

A RE-EXAMINATION OF KING LEAR:
SOURCES, DATE, TEXT

A THESIS

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Joseph E. Geist

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Approved for the Major Department
Charles E. Walton

Approved for the Graduate Council
James C. Boylan

DEDICATION

To Dorothy Schmanke

PREFACE

Goethe once stated that so much has been said already on Shakespeare it might seem as if nothing were left to be said. Ironically, the more there is written the more there is to be evaluated. Although King Lear is one of Shakespeare's greatest plays, it is also one of his most difficult ones. The drama presents special problems in the finding of sources, in the dating and the printing of the play, and in the determining of authority for the text. In this thesis, I have examined these problems and have drawn conclusions about them.

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Kansas State Teachers College
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J. E. G.

CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES OF KING LEAR

Romantic plays with happy endings are almost of necessity inferior in artistic value to true tragedies. Yet, one would judge, simply because they end happily, happiness in itself is certainly not less beautiful than tragedy. It is tragedy in its great moments that is really inferior to be sincere, while romantic plays like *King Lear* are an atmosphere of ingenuity and make-

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an old king and his three daughters, is stated in early English literature. The basic story was, in all probability, a pure fabrication of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who included it in his pseudo-historical Latin work, *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136).² The legend was first told

²X. Blair, *Shakespeare's Sources*, I, p. 141: "We do not know what first gave to Shakespeare the idea of writing a play about King Lear."

CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES OF KING LEAR

Romantic plays with happy endings are almost of necessity inferior in artistic value to true tragedies. Not, one would hope, simply because they end happily; happiness in itself is certainly not less beautiful than grief; but because a tragedy in its great moments can generally afford to be sincere, while romantic plays live in an atmosphere of ingenuity and make-believe.

--Gilbert Murray, Preface to The Iphigenia in Tauris of Euripides

I

The Lear Legend

There has always been some doubt as to the source or sources for the main plot in Shakespeare's King Lear.¹ The story itself, a tale of love and ingratitude between an old king and his three daughters, is rooted in early English literature. The basic story was, in all probability, a pure fabrication of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who included it in his pseudo-historical Latin work, Historia Regum Britanniae (c. 1136).² The legend was first told

¹K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, I, p. 141: "We do not know what first gave to Shakespeare the idea of writing a play about King Lear."

in English in Layamon's The Brut (c. 1189-1207).³ Robert of Gloucester repeated it in a second English version around 1300.⁴ Between the time of Geoffrey and the time of Shakespeare, the story is found in no less than fifty-seven versions, as recorded in Perrett's study.⁵

Around 1593 or 1594, a comical drama, The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella, was produced in London, which has often been considered as the direct source for Shakespeare's play. This old play was entered in the Stationers' Register on May 14, 1594, as The most famous Chronicle history of Leir King of England and his Three Daughters, re-entered May 8, 1605, and printed in 1605 without attribution to company.⁶ Henslowe's Diary records that the play was performed by the Queen's and Sussex's companies at the Rose in April, 1594.⁷ Although

²R. S. Loomis (ed.), Medieval English Verse and Prose, p. 548.

³Loc. cit.

⁴K. Muir (ed.), King Lear, p. xxxvi.

⁵W. Perrett, The Story of King Lear from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Shakespeare, pp. 29-142. A chart in the Appendix shows the pedigree of the Lear story.

⁶E. Arber (ed.), A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, II, p. 648; III, p. 289.

the authorship is quite obscure, many names have been assigned to it, including Marlowe, Lodge, Greene, Kyd, or even combinations of these dramatists.⁸ Baldwin discovered that Robert Greene made use of materials common to the Leir play in two earlier dramas: Farewell (1587) and Orlando (1591).⁹ His evidence not only points to a conjecture about the possible author, but is also an interesting illustration of the manner in which Greene turned his materials into different forms.

The importance of the Leir play involves Shakespeare's knowledge and use of this drama. Perrett states that Shakespeare was acquainted with not only the old play but also with Holinshed's Chronicles (1574), John Higgins' The Mirror for Magistrates (1574 and 1587 editions), Spenser's The Faerie Queene (1590), Camden's Remaines (1605), and the original story by Geoffrey.¹⁰ Furness believes, however, that Shakespeare went directly to the

⁷R. A. Foakes (ed.), Henslowe's Diary, p. 21.

⁸J. Munro (ed.), King Lear, p. 894.

⁹T. W. Baldwin, On the Literary Genetics of Shakespeare's Plays, 1592-1594, p. 75.

¹⁰Perrett, op. cit., p. 272. The following editors are in agreement with Perrett for all these sources, except Camden: K. Juir, King Lear, p. xxxv; G. L. Kittredge, King Lear, p. ix; A. Harbage, King Lear, p. 16; L. B. Wright, King Lear, p. xxxvi; and G. B. Harrison, King Lear, p. iii. Munro includes Camden and adds Gerald Legh's The Accedens of Armory (1562), op. cit., p. 893.

old comedy of Leir for his primary source and used the other adaptations of the legend in an indirect way.¹¹ Nicoll claims that Shakespeare knew the old drama because of the many parallels between the two plays.¹² Greg and Chambers have also explored the text and have affirmed Shakespeare's use of the Leir play.¹³ Craig suggests Shakespeare may have derived his knowledge of the old play from his having been an actor in it.¹⁴ There is also a scene in Shakespeare's Richard III (I. 4), which shows the author's familiarity with a passage in Leir (xix. 1431 ff.), and Law concludes that Shakespeare was probably the ". . . borrower and not the source."¹⁵

The core of the story in both plays is taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth's account which turns on seven series of incidents:

¹¹H. H. Furness, A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, V, p. 383.

¹²A. Nicoll, Studies in Shakespeare, p. 143.

¹³W. W. Greg, "The Date of King Lear and Shakespeare's Use of Earlier Versions of the Story," The Library, XX (March, 1940), p. 386.

¹⁴H. Craig, A New Look at Shakespeare's Quartos, p. 12. Muir (ed.), King Lear, p. xxxii, says that since Perillus is on the stage when most of the parallel passages between the two plays are spoken, this may have been Shakespeare's role.

¹⁵R. A. Law, "Richard III, Act I, Scene 4," Publications Modern Language Association, XXVII (1912), p. 141.

(1) the love test; (2) courtship and marriage of the three daughters; (3) rebellion of the sons-in-law; (4) mistreatment of their father by the elder daughters and dismissal of all his knights; (5) Cordella's kind treatment of her father; (6) Leir's victory over his sons-in-law and restoration to the throne; (7) Cordella's later overthrow by her nephews and death in prison. Leir omits (3), modifies (4), and omits (7). Shakespeare also omits (3), telescopes and modifies (6) and (7).¹⁶

The unknown author of Leir follows the general outline of Geoffrey's story, while Shakespeare makes his play a tragedy and adds a subplot. However, a closer examination of the old play shows that Shakespeare owed a greater debt than is usually recognized to this drama and that ". . . nowhere did he exhibit greater artistic power than in turning this crude romantic comedy into heartrending tragedy."¹⁷ The following brief summary of the plot of Leir will serve as a basis for comparison with the plot of Lear:

In the first scene, Leir plans a stratagem to trick Cordella into marriage. Leir's plan is betrayed to Cononrill and Ragan by the servant, Skalliger (Sc. 2). The wicked sisters, who are jealous of Cordella, flatter their father and promise to marry anyone he may appoint. Cordella refuses to flatter and Leir determines to divide the kingdom between her sisters (Sc. 3). The Gallian King decides to visit Leir in disguise to see whether his daughters are as beautiful as they are reputed to be (Sc. 4). Cornwall and Cambria draw lots for their shares of the kingdom, and Ferillus makes an

¹⁶R. A. Law, "King Leir and King Lear," Studies in Honor of T. W. Baldwin, p. 112.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 124.

ineffectual attempt to prevent Cordella from losing her share (Sc. 5-6). The Gallian King meets Cordella, bewailing her lot, whom he woos and weds (Sc. 7). Perillus laments Leir's stupidity but does not desert him (Sc. 8). Leir is mistreated by Gonorill and Ragan, and the Gallian King invites Lear to visit Gallia (Sc. 9-16). A man bribed by Ragan to murder Leir is stricken with remorse just as he is about to do the deed (Sc. 17-19). Cordella and her husband decide to go in disguise to Brittainne (Sc. 21-1). But Leir and Perillus escape to Gallia and there encounter the Gallian King and Cordella. Leir is reconciled to Cordella (Sc. 22-4). The Gallian King invades Brittainne on Leir's behalf, defeats the army of Cornwall and Cambria, and reinstates Leir (Sc. 25-32).¹⁸

The old drama plays a considerable part in framing the argument in the first act of Lear although Shakespeare condenses the first eight scenes into his own first scene. He relies mainly on the Leir play for the division of the kingdom, but offers no motives for Lear's conduct in his play. In Lear, Gonoril and Regan are already married, and Cordelia's suitor awaits and accepts her. Therefore, in the opening of the drama, Shakespeare attempts immediately to secure the tragic effect by showing that Lear's decisions flow entirely from the error in his own nature and not from any external circumstances. Kent is Shakespeare's most conspicuous debt to the old play; his character and action are reproduced from the old dramatist's conception of

¹⁸A condensation of Muir's summary of the plot in his edition of Lear, pp. xxvii-xxdii. Cf. the Malone Society Reprints, 1907, for the complete text of the old play.

Perillus. Hardly any of the speeches which Perillus and Leir address to one another fail to yield suggestion to Shakespeare.¹⁹ Perillus and Kent have much in common-- each is a counselor who attempts to dissuade the King from his fatal purpose; each excites the King's anger by interceding for the heroine; each presents himself to his master at the moment when the King suffers the first shock of Cononil's infidelity; and each is afterwards a faithful servant to the King throughout his distress. But Shakespeare's banishment of Kent and Kent's subsequent serving of Lear in disguise are more dramatic than the continuation of Perillus in Leir's service. After the first act, however, Shakespeare relies less upon Leir. One notable exception is the reconciliation scene in which Lear (Leir) recognizes Cordelia (Cordella), and they kneel to each other. Greg details some forty passages in which lines from Lear echo phrases in Leir.²⁰ These instances are not all of the same value, and it is evident that Shakespeare reshaped and applied them, or adapted them freely, as the situation prompted.²¹

¹⁹S. Lee (ed.), The Chronicle History of King Leir, p. xxxix.

²⁰Greg, op. cit., pp. 386-397.

²¹Munro, op. cit., p. 894.

In Holinshed, in Spenser, and in Higgins, the Lear story is substantially the same.²² From Holinshed's Chronicles, Shakespeare took the ducal titles of Cornwall and Albany (Albania) and perhaps a clue to Goneril's first speech.²³ He borrowed Cordelia's name and her death by hanging from The Faerie Queene.²⁴ Furthermore, in a part of Spenser's epic, not even related to the Lear story, there is an obvious similarity to Shakespeare's play:

He took him selfe unto his hermitage,
In which he liv's alone, like carelesse bird
in cage.

(F.Q. VI. vi. 4)

These lines are echoed in Lear's speech:

No, no, no, no: come let's away to prison,
We two alone will sing like Birds i'th Cage:
(V. iii. 9-10)²⁵

From The Mirror for Magistrates, Shakespeare took ten minor details, including the depiction of Albany and of the King of France.²⁶ In Camden's Remaines, the story of

²²Kittredge, op. cit., p. x.

²³Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, I, p. 142-3.

²⁴Muir (ed.), King Lear, p. xxxiv.

²⁵Quotes from Lear will be from the First Folio (1623) unless otherwise specified.

²⁶Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, I, p. 143.

King Ina parallels that of Lear; however, most scholars think that this evidence is inconclusive.²⁷

Concerning their endings, the sources of the legend can be readily divided into two categories. One group, including Geoffrey, Holinshed, Higgins, and Spenser, not only restores the king to his throne but also tells of future events in the kingdom. For instance Holinshed narrates:

Cordeilla the youngest daughter of Leir was admitted Q. and supreme gouernesse of Britaine, in the yeere of the world 3155, before the bylding of Rome 54, Uzia was then reigning in Juda, and Jeroboam ouer Israell. This Cordeilla after hir father's deceasse ruled the land of Britaine right worthilie during the space of fiue yeeres, in which meane time hir husband died, and then about the end of those fiue yeeres, hir two nephewes Margan and Cunnedag, sonnes to hir aforesaid sisters, disdainig to be vnder the gouernment of a woman, leuied warre against hir, and destroyed a great part of the land, and finallie tooke hir prisoner, and laid hir fast in ward, wherewith she tooke suche grieffe, being a woman of a man-like courage, and despairing to recouer libertie, there she slue hirselfe.²⁸

Here, this catastrophe is quite different from that of Shakespeare's tragedy. Lear dies peacefully, two years after his restoration, and it is Cordelia's life, not the life of Lear, that comes to a tragic end. The legend is given a happy ending in another set of sources which

²⁷Loc. cit.

²⁸Quoted in Furness, op. cit., p. 386, from Holinshed, The second booke of the historie of England, Ch. VI.

include Robert of Gloucester's rendition, the Gesta Romanorum (1295), and Warner's Albion's England (1586).

Leir's concluding speech in the old play complements these sources:

Ah, my Cordella, now I call to mind,
 The modest answer, which I tooke vnkind:
 But now I see, I am no whit beguild,
 Thou louedst me dearly, and as ought a child.
 And thou (Perillus) partner once in woe,
 Thee to requite, the best I can, Ile doe:
 Yet all I can, I, were it ne're so much,
 Were not sufficient, thy true loue is such.
 Thanks (worthy Mumford) to thee last of all,
 Not greeted last, 'cause thy desert was small;
 No, thou hast Lien-like layd on to day,
 Chasing the Cornwall King and Cambria:
 Who with my daughters, daughters did I say?
 To saue their liues, the fugitives did play.
 Come, sonne and daughter, who did me aduance,
 Repose with me awhile, and then for Fraunce.
 (ll. 2649-2664)

Shakespeare's tragic manipulation of the Lear theme cannot, therefore, be directly attributed to similar treatment in his sources. On the one hand, he rejects the undramatic elements of the versions in Holinshed, Higgins, and Spenser, in which the defect and suicide take place; on the other hand, he rejects the happy ending of the old play.³⁰ But, in his version, Lear never gets to France,

²⁹Greg (ed.), The History of King Lear 1605 (The Malone Society Reprints).

³⁰Muir (ed.), King Lear, p. xxxvii.

the forces of Cordelia are defeated, and Lear's and Cordelia's deaths result. It is certainly true, as Perkinson points out, that the telescoping of the Cordelia tragedy into the Lear story is the crucial point in Lear.³¹

There is one other source, however, which has an ending similar to that of Shakespeare's tragedy. It is an old ballad found in Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765), entitled "A Lamentable Song of the Death of King Lear and his Three Daughters," said to have been first discovered in an ancient copy of Golden Garlands of Princely Pleasures and Delicate Delights (1620).³² The last two stanzas of the ballad are of interest here:

But when he heard Cordelia's death,
 Who died indeed for love
 Of her dear father, in whose cause
 She did this battle move;
 He swooning fell upon her breast,
 From whence he never parted;
 But on her bosom left his life,
 That was so truly hearted.

