NCS | THE NEW CAMBRIDGE SHAKESPEARE

Edited by Jay L. Halio

THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

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For this updated critical edition of *King Lear*, Professor Halio has added a new introductory section on recent stage, film, and critical interpretations of the play. He gives a comprehensive account of Shakespeare's sources and the literary, political, and folkloric influences at work in the play; a detailed reading of the action; and a substantial stage history of major productions.

Jay Halio is concerned to clarify, for those approaching the play for the first time, the vexed question of its textual history. Unlike previous editions, his does not present a conflation of the quarto and the Folio. Accepting that we have two versions of equal authority, the one derived from Shakespeare's rough drafts, the other from a manuscript used in the playhouses during the seventeenth century, Professor Halio chooses the Folio as the text for this edition. He explains the differences between the two versions and alerts the reader to the rival claims of the quarto by means of a sampling of parallel passages in the Introduction and by an appendix which contains annotated passages unique to the quarto.

THE NEW CAMBRIDGE SHAKESPEARE

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The Taming of a Shrew: The 1594 Quarto, edited by Stephen Roy Miller

THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

Updated edition

Edited by

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CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

For over two hundred years editors of *King Lear* have based their work on the theory that the two early texts of the play, the first quarto of 1608 and the Folio of 1623, represent incomplete and faulty approximations of the play as Shakespeare originally wrote it. This single-text theory, so-called, is in the judgement of many scholars today no longer viable. In their view, an alternative theory – that Q and F (as they are known) represent different versions of the play – must replace it. These scholars believe that the quarto, poorly printed by Nicholas Okes's compositors in the winter of 1607–8, derives from an early manuscript copy in Shakespeare's hand, and that the Folio derives from a considerably altered and revised version, one more closely approximating the play as the author visualised it in performance, or as the King's Men actually staged it in the period between its first performances and the third decade of the seventeenth century.

The implications of the alternative, or revision, hypothesis are significant for a modern editor, who must now decide which version to follow as his copy-text. The advocates of a quarto-based edition have strong arguments to support them; so do those who advocate a Folio-based edition. Final choice will depend upon one's preference for an early manuscript version, as reflected in the first printed edition, however corrupt or incomplete, or for a revised version of the play which, though in many respects offering a better text, involves problems of its own. Among those problems is the vexed question of revision and the issue of authenticity or legitimacy that revision, including authorial revision, raises.

Recently revision and the issue of intentionality it involves have also come under renewed scrutiny by theoretical and practical critics alike. If years have passed between the original composition and the revision (in the case of *King Lear*, perhaps more than five years), may it not be argued that the original creative impulse and sense of design have long since vanished, that the author can no longer be sure what he intended? My colleague, Hershel Parker, has asked just such questions and provided answers to them in his stimulating enquiry, *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons* (1984). Using examples from American fiction, he maintains that authors may be subjected to pressures and motives having to do with commercial viability or public taste or other matters that are irrelevant to the composition at hand and which are extrinsic to the creative process. Much of his argument is of course applicable to other forms of literature, perhaps even – or especially – to plays, which are above all forms of literature highly susceptible to the pressures of production, box-office concerns, shifts in taste or decorum (not to mention morality), and so forth. But it is precisely here that plays also differ from novels or poems in that they are, by their very nature, collaborative undertakings. A play by Shakespeare, no less than one by Tennessee Williams, Tom Stoppard, or Eugène Ionesco, is seldom the same on the boards as in the playwright's study. And it may change from production

to production, revival to revival, raising questions about the nature of the play as well as its interpretation.[1] In the quarto and the Folio, *King Lear* presents two significantly different versions of Shakespeare's play, one closer to the composition as he originally conceived it (Q), the other closer to an actual staged production after revision (F). The two versions involve a host of variant readings in addition to unique passages, alternative speech assignments, missing stage directions, and other divergences, besides numerous printer's errors. Editors have hitherto thought that by conflating, or splicing, the two versions they could approach what they assumed to be the 'ideal' form of the play, apparently lost; but this belief violates theatrical tradition and otherwise has little to support it.

Establishing the definitive text of such a fluid enterprise as a play is in its evolution from conception through performance under a variety of exigencies becomes impossible, unless one arbitrarily decides (as past scholars usually have done) that the last published version in the author's lifetime in which the author had a hand is 'definitive'. Questions about the soundness of this procedure aside, what if the author had no hand in the publication of the work? Shakespeare was dead before half of his plays were published, and it is uncertain what role, if any, he played in the publication of any of the others, including *King Lear* in 1608. Although he oversaw the printing of his long poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, dedicated to his patron Southampton, he apparently cared much less about the publication of his dramatic works, leaving to generations of scholars the fascinating problems of establishing an authentic, if not definitive, edition of his plays. An authentic, not definitive, edition of *King Lear* is the goal of this one. Founded on a fresh examination of the texts as well as on the best available scholarship and criticism regarding the text, the total historical context (including theatrical data), and the study of extant sources, this edition tries to provide a clear, up-to-date, readable, and reliable version based on the Folio text of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Throughout, the emphasis is upon the play *as a play*, not just a literary document, though it is that too, of course, and the Commentary accordingly ignores neither aspect of the work.

Modern editors of Shakespeare owe enormous debts to the countless scholars, editors, critics, and theatre professionals who have preceded them. Wherever possible, I have tried to record specific debts in footnotes or Commentary, but more generalised and personal debts must be acknowledged here. Many friends and scholars have lent assistance by reviewing various parts of the typescript in preparation and making invaluable suggestions and often corrections of error or misunderstanding. Donald Foster, Trevor Howard-Hill, and Gary Taylor all read the Textual Analysis in its original form; it appears here much changed as a result of their suggestions and those of Philip Brockbank who, until his death, served as General Editor of the New Cambridge Shakespeare. Thomas Clayton, Richard Knowles, and George Walton Williams read the original *and* the revised versions of that analysis – a service well beyond the call of collegiality and friendship. Indeed, Thomas Clayton read all of the Introduction, except

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[1] So, too, poems may change from one printing to another, in new editions or new anthologies, as the texts of Robert Lowell's early poetry attest. See Hugh Staples, *Robert Lowell: The First Twenty Years*, 1962.

the stage history, which Marvin Rosenberg read in an earlier form. Philip Brockbank also vetted the original version of the section on dates and sources, which (like the Textual Analysis) has been entirely reorganised and revised according to his recommendations. I am sure, had he lived, he would have made further recommendations concerning other sections of the Introduction, which then would have profited from his advice and counsel. Since his death, Brian Gibbons, who has succeeded him as General Editor, has been of great assistance, offering many suggestions and not a few corrections of detail. It was, in fact, his suggestion to follow the example of John Hazel Smith's edition of *Bussy D'Ambois*, and include a sampling of parallel passages from quarto and Folio to highlight the kinds of changes that occur between them. The Associate General Editors, Robin Hood and A. R. Braunmuller, have also been most helpful in making suggestions and corrections. Sarah Stanton has advised me on various aspects of format and procedure, and Paul Chipchase's copy-editing has been both thorough and acutely perceptive. To all of these dedicated professionals, I express my gratitude and exempt them from any errors or infelicities that remain. They are of my own making and my own responsibility.

