LEAR'S "YOU HAVE SOME CAUSE": A STUDY OF *KING LEAR*

María Luisa DAÑOBEITIA
Universidad de Granada

In act IV, scene VII, line 75 Cordelia claims that there is "no cause, no cause"[1] to her father's "you have some cause," referring to the fact that she has some reason to be angry with him. The existence of a cause in this paper is taken to be the determinate concept that governs the development of Lear's tragedy. This arises from his enormous egotism, from his supposition that he has the right to manipulate the destiny of Cordelia, an idea that leads him unreasonably to desire to preserve both life and comfort at the expense of Cordelia's unnatural renunciation of her rights as a woman. Lear's desire, originating in his need to keep her with him is the cause of his tragedy. Cordelia is capable of saying to Lear that there is no cause because Cordelia's inmense love for her father prompts her to forgive him, regardless of the nature of his offense. To acknowledge the existence of a cause, and to determine the nature of the cause, is indispensable for the understanding of the tragic finale of the play. The perception of the nature of the cause clarifies and verfies the validity of Lear's lucid statement when he claims that nothing comes out of nothing. Since nothing can come out of nothing and much happens to both Lear and Cordelia, there has to be something, a cause supported by poetical justice, that vindicates the tragedy.

The idea that there is a *cause*, and a serious one, came to us when comparing the scene of the reconciliation between father and daughter with that of the murder of Desdemona in *Othello*. Othello feels he has to kill Desdemona because there is a *cause*, her infidelity; and he is wrong—Desdemona's death is the product of insane jealousy. Cordelia, who is as mild and innocent as Desdemona, speaks to her father in terms of having no *cause* to be annoyed with him so there is nothing to exculpate; yet there is a *cause*. In both cases the problem with the existence or non-existence of a cause arises from the same emotion, that of jealousy.

The reverberation of Othello's words arouses uneasy feelings in the case of an accurate evaluation of Cordelia's words, and so of her act of mercy. When comparing the context in which both sentences have been articulated, one becomes conscious that there is a significant inversion of meaning deriving from a single cause, rivalry. For Othello there is a *cause*, when there is none, and for Cordelia there is no cause, when there is a *cause* that has generated pain, rejection and exile.

Lily B. Campbell (1988) sees *King Lear* as a tragedy arising out of Lear's wrathful nature, aggravated by old age. Bucknill, already in 1867, in his work *The Mad Folk of Shakespeare*, considers Lear's sufferings as the natural consequence of a mind that is a unbalanced, so that his madness should not be viewed as the product of his misery and even less as the outcome of his exposure to the storm, because the seeds of insanity are already present in him form the very beginning of the play.

We believe that Campbell and Bucknill are right. However, the seeds of insanity are to be sought in the *cause* of Lear's tragedy. Lear is not only too easily moved to outbursts of wrath, but from the opening of the play his mind exhibits the characteristic traits of a pathological disorder. The *cause* of this pathological disturbance has to be sought in some inner tension that *causes* emotional incipient derangement as arising from a new situation, his youngest daughter's imminent rite of passage. She is about to pass from childhood into womanhood through matrimony. The possibility in King Lear that we have a person whose mind is diseased by some passion does not mean we are trying to say he is not aware of what he is doing. We are not going to dismiss the *cause* of his tragedy as the simple result of insanity produced by senility as Campbell and Bucknill do. During the opening scene Lear is impatient and irrational: however, when it comes to self-preservation, Cordelia's love and physical comfort, he is foolish but cunning. There is nothing in Lear that speaks of the mildness and tolerance that should characterize old age, since he is anything but a patient old king. He does not accept defeat; everybody must act in agreement with his personal needs, otherwise he rejects the person that has contravened his wishes.

For many critics, the opening scene is a very unhappy one; its commencement is too abrupt and the movement of the events presented in it too rapid, so that the reader[2] is caught by the sense of uneasiness which arises from its surprising finale, enhanced by the fact that what is taking place in Lear's mind may not seem sufficently clear. However this is really not the case. If we look carefully at the thematic development of the scene and at Lear's words as fitting within that of the drama, this rapid movement is necessary. Shakespeare has given a tremendous twist to the original source or sources. The twist stems precisely from the abruptness and deliberate omission of information relating to Lear's determination to banish Cordelia and thus to the cause of his resolution: a *cause* that cannot be found in the original sources.

The play opens with a Lear who seems to have prepared a very specific and absurd situation at his daughters' expense with the idea of cornering Cordelia for his own ends. He has devised a trap with cunning care, and what is even worse, with the acceptance and compliance of his two counsellors, Kent and Gloucester. There is something devious as well as bizarre in his desire to know who loves him most at this moment. The importance of the issue at hand,—the division of the kingdom and Lear's irresponsible attitude in this matter—makes the reader feel he is watching a performance rather than a true event. By keeping in mind the theatrical quality of the scene, transformed into a parody of a competition of verbal skill, we can begin to apprehend the nature of the love-quest as far as Lear's expectations are concerned, and so the underlying *cause* of his expectations.

Wilson Knight (1977: 161) pointed out the effect of being presented with an interlude whose main actor happens to be Lear. However, Wilson Knight did not consider to problem inherent in an "interlude" of this nature[3]. The problem lies not in Lear as an actor but in the other players. Lear wants to be everything, the actor, the director and the designer of his own performance and so runs the risk of a bad performance for not having rehearsed the other actors of the play in the roles that he has already assigned to them in his mind.

The germinal cause of Lear's tragedy lies in the fact that Cordelia is no longer a child but a woman ready to enter into a relationship with a man she will love[4]. Here Shakespeare is touching upon a problem that is not only very human but real: the reaction of a man who is about to lose the only child that he has left: a child that he loves beyond the bounds of common sense. The problem is aggravated by Lear's age and the fact that he became a father late in life. So, Lear has the mind more of a doting grandfather than of a parent, and thus he is in greater need of love and reassurance than a younger father with a wife[5]. With such a prospect ahead of him, one can understand Lear's obsession with no longer being the only object of Cordelia's attention. Shakespeare is depicting a

rather familiar situation that many have to confront. The perplexing magnitude of the type of drama that Shakespeare explores derives from the fact that Lear does not belong to the many: he is a king and he does not love his daughter in a traditional way. In the calibre of his love lies the *cause* of his approaching tragedy, because it is in the quality of his love for Cordelia that his dilemma begins.

Mindless both of his duties and his title he tries to solve a personal difficulty to his liking. There is more to it than mere inclination: he is driven by a forceful emotional craving that produces both anxiety and tension. For Lear at this point there is only one thing that is real—the presence in his court of two men who want his daughter's hand. These two men are Burgundy and France and one of them will take Cordelia away with him and will have her love:

> The Princes, France and Burgundy,
> Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
> Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
> And here are to be answer'd.
> (I,i,44-7)

What Lear says in this speech is of great consequence. There are several items that must be appraised because they reveal much about Lear's attitude to Cordelia's suitors. Lear qualifies France and Burgundy as contenders. He sees both men as fighters contesting for his daughter's hand. For Lear it is not sufficient that they are rivals, but they have to be "great rivals." What Lear does not want to acknowledge is that there are not two rivals but three, he being the adversary of the two[6]. Lear's rivalry for his daughter's love transforms him into a fiercer fighter than France and Burgundy, who fight with cleaner weapons than those of Lear.

Another thing worth noting is the fact that the question of Cordelia's engagement is not an event that has occurred suddenly, but something that has been discussed for sometime and needs to be answered now. It is difficult to know if they have been long at court. Lear claims that they have; however, for Lear it might seem like a long time, because time is conditioned by the cause of their staying, Cordelia. Whatever the waiting period might have been, Lear has to face them now with a direct answer. If we consider the possibility that they have not been long at court, Lear's words will imply that he cannot tolerate their presence. If we accept Lear's statement as the truth, we will deduce that there has been some procrastination in taking a decision concerning Cordelia's betrothal. Independently of which interpretation is convincing, both point to the same thing: Lear is uneasy about the present situation. The discomfort originates

in a cause that either makes Lear feel that they have been there long or that has prompted him to postpone his answer as much as possible. Be it what it may, the contrast between "long in our court" and "here are to be answer'd" is provocative. Lear calls his proceedings a "darker purpose" so that it cannot be the product of an irrational whim devised in the last five minutes. What Lear is about to do is something that has been well calculated.