The lords and nobles when they saw
 The end of these events,
 The other sisters unto death
 They doomed by consents;
 And being dead, their crowns they left
 Unto the next of kin;
 Thus have you seen the fall of pride,
 And disobedient sin.³³

³¹R. N. Perkinson, "Shakespeare's Revision of the Lear Story and the Structure of King Lear," Philological Quarterly, XXII (1943), p. 325.

Originally, this ballad was thought to have contained the suggestion which Shakespeare used for Lear's madness and consequent death. Later scholars, however, such as Ritson and Halliwell, have discredited this theory,³⁴ and, in all probability, the ballad does not come before the play. Instead, the ballad could even be a mingling of the earlier versions with the Shakespeare theme.³⁵ Perrett says that, if nothing but the title of the ballad were preserved, there would be sufficient proof to show that the tragedy came first, since the deaths of the elder daughters are found nowhere else but in Shakespeare.³⁶

One factor which all of the sources (with the exception of the old play) have in common with Lear is the "pagan" setting. The background of the Leir play has been endowed with a Biblical and Catholic ethos. Cordella has a Christian sanctity; Leir acknowledges that he has offended God; and the blessing which he finally gives to Cordella is "The blessing, which the God of Abraham gave /

³²Lee, op. cit., p. xxxvii.

³³T. Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, I, p. 237.

³⁴Furness, op. cit., p. 403.

³⁵B. De Mendonca, "The Influence of Gerbodius on King Lear," Shakespeare Survey, XIII (1960), p. 41.

³⁶Perrett, op. cit., p. 138.

the tribe of Juda." (ll. 2326-2327).³⁷ Shakespeare, carefully denying his play such a Christian setting, places it in a remote Celtic past. Perrett claims that the Celtic element introduces the tragic note into the unhappy sequel concerning Cordelia's fate in the earlier sources and may have led Shakespeare to conceive of the plan for the whole story in the form of tragic unity.³⁸ Boas has also noted that in Lear, as in Macbeth, Shakespeare drew his chief materials from the Celtic tradition, singling out the uncontrollable and wayward passion of the Celtic race, and showing how it links with the untamed forces of purely animal or natural life.³⁹ This Celtic characteristic explains the frequent references to animals throughout the play.

It is apparent that Shakespeare's tragic concept of the legend is the significant element of his adaptation. This rehandling affects the structure in two ways: first, Lear achieves a tragic character from the very beginning of the play; secondly, every character is developed to

³⁷D. G. James, The Dream of Learning, p. 92.

³⁸Perrett, op. cit., p. 138.

³⁹F. S. Boas, Shakespeare and his Predecessors, p. 441-2.

⁴⁰Perkinson, op. cit., p. 326.

heighten the tragic outcome.⁴⁰ It may be rash to speak de fide and say that Shakespeare drew his play from any particular set of sources. But it is obvious that when Shakespeare used any of the renditions of the Lear legend, he completely rewrote them rather than "dressed them up."

II

The Sidney Story and Other Sources

To the Lear legend, Shakespeare added the subplot of Gloucester and his two sons, which he borrowed from Sidney's story of the blind king of Paphlagonia, found in Arcadia (II. x).⁴¹ The Arcadia was entered in the Stationers' Register, August 23, 1588, and printed in 1590,⁴² the same year in which appeared the first three books of The Faerie Queene. It is obvious that Shakespeare was not content with turning the play into a tragedy, but added the minor plot dealing with a parallel theme, equally somber in complexion. A common Elizabethan device consisted of reinforcing the main plot with a subplot, but hardly to the extent of situation and motive as Shakespeare

⁴¹F. G. Fleay, A Chronicle History of the Life and Work of William Shakespeare, p. 238.

⁴²Arber (ed.), op. cit., II, p. 496.

demonstrates in Lear.⁴³ In both plots, the father believes the evil child and disinherits the good one. Also, the father receives ill from the favored child and good from the disinherited son. Lear's madness is suitably balanced with Gloucester's blindness, for both perceive truth in the midst of affliction.

From the Sidney story, Shakespeare took two incidents--Edgar's combat with his brother Edmund and Edgar's accession to sovereignty.⁴⁴ He tied the subplot into the main story by means of the characters of Edgar and Edmund who assume importance in the Goneril and Regan sections. Sidney's Flexirtus, who becomes Edmund, provided Shakespeare with a murderer for Cordelia and a lover for the two evil sisters. His brother, Leconatus (Edgar), becomes the one who exposes Goneril and Regan to Albany and brings about their downfall. In the secondary plot, as in the main one, Shakespeare substitutes a tragic for a happy ending. Therefore, Edmund, unlike his counterpart in the Arcadia, is not spared and later reconciled with his brother. Shakespeare's chief purpose, then, in the Gloucester subplot is to emphasize the tragic direction of the story of Lear.

⁴³A. H. Thorndike, Tragedy, p. 169.

In recent years, several critics have seen an influence of Sidney's Arcadia also upon the main plot of Lear. For example, Pyle and Ribner both argue that Sidney's story of the Paphlagonian king relates to the main plot of Arcadia as the Gloucester story does to the main plot of Lear.⁴⁵ They explain that both works treat of the evils which will befall a kingdom when the ruler abandons his responsibility. In both Lear and the Arcadia, the story of the king of Paphlagonia (Gloucester) and his sons is used to bolster the main plot in order to give it ". . . more intensity and a more universal application, and to reinforce the moral and artistic effect which the work as a whole was designed to convey."⁴⁶ They believe, therefore, that Shakespeare not only took his subplot from Sidney's Arcadia but borrowed its structure as well.

On the other hand, certain critics have questioned the value of the second plot as a counterpart for the Lear

⁴⁴Perkinson, op. cit. p. 325.

⁴⁵F. Pyle, "Twelfth Night, King Lear, and Arcadia," Modern Language Review, XLIII (October, 1948), pp. 449-455, I. Ribner, "Sidney's Arcadia and the Structure of King Lear," Studia Neophilologica, XXIV (1952), pp. 63-68.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 68.

story. Granville-Barker, for one, says that the play suffers under the burden.⁴⁷ Nicoll thinks it complicates the interest in a rather perplexing way.⁴⁸ Van Doren believes that the Gloucester story is necessary to the greatness of the play.⁴⁹ Bradley makes the point that the Gloucester story reflects and strengthens the tragic history of Lear and his daughters with tremendous effect.⁵⁰ Finally, Craig claims that the second plot is highly important to the tragedy because ". . . the tone, the setting, and the environment of a tragedy of filial ingratitude came from Arcadia. . . ."51

Another debated point evolving from the problem of the secondary plot is the scene of the blinding of Gloucester. Shakespeare's Lear seems to be the only eye-gouging English play of the period.⁵² The incident itself can be found in the Arcadia when the son removes the father's eyes and deposes him. However, the problem lies in the outrageous staging of the scene, and the mere

⁴⁷H. Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare, I, p. 271.

⁴⁸A. Nicoll, Studies in Shakespeare, p. 146.

⁴⁹M. Van Doren, Shakespeare, pp. 239-40.

⁵¹Craig, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵²Baldwin, op. cit., p. 224.

physical horror which would result from it. Bradley decides that it is a blot upon Lear, but admits that the scene belongs rightly to Lear in the world in imagination when it is read.⁵³ In an opposing view, Stewart states that, since the Gloucester theme reflects all of the qualities of the Lear story, Gloucester's blinding had to be shown to correlate the act with the torments and the deprivations of the old king.⁵⁴

Even though scholars accept the Arcadia for the character of Edmund, it is possible also to detect a similarity of character with certain earlier Shakespearean creations. Edmund is a bastard, and his illegitimate birth places him, he thinks, outside the limits of ordinary moral obligation. Similarly, Richard III's deformity drives him to adopt such an attitude, and one hears the echo of the hunchback's cry, "I have no brother, I am like no brother," in Edmund's phrase, "Brother, a word; descend, I say."⁵⁵ Edmund has also been related to a character in the more proximate Shakespearean past, that of Iago in

⁵³Bradley, op. cit., p. 203.

⁵⁴J. I. M. Stewart, "The Blinding of Gloucester," Review of English Studies, XXI (1945), p. 266.

⁵⁵Boas, op. cit., p. 446.

Othello, a play which was probably written immediately prior to Lear.⁵⁶ Edmund's "Look, sir, I bleed." (II. i. 43) sounds like an echo of Iago's "I bleed, sir, but not killed." (V. ii, 288). The personalities of these two villains expose an abnormal want of feeling, an abundance of courage, strength of will, egoism, and a marked sense of humor.⁵⁷ There is, in fact, a good deal in Lear which seems to echo Othello. But Bradley claims ". . . there are other instances where the matter of the play seems to go on working in Shakespeare's mind and reappears, generally in weaker form, in his next play."⁵⁸

Another earlier drama, Richard II (c. 1593-1594), shows Shakespeare confronted with a problem anticipatory of Lear. Each play portrays a king at the zenith of his power in the opening scenes, but as one against whom the action turns almost at once. Watkins concludes that Shakespeare repeated the structural pattern of Richard II with more mature depth in Lear, the essential difference being that the subplot of Aumerle's treason in Richard is loosely developed, while the one in Lear reinforces the

⁵⁶Bradley, op. cit., p. 198.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 240.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 198.

main action after the downfall of Lear.⁵⁹ Thus, it is evident that when Shakespeare borrowed a story from another source, he often interpreted and incorporated it into his own backlog of original stories.

The names which Shakespeare assigns to his characters in the subplot are not to be found in Sidney. For example, where then did he find the names of Gloucester, Edgar, and Edmund? In a play called Uter Pendragon, acted by the Admiral's Company in 1597, there are included the parts of the Earl of Gloster and Edwyn his son.⁶⁰ This play is conjectured to have been the source of The Birth of Merlin (c. 1608) which also contained these names in addition to a "Wild man of the Woods" motif. The "Wild man" theme, found in the Merlin tradition, has also been considered the source of the mad scenes in Lear.⁶¹ There is no madness in the old play of Leir, none in the story of Lear in any version before Shakespeare's, and none in Sidney's tale of the Paphlagonian king. However, Shakespeare was not the first dramatist in this period to have treated madness in

⁵⁹W. B. G. Watkins, Shakespeare and Spenser, p. 80.

⁶⁰R. M. Smith, "King Lear and the Merlin Tradition," Modern Language Quarterly, VII (June, 1946), p. 170.

⁶¹This opinion is discussed in a rather involved article by R. M. Smith. Cf. previous footnote.

a serious manner. Such a presentation is found in Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy (c. 1589), Dekker's The Honest Whore, Part I (1604), and Webster's The Duchess of Malfi (c. 1612). But a comparison of the treatment of madmen in these other dramas with Shakespeare's depiction of insanity shows how superior he was to his rivals in this respect.⁶² The German critic, Klein, offers one of the few probable suggestions for Shakespeare's theme of madness, showing that an Italian play, Le Stravaganze d'Amore by Cristoforo Castelletti (published in Rome in 1585) presents in one scene three forms of madness--real, assumed, and professional --all similar to the madness displayed in Lear:

Old Metello, insane out of grief for his children, Alessandro an assumed Fool, and Bell' Humore a professional one, represent in Castelletti's comedy a trio jangled into discord, which finds its resolution in that infinitely pathetic terzetto of insanity in Lear, and reveals its artistic and tragic capabilities when the paroxysms of a tragic insanity, simulated at the same time by a fictitious insanity, are soothed into a tragic sorrow by a Fool. The assumption of such a hint is all the more allowable since, as far as we remember, no drama is to be found before Lear wherein these three varieties of mental alienation are employed as a motif in one and the same scene; nay, as far as we know, no drama exists before Lear and Hamlet wherein feigned insanity is depicted at all, except in this very Stravaganze d'Amore by Castelletti.⁶³

⁶²K. Muir, "Madness in King Lear," Shakespeare Survey, XIII (1960), pp. 30-40.

⁶³Quoted in Furness, op. cit., p. 407.

That Shakespeare was familiar with this play is not proved, but the themes are strangely alike.

Gorboduc also may have influenced Shakespeare in the writing of Lear. Although the play does not deal with the Lear tale, it is Senecan to the core, it treats of a similar theme, and does have a tragic nature. Written in 1561 or 1562 and highly praised by Sidney, it is almost certain to have been known by Shakespeare. De Mendonca has discovered seven points in which these two plays agree: (1) similarity in stories; (2) morality quality; (3) classical influence; (4) subject of nature; (5) trial of evil children; (6) quality of urgency in plot; and (7) the civil war ending.⁶⁴ In both stories, there is an old king who wishes to divide his kingdom between his children, an action which causes the monarch extreme sorrow and death. Both plays show the mortal combat between good and evil and the disruptive results of unnatural actions. In Lear, there are twenty-eight, and in Gorboduc, thirty-one references to classical deities, amazingly lacking in the other purported sources. The plots are laid against a background of the study of the nature of Man; the terms nature, natural, and kind appear

⁶⁴De Mendonca, op. cit., p. 42.

thirty-seven times in Gorboduc and forty-two times in Lear. In both plays, fathers hold trials of their evil children: an actual trial in Gorboduc (IV. ii), and an imaginary one in Lear (III. vi). There is a sense of urgency in both plays, moving the action and increasing the tension to the tragic ending, a characteristic not to be found in the other possible sources. From a rash decision to divide their kingdoms, these two kings suffer and die, and their respective states are devastated by wars, shown in Gorboduc, but only suggested in Lear. De Mendonca concludes that there are too many similarities between these plays to deny that Gorboduc provided Shakespeare with many poetical ideas for his tragical drama.⁶⁵

One last group should be considered in discussing Shakespeare's problem of source in Lear. In approaching the subject of contemporary sources, Chambers gives warning:

Shakespeare does not seem to have been greatly given to "topical" allusions, and the hunt for them becomes dangerous, especially if it is inspired by a desire to link the plays with contemporary literary controversies in which he may have taken but little interest.⁶⁶

⁶⁵Ibid., pp. 41-47.

⁶⁶Sir E. K. Chambers, William Shakespeare, I, p. 246.

Harrison also comments that ". . . it was rather Shakespeare's method to see old stories in the light of modern instance than to season his plays with passing references."⁶⁷ In spite of these scholars' views, recent studies have shown that, when a play is read in the light of contemporary events, a number of passages may take on new colors and significance.

A contemporary source for Lear, which all scholars agree that Shakespeare used, is Samuel Harsnett's A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures (1603).⁶⁸ Muir argues that Harsnett's book contributed more to the text of Lear than did the old play, Holinshed, Spenser, or Sidney.⁶⁹ This booklet was an analysis of the confessions of bogus demoniacs. The greatest part of Edgar's dissembled lunacy, the names of the devils whom he communes with, and the descriptive circumstances he alludes to in his own case are drawn from this pamphlet.⁷⁰

⁶⁷G. B. Harrison, "The National Background," A Companion to Shakespeare's Studies, p. 185.

⁶⁸Harbage, op. cit., p. 17.

⁶⁹Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, I, p. 148. in an appendix, pp. 253-256, to his edition of Lear, Muir finds sixty-six line references from Harsnett which correspond to passages in Lear.

⁷⁰Citations will be made to these passages in the next chapter.

