uncertainties are followed by a question mark, set in parentheses: (?)
- When particularly relevant, “translations” into twenty-first-century English have been added, in parentheses
- Annotations of repeated words are *not* repeated. Explanations of the *first* instance of such common words are followed by the sign ★. Readers may easily track down the first annotation, using the brief Finding List at the back of the book. Words with entirely separate meanings are annotated *only* for meanings no longer current in Modern English.

The most important typographical device here employed is the sign ★ placed after the first (and only) annotation of words and phrases occurring more than once. There is an alphabetically arranged listing of such words and phrases in the Finding List at the back of the book. The Finding List contains no annotations but simply gives the words or phrases themselves and the numbers of the relevant act, the scene within that act, and the footnote number within that scene for the word's first occurrence.

INTRODUCTION



*L*ear would be an excellent choice for the most virtuosic play Shakespeare ever wrote. It has great verbal brilliance—but so too do *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Twelfth Night*, and indeed others of his plays as well. Although brilliance and Shakespeare regularly walk hand in hand, A.C. Bradley begins his famous lecture on *Lear* with the following statement: “*King Lear* has again and again been described as Shakespeare’s greatest work, the best of his plays, the tragedy in which he exhibits most fully his multitudinous powers.” But Bradley then adds that “*King Lear* seems to me Shakespeare’s greatest achievement, but it seems to me *not* his greatest play.”¹

Nor has Bradley been the only querulous critic. Jan Kott, who like Bradley loves the play, begins his discussion of *Lear* as follows: “The attitude of modern criticism to *King Lear* is ambiguous and somehow embarrassed. Doubtless *King Lear* is still recognized as a masterpiece. . . . But at the same time *King Lear* gives one the impression of a high mountain that everyone admires but no one particularly wishes to climb.”² A dedicated theater professional, Margaret Webster, confesses that *Lear* “seems to me baffling from the very beginning.” She explains: “If the dramatic structure of

the play had stood, clean and firm, around [its] tempestuous center, it would still be actable; Lear himself would be upheld by it. But, in my view, he is not. . . . The practical objections which I have here outlined [omitted here] may seem picayune to the enthralled and worshipping reader, but I believe they have almost always proved fatal to the play in performance, because Shakespeare has not given us the means to resolve them, but substituted a cloak of dark magnificence which we may throw around them, hoping that no one will look beneath it.”³

Of course, all Shakespeare’s plays, early and late, are stageworthy. He was, after all, what we today would have to call a commercial playwright (though “commercial” in this context has taken on a negative connotation the Elizabethans would not have intended, had they used the word at all—and they did not). Yet is there another of his plays that features eye-popping stage effects of so wide-ranging a variety, from gutta percha eyeballs dropping onto the stage (with surely a splash of red paint to heighten audience reaction), to bravura emotional displays and scenes of such thunderous impact as a son showing a blind father how to commit suicide by jumping off a nonexistent cliff, or a deranged father trying to persuade his dead daughter to return to life?

To be intensely virtuosic in its dramatic displays, notably in the play’s first three acts, necessarily involves a special dramatic structure. Virtually all commentators have noted that *Lear*’s greatness is surely different, and the nature of that differentness has been explained in a wide range of ways.⁴ Careful, detailed analysis of *Lear*’s dramatic structure will indicate, unsurprisingly, that although we may not have always or accurately understood him, Shakespeare knew exactly what he wanted to do. Plainly, so sweeping and pervasive a dedication to dramatic effect cannot be acciden-

tal. H. Granville Barker *almost* came to the exact conclusion that I will here assert, only to end on exactly the opposite side of the fence: “*It is possible that this most practical and loyal of dramatists did for once . . . break his promise and betray his trust by presenting to his fellows a play, the capital parts of which they simply could not act.*”⁵ It seems to me not only possible, but demonstrably correct that Shakespeare *did* intend to give his actor comrades a play—but a play that was specifically and consciously meant for them to, as the phrase goes, cut a rug. Insert a period instead of a comma, at the end of the italicized portion of Granville Barker’s remarks, and you have precisely the argument I will now set out: *Lear*—at least in its first three acts—was from the start designed to indulge and please the actors in Shakespeare’s company.

It is not accidental that, though the cast list is relatively small, twelve of *Lear*’s two dozen significant characters have *each* been awarded no less than 14 percent of the play’s on-stage time (significant on-stage time, not including mere on-stage-presence). Ophelia, a famously important character in *Hamlet*, has only 17 percent. Further, no single character in *Lear*, *Lear* included, has anything like the dominant 66 percent of stage time given to Hamlet, the 64 percent given to Iago in *Othello*, or the 59 percent given to both *Othello* and *Macbeth*. Here is a roughly calculated list of on-stage time for *Lear*’s twelve most prominent characters:

Lear	48%
Kent	39.4%
Gloucester	36.5%
Edgar	33%
Edmund	24%

Fool	21%
Goneril	20.5%
Regan	20.5%
Albany	17%
Cornwall	17%
Oswald	14%
Cordelia	11%

Each of these parts is what actors call a “fat” role, any one of which could be honorably undertaken by a theatrical “star.” If, once again, this is not accidental, why has Shakespeare been thus unprecedentedly generous to his actors?

Consider, in the order of their first appearance on stage, the range of emotions displayed by eleven of the above-listed twelve prominent characters (Cornwall’s first-act appearance is almost totally nonverbal), in the sequence of their appearances in the first act.

Kent: (1) gentlemanly, considerate, (2) forthright, intrepid, determined, loyal, (3) peasant-like in dress and dogged, blunt speech, (3) clever with peasant-appropriate words, (4) ferociously, violently upper-class-conscious

Gloucester: (1) courtly, bawdy, paternal, (2) dutiful, (3) aggravated, distressed, conspiratorial, philosophically self-important

Edmund: (1) humble, filial, (2) soaringly self-advancing, provocative, hypocritically unctuous, contemptuous, brazenly lying

Lear: (1) majestic, credulous, tempestuously hasty, punitive, violent, heavily sarcastic, cruel, (2) affable, imperious, shocked, violent, grateful, detached, brisk, unbelieving,

bewildered, ironic, angry, confused, threatening, indignant,
(3) business-like, repentant, shaky

Goneril: (1) flagrantly flattering, righteously scornful, disloyal,
conspiratorial, pompous, (2) imperious, arrogant,
commanding, lying, (3) aggressive, condescending, cruel,
relentless, haughty

Cordelia: (1) moralistic, rigidly, inflexibly filial, sorrowful,
stern, pedagogically inclined

Regan: (1) flagrantly flattering, righteously scornful, disloyal,
conspiratorial, pompous

Edgar: (1) courtly, fraternal, credulous, confused

Oswald: (1) oily, subservient, indignant, proud

Fool: (1) sadly mocking, witty, quick, prophetic, truthful,
musical (he sings), class-conscious, observant, dance-like
(he mimes), pathetic, meditative

Albany: (1) courtly, shocked, politely firm, quietly truthful,
philosophical

Shakespeare is notorious, to be sure, for presenting us with a busy stage. His characters are invariably in constant motion. Only the fast and furious mood-shifting shared, appropriately, by Lear and Kent is distinctly unusual, but the aggregate degree of often very abrupt changes in mood is noteworthy.

The tone of these characters, further, is as quick-triggered and often as extravagant as their actions. It is Lear who first signals, though he does not fully initiate, the play's tonal extravagance:

Tell me, my daughters

(Since now we will divest us both of rule,

Interest of territory, cares of state),

Which of you shall we say doth love us most,

That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge.

(I.I.49–54)

Lear has been, to this point, “every inch a king” (as he says most pathetically, later in the play). His plan to give up power and divide his kingdom among his children seems businesslike and feasible—until this curiously bland idiocy. Shakespeare blows no trumpets, offers us no high-dramatic signals, but if there were time to stop and consider, when watching (or even when reading), it would surely seem extraordinary to have an apparently sober ruler declare that division of the realm will take place according to “which of you . . . doth love us most.” Love him most? The play has deftly slid away from sanity and into a never-never land of utter foolishness. And Goneril, oldest child and therefore the first to speak, winds up the rhetorical engines:

Sir,
I love you more than words can wield the matter,
Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty,
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor.
As much as child e’er loved, or father found.
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable –
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

(I.I.55–62)

Even without the annotated explanations to be found in the text that follows, the profound emptiness of these vows is obvious. “I love you a whole lot,” Goneril says, “a whole whole lot lot, a whole whole whole lot lot lot.” The burden on the actress, here

(the part having been played by a prepubescent boy, in Shakespeare's time), is to make the surface of this plausible, while simultaneously registering its inner flatulence.

And Lear does not bat an eyelash, swallowing this farrago of platitudes as if it meant something. Indeed, he promptly acts on it, and gives Goneril the rewards she wanted. Then, as if he is being completely businesslike and sober (though he is in fact already a candidate for an Alzheimer physician), he turns to Regan, asking: "What says our second daughter, / Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak." And she in essence repeats Goneril's high-order near-gibberish:

I am made of that self mettle as my sister,
 And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
 I find she names my very deed of love,
 Only she comes too short. That I profess
 Myself an enemy to all other joys
 Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
 And find I am alone felicitate
 In your dear Highness' love.

(1.1.71-78)

What can one say? Lear's reaction remains the same, and Regan too gets her share.

We have been prepared by Cordelia's brief asides, and we know she is exceedingly unlike her sisters. But Shakespeare spices matters by making Cordelia, and not the older daughters, the King's clear favorite:

Now our joy,
 Although our last and least, to whose young love

The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
 Strive to be of interest. What can you say to draw
 A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

(1.1.84–88)

The “opulence” lathered on him by Goneril and Regan is plainly what he wants, but he anticipates still greater pleasure, hearing it from the child he favors. There follows the first part of their elaborate exchange:

Cordelia Nothing, my lord.

Lear Nothing?

Cordelia Nothing.

Lear Nothing will come of nothing, speak again.

Cordelia Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty

According to my bond, no more nor less.

Lear How now, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,

Lest you may mar your fortunes.

(1.1.89–97)

If Lear has been lost in a fantasy world, and Goneril and Regan have been swishing through a fog of pure verballity, Cordelia swings starkly to the other extreme. Lear’s subsequent unbalanced rage, no matter how predictable, is grandly dramatic—but what I want to emphasize is, quite simply, the poundingly dramatic absoluteness of both words and actions, in this whole flattery-milk-ing affair. It is without question great theater. It stretches actors to their utmost. It thrills, moves, and ultimately enthralls viewers (and readers). “Virtuosic” is thus, here, another way of saying immense, extravagant, boldly impressive, intensely passionate.

But it may seem clearer, by now, that the difference between *Lear* and most of Shakespeare's other great plays is primarily founded on dramatic extravagance, beautifully handled, splendidly phrased, but not entirely the same kind of drama we find in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, or *Macbeth*. Until we reach act 4, and Shakespeare more or less "reverts" to his justly celebrated profound insights into human nature, *Lear*'s characters are of high interest *not* because of what they *are* but because of what they *do*. This not a value judgment. Grand opera, similarly extravagant, is no less artistically potent than the wry plays of Anton Chekhov or the grinding, partly bewildering, but always enlightening plays of Samuel Beckett. Grand opera is simply by its very nature different from merely verbal drama.

Lear is every bit as experimental, and as breath-taking, as *Macbeth*. There is an immense amount of witty speech, and not a little burlesque, in *Hamlet*. There is a streak of mordant wit in *Othello*, but nothing particularly burlesque. There is almost no witty speech in *Macbeth*, and no burlesque: as I have noted, in my edition of that play, the porter at the gate scene is deadly serious. None of the mentioned mature plays has the fantastical material of *The Tempest*. None has the satirical bite, the social sweep, of *Twelfth Night*. We do not have to choose among them, or appreciate one less because we appreciate any or all of the others.

But Shakespeare's purpose, in the experiment that is the first three acts of *Lear*, may now have become plainer. I have said that the first three acts of the play are actor-oriented: for most of the play, it is a grandness of acting that is plainly the playwright's largest concern. Did Shakespeare conceive this emphasis on his own, or collaboratively with the other, more actively on-stage members of his company? There is no direct evidence, nor does

it, I think, make a great deal of difference. As in most things, there is almost certain to be a complex mixture of motivations. Actors may have complained, or petitioned. This was a collectively sustained stage, in ways that it is sometimes hard for us to understand. Not only was there no director, but neither was there a stage manager, or a set designer, or a costume designer, or a lighting expert, or a soundman. From what we know of rehearsals, they were rarely if ever full run-throughs. Actors rehearsed *their* scenes, not whole plays. We do not know how closely the acting “scripts” that we have resemble either the original manuscripts, or whether or not there ever were such things as preliminary, unacted versions. We do not know, as I note in the “Textual Note,” below, at what stage in a particular play’s history the version (or versions) we have were drafted, or in whose hand. Or by whose direction. It seems clear that the 1623 Folio had no “editor,” in our sense of the word. And there are many equally uncertain matters we need to confront as directly as we can. But we neither have, nor can we reasonably expect ever to have, all the answers to all our pressing questions.

And the only legitimate answer to why Shakespeare changed the dramatic nature of the play, after act 3, is “yes.” That is, Shakespeare did it: that is all we know and, of necessity, all we need to know.

A word is in order, as to Shakespeare’s sources for *Lear*. Like the Greek dramatists almost two thousand years earlier, Shakespeare was a notorious plot-borrower. Many of the ways in which his narratives varied from their sources are, from play to play, of considerable interest; nothing Shakespeare does is of no interest. But what is particularly illuminating, in the case of *Lear*, is the nature

and quality of its sources, which start as ancient folktale and develop into a kind of popular “history.” That is, the intrinsic simpleness of *Lear*’s sources, which display a traditional absence of psychological complexities, may have given Shakespeare the freedom required, in order to focus on *what* happened rather than *how* or *why*. *Lear* has always reminded commentators of the “fairy tale” it once was. The pain and suffering in fairy tales is undeniable. But it is not the pain and suffering of Fyodor Dostoyevsky, or Franz Kafka—or that of *Hamlet*. Again, that is not a value judgment but a fact.

Notes

1. A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 198–99.
2. Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (New York: Norton, 1974), 127.
3. Margaret Webster, *Shakespeare Without Tears* (New York: Whittlesey House, 1942), 221, 223, 224.
4. Commentators have, indeed, fairly stood on their heads, trying to justify *Lear*’s differentness: “The tragedy is most poignant in that it is purposeless, unreasonable. . . . *King Lear* is supreme in that, in [its] main theme, it faces the very absence of tragic purpose.” G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire: Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 174–175.
5. H. Granville Barker, “King Lear,” quoted in Anne Bradby, ed., *Shakespeare Criticism, 1919–35* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 112.

TEXTUAL NOTE



*K*ing Lear has two differing printed texts, the 1608 Quarto and the 1623 Folio. (I need not here discuss the so-called Second Quarto, falsely dated 1608 but in fact printed in 1619 and pretty much a copy of the 1608 text.) We do not know and are likely never to know how distant each of the two texts is from Shakespeare's original, though that is hardly a unique bewilderment. On the evidence of the two texts themselves, there is no reason to believe that there are or ever were two distinct versions of the play. The Quarto is obviously more carelessly printed: there are 167 differences among its twelve surviving copies. This is not gross carelessness, by Elizabethan standards of printing, but it is definitely on the high side. The Folio is much more carefully printed, and in addition to correcting many errors (and adding not a few of its own), it does a good deal of editing, most of it clearly both consistent and responsible. It adds a total of 115 lines to the Quarto text, and deletes a total of 265 lines.

On the evidence of the two texts, the most sensible and conservative editorial position seems to be that, when possible, the Folio text should be reproduced. It may or may be not based on an authoritative manuscript (there are no manuscripts for any of

Shakespeare's surviving plays, nor do we know without question on what kind of texts any of his plays has been based). Most commentators, and an even higher percentage of those who have actually collated the two texts, would probably agree that, though the Quarto is imperfect, and the Folio is markedly superior, the Folio is not a perfect "copy text" (that is, the text on which an edition is based). Accordingly, the only editorial perspective other than that just stated would be the highly speculative and I think incorrect conclusion that these two printed texts are distinct versions.

Some few of the passages deleted in the Folio, having become embedded in readers' minds, and in critical commentary, are here restored, either in whole or in part. Act 4, scene 3, is deleted in the Folio, a readily understandable omission for what is plainly a performance-oriented text. This edition, however, being a reading-oriented text, act 4, scene 3—characterologically and narratively enriching—is here restored in its entirety. (The question of performance versus reading is charmingly and passionately discussed in Charles Lamb's famous essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare, Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage-Representation.") All such restorations are identified in text footnotes.

As I have throughout the Annotated Shakespeare series, I here avoid emendations. An editor, in my judgment, should resort to such extreme solutions only in absolute desperation and never because he or she believes this or that word or phrase sounds better than what either of the two printed texts gives us. No matter how clever we are, we are not Shakespeare. The Folio editors were not Shakespeare either, but they were a great deal closer to him than we are, in both time and acquaintance.

SOME ESSENTIALS OF THE
SHAKESPEAREAN STAGE



The Stage

- There was no *scenery* (backdrops, flats, and so on).
- Compared to today's elaborate, high-tech productions, the Elizabethan stage had few *on-stage* props. These were mostly handheld: a sword or dagger, a torch or candle, a cup or flask. Larger props, such as furniture, were used sparingly.
- Costumes (some of which were upper-class castoffs, belonging to the individual actors) were elaborate. As in most premodern and very hierarchical societies, clothing was the distinctive mark of who and what a person was.
- What the actors *spoke*, accordingly, contained both the dramatic and narrative material we have come to expect in a theater (or movie house) and (1) the setting, including details of the time of day, the weather, and so on, and (2) the occasion. The *dramaturgy* is thus very different from that of our own time, requiring much more attention to verbal and gestural matters. Strict realism was neither intended nor, under the circumstances, possible.

- There was *no curtain*. Actors entered and left via doors in the back of the stage, behind which was the “tiring-room,” where actors put on or changed their costumes.
- In *public theaters* (which were open-air structures), there was no *lighting*; performances could take place only in daylight hours.
- For *private* theaters, located in large halls of aristocratic houses, candlelight illumination was possible.

The Actors

- Actors worked in *professional*, for-profit companies, sometimes organized and owned by other actors, and sometimes by entrepreneurs who could afford to erect or rent the company’s building. Public theaters could hold, on average, two thousand playgoers, most of whom viewed and listened while standing. Significant profits could be and were made. Private theaters were smaller, more exclusive.
- There was *no director*. A book-holder/prompter/props manager, standing in the tiring-room behind the backstage doors, worked from a text marked with entrances and exits and notations of any special effects required for that particular script. A few such books have survived. Actors had texts only of their own parts, speeches being cued to a few prior words. There were few and often no rehearsals, in our modern use of the term, though there was often some coaching of individuals. Since Shakespeare’s England was largely an oral culture, actors learned their parts rapidly and retained them for years. This was *repertory* theater, repeating popular plays and introducing some new ones each season.

- *Women* were not permitted on the professional stage. Most female roles were acted by *boys*; elderly women were played by grown men.

The Audience

- London's professional theater operated in what might be called a "red-light" district, featuring brothels, restaurants, and the kind of *open-air entertainment* then most popular, like bear-baiting (in which a bear, tied to a stake, was set on by dogs).
- A theater audience, like most of the population of Shakespeare's England, was largely made up of *illiterates*. Being able to read and write, however, had nothing to do with intelligence or concern with language, narrative, and characterization. People attracted to the theater tended to be both extremely verbal and extremely volatile. Actors were sometimes attacked, when the audience was dissatisfied; quarrels and fights were relatively common. Women were regularly in attendance, though no reliable statistics exist.
- Drama did not have the cultural esteem it has in our time, and plays were not regularly printed. Shakespeare's often appeared in book form, but not with any supervision or other involvement on his part. He wrote a good deal of nondramatic poetry as well, yet so far as we know he did not authorize or supervise *any* work of his that appeared in print during his lifetime.
- Playgoers, who had paid good money to see and hear, plainly gave dramatic performances careful, detailed attention. For some closer examination of such matters,

see Burton Raffel, "Who Heard the Rhymes and How: Shakespeare's Dramaturgical Signals," *Oral Tradition* 11 (October 1996): 190–221, and Raffel, "Metrical Dramaturgy in Shakespeare's Earlier Plays," *CEA Critic* 57 (Spring–Summer 1995): 51–65.

King Lear



CHARACTERS (DRAMATIS PERSONAE)

Lear (King of Britain)

*Goneril, Regan,*¹ *Cordelia* (Lear's daughters)

*Duke*² *of Albany* (Goneril's husband)

Duke of Cornwall (Regan's husband)

*Earl*³ *of Kent*

*Earl of Gloucester*⁴

Edgar (Gloucester's older son)

Edmund (Gloucester's younger son, illegitimate)

King of France

Duke of Burgundy

Fool

Oswald (Goneril's steward)

Curran (Gloucester's servant)

*Old Man, Doctor, Captain, Herald, Knights, Messengers, Servants,
Soldiers*

¹ RAYgin

² duke = nobleman of royal blood, subordinate only to a king

³ earl = nobleman of lesser rank than a duke (often not a hereditary rank)

⁴ GLAHster

Act I



SCENE I

King Lear's palace

ENTER KENT, GLOUCESTER, AND EDMUND

Kent I thought the King had more affected¹ the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Gloucester It did always seem so to us.² But now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not³ which of the dukes he values⁴ most, for qualities⁵ are so weighed⁶ that curiosity⁷ in neither⁸ 5
can make choice⁹ of either's moiety.¹⁰

Kent Is not this your son, my lord?

1 more affected = better liked

2 me (the royal "we," employed by many highborn figures in this play)*

3 appears not = is not clear/visible

4 esteems*

5 capacities, characteristics*

6 balanced, calculated

7 ingenuity, careful attention

8 neither one of the two dukes

9 make choice = choose

10 either's moiety = the other duke's share/portion

Gloucester His breeding,¹¹ sir, hath been at my charge.¹² I have
so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed
to¹³ it.

10

Kent I cannot conceive¹⁴ you.

Gloucester Sir, this young fellow's mother could,¹⁵ whereupon
she grew round-wombed, and had (indeed) sir a son for her
cradle, ere¹⁶ she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a
fault?¹⁷

15

Kent I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue¹⁸ of it being
so proper.¹⁹

Gloucester But I have a son, sir, by order of law,²⁰ some year²¹
elder than this, who yet is no dearer²² in my account,²³
though this knave²⁴ came something saucily²⁵ into the world
before he was sent for. Yet was his mother fair,²⁶ there was
good sport²⁷ at his making, and the whoreson²⁸ must be

20

11 education, bringing up*

12 responsibility, expense

13 brazed to = hardened to, shameless about

14 understand, comprehend

15 become pregnant ("conceive")

16 before

17 smell a fault = perceive/suspect a moral wrong*

18 (1) offspring, (2) outcome*

19 more (1) worthy/admirable, (2) handsome

20 by order of law = under the sacrament/arrangement of marriage (i.e.,
Edgar is legitimate)

21 some year = about/roughly a year

22 worthier, esteemed, valued, beloved*

23 (1) estimation, opinion, (2) reckoning, calculations

24 rascal* (Edmund)

25 something saucily = rather/to some extent* impertinently/cheekily/
rudely*

26 good-looking, beautiful*

27 entertainment, recreation, amorous dalliance

28 bastard (here, jocular)*

acknowledged.²⁹ Do you know this noble gentleman,
Edmund?

Edmund No, my lord. 25

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

Edmund My services³⁰ to your lordship.

Kent I must love³¹ you, and sue³² to know you better.

Edmund Sir, I shall study deserving.³³ 30

Gloucester He hath been out³⁴ nine years, and away he shall³⁵
again.

SENNET³⁶

The King is coming.

ENTER KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL,
REGAN, CORDELIA, AND ATTENDANTS

Lear Attend³⁷ the lords of France and Burgundy,
Gloucester. 35

Gloucester I shall, my liege.³⁸

EXEUNT GLOUCESTER AND EDMUND

29 recognized, confessed (unacknowledged children were not legally regarded
as a father's offspring)

30 respects, compliments

31 regard, like

32 (1) proceed, (2) seek

33 study deserving = apply myself* to earning/being entitled/worthy*

34 out of the country, away

35 must

36 fanfare

37 wait upon

38 address by a subordinate to his superior (originally a feudal
acknowledgment)

Lear Meantime we shall express³⁹ our darker purpose.⁴⁰

Give me the map there.⁴¹ Know,⁴² that we have divided

In three our kingdom. And 'tis our fast⁴³ intent

40 To shake⁴⁴ all cares and business⁴⁵ from our age,⁴⁶

Conferring them on younger strengths, while we

Unburthened crawl toward death. Our son⁴⁷ of Cornwall,

And you, our no less loving son of Albany,

We have this hour⁴⁸ a constant will⁴⁹ to publish⁵⁰

45 Our daughters' several dowers,⁵¹ that⁵² future strife

May be prevented now. The princes,⁵³ France and Burgundy,

Great rivals in⁵⁴ our youngest daughter's love,

Long in our court⁵⁵ have made their amorous sojourn,⁵⁶

And here are to be answered.⁵⁷ Tell me, my daughters

39 set forth, convey, reveal

40 darker purpose = more unknowable/secret/hidden determination/
intention★

41 map there: (?) that map there, *or* (?) you over there

42 be made aware, understand, learn

43 firm, fixed

44 shake off, dislodge, get rid of

45 cares and business = troubles/anxieties/concerns★ and labor/activities/
exertions★

46 old age

47 relationships created by marriage were spoken of in the same terms as birth
relationships

48 this hour = now

49 constant will = resolute/steadfast desire/wish

50 make public/generally known

51 several dowers = distinct/different★ dowries (money/property conveyed in
marriage by the wife/her family to the husband)★

52 so that

53 persons of royal standing

54 as to, in the matter of ("for")

55 i.e., those who surround a monarch ("courtiers")

56 temporary stay

57 responded to ("given an answer")★

(Since now we will divest us both⁵⁸ of rule, 50
 Interest of⁵⁹ territory, cares of state),
 Which of you shall we say doth love us most,
 That⁶⁰ we our largest bounty may extend⁶¹
 Where nature doth with merit challenge.⁶² Goneril,
 Our eldest-born, speak first. 55

Goneril Sir,
 I love you more than words can wield⁶³ the matter,⁶⁴
 Dearer than eyesight, space,⁶⁵ and liberty,⁶⁶
 Beyond⁶⁷ what can be valued, rich⁶⁸ or rare,
 No less than life, with grace,⁶⁹ health, beauty, honor.⁷⁰ 60
 As much as child e'er loved, or father found.⁷¹
 A love that makes breath poor,⁷² and speech unable⁷³ –
 Beyond all manner of so much⁷⁴ I love you.

58 i.e., loosely plural, not limited to precisely two of something

59 interest of = legal title in

60 so that

61 bounty may extend = generosity can direct to

62 nature doth with merit challenge = birth and worthiness/deserving dispute
 with one another

63 manage, deal with, utter

64 thoughts, substance ("subject matter")*

65 living space/room/scope

66 the right to do as one thinks best

67 more than

68 whether rich

69 favor, fortune*

70 no LESS than LIFE with GRACE health BEAUTy ONor

71 encountered, met with (as MUCH as CHILD e'er LOVED or FATHER
 FOUND)

72 breath poor = (?) (1) the capacity for breathing inadequate, or (2) words/
 language inadequate (the 2nd meaning would clearly be the proper choice,
 except that Shakespeare immediately and additively refers to "speech")

73 incompetent, ineffectual

74 all manner of so much = all such comparisons

Cordelia (aside) What shall⁷⁵ Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.

65 *Lear* (referring to map) Of all these bounds,⁷⁶ even⁷⁷ from this line, to this,

With shadowy⁷⁸ forests and with champains riched⁷⁹

With plenteous⁸⁰ rivers, and wide-skirted meads,⁸¹

We make thee lady.⁸² To thine and Albany's issue

Be this perpetual.⁸³ What says our second daughter,

70 Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

Regan I am made of that self mettle⁸⁴ as my sister,⁸⁵

And prize me⁸⁶ at her worth.⁸⁷ In my true⁸⁸ heart

I find she names my very deed⁸⁹ of love,

Only she comes too short.⁹⁰ That⁹¹ I profess⁹²

75 Myself an enemy to all other joys

Which the most precious square⁹³ of sense possesses,

And find I am alone felicitate⁹⁴

75 must

76 boundary lines

77 exactly, equally

78 shady

79 champains riched = level, open country/fields enriched

80 abundant, plentiful

81 wide-skirted meads = wide-edged/bordered meadows

82 owner (female counterpart of "lord")

83 yours forever

84 self mettle = same disposition/temperament/spirit

85 i am MADE of THAT self MEtle AS my SISter

86 prize me = account/value/esteem* myself

87 (1) price, value, (2) excellence*

88 (1) trusty, loyal, faithful, firm, (2) real, certain*

89 action, performance

90 comes too short = does not deal with it adequately*

91 because

92 declare, vow, affirm

93 standard, rule, measure (right-angle carpenter's tool)

94 alone felicitate = only made happy

In your dear Highness' love.

Cordelia (aside) Then poor Cordelia!

And yet not so, since I am sure my love's

More ponderous⁹⁵ than my tongue. 80

Lear To thee and thine hereditary ever

Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,

No less in space, validity, and pleasure

Than that conferred on Goneril. Now our joy,

Although our last and least,⁹⁶ to whose young love 85

The vines of France and milk⁹⁷ of Burgundy

Strive to be of interest.⁹⁸ What can you say to draw

A third more opulent⁹⁹ than your sisters? Speak.

Cordelia Nothing, my lord.

Lear Nothing? 90

Cordelia Nothing.

Lear Nothing will come of nothing, speak again.

Cordelia Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave¹⁰⁰

My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty

According to my bond,¹⁰¹ no more nor less. 95

Lear How now, Cordelia? Mend¹⁰² your speech a little,

Lest you may mar your fortunes.¹⁰³

Cordelia Good my lord,

95 weighty, massive

96 (1) shortest, smallest, (2) youngest

97 abundance, riches (as in the biblical "milk and honey")

98 of interest = legally connected ("married")

99 splendid, rich (i.e., not in size but in value)

100 lift up, raise, move

101 duty, obligation

102 improve, reform, correct

103 (1) prosperity, (2) chances, luck★

You have begot¹⁰⁴ me, bred me, loved me. I
 Return¹⁰⁵ those duties back as are right fit,¹⁰⁶
 100 Obey you, love you, and most¹⁰⁷ honor you.
 Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
 They love you all?¹⁰⁸ Haply,¹⁰⁹ when I shall wed,
 That lord¹¹⁰ whose hand must take my plight¹¹¹ shall carry
 Half my love with him, half my care and duty.¹¹²
 105 Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
 To love my father all.

Lear But goes thy heart with this?

Cordelia Ay, good my lord.

Lear So young, and so untender?¹¹³

Cordelia So young, my lord, and true.

110 *Lear* Let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower.