Lear's secret intention derives form a primary *cause* that is too private and personal to be discussed openly with either his daughters of Cordelia's suitors. Kent may know about it, and perhaps Gloucester, but nobody else knows about his motives. Lear is counting on the element of surprise. To make his trick operative, he must have an ample advantage over the other players in order to be the winner, thus bringing his game to a satisfactory conclusion. Lear does not think that he is playing a game of chance, but a game of skill. He is sure to win his game because he believes that he has planned a strategy perfect for pushing Cordelia into a trap to catch her. But Lear is wrong. There is an element of chance that he has not calculated arising from Cordelia's reaction. Lear was unable to anticipate this event because he does not really know Cordelia.

The problem with Lear is that what he feels is one thing and what he is capable of understanding about his emotions is another. To become a person capable of knowing himself and thus able to perceive the quality of his sentiments is not an easy task for Lear. He has been surrounded by sycophants and he has believed them because it was easiest. By accepting whatever he has been told, which was what he wanted to hear, he has not been faced with the choice of discriminating right from wrong. He has not had the opportunity to look at himself introspectively. Lear's shortcomings—his irrational disposition, hubris, and his inclination to have whatever is advantageous for him—has not helped him solve his problems in a more rational and logical manner. Lear does not know the meaning of disagreement, so he feels unimpeachable.

Because of their blind submission, Lear knows very little about either his own family or his counsellors. Lear's plan would not make sense if this were not the case. Obviously he took for granted that his plan was going to work because he took it for granted that his two daughters, Goneril and Regan, would praise him excessively. He also took for granted that Cordelia would try to eclipse them both. In the same way that Lear does not know himself, he does not know other: so the Lear who plans and schemes here cannot be all that dissimilar from the Lear he must have been in the past, though now more irascible and violent because of age and his pressing circumstances.

There is something wrong with Lear's world[7]. Knowing little about oneself is the rule rather than the exception in his domain. Gloucester, Lear's foil, acts and behaves in a manner that is similar to Lear's. He can be as

irresponsible as Lear when talking about his children and to his children[8]. While Lear is plotting to have Cordelia as his kind nurse, Gloucester stands in the background talking to Kent as if he were the backcloth that gives a pictorial dimension to Lear's demands about love. Gloucester talks about his children as anaesthetized creatures that must accept their parent's errors and affronts as if they were no more than trifling and fleeting whims of no consequence[9].

At first it takes a while to see the moral implications inherent in Lear's behaviour towards his daughters. The reader is too shocked or preoccupied with the question of the division of the kingdom. As Ribner has pointed out, Lear's proposal would not have been all that welcome to a Jacobean audience (Ribner 1971: 118-9), and their initial attention would be focused on the resolving of the difficulty caused by the approaching division of the kingdom rather than on the moral relevance of Lear's conduct[10]. We cannot enjoy the feeling of an initial impression because one of the problems with reading *King Lear* —or any of Shakespeare's plays—is that we know in advance how the events are going to unfold. Most people, even if they have not read the play, identify Goneril and Regan with two diabolical creatures. However, in the opening scene we do not know anything about them: all that we are allowed to perceive is an old man who is about to commit a very foolish act. To understand the exact nature of the transgression of Lear we must forget several things: what Lear is, how his daughters behave towards him, and Cordelia's matchless disposition. This is not easy; however, it must be done: it is a decisive predicament. We tend to read or re-read the play based on what must be qualified as received reading, and this should not be the case at all.

As soon as the king takes his place on the throne and delivers his first speech, the reader knows he is about to face something already preordained by Lear[11]. This sensation has been intensified by the conspicuous fact that the kingdom has already been divided into three portions. When the first daughter begins to speak, what comes to the reader's mind, surely as surely it must, is Gloucester's treatment of his son Edmund. Lear's tone does not help the reader to dissociate Lear's attitude from that of Gloucester. Both seem to be alike, not a reassuring thought. The spectacle that has been staged by Lear is a lamentable one. His cunning is boundless and he is cruel, for whether we like it or not, to be Goneril or Regan at this point must be very discomfiting[12]. To be pushed into such mockery is not only offensive but painful. Even the way in which he addresses his daughters is marked by both anxiety and tension. What Lear does is to violate his daughters' most elementary human rights and their sense of dignity.

> Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
> That we our largest bounty may extend
> Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,
> Our eldest-born, speak first.
>
> (I, i, 50-53)

What Lear says is pivotal. However, the enormity of his demand tends to be neglected by critics because what they see now is not a cruel and callous father but the tragic old man on the heath.

To grasp the dramatic texture of this scene requires the reader to forget all about Lear's affliction and to appraise his words within the context of the scene rather than within the framework of approaching events. What will happen, whether we care to admit it or not, assuages and even deletes all that is amoral, irrational and pitiless in the old king. One does not need much sagacity to see that Lear's daughters have been tranformed into a public spectacle in which the main issue at hand is a protestation of love. This phenomenon is sufficient to make a sesible human being feel that Lear, for one reason or other, is manipulating his daughters[13]. For Lear the manœuvring is both acceptable and legitimate because he has a reason or cause that is of fundamental importance for him.

To challenge his daughters to acquiesce to a love quest and to encourage them to dispute for a piece of land is hardly acceptable. To force them to strive publicly with declarations of love is unethical. To hear his daughters, at this moment, making frantic, insane and hollow protestations of love should shock us. But, his two daughters do exactly what Lear wants: obey him. The reader should note the direct, dry and urgent tone of Lear when he commands Goneril to speak. At first we think in terms of a father who is curt, authoritative and unwilling to waste words. However, this impression vanishes when the reader begins to contrast the manner in which he speaks to his other two daughters.

The way in which Lear speaks to Goneril is hardly acceptable even if the underlying cause were no more than Lear's anxiety to secure Cordelia with the biggest portion. It is sufficient to be the eldest-born and to have to compete with her other two sisters for a portion of the kingdom. Not a single endearing term has been used by Lear but a plain "Goneril." To be acknowledged in public as the one her father loves least must be a mortifying and unbearable experience and surely can do nothing but awake hostile feelings towards the favourite.

There is urgency in Lear's tone. His tension is manifest and the sensation of exigency is very marked. Lear is not capable of controlling his sentiments. What he wants of Cordelia transforms him in a relentless and unjust father. The

cause that promotes his designs overpowers him to such a point that the reader cannot fail to perceive that there is something very wrong with the demeanour of this old king. Lear does not waste much time in ordering Goneril to speak. Five words constitute his address to her.

As soon as Lear summons her to speak, Goneril surrenders to his will. She knows that the parody must go on, and so she recites in gradiose terms her feelings about her father. However, her words are sufficiently caustic. Goneril claims that Lear is to her "dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty." Her statement needs to be evaluated with much care. The first thing she does is to allude to blindness as opposed to sight, that is to say, to his incapacity to see things as they are because his unsound mind can blind him Blindness will achieve, as the action of the play undofolds itself, a horrifying dimension that will prompt the reader to question the nature and degree of his feelings towards his youngest daughter Cordelia. Goneril affirms that she would rather be blind than be without her father's love. By saying this Goneril is placing herself on her father's level. She obliquely claims that she is willing to become blind like Lear as long as she receives the larger portion of his kingdom: for her anything is valid to achieve her purpose. Her suggestion can be associated with both physical and spiritual blindness, and so is pertinent to Lear's spiritual blindness as opposed to Gloucester's physical blindness. Goneril's allusion, at this point, to the necessity of being blind in Lear's world, her world, seems to be trivial and irrelevant, no more than a commonplace topos involving the preferment of love to anything else. However, this is not so.