There are also echoes of Harsnett in some of Lear's speeches, such as, "To haue a thousand with red burning spits / Come hissing in upon 'em." and

Oh how this Mother swels vp toward my heart!
Historica passio, downe thou climbing sorrow,
Thy Elements below where is this Daughter?
(II. iv. 56-58)

These are lines which show Lear's physical symptoms of hysteria.⁷¹

Shakespeare was undoubtedly reading Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essays (1603) at the time of Lear. According to Taylor, there are twenty-three Montaigne passages echoed in Lear, and 116 words used by Shakespeare which were not used by him before 1603, and which are to be found in Florio's translation.⁷²

One of the more famous allusions in the play is contained in Gloucester's electrifying speech, "These late Eclipses in the Sun and Moone portend no good to vs." (I. ii. 125ff.) This speech is followed by Edmund's answer:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that
when we are sicke in fortune, often the surfets of
our own behauiour, we make guilty of our disasters,
the Sun, the Moone, and Starres. . . .
(I. ii. 140-143)

⁷¹Muir, "Madness in King Lear," Shakespeare Survey, XIII (1960), pp. 35-36.

These speeches almost certainly refer to the eclipse of the sun which took place in October, 1605, preceded by an eclipse of the moon in September.⁷³ In February, 1606, a little pamphlet, called Strange, fearful and true news which happened at Carlstadt in the Kingdom of Croatia, related blood-curdling tales of omens, portents, and strange prophecies.⁷⁴ It was written by Edward Gresham, an almanac-maker, whose comments on ". . . the earth's and moon's late and horrible obscurations. . ." are so close to Gloucester's speech that it seems likely that Shakespeare borrowed and adapted the passage to his play.⁷⁵ Another natural phenomenon which might have some importance occurred on March 29, 1606, when a tempest of great violence brought much damage to Europe. Since there is no trace of a storm in any other version of the Lear legend, the three storm scenes in Shakespeare's version could first have been suggested by this event.⁷⁶

⁷²G. C. Taylor, Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne, pp. 9-13.

⁷³Munro, op. cit., p. 892.

⁷⁴Harrison (ed.), King Lear Text, Sources, Criticism, p. iv.

⁷⁵Loc. cit.

⁷⁶Harrison, "The Background to King Lear," London Times Literary Supplement, December 28, 1935, p. 896.

The obvious importance of astrology to Lear is fairly evident. King Lear believes in astrology and swears ". . . by ayl the operation of the orbs / From whom we do exist and cease to be." Practically all of his followers appear to be in accord with his astrological leanings. The faithful Kent claims, "It is the stars, / The stars above us, govern our condition." Gloucester, as has been shown before, is thoroughly steeped in astrological lore. Yet, Shakespeare portrays astrology as a vehicle of villainy in the hands of the profane and, even to its true believers, a false and traitorous guide. Bald suggests that Shakespeare took this attitude because "Free-will is of the essence of tragedy, which cannot exist under determinism, and astrology is only a crude form of determinism."⁷⁷ This verdict is undoubtedly very true, but it should not be forgotten that the presence of James I on the throne exerted some influence in this matter. On the accession of the King to the throne in 1603, the company for which Shakespeare was the chief playwright had become the "King's Men."⁷⁸ While the dating of Lear is a problem to be discussed later, it

⁷⁷R. B. Bald, "'Thou, Nature, Art My Goodness': Edmund and Renaissance Free-Thought," J. Q. Adams Memorial Studies, p. 349.

can be safely assumed at this point that the play was written after James had come to the throne, since there is concrete proof that it was acted at Court on December 26, 1606.⁷⁹ King James was emphatic in his condemnation of astrology, and his accession to the throne of England meant a marked quickening, on the part of English writers, of interest in witches, demons, and the stars. Therefore, Darby concludes that ". . . an examination of the treatment of astrological phenomena would seem to indicate a studied attempt to compliment the king."⁸⁰

When the Tudor dynasty came to a close with the death of Elizabeth in 1603, James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Stuart, Protestant and descendant of Henry VIII of England, ascended the throne. This event brought much distress to England through divided factions over religion and politics. It is quite possible that Shakespeare developed this theme, showing his audience the miseries which such a division brought to the King, to the dynasty, and to the whole nation. This question of a divided, as

⁷⁸Fleay, op. cit., p. 48.

⁷⁹Furness, op. cit., p. 377.

⁸⁰R. H. Darby, "Astrology in Shakespeare's Lear," English Studies, XX (1938), p. 256.

opposed to a united, Britain is fundamental to Lear. Furthermore, Albany is the husband of Goneril, who, in the division of the kingdom, receives roughly the northern half of Britain. When the play opens, he is already called the Duke of Albany, a name which refers to the ancient region, including all the Scottish Highlands. It has been discovered that the Dukedom of Albany dates from 1398, and that Mary Queen of Scots in the sixteenth century recreated the title in the person of Henry Stuart, Lord Barnley, whom she married.⁸¹ When Shakespeare wrote Lear, there was a Duke of Albany, and he was James I.⁸² It was likewise common knowledge to Shakespeare's audience that in Macbeth, a play written after Lear, Banquo was James's reputed ancestor.⁸³ Therefore, it is not by chance that, at the conclusion of the play, the kingdom is reunited under Albany's sovereign power.

The historicity of the role of Cordelia can be seen in her marriage to the King of France and not to the Duke of Burgundy. Tamblyn recalls that the Duke of Burgundy

⁸¹J. W. Draper, "The Occasion of King Lear," Studies in Philology, XXXIV (1937), p. 182.

⁸²loc. cit.

⁸³Bradley, op. cit., p. 361.

practically meant the King of Spain.⁸⁴ It will be remembered that the marriage of Mary Tudor to Philip of Spain was a "Burgundian" marriage.⁸⁵ This interpretation fits well into the historical events of the time, for France and Spain were the candidates for the hand of Princess Elizabeth, as France and Burgundy were for that of Cordelia. It was also general opinion that part of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 was devised to marry Princess Elizabeth to a Catholic gentleman in an attempt to return control of the government to the Catholics.⁸⁶ Spain would represent such a Catholic faction. There is another historical influence in the fourth act when the King of France and Cordelia come armed to Lear's rescue. In the old Leir play, there is a French victory, but in Shakespeare's play, the King of France is sent strangely back to France, making it possible for England to remain somewhat victorious.

One last hypothesis is Winstanley's provocative theory that Lear is symbolical mythology, representing at

⁸⁴W. F. Tamblin, "Notes on King Lear," Modern Language Notes, XXXVII (June, 1922), p. 347.

⁸⁵H. V. Jaffa, "The Limits of Politics: An Interpretation of King Lear, Act I, Scene I," American Political Science Review, LI (1957), p. 415.

⁸⁶Baldwin, "On King Lear," Modern Language Notes, XXXVII (1922), p. 504.

once the Darnley murder and the St. Bartholomew Massacre.⁸⁷ Although Chambers claims that the theory is not worth serious examination,⁸⁸ it possibly deserves attention in this study. Winstanley thinks that the historians of the age--Buchanan, the writers of the Oration, R. Mathieu, the French Huguenots, de Thou, and D'Aubigne--often reported ideas that were not literally true but rather expressed what they believed to be the essence of the situation. For instance, she states:

We cannot take literally Buchanan's repeated assertion that Darnley was turned "naked out of doors," robbed of his servants, and turned out to take refuge in a hovel with beggars or to wander naked on the wild heaths of Scotland.⁸⁹

Winstanley claims that a large portion of Lear is derived from the story of the Darnley murder, especially as narrated by Buchanan, and that a second large portion is derived from the story of the St. Bartholomew Massacre, which includes the death of Coligny and the civil wars in France told by the Huguenot historians. She also shows that the love story of Edmund and his wooing of the two sisters, Generil and Regan, is almost exactly like the

⁸⁷L. Winstanley, Macbeth, King Lear and Contemporary History, p. 27.

⁸⁸Chambers, op. cit., p. 470.

⁸⁹Winstanley, op. cit., p. 35.

story of Bothwell in relation to Mary Queen of Scots and his own wife, Lady Bothwell, also told by Buchanan and the authors of the Oration.⁹⁰ The parallels with the Darnley murder are grouped mainly under eleven headings: (1) both Lear and Darnley are lured on by false professions of affections; (2) both place themselves in the power of those who are false to them; (3) both of their deaths are considered as parricides; (4) both experience grief over their respective losses of power; (5) both are extremely proud and haughty; (6) both are accused of egregious folly; (7) both are reduced to beggary; (8) both are thrust out of doors into desert places and upon heaths; (9) both try to escape to France; (10) both are subjected to bitter humiliation; and (11) both are stripped naked.

The comparisons with Coligny and the Bartholomew Massacre are fewer and not quite so effective. The naked bodies of both Lear and Coligny were said to be exposed to all of the outrages of the elements of fire, earth, air, and water; and just as the stricken Coligny is carried in a litter, relieved by Joan of Navarre, so is Lear carried on a litter, rescued by Cordelia. Winstanley's

⁹⁰Loc. cit.

conclusion is stated as follows:

I find. . .that Shakespeare is really writing of his own age and that his work is a kind of symbolic mythology. The reason we have ignored it so long is because, as I have already examined, we assume there was no essential difference between the psychology of the sixteenth century and the psychology of the nineteenth century. The method of symbolic mythology which I find in Shakespeare is simply the method of his age. The whole of Spenser's Faerie Queene is precisely such symbolic mythology; so are most of Lyly's plays; so in all probability is Sidney's Arcadia. So are Ben Johnson's masques. So is much of Drayton. The historians themselves slip into it at every turn. We find it quite unmistakably in Buchanan's Detection and the Oration. It is only by studying the mentality of Shakespeare's contemporaries that we can understand the mentality of Shakespeare himself.⁹¹

Winstanley's theory is at least an extreme example of what is known as super-criticism, of trying to find in Shakespeare all the analogues and suggestions that he may have placed in his works. In Winstanley's case, the means do not seem to justify the end. It is a legitimate question to ask if critics do not find in Shakespeare's works more than he intended to place there. Yet, it is because of Shakespeare's greatness that one does find in his plays the opportunities for the deeper analysis which most dramatists do not afford. Shakespeare stands alone because of his amazing depth and ingenious subtlety.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 222.

King Lear, therefore, is a good example of what Shakespeare can do. Under the stimulus of the seventeenth century search for plots, he chose a slight episode in British history which had become the subject of a mediocre play. Shakespeare, with an eye for dramatic situations, saw that the torments of the old King could be exceedingly effective and realized that he could make of Cordella a moving story. At the same time, he must have imagined that, if full dramatic intensity were to be reached, a tragic-comic structure would be impossible. Only by raising the whole theme to the level of high tragedy could the story be rendered pregnant with the awe and mystery which makes up the highest art. To obtain his novel conclusions, Shakespeare carefully selected his sources, condensed the story at several crucial points, and reinforced and expanded it with the subplot from Sidney's Arcadia.

As was said previously, when Shakespeare took as his source the Lear legend, he completely rewrote it, rather than "dressed it up." Shakespeare's tragic concept of the story and his purposeful rearrangement of the material made his play a completely original work, one which can stand as an equation in any comparison of Lear with its sources. Shakespeare the dramatic artist and

CHAPTER II

THE DATING AND PRINTING OF KING LEAR

'Tis all a good show,
The world that we're in--
None can tell when 'twas finished
None saw it begin.
--Jones Very, The World

In dating a play of Shakespeare's, one must search for the external or internal evidence which suggests a concrete date or time in which the play was written and performed. In studying Lear, one can find several such indications for the terminus a quo and terminus ad quem in which Shakespeare wrote this play. The best external evidence is found in the Stationers' Register, which shows that Lear was acted before James on St. Stephen's Day, December 26, 1606.⁹² The influence of James upon the theatre of the period is well enough known, and his connection with this particular play has already been shown in the previous chapter.

Three references in the play also comprise internal evidence for the possible dating of the drama. The earliest, and quite possibly the soundest, is the allusion

⁹²Arber (ed.), op. cit., III, p. 366.

to Harsnett's A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures (1603). Theobald is credited with discovering that Shakespeare borrowed many words and ideas, especially throughout Edgar's feigned madness, from this pamphlet.⁹³ For instance, the five names mentioned in Edgar's following speech are taken directly from this document:

Five fiends haue beene in poore Tom at once,
Of lust, as Obidicut, Hobbididence Prince of dumbness,
Mahu of stealing, Modo of murder, Stiberdigebit of
Mobing, & Mobing who since possesses chambermaids
And waiting women, so, blesse thee master.
(Q₁. IV. i. 61-65)

A second piece of internal evidence can be located in III. iv. 187-9:

Childe Rowland to the darke Tower came,
His word was still, fie, foh, and fumme,
I smell the blood of a Brittish man.

This often-quoted line from the tale of Jack and the Giants had previously contained Englishman instead of Brittish man. The alteration was probably due to the fact that James, who had united England and Scotland, had been proclaimed King of Great Britain by the first parliament, on October 24, 1604. This reference, then, is not only good stylistic evidence that Lear was a Jacobean play, as Chambers asserts,⁹⁴ but also provides one with

⁹³Furness, op. cit., p. 186.

⁹⁴Chambers, op. cit., p. 458.

another point in order to establish the date of the play. It must be admitted, though, that in the 1623 Folio the term English also appears:

. . . seeke him out
Vpon the English party.
(IV. vi. 256)

This could have been an error on the part of Shakespeare if he had revised his own play, or of a transcriber who could have done the job for him, or of a printer who carelessly made the error in the quarto or folio edition. It would be a natural mistake to revert to a long-accustomed term instead of using a recently adopted one.

The third and final allusion in the play related to the dating is contained in the familiar reference to the eclipses:

These late Eclipses in the Sun and Moone portend
no good to vs: though the wisdom of Nature can
reason it thus, and thus, yet Nature finds it selfe
scourg'd by the sequent effects. Loue cooles,
friendship falls off, Brothers diuide. In Cities,
mutinies; in Countries, discord; in Pallaces,
Treason; and the Bond crack'd, 'twixt Sonne and
Father. This villaine of mine comes vnder the
prediction; there's Son against Father, the King
falls from byas of Nature, there's Father against
Childe. We haue scene the best of our time.
Machinations, Hollownesse, treacherie, and all
ruineous disorders follow vs disquietly to our Graues.
Find out this Villain, Edmond, it shall lose thee
nothing, do it carefully: and the Noble true-harted
Kent banish'd; his offence, honesty. 'Tis strange.
(I. ii. 125-138)

Scholars generally agree that the mention of "These late eclipses. . . ." alludes to the eclipses of the moon (September 27, 1605) and of the sun (October 2, 1605).⁹⁵ Harrison also claims that these words echoed a disgust with the general deterioration of society and the particular abhorrence of the intrigues and plots of the first four years of the new reign.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, there are a few scholars who think that Shakespeare received his information not from the actual eclipses but from a book entitled A Discursive Probleme Concerning Prophecies, written by John Harvey in 1588, which foretold of these strange happenings.⁹⁷

Several critics find references in the drama to the Gunpowder Plot of November 5, 1605, none of which is specific enough to credit. The references to Gresham's pamphlet of February, 1606, and to the tempest in March, 1606, earlier mentioned, should also be considered when discussing the dating question.

Another problem related to dating involves the old play, Leir, which was re-entered in the Stationers' Register on May 8, 1605:

⁹⁵Munro, op. cit., p. 892.

⁹⁶Harrison, "The National Background," A Companion to Shakespeare Studies, p. 185.