For by the sacred radiance of the sun,
 The mysteries of Hecate¹¹⁴ and the night,
 By all the operation of the orbs¹¹⁵
 From whom we do exist and cease to be,

115 Here I disclaim¹¹⁶ all my paternal care,

104 called into being, procreated ("fathered")

105 reverse, reciprocate ("turn back to you")

106 right fit = completely/precisely* proper/appropriate/suitable*

107 most of all

108 entirely, exclusively

109 perhaps

110 husband ("lord" of a household)

111 plight = plighting = marriage vows

112 (1) respect, deference, (2) obligation, responsibility*

113 unkind, unsoft, unloving, tough ("stiff-necked")

114 moon goddess, associated with witchcraft: Lear proclaims himself pagan rather than Christian (HEHkate)

115 celestial spheres within which all heavenly bodies moved, in Ptolemaic astronomy

116 formally/legally renounce/relinquish/repudiate*

Propinquity¹¹⁷ and property of blood,¹¹⁸
 And as a stranger to my heart and me
 Hold thee from this¹¹⁹ for ever. The barbarous Scythian,
 Or he that makes his generation messes¹²⁰
 To gorge¹²¹ his appetite, shall to my bosom 120
 Be as well neighbored,¹²² pitied, and relieved,¹²³
 As thou my sometime¹²⁴ daughter.

Kent Good my liege –

Lear Peace,¹²⁵ Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
 I loved her most, and thought to set my rest¹²⁶ 125
 On her kind nursery.¹²⁷ (*to Cordelia*) Hence, and avoid¹²⁸ my
 sight!
 So be my grave my peace, as here¹²⁹ I give¹³⁰
 Her father's heart from¹³¹ her! Call¹³² France: who stirs?¹³³
 Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany,

117 kinship (“closeness”)

118 property of blood = rights/qualities of descent/blood relationship

119 now (“this time”)

120 his generation messes = children into food/meals

121 feed, glut

122 close, friendly

123 helped, assisted

124 once, former

125 be silent*

126 (1) venture the rest/remainder of my life, (2) establish my residence/repose

127 care (as of a child)

128 stay out of, leave

129 so be my grave my peace, as here = just as I wish my grave to be the place
 where I am at peace, so too I here/hereby

130 (1) devise, award (as in a last will and testament), (2) make known, publish

131 away from

132 summon, command the attendance of

133 who stirs = (?) (1) why is no one hurrying to obey me? or (2) obey me!

130 With¹³⁴ my two daughters' dowers digest¹³⁵ the third.
 Let pride, which she calls plainness,¹³⁶ marry her.¹³⁷
 I do invest you jointly with¹³⁸ my power,
 Pre-eminence,¹³⁹ and all the large effects¹⁴⁰
 That troop with¹⁴¹ majesty. Ourself, by monthly course,¹⁴²
 135 With reservation¹⁴³ of an hundred knights,
 By you¹⁴⁴ to be sustained, shall our abode
 Make with you by due turns, only we shall retain
 The name, and all th' addition to¹⁴⁵ a king.
 The sway,¹⁴⁶ revenue,¹⁴⁷ execution¹⁴⁸ of the rest,
 140 Belovèd sons be yours, which to confirm,
 This coronet part¹⁴⁹ betwixt you.

LEAR GIVES ALBANY AND CORNWALL HIS CROWN

Kent

Royal Lear,

Whom I have ever honored as my king,
 Loved as my father, as my master followed,¹⁵⁰

134 along with

135 divide, distribute

136 frankness, honesty, directness*

137 marry her = marry her off, take care of arranging her marriage

138 invest . . . with = settle . . . upon

139 high rank/distinction

140 consequences, manifestations*

141 troop with = are associated with

142 movement, circulation

143 holding back/retention*

144 i.e., I ("ourself") am to be supported/provided for/maintained . . . by you

145 addition to = marks of honor belonging to

146 rule, sovereign power*

147 reVENue

148 performance, carrying into effect

149 small, less exalted crown (KORnet) share

150 served*

As my great patron thought on¹⁵¹ in my prayers –
Lear The bow is bent and drawn, make from¹⁵² the shaft.¹⁵³ 145
Kent Let it fall rather, though the fork invade¹⁵⁴
 The region of my heart. Be Kent¹⁵⁵ unmannerly,
 When Lear is mad. What wilt thou do, old man?
 Think'st thou that duty shall have dread¹⁵⁶ to speak,
 When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound, 150
 When majesty stoops¹⁵⁷ to folly. Reserve thy state,¹⁵⁸
 And in thy best consideration check¹⁵⁹
 This hideous rashness. Answer my life¹⁶⁰ my judgment.¹⁶¹
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,
 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds 155
 Reverb¹⁶² no hollowness.¹⁶³
Lear Kent, on thy life, no more.
Kent My life I never held but as a pawn¹⁶⁴
 To wage against thy enemies, nor fear to lose it,
 Thy safety being the motive.
Lear Out of my sight!
Kent See better, Lear, and let me still remain 160

151 patron thought on = lord/master/superior considered, remembered

152 make from = go/get away from

153 arrow

154 fork invade = the fork of the arrowhead penetrate to

155 be Kent = let Kent be

156 shall have dread = must be afraid

157 descends, falls

158 status, position

159 stop, retard*

160 answer my life = let my life suffer the consequences

161 (1) opinion, criticism, (2) discernment, reasoning*

162 reverberate/echo with

163 internal emptiness, insincerity*

164 i.e., as in chess, where pawns form the major defense of the king

The true blank¹⁶⁵ of thine eye.

Lear Now, by Apollo –

Kent Now, by Apollo, King,

Thou swear'st¹⁶⁶ thy gods in vain.

Lear O vassal!¹⁶⁷ Miscreant!¹⁶⁸

LEAR PUTS HIS HAND ON HIS SWORD

Albany, Cornwall (to Lear) Dear sir, forbear.¹⁶⁹

165 *Kent* Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
Upon¹⁷⁰ the foul¹⁷¹ disease. Revoke thy gift,
Or whilst I can vent clamor¹⁷² from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

Lear Hear me, recreant!¹⁷³

On thine allegiance,¹⁷⁴ hear me!

170 Since thou hast sought to make us break our vows,
Which we durst¹⁷⁵ never yet, and with strained¹⁷⁶ pride
To come between our sentences¹⁷⁷ and our power,

165 center (white spot) of a target

166 swear by, appeal to

167 subordinate, servant (i.e., though a duke, Kent is the feudal inferior of the King)

168 wretch, rascal

169 (1) be patient ("control yourself"), (2) desist from violence ("avoid/shun this")★

170 bestow upon = apply/give to

171 offensive, filthy, gross★

172 vent clamor = utter/express opposition/complaint ("outcry")

173 oath-breaker, deserter

174 on thine allegiance = in the name of your sworn oath of obedience/faithfulness to me

175 have been so bold

176 with strained = you seek, with overzealous

177 decisions, judgments, decrees

Which nor our nature¹⁷⁸ nor our place¹⁷⁹ can bear,
 Our potency made good,¹⁸⁰ take thy reward.
 Five days we do allot thee, for provision¹⁸¹ 175
 To shield thee from diseases of the world,¹⁸²
 And on the sixth to¹⁸³ turn thy hated back
 Upon our kingdom. If on the tenth day following,
 Thy banished trunk¹⁸⁴ be found in our dominions,
 The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter, 180
 This shall not be revoked.

Kent Fare thee well, King. Sith¹⁸⁵ thus thou wilt appear,
 Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.
 (to *Cordelia*) The¹⁸⁶ gods to their dear shelter¹⁸⁷ take thee,
 maid,
 That justly think'st, and hast most rightly said. 185
 (to *Regan and Goneril*) And your large¹⁸⁸ speeches may your
 deeds approve,¹⁸⁹
 That good effects may spring from words of love.
 Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu,
 He'll shape his old course¹⁹⁰ in a country new.

178 nor our nature = neither my character/disposition*

179 rank, dignity, station, position

180 potency made good = authority/power demonstrated/enforced

181 preparation, arrangements

182 diseases of the world = worldly discomforts/troubles

183 are to/must

184 body ("person")

185 since

186 may the

187 protection

188 lavish

189 make good, confirm, demonstrate*

190 path, direction, customary ways*

EXIT KENT

FLOURISH¹⁹¹

ENTER GLOUCESTER, WITH FRANCE, BURGUNDY,
AND ATTENDANTS

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

Lear My lord of Burgundy,
We first address toward¹⁹² you, who with this king
Hath rivaled for our daughter. What in the least¹⁹³
Will you require¹⁹⁴ in present dower with¹⁹⁵ her,
Or¹⁹⁶ cease your quest of¹⁹⁷ love?

195 *Burgundy* Most royal Majesty,
I crave¹⁹⁸ no more than hath your Highness offered,
Nor will you tender¹⁹⁹ less.

Lear Right²⁰⁰ noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us, we did hold²⁰¹ her so,
But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands.
200 If aught within that little-seeming²⁰² substance,
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,²⁰³

191 fanfare

192 address toward = speak to

193 in the least = in the smallest amount

194 request, ask for, demand, desire

195 present dower with = ready, in hand ("immediate") dower along with

196 or otherwise

197 for

198 ask, wish for*

199 offer

200 most, altogether (i.e., polite form of address)

201 believe, consider, think

202 little-seeming = small-appearing/looking physical being

203 joined

And nothing more, may fitly like²⁰⁴ your Grace,²⁰⁵

She's there,²⁰⁶ and she is yours.

Burgundy I know no answer.²⁰⁷

Lear Will you, with those infirmities she owes,²⁰⁸

Unfriended, new adopted to²⁰⁹ our hate, 205

Dowered with our curse, and strangered²¹⁰ with our oath,

Take her, or leave her?

Burgundy Pardon me, royal sir.

Election makes not up²¹¹ on such conditions.

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

I tell you all her wealth. (*to France*) For you, great King, 210

I would not²¹² from your love²¹³ make such a stray

To²¹⁴ match you where I hate, therefore beseech²¹⁵ you

To avert²¹⁶ your liking a more worthier way

Than on a wretch whom Nature is ashamed

Almost t'acknowledge hers.

France This is most strange, 215

That she that even but now was your best object,²¹⁷

204 fitly like = appropriately please

205 courtesy title extended to dukes and duchesses (as "Majesty" is used for a sovereign)*

206 she's there = there she is

207 I know no answer = I do not know how to answer

208 infirmities she owes = weaknesses/ flaws she possesses ("owns")

209 unfriended, new adopted to = friendless, having recently/newly received

210 alienated, made a stranger to me*

211 election makes not up = a choice cannot be formed/produced/prepared/decided

212 would not = do not wish to

213 i.e., referring to the relationship between Lear and France

214 stray to = departure/wandering/straying as to

215 I beg

216 turn

217 best object = drew your most attention/admiration

The argument²¹⁸ of your praise, balm of your age,²¹⁹
 Most best, most dearest, should in this trice²²⁰ of time
 Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle²²¹
 220 So many folds²²² of favor. Sure²²³ her offense
 Must be of such unnatural degree,
 That monsters it,²²⁴ or your fore-vouched²²⁵ affection
 Fall into taint,²²⁶ which to believe of her
 Must be a faith²²⁷ that reason without²²⁸ miracle
 Could never plant in me.

225 *Cordelia (to Lear)* I yet beseech your Majesty –
 If for I want²²⁹ that glib and oily art,
 To speak and purpose not,²³⁰ since what I well intend
 I'll do't before I speak – that you make known
 It is no vicious blot,²³¹ murder, or foulness,
 230 No unchaste action or dishonored step²³²
 That hath deprived me of your grace and favor,
 But even for want of that for which I am richer,

218 subject matter

219 balm of your age = soothing/restorative element of your old age

220 instant

221 strip away

222 layers, aspects

223 surely

224 monsters it = (verb) makes it monstrous

225 or your fore-vouched = or makes your previously displayed/declared/
 asserted

226 (1) disgrace, dishonor, (2) decay

227 belief

228 reason without = logic/mind* absent a

229 for I want = because I lack*

230 purpose not = do not intend to do

231 fault, failing

232 deed, action

A still-soliciting²³³ eye, and such a tongue
As I am glad I have not, though not to have it
Hath lost²³⁴ me in your liking.

Lear Better thou 235
Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better.

France Is it but this? A tardiness in²³⁵ nature
Which often leaves the history²³⁶ unspoke
That it intends to do? My Lord of Burgundy,
What say you²³⁷ to the lady? Love's not love 240
When it is mingled with regards²³⁸ that stand
Aloof from the entire²³⁹ point. Will you have her?
She is herself a dowry.

Burgundy Royal Lear,
Give but that portion²⁴⁰ which yourself proposed,
And here I take Cordelia by the hand, 245
Duchess of Burgundy.

Lear Nothing, I have sworn, I am firm.

Burgundy (to Cordelia)²⁴¹ I am sorry, then, you have so²⁴² lost a
father
That you must lose a husband.

Cordelia Peace be²⁴³ with Burgundy.

233 still-soliciting = always seeking/urging/importuning

234 ruined, destroyed

235 of

236 story, tale

237 what say you = how do you respond

238 particulars, concerns, considerations

239 undivided ("pure, central")

240 (1) share, (2) dowry, settlement

241 note that, though Burgundy refuses to speak directly to France, he speaks
very directly to Cordelia

242 to such an extent

243 peace be = may you be at peace/well

250 Since that respects²⁴⁴ of fortune are his love,
I shall²⁴⁵ not be his wife.

France Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;
Most choice, forsaken,²⁴⁶ and most loved, despised.
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon,
255 Be it²⁴⁷ lawful I take up what's cast away.
Gods, gods! 'Tis strange that from²⁴⁸ their cold'st neglect²⁴⁹
My love should kindle to inflamed respect.²⁵⁰
Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.
260 Not all the dukes of waterish²⁵¹ Burgundy
Can buy this unprized²⁵² precious maid of ²⁵³ me.
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind.²⁵⁴
Thou lovest here a better where²⁵⁵ to find.

Lear Thou hast her France, let her be thine, for we
265 Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again. (*to Cordelia*) Therefore be gone,
Without our grace, our love, our benison.²⁵⁶
Come, noble Burgundy.

244 matters

245 (1) must, (2) will (note that Cordelia's blunt tongue is not reserved solely for her father)

246 most choice, forsaken = most exquisite/excellent, when forsaken

247 be it = if/since it is

248 because of

249 slighting

250 regard, consideration, partiality, esteem

251 damp

252 unvalued

253 from

254 though unkind = though they are (1) ungenerous, harsh, (2) unnatural

255 (noun) place

256 blessing

FLOURISH

EXEUNT ALL BUT FRANCE, GONERIL, REGAN,
AND CORDELIA

France Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cordelia The jewels²⁵⁷ of our father, with washèd eyes²⁵⁸ 270
Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are,
And like²⁵⁹ a sister am most loath to call²⁶⁰
Your faults as they are named. Use²⁶¹ well our father.
To your professèd²⁶² bosoms I commit him.
But yet, alas, stood I²⁶³ within his grace, 275
I would prefer²⁶⁴ him to a better place.
So farewell to you both.

Regan Prescribe²⁶⁵ not us our duties.

Goneril Let your study
Be to content your lord, who hath received you
At fortune's alms.²⁶⁶ You have obedience scantèd,²⁶⁷ 280
And well are worth²⁶⁸ the want that you have wanted.²⁶⁹

257 treasures, adornments ("favorites, darlings")

258 washed eyes = tear-filled eyes (the JEWels OF our FATHER with WASHèd EYES)

259 as

260 proclaim, clearly speak

261 treat*

262 self-proclaiming/affirming

263 stood I = if I were still

264 put/place

265 ordain, lay down, dictate

266 charity, benefaction

267 withheld, diminished, neglected*

268 worthy, deserving

269 (1) lacked ("caused to be wanting"), (2) wished for (i.e., deliberately created)

Cordelia Time shall unfold what plaited²⁷⁰ cunning hides.
 Who²⁷¹ covers faults, at last²⁷² with shame derides.²⁷³
 Well may you prosper!

France Come, my fair Cordelia.

EXEUNT FRANCE AND CORDELIA

285 *Goneril* Sister, it is not a little²⁷⁴ I have to say,
 Of what most nearly appertains²⁷⁵ to us both.
 I think our father will hence tonight.²⁷⁶

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

Goneril You see how full of changes his age is. The observation
 290 we have made of it hath not²⁷⁷ been little. He always loved
 our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now
 cast her off appears too grossly.²⁷⁸

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

295 *Goneril* The best and soundest²⁷⁹ of his time²⁸⁰ hath been but
 rash. Then must we look²⁸¹ to receive from his age not alone
 the imperfections of long-engrafted²⁸² condition, but

270 folded, doubled over, pleated

271 those who

272 at last = in the end

273 (?) with shame derides = (1) shame derides them (Quarto: shame them
 derides), or (2) they progress from concealment to open derision

274 it is not a little = there is a lot

275 nearly appertains = intimately/particularly/closely is related/belongs

276 these three lines are set in verse, in Folio, but in prose, in Quarto

277 "not": from Quarto

278 appears too grossly = is visible/can be seen plainly/obviously

279 steadiest, healthiest ("least flawed")

280 years, life

281 expect

282 set, fixed

therewithal the unruly waywardness²⁸³ that infirm and
cholerick²⁸⁴ years bring with them.

Regan Such unconstant starts²⁸⁵ are we like to have from him 300
as this of Kent's banishment.

Goneril There is²⁸⁶ further compliment of leave-taking
between France and him. Pray you,²⁸⁷ let's hit²⁸⁸ together. If
our father carry authority²⁸⁹ with such dispositions as he
bears,²⁹⁰ this last surrender²⁹¹ of his will but offend us. 305

Regan We shall further think on't.

Goneril We must do something, and i' the heat.²⁹²

EXEUNT

283 unruly waywardness = ungovernable/disorderly/undisciplined
stubbornness/perversity/egocentricity

284 temperamental, hot-tempered, irascible, wrathful*

285 unconstant starts = fickle/changeable leaps/sudden movements*

286 i.e., Lear and France and their people are still being ceremonious with one
another (says Goneril)

287 pray you = I ask you ("please")*

288 stay, agree

289 carry authority = manages/conducts/deals with power

290 such dispositions as he bears = the sort/kind of (1) arrangements/
practices/measures, (2) ways of doing things

291 giving up property/power

292 i' the heat = intensely, soon

SCENE 2

Gloucester's castle

ENTER EDMUND, WITH A LETTER

Edmund Thou Nature¹ art my goddess, to thy law
 My services are bound. Wherefore should I
 Stand² in the plague³ of custom, and permit
 The curiosity⁴ of nations to deprive me,
 5 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
 Lag of⁵ a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?⁶
 When my dimensions⁷ are as well compact,⁸
 My mind as generous,⁹ and my shape as true,¹⁰
 As honest madam's¹¹ issue? Why brand they us
 10 With base? With baseness, bastardy? Base, base?
 Who¹² in the lusty stealth¹³ of nature take
 More composition¹⁴ and fierce quality¹⁵
 Than doth, within¹⁶ a dull, stale, tired bed,

1 physical Nature

2 stop, remain motionless, continue*

3 sickness, disease

4 scrupulousness, fastidiousness

5 moonshines lag of = months later than

6 (1) lowly, inferior, (2) illegitimate

7 bodily parts ("body")

8 put together (adjective)

9 (1) highborn, noble, (2) high-spirited

10 well-patterned, correct, right

11 honest madam's = respectable/honorable/decent* married woman's

12 we who

13 lusty stealth = merry/handsome/delightful/vigorous sneakiness/
 underhandedness/thievery

14 take more composition = require more arranging/mutuality

15 fierce quality = high-spirited/passionate character/disposition/ability

16 in

Go to the creating¹⁷ a whole tribe of fops,¹⁸
 Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then, 15
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
 Our father's love is¹⁹ to the bastard Edmund
 As to²⁰ th' legitimate. Fine word, legitimate.
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,²¹
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base 20
 Shall to' th' legitimate.²² I grow,²³ I prosper.
 Now gods, stand up²⁴ for bastards!²⁵

ENTER GLOUCESTER

Gloucester Kent banished thus? And France in choler parted?
 And the King gone tonight? Subscribed²⁶ his power,
 Confined to exhibition?²⁷ All this done 25
 Upon the gad?²⁸ Edmund, how now? What news?
Edmund So please your lordship, none.
Gloucester Why so earnestly seek you to put up²⁹ that letter?
Edmund I know no news, my lord.

17 creating of

18 fools, idiots, dullard*

19 goes/is given to

20 as to = just as to

21 succeed

22 to' th' legitimate = prevail over the legally entitled son (shall TO leGitiMIT:
 by prosodic convention, "th'" is reduced to metrical – though *not* lexical/
 syntactical – nonexistence by the apostrophe)

23 (1) flourish, (2) enlarge

24 defend, support

25 this speech is set as prose, in Quarto

26 signed away

27 confined to exhibition = limited to maintenance

28 upon the gad = on the move

29 away

30 *Gloucester* What paper³⁰ were you reading?

Edmund Nothing, my lord.

Gloucester No? What needed then that terrible dispatch³¹ of it into your pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see.³² Come, if it be nothing, I shall not
35 need spectacles.

Edmund I beseech you sir, pardon me.³³ It is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o'er-read,³⁴ and for so much as I have perused,³⁵ I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.

Gloucester Give me the letter, sir.

40 *Edmund* I shall offend, either to detain³⁶ or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

Gloucester Let's see, let's see.

Edmund I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste³⁷ of my virtue.

45 *Gloucester* (*reads*) "This policy, and reverence of³⁸ age, makes the world bitter to the best of our times,³⁹ keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond⁴⁰ bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who⁴¹ sways not as⁴² it hath power, but as it is suffered.⁴³

30 document

31 hasty getting rid

32 let's see = let's have a look at it

33 pardon me = excuse me from showing it to you

34 o'er-read = read through

35 gone through, examined*

36 keep, withhold

37 essay or taste = test or trial/test

38 reverence of = respect* for

39 best of our times = best years of our lives ("youth")

40 idle and fond = empty and foolish, sickly*

41 that

42 according to how

43 endured, submitted to

Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father 50
would sleep till I waked him,⁴⁴ you should enjoy half his
revenue⁴⁵ for ever, and live the beloved of your brother,
EDGAR.”

Hum? Conspiracy? “Sleep till I wake him, you should enjoy
half his revenue.” My son Edgar, had he a hand to write 55
this?⁴⁶ A heart and brain to breed⁴⁷ it in? When came this to
you? Who brought it?

Edmund It was not brought me, my lord, there’s the cunning⁴⁸
of it. I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.⁴⁹

Gloucester You know the character⁵⁰ to be your brother’s? 60

Edmund If the matter were good, my lord, I durst⁵¹ swear it
were his. But in respect of⁵² that, I would fain⁵³ think it were
not.

Gloucester It is his.

Edmund It is his hand, my lord. But I hope his heart is not in 65
the contents.

Gloucester Hath he never heretofore sounded⁵⁴ you in this
business?

Edmund Never, my lord. But I have heard him oft maintain it
to be fit that sons at perfect⁵⁵ age, and fathers declining, the 70

44 i.e., never, because he would be dead

45 income

46 i.e., was he actually able to write something like this?

47 give rise to, create

48 cleverness, skill

49 casement of my closet = window of my small private room (“study”)

50 handwriting

51 dare, am so bold as to

52 in respect of = as regards/relates to

53 be glad to*

54 approached, questioned

55 fully grown, legally mature

father should be as ward⁵⁶ to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

Gloucester O villain, villain. His very⁵⁷ opinion in the letter!

Abhorred⁵⁸ villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish⁵⁹ villain!

75 Worse than brutish! Go sirrah,⁶⁰ seek him. I'll apprehend⁶¹ him. Abominable villain! Where is he?

Edmund I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation⁶² against my brother, till you can

80 derive from him better testimony⁶³ of his intent, you shall run a certain⁶⁴ course. Where,⁶⁵ if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap⁶⁶ in your own honor, and shake in pieces the heart⁶⁷ of his obedience. I dare pawn down⁶⁸ my life for him, that he hath wrote this to feel⁶⁹ my affection to your honor, and to

85 no further pretense of danger.⁷⁰

Gloucester Think you so?

Edmund If your honor judge it meet,⁷¹ I will place you where

56 a minor, requiring a guardian

57 exact

58 disgusting, horrifying

59 savage ("animal-like")

60 mister (used by a superior speaking to an inferior)*

61 seize, arrest

62 wrath, anger

63 evidence, proof

64 fixed, precise, definite

65 whereas

66 (1) break, (2) wound, gash

67 center, seat, soul

68 pawn down = pledge

69 explore, examine

70 pretense of danger = dangerous purpose/intention

71 suitable, proper, appropriate*

you shall hear us confer of⁷² this, and by an auricular⁷³
assurance have your satisfaction, and that without any further
delay than this very evening. 90

Gloucester He cannot be such a monster. Edmund, seek him out.
Wind⁷⁴ me into him, I pray you. Frame⁷⁵ the business after⁷⁶
your own wisdom. I would unstate myself,⁷⁷ to be in a due
resolution.⁷⁸

Edmund I will seek him, sir, presently,⁷⁹ convey⁸⁰ the business 95
as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

Gloucester These late⁸¹ eclipses in the sun and moon portend⁸²
no good to us. Though the wisdom of nature⁸³ can reason it
thus, and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged⁸⁴ by the
sequent⁸⁵ effects. Love cools, friendship falls off,⁸⁶ brothers 100
divide.⁸⁷ In cities, mutinies;⁸⁸ in countries, discord; in palaces,
treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This
villain of mine comes under⁸⁹ the prediction: there's son

72 about

73 audible

74 twist, lead

75 prepare, shape

76 according to

77 I would unstate myself = I would be willing to give up my status/rank

78 to be in a due resolution = to have rightly/properly/truly solved/resolved
this

79 at once*

80 guide, conduct, lead

81 recent*

82 predict, foreshadow, hold out

83 of nature = about nature ("learned men")

84 (1) beaten, devastated, tormented, (2) driven

85 resulting, following

86 falls off = parts company, withdraws, becomes estranged

87 break asunder, separate

88 revolts, rebellions

89 comes under = fits/falls into

105 against father. The King falls from bias⁹⁰ of nature: there's
 father against child. We have seen the best of our time.⁹¹
 Machinations,⁹² hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous
 disorders, follow us disquietly⁹³ to our graves. Find out⁹⁴ this
 villain, Edmund, it shall lose⁹⁵ thee nothing, do it carefully.
 And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! His offense,
 110 honesty! 'Tis strange.

EXIT GLOUCESTER

Edmund This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when
 we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits⁹⁶ of our own
 behavior, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon,
 and the stars, as if we were villains by necessity, fools by
 115 heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers⁹⁷ by
 spherical predominance,⁹⁸ drunkards, liars, and adulterers by
 an enforced obedience of⁹⁹ planetary influence, and all that
 we are evil in by¹⁰⁰ a divine thrusting¹⁰¹ on. An admirable
 evasion of¹⁰² whoremaster man, to lay his goatish¹⁰³
 120 disposition to the charge¹⁰⁴ of a star! My father

90 the tendencies, inclinations, customary paths

91 age, era

92 plotting, scheming*

93 uneasily, uncomfortably

94 find out = unriddle, detect, discover

95 cost, deprive

96 often the surfeits = which are often the (1) faults, trespasses, (2) excesses

97 (1) cheaters, deceivers, (2) traitors

98 spherical predominance = superior strength/authority of the stars and
 planets ("spheres")

99 to

100 because of

101 pushing, driving

102 admirable evasion of = marvelous/wonderful/surprising escape by

103 lustful, lascivious

104 responsibility

compounded¹⁰⁵ with my mother under the Dragon's Tail,¹⁰⁶
and my nativity was under Ursa Major,¹⁰⁷ so that it
follows¹⁰⁸ I am rough¹⁰⁹ and lecherous. Tut, I should have
been that¹¹⁰ I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament
twinkled on my bastardizing. 125

ENTER EDGAR

Pat!¹¹¹ He comes like the catastrophe of¹¹² the old comedy.
My cue¹¹³ is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'
Bedlam.¹¹⁴ O these eclipses do portend these divisions!
(sings) Fa, sol, la, mi.

Edgar How now, brother Edmund, what serious 130
contemplation are you in?

Edmund I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other
day, what should¹¹⁵ follow these eclipses.

Edgar Do you busy yourself with that?

Edmund I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed 135
unhappily.¹¹⁶ When saw you my father last?

Edgar Why, the night gone by.

105 came together, joined

106 i.e., in Ptolemaic astronomy, the point at which the descending orbit of the
moon intersects with the great circle formed by the meeting of the earth's
orbit with the sphere in which the sun is located (Dragon's Tail: the
appearance of the astrological chart representing this event)

107 Ursa Major = constellation known as the Great Bear

108 necessarily/inevitably happens that

109 coarse

110 would have been that = must have been what

111 and there he is!

112 catastrophe of = disasters that occur in

113 dramatic guide/hint

114 stock beggar/fool character*

115 is supposed to

116 succeed unhappily = follow unfortunately/unluckily/regrettably

Edmund Spake you with him?

Edgar Ay, two hours together.

140 *Edmund* Parted you in¹¹⁷ good terms? Found you no
displeasure in him, by word nor countenance?¹¹⁸

Edgar None at all.

Edmund Bethink¹¹⁹ yourself wherein you may have offended
him. And at my entreaty forbear his presence, till some little
145 time hath qualified¹²⁰ the heat of his displeasure, which at
this instant so rageth in him, that with the¹²¹ mischief of your
person¹²² it would scarcely allay.¹²³

Edgar Some villain hath done me wrong.

Edmund That's my fear. I pray you, have a continent¹²⁴
150 forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower. And as I say,
retire with me¹²⁵ to my lodging,¹²⁶ from whence I will fitly
bring you to hear my lord speak. Pray ye go, there's my key. If
you do stir abroad,¹²⁷ go armed.¹²⁸

Edgar Armed, brother?

155 *Edmund* Brother, I advise you to¹²⁹ the best. I am no¹³⁰ honest

117 on

118 (1) behavior, gesture, attitude, (2) facial expression*

119 call to mind, recollect

120 modified

121 even with

122 mischief of your person = injury/harm ("evil") to your body

123 scarcely allay = hardly/barely be laid aside/abandoned

124 restrained, temperate

125 retire with me = withdraw/take shelter *in* my lodging, *not* together with
me

126 bedroom (i.e., his lodging in his father's house, he not being a full-time
resident therein)

127 stir abroad = out (of Edmund's room), at large, moving about*

128 i.e., carry a sword (firearms did not exist at the supposed date of this play)

129 for

130 am not an

man if there be any good meaning¹³¹ toward you. I have told
you what I have seen, and heard. But faintly,¹³² nothing like
the image¹³³ and horror of it. Pray you, away.¹³⁴

Edgar Shall I hear from you anon?¹³⁵

Edmund I do¹³⁶ serve you in this business.

160

EXIT EDGAR

A credulous¹³⁷ father, and a brother noble,¹³⁸
Whose nature is so far from doing harms¹³⁹
That he suspects none. On whose foolish honesty
My practices¹⁴⁰ ride¹⁴¹ easy. I see¹⁴² the business.
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit.¹⁴³
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.

165

EXIT

131 intention

132 barely, feebly

133 (1) likeness, (2) vividly, graphically

134 leave, go*

135 shortly, quickly, soon

136 (an intensifier, of no syntactical significance)

137 over-ready to believe

138 of lofty/highly moral character

139 evil, mischief, hurt

140 (1) proceedings, operations, (2) schemes, machinations*

141 move, go, are carried (as is a man on horseback)

142 anticipate, foresee

143 intelligence ("mind")

SCENE 3

Albany's palace

ENTER GONERIL, AND OSWALD, HER STEWARD

Goneril Did my father strike my gentleman¹ for chiding of his Fool?²

Oswald Ay, madam.