Goneril alludes to another theme, that of disinheritance. The connection and significance of this theme in relation to both Cordelia and her father, Lear, will soon be revealed with Cordelia's banishment. Goneril speaks of spacelessness as opposed to "space" or room or area to be in[14]. The last part of her speech is equally prophetic as far as Lear's fate and that of Cordelia is concerned. The old king is blind, his irrational desire has blinded him. In consequence he is about to be the one who becomes "disinherited" because he is going to "disinherit" the person he loves best, Cordelia. The resulting step is the expected one: lack of freedom. Goneril claims that she is willing to be a prisoner for the sake of her father's love. When considering the correlatives inherent in the word freedom, we have to admit that Goneril, in a rather crafty and indirect manner, is saying much to Lear. He does not give them the chance to be free. He wants certain words to be uttered and thus Lear is denying his daughters the right to confine their sentiments toward their father within the boundaries of a private and moral world. What he does goes against the most basic and elementary concept of freedom.

We cannot know with certainty how Goneril feels about her father's game or whether she has guessed Lear's intentions. Probably not, otherwise she would not have tried so hard to win the game. Goneril is no fool and, although she knows that Cordelia is the favourite, she must have hoped to get the larger portion by outdoing her two sisters.

In order to grasp fully the meaning of "liberty" and "space" the reader must wait for the thematic development of the play. Lear, and Cordelia at the end of the play, become prisoners, so that the one who truly loses her freedom and even her life for the sake of her father's love is Cordelia. She is capable of accepting her father's blindness, because the love she feels for him in a way blinds her to other realities.

Goneril's speech is rather mechanical but it pleases Lear: she has said what he wanted to hear, and that is all that matters. The quality of her tone, the unreality of her words, are of little consequence to Lear. What he wants is an exaggerated demonstration of love, verbal love, no more. We do not know, at this point, her true nature, but as soon as Cordelia speaks and Lear breaks into an irrational outburst of blind passion, in retrospect, we surely know that nothing coming from Goneril could please Lear. He is not really interested in the feelings of Goneril but in the verbal qualification of these feelings to be matched with those of Cordelia. Goneril could have said almost anything exaggerated enough as to make it difficult to find words to outmatch hers in quantity and in quality.

For Goneril to satisfy Lear is a futile quest. To a certain deree we can understand her behaviour: she knows that her father does not like her. However, she has hopes. Perhaps she was not fully aware of the implications inherent in her own words. The situation is so ridiculous as to make it difficult to understand Goneril's attitude towards Lear. If she fears that Lear, regardless of what she says, is not going to give her the larger portion, there is no reason to make such a tremendous verbal effort to demonstrate that she loves her father best. Possibly, hoping to secure the larger portion she selects three subjects that can hardly be matched, sight, space, and liberty, so that unawares she is setting the tone of the competition that Lear has anticipated.

Bearing in mind that Lear has said "that we our largest bounty may extend" and hearing Lear address himself to Cordelia, the reader cannot fail to see that Lear has been playing a foul game with his daughters. He has deceived them, for he has already decided to grant Cordelia the larger portion. Let us not forget that he does not wait to grant the portions after the three of them have spoken. To wait till the three were finished, at least, would have given his quest the facade of an ethical game. He gives the portion as soon as the person in question has spoken, thus leaving some hope for the next speaker to outdo the preceding one, because the larger portion has not yet been granted.

From Lear's stance it is evident that there is no real and honest communication between father and daughters. Lear is beguiling Goneril with the supposition that if she claims to love him best she will receive the larger portion; and Goneril is deceiving her father with her hollow protestations of love. Lear's quest is the product of ulterior motives and so are Goneril's words. The problem is that the reader cannot perceive Lear's falsity with sufficient clarity till he addresses himself to Cordelia, hoping that she will manage to surpass her two sisters. What Lear expects of her, as we shall see, is much, too much: her renunciation of her rights as a woman in order to become his loving companion; the nurse of an old father who wants both her reassurance and the independence to enjoy old age without responsibilities or preoccupations.

By the time Goneril finishes her deceptive speech Cordelia is already aware that there is a problem and very serious one to be faced and so she asks herself sadly and plaintively, "What shall Cordelia speak?" (I, i, 61). It is very difficult to answer her question. Perhaps the problem is that there is no way of answering it without falling into Lear's trap. Goneril, impelled by her desire to secure the larger share, has articulated, according to Lear, the desired words. All is going well for Lear and so when he speaks to his second daughter he is less tense, more relaxed and his tone has not only become warmer but his address has been increased from five words to eleven, "What says our second daughter / Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall?" (I, i, 66-67). Regan does not stand, like Goneril, as a person dismissed, as if she were no more than the "first-born" in Lear's mind. Regan's name has been qualified by "our dearest" and her social standing has been specified as that of "wife of Cornwall." Some human entity has been granted to Regan that Lear, with his urgency and anxiety, has deprived his first daughter of.

The commencement of the request with the pronoun "what" used interogatively is already a challenge that Regan must accept. His demand implies that there is still a larger portion so that she may get it if she says the correct thing. As Lear had assumed, she tries to outdo Goneril and by doing so she speaks of her affections in a manner difficult for the unhappy Cordelia to improve on. The theme of blindness, space and liberty has been enlarged to that of her condition as a wedded lady. Perhaps she has picked up Lear's hint when he spoke of her as a married lady who loves a man other than himself. It there is a clue in Lear's address, it is difficult to know. However what is plain is that Regan sees it as such and grabs at the opportunity of exceeding her sister in the love contest.

Regan's words must be analyzed with care because what she says leaves Cordelia no option other than to submit to Lear's "darker purpose" or cause that has constrained him to devise this love competition. According to Regan her affection for Lear must be measured by what she can exclude from her life as inimical to her feelings for her father:

> I am made of that self metal as my sister,
> And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
> I find she names my very deed of love;
> Only she comes too short: that I profess
> Myself an enemy to all other joys
> Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
> And find I am alone felicitate
> In your dear highness' love.
>
> (I, i, 68-74)

The first line states that she, like Goneril, is his daughter. The choice of the word "metal" gives to Regan's speech several corollaries that we must take into consideration. These associations according to *Shakespeare-Lexicon* are as follows: "Metal or mettle (no distinction made in O.E.D. between the two words). 1) Heavy, hard and shining substance, not combustible but fusible by heat. 2) The substance or material of which a thing is composed. 3) Constitutional disposition, character, temper. 4) A fiery temper, ardour, spirit of enterprise, high courage.

Apart from indicating that she is his daughter she names a quality derived from her father and relating to the fact that "metal" is very hard and shines. Lear has been hard on his daughters but he shines as king, so that he is gold-metal, and she is entitled to the crown of the larger part. Another aspect to bear in mind is that although metal implies hardness, metal is fusible by heat. The image is appropiate because it links Lear to his eventual awareness during his meeting with Cordelia at Dover that he is "bound / Upon a wheel of fire," (IV, vii, 46). The second meaning implicit in the imperative tone used by Regan, is that he must bear in mind that they are both like him: that they are made of the same substance, that they can be demanding, hard and ready to act like him. The third related meaning of "metal" refers to their "temper" which, again, has to be in line with his. Regan's implied intimation achieves full force with the last related meaning of "metal": both have a fiery disposition; both are passionate and have courage, and thus are capable of anything to further their desires.

When trying to outdo her sister, Regan is not a dunce. First, as her fierce temper dictates, she commands Lear to price her "at her [sister's] worth." Next she emphasizes that there is something in her love for him that entitles her to be exalted to a higher worth, and thus to be the deserving winner of the larger portion. She is capable of asserting, apart from preferring her father's love to

sight, space and liberty, that she wants nothing of life which is not his love. Regan's words comprise almost the utmost that a woman can deny hersfelf for the sake of her father's love.