Several scholars have generously permitted me to see their work in typescript or in proof. Among them are J. Leeds Barroll, Peter Blayney, Frank Brownlow, G. Blakemore Evans, F. D. Hoeniger, Arthur King, Alexander Leggatt, and Stanley Wells. Others have kindly sent me offprints or pre-prints of articles or have answered queries concerning some aspect of *King Lear*. These scholars have demonstrated once again that Shakespearean – indeed, all – scholarship at its best is always a collaborative venture.

I must also express gratitude to the following libraries and their staffs, who have been unfailingly co-operative and helpful: the University of Delaware Library, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the British Library, the Shakespeare Centre Library, and the Library of Congress. Several graduate students and secretarial staff have assisted in various aspects of research or preparation: Kate Rodowsky, Patience Philips, Susan Savini, Suzanne Potts, and Victoria Gray cheerfully carried out duties that must often have seemed at least tedious. To the Trustees of the University of Delaware, I owe thanks for awarding me a sabbatical leave in the autumn term of 1987 and for a research grant in the summer of 1988. Such assistance has greatly facilitated work on this edition.

J. L. H.

ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

Shakespeare's plays, when cited in this edition, are abbreviated in a style modified slightly from that used in the *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare*. Other editions of Shakespeare are abbreviated under the editor's surname (Theobald, Duthie) unless they are the work of more than one editor. In such cases, an abbreviated series title is used (Cam.). When more than one edition by the same editor is cited, later editions are discriminated with a raised figure (Rowe [2]). All quotations from Shakespeare, except those from *King Lear*, use the text and lineation of *The Riverside Shakespeare*, under the general editorship of G. Blakemore Evans.

1. Shakespeare's plays

Ado	*Much Ado About Nothing*
Ant.	*Antony and Cleopatra*
AWW	*All's Well That Ends Well*
AYLI	*As You Like It*
Cor.	*Coriolanus*
Cym.	*Cymbeline*
Err.	*The Comedy of Errors*
Ham.	*Hamlet*
1H4	*The First Part of King Henry the Fourth*
2H4	*The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth*
H5	*King Henry the Fifth*
1H6	*The First Part of King Henry the Sixth*
2H6	*The Second Part of King Henry the Sixth*
3H6	*The Third Part of King Henry the Sixth*
H8	*King Henry the Eighth*
JC	*Julius Caesar*
John	*King John*
LLL	*Love's Labour's Lost*
Lear	*King Lear*
Mac.	*Macbeth*
MM	*Measure for Measure*
MND	*A Midsummer Night's Dream*
MV	*The Merchant of Venice*
Oth.	*Othello*
Per.	*Pericles*
R2	*King Richard the Second*
R3	*King Richard the Third*
Rom.	*Romeo and Juliet*
Shr.	*The Taming of the Shrew*
STM	*Sir Thomas More*
Temp.	*The Tempest*
TGV	*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

Tim.	*Timon of Athens*
Tit.	*Titus Andronicus*
TN	*Twelfth Night*
TNK	*The Two Noble Kinsmen*
Tro.	*Troilus and Cressida*
Wiv.	*The Merry Wives of Windsor*
WT	*The Winter's Tale*

2. Other works cited and general references

Abbott	E. A. Abbott, *A Shakespearian Grammar*, 1894
Berlin	Normand Berlin, *The Secret Cause: A Discussion of Tragedy*, 1981
Bevington	*King Lear*, ed. David Bevington, 1988 (Bantam)
Blayney	Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Texts of 'King Lear' and Their Origins*, 2 vols., 1 (1982)
Booth	Stephen Booth, *'King Lear', 'Macbeth', Indefinition, and Tragedy*, 1983
Bradley	A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 2nd edn, 1905
Bratton	*King Lear*, ed. J. S. Bratton, 1987 (Plays in Performance)
Brockbank	Philip Brockbank, *'Upon Such Sacrifices'*, The British Academy Shakespeare Lecture, 1976
Bullough	*Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, 8 vols., 1957–75, VII (1973)
Cam.	*The Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W. G. Clark, J. Glover, and W. A. Wright, 1863–6 (Cambridge Shakespeare)
Capell	*Mr William Shakespeare his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, ed. Edward Capell, 10 vols., 1767–8, IX
Cavell	Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 1969
Cercignani	Fausto Cercignani, *Shakespeare's Works and Elizabethan Pronunciation*, 1981
Chambers	E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, 2 vols., 1930
Clayton	Thomas Clayton, ' "Is this the promis'd end?": revision in the role of the king', in *Division*, pp. 121–41
Colie	Rosalie Colie, 'The energies of endurance: biblical echo in *King Lear*', in *Some Facets*, pp. 117–44
Colman	E. A. M. Colman, *The Dramatic Use of Bawdy in Shakespeare*, 1974
conj.	conjecture
corr.	corrected
Cotgrave	Randall Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, 1611
Danby	John F. Danby, *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature*, 1948, reprinted 1961
Davenport	A. Davenport, 'Notes on *King Lear*', *N&Q*, n.s., 98 (1953), 20–2
Dent	R. W. Dent, *Shakespeare's Proverbial Language: An Index*, 1981
Division	Gary Taylor and Michael Warren (eds.), *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of 'King Lear'*, 1983

Doran	Madeleine Doran, *The Text of 'King Lear'*, 1931, reprinted 1967
Duthie	*King Lear: A Critical Edition*, ed. George Ian Duthie, 1949
ELR	*English Literary Renaissance*
Elton	William Elton, *'King Lear' and the Gods*, 1966
F	*Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1623 (First Folio)
F2	*Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1632 (Second Folio)
F3	*Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1663–4 (Third Folio)
F4	*Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*, 1685 (Fourth Folio)
FQ	Edmond Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1596
Furness	*King Lear*, ed. Horace Howard Furness, 1880 (New Variorum)
Globe	*The Globe Shakespeare*, ed. W. G. Clark and W. A. Wright, 1864
Goldring	Beth Goldring, *'Cor.'s* rescue of Kent', in *Division*, pp. 143–51
Granville-Barker	Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, 2 vols., 1946, I
Greg, *Editorial Problem*	W. W. Greg, *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare*, 1942, 2nd edn, 1951
Greg, *SFF*	W. W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio*, 1955
Greg, *Variants*	W. W. Greg, *The Variants in the First Quarto of 'King Lear'*, 1940
Halio	*King Lear*, ed. Jay L. Halio, 1973 (Fountainwell)
Hanmer	*The Works of Shakespear*, ed. Thomas Hanmer, 1743–4
Harbage	*King Lear*, ed. Alfred Harbage, 1958 (Penguin)
Harsnett	Samuel Harsnett, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, 1603
Heilman	Robert Heilman, *This Great Stage: Image and Structure in 'King Lear'*, 1948, reprinted 1963
Hinman	Charlton K. Hinman, *The Printing and Proofreading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, 2 vols., 1963
Hoeniger	F. D. Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance*, 1992
Holland	Norman N. Holland, *The Shakespearean Imagination*, 1964
Hunter	*King Lear*, ed. G. K. Hunter, 1972 (New Penguin)
Jackson	MacDonald P. Jackson, 'Fluctuating variation: author, annotator, or actor', in *Division*, pp. 313–49
Jennens	*King Lear*, ed. Charles Jennens, 1770
Johnson	*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson, 8 vols., 1765, VI
Joseph	Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language*, 1947
Kerrigan	John Kerrigan, 'Revision, adaptation, and the Fool in *King Lear*', in *Division*, pp. 195–245
King	Arthur King, *Materials for the Study of 'King Lear'* (in preparation)
King Leir	*The History of King Leir* (1605) (Malone Society Reprints), 1907

