

THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

# KING LEAR

EDITED BY R. A. FOAKES



THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

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KING LEAR

# THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE

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# KING LEAR

Edited by  
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For my beloved Mary

Thou'lt come no more,  
Never, never, never, never, never ...

# CONTENTS

List of illustrations	ix
General editors' preface	xii
Acknowledgements	xvi
Introduction	1
<i>Reading and staging King Lear</i>	3
<i>Responses and reworkings</i>	80
<i>The inception of King Lear</i>	89
<i>Texts of King Lear</i>	110
<i>Revision and adaptation in King Lear</i>	128
<i>Casting King Lear</i>	146
<i>Usages in this edition</i>	148
 KING LEAR	 153
 Appendix 1: Two textual problems	 393
Appendix 2: Lineation	403
Abbreviations and references	416
Index	430



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# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 Interior of the reconstructed Globe theatre, Bankside,  
London (courtesy of PA News Ltd) 6
- 2 David Garrick in regal costume in the storm scenes in  
Act 3, from the painting by Benjamin Wilson (1761),  
engraved by J. McArdell; Garrick had played the role in  
1756, restoring some of Shakespeare's lines changed or  
omitted by Nahum Tate (courtesy of the Harvard Theatre  
Collection, Harvard College Library) 14
- 3 Portrait of King James I, with crown, orb and sceptre, from  
the frontispiece to his *Works* (1618) (courtesy of the  
Huntington Library, California) 16
- 4 Map of part of Devon and Dorset, from Christopher  
Saxton, *Atlas of the Counties of England* (1579) (courtesy of  
the Huntington Library, California) 18
- 5 Edwin Forrest costumed royally, with a crown and sceptre  
of straw in Act 4, Scene 6, when playing Lear in 1871  
(courtesy of the Huntington Library, California) 21
- 6 Brian Cox as King Lear in a wheelchair in the opening  
scene of the National Theatre production by Deborah  
Warner (1990) (courtesy of Neil Libbert/Network) 25
- 7 John Wood as King Lear, with Gloucester and Edgar, in the  
Royal Shakespeare Theatre production by Nicholas Hytner  
(1990), Act 4, Scene 6 (courtesy of the Harvard Theatre  
Collection, Harvard College Library) 27

- 8 Drawing by George Scharf of William Macready in his  
Covent Garden production (1838), Act 3, Scene 4, attended  
by Kent and Priscilla Horton as a female Fool, who restrain  
him from tearing off his robes as he cries 'Off, off, you  
lendings!' (courtesy of the Huntington Library, California) 29
- 9 The megalith or Stonehenge setting, as used in the opening  
scene of the Granada television production, directed by  
Michael Elliott (1983) (courtesy of Granada Television) 30
- 10 Lear, Gloucester and Edgar (Paul Scofield, Alan Webb and  
Brian Murray) in Act 4, Scene 6, in the production by Peter  
Brook for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (1962) (courtesy  
of the Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford-upon-Avon) 34
- 11 Peggy Ashcroft playing Cordelia as Queen of France, with  
breastplate and sword, Act 4, Scene 4, in the production by  
John Gielgud and Anthony Quayle, Royal Shakespeare  
Theatre, 1950 (courtesy of the Shakespeare Centre Library,  
Stratford-upon-Avon) 36
- 12 William Larkin, portrait of Frances Howard, Countess of  
Somerset, 1612, showing the fashion for very low-cut bodices  
(courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London) 41
- 13 Archie Armstrong, Fool to King James I, from his *A  
Banquet of Jests*, 5th edition (1657) (courtesy of the  
Huntington Library, California) 53
- 14 Antony Sher as the Fool in the circus or music-hall tradition,  
in the production by Adrian Noble, Royal Shakespeare  
Theatre, 1982 (courtesy of the Harvard Theatre Collection,  
Harvard College Library) 54
- 15 Ian Hughes, with his breeches down, mocking Lear in  
Act 1, Scene 4, in the production by Adrian Noble, Royal  
Shakespeare Theatre, 1993 (courtesy of the Harvard Theatre  
Collection, Harvard College Library) 55

16	Goneril and Albany (Irene Worth and Peter Jeffrey) seen at the end of Act 1, Scene 4, after Lear and his knights have overturned furniture in their dining hall, in Peter Brook's production for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1962 (courtesy of the Shakespeare Centre Library, Stratford-upon-Avon)	68
17	Title-page of <i>A Quip for an Upstart Courtier</i> (1592), showing the contrast between the style of costume that Oswald and Edgar, in his disguise as a peasant, may have worn in Act 4, Scene 7 (courtesy of the Huntington Library, California)	70
18	The end of the play, with the death of Lear, as printed in the Quarto (1608) (courtesy of the Huntington Library, California)	76
19	The end of the play, with the death of Lear, as it appears in the Folio (1623) (courtesy of the Huntington Library, California)	77
20	Title-page of the First Quarto of <i>King Lear</i> (1608) (courtesy of the Huntington Library, California)	112
21	Title-page of the Quarto of <i>King Lear</i> (1605) (courtesy of the Huntington Library, California)	114
22	Quarto text of <i>King Lear</i> 3.1.17–34 (courtesy of the Huntington Library, California)	394
23	Folio text of <i>King Lear</i> 3.1.17–34 (courtesy of the Huntington Library, California)	395

# GENERAL EDITORS' PREFACE

The Arden Shakespeare is now nearly one hundred years old. The earliest volume in the first series, Edward Dowden's *Hamlet*, was published in 1899. Since then the Arden Shakespeare has become internationally recognized and respected. It is now widely acknowledged as the pre-eminent Shakespeare series, valued by scholars, students, actors, and 'the great variety of readers' alike for its readable and reliable texts, its full annotation and its richly informative introductions.

We have aimed in the third Arden series to maintain the quality and general character of its predecessors, preserving the commitment to presenting the play as it has been shaped in history. While each individual volume will necessarily have its own emphasis in the light of the unique possibilities and problems posed by the play, the series as a whole, like the earlier Ardens, insists upon the highest standards of scholarship and upon attractive and accessible presentation.

Newly edited from the original quarto and folio editions, the texts are presented in fully modernized form, with a textual apparatus that records all substantial divergences from those early printings. The notes and introductions focus on the conditions and possibilities of meaning that editors, critics and performers (on stage and screen) have discovered in the play. While building upon the rich history of scholarly and theatrical activity that has long shaped our understanding of the texts of Shakespeare's plays, this third series of the Arden Shakespeare is made necessary and possible by a new generation's encounter with Shakespeare, engaging with the plays and their complex relation to the culture in which they were – and continue to be – produced.

## THE TEXT

On each page of the play itself, readers will find a passage of text followed by commentary and, finally, textual notes. Act and scene divisions (seldom present in the early editions and often the product of eighteenth-century or later scholarship) have been retained for ease of reference, but have been given less prominence than in the previous series. Editorial indications of location of the action have been removed to the textual notes or commentary.