Goneril By day and night he wrongs³ me, every hour

He flashes⁴ into one gross crime⁵ or other,

5 That sets us all at odds.⁶ I'll not endure it.

His knights grow riotous,⁷ and himself upbraids us

On⁸ every trifle. When he returns from hunting,

I will not speak with him, say I am sick.

If you come slack of former⁹ services,

10 You shall do well, the fault of it I'll answer.

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

HUNTING HORNS WITHIN

Goneril Put on¹⁰ what weary negligence you please,

You and your fellows.¹¹ I'll have it come to question.¹²

1 an attendant of good birth (as Oswald is not)

2 chiding of his Fool = scolding/reproving his professional jester/clown

3 deals unfairly/unjustly, injures

4 rushes, dashes, breaks out in

5 offense

6 all at odds = thoroughly at strife/variance

7 (1) difficult, troublesome, (2) wanton, dissolute, noisy*

8 about, on the occasion of

9 come slack of former = move toward a slackening/lessening* of earlier

10 pretend, assume deceptively

11 co-workers

12 discussion

If he distaste¹³ it, let him¹⁴ to my sister,
 Whose mind and mine I know in that are one, 15
 Not to be overruled. Idle old man,
 That still would manage those authorities¹⁵
 That he hath given away! Now by my life,
 Old fools are babes again, and must be used
 With checks as¹⁶ flatteries, when they are seen abused.¹⁷ 20
 Remember what I have said.

Oswald Well,¹⁸ madam.

Goneril And let his knights have¹⁹ colder looks among you.
 What grows of it, no matter, advise your fellows so. I'll write
 straight²⁰ to my sister, to hold my course. Prepare for dinner.

EXEUNT

13 dislikes

14 let him = let him go

15 powers

16 just as with

17 used improperly/mistakenly/wrongly* ("not to be overruled . . . seen abused": Quarto)

18 very well

19 receive, be given

20 immediately, without delay

SCENE 4

Albany's palace, a hall

ENTER KENT, DISGUISED

Kent If but as well¹ I other accents borrow,
 That can my speech defuse,² my good intent
 May carry through itself³ to that full issue
 For which I razed⁴ my likeness. Now banished Kent,
 5 If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned,
 So may it come,⁵ thy master whom thou lov'st,
 Shall find thee full of labors.

HORNS WITHIN

ENTER LEAR, KNIGHTS, AND ATTENDANTS

Lear Let me not stay a jot⁶ for dinner, go get it ready.

EXIT AN ATTENDANT

(*sees Kent*) How now, what art thou?

10 *Kent* A man, sir.

Lear What dost thou profess?⁷ What wouldst thou with us?

Kent I do profess⁸ to be no less than I seem, to serve him truly
 that will put me in trust,⁹ to love him that is honest, to

1 i.e., if he can change his speech as successfully as he has his appearance

2 make indistinct

3 carry through itself = bring itself safely

4 (1) erased, obliterated, altered, (2) shaved

5 happen

6 stay a jot = delay the least bit

7 what dost thou profess = what is your trade/do you do

8 declare myself

9 put me in trust = trust/have confidence in me

converse with him that is wise and says little, to fear
judgment,¹⁰ to fight when I cannot choose, and to eat no
fish.¹¹ 15

Lear What art thou?

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

Lear If thou be as poor for¹² a subject as he is for a king, thou
art poor enough. What wouldst thou? 20

Kent Service.¹³

Lear Who wouldst thou serve?

Kent You.

Lear Dost thou know me, fellow?¹⁴

Kent No sir, but you have that¹⁵ in your countenance which I
would fain call master. 25

Lear What's that?

Kent Authority.

Lear What services canst thou do?

Kent I can keep honest counsel,¹⁶ ride, run, mar a curious¹⁷ tale 30
in telling it, and deliver¹⁸ a plain message bluntly. That which
ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the best of me
is diligence.

Lear How old art thou?

10 divine punishment

11 (1) I am a Catholic, or (2) I am a meat-eater, or (3) I avoid whores, or (4) just
see how funny I can be, ending with an irrelevancy like this (see note 17,
below: "mar a curious tale")

12 poor for = deficient/inadequate as

13 domestic service

14 i.e., a form of address from a higher-status person to a lower-status one

15 that which, something

16 honest counsel = honorably keep secrets/confidences

17 mar a curious = spoil/ruin an ingenious/subtle/elaborate*

18 express, speak

35 *Kent* Not so young sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so
old to dote¹⁹ on her for anything. I have years on my back
forty-eight.

Lear Follow me, thou shalt serve me. If I like thee no worse
after dinner, I will not part from thee yet. Dinner, ho,²⁰
40 dinner! Where's my knave? My Fool? Go you, and call my
Fool hither.

EXIT AN ATTENDANT

ENTER OSWALD

You, you, sirrah, where's my daughter?
Oswald So please you – ²¹

EXIT OSWALD

Lear What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll²² back.

EXIT AN ATTENDANT

45 Where's my Fool, ho? I think the world's asleep.

ATTENDANT RETURNS

How now? Where's that mongrel?

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

Lear Why came not the slave²³ back to me when I called
him?

50 *Attendant* Sir, he answered me in the roundest²⁴ manner, he
would not.

19 foolishly bestow excessive love

20 hey!*

21 pardon/excuse me

22 blockhead, dolt

23 contemptuous word for a servant*

24 harshest, most summary/severe/brusque

Lear He would not?

Attendant My lord, I know not what the matter is, but to my judgment, your Highness is not entertained²⁵ with that ceremonious affection as you were wont.²⁶ There's a great abatement²⁷ of kindness appears²⁸ as well in the general dependents,²⁹ as in the Duke himself also, and your daughter. 55

Lear Ha? Sayest thou so?

Attendant I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken, for my duty cannot be silent when I think your Highness wronged. 60

Lear Thou but rememberest³⁰ me of mine own conception.³¹ I have perceived a most faint neglect of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous³² curiosity than as a very pretense³³ and purpose of unkindness. I will look further into't. But where's my Fool? I have not seen him this two days. 65

Attendant Since my young lady's³⁴ going into France, sir, the Fool hath much pined away.³⁵

Lear No more of that, I have noted³⁶ it well. Go you, and tell my daughter I would speak with her. 70

EXIT ATTENDANT

25 maintained, supported, received*

26 accustomed to*

27 lessening*

28 appearing, which appears

29 general dependents = all the subordinates/servants

30 reminds

31 notion, idea

32 suspicious, apprehensive, doubtful

33 very pretense = true assertion

34 Cordelia

35 pined away = languished, suffered, been troubled/distressed

36 perceived, noticed, marked*

Go you, call hither my Fool.

EXIT ATTENDANT

ENTER OSWALD

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

Oswald My lady's father.

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

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

Lear Do you bandy³⁷ looks with me, you rascal?

LEAR STRIKES HIM

Oswald I'll not be stricken, my lord.

80 *Kent* Nor tripped neither, you base football³⁸ player.

KENT TRIPS OSWALD

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

Kent (to *Oswald*, *yanking him upright*) Come, sir, arise, away, I'll
teach you differences.³⁹ Away, away! If you will⁴⁰ measure
your lubber's length⁴¹ again, tarry. But away, go to.⁴² Have
85 you wisdom?⁴³ So.

HE PUSHES OSWALD OUT

Lear Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee. There's earnest
of⁴⁴ of thy service.

37 exchange, toss back and forth

38 rowdy form of soccer, played by boys

39 i.e., in rank/status

40 wish to

41 lubber's length = clumsy/stupid ("get knocked down")

42 go to = come, come

43 i.e., are you smart enough to get out of here

44 earnest of = (1) foretaste, (2) money for

HE GIVES KENT MONEY

ENTER FOOL

Fool Let me hire him too. (*to Kent*) Here's my coxcomb.⁴⁵

Lear How now, my pretty⁴⁶ knave, how dost thou?

Fool Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb. 90

Lear Why, my boy?

Fool Why, for taking one's part that's out of favor. Nay, an⁴⁷ thou
canst not smile as the wind sits,⁴⁸ thou'lt catch cold shortly.
There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow⁴⁹ has banished two
on's⁵⁰ daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will. If 95
thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb. (*to*
Lear) How now, nuncle?⁵¹ Would I had two coxcombs and
two daughters.

Lear Why, my boy?

Fool If I gave them all my living,⁵² I'd keep my coxcombs 100
myself. There's mine, beg another of thy daughters.

Lear Take heed sirrah, the whip.

Fool Truth's a dog must to kennel,⁵³ he must be whipped out,
when⁵⁴ the Lady Brach⁵⁵ may stand by th' fire and stink.

Lear A pestilent gall⁵⁶ to me! 105

45 fool's cap

46 clever

47 if*

48 the way the wind blows (i.e., flatter those in power)

49 Lear

50 of his

51 uncle (dialectal variant)

52 income, way of life

53 (1) be returned to his kennel, (2) be kept quiet, shut up

54 out, when = away, while

55 bitch

56 pestilent gall = noxious/poisonous sore/exasperation/bitterness*

Fool Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

Lear Do.

Fool Mark⁵⁷ it, nuncle.

Have more than thou showest,⁵⁸

110 Speak less than thou knowest,

Lend less than thou owest,

Ride more than thou goest,⁵⁹

Learn more than thou trowest,⁶⁰

Set less than thou throwest.

115 Leave thy drink and thy whore,

And keep in-a-door,

And thou shalt have more

Than two tens to a score.⁶¹

Kent This is nothing, Fool.

120 *Fool* Then 'tis like the breath of an unfeed⁶² lawyer, you gave
me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?

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

Fool (to *Kent*) Prithee, tell him, so much the rent⁶³ of his land
comes to. He will not believe a fool.

125 *Lear* A bitter⁶⁴ fool!

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

Lear No lad, teach me.

57 note, pay attention to*

58 display, exhibit*

59 walk

60 expect, believe

61 1 score = 20*

62 unpaid

63 revenue, income

64 disagreeable/hard/unpleasant (himself)

*Fool*⁶⁵ That lord that counseled thee
 To give away thy land, 130
 Come place him here by me,
 Do thou for him stand.
 The sweet and bitter fool
 Will presently appear,
 The one⁶⁶ in motley⁶⁷ here, 135
 The other found out there.

Lear Dost thou call me fool, boy?

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

Kent This is not altogether fool, my lord. 140

Fool Give me an egg, nuncle, and I'll give thee two crowns.

Lear What two crowns shall they be?

Fool Why, after I have cut the egg i' the middle, and eat⁶⁸ up the
 meat, the two crowns⁶⁹ of the egg. When thou clovest⁷⁰ thy
 crown i' the middle, and gavest away both parts, thou borest 145
 thy ass⁷¹ on thy back o'er the dirt.⁷² Thou hadst little wit in
 thy bald crown, when thou gavest thy golden one away. If I
 speak like myself⁷³ in this, let him be whipped that first finds
 it so.

HE SINGS

65 the next eleven lines are from Quarto

66 sweet one

67 fool's multicolored costume

68 ate (pronounced "et," in England, to this day)

69 rounded ends

70 split, cut

71 donkey (the human bottom in British English is "arse")

72 a popular fable: a man trying to please everyone ends up carrying his donkey
 on his back

73 i.e., like a fool

150 Fools had ne'er less grace in a year,
 For wise men are grown foppish,
 They know not how their wits to wear,⁷⁴
 Their manners are so apish.⁷⁵

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

155 *Fool* I have used it,⁷⁶ nuncle, ever since thou madest thy
 daughters thy mothers, for when thou gavest them the rod,
 and put'st⁷⁷ down thine own breeches,

HE SINGS

Then they for sudden joy did weep,
 And I for sorrow sung,
 160 That such a king should play bo-peep,⁷⁸
 And go the fools among.
 Prithee, nuncle, keep⁷⁹ a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool
 to lie. I would fain learn to lie.

Lear An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped.

165 *Fool* I marvel what kin⁸⁰ thou and thy daughters are. They'll
 have me whipped for speaking true, thou'lt have me whipped
 for lying, and sometimes I am whipped for holding my peace.
 I had rather be any kind o' thing than a Fool, and yet I would
 not be thee, nuncle. Thou hast pared⁸¹ thy wit o' both sides,
 170 and left nothing i' the middle. Here comes one o' the parings.

74 use, employ

75 ape-like, silly

76 used it = been in the habit of it

77 pulled

78 i.e., be childish

79 employ

80 what kin = how birth-related

81 trimmed by cutting

ENTER GONERIL

Lear How now, daughter? What makes that frontlet⁸² on?⁸³

Methinks you are too much of late i' the frown.⁸⁴

Fool Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to
care for her frowning. Now thou art an O⁸⁵ without a
figure.⁸⁶ I am better than thou art now. I am a Fool, thou art 175
nothing. (*to Goneril*) Yes, forsooth,⁸⁷ I will hold my tongue.
So your face bids me, though you say nothing.

Mum, mum,

He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,

Weary of all, shall want some. 180

(*pointing to Lear*) That's a shealed peascod.⁸⁸

Goneril Not only, sir, this your all-licensed⁸⁹ Fool,

But other of your insolent⁹⁰ retinue

Do hourly carp and quarrel,⁹¹ breaking forth

In rank⁹² (and not to be endured) riots, sir. 185

I had thought, by making this well known unto you,

To have found a safe redress,⁹³ but now grow fearful,

By what yourself too late have spoke and done,

82 literally, bandage worn at night, to prevent/remove wrinkles; here, a frown, wrinkling up the forehead like a frontlet

83 what makes that frontlet on? = why are you wearing that frown-bandage?

84 i' the frown = in the habit of frowning

85 (1) circle, (2) zero

86 (1) picture, (2) face

87 truly

88 shealed peascod = shelled pea pod

89 all-licensed = all-permitted/tolerated/privileged

90 haughty, overbearing

91 carp and quarrel = chatter and complain

92 violent, gross

93 relief, remedy

- That you protect this course, and put it on⁹⁴
 190 By your allowance⁹⁵ – which if you should, the fault
 Would not 'scape censure, nor the redresses sleep,
 Which in the tender⁹⁶ of a wholesome weal,⁹⁷
 Might in their working⁹⁸ do you that offense,
 Which else were⁹⁹ shame, that¹⁰⁰ then necessity
 Will call¹⁰¹ discreet proceeding.
- 195 *Fool* For you know, nuncle,
 The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long
 That it's had it¹⁰² head bit off by it young.¹⁰³
 So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.¹⁰⁴
- Lear* Are you our daughter?
- 200 *Goneril* Come, sir,
 I would you would make use of that good wisdom
 (Whereof I know you are fraught)¹⁰⁵ and put away
 These dispositions,¹⁰⁶ which of late transport¹⁰⁷ you
 From what you rightly are.
- 205 *Fool* May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?
 Whoop, Jug!¹⁰⁸ I love thee.

94 encourage/incite it

95 approval, acceptance, permission*

96 (?) texture? working? urge toward?

97 wholesome weal = healthy social fabric ("general good")

98 their working = the operation of the censures and redresses

99 else were = otherwise would be

100 but that

101 name, identify as

102 its

103 it young = the cuckoo's much larger chick

104 in darkness

105 filled, supplied, equipped

106 inclinations

107 remove, carry away

108 Joan (spoken to Goneril?)

Lear Doth any¹⁰⁹ here know me? This is not Lear.
 Doth Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?
 Either his notion¹¹⁰ weakens, his discernings¹¹¹
 Are lethargied.¹¹² Ha! Waking? 'Tis not so. 210
 Who is it that can tell me who I am?

Fool Lear's shadow.

Lear Your name, fair gentlewoman?

Goneril This admiration,¹¹³ sir, is much o' the savor¹¹⁴
 Of other¹¹⁵ your new pranks. I do beseech you 215
 To understand my purposes aright.
 As you are old and reverend, should¹¹⁶ be wise.
 Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,
 Men so disordered,¹¹⁷ so deboshed¹¹⁸ and bold,
 That this our court,¹¹⁹ infected with their manners, 220
 Shows¹²⁰ like a riotous inn. Epicurism¹²¹ and lust
 Make it more like a tavern or a brothel
 Than a gracèd palace. The shame itself doth speak
 For instant remedy. Be then desired
 By her, that else will take the thing she begs, 225

109 anyone

110 mind

111 perceptions

112 afflicted by morbid drowsiness

113 astonishment, surprise, wondering

114 taste, flavoring

115 other of

116 you should

117 disorderly*

118 debauched

119 courtyard

120 seems, looks

121 sensuality, the pursuit of pleasure

A little to disquantity your train,¹²²
And the remainder that shall still depend,¹²³
To be such men as may besort¹²⁴ your age,
And know themselves and you.

Lear Darkness and devils!

230 Saddle my horses, call my train together.
Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee.
Yet¹²⁵ have I left a daughter.

Goneril You strike my people, and your disordered rabble¹²⁶
Make servants of their betters.

ENTER ALBANY

235 Lear Woe, that too late repents – (*To Albany*) O sir, are you
 come?

Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses.
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou show'st thee¹²⁷ in a child
Than the sea-monster!

Albany Pray, sir, be patient.

240 *Lear* (to *Goneril*) Detested kite,¹²⁸ thou liest.
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,¹²⁹
That all particulars of duty¹³⁰ know,

122 disquantity your train = diminish/lessen your retinue, following,
attendants*

123 be maintained

124 match, befit

125 still

126 mob

I27 show'st thee = show yourself (i.e., ingratitude)

128 bird of prey, hawk

129 qualities, capabilities

130 particulars of duty = details/elements of the required actions of personal
service

And in the most exact regard support¹³¹
 The worships¹³² of their name.¹³³ O most small fault,
 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!¹³⁴ 245
 Which¹³⁵ like an engine¹³⁶ wrenched my frame of nature¹³⁷
 From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love,
 And added to the gall. (*striking his head*) O Lear, Lear, Lear!
 Beat at this gate that let thy folly in
 And thy dear judgment out! Go, go,¹³⁸ my people. 250

EXIT KENT, ATTENDANTS

Albany My lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant
 Of what hath moved¹³⁹ you.

Lear It may be so, my lord.
 Hear Nature, hear dear goddess, hear!
 Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
 To make this creature fruitful! 255
 Into her womb convey sterility,
 Dry up in her the organs of increase,¹⁴⁰
 And from her derogate¹⁴¹ body never spring
 A babe to honor her! If she must teem,¹⁴²

131 regard support = uphold all aspect/circumstances

132 honor, dignity

133 reputation, rank

134 appear

135 i.e., the “small fault” looked far bigger to him, and had the disastrous results
 he proceeds to record

136 a battering ram, or some such mechanical contrivance

137 frame of nature = natural/normal disposition/state (“structure of being”)

138 go, go = leave, leave

139 disturbed, provoked, excited

140 propagation, reproduction

141 debased

142 bring forth

260 Create her child of spleen,¹⁴³ that it may live
 And be a thwart disnatured¹⁴⁴ torment to her!
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
 With cadent¹⁴⁵ tears fret channels¹⁴⁶ in her cheeks,
 Turn all her mother's pains and benefits¹⁴⁷
 265 To laughter and contempt, that she may feel
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
 To have a thankless child! Away, away!

EXIT LEAR

Albany Now gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

Goneril Never afflict¹⁴⁸ yourself to know more of it,

270 But let his disposition have that scope
 That dotage gives it.

ENTER LEAR

Lear What, fifty of my followers at a clap?¹⁴⁹

Within a fortnight?¹⁵⁰

Albany What's the matter, sir?

Lear I'll tell thee. (*to Goneril*) Life and death, I am ashamed

275 That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,
 That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,¹⁵¹
 Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee!

143 of spleen = out of/from peevishness/bad temper

144 thwart disnatured = perverse/cross-grained unnatural

145 dripping

146 fret channels = chafe/rub/gnaw/wear grooves/furrows

147 pains and benefits = efforts/care and kindness

148 never afflict = don't ever distress/grieve

149 stroke

150 two weeks

151 of necessity, by compulsion★

Th' untented woundings¹⁵² of a father's curse
 Pierce¹⁵³ every sense about thee! (*to himself*) Old fond eyes,
 Beweep this cause¹⁵⁴ again, I'll pluck ye out, 280
 And cast you, with the waters that you loose,
 To temper clay.¹⁵⁵ Ha? Let it be so.
 I have another daughter,
 Who I am sure is kind and comfortable.¹⁵⁶
 When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails 285
 She'll flay¹⁵⁷ thy wolfish visage. Thou shalt find
 That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
 I have cast off for ever.

EXEUNT LEAR, KENT, AND ATTENDANTS

Goneril Do you mark that?
Albany I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
 To¹⁵⁸ the great love I bear you – 290
Goneril Pray you, content.¹⁵⁹ What Oswald, ho!
 (*to Fool*) You sir, more knave than fool, after¹⁶⁰ your master.
Fool Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry; take the Fool with thee.
 A fox, when one has caught her,
 And such a daughter, 295
 Should sure to the slaughter,

152 untented woundings = exposed/open wounds

153 (1) penetrate, (2) deeply wound/affect/move*

154 beweep this cause = if you weep for this action

155 temper clay = mix

156 supporting, comforting

157 strip the skin off

158 partial . . . to = influenced/biased by

159 stop complaining ("be quiet")

160 go after/behind

If my cap would buy a halter.¹⁶¹
So the Fool follows after.

EXIT FOOL

Goneril This man¹⁶² hath had good counsel.¹⁶³ A hundred
knights?

300 'Tis politic¹⁶⁴ and safe to let him keep
At point¹⁶⁵ a hundred knights! Yes, that¹⁶⁶ on every dream,
Each buzz, each fancy,¹⁶⁷ each complaint, dislike,
He may enguard¹⁶⁸ his dotage with their powers,
And hold our lives in mercy. Oswald, I say!

305 *Albany* Well, you may fear too far.

Goneril Safer than trust too far:

Let me still¹⁶⁹ take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be taken.¹⁷⁰ I know his heart.

What he hath uttered I have writ my sister.

310 If she sustain him and his hundred knights
When I have showed the unfitness –

ENTER OSWALD

How now, Oswald?

What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

161 rope, strap

162 Lear

163 advice

164 prudent, wise

165 ready, fully prepared ("armed")

166 so that

167 each buzz, each fancy = each whim, each delusive imagining

168 protect

169 always

170 seized, captured (by them)*

Oswald Yes, madam.

Goneril Take you some company,¹⁷¹ and away to horse.

Inform her full of my particular¹⁷² fear, 315

And thereto add such reasons of your own

As may compact¹⁷³ it more. Get you gone,

And hasten your return.

EXIT OSWALD

No, no, my lord,

This milky gentleness and course of yours

Though I condemn not, yet under pardon,¹⁷⁴ 320

You are much more at task¹⁷⁵ for want of wisdom

Than praised for harmful mildness.

Albany How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell.

Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

Goneril Nay, then –

Albany Well, well, th' event. 325

EXEUNT

171 other servants ("escort")

172 (1) private, (2) special

173 tighten, make firmer

174 under pardon = excuse me, if you don't mind my saying

175 at task = to be blamed

SCENE 5

Courtyard of Albany's palace

ENTER LEAR, KENT, AND FOOL

Lear (to *Kent*) Go you before¹ to Gloucester with these letters.
 Acquaint my daughter no further with anything you know
 than comes from her demand out of² the letter. If your
 diligence³ be not speedy, I shall be there afore you.

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

EXIT KENT

Fool If a man's brains were in's heels, were't not⁴ in danger of
 kibes?⁵

Lear Ay, boy.

Fool Then, I prithee, be merry, thy wit shall ne'er go slip-shod.⁶

10 *Lear* Ha, ha, ha!

Fool Shalt⁷ see thy other daughter will use thee kindly, for
 though she's as like this as a crab's⁸ like an apple, yet I can tell
 what I can tell.

Lear Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

15 *Fool* She will taste as like this⁹ as a crab does to a crab. Thou
 canst tell why one's nose stands i'the middle on's¹⁰ face?

1 ahead of me

2 demand out of = request because of (i.e., only "after she reads")

3 effort, exertion

4 were't not = would the mind/brains not be

5 chilblains (swelling/inflammation, caused by cold)

6 slip-shod = wearing slippers/loose shoes

7 you will

8 crab apple

9 Goneril

10 on his

Lear No.

Fool Why, to keep one's eyes of¹¹ either side's nose. That what a man cannot smell out, he may spy into.

Lear I did her wrong. 20

Fool Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

Lear No.

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

Lear Why?

Fool Why, to put his head in, not to give it away to his daughters, and leave his horns without a case.¹² 25

Lear I will forget my nature.¹³ So kind a father! Be my horses ready?

Fool Thy asses¹⁴ are gone about¹⁵ 'em. The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason. 30

Lear Because they are not eight?

Fool Yes, indeed. Thou wouldst make a good Fool.

Lear To take't again perforce!¹⁶ Monster¹⁷ ingratitude!

Fool If thou wert my Fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time. 35

Lear How's that?

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

Lear O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven.
Keep me in temper.¹⁸ I would not¹⁹ be mad!

11 on

12 receptacle, covering, sheath, box

13 natural disposition

14 i.e., Lear's attendants

15 to see about

16 take't again perforce = take it back by force/violence

17 (adjective) monstrous

18 balance, good adjustment

19 would not = do not want to

ENTER ATTENDANT

40 How now, are the horses ready?

Attendant Ready, my lord.

Lear Come, boy.

EXEUNT LEAR AND ATTENDANT

Fool She that's a maid²⁰ now, and²¹ laughs at my
departure²²

Shall not be a maid long, unless things²³ be cut shorter.

EXIT

20 virgin

21 (?) if she

22 i.e., on such a fool's errand

23 penises

Act 2



SCENE I

Gloucester's castle

ENTER EDMUND AND CURRAN, FROM OPPOSITE
SIDES OF THE STAGE

Edmund Save thee,¹ Curran.

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

Edmund How comes that?

5

Curran Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad, I mean the whispered ones,² for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments?³

Edmund Not I. Pray you, what are they?

Curran Have you heard of no likely wars toward,⁴ 'twixt the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

10

1 save you = may God save you (a conventional greeting)

2 "news" was a plural

3 ear-kissing arguments = whispered statements/claims

4 coming, approaching* (taWARD)

Edmund Not a word.

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

EXIT CURRAN

Edmund The Duke be here tonight? The better – best!

15 This weaves itself perforce into my business.
My father hath set guard to take⁵ my brother,
And I have one thing, of a queasy question,⁶
Which I must act.⁷ Briefness⁸ and fortune, work!
Brother, a word, descend! Brother, I say!

ENTER EDGAR

20 My father watches. O sir, fly this place,
Intelligence is given⁹ where you are hid.
You have now the good advantage¹⁰ of the night.
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?
He's coming hither, now i' the night, i' the haste,
25 And Regan with him. Have you nothing said
Upon his party¹¹ 'gainst the Duke of Albany?
Advise yourself.¹²

Edgar I am sure on't,¹³ not a word.

Edmund I hear my father coming. Pardon me,
In cunning¹⁴ I must draw my sword upon you.

5 set guard to take = arranged for armed men to capture

6 queasy question = ticklish/uncertain/delicate inquiry/investigation

7 put in motion, perform, carry out

8 brevity/quickness

9 intelligence is given = knowledge has been delivered

10 good advantage = useful gain/profit

11 dispute, affair

12 advise yourself = consider, think about it

13 on't = on it = of/about it

14 cleverness, ingenuity

Draw, seem to defend yourself. Now quit¹⁵ you well. 30
Yield, come before my father. Light ho, here!
Fly, brother. Torches, torches! (*to Edgar*) So farewell.

EXIT EDGAR

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion¹⁶
Of my more fierce endeavor.

HE WOUNDS HIS ARM

I have seen drunkards
Do more than this in sport. Father, father! 35
Stop, stop! No help?

ENTER GLOUCESTER, AND SERVANTS WITH TORCHES

Gloucester Now Edmund, where's the villain?

Edmund Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,
Mumbling of¹⁷ wicked charms, conjuring the moon
To stand auspicious mistress¹⁸ –

Gloucester But where is he?¹⁹ 40

Edmund Look, sir, I bleed.

Gloucester Where is the villain, Edmund?²⁰

Edmund Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could –

Gloucester Pursue him, ho, go after!

EXEUNT SOME SERVANTS

15 acquit, prove (“do/play your part”)

16 beget opinion = create belief

17 mumbling of = muttering

18 stand auspicious mistress = become a favorable/kind goddess/governor
 (“person in power/control”)

19 but WHERE is HE

20 where IS the VILLain EDMund

By no means what?

Edmund Persuade me to the murder of your lordship.

45 But²¹ that I told him the revenging gods
 'Gainst parricides²² did all their thunders²³ bend –
 Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
 The child was bound to th' father – sir, in fine,²⁴
 Seeing how loathly opposite²⁵ I stood
 50 To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion,²⁶
 With his preparèd²⁷ sword, he charges home²⁸
 My unprovided²⁹ body, latched³⁰ mine arm.
 But when he saw my best alarumed³¹ spirits,
 Bold in the quarrel's right,³² roused to the encounter,
 55 Or whether gasted³³ by the noise³⁴ I made,
 Full suddenly he fled.

Gloucester

Let him fly far.

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught
 And found. (*to servants*) Dispatch!³⁵ The noble Duke my
 master,³⁶

21 except

22 those who murder their fathers

23 thunders bend = lightning bolts hurl down/aim

24 in fine = in short

25 loathly opposite = abhorrently/dreadfully opposed

26 fell motion = fierce/ruthless/cruel movement ("thrust")

27 readied

28 toward, at

29 unequipped ("not armored")

30 struck

31 alarumed = aroused

32 quarrel's right = my rectitude/righteousness in the dispute

33 frightened, alarmed

34 outcry, clamor

35 (1) hurry, (2) settle/take care of this

36 commander, leader, governor

My worthy arch and patron,³⁷ comes tonight.
 By his authority I will proclaim³⁸ it,
 That³⁹ he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,
 Bringing the murderous coward to the stake,⁴⁰
 He that conceals him: death.

60

Edmund When I dissuaded him⁴¹ from his intent,
 And found him pight⁴² to do it, with curst⁴³ speech
 I threatened to discover⁴⁴ him. He replied,
 “Thou unpossessing⁴⁵ bastard! Dost thou think,
 If I would stand against⁴⁶ thee, would the reposal⁴⁷
 Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
 Make thy words faithed?⁴⁸ No, what I should deny
 (As this I would, though thou didst produce⁴⁹
 My very character), I’d turn⁵⁰ it all
 To thy suggestion, plot, and damnèd practice.
 And thou must make a dullard of the world,
 If they not thought the profits of⁵¹ my death
 Were very pregnant⁵² and potential spurs

65

70

75

37 arch and patron = chief/superior and lord/protector

38 officially announce*

39 so that

40 the stake = execution

41 dissuaded him = advised/exhorted against

42 set, determined (PITE)

43 harsh, fierce, irritated

44 expose, reveal (“betray”)

45 penniless (“owning nothing”)

46 stand against = oppose

47 placing, reliance

48 believed

49 represent, exhibit

50 bend, twist, change

51 from

52 weighty, convincing, obvious

To make thee seek it.”

Gloucester O strange and fastened⁵³ villain,
Would he deny his letter? Said he?⁵⁴

TUCKET⁵⁵ WITHIN

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

80 All ports I’ll bar, the villain shall not ’scape.
The Duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture⁵⁶
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
May have due note⁵⁷ of him. And of my land,
Loyal and natural⁵⁸ boy, I’ll work⁵⁹ the means
85 To make thee capable.⁶⁰

ENTER CORNWALL, REGAN, AND ATTENDANTS

Cornwall How now, my noble friend. Since I came hither,
Which I can call but⁶¹ now, I have heard strange news.