Kittredge	*King Lear*, ed. George Lyman Kittredge, 1940
Kökeritz	Helge Kökeritz, *Shakespeare's Pronunciation*, 1953
Mack	Maynard Mack, *'King Lear' in Our Time*, 1965
McLeod	Randall McLeod, '*Gon.* No more, the text is foolish', in *Division*, pp. 153–93
Malone	*The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. Edmond Malone, 10 vols., 1790, VIII
Meagher	John C. Meagher, 'Vanity, Lear's feather, and the pathology of editorial annotation', in Clifford Leech and J. M. R. Margeson (eds.), *Shakespeare 1971*, Toronto, 1972, pp. 244–59
MLR	*Modern Language Review*
Montaigne	*The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne*, trans. John Florio, 6 vols., 1897 (Temple Classics)
MP	*Modern Philology*
Muir	*King Lear*, ed. Kenneth Muir, 1963 (Arden)
N&Q	*Notes and Queries*
Noble	Richmond Noble, *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge*, 1935
NS	*King Lear*, ed. George Ian Duthie and John Dover Wilson, 1960, 1968 (New Shakespeare)
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
Onions	C. T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary*, enlarged and revised, Robert D. Eagleson, 1986
Oxford	*William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, gen. eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, 1986
Partridge	Eric Partridge, *Shakespeare's Bawdy*, 3rd edn, 1969
PBSA	*Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*
Peat	Derek Peat, ' "And that's true too": *King Lear* and the tension of uncertainty', *S.Sur.*, 33 (1980), 43–53
Perrett	Wilfrid Perrett, *The King Lear Story from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Shakespeare*, Berlin, 1904
Pope	*The Works of Shakespear*, ed. Alexander Pope, 1723–5
Q	*M. William Shake-speare*: *HIS True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three Daughters*, 1608 (first quarto)
Q2	*M. William Shake-speare*, *HIS True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear, and his three Daughters* [1619] (second quarto)
Qq	quartos
Reibetanz	John Reibetanz, *The Lear World*, Toronto, 1977
RES	*Review of English Studies*
Riverside	*The Riverside Shakespeare*, gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans, 1974
Rosenberg	Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of 'King Lear'*, 1972
Rowe	*The Works of Mr William Shakespeare*, ed. Nicholas Rowe, 6 vols., 1709, V
Rowe²	*The Works of Mr William Shakespeare*, ed. Nicholas Rowe, 2nd edn, 8 vols., 1714
Rubenstein	Frankie Rubenstein, *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sexual Puns and Their Significance*, 1984
Salingar	Leo Salingar, *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare and the Jacobeans*, 1986

SB	*Studies in Bibliography*
Schmidt	Alexander Schmidt, *A Shakespeare-Lexicon*, 3rd edn, Breslau, 1901
Schmidt 1879	*King Lear*, ed. Alexander Schmidt, Berlin, 1879
SD	stage direction
SFNL	*Shakespeare on Film Newsletter*
SH	speech heading
Shaheen	Naseeb Shaheen, *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Tragedies*, 1987
Sisson	C. J. Sisson, *New Readings in Shakespeare*, 2 vols., 1956, II
Some Facets	Rosalie L. Colie and F. T. Flahiff (eds.), *Some Facets of 'King Lear': Essays in Prismatic Criticism*, 1974
SP	*Studies in Philology*
Spurgeon	Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, 1935
SQ	*Shakespeare Quarterly*
S.St.	*Shakespeare Studies*
S.Sur.	*Shakespeare Survey*
Stampfer	Judah Stampfer, 'The catharsis of *King Lear*', *S.Sur.* 13 (1960), 1–10
Staunton	*The Plays of Shakespeare*, ed. H. Staunton, 1858–60
Steevens	*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Johnson and George Steevens, 15 vols., 1793, XIV
Stone	P. W. K. Stone, *The Textual History of 'King Lear'*, 1980
subst.	substantively
Taylor, 'Censorship'	Gary Taylor, 'Monopolies, show trials, disaster, and invasion: *King Lear* and censorship', in *Division*, pp. 75–119
Taylor, 'Date and authorship'	Gary Taylor, '*King Lear*: the date and authorship of the Folio version', in *Division*, pp. 351–468
Taylor, 'New source'	Gary Taylor, 'A new source and an old date for *King Lear*', *RES* 132 (1982), 396–413
Taylor, 'War'	Gary Taylor, 'The war in *King Lear*', *S.Sur.* 33 (1980), 27–34
Textual Companion	Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, with John Jowett and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion*, 1987
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uncorr.	uncorrected
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Urkowitz, 'Editorial tradition'	Steven Urkowitz, 'The base shall to th'legitimate: the growth of an editorial tradition', in *Division*, pp. 23–43
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Warren, 'Diminution'	Michael Warren, 'The diminution of Kent', in *Division*, pp. 59–73
Warren, R.	Roger Warren, 'The Folio omission of the mock trial: motives and consequences', in *Division*, pp. 45–57

Werstine	Paul Werstine, 'Folio editors, Folio compositors, and the Folio text of *King Lear*', in *Division*, pp. 247–312
Wiles	David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown*, 1987
Wittreich	Joseph Wittreich, *'Image of that Horror': History, Prophecy, and Apocalypse in 'King Lear'*, 1984

Biblical quotations are taken from the Geneva Bible, 1560

THE

True Chronicle Hi.

ftory of King LEIR, and his three
daughters, Gonorill, Ragan,
and Cordella.

As it hath bene diuers and fundry
times lately acted.

LONDON,

Printed by Simon Stafford for Iohn
Wright, and are to bee fold at his fhop at
Chriftes Church dore, next Newgate-
Market. 1 6 o 5.

1 The title page of the 1605 quarto of *King Leir*

INTRODUCTION

Date and sources of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

KING LEAR: DATE OF COMPOSITION AND FIRST PERFORMANCE

Although *King Lear* was probably performed earlier at the Globe, the first recorded performance of the play was at the court of King James I on St Stephen's Day during the Christmas holidays in 1606, as indicated in the Stationers' Register (26 November 1607) and proclaimed on the title page of the first quarto (1608). Both the king and the playwright must have brought to the performance a keen sense of occasion.[1] Shakespeare was a leading member of the company of actors honoured by royal patronage, the King's Men, and he knew that his play touched on a number of sensitive issues. In his first parliament, James had declared his intention of uniting the kingdoms of Scotland and England as one realm, Great Britain, restoring the ancient title and unity to the land. While he received considerable support from the lords and judges, the commons were hesitant and did not jump to ratify the proposal. Against this background of political activity, Lear's speech, 'Know, that we have divided / In three our kingdom', must have been startling indeed.[2] James was in a position to see, however, that similar material had attracted theatrical attention as early as Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* (1561) and *Locrine* (*c.* 1585) as well as *King Leir* (*c.* 1590); moreover, he would quickly have recognised that Shakespeare's play vividly dramatised the tragic consequences of dividing the kingdom, as opposed to unifying it.