A booke called "The Tragecall historie of kinge Leir and his Three Daughters &c", As it was latelie Acted. Simon Stafford.⁹⁸

Many scholars believe that the play was re-entered in the Stationers' Register and consequently printed for the first time, having originally appeared upon the stage, May 14, 1594. They think that Shakespeare's play was by this time on the boards, and that the printer was trying to deceive the public into thinking that this edition was Shakespeare's. They point to the two words, latelie acted. This theory, of course, rules out the contrary opinion that it was the presence of the old play upon the London stage at this time which influenced Shakespeare to develop his Lear story into his own tragic conception. Some critics also take exception to the term tragecall in the Register's notation. But Furness states, "It may be that Stafford looked more to the body of the drama than to the mere ending, in which case he was certainly justified in calling it a 'tragecall historie'."⁹⁹ When Stafford finally printed the play, the original title was restored as The True Chronicle History of King Leir. . . .

⁹⁷Furness, op. cit., p. 379.

⁹⁸Arber, op. cit., III, p. 289.

⁹⁹Furness, op. cit., p. 354.

but, again, the play was announced as "lately acted."¹⁰⁰ If the old play had been first published in 1594 when it was first acted and was then republished on the occasion of Shakespeare's play, it is doubtful that the 1605 publisher would have entered it again in the Stationers' Register. Therefore, since it has been shown that the old play did influence Shakespeare, and since the critics cannot explain why Leir could not have been "lately acted," one might conjecture that the printed Leir preceded Shakespeare's version. J. Q. Adams says, "It seems likely that Shakespeare bought a copy of the old play, and, seeing in it possibilities of an effective tragedy, at once set about rewriting it for his company."¹⁰¹

Malone, basing his proof on the Simon Stafford deception, puts the play in the early months of 1605.¹⁰² Drake moves the play to the close of 1604 since on May 8, 1605, it was described as "lately acted," implying several months of performances before that time.¹⁰³ Wright, who considers the influence of the eclipses and the Gunpowder

¹⁰⁰Greg (ed.), The History of King Leir 1605, title-page of the text of the play.

¹⁰¹J. Q. Adams, A Life of William Shakespeare, p. 374.

¹⁰²Furness, op. cit., p. 377.

Plot in the play, places the drama at the end of 1605.¹⁰⁴ Moberly thinks the same as Wright but for the opposite reason, i.e., the absence of any allusions to the Gunpowder Plot, shows how Shakespeare kept aloof from subjects absorbing public interest.¹⁰⁵ Fleay detects fraud in the Leir entry in the Stationers' Register and dates the play in 1605.¹⁰⁶

Recent scholars have been just as varied in their opinions. Chambers concludes that it was written in 1605, possibly not finished before the eclipses in autumn, and for some reason, conceivably the need for censorship, not performed at Court until 1606.¹⁰⁷ Boas places the play before the Leir publication and also claims that the metrical evidences are very similar to those found in Othello, which evidence would accord with a 1605 date.¹⁰⁸ Bradley thinks that Othello was composed about 1604 and Lear about 1605, and concludes that ". . . though changed in style and versification, there are obvious resemblances

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 378.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 379.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 380.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 381.

¹⁰⁷Chambers, op. cit., p. 470.

between the two.¹⁰⁹ Reviewing these similarities, one finds that more than half occur in the first two acts, indicating that the farther Shakespeare was removed from Othello, the less inclined he was to bring in ideas from the previous play.¹¹⁰ Craig also establishes Lear in 1605 but cannot decide if the play were before or after the publication of the old play. He, like Bradley, sees a certain similarity between Lear and Timon of Athens and concludes that Timon came after Lear and before Macheth.¹¹¹ Doran offers the most compromising, yet very logical, view that the play was first publicly performed about 1605, and later revised in the summer of 1606 for the performance at Court in December of 1606.¹¹² Such a theory complements her own views on the status of the quarto and folio copies. One point in Doran's favor is her consideration of the Court performance. Too many of the critics have not given this fact the special significance which is due. In a period when Shakespeare's company was known as the King's Men, and in a time when there was a growing need for the

¹⁰⁸Boas, op. cit., p. 438.

¹⁰⁹Bradley, op. cit., p. 198.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 356.

¹¹¹Craig, An Introduction to Shakespeare, p. 248.

support of the theatre by the Court, and in a play in which James's influence can be shown, it would seem to be rather strange that such a play would have been written over a long period, even that of several months, before it reached the Court of James. Finally, Muir reveals that the most usual hypothesis is that Shakespeare wrote Lear in the winter of 1605-6, using the 1605 edition of Leir.¹¹³ Assuming that all of the previously mentioned internal evidence is valid, and that Winstanley's ideas hold truth, one may conclude that the year, 1606, as the composition date of Lear may be possible, bringing it nearer to the date of the Court performance and even closer to its initial entries in the Stationers' Register.

The first such notation was recorded on November 26, 1607, for Nathaniel Butter and John Busby:

Entred for their copie vnder th andes of Sir George Buck knight and Th wardens A booke called. Master William Shakespeare his "historve of Kinge Lear" as yt was played before the kinges maiestie at Whitehall vppon Saint Stephens night at Christmas Last by his maiesties servantes play-inge vsually at the "Globe" on the Banksyde. vjd 114

¹¹²M. Doran, The Text of King Lear, p. 125.

¹¹³Muir (ed.), King Lear, p. xcii.

¹¹⁴Arber, op. cit., III, p. 366.

This entry was the initial registration for the genuine quarto edition of Lear, licensed under the authority of the wardens and Sir George Buc, the Master of Revels. It was published in the next year, 1608, under the following title:

M. William Shak-speare: / HIS / True Chronicle
 Historie of the life and / death of King LEAR
 and his three / Daughters. / With the vnfortunate
life of Edgar, sonne / and heire to the Earle of
Gloster, and his / sullen and assumed humor of /
TOM of Bedlam: / As it was played before the Kings
Maiestie at Whitehall vpon / S. Stephans night in
Christmas Hollidayes. / By his Maiesties seruants
playing vsually at the Gloabe / on the Bancke-side.
 / LONDON, / Printed for Nathaniel Butter, and are to
 be sold at his shop in Pauls / Church-yard at the
 signe of the Pide Bull neere / St. Austins Gate.
 1608¹¹⁵

Butter issued a second edition of the quarto in 1619, falsely dated 1608, with an almost identical title.¹¹⁶

The only difference, omitting varieties of type, lies in the imprint, for in the second edition there is no allusion to the shop at the sign of the Pide Bull. It should be noted that the appearance of Shakespeare's name at the head of the title-page is unique. It has

¹¹⁵W. Shakespeare, M. William Shak-speare's King Lear: The First Quarto 1608, a facsimile edition prepared by Charles Praetorius.

¹¹⁶P. Williams, "Two Problems in the Folio Text of King Lear," Shakespeare Quarterly, IV (October, 1953), p. 451. Also, Leo Kirschbaum, Shakespeare and the Stationers, p. 227 ff.

been suggested that this occurrence enabled the buyer to distinguish between the Lear and Leir plays.¹¹⁷ In the historical study of the play, these two quarto versions have been distinguished by naming the first the Pide Bull edition and the second the N. Butter edition. Although there are differences of spelling, punctuation, and pagination between the two quartos, it has been proved

. . . that no agent but the printer is required to explain the corrections, and that the emendations, introducing as they do no new errors, only partially correcting the old, or producing a divergence in the sense from the original meaning as revealed in the folio, tend to disprove the existence of a source for the text of Q₂ other than the printed text of Q₁.¹¹⁸

There are, then, essentially only two printed early versions of the play, that of the first quarto and that of the 1623 Folio. The first folio was edited by John Heminge and Henrie Condell, close friends of Shakespeare's in the Globe enterprise, and printed by William Jaggard and Edward Blount. Unfortunately, what may be considered true concerning the relationship between the two quartos is not the case in the relationship of the quarto to the folio copy in which one finds many discrepancies. The

¹¹⁷Furness, op. cit., p. 355.

¹¹⁸Doran, op. cit., p. 30.

case has been further confused by Heminge and Condell's announcement in their preface that

. . . where before you were abus'd with diverse stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths of injurious imposters that expos'd them, even these are now offer'd to your view cur'd and perfect in their limbs.¹¹⁹

The problem lies in deciding if the editors were referring to Lear in their statement of "stolen and surreptitious" copies. (The contrary opinions of such a view will be discussed in the course of this chapter.)

The quarto and folio texts can be distinguished in a variety of ways. For example, the quarto is the longer of the two, containing nearly three hundred lines which are not in the folio. On the other hand, the folio contains, roughly, one hundred lines that are not found in the quarto. Both texts have a number of verbal errors, but the quarto has more than the folio. In many cases, one can refer to the folio to correct the quarto errors and vice versa, but some unintelligible passages are found even in the corrected forms. There is a good deal of faulty punctuation in the quarto but very little in the folio. Some of the verse in the quarto is either

¹¹⁹W. Shakespeare, Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies, a facsimile edition prepared by Helge Kokeritz and Charles T. Prouty, p. A 3.

printed as prose or improperly aligned. In both texts, there are a few lines of prose (not the same ones) set up as verse. The quarto presents a continuous text, not divided into acts and scenes as is the case with the folio. The stage directions are more complete and more precise in the folio text and seem to have been written by a prompter. Speeches are often assigned to the wrong speaker in the quarto, while the folio appears to have reduced the number of actors needed for the minor parts.¹²⁰ With these basic distinctions in mind, one's problem is to determine the nature of the manuscripts which the quarto and folio represent.

Dr. Samuel Johnson expressed the belief that the folio was printed from Shakespeare's last revision carelessly and hastily performed, with more thought of shortening the scenes than of continuing the action.¹²¹ Tieck suggests that some of the omissions in the folio were due to censorship or to the obscurity of passing allusions.¹²² Knight does not think that the quarto copies were made from the author's manuscript nor does

¹²⁰Although most critics are in general agreement on the basic assumptions given in this paragraph, these notions are based primarily on Doran, *op. cit.*, p. 390, and Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 465.

¹²¹Furness, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

he assume that the omissions in the folio were due to the hands of editors.¹²³ What these three scholars have in common is the supposition that the omissions in the folio were made by Shakespeare himself.

Delius, however, concludes that all the passages in the folio, not found in the quarto, were either carelessly or willfully omitted from the quarto by the printer or editor; all the passages in the quarto, not found in the folio, were omitted by the actors in order to shorten the drama. He considers the abridgement of the folio text in many cases to have been so carelessly performed as to disprove the possibility of Shakespeare's having had a hand in it, but maintains that the folio is closer to Shakespeare's original text.¹²⁴ Koppel's study is a refutation of the position held by Delius. He takes the original form to be essentially that of the quarto text. The passages missing from it, he considers, with two exceptions (I. i. 38-43, and III. vi. 12-15), to be later additions to the play by Shakespeare. The play having

¹²²Loc. cit.

¹²³Ibid., p. 361.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 363.

been enlarged, abridgement was necessary and was probably undertaken by Shakespeare.¹²⁵

Schmidt does not deny that the basis of the quarto text is a version of the play earlier than that represented in the folio, or that the folio text is one which has been abridged for acting purposes. However, he considers that the errors in the quarto text can be accounted for only by the supposition that the play was taken down in shorthand by reporters in the theatre. The fact that it contains much which is not in the folio only signifies to him that the manuscript was prepared at a time when the drama was acted in its unabridged form.¹²⁶ He was one of the first to inject the possibility that the quarto may be one of those "surreptitious" copies mentioned in the preface to the folio. For, with the shorthand hypothesis, the Lear quarto becomes less authentic than many believed. Fleay, likewise, regards the first quarto as a ". . . scandalously incorrect and surreptitious copy. . . ." ¹²⁷ of the play, not as originally written and acted but as altered by Shakespeare for representation at Court.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 364-367.

¹²⁶Ibid., pp. 367-370.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 372.

Several of the passages which appear only in the folio, he considers, would have been offensive to James I (I. ii. 119-125; I. iv. 345-50; III. i. 22-29; III. ii. 80-95). Their absence from the quarto text he takes as evidence of their having been removed for the performance at Court on December 26, 1606. As to the nature of the omission from the folio text, he subscribes to the opinion of Delius.¹²⁸

Greg, another adherent to the shorthand theory, believes that the quarto text is a very bad one, both in comparison with that of the folio and with any of the more "reputable" quartos of other Shakespearean plays. He attempts to justify his opinion by stating that the quarto version is a reported text obtained from actual performance, presumably by some method of shorthand. His reasons for this assumption are that many errors in the quarto are mistakes of the ear and show serious confusion between speakers, even to assigning some speeches to the wrong speaker. He claims also that there is a disregard for metre, and often erroneous punctuation occurs in the quarto. Greg believes, however, that while the folio

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 370-373.

copy represents the playhouse manuscript, it is printed from an imperfect, but corrected, copy of the quarto and is, therefore, liable at times to take over erroneous readings from it.¹²⁹ This view leads Greg to his paradoxical and perhaps dubious conclusion:

We know that the quarto presents in general a very inferior version, being derived from what was probably a shorthand report of an actual performance, and even when we can feel assured that the press reader has correctly recovered the reading of the copy, we can have no certainty that this was actually what Shakespeare intended, unless it is guaranteed by the independent testimony of the folio. . . . The importance of this fact for the textual criticism of King Lear will be at once apparent. For if these oversights can be proved to have happened in the case of readings which are variant in the quarto--and in which we have therefore some sort of check on that of the folio--there can be no manner of doubt that they happened just as frequently where copies of the quarto offer no variants. This leads us to the seeming paradoxical conclusion that where our two authorities differ we have better warrant for the text than where they agree. . . . whereas where the two agree we can never be certain that the folio has not carelessly reproduced an error of the quarto.¹³⁰

Chambers is also in agreement with the shorthand theory and states that the folio rests upon an independent manuscript, but thinks that it, too, contains many errors taken over from the quarto. He believes that the quarto

¹²⁹Greg, The Variants in the First Quarto of King Lear, p. 142.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 187.

contains some connective phrases by actors and that many of its misreadings might well be due either to actors' blunders or to mishearings. He attributes most of the quarto omissions to lacunae of sense or action, identical line ends which led to mistakes, reporter's lapses of attention, and political and social criticism. He also shows that the quarto has practically no punctuation except that of commas, and ascribes the long passages of prose in the quarto to the shorthand reporter who did not trouble to arrange them in verse. His explanations of omissions in the folio are found in lacunae, printer's errors, operations of a censor, ordinary theatrical cutting, narratives of episodes in France, and other dialogue which takes away from the main action.¹³¹

Adams also considers that the play was taken down in shorthand and disposed of to two unscrupulous publishers. He suggests in an interesting, yet unproved, view that Butter and Busby did not publish the play immediately after receiving it because of protest by the King's Company, but that they agreed, upon the payment of a sum of money, to defer their actual issue of the drama for two years.¹³²

¹³¹Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 465.

¹³²Adams, "The Quarto of King Lear and Shorthand," Modern Philology, XXXI (1933), p. 137.