Regan If it be true, all vengeance comes too short
Which can pursue the offender. How dost, ⁶²my lord?

90 *Gloucester* O, madam, my old heart is cracked, it’s cracked.

Regan What, did my father’s godson seek your life?

He whom my father named, your Edgar?

Gloucester O, lady, lady, shame would have it⁶³ hid.

53 confirmed, settled

54 said he = did he say that

55 trumpet flourish

56 description

57 due note = proper/sufficient notice

58 illegitimate

59 manage, create, make (“arrange”)

60 able (to inherit Gloucester’s lands)

61 call but = say was just

62 are you

63 would have it = wishes it to be

- Regan* Was he not companion with the riotous knights
That tended⁶⁴ upon my father? 95
- Gloucester* I know not, madam. 'Tis too bad, too bad.
- Edmund* Yes, madam, he was of that consort.⁶⁵
- Regan* No marvel then, though he were ill affected.⁶⁶
'Tis they have put him on⁶⁷ the old man's death,
To have th' expense⁶⁸ and waste of his revenues. 100
I have this present⁶⁹ evening from my sister
Been well informed of them, and with such cautions
That if they come to sojourn at my house,
I'll not be there.
- Cornwall* Nor I, assure thee, Regan.
Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father 105
A child-like office.⁷⁰
- Edmund* 'Twas my duty, sir.
- Gloucester* He did bewray his practice,⁷¹ and received
This hurt⁷² you see, striving to apprehend him.
- Cornwall* Is he pursued?
- Gloucester* Ay, my good lord.
- Cornwall* If he be taken, he shall never more 110
Be feared of doing⁷³ harm. Make your own purpose,⁷⁴

64 waited ("served")*

65 company ("crowd")

66 though he were ill affected = even supposing he was previously/already
badly disposed/inclined

67 put him on = incite/encourage/urge him

68 spending, disbursement

69 very, same

70 child-like office = filial service/duty*

71 he did bewray his practice = Edmund exposed Edgar's

72 wound*

73 feared of doing = feared for the doing of

74 intention, determination

How⁷⁵ in my strength⁷⁶ you please. For you, Edmund,
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant
So much commend⁷⁷ itself, you shall be ours.

115 Natures of such deep trust we shall much need.
You we first seize on.

Edmund I shall serve you sir

Truly, however else.⁷⁸

Gloucester For him⁷⁹ I thank your Grace.

Cornwall You know not why we came to visit you?

Regan Thus out of season,⁸⁰ threading⁸¹ dark-eyed night,

120 Occasions,⁸² noble Gloucester, of some prize⁸³

Wherein we must have use of your advice.

Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,

Of differences,⁸⁴ which I best thought it fit

To answer from⁸⁵ our home. The several messengers

125 From hence attend dispatch.⁸⁶ Our good old friend,

Lay comforts⁸⁷ to your bosom, and bestow

Your needful counsel to our business,

75 however

76 authority, power

77 recommend

78 i.e., however effective I may be

79 for him = on his behalf

80 thus out of season = our coming like this, so inappropriately/
inconveniently

81 making our way through

82 is induced/ caused

83 contest

84 disputes, quarrels

85 while we are away from

86 attend dispatch = are waiting to be sent

87 lay comforts = set/place encouragement/strength/refreshment ("brace
yourself")

ACT 2 • SCENE I

Which craves the instant use.⁸⁸

Gloucester

I serve you, madam.

Your Graces are right welcome.

EXEUNT

88 instant use = urgent/immediate utilization/employment (of your advice)

SCENE 2

In front of Gloucester's castle

ENTER KENT AND OSWALD, FROM OPPOSITE

SIDES OF THE STAGE

Oswald Good dawning¹ to thee, friend. Art of this house?²

Kent Ay.

Oswald Where may we set³ our horses?

Kent I' the mire.⁴

5 *Oswald* Prithee, if thou lovest me, tell me.

Kent I love thee not.

Oswald Why then, I care not for⁵ thee.

Kent If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold,⁶ I would make thee
care for me.

10 *Oswald* Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.

Kent Fellow, I know thee.

Oswald What dost thou know me for?⁷

Kent A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats,⁸ a base,
proud, shallow, beggarly,⁹ three-suited,¹⁰ hundred-pound,¹¹
15 filthy, worsted-stocking¹² knave, a lily-livered, action-taking¹³

1 daybreak (i.e., when it comes, before too long; it is still night)

2 household

3 put

4 (1) mud, (2) bog

5 care not for = have no interest in

6 pound for stray animals

7 as, as representing

8 broken meats = leftover bits of food/drink

9 worthless

10 i.e., "service" included clothing; this would be Oswald's clothing allotment

11 i.e., salary per year

12 worsted = wool (servants wore wool stockings)

13 i.e., preferring litigation ("action") to fighting

knave, whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable¹⁴ finical¹⁵
 rogue, one-trunk-inheriting¹⁶ slave, one that wouldst be a
 bawd, in way of good service, and art nothing but the
 composition¹⁷ of a knave, beggar, coward, pander,¹⁸ and the
 son and heir of a mongrel bitch – one whom I will beat into
 clamorous whining, if thou deniest the least syllable of thy
 addition.¹⁹ 20

Oswald Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on²⁰
 one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!

Kent What a brazen-faced varlet²¹ art thou, to deny thou 25
 knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels,
 and beat thee before the King? Draw,²² you rogue, for though
 it be night, yet the moon shines. I'll make a sop²³ o' the
 moonshine of²⁴ you. Draw, you whoreson cullionly²⁵
 barber-monger,²⁶ draw. 30

KENT DRAWS HIS SWORD

Oswald Away, I have nothing to do with thee.²⁷

14 ready to serve

15 fussy, affectedly fastidious

16 i.e., having no family able to leave him more than what a single trunk can hold

17 combination

18 pimp

19 description, title

20 rail on = abuse*

21 brazen-faced varlet = impudent rogue/rascal/menial

22 draw your sword

23 something dunked in soup (usually bread)

24 out of

25 despicable, base (cullion: testicle)

26 fop (one who is always seen in barbers' shops)

27 i.e., gentlemen (which Oswald is not) do not dirty their swords on wretches like you

Kent Draw, you rascal. You come with letters against the King, and take Vanity²⁸ the puppet's²⁹ part against the royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so³⁰ carbonado³¹ your shanks.³² Draw, you rascal, come your ways.³³

Oswald Help, ho, murder, help!

Kent Strike,³⁴ you slave. Stand,³⁵ rogue, stand. You neat³⁶ slave, strike.

KENT BEATS HIM

Oswald Help, ho, murder, murder!

ENTER EDMUND (SWORD DRAWN), CORNWALL,
REGAN, GLOUCESTER, AND SERVANTS

Edmund How now, what's the matter? Part!³⁷

Kent With³⁸ you, goodman³⁹ boy, an you please. Come, I'll flesh⁴⁰ ye, come on, young master.

Gloucester Weapons? Arms?⁴¹ What's the matter here?

Cornwall Keep peace,⁴² upon your lives.

28 i.e., like a character in the old morality plays

29 (1) Vanity as a puppet, (2) "puppet" as contemptuous term for a woman, Oswald being a follower of Goneril

30 like this

31 slash, hack

32 legs (from knee to ankle)

33 come your ways = come on, do the right thing

34 swing your sword

35 fight back, stay where you are

36 unmitigated, absolute, complete

37 separate ("break it up")

38 I'll fight with

39 used only with men lower in rank than gentlemen (i.e., insulting, as of course so is "boy")

40 stick, pierce

41 fighting

42 order! stop!

- He dies that strikes again. What is the matter? 45
- Regan* The messengers⁴³ from our sister and the King.
- Cornwall* What is your difference? Speak.
- Oswald* I am scarce in breath, my lord.
- Kent* No marvel, you have so bestirred⁴⁴ your valor. You
cowardly rascal, Nature disclaims in thee. A tailor made 50
thee.⁴⁵
- Cornwall* Thou art a strange fellow: a tailor make a man?
- Kent* Ay, a tailor, sir. A stonecutter or painter could not have
made him so ill, though he had been but two hours at the 55
trade.
- Cornwall* Speak yet,⁴⁶ how grew your quarrel?
- Oswald* This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit
of⁴⁷ his gray beard –
- Kent* Thou whoreson zed,⁴⁸ thou unnecessary letter!⁴⁹ My
lord, if you will give me leave,⁵⁰ I will tread⁵¹ this unbolted 60
villain⁵² into mortar,⁵³ and daub the wall of a jakes⁵⁴ with
him. Spare my gray beard, you wagtail?⁵⁵
- Cornwall* Peace sirrah!

43 i.e., Oswald and those with him

44 displayed

45 i.e., you're just clothing, all on the outside and nothing within

46 speak yet = continue, go on

47 at suit of = at the entreaty (i.e., because/in consideration of)

48 letter Z

49 i.e., spelling could manage with the letter S

50 permission*

51 trample, crush

52 unbolted villain = unsifted (i.e., not yet truly examined/tested) low-born peasant*

53 powder (literally, masonry cement)

54 privy, outhouse

55 contemptible fellow (literally, a small bird with a constantly wagging tail)

You beastly⁵⁶ knave, know you no reverence?

65 *Kent* Yes sir, but anger hath a privilege.⁵⁷

Cornwall Why art thou angry?

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

Who wears⁵⁸ no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,

Like rats, oft bite the holy cords⁵⁹ atwain,⁶⁰

70 Which are too intrinse t'unloose,⁶¹ smooth⁶² every passion

That in the natures of their lords rebel,⁶³

Being oil to fire, snow to their colder moods,

Renegé,⁶⁴ affirm, and turn their halcyon⁶⁵ beaks

With every gall and vary⁶⁶ of their masters,

75 Knowing nought (like dogs) but following.⁶⁷

(*to Oswald*) A plague upon your epileptic⁶⁸ visage!

Smile you my⁶⁹ speeches, as⁷⁰ I were a fool?

Goose, if I had you upon Sarum⁷¹ plain,

I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.⁷²

56 brutish ("animal-like")

57 right, exemption, immunity, license

58 employs, uses

59 holy cords = sacred/venerable ties/threads/bonds (of society, family, etc.)

60 apart, in two (aTWEN)

61 intrinse t'unloose = intricate/entangled to untie/slacken

62 make the way easy for

63 (verb) rise up, are disobedient

64 deny, abandon, renounce

65 calm (after the legendary halcyon bird, which soothed the sea's rough winds and waves) (HALseeON)

66 gall and vary = irritation/exasperation and hesitation/vacillation/variance

67 but following = except how to be a follower/servant

68 i.e., spasmodic, twitching

69 at my

70 as if

71 Salisbury (SALZbaREE)

72 (?)

Cornwall What, art thou mad, old fellow? 80

Gloucester How fell you out?⁷³ Say that.

Kent No contraries⁷⁴ hold more antipathy⁷⁵

Than I and such a knave.

Cornwall Why dost thou call him a knave? What's his offense?

Kent His countenance likes me not.⁷⁶ 85

Cornwall No more, perchance,⁷⁷ does mine, nor his, nor hers.

Kent Sir, 'tis my occupation⁷⁸ to be plain.

I have seen better faces in my time

Than stands on any shoulder that I see

Before me at this instant.

Cornwall This is some fellow, 90

Who having been praised for bluntness, doth affect

A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb⁷⁹

Quite from his nature.⁸⁰ He cannot flatter, he,

An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth.

An they will take it, so. If not, he's plain. 95

These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness

Harbor more craft⁸¹ and more corrupter ends⁸²

Than twenty silly-ducking observants⁸³

73 fell you out = did you disagree/quarrel

74 opposites

75 natural incompatibility (anTIpaTHEE)

76 likes me not = I don't like

77 perhaps, maybe

78 habit, custom

79 constrains the garb = forces his behavior

80 quite from his nature = entirely naturally

81 cunning, art

82 devices, purposes

83 silly-ducking observants = head-bowing (like ducks in water) attendants/
followers/servants

That stretch their duties nicely.⁸⁴

100 *Kent* Sir, in good sooth,⁸⁵ in sincere verity,
Under th' allowance of your great aspect,⁸⁶
Whose influence,⁸⁷ like the wreath⁸⁸ of radiant fire
On flickering Phoebus' front⁸⁹ –

Cornwall What mean'st by this?

Kent To go out of my dialect,⁹⁰ which you discommend⁹¹
105 so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer. He that beguiled⁹² you
in a plain accent was a plain knave, which for my part I will
not be, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me
to't.⁹³

Cornwall (to *Oswald*) What was the offense you gave him?

110 *Oswald* I never gave him any.
It pleased the King his master very late
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction,⁹⁴
When he,⁹⁵ conjunct⁹⁶ and flattering his⁹⁷ displeasure,
Tripped me behind. Being⁹⁸ down, insulted,⁹⁹ railed,

84 stretch their duties nicely = work/labor hard/strain at their foolish/dainty jobs/homage/deference

85 truth

86 astrological position

87 astrological power

88 coil

89 flickering Phoebus' front = the wavering rays that appear on the sun's face

90 regional way of speech

91 disapprove of

92 he that beguiled = he who deceived*

93 win your displeasure to entreat me to't = (?) talk you/your angry self into asking me to be a plain knave

94 i.e., the King misunderstood what I had said

95 Kent

96 associating himself with

97 the King's

98 I being

99 he insulted

And put upon him¹⁰⁰ such a deal of man,¹⁰¹ 115
 That¹⁰² worthied¹⁰³ him, got praises of¹⁰⁴ the King
 For him attempting¹⁰⁵ who¹⁰⁶ was self-subdued,
 And in the fleshment¹⁰⁷ of this dread¹⁰⁸ exploit,
 Drew on me here again.

Kent None of these rogues and cowards 120
 But¹⁰⁹ Ajax is their fool.¹¹⁰

Cornwall Fetch forth the stocks!¹¹¹
 You stubborn ancient knave, you reverend¹¹² braggart,
 We'll teach you.

Kent Sir, I am too old to learn.
 Call not your¹¹³ stocks for me. I serve the King,
 On whose employment I was sent to you. 125
 You shall do small respect, show too bold malice¹¹⁴
 Against the grace and person of my master,
 Stocking¹¹⁵ his messenger.

Cornwall Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and honor,

100 put upon him = assumed, adopted

101 deal of man = quantity/amount ("lot") of masculinity

102 which pretense of masculine prowess

103 made him seem honored

104 from

105 him attempting = his (Kent) attacking

106 he who (Oswald)

107 excitement

108 (sarcastic)

109 none of these . . . but = all of these

110 Ajax is their fool = make fun/are contemptuous of the irascible but brave Greek warrior Ajax

111 penal device, in which the victim was locked (feet and sometimes hands) between two notched planks

112 old

113 the

114 (1) ill-will, unfriendliness, (2) wrong

115 by putting in the stocks

(to Cornwall) Come, my good lord, away.¹²⁵

EXEUNT ALL BUT GLOUCESTER AND KENT

Gloucester I am sorry for thee, friend. 'Tis the Duke's pleasure,
Whose disposition all the world well knows 150
Will not be rubbed¹²⁶ nor stopped. I'll entreat for thee.

Kent Pray do not, sir. I have watched and traveled¹²⁷ hard.
Some time¹²⁸ I shall sleep out,¹²⁹ the rest I'll whistle.
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.¹³⁰
Give¹³¹ you good morrow.¹³² 155

Gloucester The Duke's to blame¹³³ in this. 'Twill be ill taken.

EXIT GLOUCESTER

Kent Good King, that must approve¹³⁴ the common
saw,¹³⁵
Thou out of heaven's benediction¹³⁶ comest¹³⁷
To the warm¹³⁸ sun.

125 "For following . . . Come, my good lord, away": from Quarto

126 restrained, influenced, changed

127 (1) journeyed, (2) labored

128 some time = some of the time

129 away

130 out at heels = unfortunate, distressing (as shoes/stockings wear out at the heels)

131 I wish

132 morning

133 to blame = at fault

134 demonstrate, prove

135 saying, proverb

136 prosperity, blessing

137 thou out of heaven's benediction comest = you, Lear, descend from the comfortable shade of prosperity to something much less comfortable (i.e., people's lives veer from one extreme, either to a worse one or to the opposite one)

138 heat of the

160 *(to the just dawning sun)* Approach, thou beacon¹³⁹ to this
 under¹⁴⁰ globe,
 (taking out a letter) That by thy comfortable¹⁴¹ beams I may
 Peruse this letter. Nothing almost¹⁴² sees miracles
 But misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia,
 Who hath most fortunately been informed
 165 Of my obscurèd course *(reads aloud)* "and shall¹⁴³ find time,
 From¹⁴⁴ this enormous state,¹⁴⁵ seeking to give
 Losses their remedies."¹⁴⁶ All weary and o'erwatched,¹⁴⁷
 Take vantage,¹⁴⁸ heavy eyes, not to behold
 This shameful lodging.¹⁴⁹
 170 Fortune, good night. Smile once more,¹⁵⁰ turn thy wheel!¹⁵¹

HE SLEEPS

139 watchtower

140 lower

141 strengthening, cheering (COMforTABLE)

142 nothing almost = virtually no state of being

143 she will/must

144 being away from/out of

145 enormous state = extraordinary/monstrous/shocking state of things (in Britain)

146 to trying to find ways to supply remedies for what has been lost

147 being awake and observant for too long

148 opportunity ("advantage")

149 accommodation, resting place

150 once more = again

151 as a goddess, Fortune decides who gets good luck, and who gets bad, by spinning a wheel

SCENE 3

A wood

ENTER EDGAR

Edgar I heard myself proclaimed,
 And by the happy¹ hollow of a tree
 Escaped the hunt. No port is free,² no place
 That guard³ and most unusual vigilance
 Does not attend⁴ my taking. Whiles⁵ I may 'scape, 5
 I will preserve⁶ myself, and am bethought⁷
 To take the basest and most poorest shape⁸
 That ever penury,⁹ in contempt of¹⁰ man,
 Brought near¹¹ to beast. My face I'll grime¹² with filth,
 Blanket¹³ my loins, elf¹⁴ all my hair in knots, 10
 And with presented nakedness¹⁵ outface¹⁶
 The winds and persecutions¹⁷ of the sky.

1 lucky, fortunate*

2 unrestricted

3 (noun) watch

4 (1) look/watch for, (2) wait for

5 while, for as long as

6 save

7 disposed, minded

8 appearance

9 destitution, poverty

10 contempt of = dishonoring, despising

11 close, almost

12 smear, blacken

13 (verb) cover, tie around with nothing more than a blanket

14 (verb) tangle

15 presented nakedness = visible/open/displayed bareness (not nudity so much as sparsity of covering)

16 (1) confront, defy, (2) overcome

17 annoyances, malignities

The country¹⁸ gives me proof and precedent¹⁹
 Of Bedlam²⁰ beggars who, with roaring voices,
 15 Strike²¹ in their numbed and mortified²² bare arms
 Pins, wooden pricks,²³ nails, sprigs²⁴ of rosemary;
 And with this horrible object,²⁵ from low farms,
 Poor pelting²⁶ villages, sheepcotes,²⁷ and mills,²⁸
 Sometime with lunatic bans,²⁹ sometime with prayers,
 20 Enforce their charity.³⁰ "Poor Turlygod,³¹ poor Tom!"³²
 That's something yet.³³ Edgar I nothing am.³⁴

EXIT

18 countryside, land, region

19 example, models

20 London asylum for the mentally deranged

21 drive, stick

22 numbed and mortified = unfeeling, insensible, deadened (the two adjectives have virtually identical meaning)

23 thorns, spines, prickles, skewers, etc.

24 twigs

25 display

26 petty, insignificant

27 sheds

28 grain-grinding mills

29 proclamations, commands, curses

30 enforce their charity = force/compel the people in these poor conditions to give charity

31 (?)

32 often "Tom o' Bedlam" (someone who has previously been incarcerated in Bedlam)

33 anyway, still

34 nothing am = am not at all

SCENE 4

In front of Gloucester's castle, Kent in the stocks

ENTER LEAR, FOOL, AND ATTENDANT

Lear 'Tis strange that they should so depart from home,¹
And not send back my messenger.

Attendant As I learned,
The night before there was no purpose in them
Of this remove.²

Kent Hail to thee, noble master!

Lear Ha! 5
Make't thou this shame thy pastime?³

Kent No, my lord.

Fool Ha, ha! He wears cruel⁴ garters. Horses are tied by the
heads, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and
men by the legs. When a man's over-lusty at⁵ legs, then he
wears wooden nether-stocks.⁶ 10

Lear What's he that hath so much thy place mistook
To⁷ set thee here?

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

Lear No.

Kent Yes. 15

1 their home

2 departure

3 amusement, recreation

4 (1) painful, merciless, (2) crewel worsted (worn by servants)

5 over-lusty at = too lively-legged (i.e., has too many reasons for running away,
whether from police or from jealous husbands)

6 nether-stocks = stockings on the lower parts of the legs

7 as to

Which presently they read, on²² whose²³ contents,
 They summoned up their meiny,²⁴ straight took horse,
 Commanded me to follow and attend 35
 The leisure of their answer, gave²⁵ me cold looks.
 And meeting here the other messenger,
 Whose welcome I perceived had poisoned mine
 (Being²⁶ the very fellow that of late
 Displayed²⁷ so saucily against your Highness), 40
 Having more man than wit about me, drew.
 He raised the house with loud and coward cries.
 Your son and daughter found this trespass worth
 The shame which here it suffers.

Fool Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way. 45
 Fathers that wear rags
 Do make their children blind,²⁸
 But fathers that bear bags²⁹
 Shall see their children kind.
 Fortune, that arrant³⁰ whore, 50
 Ne'er turns the key³¹ to the poor.
 But for all³² this thou shalt have as many dolors³³ for³⁴ thy

22 on the basis of, after reading

23 Quarto (Folio: those)

24 following, retinue, train

25 and gave

26 he being

27 made a show of

28 heedless, uncaring

29 of money ("purses": there was then no money in circulation but coins)

30 notorious

31 opens its door

32 for all = in spite of

33 (1) sorrows, (2) dollars (German or Spanish money)

34 from, on account of

daughters as thou canst tell³⁵ in a year.

Lear O, how this mother³⁶ swells up toward my heart!

55 *Hysterica passio*,³⁷ down, thou climbing sorrow,
Thy element's³⁸ below. Where is this daughter?

Kent With the Earl, sir, here within.

Lear (to *Attendant*) Follow
me not,
Stay here.

EXIT LEAR

Attendant Made you no more offense but what you speak of?

60 *Kent* None.

How chance³⁹ the King comes with so small a train?

Fool And⁴⁰ thou hadst been set i' the stocks for that
question, thou hadst well deserved it.

Kent Why, Fool?

65 *Fool* We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach thee there's
no laboring i' the winter.⁴¹ All that follow their noses are led
by their eyes but⁴² blind men, and there's not a nose among
twenty but can smell him⁴³ that's stinking.⁴⁴ Let go thy
hold⁴⁵ when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest it break thy
70 neck with following it. But the great one that goes up the

35 count

36 hysteria (seen as a womb/female disease)

37 hysterica passio = hysteria (Latin)

38 proper place

39 does it happen

40 if

41 "the ant . . . provideth her meat [food] in the summer": Proverbs 6:6, 8

42 except for

43 he who

44 i.e., smelling of decay – like Lear

45 grip

hill, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again. I would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

That sir⁴⁶ which serves and seeks for gain,

And follows but for form,⁴⁷

75

Will pack when it begins to rain,

And leave thee in the storm.

But I will tarry, the fool will stay,

And let the wise man fly.

The knave turns fool that runs away,

80

The fool no⁴⁸ knave, perdy.⁴⁹

ENTER LEAR WITH GLOUCESTER

Kent Where learned you this, Fool?

Fool Not i' the stocks, fool.

Lear Deny⁵⁰ to speak with me? They are sick? They are weary?

They have traveled all the night? Mere fetches,⁵¹

85

The images of revolt⁵² and flying off.⁵³

Fetch me a better answer.

Gloucester My dear lord,

You know the fiery quality of the Duke,

How unremovable⁵⁴ and fixed he is

46 that sir = he who

47 appearance, correct procedure

48 is no

49 by God (corruption of "par dieu")

50 say no ("refuse")

51 stratagems, dodges

52 casting off obedience ("rebellion")

53 running away, fleeing

54 immovable

- 90 In his own course.
- Lear* Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!⁵⁵
- Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,
I'd⁵⁶ speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.
- Gloucester* Well my good lord, I have informed them so.
- 95 *Lear* Informed them! Dost thou understand me, man?
- Gloucester* Ay, my good lord.
- Lear* The King would speak with Cornwall, the dear father
Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends,⁵⁷ service.
Are they informed of this? My breath and blood!
- 100 Fiery? The fiery Duke? Tell the hot Duke that –
No, but not yet, maybe he is not well,
Infirmity⁵⁸ doth still⁵⁹ neglect all office
Whereto⁶⁰ our health is bound.⁶¹ We are not ourselves
When nature, being oppressed, commands the mind
- 105 To suffer with the body: I'll forbear,
And am fallen out with my more headier will⁶²
To take⁶³ the indisposed and sickly⁶⁴ fit
For the sound man. (*notices Kent*) Death on my state!
Wherefore
Should he sit here? This act persuades me
- 110 That this remotion⁶⁵ of the Duke and her

55 ruin, destruction

56 I wish to

57 expects

58 sickness

59 always

60 to which

61 tied, fastened, connected

62 more headier will = more headstrong/impetuous desire

63 to take = which takes

64 only sickly

65 remoteness

Is practice only. Give me⁶⁶ my servant forth.⁶⁷

(to Gloucester) Go tell the Duke, and's wife, I'd speak with them.

Now, presently. Bid them come forth and hear me,

Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum

Till it cry⁶⁸ sleep to death.

115

Gloucester I would have all well betwixt you.

EXIT GLOUCESTER

Lear O me, my heart! My rising heart! But down!

Fool Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put 'em i' the paste⁶⁹ alive. She knapped 'em o' the coxcombs with a stick, and cried, "Down, wantons,⁷⁰ down!" 120
'Twas her brother⁷¹ that, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay.⁷²

ENTER CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, AND SERVANTS

Lear Good morrow to you both.

Cornwall Hail to your Grace!

KENT IS SET AT LIBERTY

Regan I am glad to see your Highness.

Lear Regan, I think you are. I know what reason 125
I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad

66 give me = let

67 out

68 cry/bark after (like a pack of houndes "in cry")

69 pastry

70 bad-mannered/rude animals

71 i.e., a cockney (resident in London)

72 his hay = its hay (which horses will not eat, as country people and stablemen know)

I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepulchring an adultress. (*to Kent*) O are you free?

Some other time for that. Belovèd Regan,
130 Thy sister's naught. O Regan, she hath tied
Sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here,
(*points to his heart*) I can scarce speak to thee, thou'lt not
believe

With how depraved a quality – O Regan!

Regan I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope
135 You less know how to value her desert⁷³
Than she to scant⁷⁴ her duty.

Lear Say? How is that?

Regan I cannot think my sister in the least
Would fail her obligation. If sir, perchance
She have restrained the riots of your followers,
140 'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome⁷⁵ end,
As clears her from all blame.

Lear My curses on her!

Regan O sir, you are old.
Nature in you stands on the very verge⁷⁶
Of her confine.⁷⁷ You should⁷⁸ be ruled and led
145 By some discretion, that discerns⁷⁹ your state
Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray you
That to our sister you do make return.

73 deserving (deZERT)

74 cut down, abridge

75 beneficial, salutary

76 boundary, limit

77 frontier, border (CONfine)

78 must

79 recognizes, perceives

Say you have wronged her.

Lear Ask her forgiveness?

Do you but mark how this becomes the house?⁸⁰

“Dear daughter, I confess that I am old. 150

LEAR KNEELS

Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg

That you’ll vouchsafe⁸¹ me raiment, bed, and food.”

Regan Good sir, no more. These are unsightly⁸² tricks.

Return you to my sister.

Lear (*rising*) Never, Regan.

She hath abated me of half my train, 155

Looked black⁸³ upon me, strook⁸⁴ me with her tongue

Most serpent-like, upon the very heart.

All the stored⁸⁵ vengeance of heaven fall

On her ingrateful top!⁸⁶ Strike her young bones,

You taking⁸⁷ airs, with lameness!

Cornwall Fie sir. Fie! 160

Lear You nimble⁸⁸ lightnings, dart your blinding flames

Into her scornful eyes! Infect⁸⁹ her beauty,

You fen-sucked⁹⁰ fogs, drawn by the powerful sun,

To fall and blister!

80 becomes the house = is appropriate/fit for our kingly lineage

81 grant, bestow/confer on

82 ugly

83 frowning, angry, threatening

84 struck

85 accumulated

86 ingrateful top = ungrateful head

87 rapacious, blasting, pernicious

88 swift

89 stain, taint, poison, spoil

90 fen-sucked = drawn from marshes

Regan O the blest gods!

165 So will you wish on me, when the rash mood is on.

Lear No Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.

Thy tender-hefted⁹¹ nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce, but thine
Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee

170 To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,

To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes,⁹²

And in conclusion to oppose the bolt⁹³

Against my coming in. Thou better know'st

The offices of nature, bond of childhood,

175 Effects of courtesy, dues⁹⁴ of gratitude.

Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,

Wherein I thee endowed.⁹⁵

Regan Good sir, to the purpose.⁹⁶

TUCKET WITHIN

Lear Who put my man i' the stocks?

Cornwall What trumpet's that?

Regan I know't, my sister's. This approves her letter,

That she would soon be here.

ENTER OSWALD

180 Is your lady come?

Lear This is a slave, whose easy-borrowed⁹⁷ pride

91 tender-hefted = tenderly set/settled/established ("framed")

92 fixed standards/quantities

93 oppose the bolt = set the bolt on the door ("lock the door")

94 debts

95 gave, invested, enriched

96 point, subject, issue

97 easy-borrowed = easily assumed/put on (borrow: take for temporary use)

Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.

Out varlet, from my sight!

Cornwall

What means your Grace?

Lear Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope

Thou didst not know on't. Who comes here? O heavens, 185

ENTER GONERIL

(to the heavens) If you do love old men, if your sweet sway

Allow obedience, if you yourselves are old,

Make it your cause.⁹⁸ Send down, and take my part!

(to Goneril) Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?

O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand? 190

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

All's not offense that indiscretion⁹⁹ finds

And dotage terms so.

Lear O sides,¹⁰⁰ you are too tough!

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

Cornwall I set him there, sir. But his own disorders¹⁰¹ 195

Deserved much less advancement.¹⁰²

Lear You? Did you?

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

If till the expiration of your month

You will return and sojourn with my sister,

Dismissing half your train, come then to me. 200

I am now from home, and out of¹⁰³ that provision¹⁰⁴

98 motive/reason for action★

99 imprudence, lack of judgment

100 i.e., sides of the body

101 violations of order, irregularities of behavior

102 promotion, preferment (ironic)

103 out of = (1) away from, (2) deprived of, without

104 preparations, supplies, necessities

Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

Lear Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?

No, rather I abjure¹⁰⁵ all roofs, and choose

205 To wage¹⁰⁶ against the enmity¹⁰⁷ o' the air,¹⁰⁸

To be a comrade with the wolf and owl –

Necessity's sharp pinch.¹⁰⁹ Return with her?