Composition of *King Lear* had begun by spring or summer 1605, possibly sooner. Gloucester's references to 'These late eclipses in the sun and moon' (1.2.91) may allude to actual eclipses in September and October 1605. The anonymous play, 'The moste famous Chronicle historye of Leire kinge of England and His Three Daughters', first entered in the Stationers' Register on 14 May 1594 but performed earlier, was again entered (as 'the Tragecall historie') on 8 May 1605 and published, presumably for the first time, later that year. If Shakespeare's play was responsible for the revival of interest in the old play, whose title page proclaims that it was 'diuers and sundry times lately

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[1] In the Christian calendar, St Stephen's Day (26 December) was the first of four festivals ending on New Year's Day that stressed man's folly and worldliness. Biblical readings on St Stephen's Day urged patience in adversity and the festival was celebrated by granting hospitality, especially to the poor. For these and other reasons, *King Lear* was thus an appropriate choice for the evening. See R. Chris Hassel, Jr, *Renaissance Drama and the English Church Year*, 1979, pp. 22–30, and Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare*, 1988, pp. 148–59. In his recent edition of Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, Frank Brownlow speculates that Samuel Harsnett, then Bishop of Chichester, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, and Master of Pembroke College, might also have been in the audience. On Shakespeare's debt to Harsnett, see below.

[2] Compare Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation*, 1984, pp. 64–73, and Glynne Wickham, 'From tragedy to tragi-comedy: "King Lear" as prologue', *S.Sur.* 26 (1973), 33–48, who notes that the two sons of James I were at this time Duke of Cornwall and Duke of Albany. See also Wittreich, pp. 17–24.

acted', then *King Lear* must have been on the boards by early 1605.[1] On the other hand, revival of *King Leir* may have been otherwise occasioned, and composition of Shakespeare's play, clearly indebted to it, may have begun afterwards. It could not have been written before 1603, the date of Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, since much of Tom o'Bedlam's language derives from that document.[2] And if *Eastward Ho* inspired several passages, then composition occurred after April 1605.[3]

<small>THE PLAYWRIGHT'S READING</small>

The great variety of sources of *King Lear* becomes coherent when we recall the use to which the play puts the material. Although *The Chronicle History of King Leir* was Shakespeare's principal source, the Lear story goes back as far as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Brittaniae* (*c.* 1135). Shakespeare may have read this in the original Latin (no Elizabethan translation exists) or, as Bullough suggests (p. 273), he may have taken details from more recent writers who were themselves directly or indirectly indebted to the *Historia*. Geoffrey was as interested in the political implications of his *Historia* as in the social narrative; therefore, he focuses as much upon the consequence of Leir's action in dividing the kingdom between his two older daughters, as upon the initial love contest. The division eventually leads to insurrection as the two dukes, his daughters' husbands, rise up against the old king and strip him of his rights and dignities. Leir flees to France, is reunited with a forgiving Cordeilla, and finally restored to his kingdom. When he dies three years later, Cordeilla succeeds to his throne.

But the story as Geoffrey tells it is not yet over. The dissension that was Geoffrey's leitmotiv from the reign of Brut onwards continues, as Margan and Cunedag, the sons of Cordeilla's sisters, rebel against their aunt and imprison her. Overcome with despair, Cordeilla commits suicide. Further tragedy lies in store for England, as Margan and Cunedag fall out with each other, civil war ensues, and after much of the land has been laid waste, Margan is finally killed. Only then is peace restored to Britain for a prolonged period during Cunedag's reign.

Many of the later accounts of Leir and his three daughters include the episode of Cordeilla's suicide; it is told, for example, in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Higgins's *Mirour for Magistrates*, and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (II.x.27–33), all of which Shakespeare knew. It may be from Cordeilla's death in these accounts that Shakespeare got the suggestion for turning the old *Chronicle History* from a tragicomedy into tragedy, although his sub-plot, borrowed from Sidney's *Arcadia*, may also have influenced him.[4] From the old play he got the basic outlines of his fable and adapted it to his own purposes, which were quite different from those of the anonymous author.

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[1] W. W. Greg, 'The date of *King Lear* and Shakespeare's use of earlier versions of the story', *The Library*, 4th ser., 20 (1939–40), 377–400.
[2] Chambers, I, 467–70; Bullough, VII, 269–70.
[3] Taylor, 'New source', pp. 396–413.
[4] Fitzroy Pyle, '*Twelfth Night, King Lear*, and *Arcadia*', *MLR* 43 (1948), 449–55.

THE TRUE CHRONICLE HISTORY

The old play called itself a 'true chronicle history', meeting a taste for the retelling of 'true' stories from the past with often overt didactic intentions. Holinshed's *Chronicles* incorporates a span of reigns from Geoffrey of Monmouth (including Cymbeline as well as Locrine and Gorboduc), and Shakespeare was clearly interested in this early phase of British history, besides the events of the fifteenth century which he dramatised earlier in the Henriad. Unlike the anonymous *King Leir*, which is thoroughly infused with Christian pieties, Shakespeare's play is neither wholly pagan nor wholly Christian, although at certain points Lear speaks with and for the thunder as if he were indeed the thunder god himself.

Other differences between Shakespeare's play and his principal source are significant. While keeping to the main outlines of the Lear story, Shakespeare not only introduced a major second plot, inspired by the misadventures of the Paphlagonian King in Sidney's *Arcadia*; he also introduced several new characters and episodes that *King Leir* lacks, such as Lear's madness, the storm, Oswald, and the Fool (who may, however, have been suggested by the Gallian King's jesting companion, Mumford, in *King Leir*). The rather low comic relief provided by the scenes of the Watch in the anonymous play is omitted, as are several melodramatic incidents, such as Gonorill and Ragan's murder plot[1] against their father, and Perillus's offer to let a starving Leir have his arm to eat. The Gallian King has a substantial role in the old play, but Shakespeare limited him to the first scene and eliminated the Gallian Ambassador, sent to invite Leir to France, although the Ambassador's fruitless wanderings from France to Cornwall and Cambria resemble the journeys in Shakespeare's second act. In sum, Shakespeare both condensed and expanded his source to exploit its tragic potential, broaden its range, and, as F. D. Hoeniger has shown, explore the primitive aspects of the legend 'in all its depths and terror'.[2]

Perhaps the most significant alteration Shakespeare made in the Lear story is the ending. Unlike all previous accounts, *King Lear* concludes not with the old king restored to his throne, but with Cordelia and Lear dead.[3] Though France in *King Leir* invades Britain victoriously, no one dies in that play – all three sisters are spared. The wicked ones and their husbands become fugitives and are absent from the final scene, which includes no reference to the later fate of Cordella. Unlike his counterpart, Kent, Perillus is not banished, and at the end Leir rewards him for his loyalty. Departing widely from the contours of the old tragicomedy, Shakespeare thus seems intent on stripping away every possible consolation from the action to present it with the starkest reality.[4]

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[1] In Shakespeare's play, Gloucester twice refers to such a plot (3.4.147, 3.6.45), but it is not developed.

[2] 'The artist exploring the primitive', in *Some Facets*, p. 98.

[3] In *King Lear*, Harvester New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare, 1988, pp. 6–7, Alexander Leggatt argues that Shakespeare actually compressed his sources, which include Cordelia's later death in prison, and that the happy conclusion of *King Leir* was new.