Boas follows the same reasoning, although in the quarto version he admits only that the text was surreptitiously obtained, but he does not admit shorthand.¹³³ Cunningham believes the quarto to be a pirated edition and claims that the additions to the folio are explanatory, intensifying the dramatic effect, often striking a far deeper note.¹³⁴

It can thus be seen that, from Schmidt in 1879 to the critics of the twentieth century, there has been an agreement among many that the quarto was a pirated edition and that the text was made through the aid of a reporter, probably by means of shorthand. Shorthand, of course, would seem to imply piracy, but even Greg admits that the entrance in the Stationers' Register is perfectly normal and that it was made under the hand of Sir George Buc, suggesting authorized publication.¹³⁵

In 1949, George Ian Duthie published Elizabethan Shorthand and the First Quarto of King Lear, which would seem to have ended the shorthand theory, once and for all.

¹³³Boas, op. cit., p. 438.

¹³⁴R. H. Cunningham, "The Revision of King Lear," Modern Language Review, V (1910), pp. 445-453.

¹³⁵Greg, The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare, p. 113.

In his analysis, Duthie discusses the shorthand systems of Bright, Bales, and John Willis, the known ones during Shakespeare's period. One must emphasize in the beginning that, judged as a reported text, the Lear quarto is remarkably full and accurate. The hypothesis that the quarto was transmitted by Bright's Characterie, a shorthand system, is defeated by considering four requirements for this system: (1) a tremendous grasp of English vocabulary which is required by the stenographer; (2) a degree of mental alertness which is necessary to assign words to their Characterie words; (3) the difficulty of learning and of distinguishing between 550 words which have very similar signs; and (4) the slowness of the system caused by the methods of writing in columns and the necessity of moving the hand backwards to write the initial letters.¹³⁶

As for the second system, Bales's Brachygraphie, Duthie shows that a transcriber must also remember over five hundred symbols and their brachygraphy words and that he must be able on the instant to relate any non-brachygraphy word. He concludes that Brachygraphie makes

¹³⁶G. I. Duthie, Elizabethan Shorthand and the First Quarto of King Lear, p. 9.

the same colossal demands on the memory as does Characterie, and one system is as grossly impracticable as the other for verbatim reporting."¹³⁷

Concerning Willis' Stenographie, the third system, Duthie quotes from Willis, proving the impossibility of the use of shorthand in the Lear quarto:

Wherein, if the speaker from whose mouth we note, be very swift of deliuerie, so that he transporteth our imagination beyond the indeuour of our hands; it shall not be amisse to write only the Verbes & Substantives, and other Words essential to the speech deliuered, reseruing a space for the rest which are of lighter circumstance, to be supplied with Penne immediately after the speech is ended.¹³⁸

Duthie states that if the quarto had been transmitted this way, one would certainly expect to find a consistent variation between passages full of passion, presumably delivered rather fast, and passages of calmer mood, presumably delivered more slowly. But there is in the quarto no such consistent variation. Therefore, Duthie says, with tongue in cheek, that

. . . if Q Lear was indeed reported from performance by Stenographie, the stenographer was able to use the system to much better effect than its inventor was prepared to allow to be possible, though the latter had certainly no mean opinion of child of his invention.¹³⁹

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 12.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 25.

It should, perhaps, be noted that the scholars who follow the shorthand theory give no indication of having examined any of these systems extensively enough to prove their own ideas. It should also be added that the quarto text is not characterized by persistent imperfection at the beginning of speeches nor after stage directions, which tendency would show that the stenographer had to pause to identify and note the name of the character speaking. Therefore, after many exhaustive arguments against Greg's theory in particular, Duthie concludes:

If in 1608 there were shorthand systems in existence other than those of Bright, Bales, and John Willis, we do not know what they were really like. I believe that Q Lear could not have been reported in the theater by means of the systems of Bright, Bales, or John Willis. As regards other systems which may have existed, I can only re-emphasize the considerable objections to the theory of shorthand transmission for Q Lear by any system. And the fact that though Edmond Willis claims that he has resorted to all the shorthand teachers in London, he does not in his historical survey of shorthand specifically mention any systems except those of Bright, Bales, and John Willis, strongly suggests that the other systems he knew of were not very good--were not noteworthy as these three, with all their faults, were.¹⁴⁰

Prior to Duthie, in 1935, Doran had made a study of Bright's Shorthand. While she did not make a complete

¹³⁹Loc. cit.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 82.

a study as Duthie, she concluded that the shorthand system could not account for all of the variants in the quarto. Furthermore, since other agencies had to be admitted to produce the remainder of variants, they also would have been capable of producing the variants credited to Characterie.¹⁴¹

Two different views remain that attempt to explain the quarto text and its connection with the folio edition. The first is offered by Doran, who believes that the quarto was printed from Shakespeare's original manuscript and that the folio represented the prompt book, transcribed from the original and subsequently revised and shortened. The designations given to the minor characters in the quarto suggest that Shakespeare applied them indiscriminately, not having in mind the particular way in which the parts would have to be assigned. When the play was performed, the appellations had to have individual significance. At various places in the quarto, such titles as Servant (I. v), Knight (II. iv), Gentleman (III. i), and Dector (IV. iv) are used, but in the folio all of these characters are given to the role of the

¹⁴¹M. Doran, "The Quarto of King Lear and Bright's Shorthand," Modern Philology, XXXIII (1935), pp. 139-157.

Gentleman. Doran suggests that this doubling of parts is, perhaps, proof that the folio manuscript served as the prompt copy in the theatre. In general, the directions of the quarto are descriptive, and those of the folio are terse and definite. This fact would indicate that in the quarto Shakespeare was trying to visualize the action, while in the folio the prompter was interested only in getting the actors on stage at the proper time. Since the folio supplies correct readings for many errors in the quarto which could not have been corrected by the printer unaided, and since the folio contains more than one hundred lines not in the quarto and has many variants and alterations of its own, it would seem that the folio is a transcript of an early form of the play which had been prepared by the bookkeeper as the official prompt-book. Doran claims, therefore, that a common manuscript source, in which some mistakes were made and in which some words were illegibly written, is the basis for both the quarto and the folio.¹⁴² She also reassures the reader that the quarto, despite its misprints, misreadings, omissions, and faulty printing of verse, is substantially the same play, line for line, as the folio. Even though

¹⁴²Doran, op. cit., p. 96.

there is a great deal of verse printed as prose, it is also true that most of the lines are printed as verse. To explain the many errors in the quarto, it must be considered that the printer was working from a manuscript which had been added to, patched, and revised, and these circumstances would make the quarto extremely hard to read. This document, Doran assumes was Shakespeare's original manuscript, but she does not think that Shakespeare was the one who made the transcript for the playhouse fair copy since there are too many errors and doubtful readings in it, common to both quarto and folio. In summary, Doran's views are thus stated:

From the manuscript which was later given to Nathaniel Butter to print, a fair copy was made; this transcript, somewhat revised, abridged for acting, supplied with the necessary annotations by the prompter, altered in the direction of explicitness with regard to the assignment of the minor parts, and marked and licensed by the censor, was used as the theater prompt-book and finally turned over to Jaggard and Blount in 1623 as part of the copy for the First Folio.¹⁴³

The last theory is that of Craig who has re-examined the entire quarto problem. He claims that if the printer for the quarto had used Shakespeare's original manuscript, the quarto would reflect the disorder and illegibility of

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 122.

the first draft, as the Lear quarto certainly does. He rules out the possibility that the quarto was put together by memorial reconstruction, since more errors are found in the part derived from the Sidney story than in the Lear legend, and since no reporter would have been that prejudiced against a minor plot. Unlike Doran, Craig does not think that the quarto version was ever acted, since it has none of the markings of the prompter. But, like Doran, he maintains that a transcript was made from this quarto which, after undergoing theatrical changes, served as the copy for the folio version. He also mentions the possibility that Shakespeare himself made the transcript, since some of the additions are truly Shakespearean, such as Merlin's prophecy (III. ii. 79-95), and since many of the errors have been corrected or eliminated. Bradley has also offered the idea that Shakespeare shortened Lear after the original manuscript was made.¹⁴⁴ This hypothesis, of course, does not infer that the folio version was Shakespeare's clean copy, since the play undoubtedly underwent changes throughout the years. Craig summarizes by stating:

¹⁴⁴Bradley, op. cit., p. 359.

. . . it is not necessary to believe that the two texts have any relation to each other, except that they both originated from Shakespeare's manuscript, the one by copying, the other by printing. Common errors in the two fundamental texts, as well as bibliographical similarities (and there are many of them), are abundantly accounted for by a common origin in Shakespeare's original manuscript.¹⁴⁵

In brief, Shakespeare probably wrote Lear sometime in late 1605, or in the first part of 1606. It is quite possible that he revised his foul papers and made his fair copy which was recorded in the Stationers' Register and eventually produced at the Court of King James on December 26, 1606. The source of the 1608 quarto was not the fair copy but the foul papers, since ". . . the kind of stage directions, a general lack of entrance and exit notations, and confused character designations. . . ."¹⁴⁶ point to foul papers. It is also unlikely that the King's Men would have relinquished their prompt copy, based upon the fair copy, for publication. The folio copy in 1623 was derived from a prompt copy since the King's Men were responsible for its edition. In the folio, the stage directions are more precise, almost all the entrances and exits are supplied, and the character designations are

¹⁴⁵Craig, A New Look at Shakespeare's Quartos, p. 16.

¹⁴⁶W. T. Jewkes, Act Division in Elizabethan and Jacobean Plays 1583-1616, p. 185.

cleaned up.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, it is quite evident that Heminge and Condell did not have in mind Lear when they spoke of "maimed and deformed" texts since the quarto of Lear was not deprived of any of its limbs, but, on the contrary, was the ". . . closest approximation to the play as Shakespeare wrote it."¹⁴⁸ In other words, what Koppel said in 1877 still is true. There are three forms of Lear existing: "The original form was, essentially, that of the Quarto, then followed a longer form, with the additions in the Folio, as substantially our modern editions have again restored them; then, the shortest form as it is preserved in the Folio."¹⁴⁹ The why and wherefore of these additions and omissions will be analyzed in detail from the quarto and folio texts in the next chapter.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁴⁸Craig, A New Look at Shakespeare's Quartos, p. 15.

¹⁴⁹Quoted in Furness, op. cit., p. 365.

CHAPTER III

A COMPARISON OF QUARTO AND FOLIO TEXTS OF KING LEAR

All theories of what a good play is, or how a good play should be written, are futile. A good play is a play which when acted upon the boards makes an audience interested and pleased. A play that fails in this is a bad play.

--Maurice Baring, Have You Anything to Declare?

The Q and F¹⁵⁰ texts of Lear vary greatly in length for what are, undoubtedly, numerous reasons. Although there are minor variations between these texts in the matters of single words or lines which are readily attributable to the careless work of a scribe or printer, this present study will be concerned with only the most significant variations. There are, in the beginning, two generalizations which may be made: (1) F is shorter than Q; (2) when significant variations between the two texts occur, they are most often located in the third and fourth acts. The following exposition of these conditions will attempt to present solutions to these problems.

¹⁵⁰In this chapter, the abbreviations, Q and F, will refer to the first quarto and the first folio respectively.

Act I¹⁵¹

The first major variation in Q and F occurs in the Court scene involving the division of the kingdom, specifically in the following lines given to Lear:

Q

Meane time we will expresse
our darker purposes,
The map there; know we haue
diuided
In three, our kingdome; and
tis our first intent,
To shake all cares and bus-
ines of our state,
Confirming them on yonger
yeares. . . .
(I. i. 37-41)

F

Meane time we shal expresse
our darker purpose.
Giue me the Map there. Know
that we haue diuided
In three our Kingdome; and
'tis our fast intent,
To shake all Cares and Bus-
inesse from our Age,
Conferring them on yonger
strengths, while we
Vnburthen'd crawl toward
death. Our son of Cornwall,
And you our no lesse louing
Sonne of Albany,
We haue this houre a con-
stant will to publish
Our daughters seuerall Do-
wers, that future strife
May be preuented now.
(I. i. 37-46)

Obviously, the major difference in the two speeches, aside from the apparent length, is one of choice of terms (Q: state - F: Age; Q: yeares - F: strengths). However, it is clear that neither of the passages is seriously altered in meaning by the different terms employed. As

¹⁵¹Act and scene divisions are absent in Q but present in F. The divisions made in this chapter are based on those in F.

for the varied lengths of the speeches and the contents therein, Koppel claims that the F version is unworthy of Shakespeare,¹⁵² and Chambers asserts that there is a lacunae of sense in the F version without the lines shown above, since they exploit the scene which presents the division of the kingdom.¹⁵³ On the other hand, it may be that the passage is missing in Q by error and present in F to establish the characters of Albany and Cornwall. However, one must admit that the crown is given these two in the subsequent action of this same scene, at which time they are identified fully to the audience.

In Lear's same speech, there are two other lines not present in Q:

Q

The two great Princes
 France and Burgundy,
 Great ryuals in our young-
 est daughters loue,
 Long in our Court haue made
 their amorous sojourne,
 And here are to answered,
 tell me my daughters. . . .
 (I. i. 46-49)

F

The Princes, France
 & Burgundy
 Great Riuals in our young-
 est daughters loue,
 Long is our Court, haue made
 their amorous sojourne,
 And here are to be answer'd.
 Tell me my daughters
 (Since now we will diuest vs
 both of Rule,
 Interest of Territory, Cares
 of State). . . .
 (I. i. 46-51)

¹⁵²Furness, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

¹⁵³Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 467.

The idea contained in parentheses in F has already been expressed in ll. 37-39; therefore, there is no need for it in either text. It is possible that its absence in Q may be the result of abridgement.¹⁵⁴

Another passage in F emphasizes the roles of France and Burgundy:

Q

but now our loy,
Although the last, not
least in our deere loue,

What can you say to win a
third, more opulent
Then your sisters.

(I. i. 84-85; 87-88)

F

Now our loy,
Although our last and least;
to whose yong loue,
The Vines of France, and
Milke of Burgundie,
Striue to be interest. What
can you say, to draw
A third, more opulent then
your Sisters: speake.

(I. i. 84-88)

This is the second variation in F which suggests the establishment of characters.

A typical printer's mistake can be seen in the following dialogue:

Q

Cord. Nothing my Lord

Lear. How, nothing can
come of nothing. . . .
(I. i. 89, 92)

F

Cor. Nothing my Lord.
Lear. Nothing?
Cor. Nothing.
Lear. Nothing will come
of nothing. . . .
(I. i. 89-92)

¹⁵⁴Furness, op. cit., p. 365.

Lear's and Cordelia's one-word lines are both absent in Q, and may be printer's mistakes, since it is possible for the eye to be misled by the repetition of a word. It should be noted, however, that the lines show no interruption if omitted.

The "eclipses speech" by Gloucester has three sentences in F which are missing in Q:

Q

These late eclipses in
the Sunne and Moone portend
no good to vs, though the
wisdomme of nature can reason
thus and thus, yet nature
finds it selfe scourg'd by
the sequent effects, loue
cooles, friendship fals off,
brothers diuide, in Citties
mutinies, in Countries
discords, Pallaces treason,
the bond crackt betweene
soone and father;

(I. ii. 112-118)

F

These late Eclipses in the
Sun and Moone portend no
good to us: though the wise-
dome of Nature can reason
it thus, and thus, yet Na-
ture finds it selfe scourg'd
by the sequent effects.
Loue cooles, friendship falls
off, Brothers diuide, In
Cities, mutinies; in Countries,
discord; in Pallaces, Treason;
and the Bond crack'd,
'twixt Soone and Father.
This villaine of mine comes
vnder the prediction;
there's Son against Father,
the King fals from byas
of Nature, there's Father
against Childe. We haue
seene the best of our time.
Machinations, hollownesse,
treacherie, and all ruin-
ous disorders follow vs
disquietly to the Graues.

