

# As unstable as the King but never daft (?): Texts and variant readings of *King Lear*

RICHARD MADELAINE

‘Variant readings’ is basically an editorial term that acknowledges the existence of two or more viable readings of a word in the text, but I am applying this term more broadly to ways of reading the text as a whole, or parts of it. Sometimes, editorially, one or more of the variant readings seem to be *at variance with* what we like to call ‘common sense’ (a point of view that an individual does not feel the need to justify), and the same is sometimes said of certain readings of the play.

Why, then, should we investigate variant readings? Firstly, for the kind of enrichment that comes from open-mindedness; secondly, because of changed conceptions of what reading and criticism are; and thirdly, because *King Lear* is a performance text: written to be performed, by an author who worked in the public entertainment industry and who never (unlike Ben Jonson) showed any sign of regarding his plays, as opposed to his poems, as literary texts. Because it is a performance text, it has a different (or additional) kind of textual instability, which we ignore at our peril. This is particularly the case with this play, because of the differences between the Quarto and Folio texts—a point to which I shall return.

But, before that, my second reason needs amplification. In the past thirty years or so, the marked changes in Western cultural values and aesthetic attitudes have been reflected in, and have to some extent been influenced by, social and critical theories. One legacy of reader-response theories is a more general awareness of the multiplicity of ‘viable’ readings of any work of art or performance, something that theatrical practice has usually taken for granted. A legacy of feminist and postcolonial theories is a sharper awareness of the relationship between sexual politics and the operation of patriarchal political power, a matter of some importance in the story of *King Lear*.

This larger issue of how we see the activity of reading is, of course, tied to the issue of ‘relevance’. Again, as theatre practitioners have always understood (and as evidenced in Shakespeare’s day by the two texts of this play), in reading a text on the stage or the page, we take what *we* need for ourselves, *now*.

That brings me to my third reason. *King Lear* has the instability of a performance text—more demonstrably than any other Shakespeare play, because the Quarto and Folio texts are sufficiently different from each other to give the best support there is for the hypothesis that Shakespeare occasionally, or perhaps habitually, revised his texts according to changing performance needs (such as cast changes, touring requirements, and experienced or anticipated audience reaction). Jay L. Halio, in the New Cambridge edition, from which I quote, provides plenty of material on this subject, including some useful parallel passages, but his account of the revision issue should be read cautiously.<sup>1</sup> R. A. Foakes, in the Introduction to his edition of the play for the Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, presents a more balanced view of the subject, reflecting the healthy scepticism promoted by Ernst Honigmann, who argues that some of the apparent evidence for revision might in fact be textual corruption.<sup>2</sup> However the two texts became different from each other, the important thing is that they illustrate beautifully the instability of text, both in the post-structuralist theoretical sense (a text is different for all readers, according to what they are looking for; in this case the readers include scribes and compositors) and in the performance sense (no two performances are ever the same, even if the same words are used).

It is also healthy to be sceptical of Halio’s contention that the Folio text is the one prepared for performance. I think the Quarto has at least as good a claim, perhaps a better one. It is possible, of course that both are performance texts, and likely that the various changes were made at different times. What we can be fairly sure of is that the changes are related in some way to performance needs. The Stationers’ Register entry for the

Quarto seems to imply that it is the text of the performance given before the King at Whitehall, but in any case, some of the passages unique to the Quarto,<sup>3</sup> such as the ‘O, o, o, o!’ at Lear’s death, are very actorly indeed.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, some of the passages added in the Folio may have been cut (on performance grounds?) from the text before it was published in its Quarto form, and subsequently restored by Heminge and Condell. These passages might thus be seen as indicators of a reading, rather than a performance, text. Heminge and Condell, for all that they were men of the theatre, were in a real sense Shakespeare’s first editors, and were out to make the plays look more like literary texts when they published them in the literary form of a Folio, seven years after Shakespeare’s death.