[4] For more detailed analysis of *King Leir* and *King Lear*, see Bullough, pp. 277 ff.; Muir, pp. xxvi ff.; Dorothy Nameri, *Three Versions of the Story of King Lear*, 1976, 1, 26–121; Stephen J. Lynch, 'Sin, suffering, and redemption in *Leir* and *Lear*', *S.St.* 18 (1986), 161–74.

FOOLISH FOND OLD MAN: FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS

King Lear is not only about a monarch and his divided realm, but also about a father, his property, and his three daughters. Several contemporary analogues exist, of which the most important are the events surrounding Sir Brian Annesley and his daughters, the youngest of whom was named Cordell.[1] An old servant of Queen Elizabeth, Sir Brian held an estate of some value in Kent. In October 1603 his eldest daughter, Lady Grace Wildgoose, or Wildgose, attempted to have her father certified as incompetent so that she and her husband, Sir John Wildgoose, could take over the management of his affairs. The part played by his second daughter, Christian, is unknown, but Cordell opposed the plan, successfully it appears, by appealing to Sir Robert Cecil. She argued that, given his loyalty and long service, her father deserved better than to be judged lunatic in his old age. Sir Brian died in July 1604, and the Wildgooses contested his will, since in it he left most of his property and possessions to Cordell. One of the executors was Sir William Harvey, third husband of the dowager Countess of Southampton, the mother of Shakespeare's early patron. The will was upheld, and after the countess died in 1607, Harvey married Cordell Annesley. It may be that the Annesley case was responsible, at least in part, for the revival of interest in *The True Chronicle* or for Shakespeare's rewriting it (Bullough, pp. 270–1).

FOOLISH FOND OLD MAN: FATHERS AND SONS

Shakespeare took his second plot from Sidney's *Arcadia*. Sidney's romance suggested not only a chivalric colouring, as in the duel between Edgar and Edmond, but a more epic sweep than that of the old play and its analogues. Furthermore, through the parallel story of the Earl of Gloucester, modelled on that of the Paphlagonian King, Shakespeare universalised his theme and raised it to 'cosmic' proportions: 'Lear's world becomes the entire world, and it becomes clear that Lear's fate may be the fate of any man.'[2]

   Book II, chapter 10, of the *Arcadia* (1590) describes the encounter of the princes Pyrocles and Musidorus with an old blind man led by his son, Leonatus. The old man is the deposed King of Paphlagonia, dethroned and blinded by his wicked bastard son, Plexirtus, who persuaded his father first to dislike and finally to seek to destroy his elder, legitimate son. Having accomplished that, Plexirtus systematically took over control of the kingdom so that his father left himself (like Lear) 'nothing but the name of a King'.[3] Still not satiated, Plexirtus took the title, too, put out his father's eyes,

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[1] C. J. Sisson, *Shakespeare's Tragic Justice*, 1963, pp. 80–3. G. M. Young, in 'Shakespeare and the Termers', *Today and Yesterday*, 1948, is usually credited with this discovery; but Charlotte C. Stopes quotes Cordell Annesley's letter to Lord Cecil dated 18 October 1603 in *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's Patron*, 1922, p. 274. Compare also G. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton*, 1968, pp. 257–8.

[2] Irving Ribner, 'Sidney's *Arcadia* and the structure of *King Lear*', *Studia Neophilologica* 24 (1952), 67; but compare S. L. Goldberg, *An Essay on 'King Lear'*, 1974, p. 79. In 'The very pompes of the divell – popular and folk elements in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama', *RES* 25 (1949), 10–23, Douglas Hewitt shows how Shakespeare universalises his theme in other ways, e.g. through analogous representation of folk ceremonies, such as banishing the scapegoat, a ceremony still practised in Shakespeare's time. See esp. his pp. 18–20.

[3] Quotations are from Bullough's extracts, pp. 402–14; references are to the facsimile edition published by Kent State University Press, 1970.

THE
COVNTESSE
OF PEMBROKES
ARCADIA,

WRITTEN BY SIR PHILIPPE
SIDNEI.

LONDON
Printed for William Ponfonbie.
Anno Domini, 1590.

2   The title page of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590)

and cast him off to feel his misery, 'full of wretchednes, fuller of disgrace, and fullest of guiltines'. Shunned by his countrymen, the king is reduced to seeking alms until Leonatus discovers him and leads him on his way, refusing only to help him commit suicide by jumping off a cliff.

The parallels so far to the Gloucester–Edgar–Edmond plot in *King Lear* are evident, but the differences, too, are important. Edgar conceals his identity from Gloucester during almost all of their journey together; Edmond shares Plexirtus's ambition and informs on his father but is not present at the blinding; Edgar assumes the identity of Tom o'Bedlam, feigning madness, a recourse that Leonatus does not seek. As Sidney's chapter continues, Plexirtus attempts to hunt his brother down and kill him, but he and his troops are repulsed by Pyrocles, Musidorus, and their allies. Eventually, Plexirtus is defeated, Leonatus is placed on his father's throne, and the old king dies, 'his hart broken with unkindnes and affliction, stretched so farre beyond his limits with this excesse of comfort, as it were no longer to keep safe his roial spirits'. A seemingly penitent Plexirtus, with a rope around his neck, surrenders to Leonatus who, ever loving and kind, forgives him on the promise of an amended life.

Other incidents from Sidney's epic romance influenced Shakespeare's play. Queen Andromana's lust for both Pyrocles and Musidorus in chapter 20 is the mirror image of Gonerill's and Regan's lust for Edmond; her death by stabbing herself after her son Palladius is killed may have suggested Gonerill's suicide after Edmond's defeat. The mortal combat ending in mutual forgiveness between Plexirtus's allies, Tydeus and Tylenor, in chapter 22 resembles the duel between Edgar and Edmond, just as the vivid descriptions of the storm in chapter 7 may have suggested Lear's experience in Act 3. From the story of Plangus, King of Iberia, in chapter 15 Shakespeare may have got the idea for Edmond's deception of Gloucester, and in chapter 12 the verse of Basilius and Plangus anticipates Gloucester's despairing thoughts and attitude.[1] But these parallels and several verbal echoes apart, Shakespeare's greatest debt to Sidney is the hint he found in the *Arcadia* for the kind of mould in which he could shape his tragedy.

THE THEATRE OF FOLLY

Apart from the altered ending and the parallel plot, Shakespeare's introduction of the Fool is his most important contribution to the Lear story. In addition, he conspicuously extends the king's own foolishness into madness ('folly' in its extremest degree) when, exposed to rain and cold, Lear calls upon divine power. The development of King and Fool in the play derives partly from the long tradition of the court fool, but Shakespeare's handling of both character and theme is unique.

As Enid Welsford has shown in her classic study, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (1935), the court fool can be traced back to ancient times. By the late Middle Ages, the jester was a familiar figure, and in the Renaissance the fool had become a domestic servant in the homes of many aristocrats, in Britain as well as on the continent. The motley coat, eared hood, bells and *marotte*, or bauble, were traditional, but fools might also be dressed like other household servants. Regarded as pets or mascots, they

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[1] Muir, pp. xxxix–xli.

served not simply to amuse, but to criticise their masters and mistresses and their guests; Queen Elizabeth is said to have rebuked one of her fools for not being severe enough with her. On the other hand, they might be whipped for excessive behaviour, as Lear threatens to punish his Fool. Mentally deficient and/or physically deformed, they were 'exceptional' in almost every respect, requiring the protection of powerful patrons to avoid social ostracism or abuse.