In the text itself, unfamiliar typographic conventions have been avoided in order to minimize obstacles to the reader. Elided forms in the early texts are spelt out in full in verse lines wherever they indicate a usual late-twentieth-century pronunciation that requires no special indication and wherever they occur in prose (except when they indicate non-standard pronunciation). In verse speeches, marks of elision are retained where they are necessary guides to the scansion and pronunciation of the line. Final -ed in past tense and participial forms of verbs is always printed as -ed without accent, never as -'d, but wherever the required pronunciation diverges from modern usage a note in the commentary draws attention to the fact. Where the final -ed should be given syllabic value contrary to modern usage, e.g.

Doth Silvia know that I am banished?  
(TGV 3.1.214)

the note will take the form

214 **banished** banishèd

Conventional lineation of divided verse lines shared by two or more speakers has been reconsidered and sometimes rearranged. Except for the familiar *Exit* and *Exeunt*, Latin forms in stage directions and speech prefixes have been translated into English and the original Latin forms recorded in the textual notes.

## COMMENTARY AND TEXTUAL NOTES

Notes in the commentary, for which a major source will be the *Oxford English Dictionary*, offer glossarial and other explication of

verbal difficulties; they may also include discussion of points of theatrical interpretation and, in relevant cases, substantial extracts from Shakespeare's source material. Editors will not usually offer glossarial notes for words adequately defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* or *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, but in cases of doubt they will include notes. Attention, however, will be drawn to places where more than one likely interpretation can be proposed and to significant verbal and syntactic complexity. Notes preceded by \* involve discussion of textual variants or readings emended from the early edition(s) on which the text is based.

Headnotes to acts or scenes discuss, where appropriate, questions of scene location, Shakespeare's handling of his source materials, and major difficulties of staging. The list of roles (so headed to emphasize the play's status as a text for performance) is also considered in commentary notes. These may include comment on plausible patterns of casting with the resources of an Elizabethan or Jacobean acting company, and also on any variation in the description of roles in their speech prefixes in the early editions.

The textual notes are designed to let readers know when the edited text diverges from the early edition(s) on which it is based. Wherever this happens the note will record the rejected reading of the early edition(s), in original spelling, and the source of the reading adopted in this edition. Other forms from the early edition(s) recorded in these notes will include some spellings of particular interest or significance and original forms of translated stage directions. Where two early editions are involved, for instance with *Othello*, the notes will also record all important differences between them. The textual notes take a form that has been in use since the nineteenth century. This comprises, first: line reference, reading adopted in the text and closing square bracket; then: abbreviated reference, in italic, to the earliest edition to adopt the accepted reading, italic semi-colon and noteworthy alternative reading(s), each with abbreviated italic reference to its source.

Conventions used in these textual notes include the following. The solidus / is used, in notes quoting verse or discussing verse

lining, to indicate line endings. Distinctive spellings of the basic text (Q or F) follow the square bracket without indication of source and are enclosed in italic brackets. Names enclosed in italic brackets indicate originators of conjectural emendations when these did not originate in an edition of the text, or when this edition records a conjecture not accepted into its text. Stage directions (SDs) are referred to by the number of the line within or immediately after which they are placed. Line numbers with a decimal point relate to centred SDs not falling within a verse line and to SDs more than one line long, with the number after the point indicating the line within the SD: e.g. 78.4 refers to the fourth line of the SD following line 78. Lines of SDs at the start of a scene are numbered 0.1, 0.2, etc. Where only a line number and SD precede the square bracket, e.g. 128 SD], the note relates to the whole of a SD within or immediately following the line. Speech prefixes (SPs) follow similar conventions, 203 SP] referring to the speaker's name for line 203. Where a SP reference takes the form e.g. 38 + SP, it relates to all subsequent speeches assigned to that speaker in the scene in question.

Where, as with *King Henry V*, one of the early editions is a so-called 'bad quarto' (that is, a text either heavily adapted, or reconstructed from memory, or both), the divergences from the present edition are too great to be recorded in full in the notes. In these cases the editions will include a reduced photographic facsimile of the 'bad quarto' in an appendix.

## INTRODUCTION

Both the introduction and the commentary are designed to present the plays as texts for performance, and make appropriate reference to stage, film and television versions, as well as introducing the reader to the range of critical approaches to the plays. They discuss the history of the reception of the texts within the theatre and scholarship and beyond, investigating the interdependency of the literary text and the surrounding 'cultural text' both at the time of the original production of Shakespeare's works and during their long and rich afterlife.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In preparing this edition I have read much more than I can now remember in the massive published commentary about *King Lear*, seen a number of productions, and looked at films of, or based on, the play. Probably I am no longer conscious of many ways in which my thinking has been affected as a result, so let me offer a general acknowledgement, and express the hope that any who find traces of their ideas in what I have written will take it as a compliment. I am immensely grateful to the many individuals who have helped me in however slight ways, and wish I could name them all. Among scholars and critics with a special interest in *King Lear* who have been graciously supportive, whether agreeing or disagreeing with me, I think especially of Tom Craik, Jay Halio, Ernst Honigsmann, Grace Ioppolo, Richard Knowles, and the general editors of the series, David Kastan, Ann Thompson and above all Richard Proudfoot, whose comments have been invaluable. It has been a pleasure to have the stimulus of colleagues in the University of California, notably A. R. Braunmuller, Debora Shuger, Michael Warren and Robert Watson. I am grateful for their constant helpfulness to all the staff at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, where I held a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship in 1994 that enabled me to draft the commentary to this edition. It was a special pleasure to have the support there of Georgianna Ziegler, and the stimulus of coffee-breaks with readers and other Fellows, most particularly Peter Blayney, who generously shared his expert knowledge of the texts of *King Lear*. I also owe thanks to the staff at the Huntington Library in Pasadena for many courtesies, and to the gracious librarians of the Shakespeare Centre Library in Stratford-upon-Avon, especially Mary White, who became my wife; it was a joy to have her help and her sustaining presence while I was working on this edition. The University of California at Los Angeles has been

generous with research funding, making it possible for me to recruit several graduate students, Terri Bays, Billy Phelan, Owen Staley and Curtis Whitaker, to work with me at different times; and students in graduate and senior seminars have prompted me to think through various problems relating to the play. Jeannette Gilkison has saved me from errors with her skill in proofreading. Both Jane Armstrong and her colleagues at Routledge and Jessica Hodge and her associates at Thomas Nelson have been immensely helpful, sharp-eyed and efficient in response. I am also indebted to the participants in a seminar on *King Lear* I co-directed for the World Shakespeare Congress in Los Angeles in 1996 which threw up many challenging ideas.