The point is that *for Shakespeare* the text of *King Lear* was unstable, because it actually belonged to the company of which he was a sharer, rather than to him alone. The society of theatrical production was a microcosm of society as seen by post-structuralist theorists, including the new historicists: the author-as-part-of-society produces a work; social conditions are, in a sense, co-authors. Thus the cutting from the Folio text of the mock-trial in 3.6 may well have been done, reluctantly on Shakespeare’s part, not because it was a theatrical failure, as some critics have surmised, but simply because the play was too long, and non-narrative sections are always the first to go when theatrical cuts are made. In Shakespeare’s world, of course, political censorship was one of the realities of both life and theatre, and the cutting of references to the French King as invader of Britain, to the King as a fool, to monopolies, to current events fulfilling a recent prediction, and to internal division in the kingdom, are the kinds of thing that the Master of the Revels might well be responsible for.<sup>5</sup> In Shakespeare’s theatre, the play text was subject to the changes that theatrical expediency required. The cuts and transpositions may not all be Shakespeare’s, of course, though, as he was probably the first director of his own plays, it is plausible that he did make some of them following rehearsal and/or performance.<sup>6</sup> There is evidence in the period that other dramatists reluctantly agreed to the company’s making cuts to the text. What *do* look like

authorial changes, and are probably the best evidence for authorial revision (albeit probably after at least one performance), are the alterations and additions in the Folio text that soften Gonerill's character a little and slightly strengthen Albany, in 1.3, 1.4, and 2.4.

To return to cutting: I suspect that almost none of the texts we have were performed in their entirety in their own day. Even given the faster playing time of continuous staging, very few of the Shakespeare texts we have could be performed in anything like the 'two hours' traffic of our stage' to which there are so many contemporary references. The 1623 Quarto of Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* prints 'diverse things ... that the length of the Play would not beare in the Presentment'.<sup>7</sup> This was another King's Men's play, and one apparently performed at both the Blackfriars and the Globe. Thus the texts of *King Lear* played in Shakespeare's own day may well have been considerably shorter than the Folio text which Halio prints, and which is only two hundred lines shorter than the Quarto text.

If the text of *King Lear* was unstable during Shakespeare's own theatrical career, it probably became more so as soon as he retired, and certainly by the time Heminge and Condell edited his texts for the First Folio. Over four hundred years, theatrical conditions have changed, and so have the English language and the nature of cultural conditioning. So, even putting aside post-structuralist notions of text, author, and reader, we cannot look at 'Shakespeare' or any one of his texts as a stable entity. And, as I have already suggested, theatrical practitioners never have. For various professional and commercial reasons, they have long anticipated the notion of the instability of the text.

How, then, should we approach the reading of the unstable text of *King Lear*? Firstly, in the spirit of pluralism; and secondly, from recent theoretical perspectives which make different emphases but might be complementary, so that we have a strong sense of the intellectual range and emotional power of the play. Thirty years ago, it would have been fashionable to contrast Marxist and Christian views of *King Lear*. The Christian view drew strength from A. C. Bradley,

who has done so much to perpetuate a late-Victorian view of Shakespeare, based in turn on an essentially Romantic approach to plays as dramatic poems, whose protagonists are their *raison d'être*. Bradley was no more racist or misogynist than most of his peers, but what we might hold against him is that he was so decidedly anti-theatrical, and such a contrast in that respect with his contemporary Harley Granville-Barker (who was, of course, a man of the theatre). What I would suggest at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a combination of three approaches that have been increasingly influential in the last thirty years: cultural materialist or new historicist, feminist, and theatrical. The post-colonial approach is another possibility, and its preoccupation with centre and margin in power relations, and with the significance of place, might be usefully applied to *King Lear*. But in Shakespeare studies this approach is not yet as important as the other three, partly because so many of its exponents have felt compelled to say the same rather obvious things about *The Tempest*.