Distinctions can be, and were, made between the 'natural fool' and the 'artificial' or professional fool, as well as between the fool and the clown (the rustic, or country bumpkin), but the principal feature that is relevant here is the fool's privileged status in a royal or noble household. While his folly could be disregarded as the raving of a madman, it could also be seen as divinely inspired: the natural fool was 'touched' by God (or 'tetched', in American dialect). Lear's 'all-licensed fool' enjoys a privileged status, much to Gonerill's annoyance (1.4.160), and his characteristic idiom suggests he is a 'natural' fool, not an 'artificial' one, though his perceptiveness and wit show that he is far from being an idiot or a moron, however 'touched' he may otherwise be.

Fools or jesters had appeared occasionally but not often in Elizabethan drama, as in Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *James IV*. With the advent of Robert Armin, who replaced Will Kempe in the King's Men and made a speciality of fools (as distinguished from Kempe's clowns), the character became more popular on the stage between 1598 and 1605. Armin successfully undertook the roles not only of Touchstone, Feste, and Lavatch in Shakespeare's comedies, but of Carlo Buffone in Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* and Passarello in Marston's *The Malcontent*.[1] Whether or not he himself played Lear's fool (see p. 32 below) is less important than the fact that by 1605 the character had become both a popular and a significant one in plays performed by the King's Men. Shakespeare then developed the role and extended it in *King Lear* so that folly became a dominant theme in his tragedy.

Lear's folly – his foolishness in giving away everything to two daughters and banishing the third – is the Fool's persistent early refrain. This foolishness turns into madness and leads directly to the commentary in Act 4 upon 'this great stage of fools', which Lear delivers to Gloucester, his counterpart in the second plot (4.5.174 ff.). If Shakespeare derived his use of 'fool', as William Empson and others claim,[2] from a rather generalised memory of Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, he developed it in ways only glimpsed or implied by Erasmus. The ironic inversions of folly and wisdom that abound throughout the play cast darker shadows. Shakespeare had experimented with bitter fools in *Troilus and Cressida* (Thersites) and *All's Well That Ends Well* (Lavatch), but the Fool in *King Lear* is a more complex creation than these bitter fools – more affecting in his vulnerability and his closeness to Lear, yet with a perception of the horror of the situation which drives him to a relentless goading of his master.

Enid Welsford relates the central scenes of Acts 3 and 4 to the culminating moments in the *sottie*, a type of comedy especially popular in Europe from the end of the fifteenth

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[1] Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History*, 1935, reprinted 1961, pp. 245–6; Wiles, pp. 144–58.
[2] *The Structure of Complex Words*, [1951], p. 124. Compare Leo Salingar, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy*, 1974, pp. 246–7, and Walter Kaiser, *Praisers of Folly*, 1963, pp. 21–2, 99.

century to the beginning of the seventeenth. The theme of the *sottie* is the universal sway of Mother Folly, and it ends with the reduction of every class of person to 'the man in cap and bells'.[1] *The Praise of Folly* is a derivative of the *sottie*, which flourished more on the continent than in Britain, although it influenced Sir David Lindsay's *Satire of the Three Estates* (Welsford, p. 233). Whether Shakespeare consciously contrived his tragedy according to the vision of the *sottie*, we cannot know, and in any case we must guard against believing that there must be a specifically identifiable source for everything. The topsy-turvy world is implicit in the opening scene (from which the Fool is notably absent), proceeding inexorably from Lear's actions and reaching a climax in Acts 3–4. After 3.6 the Fool disappears, and after 4.1 Edgar drops his pretence of madness, leaving the stage of folly to Lear and, less obviously, to others.

THE THEATRE OF EXORCISM

All of the Fool's efforts prove incapable of preventing Lear's descent into madness, which accelerates after he meets Edgar in disguise as Tom o'Bedlam in Act 3. The purgation, or exorcism, that Lear requires is highlighted by the assumed madness of Edgar, who screams that he is possessed by devils. Exorcism had become a form of popular theatre, as priests gathered audiences to watch demonstrations of their power over evil spirits. The Anglican church vigorously opposed such demonstrations, and Samuel Harsnett exposed the practice as fraudulent in a treatise usually referred to by its shortened title, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*.[2]

   Harsnett was chaplain to the Bishop of London and part of his job was reading and licensing books, including plays. His *Declaration* followed enquiries begun in 1598 into a series of exorcisms in 1585–6 practised by Father William Weston *alias* Edmonds and performed in the household of Sir Edward Peckham. Harsnett's *Declaration* characterised exorcism as a stage play 'fashioned by cunning clerical dramatists and performed by actors skilled in improvisation'.[3] It thereby attempted to expose what Harsnett saw as its falsity and emptiness. Nevertheless, the illusion was gripping, as Shakespeare doubtless realised when he borrowed from Harsnett's exposé much of the language of possession for Edgar's masquerade as Poor Tom.[4] At the same time, he appears to support Harsnett's position in the *Declaration*, that evil is of this world, not a nether world of devils and demons, as Catholic priests like Father Weston believed.[5]

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[1] Welsford, *The Fool*, p. 220.

[2] *A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures, to with-draw the harts of her Maiesties Subiects from their allegeance, and from the truth of Christian Religion professed in England, under the pretence of casting out deuils. Practiced by Edmvnds, alias Weston a Iesuit, and diuers Romish Priests his wicked associates. . . .* At London Printed by Iames Roberts . . . 1603.

[3] Stephen Greenblatt, 'Shakespeare and the exorcists', in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, 1985, p. 169.

[4] See Kenneth Muir, 'Samuel Harsnett and *King Lear*', *RES* 2 (1951), 11–21, and Bullough, pp. 299 ff. In his forthcoming edition, Brownlow argues that the *Declaration* does not represent a 'source' for *King Lear* in the ordinary sense; rather, the play is the result of an encounter with that text, a kind of dialogue between cleric and poet, in which Shakespeare delivers a 'massive reply'. Its effect was to undo Harsnett's book and reopen matters the cleric had meant finally to close.

[5] Greenblatt, 'Shakespeare and the exorcists', p. 177.

The effect of Shakespeare's use of Harsnett in *King Lear* is yet more complicated, Greenblatt says, in so far as Harsnett's position seems there to be reversed. Since scepticism, an instrument of seekers after truth, is expressed through the villainous Cornwall, Gonerill, and especially Edmond, whilst possession and exorcism, regarded as fraudulent practices of the wicked, are given to the legitimate Edgar, Harsnett's arguments against exorcism are curiously 'alienated' from themselves. 'In Shakespeare, the realization that demonic possession is a theatrical imposture leads not to a clarification – the clear-eyed satisfaction of the man who refuses to be gulled – but to a deeper uncertainty, a loss of moorings, in the face of evil.'[1] We are not comforted by the knowledge that Edgar's performance is precisely that – a performance – any more than we can find comfort in the fact that Lear's prayers, like his curses, remain unanswered throughout the play. In any event, his exorcism, or purgation, such as it is, comes not at the hands of a priest, but through the ministrations of Cordelia, unassisted by either a 'Doctor' or by music in the Folio revision; and Gloucester's is effected by his son Edgar. Both are extraordinarily, though differently, dramatic.

