



“WHO
IS IT *that can
tell me*
who I am?
Lear’s
shadow.”

King Lear

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

edited by Michael R. Best and Alexa Alice Joubin

BROADVIEW SHAKESPEARE

"The Broadview *King Lear* is an excellent edition for students and readers of all ages. It provides a useful, unobtrusive view of the two early versions of Shakespeare's play-text, a clear and perceptive introduction to some key aspects of that play and to Shakespeare in general, compact glosses of words that might puzzle modern readers, and a well-chosen array of relevant documents that put the play into its key contexts."

ROBERT N. WATSON, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

"This *King Lear* stands out for its educationally wise and theatrically astute text. The editors supply a cornucopia of supplementary material from prior and contemporary historical narratives and poetic and dramatic sources. Unlike any previous edition I've seen, here the display and explanation of Quarto and Folio variants appear as imaginative invitations rather than interruptions. Because they are so well presented, these textual alternatives will enlighten new readers and intrigue experienced teachers and players. The variant passages with their notes together reveal themselves as working guides through the practicalities and creative possibilities of staging plays in Shakespeare's time."

STEVEN URKOWITZ, EMERITUS, CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK

K*ing Lear* is a play for our times. The central characters experience intense suffering in a hostile and unpredictable world. They face domestic cruelty, political defeat, and a stormy external environment that invades them "to the skin." They constantly question the meaning of their experiences as we watch their emotions range from despair to rage to unexpected tenderness and desperate hope as they are rejected, even tortured. Lear's daughters, as in a fairy tale, are three strong women. The eldest two vie for sexual and political power, while the youngest, Cordelia, is initially banished because of her plain speaking but then returns in a doomed attempt to restore her father to his throne.

King Lear has an unusual performance history. It was significantly revised, by Shakespeare or others, between its first two publications and was then succeeded by an adaptation that softened the ending so that Lear and Cordelia survived. In our own times *King Lear* is performed around the world in productions that explore its relevance to contemporary political and environmental challenges. This edition offers a distinctive "extended" text, taking the later Folio as a starting point and adding the lines that appear only in the Quarto, distinguished by a light gray background. Variations in individual words that are of critical interest are recorded in the margin.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND *KING LEAR*:
A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

- c. 1136 Likely date of composition of Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, which contains the earliest known version of the story of King Lear.
- 1509–47 Reign of Henry VIII.
- 1534 Polydore Vergil's *Historia Anglica* casts doubt on the veracity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's account; Act of Supremacy, declaring Henry VIII Head of the Church of England.
- 1547–53 Reign of Edward VI.
- 1553–58 Reign of Mary I; England returns to Catholicism.
- 1555 The first version of the *Mirror for Magistrates* published; Shakespeare used the edition of 1575.
- 1558–1603 Reign of Elizabeth I.
- 1558 John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*.
- 1562 Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville's *Gorboduc* performed before Queen Elizabeth; it was published in 1565.
- 1563 Adoption of the Thirty-Nine Articles, establishing Anglicanism as a middle path between Roman Catholicism and more fundamentalist Protestantism.
- 1564 William Shakespeare baptized 26 April; birthdate unknown, but traditionally celebrated on St. George's Day, 23 April.
- 1569 Suppression of Northern Rebellion of Catholic earls.
- 1576 James Burbage builds The Theatre.
- 1577 Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* includes the story of Lear and his daughters; it was reprinted in 1587.
- 1578 John Lyly, *Euphues*.
- 1579 Edmund Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calendar*; Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poetry*.
- 1582 Marriage to Anne Hathaway, November.
- 1583 Birth of Susanna, 26 May.

- 1583–84 Plots against Elizabeth on behalf of Mary Queen of Scots.
- 1584 John Lyly, *Galatea*.
- 1585 Births of Hamnet and Judith, February. Earl of Leicester sent to aid the Dutch against the Spanish.
- 1587 Execution of Mary Queen of Scots, 8 February.
- 1588 At some point, Shakespeare moves to London; family remains in Stratford.
War with Spain; the Spanish Armada fleet destroyed in July.
- 1588–94 Shakespeare writes his early comedies and histories and his early tragedy *Titus Andronicus*.
- 1590 Sir Philip Sidney, *Arcadia*; Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, Books 1–3; Richard Jones, *Book of Honor and Arms*.
- 1592 Shakespeare attacked in print by Robert Greene in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*.
- 1593 *Venus and Adonis*.
- 1593–1603 The *Sonnets*. Mostly composed late 1580s–early 1600s; published 1609.
- 1594 Shakespeare joins the Lord Chamberlain's Men; *The Rape of Lucrece*.
Comedy of Errors performed at Gray's Inn, 28 December.
The anonymous play *The Chronicle History of King Leir* entered in the Stationers' Register on 14 May.
Only known performances of *The Chronicle History of King Leir* at the Rose, 6 and 8 April.
- 1594–95 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard II*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King John*.
- 1596–98 *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *The Merchant of Venice*.
- 1597 Earl of Essex sent to Ireland to put down a rebellion led by the Earl of Tyrone.
George Chapman, *An Humorous Day's Mirth*.
- 1598 Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour*.
- 1598–99 *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.
- 1599 Shakespeare's company moves to the Globe; *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*.