What, then, are the differences between cultural materialism, new historicism, feminism, and the theatrical approach, and what is their relationship with each other? The differences between these approaches are partly a matter of emphasis, and the adherents of each are so busy disputing with each other that they hardly have time to debate with the proponents of other approaches. Theoretically, all post-structuralist theories teach us that there is no one right way of reading a text, but the more fundamentalist adherents of each of these theoretical approaches would be happy, if they had more time and more power, to burn at the stake anyone who disagrees with them, especially heretics from within their own party.

Cultural materialism and new historicism are British and American versions respectively of an approach to historical texts. The cultural materialists, of whom Jonathan Dollimore<sup>8</sup> is the best known, are directly influenced by Marxism, via Raymond Williams and his pluralist notion of culture. The new historicists are preoccupied with the relationship between identity and memory: Stephen Greenblatt is the leading light

here.<sup>9</sup> It is probably true, as Louis Montrose has said, that new historicism is more interested in refiguring past cultural contexts and cultural materialism in making present use of its versions of the past.<sup>10</sup> What they have in common is an assumption that we can know the past only through the present and that the individual is constrained by social and ideological structures. The cultural context for the production of texts is all-important to them. The *new* new historicists of recent years have concentrated on the history of everyday objects rather than people;<sup>11</sup> they are likely to be more interested in letters, the stocks, and bloody knives, and possibly in maps, than in kings or their coronets.

Both cultural materialists and new historicists reject Bradleyan notions of universal truths and the ideas that culture is monolithic and that ‘high culture’ is supreme. Shakespeare has, of course, been at the centre of a debate about high and low culture for at least a hundred years. Exponents of the theatrical approach appreciate the ironies in this, since his performance texts—created for popular entertainment—began increasingly to be read as supreme examples of ‘high culture’ from early in the eighteenth century and have only comparatively recently been reclaimed for popular culture on the stage and screen (though some nineteenth-century actor-managers did insist that Shakespeare is entertainment). As far as *King Lear* is concerned, it is probably true that the cultural materialists have had more to say than the new historicists (unless you count Leonard Tennenhouse<sup>12</sup> among the new historicists, which is slightly problematical). Cultural materialists, especially, claim that they recognise the importance of gender and race relations, but they still tend to see them as subservient to institutional relations. Given that cultural materialists, in particular, say that they deplore the oppression of the marginalised, they are likely to find things to admire in Grigori Kozintsev’s 1971 film version of *King Lear*, with its Marxist emphasis on the victims of the political power struggle and its memorable images of refugee peasants. In their own practice they will be less interested in gender and individuality than in the self-perpetuating nature of social processes and institutions. They

may well find the oppression of Kent and Edmond, and in turn Edmond's manipulations of Edgar and Gloucester (under the cloak of supporting the patriarchal system), more interesting than the behaviour of the women. Although they find it difficult to ignore the father-daughter relationships in the play altogether, they will tend to see them from the point of view of male authority.

Feminism is, of course, essentially concerned with the connection between gender and power, and emphasizes the pervasiveness of patriarchal social controls. One arm of feminism is, under the influence of psychoanalytical theory, preoccupied with the absent female and the silencing of the female voice; there is a debate among feminists about the importance of the differences between women, especially racial ones. Feminists will probably prefer the Peter Brook film of *King Lear*, made in the same year as Kozintsev's and, despite Brook's correspondence with Kozintsev, entirely different in its treatment. Brook, under the influence of Jan Kott's writing on *Endgame* and *King Lear*, created an absurdist world: its cultural institutions are mere facades, and (as Kenneth Tynan first observed) it is morally neutral.<sup>13</sup> Here the ungrateful daughters' behaviour is presented from their point of view, and Brook uses cuts to reduce the contrast with Cordelia: he removes her tenderer speeches, and the compassionate response of others to the blinding of Gloucester. There are, of course, other feminist ways of reading the women's roles in the play,<sup>14</sup> but the point of departure is here: it is possible to disapprove of Cordelia as selling out in reconciling with her father, after the promise of her earlier revolt and her use of silence as a means of resistance. But for feminists, Cordelia *is* important, as Gonerill and Regan are, and feminists will tend to disapprove of cultural materialists and new historicists for concentrating on Edmond rather than Cordelia and for marginalising the gender component in power relationships.<sup>15</sup> The differences in approach might be seen as partly a product of gender difference in the authors: cultural materialists and new historicists tend to be male and feminists to be female; and those who seek a compromise position, and are denounced by both sides, are

usually female. Kathleen McLuskie, attempting a compromise in 1985, was accused by her fellow-feminists of leading feminism up a blind alley.<sup>16</sup>