Why the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took

Our youngest born, I could as well be brought

210 To knee¹¹⁰ his throne, and squire-like¹¹¹ pension beg,

To keep base life afoot. Return with her?

Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter¹¹²

To this (*indicating Oswald*) detested groom.

Goneril

At your choice, sir.

Lear I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad.

215 I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewell.

We'll no more meet, no more see one another.

But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter,

Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,

Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,

220 A plague-sore, an embossèd carbuncle,¹¹³

In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee,

Let shame come when it will, I do not call it,

I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,

105 renounce, forswear, disclaim, reject

106 fight, venture

107 ill-will, hostility

108 open air ("out of doors")

109 pressure, difficulty ("squeeze")

110 go down on his knees to

111 squire-like = like a servant/personal attendant

112 pack horse

113 embossèd carbuncle = bulging/tumid tumor

Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging¹¹⁴ Jove.
 Mend¹¹⁵ when thou canst, be better at thy leisure, 225
 I can be patient, I can stay with Regan,
 I and my hundred knights.

Regan Not altogether so,¹¹⁶
 I looked not for you yet, nor am provided
 For your fit welcome. Give ear sir, to my sister,
 For those that mingle¹¹⁷ reason with your passion 230
 Must be content to think you old, and so –
 But she knows what she does.

Lear Is this well¹¹⁸ spoken?

Regan I dare avouch¹¹⁹ it, sir. What, fifty followers?
 Is it not well?¹²⁰ What should you need of more?
 Yea, or so many? Sith that both charge and danger 235
 Speak 'gainst so great a number? How in one house¹²¹
 Should many people, under two commands,
 Hold amity?¹²² 'Tis hard, almost impossible.

Goneril Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
 From those that she calls servants, or from mine? 240

Regan Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack you,
 We could control¹²³ them. If you will¹²⁴ come to me

114 high-judging = judging from on high

115 (1) improve, reform, (2) atone

116 altogether so = completely, entirely (with a further implication: not all of you)

117 join

118 (1) correctly, justifiably, suitably, (2) generously, kindly, (3) gratefully

119 confirm, prove, guarantee

120 i.e., isn't fifty enough?

121 speak GAINST so GREAT a NUMBER HOW in one HOUSE

122 friendly relations

123 (1) regulate, (2) call to account, rebuke

124 (1) wish to, (2) will in the future

(For now I spy a danger) I entreat you
To bring but five and twenty. To no more
Will I give place or notice.¹²⁵

245 *Lear* I gave you all –

Regan And in good¹²⁶ time you gave it.

Lear Made you my guardians,¹²⁷ my depositaries,¹²⁸

But kept a reservation to be followed

With such¹²⁹ a number. What, must I come to you

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

Regan And speak't again, my lord, no more¹³⁰ with me.

Lear Those wicked creatures yet do¹³¹ look well-favored¹³²

When¹³³ others are more wicked. Not being the worst

Stands in some rank¹³⁴ of praise. (*to Goneril*) I'll go with thee,

255 Thy fifty yet doth double¹³⁵ five and twenty,

And thou art twice her love.

Goneril Hear me, my lord.

What need you five and twenty? Ten? Or five?

To follow¹³⁶ in a house where twice so many

Have a command to tend you?

Regan What need one?

260 *Lear* O reason¹³⁷ not the need. Our basest beggars

125 place or notice = room/space or recognition

126 right, proper, seasonable

127 protectors, defenders, keepers

128 trustees ("receptacles")

129 with such = by exactly such

130 than that number

131 yet do = still

132 attractive

133 while, whereas

134 degree ("ordering")

135 (verb)

136 follow/attend you

137 discuss, argue*

Are in the poorest thing superfluous.¹³⁸
 Allow not nature more than nature needs,
 Man's¹³⁹ life's is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady.
 If only to go warm were gorgeous,¹⁴⁰
 Why nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,¹⁴¹ 265
 Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need –
 You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need.
 You see me here (you gods) a poor old man,
 As full of grief as age, wretched in both!
 If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts 270
 Against their father, fool me not so much
 To¹⁴² bear it tamely. Touch me with noble anger,
 And let not women's weapons, water drops,
 Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
 I will have such revenges on you both, 275
 That all the world shall – I will do such things –
 What they are, yet I know not, but they shall be
 The terrors of the earth! You think I'll weep,
 No, I'll not weep.

SOUNDS OF A STORM

I have full cause of weeping. But this heart 280
 Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,¹⁴³

138 are in the poorest thing superfluous = possess more than enough of the least valuable things

139 and then man's

140 magnificent, sumptuous, dazzling

141 gorgeous wear'st = gorgeously wear (literally, "wear of that which is gorgeous")

142 fool me not so much to = make me not so much a fool as to

143 detached pieces

Or ere¹⁴⁴ I'll weep. O Fool, I shall go mad!

EXEUNT LEAR, GLOUCESTER, KENT, AND FOOL

Cornwall Let us withdraw, 'twill be a storm.

Regan This house is little.¹⁴⁵ The old man and's people

285 Cannot be well bestowed.¹⁴⁶

Goneril 'Tis his own blame, hath put himself from rest,¹⁴⁷
And must needs taste¹⁴⁸ his folly.

Regan For his particular,¹⁴⁹ I'll receive him gladly,
But not one follower.

Goneril So am I purposed.

290 Where is my Lord of Gloucester?

Cornwall Followed the old man forth, he is returned.

ENTER GLOUCESTER

Gloucester The King is in high rage.

Cornwall Whither is he going?

Gloucester He calls to horse, but will I know not whither.

Cornwall 'Tis best to give him way, he leads¹⁵⁰ himself.

295 *Goneril* (to *Gloucester*) My lord, entreat him by no means¹⁵¹ to
stay.

Gloucester Alack,¹⁵² the night comes on, and the bleak¹⁵³ winds

144 or ere = before

145 not huge (i.e., larger than "little" in current usage)

146 placed, located

147 he has driven/turned/removed himself away from repose ("peace and quiet")

148 experience, deal with

149 his particular = he himself

150 guides

151 entreat him by no means = by no means entreat him

152 alas*

153 cold

Do sorely ruffle.¹⁵⁴ For many miles about
There's scarce a bush.¹⁵⁵

Regan O sir, to willful men
The injuries¹⁵⁶ that they themselves procure¹⁵⁷
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors, 300
He is attended with a desperate¹⁵⁸ train,
And what they may incense¹⁵⁹ him to, being apt¹⁶⁰
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids¹⁶¹ fear.
Cornwall Shut up your doors, my lord, 'tis a wild night.
My Regan counsels well. Come out o' the storm. 305

EXEUNT

154 sorely ruffle = severely rage/bluster

155 i.e., they've mostly been blown down/away

156 wrongs, suffering, mischief★

157 contrive, cause

158 with a desperate = by a dangerous/reckless/violent

159 inflame, excite, provoke

160 he being prepared/of a disposition/tendency

161 must

Act 3



SCENE I

A heath

ENTER, FROM OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE STAGE,

KENT AND AN ATTENDANT

Kent Who's there, besides foul weather?

Attendant One minded like¹ the weather, most unquietly.²

Kent I know you. Where's the King?

Attendant Contending³ with the fretful⁴ elements,

5 Bids the winds blow the earth into the sea,
Or swell the curlèd waters 'bove the main,⁵
That things might change, or cease.

Kent But who is with him?

Attendant None but the Fool, who labors to out-jest
His heart-strook injuries.

1 minded like = disposed/inclined, in sympathy with

2 disturbed

3 struggling, fighting

4 ill-tempered, peevish, restless, inflamed

5 mainland

Kent Sir, I do know you,
 And dare upon the warrant⁶ of my note 10
 Commend⁷ a dear thing to you. There is division
 (Although as yet the face of it be covered
 With mutual cunning) 'twixt Albany and Cornwall,
 Who have – as who have not, that their great stars⁸
 Throned⁹ and set high? – servants, who seem no less,¹⁰ 15
 Which¹¹ are to France the spies and speculations¹²
 Intelligent¹³ of¹⁴ our state. What¹⁵ hath been seen,
 Either in snuffs and packings¹⁶ of the Dukes,
 Or the hard rein¹⁷ which both of them have borne¹⁸
 Against the old kind King, or something deeper, 20
 Whereof perchance these are but furnishings.¹⁹

Attendant I will talk further with you.

Kent No, do not.
 For confirmation that I am much more
 Than my out-wall,²⁰ open this purse, and take
 What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia 25

6 security, assurance, guarantee

7 entrust, deliver

8 i.e., astrological influences/powers

9 (verb, the subject of which is “stars”)

10 inferior, lower ranking *or* who indeed appear to be what they are, servants

11 which servants

12 observers

13 (adjective, modifying both “spies” and “speculations”) communicating/
 bearing information

14 about, on

15 that which

16 snuffs and packings = indignations/resentments and plotting/contriving

17 i.e., like someone who rides a horse hard

18 maintained, asserted

19 mere externals (“signs”)

20 outward appearance

(As fear not but you shall), show her this ring
 And she will tell you who that fellow is
 That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!
 I will go seek the King.

Attendant Give me your hand.

30 Have you no more to say?

Kent Few words, but to effect more than all yet,
 That when we have found the King – in which your pain²¹
 That way, I'll this – he that first lights on²² him
 Holla the other.

EXEUNT AT OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE STAGE

21 trouble, toil, effort

22 lights on = meets, discovers

SCENE 2

Another part of the heath

ENTER LEAR AND FOOL

- Lear* Blow, winds, and crack¹ your cheeks! Rage, blow
 You cataracts,² and hurricanoes³ spout
 Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!⁴
 You sulphurous and thought-executing⁵ fires,
 Vaunt-couriers⁶ to oak-cleaving thunderbolts, 5
 Singe my white head! And thou all-shaking thunder,
 Strike⁷ flat the thick rotundity⁸ o' the world!
 Crack nature's moulds, all germens⁹ spill at once
 That make ingrateful man!
- Fool* O nuncle, court holy-water¹⁰ in a dry house is better than 10
 this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in,¹¹ ask thy
 daughters' blessing. Here's a night pities¹² neither wise men
 nor fools.
- Lear* Rumble thy bellyful! Spit fire, spout rain!
 Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters: 15
 I tax¹³ not you, you elements, with unkindness.

1 split

2 floodgates

3 (1) waterspouts, (2) hurricanes

4 weathercocks (figures of birds, spindle-mounted to turn with the wind)

5 carrying out/performing as swift as thought

6 vaunt-couriers = advance-guards

7 beat

8 state of being round/spherical

9 seeds

10 court holy-water = gracious but empty promises

11 go in

12 that pities

13 blame, scold

I never gave you kingdom, called you children,
 You owe me no subscription.¹⁴ Then let fall
 Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,
 20 A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.
 But yet I call you servile ministers,¹⁵
 That¹⁶ have with two pernicious¹⁷ daughters joined¹⁸
 Your high-engendered battles¹⁹ 'gainst a head
 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 headpiece.
 The codpiece²⁰ that will house²¹
 Before the head has any,²²
 The head and he shall louse.²³
 So²⁴ beggars marry many.²⁵

30 The man that makes his toe
 What he his heart should make,²⁶
 Shall of²⁷ a corn cry woe,
 And turn his sleep to wake.²⁸
 For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths in a
 glass.

14 submission, allegiance

15 servile ministers = slavish servants

16 you who

17 destructive, ruinous, wicked

18 (verb) (1) united, combined, (2) sent into combat

19 high-engendered battles = loftily begotten/conceived/born troops/
 battalions

20 penis (literally, a bagged appendage to close-fitting male outer garments)

21 (verb) engage in sex (literally, "lodge")

22 any housing/lodging

23 be infested with lice

24 thus

25 beggars marry many = many beggars (who are lice-infested) marry

26 i.e., inverts proper values

27 because

28 waking

Lear No, I will be the pattern²⁹ of all patience,
I will say nothing. 35

ENTER KENT

Kent Who's there?

Fool Marry, here's grace and a codpiece: that's a wise man and a fool.

Kent (to *Lear*) Alas sir, are you here? Things that love night
Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies 40
Gallow³⁰ the very wanderers of the dark,³¹
And make them keep their caves. Since I was³² man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind, and rain, I never
Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot carry 45
Th' affliction,³³ nor the fear.

Lear Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pudder³⁴ o'er our heads,
Find out³⁵ their enemies now. Tremble thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes,
Unwhipped of³⁶ justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand – 50
Thou perjured – and thou simular³⁷ man of virtue
That art incestuous. Caitiff,³⁸ to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming

29 model

30 gallow = gally = frighten, daze

31 of the dark = in the darkness

32 have been a

33 misery, distress

34 pudder = pother = turmoil, uproar

35 find out = discover

36 by

37 simulating, pretending

38 villain, wretch

Hast practiced on man's life. Close pent-up guilts,
 55 Rive³⁹ your concealing continents,⁴⁰ and cry
 These dreadful summoners grace.⁴¹ I am a man
 More sinned against than sinning.

Kent Alack, bareheaded!

Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel,⁴²
 Some friendship⁴³ will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.
 60 Repose you there, while I to this hard⁴⁴ house
 (More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised,⁴⁵
 Which⁴⁶ even but now, demanding after⁴⁷ you,
 Denied me to come in) return, and force⁴⁸
 Their scantred courtesy.⁴⁹

Lear My wits begin to turn.

65 (to Fool) Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
 I am cold myself. (to Kent) Where is this straw, my fellow?
 The art of our necessities is strange,
 That can make vile things precious. Come, your⁵⁰ hovel.
 Poor fool, and knave, I have one part in my heart
 70 That's sorry yet for thee.

39 tear apart, split, destroy

40 contents

41 cry these dreadful summoners grace = cry/beg for grace from these terrible bailiffs/arresting officers

42 shed, shack

43 kindness, favor

44 hard-hearted, impenetrable (the castle, belonging to Gloucester but controlled, now, by Cornwall et al.)

45 built

46 those in the castle

47 demanding after = asking about

48 constrain, press hard upon

49 considerateness

50 we'll go to your

Fool (*sings*)

He that has and a little tiny wit,
 With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain,
 Must make content with his fortunes fit,⁵¹
 For the rain it raineth every day.

75

Lear True, my good boy. (*to Kent*) Come, bring us to this hovel.

EXEUNT LEAR AND KENT

Fool This is a brave⁵² night to cool a courtesan.⁵³ I'll speak a
 prophecy ere I go:

When priests are more⁵⁴ in word than matter,
 When brewers mar their malt with water,
 When nobles are their tailors' tutors,
 No heretics burned, but wenches'⁵⁵ suitors,
 When every case in law is right,
 No squire in debt, nor no poor knight,
 When slanders do not live in tongues,
 Nor cutpurses⁵⁶ come not to throngs,⁵⁷
 When usurers tell their gold i' the field,
 And bawds and whores do churches build,
 Then shall the realm of Albion⁵⁸
 Come to great confusion.⁵⁹

80

85

51 content with his fortunes fit = make his happiness fit with his luck

52 fine, grand*

53 courtier

54 greater

55 but wenches' = but only girls' / young women's

56 pickpockets

57 (nor CUT purSEZ come NOT to THRONGS)

58 England (ALbeeAWN)

59 ruin, destruction (conFYOOzeeAWN)

90 Then comes the time, who lives⁶⁰ to see't,
 That going shall be used with feet.⁶¹
 This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time.

EXIT

60 who lives = whoever may live

61 used with feet = done by foot

SCENE 3

Gloucester's castle

ENTER GLOUCESTER AND EDMUND

Gloucester Alack, alack, Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing.¹ When I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from me the use of mine own house, charged me on pain of their perpetual displeasure, neither to speak of him, entreat for him, nor any way sustain him. 5

Edmund Most savage and unnatural!

Gloucester Go to,² say you nothing. There is division betwixt the Dukes, and a worse matter than that. I have received a letter this night, 'tis dangerous to be spoken. I have locked the letter in my closet. These injuries the King now bears will be 10
revenged home,³ there's part of a power⁴ already footed.⁵ We must incline to⁶ the King. I will look⁷ him and privily relieve him. Go you and maintain talk with the Duke, that my charity be not of him perceived. If he ask for me, I am ill, and gone to bed. Though I die for it (as no less is threatened me) 15
the King my old master must be relieved.⁸ There is some strange thing toward, Edmund. Pray you, be careful.

EXIT GLOUCESTER

1 conduct

2 go to = come, come

3 (1) successfully, (2) thoroughly*

4 army

5 established

6 incline to = take the side of

7 (1) go and see, examine, (2) search for, seek out

8 rescued, helped

Edmund This courtesy forbid thee,⁹ shall the Duke
Instantly know, and of that letter too.

20 This seems a fair deserving, and must draw¹⁰ me
That which my father loses: no less than all.
The younger rises when the old doth fall.

EXIT

9 courtesy forbid thee = considerateness/generosity, which has been
forbidden to you
10 bring

SCENE 4

The heath, in front of a hovel

ENTER LEAR, KENT, AND FOOL

Kent Here is the place, my lord, good my lord, enter.

The tyranny¹ of the open² night's too rough

For nature to endure.

Lear Let me alone.

Kent Good my lord, enter here.

Lear Wilt³ break my heart?

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

5

Lear Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious⁴ storm

Invades⁵ us to the skin. So 'tis to thee.

But where the greater malady is fixed,⁶

The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear,

But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea,

10

Thou'dst meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind's free,

The body's delicate.⁷ The tempest in my mind

Doth from my senses take all feeling else,

Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!

Is it not as⁸ this mouth should tear⁹ this hand

15

For lifting food to't? But I will punish home.

No, I will weep no more. In such a night

1 oppression, severity, harshness

2 unprotected against, uncovered (i.e., unroofed against)

3 will it

4 quarrelsome

5 penetrates

6 constant, firmly rooted

7 fastidious, dainty, not tough / robust

8 as if

9 lacerate, wound

To shut me out? Pour on, I will endure.
 In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril,
 20 Your old kind father, whose frank¹⁰ heart gave all –
 O that way madness lies, let me shun that.
 No more of that.

Kent Good my lord, enter here.

Lear Prithee, go in thyself, seek thine own ease.

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder

35 On things would¹¹ hurt me more. But I'll go in.

(*to Fool*) In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty –
 Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

THE FOOL GOES IN

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,

That bide¹² the pelting¹³ of this pitiless storm,

30 How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,

Your looped and windowed¹⁴ raggedness, defend you

From seasons such as these? O I have ta'en

Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp,¹⁵

Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,

35 That thou mayst shake the superflux¹⁶ to them,

And show the heavens more just.

10 generous, lavish, sincere

11 which would

12 remain/stay in

13 beating down

14 looped and windowed = having holes and openings

15 take physic, pomp = you men of magnificence (pomp), cure yourself by taking a cathartic/purge (i.e., in *Lear*'s following words, "expose yourself . . .")

16 super-/overabundance (i.e., which you possess but do not in fact need)

Edgar (*within*) Fathom and half, fathom and half!¹⁷ Poor Tom!

THE FOOL RUNS OUT FROM THE HOVEL

Fool Come not in here nuncle, here's a spirit,¹⁸

Help me, help me!

Kent Give me thy hand. Who's there?

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

40

Kent What art thou that dost grumble¹⁹ there i' the straw?

Come forth.

ENTER EDGAR DISGUISED AS A MADMAN

Edgar Away, the foul fiend follows me! Through the sharp
hawthorn²⁰ blows the cold wind. Hum, go to thy cold bed,
and warm thee.

45

Lear Didst thou given all to thy two daughters? And art thou
come to this?

Edgar Who gives any thing 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 halters²¹ in his pew,²² set ratsbane²³ by his
porridge, made him proud of heart, to ride on a bay²⁴
trotting-horse over four-inched bridges,²⁵ to course²⁶ his

50

17 i.e., the depth-measurements ("soundings") taken by sailors

18 ghost, supernatural creature

19 mutter, mumble

20 thorny shrub

21 hanging rope nooses (i.e., the second of a series of three temptations to suicide)

22 allotted place (usually in church)

23 arsenic ("rat poison")

24 reddish brown

25 four-inched bridges = bridges only four inches wide

26 hunt, pursue

own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits!²⁷ Tom's a-cold.

55 O do, de, do de, do, de. Bless²⁸ thee from whirlwinds, star-
 blasting,²⁹ and taking,³⁰ do poor Tom some charity, whom
 the foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now (*pounces*),
 and there, and there again, and there.

Lear What, have his daughters brought him to this pass?

60 Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give them all?

Fool Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed.³¹

Lear Now all³² the plagues that in the pendulous³³ air

Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

Kent He hath no daughters, sir.

65 *Lear* Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued nature
 To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.

Is it the fashion, that discarded fathers

Should have thus little mercy on³⁴ their flesh?

Judicious punishment, 'twas this flesh begot

70 Those pelican³⁵ daughters.

Edgar Pillicock³⁶ sat on Pillicock-hill,

Alow, alow, loo, loo!

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

Edgar Take heed o' the foul fiend, obey thy parents, keep thy

27 mental capacities/faculties

28 protect, guard

29 evil influence of malignant stars

30 seizures, attacks of disease

31 i.e., by being obliged to see him naked

32 may all

33 suspended overhead, overhanging

34 shown toward

35 pelicans were believed to feed their blood to their young

36 penis

word justly,³⁷ swear not, commit³⁸ not with man's sworn spouse, set not³⁹ thy sweet-heart on proud array.⁴⁰ Tom's a-cold. 75

Lear What hast thou been?

Edgar A servingman, proud in heart and mind, that curled my hair, wore gloves⁴¹ in my cap, served the lust of my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with her. Swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in⁴² the sweet face of heaven. One that slept in the contriving of lust, and waked to do it. Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured⁴³ the Turk. False of heart, light of ear,⁴⁴ bloody of hand, hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey.⁴⁵ Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman. Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets,⁴⁶ thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind. Says suum, mun, hey nonny. Dolphin⁴⁷ my boy, my boy, sessa!⁴⁸ Let⁴⁹ him trot by. 80 85 90

Lear Thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy

37 rightfully, uprightly

38 commit adultery

39 set not = don't fix her mind

40 proud array = splendid/magnificent/luxurious clothing

41 i.e., an intimate garment given him by the lady

42 in front of

43 outdid in sexual love

44 light of ear = (?) unthinking (indifferent)? unreliable? credulous?

45 preying

46 slits in the waistline of petticoats

47 a horse?

48 (?) stop? (from French "cessez," stop)

49 (?) well, let

uncovered body this extremity⁵⁰ of the skies. Is man no more
 95 than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk,
 the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat⁵¹ no perfume.
 Ha? Here's three on's⁵² are sophisticated!⁵³ (*to Edgar*) Thou⁵⁴
 art the thing itself. Unaccommodated⁵⁵ man is no more but⁵⁶
 such a poor, bare, forked⁵⁷ animal as thou art. Off, off, you
 100 lendings!⁵⁸ Come, unbutton here.⁵⁹

TEARING OFF HIS CLOTHES

Fool Prithee nuncle, be contented, 'tis a naughty⁶⁰ night to
 swim in. Now a little fire in a wild⁶¹ field were like an old
 lecher's heart – a small spark, all the rest on's⁶² body cold.
 Look, here comes a walking fire.

ENTER GLOUCESTER, WITH A TORCH

105 *Edgar* This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet.⁶³ He begins at
 curfew,⁶⁴ and walks till the first cock.⁶⁵ He gives the web and

50 extreme state

51 civet

52 of us (i.e., we three here)

53 altered from/deprived of simple naturalness

54 But you

55 unprovided-for

56 no more but = nothing more than

57 i.e., divided ("forked") at the latter end of the trunk by a pair of legs

58 loans, borrowings (i.e., clothes)

59 his own clothes

60 wicked, bad*

61 uncultivated, gone to brush

62 of his

63 (1) name of a devil, (2) a frivolous/flighty woman

64 9:00 P.M.

65 just before dawn

the pin,⁶⁶ squints⁶⁷ the eye, and makes the harelip, mildews
the white⁶⁸ wheat, and hurts the poor creature⁶⁹ of earth.

Swithold⁷⁰ footed⁷¹ thrice the 'old,⁷²

He met the night-mare,⁷³ and her nine-fold,⁷⁴ 110

Bid her alight,⁷⁵

And her troth plight,⁷⁶

And aroint⁷⁷ thee witch, aroint thee!

Kent (to *Lear*) How fares your Grace?

Lear (indicating *Edgar*) What's he? 115

Kent (to *Edgar*) Who's there? What is't you seek?

Gloucester What are you there? Your names?

Edgar Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the
tadpole, the wall-newt⁷⁸ and the water.⁷⁹ That in the fury⁸⁰
of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for 120
sallets,⁸¹ swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog,⁸² drinks the

66 the web and the pin = an eye disease, the eye being covered by a film, and
there being an excrescence the size of a pinhead ("cataract")

67 (verb) causes the eye to squint/be crossed

68 ripening

69 (plural) creatures that live on this earth

70 Saint Withold, patron saint of nocturnal travelers

71 walked

72 wold = open country

73 female nighttime spirit that attacks sleeping people, lying on them and
afflicting them with her weight

74 nine attending creatures ("familiars")

75 i.e., get off the people she is attacking

76 troth plight = promise/pledge her agreement to desist

77 go away, begone ("avaunt"*)

78 newt (amphibian lizard) on the wall

79 the newt in the water

80 disorder, tumult

81 salads

82 dead dog in a ditch

green mantle⁸³ of the standing pool. Who is whipped from tithing to tithing,⁸⁴ and stock- punished, and imprisoned. Who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body,⁸⁵

125 Horse to ride, and weapon to wear,
 But mice and rats, and such small deer,
 Have been Tom's food for seven long year.
 Beware my follower.⁸⁶ Peace, Smulkin,⁸⁷ peace, thou fiend!

Gloucester What, hath your Grace no better company?

130 *Edgar* The prince of darkness⁸⁸ is a gentleman.
 Modo he's call'd, and Mahu.⁸⁹

Gloucester Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord,
 That it doth hate what gets⁹⁰ it.

Edgar Poor Tom's a-cold.

135 *Gloucester* Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer
 T' obey in all your daughters' hard commands.
 Though their injunction be to bar my doors,
 And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,
 Yet have I ventured to come seek you out,

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

Lear First let me talk with this philosopher.⁹¹
 What is the cause of thunder?

Kent Good my lord, take his offer, go into the house.

83 scum

84 tithing to tithing = one parish to another

85 as a servant, which Edgar claims to have been

86 (1) servant, (2) familiar

87 a minor devil

88 Satan

89 Modu . . . Mahu = minor devils

90 (?) profits? begets, procreates, spawns?

91 Edgar

Lear I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.⁹²

What is your study?

145

Edgar How to prevent⁹³ the fiend, and to kill vermin.

Lear Let me ask you one word in private.

Kent (to *Gloucester*) Importune him once more to go, my lord.

His wits begin to unsettle.

Gloucester Canst thou blame him?

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

150

He said it would be thus. Poor banished man.

Thou sayest the King grows mad. I'll tell thee, friend,

I am almost mad myself. I had a son,

Now outlawed from my blood. He sought my life

But⁹⁴ lately, very late. I loved him (friend),

155

No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,

The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!

(to *Lear*) I do beseech your Grace –

Lear O cry you mercy,⁹⁵ sir.

Noble philosopher, your company.⁹⁶

Edgar Tom's a-cold.

160

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

Lear Come, let's in all.

Kent This way, my lord.

Lear With him,

I will keep still⁹⁷ with my philosopher.

92 Greek philosopher

93 prepare for, forestall, balk, stop

94 just

95 cry you mercy = I beg your pardon

96 society, fellowship

97 always

Kent Good my lord, soothe⁹⁸ him, let him take the fellow.

165 *Gloucester* (to *Kent*) Take him you on.⁹⁹

Kent Sirrah, come on, go along with us.

Lear Come, good Athenian.

Gloucester No words, no words. Hush.

Edgar Child¹⁰⁰ Rowland to the dark tower came,

170 His word was still,¹⁰¹ “Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man.”

EXEUNT

98 humor

99 take him you on = you bring him in

100 title for a candidate to knighthood

101 his word was still = what he said was always

SCENE 5

Gloucester's castle

ENTER CORNWALL AND EDMUND

Cornwall I will have my revenge ere I depart his¹ house.

Edmund How, my lord, I may be censured (that nature thus gives way to loyalty), something fears me to think of.

Cornwall I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his² death, but a provoking merit,³ 5
set a-work by a reprobable⁴ badness in himself.⁵

Edmund How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just? This is the letter he⁶ spoke of, which approves him an intelligent⁷ party to the advantages of France. O heavens!

That this treason were not, or not I the detector! 10

Cornwall Go with me to the Duchess.

Edmund If the matter of this paper be certain,⁸ you have mighty business in hand.

Cornwall True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester.
Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our 15
apprehension.⁹

Edmund (*aside*) If I find him comforting the King, it will stuff his¹⁰ suspicion more fully. (*to Cornwall*) I will persevere in my

1 Gloucester's

2 Gloucester's

3 provoking merit = exasperated/irritated/angered deserved reward

4 blameworthy, reprehensible

5 Gloucester

6 Gloucester

7 knowing, spying

8 definite, unfailing

9 seizing, capturing

10 stuff his = augment/reinforce Cornwall's

20 course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that
 and my blood.

Cornwall I will lay trust upon thee. And thou shalt find a dear
 father in my love.

EXEUNT

SCENE 6

A room in a farmhouse adjoining the castle

ENTER GLOUCESTER, KING LEAR, KENT,
FOOL, AND EDGAR

Gloucester Here is better than the open air, take it thankfully. I
will piece out¹ the comfort with what addition I can. I will
not be long from² you.

Kent All the power of his wits have given way to his
impatience.³ The gods reward your kindness. 5

EXIT GLOUCESTER

Edgar Frateretto⁴ calls me, and tells me Nero⁵ is an angler in
the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul
fiend.

Fool Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a
gentleman or a yeoman?⁶ 10

Lear A king, a king!

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

Lear To have a thousand with red burning spits⁷
Come hissing⁸ in upon 'em!⁹ 15

Edgar Bless thy five wits.

1 piece out = enlarge, extend

2 away from

3 restless incapacity

4 a minor devil

5 1st C. B.C.E. Roman emperor with a bad reputation

6 high-ranking servant

7 pointed metal cooking tools

8 hissing, whizzing

9 Goneril and Regan

Fool He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.

Lear It shall be done, I will arraign¹⁰ them straight.¹¹

20 *Kent* O pity! Sir, where is the patience now,
That thou so oft have boasted to retain?

Edgar (aside) My tears begin to take his part so much,
They'll mar my counterfeiting.

Lear The little dogs and all,

25 Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me.

Edgar Tom will throw¹² his head at them. Avaunt, you curs!

Be thy mouth or black or white,

Tooth that poisons if it bite,

Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,¹³

30 Hound or spaniel, brach or him,¹⁴

Or bobtail tike¹⁵ or trundle-tail,¹⁶

Tom will make them weep and wail.

For with throwing thus my head,

Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled.

35 Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs and
market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn¹⁷ is dry.

Lear Then let them anatomize¹⁸ Regan, see what breeds about
her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard
hearts? (*to Edgar*) You sir, I entertain for one of my hundred,

10 condemn, sentence

11 "He's mad that trusts . . . arraign them straight": Quarto

12 (?) twist, turn, swing (or "throw," since Edgar too is supposed to be mad)

13 fierce, savage

14 brach or him = female or male

15 dog of little worth

16 (?) dragging tail? long-tailed?