With Regan's speech the reader wonders what Cordelia can say to prove to Lear that she loves him best. An astute mind knows that there is only one thing left and what has been left unsaid cannot be uttered as a profession of love by Goneril or Regan because they are already married. What they have not mentioned is what Lear expects Cordelia to say. To renounce her suitors by stating that to marry a man is hateful to her because she is happy only loving her father.

Most critics tend to see Cordelia as a most faultless young maiden. Owing to this very general attitutde, Bradley's evaluation of Cordelia's behaviour has been and still is a cause of dispute[15]. Critics tend to defend Cordelia with so much zeal that one has the feeling that they are vindicating more the poetic merits of the playwright than the moral fabric of the story and with it Cordelia's attitude towards her father. This obsession to exonerate both Cordelia and Lear tends to produce a distorted picture of Lear's world. They must be perfect in their imperfection. Lear must be an ethical man even if his needs and desires cannot be classified as bering truly moral. Unless we are capable of seeing Lear's world for what it is, harsh, amoral and irrational, the finale of the play will be questioned as an atrocity. However, this is not the case. Shakespeare knew what he was doing and it is called poetic justice.

Probably the obstacle to seeing the cause of Lear's tragedy in its true light derives not so much from the incapacity to see Lear for what he is, an old man too fond of his youngest daughter, unwilling to have her married, and thus obsessed with her status as maiden. This may be easily accepted. The problem lies surely not in Lear but in the inconvenience of accepting Cordelia as the person who is wanted by her father on different terms to those which natrue imposes on her. To concede this does not mean that we are questioning her moral constitution or that we are accusing her of any impropriety. She is not the only character in the literature of this period who is the victim of a relative who wants her and is not aware of it. A good example of this problem is the unhappy Duchess of Malfi, whose tragedy, as most critics accept nowdays, originates in her brother's fixation, an obsession of which he is not fully conscious.

The evaluation of Cordelia, at this crucial moment, will depend entirely upon the moral make-up of the reader. Also the idea of what is practical and what is not will influence him[16]. Perhaps the only thing that can be easily recognized is that Lear has so manipulated the situation as to place Cordelia in very difficult position. He has managed to evince from his two elder daughters the exact words, the words he wanted to hear, to trap her. Whether we like it or not, the

main object of Lear's love-game is that of catching or trapping Cordelia, as if she where an object with no rights that he can disposed of at his convenience. The point is fully confirmed, as we shall see, towards the end of the play. The idea of catching is constantly in the air, and the reasons for the hunt or catching of Cordelia can be explained only in terms of Lear's personal needs, egotism, and infatuation; a feeling that cannot be confined within the bounds of normal love for a daughter.

Lear's address to Cordelia brings discomfort and even embarrassment. The other two sisters are there to compare the manner in wich Lear speaks to Cordelia with the way that he spoke to them a few moments earlier. Lear's language has changed and his speech is much longer:

> Now, our joy,
> Although our last, and least; to whose young love
> The vines of France and milk of Burgundy
> Strive to be interess'd; what can you say to draw
> A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
> (I, i, 81-85)

This comes as a shock. The emphasis placed on a "third more opulent" reveals how deceitful Lear has been to his other two daughters.

To study the meaning of this parliament we have to do two things; one, compare the manner in which he speaks to Cordelia with the way in which he spoke to his other daughters. Two, consider the main elements that have been cvontemplated by Lear in his speech. We shall begin by reiterating the fact that in Goneril's case Lear asks her to speak. When it comes to Regan's turn Lear does not demand her to speak but he wants to know what she has to say. When Cordelia has to speak, Lear challenges her with what she can say, and what she can say is conditioned by what has been said previously. To ask somebody to speak is not quite the same as to ask a person what he or she has to say and even less what he or she can say. Once more we must emphasize the differences in tone, grammar and structure. From a curt and unfeeling "speak", Lear changes to "what says" and from this manner of speech to "what can you say."

Happy as he is when speaking to Cordelia, not only does his tone change but he commends her for being his joy and also for being innocent because she has not yet granted her "young love" to any man. Now it is not a question of speaking but of what she can say to prove that she loves him more than her sisters, so as to win the larger portion. He mentions, again, the fact that two men are contending for her love, implying that the larger portion will be given to one of them. But this may not be so. If Lear has been capable of dissembling as far as

the granting of the larger portion to Goneril and Regan is concerned, he might be pretending now. Lear may have in mind to grant them nothing, since he hopes to keep Cordelia with him. Lear is playing a dark game, for there is nothing left for Cordelia to say other than to renounce marriage because she loves her father above all. Of course Cordelia is not willing to do so and therefore she has nothing to say. Once Cordelia says nothing a very direct and violent confrontation between two strong wills takes place. Lear's plan has proved futile; the quest has led him nowhere and thus he feels like a man bereft of what he wants most in life, his daughter.

Much has been written about Cordelia's failure to express her authentic feelings and about Lear's incapacity to understand her; but a close scrutiny of her words proves that she is not as tongue-tied as she claims to be. There is novelty in this observation for as Bradley wrote, "Cordelia is not, indeed always tongue-tied, as several passages in the drama, and even in this scene, clearly show" (Bradley 1964: 265). When Cordelia is hard pressed by Lear she is cold, clear-headed and very precise; nothing is superfluous in what she articulates and with few words she manages to state exactly what she presumes must be clarified. What Cordelia says is that she will love her husband and consequently that she cannot declare that she will love Lear most. She wants to get married, she has a right to love a man and because of this right she cannot pledge herself to love only her father.

Cordelia feels that she is tongue-tied. Her beliefs about her incapacity to express what she thinks beg some questioning. She has been hard on her father, direct, cold, and stern. Something prompts Cordelia to feel she is tongue-tied; she has not said what she feels must be said. What she is not going to convey openly is that she is not going to accept Lear's implicit proposal of self-denial. To say this unveiled is impossible because it would render Lear as a worthless liar, as a man who has deceived all of them for the sake of a personal need. What is obvious to Cordelia is that to take a husband on Lear's stipulation is impossible. Regan has stated that she prefers Lear to the marital embrace, and Lear expects of Cordelia something to prove that she is more devoted to him than her two sisters. Thus, Cordelia can do only one thing, reject her suitors. It is possible to see this as what Lear expects. After all to give for example to France his larger portion, solves nothing while causing many problems. What Lear wants is implicit in the way in which he has conducted the love-quest. What he wants is grounded in a cause, in his feelings that disturb him to the point of mental disequilibrium.

Cordelia knows how to argue her case. The method that she employs to defend herself is admirable when appraised on moral grounds and natural rights. Very clearly, she specifies that she loves him according the natural "bond" that

must exist between a father and a daughter; hence, she cannot move beyond the boundaries imposed by the laws of nature. What she says is very alarming. Cordelia is no fool and she knows exactly what she is saying. Her declaration about the type of bond that must unite a daughter to her father has to relate to Lear's purpose and so to the cause of the love competition. Her words are loaded and some of the implied meanings are associated with Lear's bearing during this scene. One of the suggested connotations is that she, unlike her sisters, is going to abide in both deed and words within the limits imposed by the bond that she is talking about. In her opinion her sisters have moved beyond the decency allowed by this bond, not of course in deed but in words, and she is right.

Cordelia is very conscious of this transgression and of the consequences. Her perception is well revealed by the way she treats her sisters when she is about to leave the court. Her argument about the bond and its limits is reinforced when to defend her point she uses words deriving from the marriage service, "I / Return those duties back as are right fit, / Obey you, love you, and most honour you" (I, i, 95-97). With these words, what she is saying is that she cannot see a reason why she cannot have a husband like her sisters. She asserts that in spite of having a husband to love she can love her father in a similar manner, but not in a identical way which does not mean that she cannot love him. With these words Cordelia is trying to achieve something else: to show that her sisters are false because they cannot love Lear more than their husbands. To do so signifies desecrating the bond of matrimony. In addition she is implying that if they are married ladies Lear must know that they love their husbands or at least that they ought love them. However, Lear accepts as natural such a monstrous statement without considering their duties as wives. Lear's acceptance of their words, in view of Cordelia's understanding of marriage, is a sham, a pretence. "Sure I shall never marry like my sisters, / To love my father all" (I, i, 102-3). Cordelia is right but Lear's counterfeit places her in a very difficult situation. Thus she is angry with them for claiming they love their father more than anything else in this world.