(I. ii. 112-125)

Chambers, who has decided that Q was used for Court presentation, believes that this passage was omitted from Q for censorship reasons probably because of the Gunpowder

Plot.¹⁵⁵ Fleay also claims that such passages, ". . . innocent perhaps originally, but liable to misconstruction by the Court, have been carefully left out in the Quarto."¹⁵⁶ Doran objects to Fleay's supposition because it infers that Q and F represent collateral manuscripts, each one having been derived independently of the other from Shakespeare's original version. She states that there is no absolute proof to show that the printer omitted the passage.¹⁵⁷ At the same time, the whole passage describes deterioration in the kingdom and could easily be a topical allusion to James I or to some other royal person at Court.

Later, in this same scene, there occurs the first significant variation in the folio in Edmund's speech which is strangely similar to Gloucester's, previously discussed:

Q

Bast. I promise you the effects he writ of, succeed vnhappily, as of vn-naturalnesse betweene the child and the parent, death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities, diuisions in state, menaces and

F

Bast. I promise you, the effects he writes of, succede vnhappily.

¹⁵⁵Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 467.

¹⁵⁶Quoted in Furness, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

¹⁵⁷Doran, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

QF

maledictions against King
and nobles, needles diffiden-
ces, banishment of friends,
dissipation of Cohorts, nup-
tial breaches, and I
know not what.

Edg. How long have you
beene a sectary Astrono-
micall?

Bast. Come, come, when you
saw my father last?
(I. ii. 156-165)

When saw you my father
last?
(I. ii. 163-165)

Fleay thinks that these lines appeared only in Q (Court presentation) because such phrases as ". . . maledictions against King and nobles. . . ," referring to the Gunpowder Plot, and "nuptial breaches," referring to Lady Essex, are allusions that would not be disagreeable to the King.¹⁵⁸

In complete contradiction, Chambers decides that they do not appear in F because of censorship.¹⁵⁹ However, when one carefully studies the construction of the two passages in question, he discovers that they consist of (1) general comments about society and the effects of planetary influence; and (2) specific comments about immediate events and characters within the play and the effects of planetary influence upon them. Therefore, since the previous passage by Gloucester (absent in Q) and this one by Edmund (absent in F) are somewhat repetitious, one might suggest that Shakespeare in making his fair copy (F) decided to give

the speech to Gloucester who is the older and more matured of the two characters, and who has just witnessed Lear's radical treatment of Kent and Cordelia in the Court. It is possible therefore, that these variations may be attributed to Shakespeare himself.

The third scene of this act contains variations in passages assigned to Goneril:

Q

Gon. Put on what wearie negligence you please, you and your fellow seruants, i'de haue it come in question, if he dislike it, let him to our sister, whose mind I know in that are one, not to be ouerruled; idle old man that still would manage those authorities that hee hath giuen away, now by me life old fooles are babes again, & must be vs'd with checkes as flatteries, when they are seene abusd, remember what I tell you.

Gent. Very well Madam.

Gon. And let his Knights haue colder looks among you, what growes of it no matter, aduise your fellowes so. I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall, that I may speake, ile write straight to my sister to hould my very course, goe prepare for dinner.

(I. iii. 12-25)

F

Gon. Put on what weary negligence you please, You and your Fellowes: I'de haue it come to question; If he distaste it, let him to my Sister, Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,

Remember what I haue said.

Ste. Well, Madam.

Gon. And let his Knights haue colder lookes among you: what growes of it no matter, aduise your fellowes so,

Ile write straight to my Sister to hold my course; prepare for dinner.

(I. iii. 16-25)

Granville-Barker believes that the shorter passage eliminates some repetition and shows Goneril to be terser and less familiar with her servant.¹⁶⁰ While it certainly does not seem proper for Goneril to speak such intimate thoughts to a servant, there could be another reason for the absence of this passage in F. Goneril's speech is the first of several throughout the drama which refer to the King or to some "old" Court authority who foolishly gives away privileges. It is possible that James I or some other noble at Court could have taken offense at these references.

The fourth scene introduces the audience to the Fool, and one of his songs and the ensuing dialogue are missing in F:

Q

Foole. That Lord that counsaill'd thee to giue
away thy land,
Come place him heere by mee, doe thou for
him stand,
The sweet and bitter foole will presently
appeare,
The one in motley here, the other found
out there.

Lear. Do'st thou call mee foole boy?

¹⁵⁸Quoted in Furness, op. cit., p. 371.

¹⁵⁹Chambers, op. cit., p. 467.

¹⁶⁰Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 329.

Q

Foole. All thy other Titles thou hast giuen away,
tha thou wast borne with.

Kent. This is not altogether foole my Lord.

Foole. No faith, Lords and great men will not let
me, if I had a monopolie out, they would
haue part an't, and Ladies too, they will
not let me haue all the fools to my selfe,
they'l be snatching;

(I. iv. 155-169)

Johnson and Chambers both declare that these lines are omitted in F for political reasons as the contents seem to censure monopolies.¹⁶¹ However, the Q passage is the second to iterate the "give away" motif. The Fool is aware that Lear is foolish in giving away his crown, still wishing to keep his title. Also, the absence of the passage in F may indicate, again, that someone in James's Court could have taken offense. In spite of the Declaratory Act against monopolies, passed at the close of Elizabeth's reign, James I constantly made such grants to his needy courtiers, and there was a great popular outcry as a consequence.¹⁶² At the same time, it should be admitted that the F version shows a tightening of the dialogue, which up to this point has appeared to be one of the characteristics of the F text.

¹⁶¹Furness, op. cit., p. 73; Chambers, op. cit. p. 467.

¹⁶²Muir (ed.), King Lear, p. 44.

In this same scene, a very important passage is absent from Q in which Goneril justifies her actions to Albany:

F

Gen. This man hath good Counsell,
 A hundred Knights?
 'Tis politike, and safe to let him keepe
 At point a hundred Knights: yes, that on
 euerie dreame,
 Each buz, each fancie, each complaint, dislike,
 He may enguard his dotage with their powres,
 And hold your liues in mercy, Oswald, I say.

Alb. Well, you may feare too farre.

Gen. Safer then trust too farre;
 Let me still take away the harmes I feare,
 Not feare still to be taken. I know his heart,
 What he hath vtter'd I haue writ my Sister:
 If she sustaine him, and his hundred Knights
 What I haue shew'd th' vnfitnesse.

Enter Steward

How not Oswald?

(I. iv. 344-357)

Fleay thinks that this scene may recall the King's whole-sale creation of knights, an event often satirized on the boards, and believes that it was removed from Q.¹⁶³ Yet, this situation is strange since up until now Q has shown no similar editing. One should recall that, later in the drama, Albany does not seem to know what Goneril has done; however, here she carefully tells him what she is planning. The F passage, then, may be an interpolation,

¹⁶³Furness, op. cit., p. 371.

not only permitting Generil to defend herself, but also bringing Albany into the intrigue. This version makes the play more meaningful and the characters more understandable.

The final textual problem in the first act occurs at the end, in a couplet spoken by the Fool:

Q

F

Shee that is maide now,
and laughs at my depar-
ture,
Shall not be a maide long,
except things be cut
shorter.

She that's a Maid now, &
laughs at my departure,
Shall not be a Maid long,
vnlesse things be cut
shorter.

Although this couplet has the sanction of both Q and F, it has been considered spurious, because of its impropriety, by Bradley, Fleay, Granville-Barker, and others.¹⁶⁴

The usual explanation is that the lines entered the play-house copy by way of an actor who was playing up to the groundlings. It is known, of course, that some of the actors who played the Fools often spoke more than was set down for them; however, Robert Armin, who played the Fool in Lear, was not ever accused of this trick.¹⁶⁵ If the couplet is an interpolation, it is odd that the passage

¹⁶⁴Bradley, op. cit., p. 364; Fleay, op. cit., pp. 237-8; Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 333.

¹⁶⁵E. J. Dent, "Shakespeare and Music," A Companion to Shakespeare's Studies, p. 155.

occurs in both Q and F. It is obvious Shakespeare was not beyond writing such grotesque remarks. One should recall the series of copulation images in IV. vi. 114-126. Furthermore, scatological imagery abounds in his other plays; e.g., Hamlet's speeches to Ophelia during the play-within-the-play scene (III. ii). It is not too difficult to assign these lines to Shakespeare, therefore.

ACT II

The second act offers few variations. In the second scene, Gloucester's speech in F is shorter than in Q:

Q

F

Let me beseech your Grace
not to doe so,
His fault is much, and the
good King his maister
Will check him for't, your
purpost low correction
Is such, as basest and tem-
nest wretches for pil-
frings
And most common trespasses
are punisht with,
The King must take it ill,
that hee's so slightly
valued
In his messenger, should
haue him thus restrained.
(II. ii. 147-153)

Let me beseech your Grace,
not to do so,

The King his Master, needs
must take it ill
That he so slightly valued
in his Messenger
Should haue him thus restrained.
(II. ii. 151-154)

Again, the Q passage suggests that a King should never be treated rudely on the stage. Nothing seems to be lost if

these lines are omitted, but their absence in F perhaps emphasizes a conscious editorial pattern of keeping allusions to the King out of the F version.

In the fourth scene, the Fool's song is absent in

Q:

F

Winters not gon yet, if the wil'd Gasse fly that way,
Fathers that weare rags, do make their Children blind,
But Fathers that beare bags, shall see their children
kind.

Fortune that arrant whore, nere turns the key toth'
poore.

But for all this thou shalt haue as many Dolours
for thy

Daughters, as thou canst tell in a yeare.

(II. iv. 46-51)

Granville-Barker says that when F ". . . gives the Fool this little song, while Lear still stands speechless, his agony upon him, the dramatic effect will be appreciably different."¹⁶⁶ Since the song does somewhat break the mood of Kent's story which immediately precedes it, it is possible that the song was an interpolation made by an actor who played the Fool, or made at the actor's request after Q was printed. Songs were often added to a play in a printed edition, not occurring in the manuscript, and such may be the case, here. Also, there is the further

¹⁶⁶Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 329.

possibility that the song makes a subtle reference to the King and Court, again.

Another variant in the same scene occurs in Regan's justification of Goneril:

F

Lear. Say? How is that?

Reg. I cannot thinke my Sister in the least
 Would faile her Obligation, If Sir perchance
 She haue restrained the Riots of your Followres,
 'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,
 As cleeres her from all blame.

(II. iv. 143-147)

Chambers explains the absence of this passage in Q as a deficiency in reporting, supporting his theory of the origin of Q.¹⁶⁷ But since these lines strengthen the character of Regan, it is more than likely evidence of the author's own hand in revision in F. At the same time, the allusion to "Riots" might have had topical significance at Court.

ACT III

Most of the variations in the third act consist of passages appearing in Q but not in F. The first is the Gentleman's speech in the opening scene:

¹⁶⁷Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 467.

Q

Contending with the fret-
 full element,
 Bids the wind blow the
 earth into the sea,
 Or swell the curled waters
 boue the maine
 That things might change
 or cease, teares his
 white haire,
 Which the impetuous blasts
 with eyles rage
 Catch in their furie, and
 make nothing of,
 Striues in his little
 world of man to out-
 scorne,
 The too and fro conflict-
 ing wind and raine,
 This night wherein the
 cub-drawne Beare would
 couch,
 The Lyon, and the belly
 pinched Wolfe
 Keepe their furre dry,
 vnbonneted he runnes,
 And bids what will take all.
 (III. i. 4-15)

F

Contending with the fret-
 full Elements:
 Bids the winde blow the
 Earth into the Sea,
 Or swell the curled Waters
 'boue the Maine,
 That things might change,
 or cease.
 (III. i. 4-7)

Granville-Barker thinks these lines might have been taken
 out because of an inefficient actor.¹⁶⁸ One suspects,
 however, that such a long speech would seldom have been
 given to a "super" in the first place. Knight and
 Chambers agree that these lines are merely poetic de-
 scription of Lear in the storm and are not necessary since
 one later sees Lear in action under the same circumstances.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 330.

Knight is in agreement with Koppel in believing that Shakespeare was the editor here. Koppel states:

We may see here the artist's hand in the choice of passages to be erased, expunging a grand description of the King in a stormy night, which might weaken the impression of his actual appearance when he comes before us in the next scene.¹⁷⁰

There could also be an indirect topical allusion in Q to the King (or an old man) who has been mistreated.

Part of Kent's speech which immediately follows is absent from Q; and still another, from F:

Q

Sir, I doe know you,
And dare vpon the warrant
of my Arte,
Commend a deare thing to
you, there is diuision,
Although as yet the face
of it be cornered,
With mutuall cunning,
twixt Albany and Cornwall

F

Sir, I do know you,
And dare vpon the warrant
of my note
Commend a deere thing to
you. There is diuision
(Although as yet the fact
of it is couer'd
With mutuall cunning)
twixt Albany and Cornwall:
Who haue, as who haue not,
that their great Starres
Thron'd and set high; Ser-
uants, who seeme no lesse,
Which are to France the
Spies and Speculations
Intelligent of our State.
What hath bin seene,
Either in snuffes, and
packing of the Dukes,
Or the hard Reine which both
of them hath borne
Against the old kinde King;
or something deeper,
Whereof (perchance) these
are but furnishings.
(III. i. 17-29)

Q

F

But true it is, from France
 there comes a power
 Into this scattered king-
 dome, who alreadie wise
 in our negligence,
 Haue secret feet in some
 of our best Ports,
 And are at point to shew
 their open banner,
 Now to you, if on my cre-
 dit you dare build so
 farre,
 To make your speed to
 Douer, you shall find
 Some that will thanke you,
 making iust report
 Of how vnnaturall and be-
 madding sorrow
 The King hath cause to
 plaine,
 I am a Gentleman of blood
 and breeding,
 And from some knowledge
 and assurance,
 Offer this office to you.
 (III. 1. 18-21; 30-42)

Schmidt points out that between the variation in F and Q,
 some lines may have been omitted from both texts.¹⁷¹
 Greg remarks that, in this instance, cutting seems to
 have overlapped, so that a part of the text is entirely

¹⁶⁹Furness, op. cit., p. 360; Chambers, op. cit.,
 p. 467.

¹⁷⁰Quoted in Furness, op. cit., p. 366.

¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁷²Greg, The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare,
 p. 93.

lost.¹⁷² Fleay thinks that the two parts are clearly alternatives: the first being removed because it was a direct allusion to the scandalous peace with Spain in the winter of 1604-5, and the second being added just to placate the Court performance of Q.¹⁷³ Doran also sees these two passages as alternative abridgements shortening the text.¹⁷⁴ The F passage makes astrological references which could have been irritating to James I. The Q passage alludes to France and the coming invasion of Britain, but in the F version, most references to France in the last three acts are noticeably absent. As far as plot development is concerned, the Q version seems to be more necessary than the F variant. The problem, here, is still a confused one; however, it has been suggested that the compositor may have thought the marginal addition to F was meant to be substituted for the Q part, beside which it was written.¹⁷⁵

The second scene of this act presents no less a problem with the famous Merlin's prophecy by the Fool:

¹⁷³Furness, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

¹⁷⁴Doran, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁷⁵Muir (ed.), *King Lear*, p. 104.