17 drinking horn

18 dissect

only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will say 40
they are Persian, but let them be changed.

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

Lear Make no noise, make no noise, draw the curtains.¹⁹

So, so, so. We'll go to supper i' the morning.

Fool And I'll go to bed at noon. 45

ENTER GLOUCESTER

Gloucester Come hither friend. Where is the King my master?

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

Gloucester Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms.

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

There is a litter²⁰ ready, lay him in 't, 50

And drive toward Dover,²¹ friend, where thou shalt meet

Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.

If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,

With thine, and all that offer to defend him,

Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up, 55

And follow me, that will to some provision²²

Give thee quick conduct.²³ Come, come, away!

EXEUNT

19 bed curtains

20 vehicle, pulled by animals, containing a bed for the sick/wounded

21 seaport in SE England, directly across from France

22 necessities

23 guidance, direction

SCENE 7

Gloucester's castle

ENTER CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL,
EDMUND, AND SERVANTS

Cornwall (to *Goneril*) Post speedily to my lord your husband,
show him this letter, the army of France is landed. (to *Servants*)
Seek out the villain Gloucester.

EXEUNT SOME OF THE SERVANTS

Regan Hang him instantly.

5 *Goneril* Pluck out his eyes.

Cornwall Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our
sister¹ company. The revenges we are bound to take upon
your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise
the Duke,² where you are going, to a most festinate³
10 preparation.⁴ We are bound to the like. Our posts shall be
swift and intelligent betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister. (to
Edmund) Farewell, my Lord of Gloucester.

ENTER OSWALD

How now? Where's the King?

Oswald My Lord of Gloucester hath conveyed him hence.
15 Some five or six and thirty of his knights,
Hot questrists⁵ after him, met him at⁶ gate,

1 Goneril

2 Albany

3 hasty, hurried

4 i.e., military

5 searchers, seekers

6 at the

Who, with some other of the lord's⁷ dependants,
Are gone with him toward Dover, where they boast
To have well-armed friends.

Cornwall Get horses for your mistress.

Goneril Farewell sweet⁸ lord, and sister. 20

Cornwall Edmund, farewell.

EXEUNT GONERIL, EDMUND, AND OSWALD

Go seek the traitor Gloucester,
Pinion⁹ him like a thief, bring him before us.

EXEUNT OTHER SERVANTS

Though well we may not pass upon his life¹⁰
Without the form¹¹ of justice, yet our power
Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men 25
May blame, but not control. Who's there? The traitor?

ENTER GLOUCESTER, BROUGHT IN BY TWO OR THREE

Regan Ingrateful fox!¹² 'Tis he.

Cornwall Bind fast¹³ his corky¹⁴ arms.

Gloucester What mean¹⁵ your Graces? Good my friends,
consider,
You are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends.

7 Gloucester's

8 agreeable

9 shackle, tie

10 pass upon his life = sentence him to death

11 proper legal procedure

12 i.e., artful/cunning creature

13 tightly, thoroughly

14 withered, dry

15 have in mind, intend*

Cornwall Bind him, I say.

SERVANTS BIND HIM

30 *Regan* Hard,¹⁶ hard. O filthy traitor!

Gloucester Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.¹⁷

Cornwall To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt find –

REGAN PLUCKS¹⁸ HIS BEARD

Gloucester By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly¹⁹ done

To pluck me by the beard.

Regan So white, and such a traitor!

35 *Gloucester* Naughty lady,

These hairs which thou dost ravish²⁰ from my chin

Will quicken²¹ and accuse thee. I am your host.

With robbers' hands my hospitable favors²²

You should not ruffle²³ thus. What will you do?

40 *Cornwall* Come sir, what letters had you late from France?

Regan Be simple²⁴—answered, for we know the truth.

Cornwall And what confederacy²⁵ have you with the traitors

Late footed²⁶ in the kingdom?

Regan To whose hands have you sent the lunatic King?

Speak.

16 exceedingly, very tightly

17 no traitor

18 pulls hair out of (as one plucks feathers from chickens)

19 basely, dishonorably, meanly

20 take by violence

21 come to life

22 hospitable favors = welcoming face/features (HOSpiTAbLe)

23 handle roughly

24 simple = straightforward/honest

25 alliance

26 set ("landed")

Gloucester I have a letter guessingly²⁷ set down, 45
Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,
And not from one opposed.

Cornwall Cunning.

Regan And false.

Cornwall Where hast thou sent the King?

Gloucester To Dover.

Regan Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged²⁸ at
peril –

Cornwall Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that. 50

Gloucester I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the
course.²⁹

Regan Wherefore to Dover, sir?

Gloucester Because I would not³⁰ see thy cruel nails
Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed³¹ flesh stick boarish³² fangs. 55

The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
In hell-black night endured, would have buoyed³³ up
And quenched the stelled³⁴ fires.

Yet poor old heart, he holp³⁵ the heavens to rain.
If wolves had at thy gate howled that stern³⁶ time, 60

27 conjecturally

28 commanded

29 stand the course = endure being tortured like a bear tied to a stake and set
on by dogs

30 would not = did not wish to

31 consecrated (as kings were considered to be)

32 cruel (like the fangs of a wild boar)

33 swelled

34 stellar ("studded with stars")

35 helped

36 hard, grim

Thou shouldst³⁷ have said, "Good porter, turn the key."³⁸
 All cruels else subscribe.³⁹ But I shall see
 The wingèd vengeance⁴⁰ overtake such children.

Cornwall See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.

65 Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.⁴¹

Gloucester He that will think to live till he be old,
 Give me some help!

CORNWALL PUTS OUT ONE OF GLOUCESTER'S EYES

O cruel! O you gods!

Regan One side will mock⁴² another. Th' other too.

Cornwall If you see vengeance –

Servant 1 Hold your hand, my lord.

70 I have served you ever since I was a child.

But better service have I never done you

Than now to bid you hold.

Regan How now, you dog!

Servant 1 (to *Regan*) If you did wear a beard upon your chin,

I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?

75 *Cornwall* My villain?

THEY DRAW AND FIGHT

Servant 1 Nay then come on,⁴³ and take the chance of anger.

CORNWALL IS WOUNDED

37 would

38 i.e., lock the door

39 all cruels else subscribe = all other varieties of cruelty agree with you

40 i.e., wingèd because descending from the heavens, sent by the gods

41 set my foot = suppress, put down, subdue, quell

42 ridicule

43 advance, attack (i.e., a challenge)

Regan (to *Servant 2*) Give me thy sword. A peasant stand⁴⁴ up thus!

SHE STABS SERVANT 1 FROM BEHIND

Servant 1 O I am slain! (to *Gloucester*) My lord, you have one eye left
To see some mischief on⁴⁵ him. O!

SERVANT 1 DIES

Cornwall Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly! 80
Where is thy luster⁴⁶ now?

Gloucester All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,
To quit⁴⁷ this horrid act.

Regan Out,⁴⁸ treacherous villain,
Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he 85
That made the overture⁴⁹ of thy treasons to us,
Who⁵⁰ is too good to pity thee.

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

Regan Go thrust him out at⁵¹ gates, and let him smell 90
His way to Dover.

EXIT SERVANT WITH GLOUCESTER

44 rise

45 done to him

46 shine, light, glow

47 redeem ("revenge")

48 impossible ("out of the question")

49 revelation, disclosure

50 he who

51 at the

How is't, my lord? How look you?⁵²

Cornwall I have received a hurt. Follow me, lady.

Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave⁵³

95 Upon the dunghill.⁵⁴ Regan, I bleed apace,⁵⁵

Untimely⁵⁶ comes this hurt. Give me your arm.

EXIT CORNWALL, LED BY REGAN

52 look you = does it look for you ("how are you")

53 Servant 1

54 garbage heap

55 heavily ("quickly")

56 badly timed, unluckily

Act 4



SCENE I

*The heath*¹

ENTER EDGAR

Edgar Yet better thus, and known to be contemned,
Than still² contemned and flattered to be worst.
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune
Stands still in esperance,³ lives not in fear.
The lamentable change is from the best,
The worst returns⁴ to laughter. Welcome, then,
Thou unsubstantial⁵ air that I embrace!
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes nothing to thy blasts.

5

ENTER GLOUCESTER, LED BY AN OLD MAN

1 waste/uncultivated land

2 always

3 hope, expectation

4 changes

5 without real substance/existence

But who comes here?

- 10 My father, poorly led?⁶ World, world, O world!
 But⁷ that thy strange mutations⁸ make us hate thee,
 Life would not yield to age.⁹

Old Man O, my good lord,
 I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant,
 These fourscore years.

- 15 *Gloucester* Away, get thee away. Good friend, be gone,
 Thy comforts can do me no good at all,
 Thee, they may hurt.

Old Man You cannot see your way.

Gloucester I have no way, and therefore want no eyes.

- I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen,
 20 Our means secure¹⁰ us, and our mere¹¹ defects
 Prove our commodities.¹² O dear son Edgar,
 The food¹³ of thy abused¹⁴ father's wrath.
 Might I but live to see thee in¹⁵ my touch
 I'd say I had eyes again.

Old Man How now? Who's there?

- 25 *Edgar* (*aside*) O gods! Who is't can say "I am at the worst"?
 I am worse than e'er I was.

Old Man 'Tis poor mad Tom.

6 poorly led = being in a state of poverty and being led/conducted along

7 except

8 changes, alterations

9 old age

10 means secure = resources/wealth/money makes us careless/overconfident

11 downright/absolute/sheer

12 prove our commodities = prove to be our resources

13 offspring, creature

14 misled, deceived

15 by means of, in

Edgar (aside) And worse I may be yet. The worst is not

So long as we can say, "This is the worst."

Old Man Fellow, where goest?

Gloucester Is it a beggar-man?

Old Man Madman and beggar too.

30

Gloucester He has some reason, else he could not beg.

I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw,

Which made me think a man a worm. My son

Came then into my mind, and yet my mind

Was then scarce friends¹⁶ with him. I have heard¹⁷

35

more since.

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods,

They kill us for their sport.

Edgar (aside) How should this be?

Bad is the trade¹⁸ that must play fool to sorrow,

Angering itself and others. (aloud) Bless thee, master.

Gloucester Is that the naked fellow?

Old Man Ay, my lord.

40

Gloucester Get thee away. If for my sake,

Thou wilt o'ertake us, hence a mile or twain

I' the¹⁹ way toward Dover, do it for ancient²⁰ love,

And bring some covering for this naked soul,

Who I'll entreat to lead me.

Old Man Alack, sir, he is mad.

45

Gloucester 'Tis the time's plague, when madmen lead the blind.

16 intimately acquainted

17 learned

18 (1) way of life, (2) craft, employment

19 i' the = along/on the

20 former, past

Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure.

Above the rest, be gone.

Old Man I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,

50 Come on't²¹ what will.

EXIT OLD MAN

Gloucester Sirrah, naked fellow.

Edgar Poor Tom's a-cold. (*aside*) I cannot daub²² it further.

Gloucester Come hither, fellow.

Edgar (*aside*) And yet I must. (*aloud*) Bless thy sweet eyes,
they bleed.

55 *Gloucester* Know'st thou the way to Dover?

Edgar Both stile²³ and gate, horse-way and foot-path. Poor
Tom hath been scared out of his good wits. Bless thee, good
man's son, from the foul fiend.

Gloucester Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues

60 Have humbled to all strokes. That I am wretched

Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still!²⁴

Let²⁵ the superfluous and lust-dieted man²⁶

That slaves your ordinance,²⁷ that will not see

Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly.

65 So distribution²⁸ should undo excess,

And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?

21 of/because of it

22 cloak, lay it on

23 steps, rungs, etc., to allow passage over a fence

24 always

25 Heavens, let

26 superfluous and lust-dieted man = the man with overabundant resources
who lives for pleasure

27 slaves your ordinance = enslaves (by abusing it) your rules/arrangements

28 redistribution, reallocation, dividing up, dealing out

Edgar Ay, master.

Gloucester There is a cliff, whose high and bending head²⁹

Looks fearfully in³⁰ the confinèd deep.³¹

Bring me but to the very brim of it,

And I'll repair³² the misery thou dost bear

With something rich about³³ me. From that place

I shall no leading need.

Edgar Give me thy arm.

Poor Tom shall lead thee.

EXEUNT

70

29 bending head = curving/inclined top

30 fearfully in = frighteningly down on

31 confinèd deep = enclosed sea (the Straits of Dover: looks FEARfully in
THE conFINed DEEP)

32 mend

33 that I have on/with me

SCENE 2

In front of Albany's palace

ENTER GONERIL AND EDMUND

Goneril Welcome,¹ my lord. I marvel our mild² husband
Not met us on the way.

ENTER OSWALD

Now, where's your master'?

Oswald Madam, within, but never man so changed.

I told him of the army that was landed.

5 He smiled at it. I told him you were coming,
His answer was, "The worse."³ Of Gloucester's treachery,
And of the loyal service of his⁴ son,
When I informed him, then he called me sot,⁵
And told me I had turned the wrong side out.
10 What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him,
What like, offensive.

Goneril (to *Edmund*) Then shall you go no
further.

It is the cowish⁶ terror of his spirit

That dares not undertake. He'll not feel wrongs

Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way

15 May prove effects. Back Edmund to my brother,

1 to my home: she has come with him, but it is her home they have come to

2 gracious, courteous

3 the worse = so much the worse

4 Gloucester's

5 fool, blockhead, dolt

6 cowardly

Hasten his musters,⁷ and conduct his powers.
 I must change names⁸ at home, and give the distaff⁹
 Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant¹⁰
 Shall pass between us. Ere long you are like to hear
 (If you dare venture in your own behalf) 20
 A mistress's¹¹ command. Wear this, spare¹² speech.
 (*puts chain around his neck*) Decline your head. This kiss, if it
 durst speak,
 Would stretch¹³ thy spirits up into the air.
 Conceive,¹⁴ and fare thee well.

Edmund Yours in the ranks of death.

Goneril My most dear Gloucester. 25

EXIT EDMUND

O, the difference of man and man!
 To thee a woman's services¹⁵ are due,
 My fool¹⁶ usurps my body.
Oswald Madam, here comes my lord.

EXIT OSWALD

ENTER ALBANY

- 7 assembling of soldiers
- 8 descriptions (i.e., her coward husband is not a man, so she must become one)
- 9 women's work (distaff: tool used in spinning)
- 10 Oswald
- 11 lady love's, sweetheart's
- 12 refrain from
- 13 extend, expand, lift
- 14 consider, think
- 15 love's services
- 16 Albany

Goneril I have been worth the whistle.¹⁷

30 *Albany* O Goneril,

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face.

Goneril Milk-livered¹⁸ man,
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs,
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honor from thy suffering.

35 *Albany* See thyself, devil!

Proper deformity¹⁹ seems not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman.

Goneril O vain fool!

ENTER A MESSENGER

Messenger O my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead,
Slain by his servant, going²⁰ to put out
The other eye of Gloucester.

40 *Albany* Gloucester's eye!

Messenger A servant that he bred, thrilled²¹ with remorse,
Opposed²² against the act, bending²³ his sword
To²⁴ his great master, who thereat enraged
Flew on²⁵ him, and amongst²⁶ them felled him²⁷ dead,

17 i.e., like a dog that is called by a whistle from its master

18 milk-livered = cowardly

19 proper deformity = personal crookedness/moral disfigurement

20 while going

21 pierced, overwhelmed

22 set himself

23 directing, leveling, aiming

24 at

25 flew on = rushed/ran/sprang at

26 between

27 the servant

But not without that harmful stroke, which since
Hath plucked him after.²⁸ 45

Albany This shows you are above,²⁹
You justicers,³⁰ that these our nether³¹ crimes
So speedily can venge! But (O poor Gloucester)
Lost he his other eye?

Messenger Both, both, my lord.
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer. 50
'Tis from your sister.

Goneril (*aside*) One way I like this well,
But being widow, and my Gloucester with³² her,
May all the building³³ in my fancy pluck
Upon³⁴ my hateful life.³⁵ Another way
The news is not so tart.³⁶ (*aloud*) I'll read, and answer. 55

EXIT GONERIL

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

Messenger Come with³⁷ my lady hither.

Albany He is not here.

Messenger No, my good lord, I met³⁸ him back again.

Albany Knows he the wickedness?

28 plucked him after = pulled/taken Cornwall too to death

29 i.e., in the heavens

30 administers of justice

31 earthly ("lower")

32 being with

33 constructing ("castles in the air")

34 pluck upon = pull down, demolish

35 hateful life = my hateful existence with a man like Albany

36 grievous, painful, severe (i.e., because Cornwall's death will more readily permit a centralization of power)

37 toward, to

38 found, came across

60 *Messenger* Ay, my good lord. 'Twas he informed against him,³⁹
 And quit the house on purpose, that⁴⁰ their punishment
 Might have the freer course.

Albany Gloucester, I live
 To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the King,
 And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend,
 65 Tell me what more thou know'st.

EXEUNT

39 Gloucester

40 so that

SCENE 3¹

The French camp near Dover

ENTER KENT AND AN ATTENDANT

Kent Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back,²
know you no reason?

Attendant Something he left imperfect³ in the state, which since
his coming forth is thought of, which imports⁴ to the
kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return 5
was most required and necessary.

Kent Who hath he left behind him general?⁵

Attendant The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

Kent Did your letters pierce the Queen⁶ to any
demonstration of grief?

Attendant Ay sir she took them, read them in my presence, 10
And now and then an ample tear trilled⁷ down
Her delicate cheek. It seemed she was a queen
Over her passion, who most rebel-like,
Sought to be king o'er her.

Kent O, then it moved her.

Attendant Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove 15
Who should express her goodliest.⁸ You have⁹ seen

1 Scene 3 in its entirety is from Quarto; Folio omits it; see Introduction

2 to France

3 unfinished, incomplete

4 causes, brings, carries with it*

5 as general/commanding officer

6 Cordelia

7 flowed

8 the best

9 would have

Sunshine and rain at once. Her smiles and tears
 Were like a better way, those happy smilets,¹⁰
 That played on her ripe¹¹ lip, seemed not to know
 20 What guests¹² were in her eyes, which parted thence
 As pearls from diamonds dropped. In brief,
 Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved,
 If all could so become¹³ it.

Kent Made she no verbal question?

Attendant 'Faith,¹⁴ once or twice she heaved¹⁵ the name of
 "father"

25 Pantingly forth, as if it pressed her heart,
 Cried, "Sisters, sisters, shame of ladies, sisters!
 Kent, father, sisters! What, i' the storm? I' the night?
 Let pity not be believed!"¹⁶ There she shook
 The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
 30 And clamor¹⁷ moistened her, then away she started
 To deal with grief alone.

Kent It is the stars,
 The stars above us, govern¹⁸ our conditions,¹⁹
 Else one self²⁰ mate and make²¹ could not beget

10 little/slight smiles

11 full red

12 i.e., tears

13 grace, befit

14 in faith, truly

15 sighed

16 believed in, trusted

17 emotional storminess

18 that govern

19 natures

20 unified self

21 mate and make = one of a pair ("partner") and peer/equal ("mate")

Such different issues.²² You spoke not with her since?

Attendant No.

35

Kent Was this before the King returned?²³

Attendant No, since.

Kent Well sir, the poor distressed Lear's i' the town,
Who sometime in his better tune,²⁴ remembers
What we are come about, and by no means
Will yield²⁵ to see his daughter.

Attendant Why, good sir?

40

Kent A sovereign shame so elbows²⁶ him, his own
unkindness,²⁷

That stripped her from his benediction, turned her
To foreign casualties,²⁸ gave her dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters, these things sting
His mind so venomously, that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia.

45

Attendant Alack, poor gentleman!

Kent Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

Attendant 'Tis so, they are afoot.

Kent Well sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear,

And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause

50

Will in concealment wrap me up awhile.

22 offspring, children

23 to France

24 frame of mind, disposition, mood

25 agree, assent, submit

26 prods, pushes, forces

27 a SOvrin SHAME so ELbows HIM his OWN unKINDness: a hexameter line (such metrical variations are not uncommon in Shakespeare's plays)

28 uncertainties, precariousness

ACT 4 • SCENE 3

When I am known aright,²⁹ you shall not grieve,
Lending me this acquaintance.³⁰ I pray you, go
Along with me.

EXEUNT

29 correctly, truly

30 personal knowledge

SCENE 4

The same, a tent

ENTER, WITH DRUMS AND COLORS,¹ CORDELIA,
DOCTOR, AND SOLDIERS

Cordelia Alack, 'tis he, why, he was met even now

As mad as the vexed sea, singing aloud,

Crowned with rank fumitor² and furrow-weeds,³

With hor-lochs,⁴ hemlock,⁵ nettles, cuckoo-flowers,⁶

Darnel,⁷ and all the idle weeds that grow

5

In our sustaining corn.⁸ A century⁹ send forth,

Search every acre in the high-grown field,

And bring him to our eye.¹⁰

EXIT OFFICER

What can man's¹¹ wisdom,

In the restoring his bereavèd¹² sense?

He that can help him, take all my outward worth.¹³

10

Doctor There is means, madam.

1 flags

2 fumitory = fumaria, a type of herb

3 weeds growing on plowed land

4 coarse weed, perhaps burdock

5 poisonous shrub

6 wild flowers blooming when cuckoos are first heard (springtime)

7 wild grass

8 sustaining corn = life-supporting wheat (in British usage, American "corn"
= maize)

9 100 men

10 to our eye = before me

11 can man's wisdom = is human wisdom capable of

12 stolen

13 all my outward worth = every *thing* I possess

Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,
The which he lacks. That to provoke¹⁴ in him
Are many simples operative,¹⁵ whose power
Will close the eye of anguish.¹⁶

15 *Cordelia* All blest secrets,
All you unpublished virtues¹⁷ of the earth,
Spring with¹⁸ my tears! Be aidant and remediate¹⁹
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him,
Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life
That wants the means to lead it.

ENTER MESSENGER

20 *Messenger* News, madam,
The British powers are marching hitherward.
Cordelia 'Tis²⁰ known before. Our preparation stands
In expectation of them. O dear father,
It is thy business that I go about.
25 Therefore great France
My mourning and important²¹ tears hath pitied.
No blown²² ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right.
Soon may I hear and see him!

EXEUNT

14 that to provoke = in order to stimulate/arouse that

15 simples (noun) operative (adjective) = herbs/medicines are effective

16 close the eye of anguish = tranquilize

17 unpublished virtues = generally unknown powers

18 spring with = may you grow by means of

19 aidant and remediate (both adjectives) = helpful and curative/remedial

20 it was

21 urgent, importunate

22 (1) blossoming, (2) tainted, inflated

SCENE 5

Gloucester's castle

ENTER REGAN AND OSWALD

Regan But are my brother's powers set forth?¹

Oswald Ay, madam.

Regan Himself in person there?

Oswald Madam, with much ado.²

Your sister is the better soldier.

Regan Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

Oswald No, madam. 5

Regan What might import my sister's letter to him?

Oswald I know not, lady.

Regan 'Faith, he is posted hence³ on serious matter.

It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,
To let him live. Where he arrives he moves 10
All hearts against us. Edmund I think is gone,
In pity of his misery, to dispatch
His nighted life.⁴ Moreover, to descry⁵
The strength o' the enemy.

Oswald I must needs after him, madam, with my letter. 15

Regan Our troops set forth tomorrow, stay with us.

The ways are dangerous.

Oswald I may not, madam.

My lady charged my duty in this business.

1 set forth = on their way

2 (1) fussing about, (2) difficulty

3 away from here

4 his nighted life = Gloucester's darkened/blackened life

5 moreover, to descry = and in addition to discover/examine

Regan Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you

20 Transport her purposes by word? Belike,⁶
 Something – I know not what: I'll love thee much,⁷
 Let me unseal the letter.

Oswald Madam, I had rather –

Regan I know your lady does not love her husband,

I am sure of that. And at her late being here
 25 She gave strange oeillades⁸ and most speaking looks
 To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.

Oswald I, madam?

Regan I speak in understanding.⁹ Y' are. I know't,

Therefore I do advise you, take this note.¹⁰
 30 My lord is dead. Edmund and I have talked,
 And more convenient¹¹ is he for my hand
 Than for your lady's. You may gather¹² more.
 If you do find him, pray you give him this,
 And when your mistress hears thus much from you,
 35 I pray desire¹³ her call¹⁴ her wisdom to her.
 So fare you well.
 If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
 Preferment¹⁵ falls on him that cuts him off.

6 perhaps, possibly

7 i.e., if you cooperate with me

8 amorous glances

9 in understanding = from knowledge

10 i.e., her own letter to Edmund

11 befitting, appropriate

12 infer, deduce

13 ask

14 summon, rouse

15 advancement, promotion

Oswald Would I could meet him, madam, I should show
What party I do follow.

Regan

Fare thee well.

40

EXEUNT

SCENE 6

Fields near Dover

ENTER GLOUCESTER AND EDGAR

Gloucester When shall we come to the top of that same hill?

Edgar You do climb up it now. Look how we labor.

Gloucester Methinks the ground is even.

Edgar Horrible steep.

Hark, do you hear the sea?

Gloucester No, truly.

5 *Edgar* Why then your other senses grow imperfect

By¹ your eyes' anguish.

Gloucester So may it be indeed.

Methinks thy voice is altered, and thou speak'st

In better phrase² and matter than thou didst.

Edgar You're much deceived. In nothing am I changed

But in my garments.

10 *Gloucester* Methinks you're better spoken.³

Edgar Come on sir, here's the place. Stand still. How fearful

And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!

The crows and choughs⁴ that wing the midway air

Show scarce so gross⁵ as beetles. Halfway down

15 Hangs one⁶ that gathers sampire.⁷ Dreadful⁸ trade!

Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.

1 because of

2 language, diction

3 you're better spoken = your speech is better

4 crowlike birds (CHUFFS)

5 show scarce so gross = look hardly as big

6 someone, a person

7 aromatic plant, the leaves of which were used in pickling

8 terrifying, formidable, dangerous

The fishermen that walk upon the beach
 Appear like mice. And yond tall anchoring bark,⁹
 Diminished to her cock,¹⁰ her cock¹¹ a buoy
 Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,¹² 20
 That on the unnumbered idle pebble chafes,¹³
 Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
 Lest my brain turn, and the deficient¹⁴ sight
 Topple¹⁵ down headlong.

Gloucester Set me where you stand.

Edgar Give me your hand. You are now within a foot 25
 Of the extreme verge.¹⁶ For all beneath the moon
 Would I not leap upright.¹⁷

Gloucester Let go my hand.
 Here, friend, 's another purse, in it a jewel
 Well worth a poor man's taking. Fairies and gods
 Prosper it with¹⁸ thee. Go thou farther off, 30
 Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

Edgar Now fare you well, good sir.

Gloucester With all my heart.

Edgar Why I do trifle¹⁹ thus with his despair
 Is done to cure it.

Gloucester (*kneeling*) O you mighty gods!

9 ship

10 a ship's small boat, cock-boat

11 her cock = and her cock seems like

12 swell, waves

13 unnumbered idle pebble chafes = uncounted inactive pebbles fret/rub

14 the deficient = my defective/failing

15 topple me

16 extreme verge = outermost limits/bounds

17 leap upright = jump into the air

18 prosper it with = make it do well for

19 why I do trifle = my reason for deluding/tricking/toying with

35 This world I do renounce, and in your sights
 Shake patiently my great affliction off.
 If I could bear it longer, and not fall
 To quarrel²⁰ with your great opposeless²¹ wills,
 My snuff²² and loathèd part of nature should
 40 Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O bless him.
 Now fellow, fare thee well.
Edgar Gone²³ sir. Farewell.

GLOUCESTER FALLS FORWARD

(*aside*) And yet I know not how conceit²⁴ may rob
 The treasury of life, when life itself
 Yields to the theft. Had he been where he thought,
 45 By this had thought been past.²⁵ Alive or dead?
 (*aloud*) Ho, you sir! Friend, hear you sir, speak!
 Thus might he pass²⁶ indeed. Yet he revives.
 What²⁷ are you, sir?²⁸
Gloucester Away, and let me die.
Edgar Hadst thou been aught but gossamer,²⁹ feathers, air,
 50 So many fathom down precipitating,³⁰

20 fall to quarrel = sink/succumb to disputing/challenging

21 unopposable

22 partially burned out candlewick

23 I'm going, I'm gone

24 how conceit = if fancy/imagination

25 by this thought had been past = (1) by this time (2) because of this, all thought would have been over

26 have departed/gone/died

27 how

28 N.B.: Edgar here pretends to be a passerby/a new and different person

29 something light as cobwebs

30 falling headlong

Thou'dst shivered³¹ like an egg. But thou dost breathe,
 Hast heavy³² substance, bleed'st not, speak'st, art sound.³³
 Ten masts at each³⁴ make not the altitude
 Which thou hast perpendicularly fell.
 Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

55

Gloucester But have I fall'n, or no?

Edgar From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.³⁵
 Look up a-height,³⁶ the shrill-gorged³⁷ lark so far
 Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.

Gloucester Alack, I have no eyes.

60

Is wretchedness deprived that benefit
 To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,
 When misery could beguile the tyrant's³⁸ rage,
 And frustrate his proud will.

Edgar Give me your arm.

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

65

Gloucester Too well, too well.

Edgar This is above all strangeness.

Upon the crown o' the cliff, what thing was that
 Which parted from you?

Gloucester A poor unfortunate beggar.

Edgar As I stood here below, methought his eyes

Were two full moons. He had a thousand noses,

70

31 shattered

32 an abundance of

33 uninjured

34 (?) end to end?

35 boundary point (of England)

36 on high

37 throated

38 (?) a specific tyrant (Cornwall?) or tyrants generally?

Horns whelked³⁹ and waved like the enraged sea.
 It was some fiend. Therefore thou happy father,⁴⁰
 Think that the clearest⁴¹ gods, who make them honors
 Of men's impossibilities,⁴² have preserved thee.

75 *Gloucester* I do remember now.⁴³ Henceforth I'll bear
 Affliction till it do cry out itself
 "Enough, enough," and die. That thing you speak of,
 I took it for a man. Often 'twould say
 "The fiend, the fiend." He led me to that place.

80 *Edgar* Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here?

ENTER KING LEAR, FANTASTICALLY ADORNED
 WITH WILDFLOWERS

The safer sense⁴⁴ will ne'er accommodate⁴⁵
 His master thus.

Lear No, they cannot touch⁴⁶ me for crying. I am the King
 himself.

85 *Edgar* O thou side-piercing sight!

Lear Nature's above art in that respect. There's your press-
 money.⁴⁷ That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper.⁴⁸

39 horns whelked = he had horns that were twisted/convoluted

40 old man

41 (1) most brightly shining/lustrous, (2) illustrious

42 make them honors of men's impossibilities = create honors for/to
 themselves by performing miracles

43 do remember now = have once again the faculty of memory

44 healthier mind

45 (?) (1) deck himself out (if the reference is exclusively to Lear) (2) be
 reconciled to (if the reference is to Edgar seeing the king like this; "master"
 strongly suggests this latter alternative, as does Edgar's next speech)

46 (?) hit? harm? lay hands on? interfere with?

47 military enlistment bonus

48 scarecrow? person hired to throw rocks at crows?