Both cultural materialism / new historicism and feminism have tended until recently to ignore the theatrical conditions of the production of Shakespearean play-texts, though there are signs of change at last.<sup>17</sup> The theatrical approach, like most theoretical approaches, interrogates the notion of text, the theatrical approach being based on the assumption that a theatrical text needs to be read in terms of potential performance. A theatrical approach can take a 'literary' form by concentrating on the 'author's' text (while acknowledging the importance of non-verbal language and the theatrical conditions in which the text was produced), and this form is obviously compatible with new historicism / cultural materialism and feminism. Alternatively, the theatrical approach can be performance-based rather than text-based. It may address historical as much as contemporary performance, viewing stage history as an aid to interpretation, because performance always reflects the changing cultural assumptions in the reading of a text.<sup>18</sup> The theatrical approach sees plays as the interaction and conflict of characters, concepts, and forces, not as excuses for soliloquies—though soliloquies and protagonists do have vital, if clearly-defined, functions in tragedies. The theatrical critic pays more attention to stage directions, actual and implied, and to the general significance of action and its relation to words.

In the light of my three chosen approaches, I should like to look at the play's opening scene and, much more briefly, at a later one (2.4). In the vital opening scene of the play, cultural materialists / new historicists are likely to be excited at the early introduction of Edmond the Bastard. Does he represent the new man who wants to overturn the old aristocratic order, or is he simply a marginalised, neurotic by-product of that order? They will see Lear's production of map and coronet as indications of the way in which he is tearing apart the nation by misusing his authority and abnegating his responsibilities while trying to hang on to the trappings of power. They will want to emphasize

the issues of property and inheritance, and to read Lear's treatment of his daughters, and their being made to speak in order of seniority, as manifestations of the way in which they are subjected to paternal / patriarchal authority. Likewise, they will view Lear's tyrannical treatment of Kent in terms of the destructive misuse of power. They are unlikely to pay a great deal of attention either to Cordelia (who, like most women in the period, is passed from father to husband, but in her case without a blessing) or to her sisters. In 2.4 they will want to concentrate on the signs of inversion of patriarchal authority, in which Kent and the Fool are instrumental as commentators, and will probably see the reduction of the king's train as most significant of all.

Feminists will be interested both in the depiction of Cordelia's silencing, and in the debate among their fellow-feminists about whether she is able to maintain her resistance to her father. Her resistance is indicated here by her refusing to outdo her sisters, but also by her 'untender' tone towards patriarchy in its dotage. The question, for feminists, is whether Cordelia's reconciliation with Lear later is a 'selling-out'. In this scene, they may be a little troubled by Cordelia's key speech (lines 90-8). While it interrogates her sisters' attitudes, it relies entirely on orthodox patriarchal thinking: she says that half her sisters' love and duty should go to their husbands, a notion they spectacularly resist in their responses to Edmond. She, on the other hand, tries to conform by loving both husband and father—and is destroyed as surely as they are. Feminists may note the absence of the mother in the play (as in so many other Shakespearean texts); certainly they will see Lear's expectant reliance on Cordelia's 'kind nursery' as an ironic attempt to substitute daughter for mother. What is equally interesting is that, when this fails, he makes his other daughters his 'mothers', as the Fool says (1.4.134), and gets not nurture but chastisement.