The research embodied in my book *Hamlet versus Lear: Cultural Politics and Shakespeare's Art* (Cambridge, 1993) made the preparation of this edition much easier than it might have been. Some material in the Introduction is reworked from this book. My ideas about the role of the Fool were developed in 'Textual Revision and the Fool in "King Lear"', *Trivium*, 20 (1985), 33–47. The problem of textual differences between Quarto and Folio in 3.1, discussed briefly in Appendix 1, is analysed more fully in an essay in *Shakespeare Survey*, 49 (1997), 217–23. I have considered the importance of the crown in the play in 'King Lear: monarch or senior citizen?', in *Elizabethan Theater. Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum*, ed. Brian Parker and Sheldon P. Zitner (Newark, Delaware, 1996), 271–89.

*R.A. Foakes*  
*Los Angeles*

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# INTRODUCTION

*King Lear* stands like a colossus at the centre of Shakespeare's achievement as the grandest effort of his imagination. In its social range it encompasses a whole society, from king to beggar, and invites us to move in our imagination between a royal palace and a hovel on a bare heath. Its emotional range extends from the extreme of violent anger to the tenderest intimacy of the loving reconciliation between Lear and Cordelia. The play powerfully registers the anguish of the suffering brought about by the inhumanity of man (and woman) to man in the exposure of Lear in the storm and the blinding on stage of Gloucester. It is unsparing in its depiction of human cruelty and misery, but also rich in its portrayals of goodness, devotion, loyalty and self-sacrifice. Through the Fool's commentary, Poor Tom's 'mad' sayings and the insights gained by Lear and Gloucester in their suffering, the play vividly exposes human folly, greed and corruption. It incorporates aspects of pastoral and romance, recalls morality plays, has a protagonist of 'epic' stature, and these features, together with the astonishing imaginative range of its action, its language and its imagery, have encouraged many to see the play in terms of universal values, as a kind of objective correlative for the spiritual journey through life of suffering Man. So it may not seem extravagant for the claim to be made that 'the bent of the play is mythic: it abandons verisimilitude to find out truth, like the story of Oedipus' (Mack, 97).

For long the play was thought to be unactable, either because of its display of cruelty and suffering, or because of its vastness of scope. Between 1681 and 1838 Nahum Tate's reworking with a happy ending formed the basis of all stage representations; and the idea of the play as Shakespeare's 'greatest achievement' but 'too huge for the stage' (Bradley, 247, 261) persisted into the twentieth century. It is in the decades since the Second World

War that *King Lear* has come to be fully accepted as a great stage play; in recent times it has been frequently performed, and several film versions have been made for cinema and television. Its exposure of the horror of torture and suffering no longer seems outrageous in the context of concentration camps, napalm bombs, anti-personnel mines, and acts of terrorism such as have become familiar in report to everyone. Its interrogation of authority, of justice and of need finds an echo in current social concerns; and the way Lear, Gloucester and Edgar are cast out of their society and reduced to poverty connects with anxiety about the old and the poor in the modern world. The innovatory dramatic technique of a play that overrides implausibilities by its imaginative power and emotional intensity anticipates the twentieth-century Theatre of the Absurd to the extent that *King Lear* has been seen as a kind of parallel to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, and 'above all others the Shakespearean play of our time' (Kott, 162). It has seemed to some the play of our time in being open to nihilistic interpretation as showing not the potentially heroic journey or pilgrimage of Man through life, but rather a progression towards despair or mere nothingness. That *King Lear* can elicit such conflicting interpretations is a testimony both to the play's vitality and to the immense range of possibilities it opens up. The first and most substantial part of this introduction is mainly concerned to illustrate some of the different ways in which we can find ourselves reflected in this most capacious of plays, which is so many-faceted that it invites multiple interpretations.

This first part of the introduction is divided into sections that deal with various aspects of the play, starting with language and performance, and going on to consider how it invites us to perceive the action and characters. Some account of ways in which the play has been staged and some reflections on critical responses to it are woven into the narrative; the stage and critical history of the play is so rich that no introduction could do justice to it. The next part of the introduction provides a brief

historical survey of changes in critical reaction to *King Lear*, and a documentation of some of the major reworkings of it in drama, fiction and poetry. A section on 'The inception of *King Lear*' is concerned with its date and its context of ideas, sources, analogues and influences. This is followed by a consideration of the problems thrown up by the two texts of the play, the Quarto of 1608 and the first Folio of 1623, which differ in many respects. The next part of the introduction comments on the more important differences between these texts in considering the question of revision or adaptation, and this is followed by a brief note on the way the play may have been cast on the Jacobean stage. The introduction ends with a notation of conventions followed in the presentation of the text, commentary and collation.

## READING AND STAGING *KING LEAR*

Wee wondred (Shake-speare) that thou went'st so soone  
From the Worlds-stage, to the Graues-Tyring-Roome.  
We thought thee dead, but this thy printed worth,  
Tels thy Spectators, that thou went'st but forth  
To enter with applause. An Actor's Art  
Can dye, and liue, to acte a second part.

(I.M., 'To the Memory of M. W. *Shake-speare*',  
First Folio, 1623)

But it is not our prouince, who onely gather his works,  
and give them to you, to praise him. It is yours that reade  
him. And there we hope, to your diuers capacities, you  
will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit  
can no more lie hid, than it could be lost. Reade him,  
therefore; and againe, and againe.

(John Heminge and Henry Condell, foreword to first  
Folio, 1623)

Plays have a double life, in the mind as read, and on the stage as acted; reading a play and seeing it acted are two different but equally valid and valuable experiences. Shakespeare's fellow-actors provided in the First Folio of his works a text for readers, and all later editors have also had readers in mind; even acting versions have first to be read. There has been a fashion in criticism for claiming that the 'real play is the performance, not the text', or that a play is a 'communal construct', and 'exists in relationship to scripts we will never have, to a series of revisions and collaborations that start as soon as there is a Shakespearean text'.<sup>1</sup> It seems to me rather that the 'real play' is as much the text we read, and perhaps act out in the mind, as the performance we watch; and scripts are what directors and actors make for the stage out of the reading texts provided for them by editors. *King Lear* is a special case in that the text of the play in the First Folio (1623) differs in many details from that first printed in the Quarto of 1608, and each text has lines that are not in the other; we thus have variant versions of the same work. The present edition includes, with markers in the form of superscript <sup>Q</sup> (for Quarto) or <sup>F</sup> (for Folio), the passages found in one text but not the other.<sup>2</sup> The aims of this edition are, first, to make available the text(s) in a form that enables readers to understand the relation between them and to appreciate the problems caused by textual differences; secondly, to help the reader to imagine some of the ways in which the action of the play might be staged; and, thirdly, to open up some of the inexhaustible possibilities for shaping and interpreting the play.

The life a play has in the mind may be very different from the life it has on the stage. *King Lear*, which is a long and complex work, may rarely have been acted in full, and has usually been cut, rearranged or reworked for performance. The title-page of the Quarto of 1608 (see Fig. 20, p. 112) claims to present the text

1 Citing Stephen Orgel, 'Shakespeare imagines a theater', in Kenneth Muir, Jay Halio and D. J. Palmer (eds), *Shakespeare, Man of the Theater* (Newark, 1983), 43; Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (1989), 360; and Jonathan Goldberg, 'Textual properties', *SQ* 37 (1986), 215.