What Cordelia says is correct but the way she says it is rather distressing. There is tremendous finality in her words, "I love your Majesty / According to my bond: no more nor less" (I, i, 91). The key word is "bond" Cordelia loves him according to the bond imposed by nature. She is unwilling to love him more than the bond licenses her. Had Cordelia said, "according to my bond," without adding the disturbing possibility that Lear wants to be loved more than the bond allows, the words would not be so shocking and perturbing. There is bitterness in her words, but also a firmness of character that can surprise the reader, considering her age and her love for her father. Her words reflect an acute sense of discomfort, the natural mortification that any sensitive person might feel when

discovering that he or she has been treated as a quarry: that Lear has managed, using, or abusing the falseness of her two sisters, to corner her in a way she is not going to accept.

Cordelia is not willing to be purchased by Lear to become his kind nurse. She wants more, she wants to be treated like anybody else. It is not a question of Cordelia's unwillingness to care for Lear, but of reluctance considering the conditions imposed by Lear. In this confrontation Cordelia proves to be Lear's equal in many respects; she will not bend her will regardless of the price she has to pay for her liberty, her capacity to see what her father wants of her.

Lear becomes mad beyond reason. Lear gives the impression of being a man bent on having his will since he has never weathered a real and direct resistance even from the ones who seem to love him well. Lear must have been a strong-headed man; otherwise we cannot understand why, up to this point, everybody seems to have been engaged in his will without forcing him to question his acts or his needs. The Lear that we see during the first scene is a man who in no way is prepared to meet the challenge of someone trying to resist his resolution and more so when such a hindrance comes from the person he loves best. The supposition that so far everybody has been most obedient to his wishes is confirmed by his violent reaction towards Cordelia and Kent when they stand up to him as if they were strangers, because this is new to him.

If he expected to assert his will over Cordelia he finds himself defeated by his own game. His emotional world has been destroyed and thus there is little left for him other than to rage like a wounded animal; and wounded as he feels he tries to inflict upon the "cause" of his pain as much pain as possbile, because in his mind it would have been better never to have had such a child than to go through the ordeal of rejection.

For Lear the existence of Cordelia becomes a disaster. Thus it is comprehensible that owing to his grief and anxiety, he prefers never to set eyes upon her than to suffer this type of hell. An appalling bottomless pit if we bear in mind that, at the end, he has to cut his emotional bond by severing the rope from which Cordelia hangs dead. He is not willing to cut the umbilical cord now and thus he will have to go through a far worse tribulation. For Lear, the ordeal of the cord, implicit in Cordelia's name—Cord [i] deal, becomes his last horror. Cordelia is not willing to maintain her child-like attachment to Lear. He fails and so he takes the opposite road, that of boundless hatred, precisely because he cannot cut the cord. The abrupt change from inmense love and joy to a inexhaustible hatred can be explained only in terms of what Lear expected of Cordelia. His love must be very intense to change in less than few minutes to such a violent abhorrence. At this point nothing can bring relief to Lear's mad

anger, and so when Kent tries to help him he turns and commits his final mistake, that of confering his revenue and the execution of his kingly duties on both Goncril and Regan.

During this unhappy scene Gloucester cannot be present and so Kent, all alone, has to contend with Lear. He offers himself as his "physician" but all he receives in exchange is banishment, because Lear, instead of trying to see and understand the cause that prompts him to act in the way he does, chooses his sword. The words that Lear utters, interrupting Kent with so much violence when he tries to say something, are worth considering, for they serve to add more data relating to the existence of a dark *cause* and hence to the nature of that *cause* :

> Come not between the Dragon and his wrath.
> I Lov'd heer most, and thought to set my rest
> On her kind nursery. Hence, and avoid my sight!
> So be my grave my peace, as here I give
> Her father's heart from her!
> (I, i, 121-25)

Lear identifies himself with a dragon and he is right in doing so. To the natural instinct of this monster, wrath, we have to add those of fire and desolation. Lear is destroyed by his own substance, the fire ot the dragon. Fire as a symbol of Lear's crisis is used on several occasions throughout the play, and fire can have associations with desires that consume. The transition from love to fire and from fire to boundless wrath is provocative. Once Cordelia refuses to pronounce the expected words, love, fire and wrath become the same thing in Lear's mind.

To the element of fire we have to add the symbol of the sword. Lear opts for the sword, thus rejecting Kent's offer to become his physician: "Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow / Upon the foul disease" (I, i, 162). The meaning of Lear's choice is sufficiently clear: nothing can cure his disease[17]. Once Kent becomes fully aware that there is no solution to Lear's problem he can do nothing other than take Lear's role as father, for Cordelia does not have a father in a moral and a physical sense. Kent does not only bless Cordelia, as father, but thinks that she has acted correctly, even if her act entails his banishment from the court: "The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid, / That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!" (I, i, 181-82).

Once Kent leaves the court, Burgundy and France appear on the scene. At this point the reader should note that Lear addresses himself first to Burgundy, "My Lord of Burgundy, / We first address toward you, who with this king / Hath rivall'd for our daughter" (I, i, 188-90), and not to France, France being a king.

Lear may have done this for two reasons: one, because he knows Burgundy sufficiently well to suspect that he will refuse Cordelia. And, that he hopes that France will reject Cordelia if Burgundy rejects her first since he is a king and the other of a lesser rank. The idea of rivalry is emphasized once more by Lear, who cannot see France and Burgundy in any other light than that of two rivals contending for his daughter's love. Lear does not do much to bring about Burgundy's rejection, so that Cordelia discovers that he does not love her greatly. This is not quite the case with France, who up to this point waits wondering at Lear's anger.

France, watching Lear's change, wonders about the cause ("This is most strange"; I, i, 212) and about Cordelia's offense: "Sure, her offence / Must be of such unnatural degree / That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection / Fall into taint" (I, i, 217-20). France, unlike Burgundy, is not governed by interest, so that he can look at the issue in a different manner. For France the event of Cordelia's disgrace is too peculiar to be accepted as such. Hence, in spite of Lear's efforts to discredit his daughter in the eyes of her suitors, he fails. For France Lear's words exhibit an ill desire towards his daughter: "therefore beseech you / T'avert your liking a more worthier way / Than on a wretch whom Nature is asham'd / Almost t'acknowledge hers." (I, i, 210-11). Lear's words constitute a diseased yearning based on his desire to see Cordelia forsaken by everybody and thus in need begging his protection. This would mean taking her back but on his own terms.

Cordelia reacts well and defends her case. At this point we must pay attention to Cordelia's words for two different reasons which are obliquely linked to the cause of Lear's tragedy. The reader can hardly qualify her words as lacking eloquence; in fact, when she addresses Lear, and indirectly France, we have been presented with her longest parliament throughout the play. There is energy in her tone and so much so that it is not difficult to deduce where her affection is placed and thus why she does not want to be forsaken by Frnce. Cordelia's speech is effective, for France, in spite of Lear's efforts to discredit his daughter, becomes aware of her worth so that his love for her increases. He knows that she has taken "No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step" (I,i, 227). Cordelia, with her speech, manages to destroy Lear's last hope, thus invalidating the expected result of the love-trial[18].

As the tragedy unfolds, the plot changes from Lear's desire to inflict pain on Cordelia to a desire of inflicting pain upon himself. Once Lear is left alone in the hands of his two daughters blindness and old age become his theme. Sex and sight take a predominant place in Lear's talk, mixed with that of adultery which haunts him like a devil, and eventually incest. Lear begins to see himself as both a fond old man and a blind one, speaking at times as if he has no eyes.

"Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are his eyes?" (I, iv, 224). Lear sees himself as a blind man because he has not been able properly to estimate the worth of his daughters. Yet, the real blindness of Lear, his moral blindness as to the cause which prompted him to misapprehend Cordelia's words when she tried to make him see things as they really were, is there. Lear never reaches the necessary anagnorisis; his is incomplete, so that he is one of the most tragic characters ever devised in the history of drama.

From asking, Lear moves to expressiang a marked desire of inflicting physical violence upon himself, and the type of savagery he is talking about fits in again with the fact that he is still morally blind.

> Old fond eyes,
> Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,
> And cast you, with the waters that you loose,
> To temper clay.
>
> (I, iv, 299-302)

Here he talks about plucking out his eyes. When he is about to depart from Goneril he speaks of drakness and of the devil, unaware yet of the fact that the devil is in him and darkness no more than a manifestation of the sickness spoken of by Kent.

Lear's sin, that is to say, the *cause* that has placed him in such a tremendous situation, has to be exorcised. Such a tremendous situation has to be exorcised, thoretically speaking, through the violent act of plucking out his own eyes. The image of darkness combined with that of the eyes is not a very comfortable one because, even with the best will, the reader cannot avoid the classical image of Orestes, driven to madness and Oedipus's blind wanderings. Yet we have to accept that the image of blindness is an apt one; it fits pefectly well with the cause of his tragedy, his unreasonable jealousy and his desire to deny Cordelia the natural embrace of matrimony.

Lear's anxiety and mental disequilibrium, caused by the tension of his feelings towards his young daughter explodes with the storm. This chaotic event is no more than nature's reflection on Lear's feelings and of his mental state. The storm, as Lear sees it, like him raves with "eyeless rage." With the storm we have to return to scene one, that is to say to several elements related to the germinal cause of the tragedy.

Goneril spoke in terms of his being to her dearer than eye-sight. In Lear's world all has become now dearer than eye-sight. He is the one who hopes to loose his sight. He is the one who has no "space" to be in and he is the one who looses

his liberty and thus he has to face nature's chaos. However, he cannot understand why all this has come about. Thus the feeling that he evokes is that even if Lear plucks out his eyes, he will be as blind as he was during the opening scene. Lear can appreciate the external in others but never his own inner world: he cannot do it because he cannot understand the nature of his sentiment.

Lear calls on the tempest in the hope of having an allied power destroy his two daughters, unaware of the fact that the storm is operating upon him. The storm is a violent and eyeless reflection of the inner storm caused by his feelings, egotism, irrationality and deceitfulness. Regardless of how much the storm rages within and without, Lear remains impotent to see because his mind is clouded by wrath and by his incapacity to accept himself for what he is, a doting father who expected too much of a daughter without considering, as Cordelia says, the natural "bond" that must unite them.

We may here compare *Othello* with *King Lear*. Othello's tragedy is based in his blindness, caused by his insane jealousy. In this play there is a tremendous moment in which Othello, after realizing that he has killed an innocent creature, calls for an storm which, from a linguistic point of view, has been described in similar terms by Lear. Yet, in Othello's case, the storm never takes place because he is no longer governed by feelings of blind jealousy and he can see that he has perpetrated a crime without "cause" (*Othello* V, ii, 279-81). Othello, unlike Lear, discovers that there was no cause so that he does not ecome involved in a real storm. Lear, unlike Othello, does not know himself. After he banishes both Kent and Cordelia, Regan attriburtes his behaviour to "the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (I, ji, 292-93). Goneril and Regan seem to know Lear much better than Cordelia. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that both are evil and thus they can see in Lear flaws unrecognized by others. Regan and Goneril, unlike Cordelia, speak of being made of the "same metal," possibly refering to Lear's fibre. In many respects his two daughters are, unlike Cordelia, made of Lear's "metal."

Many of Lear's imperfections have been transformed into vivid images of chaos and disorder; and it can hardly be a coincidence that Shakespeare, in *Othello* and in *King Lear*, has chosen images composed of the elements of air and fire. Lear is the dragon that dares the elements, while the wind blows with eyeless rage. During this episode Lear's attention is focused on lust, and on incest, that is to say, on demonic images[19]. R. M. Frye comments that "Shakespeare could have placed him in a Dantesque or Miltonic hell, but he did not so, and neither should we."[20] However, Lear is in hell enveloped by both darkness and a raging wind. Canto V of the *Divine Comedy* serves to explain why Shakespeare has combined both elements: and the type of sin that is punished in Hell with a wind that blows with "eyeless rage" is lust.

Othello invokes a hellish tempest because he has sinned against Desdemona in thought and deed, and his sin derives from his jealousy. The similarities between Desdemona, accused of a fault she has not committed, and Cordelia claiming that there is no *cause* are suggestive. Both men cannot see that the *cause* of their tragedies lies within themselves. The analogies can be taken further. In the same way that Lear, when Cordelia is about to depart with France, tells her that it would have been better for him if she had never been born, Othello says the same thing to Desdemona. The phrasing used by Lear and Othello is almost identical: "Would thou hadst ne'er been born!" (*Othello*, IV, ii, 71) and "Better thou / Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better" (*King Lear*, I, i, 23).

In Lear's mind Cordelia has been unfaithful to him because she loves another man, hence he cannot see France capable of loving her without lust. After perceiving that her shortcoming is a minor one he is still distressed by the idea of lust in the person of France and thus by his sexual possession of Cordelia: "Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took / Our youngest born," (II, iv, 210-11). Lear's immorality derives from what his possessive feelings induce him to see, and what he sees is all wrong. When Lear rages like a wounded animal, forgetting the nature of his two daughters Goneril and Regan he directs his choler against their husbands: "And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws, / Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!" (IV, vi, 184-85). Possibly he is refering to France too. Thus it would be appropriate for him to become physically blind since he cannot separte right from wrong, but this does not happen.

Owing to Lear's errors Gloucester has to suffer the ordeal of being blinded by Lear's daughters who, by now, have become the living picture of the "foul fiend." They have become two irrational furies bent on destroying Lear's world. Lear does not suffer physical blindness. However we must understand Gloucester's blindness as a physical displacement of the moral blindness that characterizes Lear. Lear speaks of wanting to pluck out his eyes but for the wrong reason, so that his eyes are never plucked. The symbolic act of Lear's blindness takes place in the person of Gloucester, who becomes his surrogate, suffering the punsihment in the king's stead. The point has been well clarified by Gloucester when he explains why he has done what he has done; "because I would not see / Thy cruel nails pluck out his poor old eyes" (II, vii, 54-55).

The punishment has to fall on Gloucester. Lear is insane and thus he is not answerable for his acts. Gloucester, the sane man, sends Lear to Dover, thus making the reunion with Cordelia possible. That reunion does not help Lear to reach the necessary anagnorisis. On the contrary, it becomes the occasion to fulfil his wild dream, that of being alone with Cordelia. The cause is of no consequence for Lear: the chance to be alone with his daughter, even if it is in

a prison is what matters. Hence the structure of the play achieves a circular motion, we have returned to the first scene. What has changed in Lear's mind is little as far as his feelings towards his daughter are concerned.

What differentiates Gloucester from Lear is that the first, by being immersed permanently in darkness, reaches an enduring anagnorisis, while the latter's is temporal. By watching Lear escaping physical blindness we can evaluate the weight of his ordeal and the imperfection of his purgation. The point has been brought to the surface by means of Lear's attitude and apprehension of Gloucester's blindness, for, before he can recognize him, he equates his blindness with Cupid's and thus with the general workings of love, not to say lust, as something to be avoided (IV, vi, 135-36). However, Lear did not want ot avoid it. After all, he has invoked the gods for blindness, he has wanted to be the agent of his own blindness. The point is important because the insane Lear cannot see beyond the boundaries of lust and eros when it comes to Gloucester, the living image of blindness. The problem is that in his madness he cannot grasp why he has wanted to pluck out his own eyes, and even less that, at this moment, he is watching a portrait of himself in the person of Gloucester.