Feminists may see the elder sisters as demonised by the text (as a product of a patriarchal and misogynistic society). Gonerill in this view, so roundly cursed by her father (see 2.4),

is a scapegoat; Gonerill and Regan have learnt wilfulness by example from their father, and consequently they dominate their husbands, and are attracted to the thrusting Edmond. Feminists will notice that Lear is quick to renounce his paternity of his daughters when it becomes uncomfortable—first of Cordelia in 1.1 and then of Gonerill (1.4) and Regan (2.4). They will be able to read the elder sisters at the end of this scene as realistic and practical, but may have more trouble doing so (despite the slight ‘softening’ of Gonerill in the Folio text) when the two sisters join to reposition their father in 2.4, working hand-in-glove (literally: Regan takes Gonerill by the hand when she enters). The way they work makes the ‘fiery’ Cornwall (2.4.85) look crudely superfluous; indeed, his forceful leadership in violent situations involving stocks or eye-gouging might be read as over-compensation for anxiety about his patriarchal position. Still, feminists might want to argue, in support of the sisters in 2.4, that they *may* be right about the knights being riotous, and are assuredly right about the number of hungry mouths to feed. Theatrical critics are likely to think that if Shakespeare had wanted us to believe that the knights are out of control, he would have *shown* them rioting and gourmandising.

Theatrical critics will be more interested in the theatrical uses of map and coronet, the dynamics of the relationships between Lear and his daughters and of their relationship with each other, Lear’s response to Kent’s response to Cordelia, and later the relationship between Cordelia’s suitors and the father and daughter. They will also see an important foreshadowing here of the way in which Lear later renounces his other daughters, just as, in the subplot, Gloucester disowns his legitimate son in favour of his illegitimate one. Theatrical critics will also be very interested in the characters as self-conscious actors. Lear arranges the two alarmingly absurd theatrical shows that open the play: the public protestations of filial love and the orders to produce the map and divide the coronet. In the same scene, the elder sisters play hypocritical parts, and later put on shows of wilfulness. The man who becomes their lover, Edmond, is even more self-satisfied and self-conscious in his manipulations of

Edgar, Gloucester, and of course the sisters themselves. There is a sense in which, in the opening scene, Gloucester's sly remark about the 'good sport at his making' (line 18) contributes to Edmond's desire to replicate (in duplicate) the experience, to make illegitimacy-in-action irresistible, simultaneously, for Gonerill and Regan.

In 2.4 theatrical critics will want to make much of the stock Kent (in his disguise as Caius), whose literal reduction to this level foreshadows the reduction of the king's train by his daughters at the end of this scene. It is significant at the emblematic level, not only because Kent represents an aggressive kind of Loyalty, but more importantly because this particularly demeaning punishment is an affront to the King himself, since Kent is serving as his messenger. Lear responds hyperbolically, with 'Tis worse than murder' (2.4.20), and he orders the stock Kent *not* to follow him, as an attempt to retain his royal dignity in the face of this outrage. Putting Kent into the stocks also foreshadows, in a sense, the blinding of Gloucester, since it constrains him for the purpose of physical abuse. We see how the powerful unconstrained are good at disempowering by imposing constraints. The male violence of Cornwall is foregrounded (especially in the cultural materialists' eyes) in both these scenes, but the abuse of power is enabled by the elder sisters' attitudes. Likewise, the beating, and later the killing, of Oswald are emblematised violence related to misrule. Kent's hatred of Oswald seems psychologically under-motivated until this scene, when Kent tells Lear that, as Gonerill's messenger, Oswald poisoned Kent's welcome as Lear's (2.4.24-42). Oswald is the opportunist whom the virtuous Kent instinctively hates and wants to beat in righteous anger. Geoffrey Whitney has an emblem on this subject, in which the righteous man beats a hypocrite, who is represented by a man in a mask, a false face.<sup>19</sup> Oswald's nature is represented in more detail later in the play, as he becomes go-between to Edmond for both Regan and Gonerill, and, when Edgar kills him in 4.5, he is trying to murder the blind Gloucester for the price on his head.