2 See below, p. 110, for a fuller discussion of the text.

'As it was played before the Kings Maiestie at Whitehall' on St Stephen's night, 26 December 1606, but the version printed in the Quarto may well derive from a manuscript that was never used for performance. The changes and revisions found in the text of the first Folio (1623) appear to have been made for a revival by Shakespeare's company after 1608, but, apart from evidence of a staging of the play in Yorkshire in 1610,<sup>1</sup> there are no further records of performances until *King Lear* was revived after the restoration of Charles II in 1664.

Long and complex as the play is, it does not call for elaborate staging. It requires a number of commonplace properties such as letters, purses, weapons, torches and chairs, and some less often in use, such as a map, a coronet and the stocks for Kent, but nothing unusual.<sup>2</sup> Some representation of a storm is also required, and on the Jacobean stage thunder could be imitated by beating drums or rolling a cannon-ball on a metal sheet, while lightning was suggested by squibs (Gurr, 186). At 2.1.20 Edmund calls on Edgar to 'descend'; this is the only point in the play where a balcony or some area above the stage is needed. The 'hovel' from which Poor Tom emerges in 3.4 may have been simply a stage door, and the audience may have been expected to imagine the 'bush' (Q) or 'tree' (F) that shelters Gloucester in 5.2. The play makes good use of visual action and effects, processions, fights, disguises, torches, weapons, deaths, torture (the blinding of Gloucester) and even an imagined fall off a cliff, all designed for an open stage like that at the Globe (see Fig. 1), providing varied and often exciting movement and spectacle without scenery or modern lighting effects.

The audience stood or sat on three sides of the stage, in close proximity to it, and in the same light as the actors, so that the

1 First noticed by C. J. Sisson, 'Shakespeare's quartos as prompt-copies, with some account of Cholmeley's players and a new Shakespeare allusion', *RES*, 18 (1942), 129–43; see also John J. Murphy, *Darkness and Devils* (1984), and p. 90.

2 For an account of Shakespeare's use of properties, see Frances Teague, *Shakespeare's Speaking Properties* (Lewisburg, 1991); her list of properties needed for *King Lear*, 185–6, omits a crown and chair of state for Lear in the opening scene.



Image removed - rights not available

- 1 Interior of the reconstructed Globe theatre, Bankside, London

relationship between players and spectators was an intimate one. Shakespeare's plays were written for an audience that obtained much of its news, instruction (in sermons, for example) and entertainment through the ear; many people were illiterate, and there were no newspapers. It is hard now in our increasingly visual culture to imagine the excitement of listening to eloquent poetry and prose in stage dialogue, a pleasure that drew thousands to the theatres of London. *King Lear* has a strong action that is easy to follow, but the absence of modern technical devices meant that the atmosphere, the sense of location, time, external scene, as well as ideas and emotions, had to be generated mainly through the dialogue. Shakespeare's use of language shows that he expected his audience to include many capable listeners who could tune in to puns, paradoxes and nuances of meaning. He also expected them to engage with complex metaphors and images, as well as an innovative vocabulary. Some of these nuances are partly lost because of changes

in pronunciation, as at 1.4.312–14, where ‘slaughter ... halter ... after’ were closer to being true rhymes than these words are now.

English as yet lacked formulated rules, and authors were accustomed to bend grammar to their service, to import or invent words, and had little concern, any more than printers did, for consistency or regularity. Over the centuries significant changes in grammatical usage have taken place, such as the virtual disappearance of the ‘ethical dative’ in phrases like ‘wind me into him’ (1.2.98), meaning ‘obtain his confidence for me, on my behalf’. Meanings of some words, too, have shifted in ways that may not be obvious; for instance, the primary meanings of ‘unhappy’ (1.1.91) and ‘unhappily’ (1.2.144) were ‘unlucky’ and ‘unfortunately’ (a meaning still carried in ‘mishap’), rather than ‘discontented’ or ‘cheerlessly’; and the word ‘practice’ (as at 2.1.73 and 5.3.149) has lost the negative connotations of trickery or scheming that it had for Shakespeare.

The commentary on the text deals with these matters. Here it may be more helpful to consider other aspects of Shakespeare’s use of language that may not be so readily noticed. We are accustomed to the idea of human beings as equal and all addressed as ‘you’; Shakespeare reflects his world in making use of differences in his dramas. He does this most obviously by the way he distributes verse and prose to distinguish social levels as well as emotional states among his characters. He also registers different relationships by linguistic usage, notably in this play by some subtle distinctions in the use of ‘thou’ and ‘you’: ‘thou’ usually has ‘overtones either of affection towards intimates, or of well-disposed superiority towards social inferiors, or of enmity towards strangers of the speaker’s own rank’ (Horsman, 225), while ‘you’ is the common, more neutral form. For example, when Lear encounters Regan in 2.2, he begins using the affectionate and pleading ‘thou’ to her, expecting kindness from her, but when he realizes that she is as hostile to him as Goneril he changes to a distancing ‘you’ (see 2.2.383 and n.). Kent and Oswald register their enmity when they quarrel at the beginning

of 2.2 by addressing each other as 'thou', as do Edmund and Edgar when challenging one another to fight in 5.3. The moment when Goneril loses control over her passion for Edmund is marked by a kiss; before it she addresses him as 'you', afterwards with the affectionate 'thou', 'To thee a woman's services are due' (see 4.2.22 and 27). Later in this scene, as Albany and Goneril quarrel, they shift from the general 'you' to 'thou' in the bitterness of matrimonial wrangling.

Lear signals that he is well-disposed towards the disguised Kent in 1.4 by addressing him as 'thou', and the changes in Lear's moods in relation to the Fool, alternating between affection and irritation, are also registered in his use of 'you' and 'thou'. It is striking that in the reconciliation scene, 4.7, Cordelia addresses her father as 'thou' only while he is asleep, but when he wakes she relates to him formally as 'your majesty' in a scene that at once brings them together in great intimacy and suggests a certain distance between them, perhaps to remind us that she is now Queen of France, invading his country (though it is possible that, as in the opening scene, she cannot heave her heart into her mouth in addressing her father). In the final scene, by contrast, the pathos of Lear's address to the body of Cordelia is enhanced by his use of the affectionate 'thou' to her, and the common 'you' to everyone else.