The scene is unbearable but it is a necesssary one in consideration to the germinal cause of Lear's tragedy. The scene prepares the reader to confront Lear's imperfection. The image of a blind man and Lear talking about Cupid as the cause of his blindness paves the way for the meeting between daughter and father and also for the unavoidable aftermath of the encounter[21]. Much has been written about the redeeming quality of the rendezvous, forgetting that Cordelia is alone so that in Lear's mind she has become the perfect being, the creature untouched by the power of the "foul fiend". She is there but on Lear's terms: as his child, not as the wife of France[22]. She has become his kind nurse. This is the consummation of Lear's dream at the opening of the play so that we must expect another disaster since Lear's aspiration has been realized.

Cosidering Lear's nature and the cause of his tragedy, on moral grounds the meeting must to be no more than an evanescent relief to bring to life Lear's dream[23]. The battle is lost and both are taken prisoner. For Lear, at this point, Cordelia becomes dearer than space and liberty, dearer than sight, for he does not want to see anybody other than his dearest daughter. Lear at this point, instead of being angry, feeling the humilation of the defeat, seems to be happy; too happy, indeed, to be considered as normal. His words when they are taken to prison are strange and out of context (V, iii, 8-14). Nothing seems to bother him now, on the contrary, he gives the impression of being elated by the circumstances, so that his egotism is revealed in a line that can bring nothing but horror and pity in the reader's mind.

Both are sent to prison and this is a return to the initial point of Lear's quest at the opening of the play. Lear is happy for he has Cordelia all to himself. Cordelia becomes silent; as in the love quest there is nothing for her to say, she cries but not a sound can be heard. The one who talks and talks is Lear. He feels like talking because the topic of his discourse gladdens him. He gives immense consideration to the certainty that now, finally, they are going to be alone. Lear's urgency and excitement is very conspicuous. When Cordelia questions him as to whether they are going to see Goneril and Regan before going to prison, Lear vehemently says "no!, no, no, no!." His negative is followed by a command, "Come, let's away to prison" (V, iii, 8).

For Lear, prison becomes his haven. The sense of alarm at Lear's reaction grows when he, as the irresponsible and egocentric man he is, asks Cordelia, "have I caught thee?" (V, iii, 21). This is a loaded verb. The point achieves full force when looking at the implications inherent in "caught." Lear has been able to catch her and this transforms Cordelia unawares into what she has been, Lear's game. Even the simile, "like foxes!" is appropriate to Lear because he has been the fox of he parody of the love quest. A deceptive fox contriving an forbidden trap for Cordelia by means of the love contest. Here we have the lethal fulfilment of Lear's quest in the opening scene of the play, to catch her: also, the germinal *cause* of the tragedy, for catching her was the "darker purpose" of the love competition. He has achieved his end but both will have to pay a very high price for his offense.

Given the nature of Lear's obsession, his joy cannot last long. Soon a desperate and broken old man emerges on stage bearing the body of her whom he loves best, Cordelia. For Shakespeare it has to be so: Lear, unlike Gloucester, is still ruled by irrational feelings and is thus morally blind. In addition, there is not a fitting way out for Cordelia, since in all probability, had she returned to France Lear would have been as crazed by her absence and the idea that she loved another man as he was when she left him. Thus her death fulfils a moral purpose.

Lear cuts the cord and with it he liberates Cordelia from a condition that is too binding owing to her good nature and filial love. She has been unable to forsake a father in need and thus she has been true to her statement at the opening of the play loving Lear according to the natural "bond" that must unite them. Bearing in mind Cordelia's predicament and Lear's agony we have to do what Edward asks the reader to do, "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (V, iii,323)[24]. What our reason forces us to declare is one thing and what our emotions prompt us to feel about Lear's sufferings is another. The last image is that of a man who is punished for loving much but in a foolish way: what he has to pay in retribution is sufficient to forgive him for wanting to secure his daughter's love.

In the last scene Lear's final punishment becomes a penalty that goes beyond the horror of physical blindness or extinction. Cordelia's death is necessary, for had she lived, Lear would have been in perpetual darkness. Both are released from a prison: "space and liberty" are granted to them when Lear cuts the cord. By severing the cord there is no more cause so that Lear is loosed from the sorrows innate in human needs.

NOTES

1. *King Lear*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1973). The Arden Shakespeare. Note: all quotations from this edition.

2. This may sound like a digression but it is not. We wish to explain why we use the term reader rather than audience. We are very aware of the differences between reader and audience and precisely because we are very aware of the dissimilarity we feel we have to use the term reader rather than audience. A critic has to be a reader because he is not evaluating the play as a whole, starting from a general dramatic impression of the performance, but from one aspect of the play as it relates to the dramatic fabric of the play. To do this we have to read the play a considerable number of times. It is realistic to accept that we do not always have the chance to see the performance sufficiently often for this type of criticism based on the real thing, the actual performance of the play. Also, we are sufficiently pragmatic to accept the inevitable fact that when teaching drama in a classroom we cannot make use of the dramatic visual effect of the play: we do not have the possibility of appreciating the effects on the stage, and all we have to work with is the written text. The observation may sound futile and irrelevant but it is not and needs to be stated.

3. As in *Hamlet*, because there is a cause the director of the play expects something of great importance from the performance. However, Hamlet, unlike Lear, gives instructions to the players. For Hamlet, behind the performance lies the discovery of the existence of a cause to avenge. The verification of the existence of a cause, owing to Hamlet's attitude, will affect the lives of the innocent and the guilty an equal degree. In Lear's case, the affirmation of Cordelia's unconditional love is the *cause* of Lear's staging an absurd performance.

4. For Ribner (1971: 120) the problem derives from the fact that Lear's fault "was a deliberate moral choice made before the love-contest." This is fine, but unless we understand the nature of this choice we shall not be able to grasp the seriousness of the fault.

5. Iris Murdoch uses the Lear theme in her novel *The Philosopher's Pupil*. The interesting point is that she has transformed the old father into a gradfather whose

preoccupation is with his grand-daughter's marriage. We would like to indicate that Iris Murdoch's novel has in no way influenced the thesis of this paper. In fact, we wrote this paper in 1977. Two years later we used this paper to stage *King Lear* following the methods of Grotowski. The production of *King Lear* was presented as an exercise at Studio Theatre, 4 Glen Morris St. of the Toronto Drama Centre of the University of Toronto. The reason we mention Murdoch's work lies in the fact that we were both surprised and pleased with her treatment of Lear. In addition, her approach to Lear helped reaffirm us in the validity of our thesis. For years we had felt that our analysis of Lear's problem was a little daring. Yet, at present, writers are beginning to see Lear's dilemma in a different light from the traditional one. For example, Adrian Pool (1987: 232-3) considers that Lear has a fixation with the mother figure and he is right. In this paper, as in 1977, we take this point much further. We understand that Lear's fixation is grounded on both concepts, that of the mother figure and that of the wife, combined in the person of Cordelia.

6. According to L.C. Knights, Lear "is a symbol of something not uncommon—the attempt to manipulate affection which can only freely be given" (1983: 334). This is quite right, but the problem lies in knowing why he feels he must manipulate Cordelia's affection when he already knows that she loves him.

7. As far as we are aware, a detailed analysis of the curious fact that in one way or other all the characters act as a mirror of the others has not been done. However, the fact that Kent emulates Lear has been mentioned by F. A. Shirley (1979: 129). Danby writes that if Kent emulates Lear, the Fool is as callous as he. See John F. Danby (1982: 104, 113). According to Goldsmith we might even question the Fool's loyalty. See H. Goldsmith (1963: 65). S. L. Goldberg (1980) avoids judgements based on total pefection and evil. He tries to see Cordelia in the light of possible error rather than of total flawlessness.