THE THEATRE OF THE BLIND

When Edgar in his disguise takes his father to Dover, he means to perform a kind of exorcism, telling Gloucester, for example, that there stood behind him on the cliff 'some fiend' from whom he has miraculously escaped (4.5.66–74). The old man's resistance, here and later, after his 'fall', is confused because he has lost his eyes. The blind figure is taken from Sidney's *Arcadia*, but Shakespeare develops and dramatises his source not only in the mimed 'leap', but later in the confrontation between the unseeing old man and the mad king. Their meeting becomes the climactic spectacle in the play's theatre of folly, to which Montaigne also was a major contributor. It was in Florio's translation of Montaigne that Shakespeare found that a dog could be 'obeyed in office' (4.5.151) and that a man could see with no eyes (144–5). Similarly, Montaigne several times refers to unrighteous judges (146–8), and elsewhere Shakespeare seems indebted to the French essayist not only for phrases and ideas but for the sceptical attitudes that pervade the play.[2]

SALT AND CINDERELLA

Folklorists towards the end of the nineteenth century noticed the connection between the old Leir story and some versions of the Cinderella tale. Although Shakespeare makes no direct use of these versions, Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia* must have drawn upon a related body of folklore and folktales for which no record any longer exists.[3] The affinity between the story of Leir and his three daughters and the ancient Cinderella tale, moreover, has recently aroused much interest among anthropologists

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 179. John J. Murphy comes to an opposite conclusion in *Darkness and Devils: Exorcism and 'King Lear'*, 1984, pp. 200–1. Compare Brownlow, cited above.

[2] See Muir, pp. 249–53, and Salingar, pp. 107–39.

[3] See Alan R. Young, 'The written and oral sources of *King Lear* and the problem of justice in the play', *SEL: Studies in English Literature* 15 (1975), 309–19.

and psychoanalytically oriented literary critics, who focus upon the incest motif latent in the tales and in Shakespeare's tragedy.[1]

Briefly, the love contest with which *King Lear* opens and which appears, *mutatis mutandis*, in all of the analogues, closely parallels the folktale tradition of the rich man or king who asks his daughters to tell him how much they love him. The two eldest daughters respond much as Gonerill and Regan do, but the youngest replies that she loves her father as fresh meat loves salt, or words to that effect.[2] The father, enraged, disowns his youngest daughter, who then follows her Cinderella-like adventures until, married to her prince, she invites her father to the wedding feast. There he is served food without salt, learns at last the meaning of his daughter's words, and is reconciled. Folklorists refer to this motif in the tales alternatively as 'Love like salt' and 'The King Lear judgement' and group the tales under the Cinderella type.[3]

The folk paradigm is therefore always auspicious for the Cordelia figure, and when Nahum Tate in the Restoration gave Shakespeare's play a happy ending, he was reverting to that type (see p. 34 below). On the other hand, as Katherine Stockholder notes, 'The conventional fairytale would have the two sisters either dead or repentant . . . by the time Cordelia achieved her happiness [marriage to France]. As it is, the fairy tale ends when the play has scarcely begun, and leaves the play with the task of resolving in a more realistic mode issues put forth in fairy tale starkness and absoluteness.'[4] The long-delayed scenes of reconciliation between Lear and Cordelia in Acts 4 and 5 have a 'lyric separateness' from the rest of the action, suitable for a fairytale ending, but their reconciliation cannot reshape the world Lear has created by banishing his daughter.[5]

THE TRAGEDY OF KING LEAR

Although called a 'True Chronicle Historie' in the 1608 quarto, the Folio title is 'The Tragedy of King Lear', which sets up expectations about the form and outcome of the play. While linked with the Cinderella story, it diverges from that story's familiar course and recalls, rather, the ancient biblical story of Jephthah and his daughter, as well as a number of dramas in which a daughter is sacrificed, such as those dealing with

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[1] The seminal paper is Sigmund Freud's 'The theme of the three caskets', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, 1958, XII, 291–301. Compare John Donnelly, 'Incest, ingratitude and insanity: aspects of the psychopathology of King Lear', *Psychoanalytic Review* 40 (1953), 149–55, and especially Alan Dundes, ' "To love my father all": a psychoanalytic study of the folktale source of *King Lear*', in *Cinderella: A Casebook*, ed. Alan Dundes, 1983, pp. 229–44.

[2] Perrett comments on the two dozen or so most pertinent folktales (among the 345 tabulated and arranged by M. R. Cox, *Cinderella*, 1893). He notes the essential features that connect them with the Lear story: the love test and the outcast heroine. While Geoffrey includes nothing about salt, this is a literary narrative, Perrett says, and sophistication is likely – sophistication so subtle that the real significance of Cordeilla's cryptic and jesting reply (*quantum habes, tantum vales, tantumque le diligo*) has eluded commentators. It can be roughly translated as 'As much as you have, so much do you value, and so much do I love you.'

[3] Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, Bloomington, 1956, III, 432: Motif H592.1, *Love like salt*; V, 29: Motif M21, *King Lear judgement.* See also Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, trans. and enlarged by Stith Thompson, Helsinki, 1961, p. 175: Tale type 510; and 'Cap o' Rushes' in Katherine M. Briggs, *A Dictionary of British Folk-Tales in the English Language*, 1970, Part A, II, 387–90. Briggs includes a tale-type index in I, 35–77.

[4] 'The multiple genres of *King Lear*: breaking the archetypes', *Bucknell Review* 16 (1968), 45.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Agamemnon and Iphigeneia. Similarly, *King Lear* borrows from but alters the form of the Morality play and stories from the romance tradition.

In *'King Lear' in Our Time* (1965) Maynard Mack cites many parallels from the old Morality plays and from scripture. The Morality play tradition, of course, extends down to plays as late as Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, and Shakespeare's dialogue is full of allusions to it. Characters like Edmond have a sharp affinity with the Vice of these old plays, as Gloucester does with Mankind or Everyman. From the romance tradition, stories like those of King Robert of Sicily provide important analogues in the theme of the Abasement of the Proud King. Thomas Lodge's prose romance, *The Famous true and historicall life of Robert second Duke of Normandy, surnamed for his monstrous birth and behavior, Robin the Diuell* (1591), besides recounting Robert's humbling and penitence, prefigures many incidents in *King Lear*, such as Robert's sheltering in a homely cottage during a storm, his growing compassion for fellow sufferers, and a trial by combat.[1] But although heavily indebted to Sidney's *Arcadia*, Shakespeare saw in it the possibilities for transforming his fable into tragedy. The Folio revision, moreover – specifically by its omission of the scene in Act 4 (see p. 271 below), as well as Shakespeare's alteration of the traditional ending of the Lear story – suggests a further hardening of this anti-romantic impulse without, however, altogether abandoning the tantalising positive possibilities still inherent in the later scenes of the play.