Draw me⁴⁹ a clothier's yard. Look, look, a mouse! Peace,
 peace, this piece of toasted⁵⁰ cheese will do 't. There's my
 gauntlet,⁵¹ I'll prove it on a giant. Bring up the brown bills.⁵² 90
 O well flown, bird!⁵³ I' the clout,⁵⁴ i' the clout. Hewgh!⁵⁵
 Give the word.⁵⁶

Edgar Sweet marjoram.⁵⁷

Lear Pass.⁵⁸

Gloucester I know that voice. 95

Lear Ha! Goneril with a white beard? They flattered me
 like a dog, and told me I had the white hairs in my beard, ere
 the black ones were there. To say "ay" and "no" to everything
 that I said. "Ay," and "no" too, was no good divinity.⁵⁹ When
 the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me⁶⁰ 100
 chatter, when the thunder would not peace at my bidding,
 there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not
 men o' their words, they told me I was everything. 'Tis a lie, I
 am not ague-proof.⁶¹

Gloucester The trick⁶² of that voice I do well remember: 105
 Is 't not the King?

49 draw me = pull back the bow string a full yard

50 browned by fire

51 steel-reinforced glove, worn by knights

52 brown bills = spear/battle-ax weapon, painted brown

53 well flown, bird = good shot, arrow (?) (well flown: falconer's approving cry)

54 archery target

55 whistle-like sound

56 password

57 aromatic herb (MARGEorum)

58 you may pass

59 theology (i.e., it did not make Lear a god)

60 my teeth

61 ague = an acute fever (EYGYou)

62 quality, habit, ways

Lear Ay, every inch a king.

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

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

Adultery?

110 Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No,

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

Does lecher⁶³ in my sight.

Let copulation thrive, for Gloucester's bastard son

Was kinder to his father than my daughters

115 Got 'tween the lawful sheets.

To 't, luxury,⁶⁴ pell-mell,⁶⁵ for I lack soldiers.

Behold yond simpering dame,⁶⁶

Whose face between her forks presages snow,⁶⁷

That minces⁶⁸ virtue, and does shake the head

120 To hear of pleasure's name.

The fitchew,⁶⁹ nor the soiled⁷⁰ horse, goes to 't

With a more riotous⁷¹ appetite.

Down from the waist they⁷² are centaurs,⁷³

Though women all above.

125 But to the girdle⁷⁴ do the gods inherit,⁷⁵

63 sexually indulge ("copulate")

64 lascivious

65 hand to hand, at close quarters, indiscriminately

66 simpering dame = affected/mincing lady

67 (?) forks = legs; the general sense is plainly obscene, but the exact meaning is unclear

68 she that disparages/makes little of

69 the fitchew = neither the polecat

70 (?) dirty? overfed?

71 dissolute, wanton, extravagant

72 women

73 top half human, bottom half horse, and notoriously lecherous

74 but to the girdle = only to the belt

75 possess

Beneath is all the fiends’.

There’s hell, there’s darkness, there is the sulphurous pit,
Burning, scalding, stench, consumption.⁷⁶

Fie, fie, fie! Pah, pah!

Give me an ounce of civet,⁷⁷ 130

Good apothecary,⁷⁸ to sweeten my imagination.⁷⁹

There’s money for thee.

Gloucester O, let me kiss that hand!

Lear Let me wipe it first, it smells of mortality.

Gloucester O ruined piece of nature! This great world
Shall so⁸⁰ wear out to nought. Dost thou know me? 135

Lear I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou
squiny⁸¹ at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid,⁸² I’ll not love.
Read thou this challenge, mark but the penning⁸³ of it.

Gloucester Were all the letters suns, I could not see one.⁸⁴

Edgar (*aside*) I would not take this from report.⁸⁵ It is, 140
And my heart breaks at it.

Lear Read.

Gloucester What, with the case of eyes?⁸⁶

Lear O ho, are you there with me?⁸⁷ No eyes in your head,
nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, 145

76 conSUMPteeOWN

77 musk scent, derived from civets

78 druggist (aPOtheCARY)

79 anticipation, fancy (“mental image”)

80 thus, in this way

81 look slantingly/sideways, as might a whore (“squint”)

82 Cupid was often portrayed as blind

83 writing, handwriting

84 “one”: Quarto

85 take this from report = accept/believe this if it were rumored

86 case of eyes = empty eye sockets

87 i.e., so that’s it, that’s what you mean

your purse in a light, yet you see how this world goes.

Gloucester I see it feelingly.⁸⁸

Lear What, art mad?⁸⁹ A man may see how this world goes
with no eyes. Look with thine ears. See how yond justice rails
150 upon⁹⁰ yond simple thief. Hark in thine ear.⁹¹ Change places
and, handy-dandy,⁹² which is the justice, which is the thief?
Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

Gloucester Ay, sir.

Lear And the creature⁹³ run from the cur? There thou
155 mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed
in office.

Thou rascal beadle,⁹⁴ hold thy bloody hand!⁹⁵

Why dost thou lash⁹⁶ that whore? Strip thine own back.

Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind⁹⁷

160 For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the
cozener.⁹⁸

Through tattered clothes small vices do appear.

Robes and furred gowns hide all.⁹⁹ Plate¹⁰⁰ sin with gold,

And the strong lance of justice hurtless¹⁰¹ breaks.

88 (1) with understanding, from experience, (2) appropriately, (3) with great emotion

89 i.e., how can you perceive the world via the sense of touch?

90 justice rails upon = magistrate/judge ("justice of the peace") abuses

91 hark in thine ear = listen

92 handy-dandy = take your pick (from the children's game)

93 man

94 under-bailiff/sheriff

95 hold thy . . . hand = stop

96 whip (whipping was a common punishment)

97 manner, fashion, way

98 cheat, deceiver, impostor*

99 i.e., all vices, large as well as small

100 overlay

101 causing no harm/injury

- Arm it¹⁰² in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it. 165
 None does offend, none, I say, none, I'll able¹⁰³ 'em.
 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
 To seal th' accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,
 And like a scurvy politician,¹⁰⁴ seem
 To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now. 170
 Pull off my boots. Harder, harder. So.
Edgar O matter and impertinency¹⁰⁵ mixed,
 Reason in madness!
Lear If thou wilt weep¹⁰⁶ my fortunes, take my eyes.
 I know thee well enough, thy name is Gloucester. 175
 Thou must be patient, we¹⁰⁷ came crying hither.
 Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,
 We wawl¹⁰⁸ and cry. I will preach to thee. Mark.
Gloucester Alack, alack the day!
Lear When we are born, we cry that we are come 180
 To this great stage of fools. This a good block.¹⁰⁹
 It were a delicate¹¹⁰ stratagem, to shoe
 A troop of horse¹¹¹ with felt. I'll put 't in proof,
 And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,
 Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill! 185

ENTER ATTENDANTS

- 102 sin
 103 vouch for, warrant
 104 scurvy politician = contemptible/worthless schemer/plotter
 105 irrelevancy (imPERTiNENsee)
 106 wilt weep = wish/want to weep for
 107 N.B.: the royal "we" appears, and then disappears again
 108 loud/harsh cry
 109 (?) log/tree stump, real or imagined?
 110 charming, pleasant, delightful, sumptuous
 111 of horse = cavalry

Attendant O here he is. Lay hand upon him. Sir,

Your most dear daughter –

Lear No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even¹¹²

The natural¹¹³ fool of fortune. Use me well,

190 You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons,¹¹⁴

I am cut¹¹⁵ to the brains.

Attendant You shall have anything.

Lear No seconds?¹¹⁶ All¹¹⁷ myself?

Why, this would make a man a man of salt,¹¹⁸

To use his eyes for garden water-pots.

195 I will die bravely, like a smug¹¹⁹ bridegroom.

What? I will be jovial.¹²⁰ Come, come,

I am a king, masters,¹²¹ know you that?

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

Lear Then there's life in't. Come, and¹²² you get it,

200 You shall get it with running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

EXIT LEAR RUNNING

Attendant A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,

Past speaking of in a king. Thou hast a daughter,¹²³

112 uniformly, regularly

113 born

114 doctors, medical men

115 wounded, distressed

116 others, followers/supporters

117 only

118 man of salt = a man who cries

119 sleek, complacent, consciously respectable

120 majestic ("Jove-like")

121 misters, fellows

122 if

123 Cordelia

Who redeems nature from the general¹²⁴ curse

Which twain¹²⁵ have brought her¹²⁶ to.

Edgar Hail, gentle sir.

Attendant Sir, speed you. What's your will?¹²⁷ 205

Edgar Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?

Attendant Most sure and vulgar.¹²⁸

Everyone hears that, which can distinguish sound.

Edgar But by your favor,¹²⁹ how near's the other army?

Attendant Near and on speedy foot. The main descry¹³⁰ 210

Stands on the hourly thought.¹³¹

Edgar I thank you, sir, that's all.

Attendant Though that the Queen on special cause is here,

Her army is moved on.

Edgar I thank you, sir.

EXIT ATTENDANT

Gloucester You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me,

Let not my worser spirit tempt me again 215

To die before you please.

Edgar Well pray you, father.

Gloucester Now, good sir, what are you?

124 widespread (this has been taken to refer to the curse brought on all men's heads by Adam and Eve, the original "twain," but since the curse here is what the "twain have brought to her," i.e., to Cordelia, the broader religious reference seems inapplicable)

125 two daughters (Goneril and Regan)

126 Cordelia

127 what's your will = what is your wish, what can I do for you

128 current, prevalent

129 by your favor = if you please

130 final perception/observation

131 stands on the hourly thought = is expected at any hour

Edgar A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows,
 Who by the art¹³² of known and feeling sorrows,
 220 Am pregnant¹³³ to good pity. Give me your hand,
 I'll lead you to some biding.¹³⁴

Gloucester Hearty thanks.
 The bounty¹³⁵ and the benison of heaven
 To boot, and boot!

ENTER OSWALD

Oswald A proclaimed¹³⁶ prize. Most happy!
 That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh
 225 To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor,
 Briefly thyself remember.¹³⁷ The sword is out
 That must destroy thee.

Gloucester Now let thy friendly hand
 Put strength enough to't.¹³⁸

EDGAR INTERPOSES

Oswald Wherefore, bold peasant,
 Darest thou support a published traitor? Hence,
 230 Lest that th' infection of his fortune take
 Like¹³⁹ hold on thee. Let go his arm.

Edgar (*in country dialect*) Ch'ill¹⁴⁰ not let go, zir, without

132 practical skill

133 ready, apt

134 dwelling, residence

135 generosity, gift

136 PROclaimed

137 think of, commemorate

138 into it

139 similar, the same

140 I will

vurther 'casion.¹⁴¹

Oswald Let go, slave, or thou diest!

Edgar Good gentleman, go your gait,¹⁴² and let poor volk 235
pass. An chud ha' bin zwaggered¹⁴³ out of my life, 'twould
not ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. Nay, come not near
th' old man. Keep out, che vor¹⁴⁴ ye, or ise¹⁴⁵ try whether
your costard¹⁴⁶ or my ballow¹⁴⁷ be the harder. Ch'ill¹⁴⁸ be
plain with you. 240

Oswald Out, dunghill!

Edgar Ch'ill pick¹⁴⁹ your teeth, zir. Come,¹⁵⁰ no matter vor
your foins.¹⁵¹

THEY FIGHT, OSWALD FALLS

Oswald Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse.

If ever thou wilt¹⁵² thrive, bury my body, 245
And give the letters which thou find'st about me
To Edmund Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out
Upon¹⁵³ the British¹⁵⁴ party. O untimely death, death.

DIES

141 vurther 'casion = further occasion ("consideration, reason, ground")

142 way

143 an chud ha' bin zwaggered = if I could have been blustered/swaggered

144 che vor = I warrant/promise/warn

145 I shall

146 head ("large apple")

147 staff, cudgel

148 I'll be

149 break

150 come on

151 vor your foins = about your sword thrusts/strokes

152 wish to

153 in

154 i.e., as opposed to the French (Cordelia's)

Edgar I know thee well. A serviceable¹⁵⁵ villain,
 250 As duteous¹⁵⁶ to the vices of thy mistress
 As badness would desire.

Gloucester What, is he dead?

Edgar Sit you down, father. Rest you.
 Let's see these pockets,¹⁵⁷ the letters that he speaks of
 May be my friends. He's dead, I am only sorry
 255 He had no other deathsman.¹⁵⁸ Let us see.
 Leave, gentle wax,¹⁵⁹ and manners, blame us not.
 To know our enemies' minds, we rip their hearts,
 Their papers is more lawful.

READS

“Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many
 260 opportunities to cut him off.¹⁶⁰ If your will want not, time
 and place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done.¹⁶¹
 If he return the conqueror, then am I the prisoner, and his
 bed my jail, from the loathèd warmth whereof deliver me,
 and supply¹⁶² the place for your labor.¹⁶³
 265 “Your (wife, so I would¹⁶⁴ say) affectionate servant,
 Goneril.”
 O undistinguished space¹⁶⁵ of woman's will!

155 diligent, subservient (SERviSable)

156 obedient

157 pouches, small bags

158 executioner

159 leave, gentle wax = your leave/permission, noble sealing wax

160 cut him off = kill Albany

161 (?) down = down on paper, written down

162 fill

163 a sexual reference

164 wish to

165 undistinguished space = distinctionless dimensions

A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,
 And the exchange my brother! Here in the sands,
 Thee¹⁶⁶ I'll rake up,¹⁶⁷ the post¹⁶⁸ unsanctified 270
 Of murderous lechers. And in the mature¹⁶⁹ time
 With this ungracious paper strike the sight¹⁷⁰
 Of the death-practiced¹⁷¹ Duke. For him 'tis well
 That of thy death and business I can tell.
Gloucester The king is mad. How stiff is my vile sense,¹⁷² 275
 That I stand up, and have ingenious¹⁷³ feeling
 Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract,¹⁷⁴
 So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,
 And woes by wrong imaginations lose
 The knowledge of themselves.
Edgar Give me your hand. 280

DISTANT DRUMMING

Far off methinks I hear the beaten drum.
 Come father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

EXEUNT

166 Oswald

167 rake up = cover

168 rapid messenger

169 ripe

170 strike the sight = assault the eyes

171 death-practiced = intended/plotted to be killed

172 stiff is my vile sense = how resolute/firm/steadfast are my despicable
organs of perception

173 capable, functional

174 confused, perplexed, mentally scattered

SCENE 7

A tent in the French camp, Lear on a bed asleep

SOFT MUSIC

ENTER CORDELIA, KENT, AND DOCTOR

5 *Cordelia* O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
And every measure¹ fail me.

Kent To be acknowledged, madam, is² o'erpaid.
All my reports go with³ the modest truth,
Nor more, nor clipped,⁴ but so.

Cordelia Be better suited,⁵
10 These weeds⁶ are memories of those worser hours.
I prithee, put them off.

15 *Kent* Pardon, dear madam,
Yet to be known shortens my made⁷ intent.
My boon⁸ I make it that you know⁹ me not
Till time and I think meet.

Cordelia Then be't so, my good lord.
(to Doctor) How does the King?

Doctor Madam, sleeps still.

Cordelia O you kind gods,

1 course of action

2 is to be

3 go with = are part of/match/accompany

4 cut, reduced

5 dressed

6 clothes

7 planned, contrived

8 petition, request

9 recognize

Cure this great breach in his abusè¹⁰ nature.
The untuned and jarring¹¹ senses, O wind up,¹²
Of this child-changed¹³ father!

Doctor So please your Majesty 20

That we may wake the King. He hath slept long.

Cordelia Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed

I' the sway of your own will. Is he arrayed?¹⁴

Attendant Ay, madam. In the heaviness of his sleep

We put fresh garments on him.

Doctor Be by,¹⁵ good madam, when we do awake him,
I doubt of his temperance.¹⁶ 25

ENTER LEAR, IN A CHAIR CARRIED BY SERVANTS

Cordelia O my dear father, restoration¹⁷ hang

Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss

Repair those violent harms that my two sisters

Have in thy reverence¹⁸ made.

Kent Kind and dear princess. 30

Cordelia (to *Lear*) Had you not been their father, these white
flakes¹⁹

Had challenged²⁰ pity of them. Was this a face

10 violated, worn out

11 discordant, clashing

12 wind up = repair, tighten, re-tune

13 changed by the actions of his children

14 clothed, dressed

15 near

16 rational self-restraint

17 recovery

18 thy reverence = your revered self

19 tufts (of hair)

20 demanded

To be opposed against²¹ the warring winds?

35 Mine enemy's dog, though he had bit me,
Should have stood that night against²² my fire.

And wast thou fain (poor father)

To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn,²³

In short²⁴ and musty straw? Alack, alack,

40 'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all. He wakes, speak to him.

Doctor Madam, do you, 'tis fittest.

Cordelia How does my royal lord? How fares your Majesty?

Lear You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave.

Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound

45 Upon a wheel of fire, that²⁵ mine own tears

Do scald like molten lead.

Cordelia Sir, do you know me?

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

Cordelia Still, still, far wide!²⁶

50 *Doctor* He's scarce awake, let him alone awhile.

Lear Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?

I am mightily abused, I should e'en²⁷ die with pity

To see another thus.²⁸ I know not what to say.

I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see,

I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured

21 opposed against = confronted with

22 directly facing

23 depraved

24 i.e., stiff and prickly, without the resilience of longer straw

25 so that

26 off, away

27 quite, fully

28 another thus = someone else in the state I'm in

Of my condition.

Cordelia O look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.
You must not kneel.

Lear Pray, do not mock me.
I am a very foolish fond old man, 55
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more, nor less.
And to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I should know you, and know this man,
Yet I am doubtful. For I am mainly²⁹ ignorant 60
What place this is. And all the skill³⁰ I have
Remembers not these garments. Nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
For (as I am a man) I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.

Cordelia And so I am. I am. 65

Lear Be your tears wet? Yes, 'faith. I pray, weep not.
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me, for your sisters
Have (as I do remember) done me wrong.
You have some cause, they have not.

Cordelia No cause, no cause. 70

Lear Am I in France?

Kent In your own kingdom, sir.

Lear Do not abuse me.

Doctor Be comforted good madam, the great rage

²⁹ entirely

³⁰ reason, mental faculties

You see is killed in him. Desire him to go in,

75 Trouble him no more till further settling.

Cordelia Will't please your Highness walk?

Lear

You must bear with

me.

Pray you now, forget and forgive,

I am old and foolish.

EXEUNT

Act 5



SCENE I

The British camp, near Dover

ENTER, WITH DRUM AND COLORS, EDMUND, REGAN,
ATTENDANTS, AND SOLDIERS

Edmund (to *Attendant*) Know of¹ the Duke if his last purpose
hold,
Or whether, since, he is² advised by aught
To change the course. He's full of alteration
And self-reproving. Bring³ his constant pleasure.⁴

EXIT ATTENDANT

Regan Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.⁵

5

Edmund 'Tis to be doubted,⁶ madam.

Regan Now sweet lord,

1 know of = find out from

2 has been

3 fetch/bring me

4 constant pleasure = firm choice

5 gone astray

6 feared

You know the goodness⁷ I intend upon you.

Tell me but truly, but then speak the truth,

Do you not love my sister?

Edmund In honored⁸ love.

10 *Regan* But have you never found my brother's way
To the forfended⁹ place?¹⁰

Edmund No, by mine honor, madam.

Regan I never shall endure¹¹ her. Dear my lord
Be not familiar¹² with her.

Edmund Fear not.

ENTER, WITH DRUM AND COLORS, ALBANY,
GONERIL, AND SOLDIERS

15 She and the Duke her husband.

Goneril (*aside*) I had rather lose the battle than that sister
Should loosen¹³ him and me.

Albany Our very loving sister, well be-met.

Sir, this I heard, the King is come to his daughter,

20 With others, whom the rigor¹⁴ of our state
Forced to cry out.

Regan Why is this reasoned?

Goneril (*to Albany*) Combine together 'gainst the enemy,
For these domestic and particular broils
Are not the question here.

7 benefit, advantage, good fortune

8 dignified, respectful

9 prohibited, forbidden

10 i.e., have you had sex with her

11 tolerate, bear, suffer

12 intimate, free

13 detach, make a breach between

14 severity, harshness

Albany Let's then determine
 With the ancient of war¹⁵ on our proceedings. 25
Edmund I shall attend you presently at your tent.
Regan Sister, you'll go with us?
Goneril No.
Regan 'Tis most convenient,¹⁶ pray go with us.
Goneril (*aside*) O ho, I know the riddle.¹⁷ (*aloud*) I will go. 30

EXEUNT REGAN AND GONERIL

ENTER EDGAR, IN PEASANT DISGUISE

Edgar (*to Albany*) If e'er your Grace had speech with man so
 poor,
 Hear me one word.
Albany (*to Soldiers*) I'll overtake you. (*to Edgar*)
 Speak.

EXEUNT SOLDIERS

Edgar Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
 If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
 For¹⁸ him that brought it. Wretched though I seem, 35
 I can produce a champion¹⁹ that will prove²⁰
 What is avouchèd there. If you miscarry,²¹

15 the ancient of war = those with more military experience (ancient: a plural noun, here)

16 appropriate, suitable

17 i.e., Regan wants to protect her own interest in Edmund, and watch her sister

18 to call

19 i.e., a man who will represent, in combat, what Edgar maintains

20 put to trial by combat

21 fail, die

Your business of the world hath so²² an end,

And machination ceases. Fortune love you.

Albany Stay till I have read the letter.

40 *Edgar* I was forbid it.

When time shall serve,²³ let but the herald cry,

And I'll appear again.

Albany Why, fare thee well, I will o'erlook thy paper.

EXIT EDGAR

ENTER EDMUND

Edmund The enemy's in view, draw up²⁴ your powers.

45 Here is the guess of their true strength and forces

By diligent discovery; but your haste

Is now urged on you.

Albany We will greet²⁵ the time.

EXIT ALBANY

Edmund To both these sisters have I sworn my love,

Each jealous of²⁶ the other as the stung

50 Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?

Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed,

If both remain alive. To take the widow

Exasperates,²⁷ makes mad her sister Goneril,

And hardly²⁸ shall I carry out my side,

22 thus

23 be advantageous/useful/favorable/suitable

24 draw up = put in proper combat array

25 deal with, address, receive

26 jealous of = furious at

27 embitters, enrages

28 uneasily, painfully

Her²⁹ husband being alive. Now then we'll use 55
 His countenance³⁰ for the battle, which being done
 Let her who would be rid of him devise
 His speedy taking off. As for his mercy
 Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
 The battle done, and they within our power, 60
 Shall³¹ never see his pardon, for my state
 Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

EXIT

29 Goneril's

30 (1) patronage, support, (2) appearance, dignity, position

31 they shall

SCENE 2

A field between the two camps

ALARUM WITHIN. ENTER, WITH DRUM AND COLORS,
LEAR, CORDELIA, AND SOLDIERS, WHO ALL CROSS
THE STAGE AND THEN EXEUNT

ENTER EDGAR AND GLOUCESTER

Edgar Here, father, take the shadow of this tree
For your good host. Pray that the right may thrive.¹
If ever I return to you again,
I'll bring you comfort.

Gloucester Grace go with you, sir!

EXIT EDGAR

ALARUM AND RETREAT WITHIN

ENTER EDGAR

5 *Edgar* Away, old man, give me thy hand, away!
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en,
Give me thy hand. Come on.

Gloucester No further, sir, a man may rot even here.

Edgar What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
10 Their going hence, even as their coming hither.
Ripeness is all. Come on.

Gloucester And that's true too.

EXEUNT

¹ prosper, be successful

SCENE 3

The British camp near Dover

ENTER TRIUMPHANT, WITH DRUM AND COLORS,
EDMUND, WITH LEAR AND CORDELIA AS PRISONERS,
AND WITH CAPTAIN,¹ SOLDIERS, ETC.

Edmund Some officers² take them away. Good guard,³
Until their greater⁴ pleasures first be known
That⁵ are to censure⁶ them.

Cordelia We are not the first
Who with best meaning have incurred the worst.
(*to Lear*) For thee oppressèd king I am cast down, 5
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.
(*to Edmund*) Shall we not see these daughters and these
sisters?

Lear No, no, no, no! Come let's away to prison,
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage.
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down 10
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies.⁷ And hear poor rogues
Talk of court news, and we'll talk with them too,
Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out, 15
And take upon's the mystery of things,

1 subordinate officer

2 subordinates

3 good guard = keep good guard of them

4 superior, higher-ranking

5 those who are

6 judge

7 gilded butterflies = fashionable vain/gaudily dressed people/courtiers

As if we were God's spies. And we'll wear out,⁸
 In a walled prison, packs and sects⁹ of great ones,
 That ebb and flow by the moon.

Edmund Take them away.

20 *Lear* Upon such sacrifices,¹⁰ my Cordelia,
 The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught¹¹ thee?
 He that parts us shall bring a brand¹² from heaven,
 And fire¹³ us hence, like foxes. Wipe thine eyes,
 The good years shall devour them, flesh and fell,¹⁴
 25 Ere they shall make us weep.
 We'll see 'em starve first. Come.

EXEUNT LEAR AND CORDELIA, GUARDED

Edmund Come hither, captain, hark.

Take thou this note, go follow them to prison.
 One step I have advanced¹⁵ thee. If thou dost
 30 As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
 To noble¹⁶ fortunes. Know thou this, that men
 Are as the time is, to be tender-minded
 Does not become a sword. Thy great employment¹⁷
 Will not bear question.¹⁸ Either say thou'lt do 't,

8 wear out = outlast

9 packs and sects = gangs/collections and partisans/followers

10 i.e., in the "pagan" sense: the killing of people or animals as sacrificial objects

11 ensnared, gotten to

12 stick of burning wood

13 drive

14 skin, hide

15 step . . . advanced = promoted ("moved forward/upward")

16 great, distinguished

17 profession, occupation

18 inquiry, discussion

Or thrive by other means.

Captain I'll do 't, my lord. 35

Edmund About it,¹⁹ and write happy²⁰ when thou hast done.

Mark,²¹ I say instantly; and carry it²² so

As I have set it down.

Captain I cannot draw a cart, nor eat dried oats,
If it be man's work, I'll do 't.²³ 40

EXIT CAPTAIN

FLOURISH

ENTER ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN,
CAPTAIN 2, AND SOLDIERS

Albany (to Edmund) Sir, you have showed today your valiant
strain,²⁴

And fortune led you well. You have the captives

That were the opposites of this day's strife.

I do require them of you, so to use them

As we shall find their merits and our safety 45

May equally determine.

Edmund Sir, I thought it fit

To send the old and miserable King

To some retention²⁵ and appointed guard,

Whose age had charms in it, whose title more,

19 about it = do it, set about it

20 fortunate, lucky

21 note

22 carry it = carry it out

23 captain's speech: from Quarto

24 capacity, effort

25 confinement, detention

- 50 To pluck the common bosom²⁶ on his side,
 And turn our impressed lances²⁷ in our eyes
 Which²⁸ do command them. With him I sent the Queen,
 My reason all the same, and they are ready
 Tomorrow, or at further space,²⁹ t' appear
 Where you shall hold your session.
- 55 *Albany* Sir, by your patience,³⁰
 I hold you but a subject of³¹ this war,
 Not as a brother.³²
- Regan* That's as we list³³ to grace him.
 Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded,³⁴
 Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,
 60 Bore the commission³⁵ of my place and person,
 The which immediacy³⁶ may well stand up
 And call itself your brother.
- Goneril* Not so hot.
 In his own grace³⁷ he doth exalt³⁸ himself,
 More than in your addition.³⁹
- Regan* In my rights,

26 common bosom = public/general opinion ("heart")

27 impressed lances = forcibly enlisted cavalry soldiers

28 we who

29 time, interval

30 forbearance, permission (politely conventional)

31 subject of = subordinate in

32 a brother = an equal

33 choose, wish

34 requested

35 authority, trust

36 direct connection

37 behavior, honor

38 raise, elevate

39 title, name

- By me invested,⁴⁰ he compeers⁴¹ the best. 65
- Goneril* That were the most,⁴² if he should husband you.
- Regan* Jesters do oft prove prophets.
- Goneril* Holla, holla!
- That eye that told you so looked but a-squint.
- Regan* Lady, I am not well, else I should answer
- From a full-flowing stomach.⁴³ (*to Edmund*) General, 70
- Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony,⁴⁴
- Dispose of them, of me, the walls is thine.⁴⁵
- Witness the world, that I create thee here
- My lord and master.
- Goneril* Mean you to enjoy⁴⁶ him?
- Albany* The let-alone lies not⁴⁷ in your good will. 75
- Edmund* Nor in thine, lord.
- Albany* Half-blooded⁴⁸ fellow, yes.
- Regan* (*to Edmund*) Let the drum strike,⁴⁹ and prove⁵⁰ my title
- thine.⁵¹
- Albany* Stay yet, hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee

40 clothed, enveloped

41 rivals, is the equal of

42 the most = most fully/completely

43 full-flowing stomach = intense passion/emotion

44 inheritance from her father

45 the walls is thine = you have conquered the castle (i.e., the body that encloses her soul, or Regan herself)

46 possess (with sexual overtones)

47 let-alone lies not in = injunction ("power to interfere") is not located in/controlled by

48 half-blooded = son of a noble father but a commoner mother, and therefore only half-noble

49 be struck/sounded (i.e., in announcement)

50 i.e., by combat

51 has been given to you

Goneril (*aside*) If not,⁶⁶ I'll ne'er⁶⁷ trust medicine.⁶⁸

Edmund (*throws down glove*) There's my exchange. What⁶⁹ in the world he is

That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.

Call by the trumpet. He that dares approach, 95

On him, on you, who not,⁷⁰ I will maintain

My truth and honor firmly.

Albany A herald,⁷¹ ho!

Edmund A herald, ho, a herald!

Albany Trust to thy single virtue,⁷² for thy soldiers,

All levied⁷³ in my name, have in my name 100

Took their discharge.

Regan My sickness grows upon me.

Albany She is not well, convey⁷⁴ her to my tent.

EXIT REGAN, ESCORTED

ENTER HERALD

Come hither, herald, let the trumpet sound,

And read out this.

TRUMPET SOUNDS

66 if not = if you're not sick

67 never again

68 drugs ("poison")

69 whatever

70 who not = and who not (i.e., on anyone and everyone)

71 a man who makes proclamations

72 single virtue = solitary power, strength

73 enlisted

74 escort

105 *Herald* (*reads*) “If any man of quality or degree⁷⁵ within the
lists⁷⁶ of the army will maintain⁷⁷ upon Edmund, supposed
Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold⁷⁸ traitor, let him
appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He⁷⁹ is bold⁸⁰ in
his defense.”

FIRST TRUMPET CALL

110 *Herald* Again!

SECOND TRUMPET CALL

Herald Again!

THIRD TRUMPET CALL

A TRUMPET ANSWERS WITHIN

ENTER EDGAR, ARMED

Albany Ask him his purposes, why he appears
Upon this call o’ the trumpet.

Herald What are you?⁸¹
Your name, your quality? And why you answer
This present summons?

115 *Edgar* Know, my name is⁸² lost
By treason’s tooth. Bare-gnawn⁸³ and canker-bit,⁸⁴
Yet am I noble as the adversary

75 quality or degree = rank

76 rolls

77 prosecute

78 many-times-over

79 Edmund

80 fearless

81 WHAT are YOU

82 has been

83 bare bitten away

84 ulcer/insect-eaten

I come to cope.⁸⁵

Albany Which is that adversary?

Edgar What's he that speaks for Edmund Earl of Gloucester?

Edmund Himself, what say'st thou to him?