The other stage business that theatrical critics will want to highlight in 2.4 is Lear's mock-kneeling for forgiveness before Regan, but as it were *to* Gonerill, a gesture which graphically, if ironically, articulates his sense of the way in which his patriarchal world has been inverted (lines 146-8). The convention is for children (of whatever age) to kneel for their parents' blessing; and in this respect Lear's gesture foreshadows his kneeling to Cordelia in the reconciliation scene (4.6), where she says that it is her place, not his, to kneel. The latter episode dismays some feminists, but perhaps the point is that she *chooses* to kneel, and her father also kneels to her (possibly in dementia, but the significance of his action is broader). Finally, theatrical critics will want to confirm the *face value* of actions here, as in other scenes. The way in which, at the end of 2.4, the elder sisters shut their old father out in the '*storm and tempest*' (that begin when he tries not to weep at their ingratitude), will be read as more than a hint about their natures, just as their attempts to murder each other later, in their struggle to possess Edmond, will be.

The theatrical critic who is concerned with Jacobean staging will take an interest in the subversive deployment of the adolescent apprentice ('boy') actors in the play. (I prefer the term 'apprentice actors' because I suspect that major female roles were played not by 'boys' with unbroken voices, but by youths of eighteen or so.) The two playing Gonerill and Regan issue a direct challenge to the authority of the patriarch, who was initially played by the company's leading tragic actor, Richard Burbage. In 1.1, the elder sisters subvert by the subterfuge of hypocrisy, while they are much more openly defiant in 2.4, before going on, later in the play, to use subterfuges against each other. They both throw themselves into a forfended alliance with the figure of rebellion or misrule, the '*Bastard*', as Edmond is called in stage directions in both texts. The apprentice playing Cordelia also initially resists the authority of the patriarch, and there is an interesting relationship between Cordelia and the Fool, whose role is also partly subversive (see 2.4). The 'traditional' view, endorsed by Halio, that the parts of Cordelia and the Fool were originally

played by the same actor, is, I think, erroneous.<sup>20</sup> Surely the celebrated Fool, Robert Armin, played the Fool's part, not that of Edgar; and surely he did not play a female role, which was an apprentice's part. Cordelia was, I suspect, played by Armin's apprentice.<sup>21</sup> I would also suggest that the thematic preoccupation in the play's opening scene with 'kind nursery' and 'professed bosoms' (1.1.118, 266) glances at the low-cut dresses the 'boy' actors were almost certainly wearing. There was a fashion for *décolletage* at the time and the female characters in Jacobean historical plays wore contemporary dress. We know that the 'boy' actors wore corsets, and these were no doubt laced in a way that gave them 'professed bosoms' in another sense. At the theatrical level, there is an ironic literalism underpinning Lear's recognition that none of his three daughters will offer him the organ of nurture he expects, that all of them are 'unnatural'.

Finally, a theatrical critic interested in modern productions of Shakespeare might care to test assumptions about the play's meanings and processes by examining Barrie Kosky's controversial 1998 production for the Bell Shakespeare Company.<sup>22</sup> Like Baz Luhrman's rather more popular film of *Romeo + Juliet*, Kosky's *King Lear* was a tribute simultaneously to Shakespeare's enduring popularity and to the post-structuralist recognition of reading / performing as an act of transformation. A modern director is, of course, a public reader, if one temporarily invested with the power to try to persuade us to read in the same way as he does. He may rely on cuts and theatrical devices to try to make us see the play afresh, in the way that Shakespeare's first audiences did. John Bell himself called Kosky's version an 'adaptation', which raises an important issue: *all* productions are adaptations to some extent, but it is a matter of degree.<sup>23</sup> Kosky's had something in common with Edward Bond's *Lear*, which is a complete rewriting of the story. Unlike Bond, Kosky made use of Shakespeare's text, but the result was probably more a product of Kosky and his society than of Shakespeare and his.