What perhaps most distinguishes Shakespeare's language from everyday modern usage is its richness, density and flexibility; the cumulative effect is to open up resonances and implications in such a way that the possibilities for interpretation seem inexhaustible. Among the patterns of verbal imagery in the play, that relating to seeing, blindness and insight has a prominent thematic importance (see Heilman, 41–64), and the reverberations of terms like 'nothing', and of fools and folly, have been much studied. The sense of imminent violence in the action is fostered by the activity of verbs like 'pierce', 'stamp', 'fret', 'pluck', 'strike', 'dart', 'blister', and by the numerous references to animals (see Spurgeon, 338–44; Thompson,

47–88), many of which also relate to the reduction of men to bestiality, symbolized in the stripping away of clothes to a point where ‘Man’s life is cheap as beast’s’ (2.2.456). Also of thematic importance are two other features of the play’s language. One is seen in the contrast between plain speech and rhetoric; the play generally favours directness and simplicity, but the temptation to align plain speaking with goodness and rhetoric with flattery or hypocrisy should be resisted, for Kent’s bluntness in 2.2 earns him the stocks, and arguably does Lear a disservice, while Lear’s passion in Act 3 can only be expressed in the magnificent rhetoric of his outcries in the storm.<sup>1</sup> A second feature, which has links with the first, is a concern with the gap that may exist and be exploited between words and intentions, or words and deeds. Kent draws attention to the potential emptiness of the eloquence of Goneril and Regan early on –

And your large speeches may your deeds approve,  
That good effects may spring from words of love.  
(1.1.185–6)

– but Lear learns to understand the difference between word and deed only through harsh experience (see 1.1.55 and n., and 4.6.96–104).

The reader can savour the full text, and notice connections that may be missed in the theatre. It is in the study, for instance, that a reader is able to examine the numerous examples of words beginning with the prefix ‘un-’, and observe the way that the play begins with Kent remarking of Gloucester’s adultery, ‘I

1 David Aers and Gunther Kress seem to me to oversimplify in finding two languages in the play, one belonging to an upper-class ideology, the other to the ideology of the self-reliant individual; see ‘The language of social order: individual, society and historical process in *King Lear*’, in David Aers, Bob Hodge and Gunther Kress (eds), *Literature, Language and Society in England 1580–1680* (Dublin, 1981), 75–99. Kenneth J. E. Graham, in *The Performance of Conviction: Plainness and Rhetoric in the Early English Renaissance* (Ithaca, 1994), 190–219, sees plain speech in *King Lear* as ‘challenging the corrupt morality of the powerful’ (211), but I think he sees plainness too simply as good, and rhetoric as evil. However, both these thoughtful essays offer interesting perspectives on the play.

cannot wish the fault undone', and ends with Lear crying, 'Pray you undo this button.' Kent's wish is positive, but his mode of expression carries negative connotations. Lear has tried to tear off his clothes, crying 'come, unbutton here' at 3.4.107, where the main force of 'unbutton' is negative, since if he were to succeed, he would reduce himself to a beast. 'Pray you undo this button' has obvious positive resonances, as Lear emerges from his fixation on Cordelia to speak gently to someone else; yet it may have the negative force, if he refers to a button on his own clothes, of signalling his death as his heart bursts. Thus many 'un-' words in the play may have a kind of paradoxical quality, embodying contradictions, and enriching meanings, as in Lear's desire to 'Unburdened crawl toward death' (1.1.40, F only), which is vividly qualified by the final entry of the dying old king, burdened with the body of Cordelia.<sup>1</sup>

In the theatre each production necessarily selects one way of performing the play, emphasizing one range of possible meanings at the expense of others. If something is lost, much is gained, as the actions implied by the dialogue may clarify or convey emotion more strongly than the words. In the opening scene, for instance, what Lear does with the map he calls for (there are no stage directions relating to it in the early texts) vividly establishes the political and emotional tensions of the scene in a way that may be missed in reading it. The map of England (or Britain; see p. 18) both symbolizes Lear's power as King, and reduces it to a sheet of paper which he may easily tear up and destroy, or which, as in a recent production (Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1993), may be made so large that it 'papered the stage floor', and gradually 'ripped and shredded' until it vanished in the final scenes (Holland, 201–2; and see

1 The implications of Lear's final action and words have provoked many differing interpretations; see especially Rosalie Colie, *Paradoxa Epidemica* (Princeton, 1966), who thinks that Lear's 'undoing is his recreation as a man' (481); and Leslie Thomson, "'Pray you undo this button": implications of "un-" in *King Lear*', *SS*, 45 (1993), 79–88. See also p. 78.

Hawkes, 136–7). Readers may also readily fail to notice the force of the image on stage at 2.2.172–92, where editions since the eighteenth century have inserted scene breaks not in the early texts, as if Edgar’s speech about disguising himself as Poor Tom, ‘I heard myself proclaimed’, constituted a separate scene (2.3). Here Kent remains on stage throughout, asleep in the stocks, so that the audience sees two noble characters humiliated, disguised and reduced to wretchedness in a visual emblem of the disorder produced by the actions of Lear and Gloucester.

Hearing the dialogue spoken can also bring home possibilities easily missed in reading. When Regan says

Sir, I am made of that self mettle as my sister,  
And prize me at her worth.

(1.1.69–70)

it may be easier to note the quibble on ‘metal’ and the undertone of ‘price’ in the theatre than on the page. Only in performance is it possible to make Lear’s ‘Know that we have divided / In three our kingdom’ (1.1.36–7) initiate a nihilistic interpretation of the play by emphasizing the first word as if it were ‘No’, as Paul Scofield did in Peter Brook’s film version of *King Lear*. At 5.3.17, an audience hearing ‘Gods spies’ (Q and F), rather than ‘gods’ spies’, is likely to interpret the phrase as ‘God’s spies’, a reference to the Christian God, although only pagan gods are mentioned elsewhere in the play. Reading, hearing and seeing *King Lear* are activities that open up a variety of meanings, connections, reverberations and shapings of the action and dialogue. Some of the possibilities that seem especially valid at the present time are considered in the rest of this section, with reference both to critical accounts of the play and to productions in the theatre.

*‘Every inch a king’*

The stage history of the play down to the late nineteenth century is remarkably consistent in one matter of some importance,

namely in the presentation of Lear as a king, dressed in robes such as contemporary monarchs might wear.<sup>1</sup> The title-page of the Quarto calls the play the 'True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King LEAR and his three Daughters', in imitation of the old play of *King Leir* published in 1605, as if it were really about the 'historical' Lear, who reigned, according to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, about 800 BC, before the founding of Rome (see pp. 30–1). The title-page may also have reminded some readers of *Locrine*, published in 1595 as 'Newly set foorth, ouerseene and corrected, By W.S.', a play that shows the civil strife and wars with 'Huns' and 'Scythians' that follow when Brutus, the legendary founder of Britain, divides his kingdom among his three sons, Locrine, Camber and Albanact. The story of Brutus and his sons is told in Holinshed's *Chronicles* a few pages prior to that of Lear (Holinshed, 1.443–4, 446–8). There may have been readers who also recalled Robert Greene's *Selimus*, published in 1594, a play about an early-sixteenth-century Emperor of Turkey and his three sons, the youngest of them, Selimus, rising to power by poisoning his father and murdering his brothers.<sup>2</sup>