Edgar Draw thy sword, 120

That⁸⁶ if my speech offend a noble heart,

Thy arm may do thee justice. Here is mine.⁸⁷

Behold, it is the privilege of mine honors,

My oath, and my profession.⁸⁸ I protest,⁸⁹

Maugre⁹⁰ thy strength, youth, place, and eminence, 125

Despite thy victor sword and fire-new⁹¹ fortune,

Thy valor and thy heart, thou art a traitor,

False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,

Conspirant 'gainst this high-illustrious prince,⁹²

And from th' extremest upward⁹³ of thy head, 130

To the descent⁹⁴ and dust below thy foot,

A most toad-spotted⁹⁵ traitor. Say thou "No,"

This sword, this arm, and my best spirits,⁹⁶ are bent⁹⁷

To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,⁹⁸

85 battle, engage ("fight")

86 so that

87 my sword

88 declaration (proFEseeOWN)

89 solemnly state/affirm

90 in spite of

91 fire-new = newly forged

92 Albany

93 extremest upward = very top

94 lowest part

95 toad-spotted = loathsome

96 best spirits = highest being

97 braced, set

98 whereto I speak = from which (as to himself) and to which (as to Edmund)
I address myself

Thou⁹⁹ liest.

135 *Edmund* In wisdom I should ask thy name,
 But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
 And that thy tongue some say¹⁰⁰ of breeding breathes,
 What safe and nicely¹⁰¹ I might well delay
 By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
 140 Back do I toss these treasons to thy head,
 With the hell-hated lie, o'erwhelm¹⁰² thy heart,
 Which for¹⁰³ they yet glance by and scarcely bruise,¹⁰⁴
 This sword of mine shall give them instant way,¹⁰⁵
 Where they¹⁰⁶ shall rest for ever. Trumpets, speak!

ALARUMS

THEY FIGHT

EDMUND FALLS

Albany (to *Edgar*) Save¹⁰⁷ him, save him!

145 *Goneril* (to *Edmund*) This is
 practice, Gloucester.
 By the law of arms thou wast not bound to answer
 An unknown opposite. Thou art not vanquished,
 But cozened, and beguiled.

Albany Shut your mouth, dame,

99 that thou

100 (1) taste, (2) attempt

101 formally, strictly

102 in order to overwhelm/overtum/tumble down

103 because (i.e., visibly, obviously)

104 injure (i.e., your lying, treasonous heart)

105 instant way = an immediate path/road (to his heart, by piercing right to it)

106 your treasons and lies

107 spare

Or with this paper shall I stop¹⁰⁸ it. (*to Edmund*) Hold,¹⁰⁹ sir.
 (*to Goneril*) Thou worse than any name,¹¹⁰ read thine own 150
 evil.

No tearing,¹¹¹ lady, I perceive you know it.
Goneril Say if I do, the laws are mine, not thine,
 Who can arraign¹¹² me for't?

EXIT GONERIL

Albany Most monstrous! O!
 (*to Edmund*) Know'st thou this paper?

Edmund Ask me not what I
 know.

Albany Go after her, she's desperate, govern her. 155

Edmund What you have charged me with, that have I done,
 And more, much more, the time will bring it out.
 'Tis past, and so am I. (*to Edgar*) But what art thou
 That hast this fortune on¹¹³ me? If thou'rt noble,
 I do forgive thee.

Edgar Let's exchange charity.¹¹⁴ 160
 I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund.
 If¹¹⁵ more, the more thou hast wronged me.
 My name is Edgar, and¹¹⁶ thy father's son.

108 plug, close

109 (?) hold on (stay alive)? just a moment?

110 i.e., any name that he could use to describe her

111 ripping it up

112 indict, charge (i.e., since she rules, she *is* the law)

113 hast this fortune on = made this accident/disaster occur to

114 kindness

115 if I am

116 and I am

The gods are just, and of our pleasant¹¹⁷ vices
 165 Make instruments to plague us.
 The dark and vicious¹¹⁸ place where thee he got¹¹⁹
 Cost him his eyes.

Edmund Th' hast spoken right, 'tis true,
 The wheel is come full circle, I am here.

Albany (to *Edgar*) Methought thy very gait did prophesy
 170 A royal nobleness. I must embrace thee,
 Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I
 Did hate thee or thy father.

Edgar Worthy prince, I know't.

Albany Where have you hid yourself?
 How have you known the miseries of your father?
 175 *Edgar* By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale,
 And when 'tis told, O that my heart would burst.
 The bloody proclamation to escape,
 That followed me so near (O our lives' sweetness!
 That we the pain of death would hourly die
 180 Rather than die at once!) taught me to shift
 Into a madman's rags, t' assume a semblance
 That very¹²⁰ dogs disdained. And in this habit
 Met I my father with his bleeding rings,¹²¹
 Their precious stones¹²² new lost. Became¹²³ his guide,
 185 Led him, begged for him, saved him from despair.

117 agreeable (i.e., to us)

118 wicked, immoral

119 where thee he got = where you put him

120 the very

121 eye sockets ("circular objects")

122 eyes

123 I became

Never (O fault!) revealed myself unto him,
 Until some half-hour past, when I was armed.¹²⁴
 Not sure, though hoping of this good success,
 I asked his blessing, and from first to last
 Told him my pilgrimage. But his flawed¹²⁵ heart 190
 (Alack too weak the conflict to support)
 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
 Burst smilingly.

Edmund This speech of yours hath moved me,
 And shall perchance do good, but speak you on,
 You look as you had something more to say. 195

Albany If there be more, more woeful, hold it in,
 For I am almost ready to dissolve,¹²⁶
 Hearing of this.

ENTER ATTENDANT, WITH A BLOODY KNIFE

Attendant Help, help. O help!
Edgar What kind of help?
Albany Speak, man.
Edgar What means this bloody knife?
Attendant 'Tis hot, it smokes, 200

It came even from the heart of – O she's dead.

Albany Who¹²⁷ dead? Speak, man.

Attendant Your lady, sir, your lady. And her sister
 By her is poisoned. She confesses it.

Edmund I was contracted to them both, all three¹²⁸ 205

124 wearing armor and bearing weapons

125 broken

126 i.e., into tears

127 who is

128 three of us

Now marry¹²⁹ in an instant.

Edgar Here comes Kent.

Albany (to Attendants) Produce their bodies, be they alive or dead.

This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
Touches us not with pity.

EXIT ATTENDANT

ENTER KENT

O is this he?¹³⁰

210 The time will not allow the compliment
Which very¹³¹ manners urges.

Kent I am come
To bid my king and master aye¹³² good night.
Is he not here?

Albany Great thing of us forgot!
Speak, Edmund, where's the King? And where's Cordelia?

THE BODIES OF GONERIL AND REGAN ARE BROUGHT IN

See'st thou this object,¹³³ Kent?

215 *Kent* Alack, why thus?

Edmund Yet Edmund was beloved.
The one the other poisoned for my sake,
And after slew herself.

Albany Even so. Cover their faces.

129 unite (i.e., in death)

130 i.e., Kent is still rudely dressed and Albany does not at once know him

131 true

132 forever

133 sight

Edmund I pant for life. Some good I mean to do,
 Despite of¹³⁴ mine own nature. Quickly send 220
 (Be brief in it) to th' castle, for my writ¹³⁵
 Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.
 Nay, send in time.

Albany Run, run, O, run!

Edgar To who, my lord? Who hath the office? (*to Edmund*)
 Send
 Thy token of reprieve.

Edmund Well thought on, take my sword, 225
 Give it the¹³⁶ captain.

Edgar (*to Attendant*) Haste thee, for thy life.

EXIT ATTENDANT

Edmund He hath commission¹³⁷ from thy wife and me
 To hang Cordelia in the prison, and
 To lay the blame upon her own despair,
 That she fordid¹³⁸ herself. 230

Albany The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.

EDMUND CARRIED OFF

ENTER LEAR, WITH CORDELIA DEAD IN HIS ARMS,
 EDGAR, CAPTAIN, AND OTHERS FOLLOWING

Lear Howl, howl, howl! O you are men of¹³⁹ stones.
 Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so

134 despite of = scorning, defying

135 written command

136 to the

137 orders, instructions

138 killed

139 made of

That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever.

235 I know when one is dead, and when one lives,
 She's dead as earth. (*setting 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 promised end?¹⁴⁰

Edgar Or image¹⁴¹ of that horror?

Albany Fall, and cease!¹⁴²

240 *Lear* This feather stirs, she lives! If it be so,
 It is a chance¹⁴³ which does redeem all sorrows
 That ever I have felt.

Kent O my good master!

Lear Prithee, away.

Edgar 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

Lear A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!

245 I might have saved her, now she's gone for ever!
 Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha!
 What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,
 Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.
 I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.

Captain 'Tis true, my lords, he did.

250 *Lear* Did I not, fellow?
 I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion¹⁴⁴
 I would have made them skip.¹⁴⁵ I am old now,

140 i.e., the end of everything: Judgment Day, the Day of Doom

141 the image/representation

142 fall, and cease = let the skies/heavens fall, and everything end

143 (1) fortune, luck, (2) opportunity, (3) event, happening

144 biting falchion = sharp, curved broadsword (FOALshin)

145 (1) hop about, (2) run away

And these same crosses spoil¹⁴⁶ me. Who are you?

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

Kent If Fortune brag of two she loved and hated, 255

One of them we behold.

Lear This is a dull sight.¹⁴⁷ 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. 260

Kent No my good lord, I am the very¹⁴⁸ man.

Lear I'll see that straight.¹⁴⁹

Kent That, from your first of difference¹⁵⁰ and decay,

Have followed your sad steps.

Lear You are welcome hither.

Kent Nor no man else.¹⁵¹ All's cheerless, dark, and deadly. 265

Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,

And desperately¹⁵² are dead.

Lear Ay, so I think.

Albany He knows not what he says, and vain it is

That we present us to him.

Edgar Very bootless.¹⁵³

ENTER CAPTAIN

146 crosses spoil = afflictions/troubles/misfortunes plunder/rob

147 (1) my eyes are not keen, or (2) Cordelia's body is a gloomy/melancholy/
depressing sight

148 same

149 in good time

150 change, alteration

151 (1) that's exactly who I am, (2) neither me nor anyone else

152 in despair/hopelessness

153 useless

Captain (to Albany) Edmund is dead, my lord.

270 *Albany* That's but a trifle
here.

You lords and noble friends, know our intent.

What comfort to this great decay¹⁵⁴ may come

Shall be applied. For us¹⁵⁵ we will resign,

During the life of this old majesty,

275 To him our absolute power (*to Edgar and Kent*), you¹⁵⁶ to
your rights,

With boot,¹⁵⁷ and such addition as your honors

Have more than merited. All friends shall taste

The wages of their virtue, and all foes

The cup of their deservings. O see, see!

280 *Lear* And my poor fool¹⁵⁸ is hanged! No, no, no life!

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

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

Never, never, never, never, never!

Pray you, undo this button.¹⁵⁹ Thank you, sir.

285 Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,

Look there, look there!

LEAR DIES

Edgar He faints, my lord, my lord!

Kent Break, heart, I prithee, break.

Edgar (*to Lear*) Look up, my lord.

154 decline, in Lear

155 as for me

156 and you

157 gain, profit, compensation

158 Cordelia (fool = term of endearment)

159 i.e., Lear feels himself suffocating

Kent Vex not his ghost, O let him pass. He hates him,
That would upon the rack¹⁶⁰ of this tough¹⁶¹ world
Stretch him out longer.

Edgar He is gone indeed. 290

Kent The wonder is, he hath endured so long,
He but usurped¹⁶² his life.

Albany Bear them from hence. Our present business
Is general woe. (*to Kent and Edgar*) Friends of my soul, you
twain

Rule in this realm, and the gored¹⁶³ state sustain. 295

Kent I have a journey, sir, shortly to go.
My master¹⁶⁴ calls me, I must not say no.

Edgar The weight of this sad time we must obey;
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most, we that are young
Shall never see so much, nor live so long. 300

EXEUNT, WITH A DEAD MARCH¹⁶⁵

160 instrument of torture

161 (1) severe, painful, (2) sturdy, strong

162 but usurped = only assumed/bore

163 pierced, stabbed

164 Lear? God?

165 dead march = slow funeral music

AN ESSAY BY HAROLD BLOOM



In the long reaction against A. C. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* and *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, we have been warned endlessly against meditating upon the girlhood of Shakespeare's heroines or brooding upon the earlier marital days of the Macbeths. Yet Shakespearean representation, as the critic A. D. Nuttall observes, allows us to see aspects of reality we would not otherwise recognize. I would go beyond Nuttall to suggest that Shakespeare has molded both our sense of reality and our cognitive modes of apprehending that reality to a far greater degree than Homer or Plato, Montaigne or Nietzsche, Freud or Proust. Only the Bible rivals Shakespeare as an influence upon our sense of how human character, thinking, personality ought to be imitated through, in, or by language. No Western writer shows less consciousness of belatedness than Shakespeare, yet his true precursor is not Marlowe but the Bible. *King Lear* as tragedy finds its only worthy forerunner in the Book of Job, to which John Hollaway and Frank Kermode have compared it.

A comparison between the sufferings of Job and of Lear is likely to lead to some startling conclusions about the preternatural persuasiveness of Shakespearean representation, being as it is

an art whose limits we have yet to discover. This art convinces us that Lear exposed to the storm, out on the heath, is a designedly Jobean figure. To be thrown from being king of Britain to a fugitive in the open, pelted by merciless weather, and betrayed by ungrateful daughters is indeed an unpleasant fate, but is it truly Jobean? Job, after all, has experienced an even more dreadful sublimity; his son, daughters, servants, sheep, camels, and houses all have been destroyed by Satanic fires, and his direct, physical torment far transcends Lear's, not to mention that he still suffers his wife, while we never do hear anything about Lear's queen, who amazingly brought forth monsters of the deep in Goneril and Regan, but also Cordelia, a soul in bliss. What would Lear's wife have said, had she accompanied her royal husband onto the heath?

So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

That Shakespeare intended his audience to see Job as the model for Lear's situation (though hardly for Lear himself) seems likely, on the basis of a pattern of allusions in the drama. An imagery that associates humans with worms, and with dust, is strikingly present in both works. Lear himself presumably thinks of Job when he desperately asserts, "I will be the pattern of all patience" (3.2.35), a dreadful irony considering the king's ferociously impatient nature. Job is the righteous man handed over to the Accuser, but Lear is a blind king, who knows neither himself

nor his daughters. Though Lear suffers the storm's fury, he is not Job-like either in his earlier sufferings (which he greatly magnifies) or in his relationship to the divine. It is another indication of Shakespeare's strong originality that he persuades us of the Jobean dignity and grandeur of Lear's first sufferings, even though to a considerable degree they are brought about by Lear himself, in sharp contrast to Job's absolute blamelessness. When Lear says that he is a man more sinned against than sinning, we tend to believe him, but is this really true at that point?

Only proleptically, as a prophesy, but again this is Shakespeare's astonishing originality, founded upon the representation of *impending change*, a change to be worked within Lear by his own listening to, and reflecting upon, what he himself speaks aloud in his increasing fury. He goes into the storm scene on the heath still screaming in anger, goes mad with that anger, and comes out of the storm with crucial change deeply in process within him, full of paternal love for the Fool and of concern for the supposed madman, Edgar impersonating Poor Tom. Lear's constant changes from then until the terrible end remain the most remarkable instance of a representation of a human transformation anywhere in imaginative literature.

But why did Shakespeare risk the paradigm of Job, since Lear, early and late, is so unlike Job, and since the play is anything but a theodicy? Milton remarked that the Book of Job was the rightful model for a "brief epic," such as his *Paradise Regained*, but in what sense can it be an appropriate model for a tragedy? Shakespeare may have been pondering his setting of *King Lear* in a Britain seven centuries before the time of Christ, a placement historically earlier than he attempted anywhere else, except for the Trojan War of *Troilus and Cressida*. *Lear* presumably is not a Christian

play, though Cordelia is an eminently Christian personage, who says that she is about her father's business, in an overt allusion to the Gospel of Luke. But the Christian God and Jesus Christ are not relevant to the cosmos of *King Lear*. So appalling is the tragedy of this tragedy that Shakespeare shrewdly sets it before the Christian dispensation, in what he may have intuited was the time of Job. If *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's one full-scale venture into a Gnostic cosmos (and I think it was), then *King Lear* risks a more complete and catastrophic tragedy than anything in the genre before or since.

Job, rather oddly, ultimately receives the reward of his virtue; but Lear, purified and elevated, suffers instead the horror of Cordelia's murder by the underlings of Edmund. I think then that Shakespeare invoked the Book of Job in order to emphasize the absolute negativity of Lear's tragedy. Had Lear's wife been alive, she would have done well to emulate Job's wife, so as to advise her husband to curse God and die. Pragmatically, it would have been a better fate than the one Lear finally suffers in the play.

The Gloucester subplot may be said to work deliberately against Lear's Jobean sense of his own uniqueness as a sufferer; his tragedy will not be the one he desires, for it is not so much a tragedy of filial ingratitude as of a kind of apocalyptic nihilism, universal in its implications. We do not sympathize with Lear's immense curses, though they are increasingly related to his rising fear of madness, which is also his fear of a womanly nature rising up within him. Finally Lear's madness, like his curses, proceeds from his biblical sense of himself; desiring to be everything in himself, he fears greatly that he is nothing in himself. His obsession with his own blindness seems related to an aging vitalist's fear of impotence and

so of mortality. Yet Lear is not just any old hero, nor even just a great king falling away into madness and death. Shakespeare allows him a diction more preternaturally eloquent than is spoken by anyone else in this or any other drama, and that evidently never will be matched again. Lear matters because his language is uniquely strong, and because we are persuaded that this splendor is wholly appropriate to him.

We can remark, following Nietzsche and Freud, that only one Western image participates neither in origin nor in end: the image of the father. Lear, more than Gloucester, more than any other figure even in Shakespeare, is *the* image of the father, the metaphor of paternal authority. Nature, in the drama, is both origin and end, mother and catastrophe, and it ought to be Lear's function to hold and safeguard the middle ground between the daemonic world and the realm of the gods. He fails, massively, and the ensuing tragedy engulfs an entire world, with a poignance unmatched in literature:

Edgar

But who comes here?

ENTER KING LEAR, FANTASTICALLY ADORNED
WITH WILDFLOWERS

The safer sense will ne'er accommodate
His master thus.

Lear No, they cannot touch me for crying. I am the King
himself.

Edgar O thou side-piercing sight!

Lear Nature's above art in that respect. There's your press-
money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-keeper. Draw
me a clothier's yard. Look, look, a mouse! Peace, peace, this

piece of toasted cheese will do 't. There's my gauntlet, I'll
prove it on a giant. Bring up the brown bills. O well flown,
bird! I' the clout, i' the clout. Hewgh! Give the word.

Edgar Sweet marjoram.

Lear Pass.

Gloucester I know that voice.

Lear Ha! Goneril with a white beard? They flattered me
like a dog, and told me I had the white hairs in my beard, ere
the black ones were there. To say "ay" and "no" to everything
that I said. "Ay," and "no" too, was no good divinity. When
the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me
chatter, when the thunder would not peace at my bidding,
there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not
men o' their words, they told me I was everything. 'Tis a lie, I
am not ague-proof.

Gloucester The trick of that voice I do well remember:

Is 't not the King?

Lear Ay, every inch a king.

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

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

Adultery?

Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No,

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

Does lecher in my sight.

Let copulation thrive, for Gloucester's bastard son

Was kinder to his father than my daughters

Got 'tween the lawful sheets.

To 't, luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.

Behold yond simpering dame,

Whose face between her forks presages snow,

That minces virtue, and does shake the head
 To hear of pleasure's name.
 The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to 't
 With a more riotous appetite.
 Down from the waist they are centaurs,
 Though women all above.
 But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
 Beneath is all the fiends'.
 There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit,
 Burning, scalding, stench, consumption.
 Fie, fie, fie! Pah, pah!
 Give me an ounce of civet,
 Good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination.
 There's money for thee.

Gloucester O, let me kiss that hand!

Lear Let me wipe it first, it smells of mortality.

Gloucester O ruined piece of nature! This great world
 Shall so wear out to nought. Dost thou know me?

Lear I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou squiny
 at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid, I'll not love. Read thou
 this challenge, mark but the penning of it.

Gloucester Were all the letters suns, I could not see one.

Edgar (*aside*) I would not take this from report. It is,
 And my heart breaks at it.

Lear Read.

Gloucester What, with the case of eyes?

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

Gloucester I see it feelingly.

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

Gloucester Ay, sir.

Lear And the creature run from the cur? There thou
 mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed
 in office.
 Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
 Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back.
 Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
 For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.
 Through tattered clothes small vices do appear.
 Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks.
 Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
 None does offend, none, I say, none, I'll able 'em.
 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
 To seal th' accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,
 And like a scurvy politican, seem
 To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now.
 Pull off my boots. Harder, harder. So.

Edgar O matter and impertinency mixed,
 Reason in madness!

Lear If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
 I know thee well enough, thy name is Gloucester.
 Thou must be patient, we came crying hither.
 Thou know'st, the first time that we smell the air,
 We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee. Mark.

Gloucester Alack, alack the day!

Lear When we are born, we cry that we are come

To this great stage of fools.

[4.6.80–181]

Frank Kermode justly remarks of this scene that it is at once Shakespeare's boldest effort of imagination and utterly lacking in merely *narrative* function. Indeed, it strictly lacks all function, and the tragedy does not need it. We do not reason the need: poetic language never has gone further. Edgar, who once pretended madness, begins by observing that "the safer sense" or sane mind cannot accommodate itself to the vision of the ultimate paternal authority having gone mad. But "safer sense" here also refers to seeing, and the entire scene is a vastation organized about the dual images of eyesight and of fatherhood, images linked yet also severed throughout the play. The sight that pierces Edgar's side is intolerable to a quiet hero whose only quest has been to preserve the image of his father's authority. His father, blinded Gloucester, recognizing authority by its voice, laments the mad king as nature's ruined masterpiece and prophesies that a similar madness will wear away the entire world into nothingness. The prophecy will be fulfilled in the drama's closing scene, but is deferred so that the reign of "reason in madness" or sight in blindness can be continued. Pathos transcends all limits in Lear's great and momentary breakthrough into sanity, as it cries out to Gloucester, and to all of us, "If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes."

Hardly the pattern of all patience, Lear nevertheless has earned the convincing intensity of telling Gloucester, "Thou must be patient." What follows however is not Jobean but Shakespearean, perhaps even the essence of the drama's prophecy: "we came cry-

ing hither” and “When we are born, we cry that we are come / To this great stage of fools.” The great theatrical trope encompasses every meaning the play crams into the word “fool”: actor, moral being, idealist, child, dear one, madman, victim, truth-teller. As Northrop Frye observes, the only characters in *King Lear* who are not fools are Edmund, Goneril, Regan, Cornwall, and their followers.

Lear’s own Fool undergoes a subtle transformation as the drama burns on, from an oracle of forbidden wisdom to a frightened child, until at last he simply disappears, as though he blent into the identity of the dead Cordelia when the broken Lear cries out, “And my poor fool is hanged!” (5.3.280). Subtler still is the astonishing transformation of the most interesting consciousness in the play, the bastard Edmund, Shakespeare’s most intensely theatrical villain, surpassing even Richard III and Iago. Edmund, as theatrical as Barabas, Marlowe’s Jew of Malta, might almost be a sly portrait of Christopher Marlowe himself. As the purest and coolest Machiavel in stage history, at least until he knows he has received his death-wound, Edmund is both a remarkably antic and charming Satan, and a being with real self-knowledge, which makes him particularly dangerous in a world presided over by Lear, who “hath ever but slenderly known himself” (1.1.293–94), as Regan remarks.

Edmund’s mysterious and belated metamorphosis as the play nears its end, a movement from playing oneself to being oneself, turns upon his complex reactions to his own deathly musing: “Yet Edmund was beloved (5.3.216). It is peculiarly shocking and pathetic that his lovers were Goneril and Regan, monsters who proved their love by suicide and murder, or by victimage, but

Shakespeare seems to have wished to give us a virtuoso display of his original art in changing character through the representation of a growing inwardness. Outrageously refreshing at his most evil (Edgar is a virtuous bore in contrast to him), Edmund is the most attractive of Jacobean hero-villains and inevitably captures both Goneril and Regan, evidently with singularly little effort. His dangerous attractiveness is one of the principal unexplored clues to the enigmas of Shakespeare's most sublime achievement. That Edmund has gusto, an exuberance befitting his role as natural son, is merely part of the given. His intelligence and will are more central to him, and darken the meanings of *King Lear*.

Wounded to death by Edgar, his brother, Edmund yields to fortune: "The wheel is come full circle, I am here" (5.3.168). Where he is not is upon Lear's "wheel of fire," in a place of saving madness. Not only do Edmund and Lear exchange not a single word in the course of this vast drama, but it defies imagination to conceive of what they could say to one another. It is not only the intricacies of the double plot that keep Edmund and Lear apart; they have no language in common. Frye points out that "nature" takes on antithetical meanings in regard to the other, in Lear and Edmund, and this can be expanded to the realization that Lear, despite all his faults, is incapable of guile, but Edmund is incapable of an honest passion of any kind. The lover of both Goneril and Regan, he is passive towards both, and is moved by their deaths only to reflect upon what was for him the extraordinary reality that anyone, however monstrous, ever should have loved him at all.

Why does he reform, however belatedly and ineffectually, since Cordelia is murdered anyway; what are we to make of his final turn towards the light? Edmund's first reaction towards the

news of the deaths of Goneril and Regan is the grimly dispassionate, "I was contracted to them both, all three / Now marry in an instant" (5.3.205–6), which identifies dying and marrying as a single act. In the actual moment of repentance, Edmund desperately says, "I pant for life. Some good I mean to do, / Despite of mine own nature" (219–20). This is not to say that nature no longer is his goddess, but rather than he is finally touched by images of connection or concern, be they as far apart as Edgar's care for Gloucester, or Goneril's and Regan's fiercely competitive lust for his own person.

I conclude by returning to my fanciful speculation that the Faustian Edmund is not only overtly Marlovian, but indeed may be Shakespeare's charmed but wary portrait of elements in Christopher Marlowe himself. Edmund represents the way not to go, and yet is the only figure in *King Lear* who is truly at home in its apocalyptic cosmos. The wheel comes full circle for him, but he has limned his nightpiece, and it was his best.

FURTHER READING



This is not a bibliography but a selective set of starting places.

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FINDING LIST



Repeated unfamiliar words and meanings, alphabetically arranged,
with act, scene, and footnote number of first occurrence, in the
spelling (form) of that first occurrence

<i>abatement</i>	1.4.27	<i>check</i>	1.1.159
<i>abroad</i>	1.2.127	<i>choleric</i>	1.1.284
<i>abused</i>	1.3.17	<i>condemnedst</i>	2.2.121
<i>alack</i>	2.4.152	<i>countenance</i>	
<i>allowance</i>	1.4.95	(noun)	1.2.118
<i>an</i>	1.4.47	<i>course</i>	1.1.190
<i>answered</i>	1.1.57	<i>cozener</i>	4.6.98
<i>approve</i>	1.1.189	<i>crave</i>	1.1.198
<i>avaunt</i>	3.4.77	<i>curious</i>	1.4.17
<i>away</i> (verb)	1.2.134	<i>dearer</i>	1.1.22
<i>beguiled</i>	2.2.92	<i>deserving</i>	1.1.33
<i>brave</i>	3.2.52	<i>disclaim</i>	1.1.116
<i>breeding</i> (noun)	1.1.11	<i>disordered</i>	1.4.117
<i>business</i>	1.1.45	<i>dowers</i>	1.1.51
<i>cares</i>	1.1.45	<i>duty</i>	1.1.112
<i>cause</i> (noun)	2.4.98	<i>effects</i> (noun)	1.1.140

FINDING LIST

<i>entertained</i>	I.4.25	<i>mean</i> (verb)	3.7.15
<i>fain</i>	I.2.53	<i>meet</i> (adjective)	I.2.71
<i>fair</i>	I.I.26	<i>nature</i>	I.I.178
<i>fault</i> (noun)	I.I.17	<i>naughty</i>	3.4.60
<i>fit</i>	I.I.106	<i>noted</i>	I.4.36
<i>followed</i>	I.I.150	<i>office</i>	2.1.70
<i>fond</i>	I.2.40	<i>our</i> : see under "us"	
<i>fops</i>	I.2.18	<i>peace</i>	I.I.125
<i>forbear</i>	I.I.169	<i>perforce</i>	I.4.151
<i>fortunes</i>	I.I.103	<i>peruse</i>	I.2.35
<i>foul</i>	I.I.171	<i>pierce</i>	I.4.153
<i>gall</i>	I.4.56	<i>plainness</i>	I.I.136
<i>grace</i>	I.I.69	<i>post</i> (noun)	2.4.16
<i>Grace</i> (as title)	I.I.205	<i>practices</i> (noun)	I.2.140
<i>happy</i>	2.3.1	<i>pray you</i>	I.I.287
<i>ho</i>	I.4.20	<i>presently</i>	I.2.79
<i>home</i> (adverb)	3.3.3	<i>prize</i> (verb)	I.I.86
<i>honest</i>	I.2.11	<i>proclaim</i>	2.1.38
<i>hollowness</i>	I.I.163	<i>purpose</i>	I.I.40
<i>hurt</i> (noun)	2.1.72	<i>qualities</i>	I.I.5
<i>imports</i> (verb)	4.3.4	<i>rail</i> (verb)	2.2.20
<i>injuries</i>	2.4.156	<i>reason</i> (noun)	I.I.228
<i>issue</i> (noun)	I.I.18	<i>reason</i> (verb)	2.4.137
<i>judgment</i>	I.I.161	<i>reservation</i>	I.I.147
<i>knave</i>	I.I.24	<i>reverence</i>	I.2.38
<i>late</i>	I.2.81	<i>right</i>	I.I.110
<i>leave</i> (noun)	2.2.50	<i>riotous</i>	I.3.7
<i>machinations</i>	I.2.92	<i>saucily</i>	I.I.29
<i>mark</i> (verb)	I.4.57	<i>scanted</i>	I.I.271
<i>matter</i> (noun)	I.I.64	<i>score</i>	I.4.61

FINDING LIST

<i>several</i>	1.1.55	<i>Tom o' Bedlam</i>	1.2.114
<i>short</i>	1.1.94	<i>toward</i>	2.1.4
<i>showest</i>	1.4.58	<i>train</i> (noun)	1.4.122
<i>sirrah</i>	1.2.60	<i>true</i>	1.1.88
<i>slack</i>	1.3.9	<i>unprized</i> : see under "prize"	
<i>slave</i>	1.4.23	<i>us</i> (royal)	1.1.2
<i>something</i>	1.1.29	<i>use</i> (verb)	1.1.265
<i>stand</i>	1.2.2	<i>values</i> (verb)	1.1.4
<i>starts</i> (noun)	1.1.285	<i>villain</i>	2.2.52
<i>strangered</i>	1.1.210	<i>want</i> (verb)	1.1.229
<i>study</i>	1.1.33	<i>we</i> (royal): see under "us"	
<i>sway</i> (noun)	1.1.146	<i>whoreson</i>	1.1.28
<i>taken</i>	1.4.170	<i>wont</i>	1.4.26
<i>tended</i>	2.1.64	<i>worth</i>	1.1.87