Kosky's updating of Shakespeare was often witty. The Fool sang hits from stage musicals, 'My heart belongs to Daddy' and 'What kind of fool am I?'<sup>24</sup> At a more visceral level, Gonerill and Regan's sucking out, rather than plucking out, of Gloucester's eyes, was possibly a tribute to Monica Lewinsky's oral skills, which were headline news in 1998. The production was lively, fast, different, and coherent; but it left out and changed so much that it offended not only cultural materialists and feminists, but theatrical critics as well. Radical surgery of the text and alteration of its events radically altered power relations; the alteration of events and a determinedly literal interpretation of Edmond's remarks produced an Edgar who was a floppy fop and entirely unfit to rule at the end of the play.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, Lear's knights were undomesticated hounds with oversized genitals—a real housekeeping problem. Kosky's Edmond was merely the toy-boy of Gonerill and Regan and ended up with both his tongue and his other boneless organ bitten off by his lovers, in what was presumably over-competitive foreplay. Yet the elder sisters were not reconstructed as feminist girls who are keen to have fun; their languid cocktail party air persisted as a general *ennui*, and it was possible to think that they had mistaken Edmond's organs for canapés. Certainly he lost his last-minute determination to do some good despite of his own nature. Kosky also radically altered the ending of the play, so that the Fool was present, and Gonerill strangled both Regan and Cordelia on stage and then stabbed herself. Kosky's cuts depoliticized the play and removed Shakespeare's emphasis on a terrifying form of poetic justice. Without making the women politically strong, he diminished the power of Shakespeare's important men, removing Cornwall altogether and considerably reducing the parts of Edmond, Edgar, and Kent. While keeping the nihilism, he removed all the pathos (which he saw as 'sentiment') and radically altered the reconciliation scene, which is usually the linch-pin of the audience's participation in the protagonist's process of transformation and sense of overwhelming loss. Thus Kosky manipulated the genre of the play, and the audience was left disturbed but unmoved.

In keeping with his views about Australians' problems with articulateness, Kosky cut lines usually regarded as important from all three daughters, as well as from Lear himself. Many audience members and reviewers saw Kosky's production as reductionist; some even wondered whether directors have the moral right to try to force their audiences to read texts in an 'idiosyncratic' way. But of course there is more than one way of reading Kosky's reading. It is important to remember that variant readings confirm the richness, as well as the instability, of the text.

- <sup>1</sup> *King Lear*, ed. Jay L. Halio, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.)
- <sup>2</sup> R. A. Foakes, ed., *King Lear*, Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (London: Nelson, 1997), Introduction, esp. pp. 128-46; E. A. J. Honigmann, *The Texts of 'Othello' and Shakespearian Revision* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), esp. chapter 12. Honigmann thinks that errors were inevitable, given the complicated relationship between author's not-always-legible 'foul papers', scribal fair copy (also not always legible), and printing-house compositors. The compositors were always in a hurry, were often inexperienced (the Quarto of *Lear* was that printer's first play-text), and in any case did not take the book of the play very seriously. Revision is only a theory, Honigmann reminds us, and he notes that even hardened revisionists want to conflate occasionally, because they recognize the corruption of the text.
- <sup>3</sup> The entry for 26 November 1607 reads in part 'as yt was played before the kings maiestie at Whitehall vpon St Stephans night at Christmas last': quoted in Kenneth Muir, ed., *King Lear*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1952), p.xxvi. The title-page of the First Quarto (1608) says the same thing, but title-pages of the period are less reliable in so far as they are a form of advertising.
- <sup>4</sup> Compare these dying groans with 'O,o,o,o. Dyes' in the Folio text of *Hamlet*; Hamlet's groans, which, like Lear's, probably originated from Burbage the star actor, do not appear in the First or Second Quartos: see *The Three-Text Hamlet*, ed. Paul Bertram and Bernice W. Kliman (New York: AMS Press, 1991), pp.266-7).