F

This is a braue night to coole a Curtizan:
 Ile speake a Prophecie ere I go:
 When Priests are more in word, then matter;
 When Brewers marre their Malt with water;
 When Nobles are their Taylors Tutors,
 No Heretiques burn'd, but wenches Suters;
 When euery Cafe in Law, is right;
 No Squire in debt, nor no poore Knight;
 When Slanders do not liue in Tongues;
 Nor Cut-purses come not to throngs;
 When Vsurers tell their God i'th Field,
 And baudes, and whores, do Churches build,
 Then shall the Realme of Albion, come to great confusion:
 Then comes the time, who liues to see't,
 That going shall be vs'd with feet.
 This prophecie Merlin shall make, for I liue
 before his time.

(III. ii. 79-94)

Because the passage is not found in Q, Chambers and Granville-Barker both affirm that it is a theatrical interpolation.¹⁷⁶ Fleay terms the lines a gag, ". . . inserted by the Fool-actor to raise a laugh among the groundlings."¹⁷⁷ These critics also notice the awkward stage situation which occurs when Lear leaves the scene and permits the Fool to stay behind. Koppel, on the other hand, thinks that this speech was added by Shakespeare: ". . . the poet was generous to this, the most amiable of all his Fools, and even added to his part."¹⁷⁸ Craig also

¹⁷⁶Chambers, op. cit., p. 466; Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 312.

¹⁷⁷Fleay, op. cit., p. 238.

considers this passage to be truly Shakespearean and a possible argument to show Shakespeare's revision of his foul papers for a transcript.¹⁷⁹ It would seem that the critics who are reluctant to accept this passage fail to realize that the verse is typical of the Fool's utterances, and since Merlin is associated with early Britain, such a reference should even be expected in a play set in this time of history. Finally, the direct allusion to the great confusion, about to take place in England (Albion), might have been offensive to James I; however, here again, its absence in Q and appearance in F makes it most conspicuous.

The imaginary trial of Regan and Coneril in Q (III. vi. 18-59) is not found in F. Knight offers two reasons for its absence: first, so much physical exertion is needed by the actor who plays Lear throughout the third act that something had to be abridged; secondly, this scene might manifest ". . . too much method in the madness" of Lear.¹⁸⁰ But Granville-Barker offers a more probable reason in the time which it takes.¹⁸¹ Since the

¹⁷⁸Quoted in Furness, op. cit., p. 179.

¹⁷⁹Craig, A New Look at Shakespeare's Quartos, p. 14.

¹⁸⁰Quoted in Furness, op. cit., p. 360.

F version is shortened, this scene could have been easily foregone since it does not affect the logical development of the plot. Finally, the overtones of injustice in the scene could again have caused uneasiness at Court.

In this same scene, one of the thorniest problems in the drama occurs. The Fool exits with a simple line, appearing only in F, and is heard no more. Yet, Kent's speech, which appears a few lines later, only in Q, directs the Fool to come with them:

Q

Kent. Now good my Lord lie here awhile.

Lear. Make no noise, make no noise, draw the curtains, so, so, so.

Weele go to supper it'h morning, so, so, so.

Glost. Come hither friend, where is the King my maister.

Kent. Here sir, but trouble him not his wits are gon.

Glost. Good friend I prithy take him in thy armes, I haue or'e heard a plot of death vpon him,

Ther is a Litter ready lay him in't, & protection, take vp thy master,

F

Kent. Now good my Lord, lye heere, and rest awhile.

Lear. Make no noise, make no noise, draw the Curtaines: so, so, wee'l go to Supper it'h morning.

Foole. And Ile go to bed at noone.

Glou. Come hither Friend: Where is the King my Master?

Kent. Here Sir, but trouble him not, his wits are gon.

Glou. Good friend, I prythee take him in thy armes: I haue ore-heard a plot of death vpon him:

There is a Litter ready, lay him in't, And driue toward Douer friend,

181 Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 331.

Q

If thou should'st dally
 halfe an houre, his life
 with thine
 And all that offer to defend
 him stand in assured losse,
 Take vp the King and followe
 me, that will to some prouision
 Giue thee quicke conduct.

Kent. Oppressed nature
 sleepe,
 This rest might yet haue
 balmed thy broken sinewes,
 Which if conuenience will
 not allow stand in hard
 cure,
 Come helpe to beare thy
 maister, thou must not
 stay behind.
 Glost. Come, come away.
 (III. vi. 88-91;
 93-101; 104-108)

F

Where thou shalt meete
 Both welcome and protection.
 Take vp thy Master,
 If thou should'st dally halfe
 an houre, his life
 With thine, and all that offer
 to defend him,
 Stand in assured losse. Take
 vp, take vp,
 And fellow me, that will to
 some prouision
 Get thee quicke conduct.
 Come, come, away.
 (III. vi. 88-103)

The various interpretations concerning this scene will be discussed in conjunction with the role of Cordelia in the appendix. Bradley believes it strange, indeed, that Shakespeare should have left the audience in ignorance about the Fool's disappearance, but thinks the situation could have been due to nothing more than carelessness or an impatient desire to reduce his material.¹⁸² Swinburne

¹⁸²Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

thinks that since the trial scene and IV. iii, were absent in F, it is possible that the editors of F left out another scene in which the Fool would have reappeared.¹⁸³ Concerning Kent's speech, Granville-Barker suggests that the absence of these lines in F is probably due to a quick closing of the inner stage, which may obviate the lifting of the sleeping Lear.¹⁸⁴ However, this opinion is dubious since there are other indications that the F edition was performed on a stage that lacked the usual alcove at the back with the balcony above it.¹⁸⁵ It would seem that Kent explicitly directs the Fool to Dover, and one expects to see him again, but neither Q nor F gives any definite indication that the Fool reappears in the play. There is a possibility that the Fool should re-enter in IV. vi. with the mad Lear, and that some of Lear's speeches, especially the prose passages, belong to the Fool. These passages are ironically similar to the Fool's speeches in the earlier part of the play. Of course, this device could have been used by Shakespeare intentionally to show how Lear had assumed the role of

¹⁸³A. C. Swinburne, Shakespeare, p. 68.

¹⁸⁴Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 331.

¹⁸⁵Greg, The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare, p. 98.

the Fool. On the other hand, if Kent's speech in Q points to an inconsistency on Shakespeare's part, its absence in F could be attributed to this reason, causing the Fool's line in F to become a weak concealment of fault.

At the end of this scene, a speech by Edgar appears only in Q:

When we our betters see bearing our woes; we
scarcely thinke, our miseries, our foes.
Who alone suffers suffers, most it'h mind,
Leaving free things and happy sufferance doth
or'e scip,
When grieffe hath mates, and bearing fellowship;
How light and portable my paine seemes now,
When that which makes me bend, makes the King bow.
He childed as I fathered, Tom away,
Marke the high noyses and they selfe bewray,
When false opinion whose wrong thoughts defile
thee,
In thy iust prooffe repeals and reconciles thee,
What will hap more to night, safe scape the
King,
Lurke, lurke.

(III. vi. 109-122)

Fleay and Chambers agree that the passage was absent in F because its peculiar rhyme pattern had become unpopular in later years after Shakespeare had written the play.¹⁸⁶ But Muir remarks that the passage is not unlike that of

¹⁸⁶Furness, *op. cit.*, p. 372; Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 467.

¹⁸⁷Muir (ed.), *King Lear*, p. 137.

others from Shakespearean plays (Othello. I. iii. 210-20; Macbeth. V. iv. 16-21), and thinks it was necessary to bring out the parallelism between the two plots.¹⁸⁷

Granville-Barker advises the producer to suppress the soliloquy because it is redundant and separates Gloucester's catastrophe from Lear's misfortunes.¹⁸⁸ The speech is somewhat similar in mood to Edgar's at the beginning of the fourth act and, therefore, can easily be spared in this scene. Also, since the following scene involves many actors on the stage, it is possible to think that Edgar's speech may have been a delaying device to allow these actors to assemble for their entrances.

The last variation from the F text in the third act is a dialogue between two servants:

Q

Seruant. Ile neuer care what wickednes I doe,
If this man come to good.

2 Seruant. If she liue long, & in the end meet
the old course / of death, women will all turne
monsters.

1 Ser. Lets follow the old Earle, and get the bedlom
To lead him where he would, his madnes
Allows it selfe to anything.

2 Ser. Goe thou, ile fetch some flaxe and whites
of eggs to / apply to his bleeding face, now heauen
helpe him.

(III. vii. 99-107)

¹⁸⁸Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 331.

It is not difficult to assume that this situation is one of ordinary theatrical cutting, undoubtedly for the purpose of reducing the number of actors. If the play were taken to the country during the plague and revised for the provinces, economy in the number of actors would have been practical. One should also note that the servants, here, utter another seeming inconsistency when they express a desire to follow the Earl, since they do not appear in the next act with Gloucester.

ACT IV

Edgar's familiar litany of devils from Harsnett's

Declaration is not found in F in the first scene of the fourth act:

Q

Both stile and gate, horse-
way, and foot-path,
Poore Tom hath beene scard
out of his good wits,
Blesse the good man from
the foule fiend,
Fiue Fiends haue been in
poore Tom at once,
Of lust, as Obidicut, Hob-
bididence Prince of dumb-
nes,
Mahu of stealing, Modo of
murder, Stiberdigebit of
Mobing, & Mobing who
since possesses chamber-
maids
And waiting women, so,
blesse thee master.
(IV. 1. 58-66)

F

Both stile and gate; Horse-
away, and foot-path; poore
Tom hath bin scarr'd out
of his good wits. Blesse
thee good mans sonne, from
the foule Fiend.
(IV. 1. 58-60)

There is certainly nothing lost by the absence of this passage in F since the mad lingo was used frequently in the earlier part of the play. The speech, undoubtedly a difficult one for any actor to deliver, may have been removed, therefore, upon request. At the same time, a printer's mistake may be detected in the repetition of "Mobing" which should probably read mowing. This passage also is one which is printed in Q as verse and in F as prose.

In the second scene of this act, the parts of Albany and Goneril are much shorter in F than in Q:

Q

Alb. O Goneril, you are not
 worth the dust which the
 Blowes in your face, I feare
 your disposition
 That nature which contemnes
 ith origin
 Cannot be bordered certaine
 in it selfe,
 She that her selfe will sliu-
 er and disbranch
 From her materiall sap, per-
 force must wither,
 And come to deadly vse.
 Gen. No more, the text is
 foolish.
 Alb. Wisedome and goodnes,
 to the vild seeme vild,
 Filths sauer but themselues,
 what haue you done?
 Tigers, not daughters, what
 haue you perform'd?
 A father, a gracious aged
 man

F

Alb. Oh Gonerill,
 You are not worth the dust
 which the rude winde
 Blowes in your face.

Q

Whose reuerence euen the
 head-lugd beare would lick.
 Most barbarous, most degene-
 rate haue you madded,
 Could my good brother suffer
 you to doe it?
 A man, a Prince, by him so
 benifited,
 If that the heauens doe not
 their visible spirits
 Send quickly downe to tame
 this vild offences, it
 will come
 Humanity must perforce pray
 on it self like monsters
 of the deepe.

Gen. Milke liuerd man
 That bearest a cheeke for
 bloes, a head for wrongs,
 Who hast not in thy browes
 an eye deseruing thine
 honour,

From thy suffering, that
 not know'st, fools do
 those vilains pittie

Who are punisht ere they
 haue their mischiefe,

Wher's thy drum? France
 spreads his banners in
 our noyseles land,

With plumed helme, thy
 state begins thereat

Whil'st thou a morall
 foole sits still and
 cries

Alack why does he so?

Alb. See thy selfe deuill,
 proper deformity shewes
 not in the fiend, so
 horrid as in woman.

Gen. O. vaine Foole!

Alb. Thou changed, and
 selfe-couerd thing for
 shame

F

Gen. Milke-Liuer'd man,
 That bear'st a cheek for
 blowes, a head for wrongs,
 Who hast not in thy browes,
 an eye-discerning
 Thine Honor, from thy suf-
 fering.

Alb. See thy selfe diuell.
 Proper deformitie seemes
 not in the Fiend
 So horrid as in woman.

Gen. Oh vaine Foole.

(IV^e ii. 30-31;
 49-53; 60-61)

Q

F

Be-monster not thy feature,
 wer't my fitnes
 To let these hands obey my
 bloud,
 They are apt enough to dis-
 lecate and teare
 Thy flesh and bones, how ere
 thou art a fiend,
 A womans shape doth shield
 thee.

Gen. Marry your manhood mew--
 Alb. What newes.

(IV. ii. 30-69)

Chambers sees an example, here, of ordinary theatrical cutting.¹⁸⁹ The reference to France is absent in F which again seems to follow the general plan of lessening the importance of France. Knight claims that in its amplified state the scene neither advances the progress of the action, nor contributes to the development of the characters.¹⁹⁰ However, Granville-Barker suggests that although Shakespeare may have yielded to the exigencies of bad casting or to a wish to knit the action more closely, he was also taking some pains at this juncture to develop Albany, and concludes that one would be safe in keeping to the Q text.¹⁹¹ Yet, the F text seems to be

¹⁸⁹Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 467.

¹⁹⁰Furness, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

¹⁹¹Granville-Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

following a pattern in omitting portions of speeches appearing in Q which involve Goneril and Albany.

The most obvious variation occurs in the fourth act, where the whole third scene is omitted from F. The variant does not impair the plot, and it also reduces the play by the length of fifty-six lines. In this scene, the Gentleman has been commissioned by Kent to carry news to Cordelia at Dover concerning the ill treatment accorded Lear by Goneril and Regan. However, since in IV. iv, Cordelia herself takes active steps to find her father, this long report by the Gentleman to Kent in iii, describing her reaction to the news, can be dispensed with. In this same scene, the Gentleman tells Kent that the King of France has returned home and has left Monsieur la Fax to conduct his forces. Since there has been no previous mentioning of France's coming with his troops (except in III. ii. 30-42, only in Q) and since he and his general are never spoken of again, it is unnecessary to say anything about them, here. The chief loss is that this Q information reintroduces Cordelia, if only indirectly through the exposition. The main reason for a wholesale cutting of the scene seems to be that of shortening the play. There is also good bibliographical proof of the omission of this scene from the F text after

the transcript was made. For example, the compositor observed that the third scene was apparently marked out of the transcript and, therefore, changed the headings of the following scenes, i.e., scene iv became Scena Tertia, etc; but vii is labeled Scaena Septima, indicating that the compositor forgot to alter the heading for the seventh scene. This situation also argues for the possibility of a second compositor at work on the play, one who knew nothing of the deletion of iii. Furthermore, the spelling at vii from Scena to Scaena points to a second compositor.¹⁹² There is little doubt, then, that Shakespeare wrote the scene; in fact, Knight claims that it is one of the most beautifully written scenes in the entire play.¹⁹³

There are some remaining variations in this act which do not demand close scrutiny. For example, a few lines are absent from Cordelia's speech in F:

Q

Had you not bene their father
these white flakes,
Had challengd pitie of them,
was this a face
To be exposd against the
warring winds,
To stand against the deepe
dread bolted thunder,
In the most terrible and
nimble stroke
Of quick crosse lightning
to watch poore Per du,
With this thin helme. . . .
(IV. vii. 30-36)

F

Had you not bin their Fa-
ther, these white flakes
Did challenge pittty of
them. Was this a face
To be oppos'd against the
iarring windes?
(IV. vii. 30-32)

A simple shortening of the text seems to be the only explanation for the absence of these lines in F.