Shakespeare's play is unlike these earlier ones not only in being concerned with daughters rather than sons, but also in being curiously disconnected from chronicled time;<sup>3</sup> we know nothing of Lear's antecedents, of how he came to the throne, of

- 1 Versions of the play by Nahum Tate or George Colman, with a happy ending, held the stage between 1681 and 1838 (see p. 85), but Lear was played as a majestic figure in these.
- 2 *Selimus* in turn has links with Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, Part 2 (1590); the hero of this play also has three sons, though he retains his power to the end. *Gorboduc*, by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville (published 1565 and 1570), may have been known to Shakespeare and others; an academic play about the strife that erupts when a pseudo-historical King of Britain divides his kingdom between his two sons, Ferrex and Porrex, it includes among its cast a Duke of Cornwall and a Duke of Albany.
- 3 Derek Cohen has drawn attention to references to the past in the play in *Shakespearean Motives* (New York, 1988), 119–32; but none of these allusions relates to a specific time or period; they are general, as in the case of the servant in 3.7 who since childhood has served Cornwall, or of the Old Man in 4.1 who has been Gloucester's tenant fourscore years.

how long he has reigned, of his queen, or of how she lived or died; the play has no past, except in general references to vague injustices and neglect of the poor, which might apply to later times. Shakespeare makes use of the antiquity of the legend to the extent that Lear invokes classical deities such as Hecate and Apollo, and unidentified pagan 'gods' are appealed to throughout; in other words, antiquity is evoked in mythic terms, while the historical past is pretty much a blank, and the present is what matters in the action. Many critics and producers have therefore seen the play primarily in relation to the Jacobean age or to their own contemporary world, rather than to the period when Lear is said to have reigned.

A striking feature of productions of *King Lear* from David Garrick in 1756 to F. R. Benson in 1904 is the tradition of dressing Lear in scarlet trimmed with ermine, not only in the opening scene, but throughout most, if not all, of the play (Figs 2 and 5). Now that there are hardly any kings left in western society, and none who wield significant power, this way of playing Lear, with all the panoply of majesty, has gone, and with it, perhaps, an understanding of an important dimension of the action. The opening court ceremonial emphasizes Lear's majesty, and it is proper that one who is addressed by Kent as 'Royal Lear, / Whom I have ever honoured as my king' (1.1.140–1), should make a processional entry (preceded in the Quarto by 'one bearing a coronet'), sit on a throne, and wear royal robes and a crown. He is to conduct state business, in a formal ceremony publishing the division of the kingdom, and determining a husband for his youngest daughter. The date of the play's action is not fixed by any reference in the text, but Cordelia's suitors, representative of 'The vines of France and milk of Burgundy' (1.1.84), seem to belong to Shakespeare's own age, just as Cornwall and Albany have titles current in Jacobean England, and might remind an audience of Prince Henry, created Duke of Cornwall on the accession of James I to the throne in 1603, and Prince Charles, named Duke of Albany at his baptism in 1600. In other ways, not



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- 2 David Garrick in regal costume in the storm scenes in Act 3, from the painting by Benjamin Wilson (1761), engraved by Charles Spencer; Garrick had played the role in 1756, restoring some of Shakespeare's lines changed or omitted by Nahum Tate

least in its frequent allusion to the Bible, and use of Samuel Harsnett's account of recent exorcisms (see pp. 102–4), the play speaks to and of Shakespeare's own age, an age in which King James told his parliament, 'Kings are justly called Gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of Divine power upon earth' (*Works*, 307).

Some have thought that when Lear offers a coronet to Cornwall and Albany at 1.1.140, he takes one from his own head; but Shakespeare and his audience well knew the difference between crowns and coronets: crowns typically had raised sides, were 'archée', that is, had between four and eight arches over the circlet, and were topped with an emblem symbolic of the power belonging to kings. Coronets (the word is a diminutive of 'crown') were circlets worn by princes and dukes. It makes dramatic sense if Lear wears such a crown at the beginning of the

play, and gives a coronet intended for Cordelia to Cornwall and Albany; he acts imperiously all through the scene, and if he continues to wear a crown until his exit this would highlight visually the irony of his actions in giving away his power, yet seeking to retain his royal prerogatives, 'The name, and all th'addition to a king' (1.1.137).

If Lear was robed and crowned like a king (Fig. 3), the play would have had further resonances for its original audiences, who might have detected analogies with James I. Some, indeed, have been tempted to find in the play something like a 'fictional portrait of the king himself',<sup>1</sup> but if James were in attendance when the play was performed at court in December 1606, as the title-page of the Quarto claims, he would have noticed the differences from his own situation and behaviour: James had two sons and a daughter, Lear three daughters; and Lear behaves in a way precisely opposite to that James had recommended to his heir:

And in case it please God to provide you to all these three Kingdomes, make your eldest son *Isaac*, leauing him all your kingdomes; and provide the rest with priuate possessions: Otherwayes by deuiding your kingdomes, yee shall leaue the seed of diuision and discord among your posteritie; as befell to this Ile, by the diuision and assignement thereof, to the three sonnes of *Brutus*, *Locrine*, *Albanact*, and *Camber*.<sup>2</sup>

This passage illustrates one way in which *King Lear* had immediate relevance for a Jacobean audience, and it is reasonable to suppose that Lear's crown on stage was not unlike that worn by James himself.

1 So Patterson claims, 106–9; and see also Marcus, 148–59; for further discussion of possible topical concerns in the play, see pp. 89–93.

2 *Basilikon Doron* ('The King's Gift', addressed to Prince Henry) (Edinburgh, 1599; London, 1603), in James I, *Works*, 37. James may have read the story of Brutus in Holinshed, where it is twice told, the second time just before his account of the reign of Lear.

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- 3 Portrait of King James I, with crown, orb and sceptre, from the frontispiece to his *Works* (1618)

James had sons in mind as heirs, not daughters. It is not so clear that Lear's action in dividing his kingdom is certain to sow 'the seed of diuision and discord'; but, if he is unwise to give away his power, his distribution of his lands also, in contemporary terms, appears to have been illegal.<sup>1</sup> Queen Elizabeth had sought advice from her counsel on whether she could dispose of property, and her counsel advised her that any property, whether it came by descent from royal ancestors or from other sources, had to be regarded as part of the royal estate, and not as owned by the monarch as an individual. They appealed to the doctrine of the King's two bodies, and argued that the King (they referred always to the monarch as King) could not give away lands to a subject in his own person, but only by an open letter of authorization formally conferring the title, written on parchment and with the great seal attached, as the law prescribed: 'the land shall pass by the King's letters patent only by the course of the common law'.<sup>2</sup>

In marking out divisions on a map ('Give me the map there'), or, as in some productions, tearing it into three parts, Lear symbolically gives away his power and the revenues generated by his ownership of lands:

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,  
With shadowy forests and with champagnes riched,  
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,  
We make thee lady.