- 
- <sup>5</sup> See Janet Clare, *'Art made tongue-tied by authority'*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 152.
- <sup>6</sup> Tiffany Stern takes the unconventional view that the public theatre dramatist did not direct a general rehearsal, but was one of a number of teachers who instructed the actors in pronunciation and gesture: *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.40. I am not entirely convinced by her claim that a general rehearsal was a luxury, and that the prompter directed basic blocking during the performance.
- <sup>7</sup> John Webster, *The tragedy of the Dutchesse of Malfy*, facs. edn (Menston: Scolar, 1968), t.p.
- <sup>8</sup> See especially *Radical Tragedy* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1984).
- <sup>9</sup> See, e.g., *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- <sup>10</sup> 'Renaissance Literary Studies and the Subject of History', *English Literary Renaissance* 16 (1986), 5-12.
- <sup>11</sup> Patricia Fumerton uses the term 'New New Historicism' to indicate a concern with everyday common practices, emptying 'everyday materials' of their residual Marxist connotations: *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, ed. P. Fumerton and S. Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), Introduction.
- <sup>12</sup> Especially notable for *Power on Display* (New York and London: Methuen, 1986).
- <sup>13</sup> See Jan Kott, *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1967) [1st edn. 1964]. For an account of film versions of the play, see Anthony Davies, 'King Lear on Film', in *Lear from Study to Stage: Essays in Criticism*, ed. James Ogden and Arthur H. Scouten (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), pp. 247-66.
- <sup>14</sup> See Carol Rutter, 'Eel Pie and Ugly Sisters in King Lear', in *Lear from Study to Stage*, ed. Ogden and Scouten, pp.172-225.
- <sup>15</sup> See Ann Thompson, 'Are There Any Women in King Lear?', in *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 117-28.
- <sup>16</sup> 'The patriarchal bard: feminist criticism and Shakespeare: *King Lear* and *Measure for Measure*', in *Political Shakespeare: New essays in cultural materialism*, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan

- 
- Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 88-108.
- <sup>17</sup> Among these are Greenblatt's editing the Norton Shakespeare; and feminist critics of *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, beginning to consider the boy actors as more than mere gender-appropriators.
- <sup>18</sup> For the stage history of this play, see J. S. Bratton (ed.), *King Lear, Plays in Performance* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1987).
- <sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes and Other Devises* (Leyden, 1586; facs. rpt, Menston: Scolar, 1969), p. 226.
- <sup>20</sup> Hailo, ed., *King Lear*, p.35.
- <sup>21</sup> The 'tradition' that the roles of the Fool and Cordelia were doubled seems to come from nineteenth-century practice, when the role of the Fool was usually played by an actress. When Nahum Tate adapted the play in 1681, in accordance with Restoration notions of heroism and poetic justice, not only did he keep Cordelia alive and marry her to Edgar, but he also abolished the Fool as too frivolous. The Fool was not restored to the English stage until 1838, when William Macready gave the part to an actress. The role is located midway between serious tragic function and entertainment value, which is about where the average Victorian actor-manager liked to position his leading lady. Samuel Phelps, however, in his excellent series of Shakespeare productions, used a male fool in his production of *Lear* in 1845. Charles Kean restored the tragic ending of *Lear* in 1826.
- <sup>22</sup> It was better received in Sydney than in either Melbourne, where it was derided, or Brisbane, where refunds were given to outraged patrons.
- <sup>23</sup> Bell's comment was made at a 'public forum' at the Sydney Opera House, 22 October 1998.
- <sup>24</sup> The first, by Cole Porter, comes from *Leave It to Me* (1938) and the second, by Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse, from *Stop the World—I Want to Get Off* (1961).
- <sup>25</sup> Edgar is often seen as a theatrical problem because of a perceived lack of coherence in his character; Peter Brook is on record as having conducted rehearsal exercises in which the actors tried to imagine the home life of the Gloucesters, but the usual solution is to play the scene and not the character, as they say in the theatre.

RICHARD MADELAINE is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of New South Wales and joint General Editor of the Bell Shakespeare. He has edited *Antony and Cleopatra* for the

series *Shakespeare in Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and co-edited *O Brave New World: Two Centuries of Shakespeare on the Australian Stage* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2001). This is a revised version of a lecture given for the English Association on 24 February 2001.