At the end of the act, the Q conversation between Kent and the Gentleman does not occur in F. This passage contains only a report of circumstances, already known to the audience, that Cornwall has been slain and that Edmund is leading his forces; and an unfounded rumor, not made use of in the plot, that Edgar and Kent are together in Germany:

Q

Gent. Holds it true sir that the Duke of Cornwall was so slaine?

Kent. Most certaine sir.

Gent. Who is conductor of his people?

Kent. As tis said, the bastard sonne of Gloster.

Gent. They say Edgar his banisht sonne is with the Earle of Kent in Germanie.

Kent. Report is changeable, tis time to looke about, The powers of the kingdome approach apace.

Gent. The arbiterment is like to be bloudie, fare you well sir.

Kent. My poynt and period will be throughly wrought, Or well, or ill, as this dayes battels fought.

(IV. vii. 85-97)

The absence of this part in F (like that of III. vi. 99-107) may have something to do with the use of two actors instead of three, again the pattern of abridgement in the F.

¹⁹²Doran, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁹³Furness, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

ACT V

There are few important variations in the fifth act. In the first scene, one of Albany's speeches offers a variant:

Q

. . . where I could not be honest
I neuer yet was valiant, for this busines
It touches vs, as France inuades our land
Not bolds the King, with others whome I feare,
Most iust and heauy causes make oppose.

(V. i. 23-27)

The absence of this passage in F again suggests an intentional reducing of Albany's part, and also plays down the mentioning of France.

In the third scene, Edgar's speech of exposition occurs only in Q:

Q

Edg. This would haue seemd a periode to such
As loue not sorow, but another to amplifie too
much,
Would make much more, and top extremitie
Whilst I was big in clamor, came there in a man,
Who hauing seene me in my worst estate,
Shund my abhord society, but then finding
Who twas that so indur'd with his strong armes
He fastened on my necke and bellowed out,
As hee'd burst heauen, threw me on my father
Told the most pitious tale of Lear and him,
That euer eare receiued, which in recounting
His grieffe grew puissant and the strings of life
Began to cracke twice, then the trumpets sounded.
And there I left him traunst.

Alb. But who was this.

Ed. Kent, sir, the banisht Kent, who in disguise,
Followed his enemie king and did him seruice
Empreper for a slaue.

(V. iii. 205-221)

Fleay, who cannot believe that the transcript for F was made by Shakespeare, claims that this passage is necessary to the plot and points out how abrupt l. 231--"Here comes Kent."--is without it.¹⁹⁴ Of course, if the F edition is a shortened version, dialogue containing information already known by the audience would probably have been deleted.

There is some debate over who should receive the last speech of the play:

The waight of this sad time we must obey,
Speake what we feele, not what we ought to say:
The oldest hath borne most, we that are yong,
Shall neuer see so much, nor liue so long.
(V. iii. 323-236)

Q gives the speech to Albany; F, to Edgar. Some have thought it was given to Edgar because the role was performed by the more popular actor at the time.¹⁹⁵ Bradley argues that the last speech should be assigned to the surviving person of highest rank, in this case Albany; but since Albany has answered Kent, and Edgar has not, the lines seem to be more appropriate to Edgar.¹⁹⁶ Muir suggests that the words, ". . . we that are yong. . ."

¹⁹⁴Furness, op. cit., p. 372.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 349.

¹⁹⁶Bradley, op. cit., p. 377.

come more naturally from Edgar's mouth.¹⁹⁷ Since there are variants in Albany's part in F, it is likely that the part was deliberately given to Edgar in F.

A study of Lear in Q and F by parallel texts reveals that F is considerably shorter. This method shows that the briefer F text has been shortened in the following ways: (1) in certain speeches referring to an old man; (2) in allusions to Court and social disturbances; (3) in several speeches involving Goneril and Albany (and Albany alone); (4) in a minimizing of references to France, especially in the last three acts; (5) in the removal of certain inconsistencies in plot development; and (6) in the deletion of passages in order to shorten and tighten the play. On the other hand, F reveals additions not present in Q, for the following reasons: (1) several speeches establish character earlier in the play, especially in the secondary roles of Albany, Cornwall, Goneril, and Regan; (2) several allusions to Court and social disturbances replace similar ones in Q; and (3) several passages suggest alteration, especially in the Fool's role. This evidence tends to point to the work of the author in improving the drama, rather than to the work of an outsider.

¹⁹⁷Muir (ed.), King Lear, p. 219.

It is possible to reconstruct the sequence of events surrounding the Q and F versions of this play:

- (1) Shakespeare wrote a first draft of the play. In looking over his foul sheets with an eye for revision, he discovered that it was possible to make corrections that shortened and tightened the play.
- (2) Having finished, he drew up a fair copy which was, then, taken to the Master of Revels for licensing. If any censorship were in order, one can be assured that such action was taken at this time. At any rate, it is a safe conclusion that the F text contains the play as it was approved for production, insofar as the possibility of future additions is concerned; i.e., once the play had been licensed for performance, there would have been no opportunities for Shakespeare to have expanded his drama.
- (3) The play was then given to the prompter who, in turn, marked it for production, and the document, undoubtedly, underwent further revision of a theatrical nature.
- (4) Shakespeare's foul papers, however, had not been disposed of, and, for some unknown reason, they turned up in the hands of a printer who published what is known as the 1608 Q of the play, containing all of the parts that were eventually discarded, or at least reworked, by Shakespeare when preparing his fair copy for licensing. Therefore, a study

of the parallel texts of Q and F reveals that the play passed through three possible revisions. Shakespeare himself, in preparing the fair copy, made the first revision. In shortening and tightening his play, (a) he removed repetitious passages; i.e., speeches referring to an old man who gives away his authority (I. iii. 12-25; I. iv. 155-169; II. ii. 147-153); and passages concerning Court and social disturbances (I. ii. 156-162; III. i. 30-42); (b) he minimized the influence of France (IV. ii. 54-69; IV. iii; V. i. 25-27); (c) he took out inconsistencies (III. v. 104-108; III. vii. 99-107); (d) he established more definitely certain minor characters (I. i. 42-46; I. i. 48; I. iv. 344-357; II. iv. 143-147); and (e) he deleted extraneous matter (III. vi. 18-59; IV. i. 61-66; V. iii. 205-221). This evidence reflects Shakespeare's method of revision and gives one an insight into the author's skill as a dramatist.

On the other hand, it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace the extent to which the play was altered from Shakespeare's original draft as the result of its preparation for stage performance. However, two revisions were probably made: (1) for the original production, and (2) for touring the provinces. Since Shakespeare was a member of the King's Men, he may have supervised many of

these changes himself. Such revisions might be the following: (a) the doubling of parts (III. vii. 99-107; IV. vii. 85-97); and (b) ordinary theatrical cutting because of bad casting or ineffective acting (III. i. 8-15; IV. ii. 32-48; IV. ii. 62-59). It is also likely that a play could have received alterations during the history of its performance. After a period of time, these alterations could have become permanent and have found their way eventually into the prompt copy. Such a situation would explain the songs of the Fool (II. iv. 46-51; III. ii. 79-94), and other changes in words or single lines, between Q and F.

Many problems still exist concerning the text of King Lear, but one can now conclude that (1) censorship may not have played an important part in F as many have thought in the past; (2) the true form of the play, as Shakespeare wrote and revised it, is the F version; and (3) the F text was set, not from the Q version, but from the licensed fair copy which had undergone the markings of the prompter.

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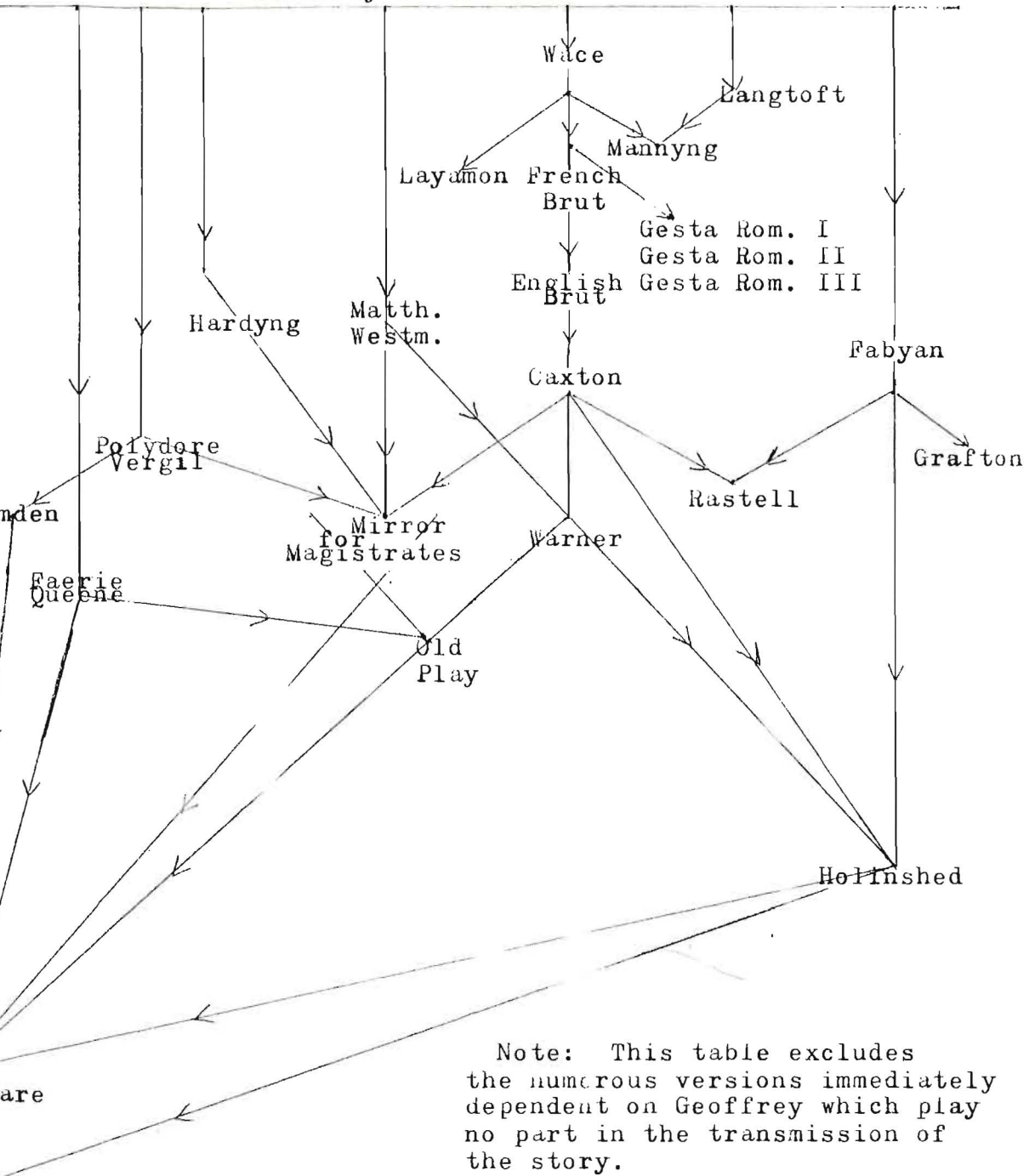
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APPENDIX "A"

PEDIGREE OF THE STORY

Geoffrey of Monmouth



Reproduced from The Story of King Lear from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Shakespeare by Wilfrid Perrett Berlin (Mayer and Muller), 1904

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APPENDIX "B"

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THE FOOL-CORDELIA PROBLEM

After the climax of King Lear in the tremendous storm scene in III, the Fool exits with a simple line: "And Ile go to bed at noone" (III. vi. 83), and is heard no more. The critics have run the gamut in expressing opinions on what has happened to the Fool. Granville-Barker quite indifferently says that one does not know and one should not care what happens to the Fool. "To pursue the Fool beyond the play's bounds . . . is to miss the most characteristically dramatic thing about him."¹⁹⁸ James who thinks the Fool is the center of the play's imagination believes that, since the Fool has become an image of helpless and suffering love, he can no longer exert any influence upon the course of events. Therefore, the course of events passes him by, also.¹⁹⁹ Bradley suggests that, if the Fool were about to die, the actor who played the part would indicate his approaching death in his stage actions and expressions.²⁰⁰ Tolman claims that the Fool disappears at this point ". . . because his jocular utterances would jar upon us after Lear's mind

¹⁹⁸Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 312.

¹⁹⁹James, op. cit., p. 116.

²⁰⁰Bradley, op. cit., p. 251.

has completely given away."²⁰¹ Goldsmith decides that the Fool probably meets his death on the heath.²⁰² Muir announces that "Lear's Fool disappears from the play at the moment when his master, as madman, can carry on the Fool's role."²⁰³

There is still another group of scholars who interpret the Fool's line in connection with Lear's line in his concluding speech at the end of the play; "And my poore Foole is hang'd." (V. iii. 306). These critics adopt the theory that the roles of the Fool and Cordelia were played by one and the same actor, a young boy in the company. One notes that this doubling of parts is possible, since the Fool and Cordelia do not appear on the stage in any one scene together. In fact, Cordelia appears in only four of the twenty-six scenes in F Lear and has scarcely over one hundred lines in the entire play. She enters and leaves the play in I. i. and does not appear again until IV. iv. Of course, the reason for this interim may be ascribed to the limitations of the boy actor. Brandl first professed the theory in 1894 that the two roles were

²⁰¹A. H. Tolman, Falstaff and Other Shakespearian Topics, p. 92.

²⁰²R. H. Goldsmith, Wise Fools in Shakespeare, p. 98.

²⁰³Muir, "Madness in King Lear," Shakespeare Survey, XIII, p. 33.

originally undertaken by one and the same individual.²⁰⁴ Lawrence rejected this idea, arguing that a boy did not switch from male to female roles in the same play. He admits that adult actors often resorted to mixed doubling, but only when the female character was an elderly type.²⁰⁵

Prescinding from this point, the confusing line-- "And my poore Foole is hang'd."--still needs an explanation. The N.E.D. states that fool was used as a term of affection at this time; in Old English, a fool and an innocent were synonymous terms. Three pages of selected commentary on these words in the Variorum illustrate the two opinions: one claims that the word fool refers to the Fool; the other, that it is a reference to Cordelia. Furness, in his own words, very reluctantly comes to the conviction that the term refers to Cordelia.²⁰⁶ One concludes it is very doubtful that Shakespeare wished to confuse anyone with his choice of term. Yet, he undoubtedly knew that, by using the word, he would suggest the Fool to his audience, especially if the two characters were united in the person of one actor. Is it possible that Shakespeare wanted to convey a symbolical meaning, here? In many

²⁰⁴Tolman, op. cit., p. 93.

²⁰⁵W. J. Lawrence, Pre-Restoration Stage Studies, p. 73.

respects, both Cordelia and the Fool represent truth in the play, and, when Cordelia is absent, the Fool, in a manner, takes her place. Indeed, the Fool was very grieved at her departure to France (I. iv. 71). Therefore, when Cordelia suffers death, the Fool, if he is not yet dead, at least symbolically dies with her. The line--"And my poore Foole is hang'd"--could, then, have referred to the unnatural death of Cordelia and the symbolical death of the Fool.