(1.1.63–6)

Here Shakespeare may well have had in mind contemporary maps such as those of Christopher Saxton, which visibly represented

- 1 No character suggests Lear's actions might be illegal, but I think it would have been impolitic, to say the least, for Shakespeare to introduce the idea overtly in a play that was staged before King James, and that was subject to censorship.
- 2 *Law Reports*, 1.148. Ernst H. Kantorowicz considers this case in *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957), 9–15 and 405–9, but only in relation to the doctrine of the King's two bodies. It is interesting that James I was chronically short of funds, and Robert Cecil, appointed Lord Treasurer in 1608, determined that Crown lands would have to be sold off to raise revenue.

forests, rivers, villages and towns as if to display the value of the land (Fig. 4). The importance of possessing land is emphasized in the subplot, in which Edmund's aim is to obtain Edgar's inheritance: 'Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit' (1.2.181); lacking land, Edmund is dependent upon the whims of his father, as Lear, in giving away his kingdom, becomes dependent on the whims of his daughters.

The King's body politic included the body natural, 'but the body natural is the lesser, and with this the body politic is consolidated. So that ... he has not a body natural distinct and divided by itself from the office and dignity royal, but a body natural and a body politic together indivisible, and these two bodies are incorporated in one person' (*Law Reports*, 1.148). Lear divides what is 'indivisible', for in dividing the kingdom he acts in the body natural, doing what is not permitted in the body politic, and so divides not only his lands but himself. He cannot

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4 Map of part of Devon and Dorset, from Christopher Saxton, *Atlas of the Counties of England* (1579)

stop being King, yet gives his power away. This contradiction Shakespeare exploits to superb effect, as Lear is soon forced by Goneril to sense the split in himself without understanding it:

Does any here know me? Why, this is not Lear.  
Does Lear walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes?  
Either his notion weakens, his discernings  
Are lethargied – Ha! Waking? 'Tis not so.  
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

(1.4.217–21; F)

This last devastating rhetorical question<sup>1</sup> resonates because it highlights at once the rift in Lear himself that will lead to madness, and his failure to perceive the nature of what he has done.

If he has to come to terms with the recognition that he is ‘a poor old man’ (2.2.461), at the mercy of his daughters, at the same time he remains King, as is shown not only by the way Kent, Cordelia, Albany and Edgar refer to him as King throughout the later acts, but also in the way his enemies continue to think of him so, as when Cornwall and Regan grill Gloucester in 3.7 with questions such as ‘Where hast thou sent the King?’ It seems that the mental habit of all the characters is to take for granted that their country is a monarchy under Lear, just as it was no doubt taken for granted, both by Jacobean and by much later audiences, that England, or Britain (James was proclaimed King of Great Britain at Westminster in October 1604),<sup>2</sup> was essentially a monarchy. Garrick, Kean, Macready and Edwin Forrest, for example, all played the role dressed in scarlet and

- 1 The response to this question in both texts is also startling. In Q Lear himself cries, ‘Lear’s shadow’, suggesting already a consciousness that he has lost authority; in F the Fool speaks these words, and they come more appropriately from his mouth as an acerbic comment on what he perceives and Lear as yet fails to see. Lear continues to act as if he retains royal authority until well into Act 2, and the change in F makes the action more consistent. See 1.4.222 and n.
- 2 The play may echo this proclamation in its reference to the armies of Albany and Cornwall as ‘the British powers’ (4.4.21); possibly Albany and Goneril were given Scotland; Cornwall and Regan the south-west, including Wales, marked out by Lear on the map in 1.1.

ermine. When in the storm scenes Lear tried to tear off his clothes, it was his regal gown, symbol of royalty, that the Fool and Kent prevented him from pulling off.<sup>1</sup> Cordelia returns in 4.3 to describe her father as 'Crowned ... with all the idle weeds that grow / In our sustaining corn', and her words serve as a stage direction for his entry in 4.6, where, as played, for instance, by Edwin Forrest, he still wore in his madness an ornate gown, with a mock crown, archée, tricked out with flowers, and he carried a sceptre made of straw, which enhanced the visual irony of his cry at 4.6.106, 'Ay, every inch a king!' (Fig. 5). The image of the mock-crown parodies Lear's appearance in the opening scene, while reminding us that he is still the King; it also, incidentally, may suggest a transition from the bleak storm scenes into a pleasanter atmosphere of summer and ripeness (see 4.4.3–7 and n.).

In the next scene he is brought on asleep in a chair, and we are told that he has been clothed in 'fresh garments' (4.7.22). His change of clothing is related to other imagery of clothing in the play, and especially to the stripping off by Kent and Edgar of the costume appropriate to their aristocratic status, their adoption of disguises and their shedding of these to appear in their proper roles at the end of the play. It would add to the dramatic irony and poignancy of this scene (4.7) if Lear were dressed again in robes befitting a monarch, as former stage tradition suggests;<sup>2</sup> for visually there is an echo of the opening scene, where Lear sits in his chair of state. Then Goneril and Regan perhaps might kneel before him in homage befitting his majesty, while Cordelia might stand to confront him boldly with the dismissive word 'Nothing'; now she kneels to him, and he tries to kneel to her, in

- 1 See the illustrations by George Scharf of William Macready in the storm scenes (the Fool played by an actress), and the engraving of David Garrick, also in the storm scenes, from a painting by Benjamin Wilson, Figs 8 and 2.
- 2 Maurice Charney, in *Some Facets*, 77–88, notes how in modern productions Lear has often been clothed in a white robe or 'gown of humility' in 4.7, as if to emphasize a moral contrast to the 'Robes and furred gowns' that hide all in Lear's tirade at 4.6.161.

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- 5 Edwin Forrest costumed royally, with a crown and sceptre of straw in Act 4, Scene 6, when playing Lear in 1871



mutual forgiveness. But whereas Lear's thoughts centre on his new-found humility, his sense of himself as a 'foolish, fond old man', and on dying, 'You do me wrong to take me out o'the grave', Cordelia insists on engaging in a war to restore him to his throne. Her mission in invading England is to return to him his 'right', and the feebleness he grows, the more she treats him with reverence, addressing him only as King, not as father:

How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?  
(4.7.44)

She insists, that is, on restoring him to the role he now, at last, wants to shed.