8. N. Frye sees Gloucester as a fool. The way he speaks about Edmund makes his treachery "at any rate credibly motivated" (1986: 103).

9. So far we have mentioned Lear's incapacity to understand and to see things in their proper perspective. The type of counsellors that Lear has chosen prove to be inefficient. Perhaps Lear has chosen Gloucester precisely because he is like himself, irrational, careless and unfeeling when it comes to his children. Lear can feel comfortable with him. We have to accept that Gloucester's lack of knowledge concerning his children does not make him the ideal counsellor, for, if he is not capable of seeing through the crude wiles of Edmund, how can we expect him to see the tricks of those who are not so close to him as his own children?

10. At the beginning the initial consideration may have been that the problem becomes even more unacceptable owing to the fact that the division of the kingdom is not an unavoidable political situation but rather the result of a personal need. The point is fully clarified as the action unfolds itself and the audience can see that Albany is a man of good nature and honourable intentions. We do not know this now, but, since we do not know anything about the nature of his daughters, we have no guideline as to why he has to divide his kingdom in such an unreasonable manner.

11. The first image is that of a map that is about to be torn in three portions. The second is that of a king who feels tired and aware of the existence of death. As Wolfgang Clemen pointed out, "crawl awakens a definite notion. Taken from the realm of animal life, crawling suggests a wounded, tired, perhaps, hunted animal dragging itself nearer to death" (1977: 138). What Clemen writes is correct. However, the animal-like instinct of preservation is there but caused by both the awareness of life in Cordelia and his desire to hold on to life, crawling like a baby, while all the work is done for him. The image of the wounded animal is adequate. Yet it has to be understood within the pattern of Cordelia's death as part of a wounded Lear cutting the umbilical cord when he takes down the body of Cordelia. The symbol of the rope and the prison must be analyzed in this context. Owing to the limitations imposed by the length of this paper we cannot touch upon this subject here, but it is relevant to the theme of incest.

12. "Lear at the opening is arrogant, rash and willful; it is clear that Cordelia has been his favourite, but he banishes her. How, then, has he treated Goneril and Regan all these years? Can their dislike for him be extenuated?" (Marilyn French 1981: 238).

13. We may go so far as to smile when watching the performance if we do not know the tragic consequences of this act. The grin may be provoked by our first impression of Lear who owing to his old age has become indiscreet and inane. When Goneril's speech is finished, we may entertain the possibility that his daughter is trying to humour him, and this is the correct thing considering his age. However, to do this is difficult because the play has been read a considerable number of times and our value judgment has been already prejudiced since we are too familiar with the characters of the play. This knowledge is a dangerous tool if we try to see the play as a living organism, arising from the dramatic development of events as a sequence depending on a form of cause and effect.

14. We have taken space to mean room, rather than the idea of "freedom from confinement" suggested by the editor of *King Lear* Kenneth Muir. See Alexander Schmidt (1971), vol. 2. The repetition of the concept of freedom makes little sense when there is the concept of room or space used as a geographical area as in *Macbeth* (IV, iii, 36).

15. See A. C. Bradley (1964: Lecture VII, 198-230 and Lecture VIII, 231-76).

16. When considering the problem of Cordelia from a moral point of view Cordelia's detractors are right. There is nothing for her to do but reject her father with all its consequences. However, when looling at it from a practical angle Bradley's evaluation is equally correct.

17. The significance of the sword has to be that of the rapier in *The Duchess of Malfi*, a phallic symbol. For some critics, among other things, *King Lear* is a play about sex. Kermode writes, "King Lear is his twenty-sixth play, or thereabouts; and it is the fifteenth in which he concerns himself with such problems, with the right of the ruler, and with the justice as dispensed by a poor forked thing. Nor is this by any means the only obsession we can confidently attribute to Shakespeare; it may be said, for example, that he was more than usually interested in vicious sexuality and madness" (1971: 178). We

believe that sex and madness go hand in hand. Perverted sexuality characterizes both old age and madness. These two aspects surely are the theme of *King Lear*. The idea of madness associated with sex, but not with incest, has been considered by Kenneth Muir. He remarks that "J. C. Bucknill in *Shakespeare* (1860) and H. Somerville in *Madness in Shakespearian Tragedy* (1929) illustrate the fact that our increasing knowledge of madness during the past century has served only to justify Shakespeare's intuitions." K. Muir sees the problem in terms of revulsion towards sex but deriving from the obsession that perhaps his wife had been faithless to him (1979: 31). We would like to direct the reader's attention to the fact that for Freud, *Hamlet* and *Timon of Athens* are the product of some emotional impact, not altogether unrelated to the drama inherent in *Oedipus Rex* (Freud 1970: 298-9). Freud is interested in Shakesperare and we are in his plays. Thus we do not need to attribute to Shakespeare Hamlet's problems or Lear's. To become interested in this aspect of human nature is natural in a man so preoccupied with the workings of the mind. We accept that Lear is suspicious about his paternity. Perhaps Lear's anger at Kent's intercession could be understood in terms of Lear's distrustful thoughts regarding his paternity. What Lear screams at Kent, "avoid my sight," is provocative. This possibility reinforces the thesis of incest. Perhaps Lear has been brooding too long about his blood-ties with Cordelia.

18. We must point out that this is a variation of the original sources. Leir does not behave in such a way, and although he is very angry with her, he is quite willing to get rid of her, giving her to Aganippus. Furthermore, Leir does not banish Cordelia, but waits till Aganippus can take her with him. *The History of the Kings of Britain* (London: Penguin Books, 1969), 83.

19. For demonic images, see N. Frye (1973: 156).

20. Roland Mushat Frye (1967: 255). According to Wilson Knight, Lear is not in Purgatory; however, he claims that the play's "philosophy is continually purgatorial" (1977: 179).

21. "Both Lear and Gloucester are the victims of filial ingratitude; the blinding of Gloucester is the physical equivalent to the madness of Lear." This is fine, but why blindness? In what T. Spencer is right is in seeing the play based on "one violation [that] leads to another." Thus we are concerned with the primary violation and its relation to blindness (Spencer 1974: 136, 143). Jan Kott (1967) sees Lear's world as an absurd one. He has compared *Waiting for Godot* with *King Lear*. Mark Taylor studies the theme of incest in Shakespeare's works in *Shakespeare's Darker Purpose: A question of Incest*. However, in spite of the title, he does not include *King Lear* in his study.

22. An interesting comment realted to Cordelia can be found in the criticism of the 19th century so much rejected nowadays. Charles Lamb indicates we never see Cordelia as the wife or lover, but only in terms of the daughter (1919: 112).

23. For David Sundelson there is restoration of the father figure: "King Lear contains Shakespeare's most terrible destruction of fathers, but it also contains the impulse to restore them" (1946: 2). We do not think that there is restoration till Cordelia's death. In fact we wonder about the value of such a restoration when France becomes wifeless.

24. The idea of fear as being, in part, the cause of Lear's mistake—wanting to buy Cordelia's love—has been pointed out by Caroline F. E. Spurgeon when she wrote that "love is a binding or knitting together, a strong cement, fear is disintegrating, annihilating" (1977: 155). Fear is at the core of the tragedy, but fear caused by the prospect of losing his daughter. The possibility that Lear wanted to keep Cordelia for ever has been pointed out by many critics. A. C. Bradley was the first to consider this probability (1964: 204). However, the cause is seldom touched by the critics. N. Frye (1986: 115) comments on the ambivalence inherent in Edmund's speech. for him "The second line, incidentally, seems very curious. If it's a vindication of the conduct of Cordelia and Kent in the opening scene, it's a bit late in the day; and as a general principle it covers too much ground". This statement we take as the evaluation of the "bond" between Lear and Cordelia, as far as Lear is concerned, but without passing a moral judgment.

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