- The Passionate Pilgrim*, attributed to Shakespeare, published.
Robert Armin replaces Will Kempe as the company clown.
Prohibition and public burning of satires.
- 1600–02 *Twelfth Night*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Hamlet*, *All's Well That Ends Well*.
- 1601 Shakespeare's father dies.
Essex's abortive rebellion and subsequent execution;
Thomas Dekker, *Satiromastix*; Ben Jonson, *Poetaster*; the
"Poet's War," a literary feud among Dekker, Jonson, and
John Marston.
- 1602 First recorded performance of *Twelfth Night*, Middle
Temple Hall, 2 February.
- 1603 Death of Elizabeth I; coronation of James I, 24 March.
Shakespeare's company the Lord Chamberlain's Men is
renamed the King's Men.
Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish
Impostures* published.
John Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essais*
published.
- 1603–04 *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*.
- 1604 James's confrontation of the Puritans at the Hampton
Court Conference.
Peace with Spain.
- 1605 The Gunpowder Plot foiled, 5 November.
In the months of September and October there were
eclipses of the sun and moon within a few weeks of each
other, an occurrence which may lie behind Gloucester's
reference to eclipses of the sun and moon in *King Lear*.
The Chronicle History of King Leir entered again in the
Stationers' Register on 8 May, published later that year.
- 1605–06 *King Lear*.
- 1606–07 *Macbeth*, *Timon of Athens*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Pericles*.
- 1606 *King Lear* acted at court on 16 December, the first
recorded performance.
- 1608 Publication of the Quarto version (Q1) of *King Lear*.
Coriolanus; Thomas Dekker's *The Bellman of London*.

- 1608–10 Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Philaster*.
- 1609–11 *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*.
- 1613–14 Shakespeare in retirement, living in Stratford.
Henry VIII, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*; the Globe burns down, soon rebuilt “in far fairer manner than before.”
 In collaboration with John Fletcher, *Henry VIII*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and the lost play *Cardenio*.
- 1616 Death of Shakespeare, 23 April; buried 25 April.
- 1619 Publication of Q2.
- 1623 Publication of the First Folio (F).
- 1681 Nahum Tate publishes a version of the play in which the good characters survive and Cordelia marries Edgar.
 This version holds the stage for 150 years.
- 1725 Alexander Pope's edition of Shakespeare offers the first conflated text of the play.
- 1838 William Charles Macready restores Shakespeare's text to the stage.
- 1859 Ira Aldridge plays *King Lear* in St. Petersburg, Russia.
- 1904 A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*.
- 1909 *King Lear*, directed by William V. Ranous (Vitograph).
- 1964 Jan Kott's “*King Lear or Endgame*” in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*.
- 1969 Stanley Cavell, “The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*.”
- 1971 Grigori Kozintsev's film *Korol Lir*; Peter Brook's film *King Lear*; Edward Bond's *Lear*; Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather*.
- 1976 Trevor Nunn directs *King Lear*, Royal Shakespeare Company.
- 1983 Gary Taylor and Michael Warren, *The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare's Two Versions of “King Lear.”*
 Laurence Olivier plays Lear in Michael Elliott's film.
- 1985 Akira Kurosawa's Samurai film *Ran* adapts the Lear story.
 Kathleen McCluskie, “The Patriarchal Bard.”
- 1986 The Oxford University Press edition of the *Complete Works* prints both Q and F.
 Coppélia Kahn, “The Absent Mother in *King Lear*.”

- 1987 Jean-Luc Godard's film *King Lear*.
- 1997 Arden III edition of *King Lear*, a conflation edited by R.A. Foakes.
Ong Keng Sen directs *Lear* (TheatreWorks, Singapore) at the Festival of Perth, Australia.
- 1999 *Kathakali King Lear*, directed by Annette Leday at the London Globe; Yukio Ninagawa directs *King Lear*, Royal Shakespeare Company, starring Nigel Hawthorne.
- 2000 *The King Is Alive*, directed Kristian Levring (Newmarket Capital Group, Denmark).
- 2001 Wu Hsing-kuo directs and performs *Lear Is Here* (Contemporary Legend Theatre, Taiwan), Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York.
- 2004 Kim Myung-gon's *King Uru* stages in Seoul, South Korea.
- 2006 *Slings and Arrows*, Canadian television series.
- 2009 Sangeeta Datta's film *Life Goes On*.
- 2018 Richard Eyre's film *King Lear* (BBC and Amazon).
- 2019 Glenda Jackson plays Lear in Sam Gold's Broadway production.

—Michael Best and Alexa Alice Joubin

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