In Act 5 she draws him into joining her in leading the French forces to do battle against the British powers, so that he is, paradoxically, at the head of enemy forces invading his own country. He is still perceived as King, even when he is taken prisoner, and as 'the old and miserable King' is sent off under guard by Edmund. At the end, when he appears no longer fully aware of those around him, it is entirely appropriate on one level, if ironic on another, that Albany should still regard Lear as King, and propose to

resign  
During the life of this old majesty  
To him our absolute power.  
(5.3.297-9)

Macready was robed as a king at this point, and so brought home to his audience the degree to which the play is about power, and the perception others have of the absolute monarch as symbolic of the body politic. Lear gives away his lands to Goneril and Regan but cannot stop behaving as a king. When he recovers from madness to acknowledge his frailty and wish for reconciliation ('Pray you now, forget and forgive; I am old and foolish.' 4.7.83-4), no one will grant his desire. It is an important aspect of Lear's tragedy that he cannot find release from his role as King, and

'Unburdened crawl toward death', as he proposes in the opening scene (1.1.40, F); the burden of authority remains, and he is always the monarch. It may be that this regal aspect of the play cannot be fully recovered in the present age. Few kings remain, and fewer still have much authority, so that the idea of majesty means less and less; but old, authoritarian rulers and presidents are familiar enough, and it is important to try to retain a sense of Lear as an imperious monarch if we are to appreciate fully the interrogation of authority and power that is a central issue in *King Lear*.

*'What wouldst thou do, old man?'*

If one stage tradition emphasizes the royal authority of Lear, another gives more prominence to the man and father. The play typically offers multiple perspectives on the characters and the action. Different possibilities for playing Lear emerged in the rivalry between the majestic Spranger Barry and David Garrick in the eighteenth century, commemorated in anonymous verses:

The town has found out different ways  
To praise the different Lears.  
To Barry they give loud huzzas,  
To Garrick – only tears.  
A king, nay, every inch a king,  
Such Barry doth appear,  
But Garrick's quite a different thing,  
He's every inch King Lear.<sup>1</sup>

Edwin Forrest, who played Lear with 'imposing majesty' on the New York stage until 1871, was succeeded by Tommaso Salvini: 'With ... Edwin Forrest one knew from the start and never forgot that Lear was the *king*, but Salvini, with his penchant for realism,

1 These lines are cited in Carola Oman, *David Garrick* (1958), 176; see also J. D. Hainsworth, 'King Lear and John Brown's *Athelstan*', *SQ*, 26 (1975), 471–7, and Leigh Woods, 'Garrick's King Lear and the English malady', *Theatre Survey*, 27 (1986), 17–35.

emphasized the human attributes of *old man*'.<sup>1</sup> Philip Kemble and later Henry Irving also chose to represent Lear as rather decrepit, even palsied, from the beginning. In the twentieth century some powerful Lears renewed the tradition of playing the character with authority, for example, John Gielgud (1940), Donald Wolfit (1943) and Donald Sinden (1976). However, Kenneth Tynan was belated in greeting Peter Brook's production of the play in 1962, with Paul Scofield in the title role, with the cry, 'Lay him to rest, the royal Lear with whom generations of star actors have made us reverently familiar: the majestic ancient'. Tynan thought Brook had discovered a new protagonist, 'an edgy, capricious old man, intensely difficult to live with' (Tynan, 343), but Brook's was by no means the first production to downplay the idea of majesty.

In the opening scene in this production Lear sat on a primitive chair placed on a platform, with a crown standing on a cushion at one side. In his film version (1970), Brook omitted the opening dialogue, and the camera moved from a group of courtiers sitting in a broken circle to a close-up of Scofield, bare-headed, dressed in a garment apparently made of skins, sitting framed within a sort of primitive hooded chair. Many more recent stage productions have further reduced any sense of regality, and some have shown almost from the start an old pensioner with nothing royal about him, white-haired, rather senile, fitter for shuffle-board than to be ruling a kingdom, and losing the last shreds of an uncertain dignity very early on. In the 1990 production at the National Theatre in London, Brian Cox appeared in a wheelchair in the opening scene (Fig. 6). In later scenes Lear has sometimes been costumed in a kind of military greatcoat (Donald Sinden, 1976, and Michael Gambon, 1982), as if he were a superannuated army officer, or simply in shirt and braces, like Robert Stephens (Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1993). It may be that as the very concept of royalty in the western

1 William Rouseville Alger, *Life of Edwin Forrest, the American Tragedian*, 2 vols (Philadelphia, 1877), 2.781; Charles H. Shattuck, *Shakespeare on the American Stage: From Booth to Sothorn and Marlowe*, 2 vols (Washington, 1987), 2.155.

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- 6 Brian Cox as King Lear in a wheelchair in the opening scene of the National Theatre production by Deborah Warner (1990)

world becomes increasingly hard to grasp, while at the same time a distrust of authority in all its forms becomes more widespread, and anxiety grows about a steadily ageing population, the emphasis in productions of *King Lear* would inevitably reflect these changing conditions. So recent productions have often set out to show 'the overwhelming pathos of an old man humbled and petted, disarmed and then restored to peace and gratitude' (Bratton, 41). Lear as everyman in the modern world tends to be characterized as a victim of violent forces in an uncaring society rather than as an agent, an authoritarian monarch causing the violence that destroys him.

Rather than emphasizing Lear's concern, as the Folio puts it, to divest himself of rule and cares of state (1.1.49–50), such productions give visual prominence to the business with the map. If Lear's action in scrawling boundaries, tearing or otherwise marking the map becomes the focal point, then he may be seen as essentially a patriarch redistributing his property, and Kent's line, 'What wouldst thou do, old man?' (1.1.147), becomes more important than the references to royalty. Peter Brook had the work of Samuel Beckett in mind when he began directing his production, and may have been influenced by Jan Kott's *Shakespeare our Contemporary* (English version 1964), in which *King Lear* is viewed, through the prism of the Theatre of Cruelty, and specifically Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, as showing the disintegration of both the Renaissance and the modern world (Marowitz, 104, and Leggatt, 46). The characters seemed to be stumbling about blindly in a hostile universe, and words of consolation, repentance or protest, such as the lines given to the servants who take pity on Gloucester at the end of 3.7 (Q), and Edmund's late impulse to do some good (5.3.241, Q and F), were cut, so that the overall effect tended towards nihilism. Brook released and made others aware of the play's potential bleakness, which later productions have softened, and he also made his wilful, arrogant old Lear no better than Goneril and Regan, receiving from them a treatment he perhaps deserved.

Brook's vision of the play had great influence, and helped to reinforce the idea of *King Lear* as Shakespeare's most powerful play, and the one that had most to say to our age (Foakes, 2–5, 54–60; Bratton, 44–6). The numerous stage productions since the 1960s have reconfigured what the play has to say, often restoring much of the text Brook cut, and presenting a Lear who is likely to appear as an increasingly pathetic senior citizen trapped in a violent and hostile environment. Most of these productions have given prominence to the pathos of an old man pushed out of doors by daughters who simply want to get rid of a nuisance, and driven mad by his sufferings until his mind is healed through the love of Cordelia. The image John Wood offered of the mad Lear (4.6) in the 1990 production by Nicholas Hytner at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre (Fig. 7) registers the kind of effect achieved. He is costumed in what look like old jeans, shirt hanging outside them, a worn jacket, and a

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7 John Wood as King Lear, with Gloucester and Edgar, in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre production by Nicholas Hytner (1990), Act 4, Scene 6