FRAGMENTARY RECOLLECTIONS

Consciously or otherwise, Shakespeare drew upon other materials as well. Numerous parallels with *Gorboduc* exist, not only in the language, political implications, and plots of the two plays, but in their symbolism and treatment of nature.[2] The play *Selimus* also bears close resemblances to the plot structure of *King Lear*,[3] and Shakespeare may have borrowed from *Eastward Ho*, a play by Chapman, Jonson, and Marston, performed and then banned in 1605.[4] Classical mythology plays its part, too: in the specific allusions to centaurs and Lear's 'wheel of fire' (4.6.44), as well as the overall structure and development of the play, the influence of the myth of Ixion may be recognised.[5] Similarly, the political and philosophic thought found in William Jones's translation of Iustus Lipsius's *Six Bookes of Politickes or Ciuill Doctrine* (1594) appears pervasive in *King Lear*.[6]

The biblical parable of the Prodigal Son probably influenced Shakespeare's handling of situation, theme, and imagery in both the Lear and Gloucester plots.[7] The frequent references to nakedness and raggedness in the heath scenes apparently derive from

[1] Donna Hamilton, 'Some romance sources for *King Lear*', *SP* 71 (1974), 173–92.
[2] Barbara Heliodora Carneiro de Mendonça, 'The influence of *Gorboduc* on *King Lear*', *S.Sur.* 13 (1960), 41–8.
[3] Inga-Stina Ewbank, '*King Lear* and *Selimus*', *N&Q*, n.s., 4 (1957), 193–4.
[4] Taylor, 'New source', pp. 396–413.
[5] O. B. Hardison, 'Myth and history in *King Lear*', *SQ* 26 (1975), 227–42. Compare Jonathan Bate, 'Ovid and the mature tragedies: metamorphosis in *Othello* and *King Lear*', *S.Sur.* 41 (1989), 133–44.
[6] Arthur F. Kinney, 'Some conjectures on the composition of *King Lear*', *S.Sur.* 33 (1980), 13–25.
[7] Susan Snyder, '*King Lear* and the Prodigal Son', *SQ* 17 (1966), 361–9.

Shakespeare's conception of the Prodigal. That Lear and Gloucester are old men and the Prodigal is a young one signifies only that Shakespeare inverted the biblical story to produce a parable of Prodigal Fathers.

THE THEATRE OF THE BIBLE

In *The Story of the Night* John Holloway shows that the movement of *King Lear*, especially from Act 4 to the end, parallels the movement of the Book of Job. The action of the play is prolonged, he says, by the same ironic conception that informs the biblical narrative of Job's ordeal: whenever we (or the characters) are made to think that release from suffering is imminent, the suffering is renewed; the 'bitter reversal of events comes again and again'.[1] Holloway also draws parallels between apocalyptic prophecy in the New Testament and specific references to Doomsday in the play, evidence that Shakespeare shared with many of his contemporaries a preoccupation with the end of days.[2] Joseph Wittreich has argued at length that Shakespeare was directly influenced not only by James I's interest in the Book of Revelation, but also by the 'secular millennianism' that dates back to the fifteenth century in England and became more pronounced from 1550 onwards.[3]

Marshalling considerable scholarship, Wittreich argues that the apocalypse is a radical metaphor in *King Lear*, 'a mind-transforming event that culminates in a king's redemption'.[4] After a close reading of all of the available evidence, he concludes, however, that while apocalypse is an essential element in the play, its function is ambiguous, 'so much so that it may be construed as lending all degrees of darkness to the play or, conversely, as shattering that darkness by letting in the light, however scattered, of Revelation itself'.[5] As many critics have said, Kent's and Edgar's lines at the end explicitly invoke Doomsday: 'Is this the promised end?' 'Or image of that horror?' But the analogy does not proclaim the play Christian, even though it provides, in Wittreich's view, an important clue to interpretation.[6] For Doomsday is not yet: Shakespeare's strategy 'is to use apocalypse against itself, not to deny it as a possibility but to advance the consummation of history into the future'.[7] Although redemption is not proclaimed, it is held out as a possibility for both individuals and nations; errors of the past are, after all, reparable.[8] The burden of the play's ending, therefore, is not simply pessimistic or optimistic, but a complex of possibilities, complicated further, as Wittreich fails to note, by divergences between the quarto and Folio texts (see Commentary at 5.3.286).

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[1] Holloway, *The Story of the Night*, 1961, p. 89.
[2] In '*King Lear* and Doomsday', *S.Sur.* 26 (1973), 69–79, Mary Lascelles discusses the existence in Shakespeare's time of wall paintings in many churches, including Stratford's Holy Trinity Church, that depicted Judgement Day, and connects these thematically with imagery and incidents in *King Lear*.
[3] Wittreich, p. 26. Like most scholars until very recently, Wittreich bases his study on a conflated text (Muir's Arden edition). Except as regards 'Merlin's Prophecy' at the end of 3.2, he fails to distinguish between alternative versions of the play in the quarto and Folio.
[4] Wittreich, p. 33.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Wittreich's analysis focuses for us the long controversy regarding Shakespeare's handling of biblical material. He raises the vexed question of *King Lear* and its Christian framework, and the religious milieu in which the play was composed and performed. Religious allusion, however dense, does not imply that the experience of the play can be contained within the parameters of a single religious interpretation. The attempts of those who try to do this prove the effort misguided because they reach opposite conclusions. Clearly they are working to too narrow a base. As elsewhere in Shakespeare, most notably in *Hamlet*, much of the evidence in the play is contradictory or at best inconsistent. By sorting through the evidence selectively, one could conclude that the 'constant association of Cordelia with Christian doctrine' is a 'foreshadowing' of Christ.[1] Cordelia's remark, 'O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about' (4.3.23–4) closely paraphrases Luke 2.49, 'knewe ye not that I must go about my fathers business?', and the Gentleman's comment at 4.5.196–7 echoes the Christian belief that Jesus redeemed fallen humanity from the general curse. Other associations also enforce this symbolic role of Cordelia. But at the other extreme are those who, like William R. Elton, similarly working with a conflated text, argue that despite its Christian references, *King Lear* is by no means 'an optimistically Christian drama'.[2] Scriptural echoes are adapted to the pagan context of the play, and in any case the 'business' that Cordelia serves has an unhappy outcome.[3] Rather than an analogue to Christ, Cordelia (like Pamela in Sidney's *Arcadia*) represents the pagan *prisca theologia*, or 'virtuous-heathen' view, embodying virtues and pieties derived from natural, not Christian, beliefs. As such, the virtues approach the Christian ideal but are not identical with it.[4] Elton attempts to demonstrate, moreover, that the play does not show Lear saved, redeemed, or regenerate, and that a benevolent providence does not preside over the action; therefore, he concludes, the optimistic Christian interpretation of *King Lear* is 'invalid'.[5]

Complementing this view, Thomas P. Roche argues that although he is convinced that Shakespeare was a Christian writer, *King Lear* is not a Christian play. Rather, it depicts 'the plight of man before the Christian era, that is, before the salvation of man by Christ's sacrifice was available'.[6] Shakespeare altered the story as it appeared in *King Leir* precisely to emphasise this fact. (Paradoxically, this emphasis, I believe, would seem to make his play more Christian, not less, than the pietistic old play.) In bringing to bear a host of biblical allusions from both the Old and New Testaments, Shakespeare drew upon such language, Rosalie L. Colie maintains, 'to remind us both of man's predicament and of the options he has within that predicament'.[7] But her conclusion

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[1] S. L. Bethell, *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition*, 1944, p. 68.
[2] Elton, p. 3.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 83–4, 292.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 38–42.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 336.
[6] Roche, ' "Nothing almost sees miracles": tragic knowledge in *King Lear*', in *On 'King Lear'*, ed. Lawrence Danson, 1981, p. 149.
[7] Colie, p. 121.