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An Ecocritical and Performance History of King Lear

Jennifer Mae Hamilton

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For Richard, Dad and Nana.

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee,
But where the greater malady is fixed,
The lesser is scarce felt

King Lear, *King Lear*, 3.4.6–9

Contents

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When I tell the story of this project I always begin with three deaths: that of my supervisor, Richard, whom I mention above, but also that of my father, John James 'JJ' Hamilton, and my maternal grandmother, May Schubert. These three people, very real in their own lives and important in mine, have taken on a symbolic quality with regard to this project. Writing about *King Lear* is altered when one is simultaneously faced with aging, disease, death and grief; it fixes one's attention on what the play has to say about the earthly finitude of the individual human being. When attuned to the materiality of death, the loftier dimensions of the human condition can only be understood as extensions of that matter—as expressions of grief and fear, rather than as some transcendent quality. This personal context circumscribes my thinking about the storm. With this going on in the 'background', the storm could never be a symbol of some unearthly concept, but always a physical reminder of the kinds of tumult that beleaguers the third rock from the sun, or what Laurie Shannon calls the 'literal problem of weather on skin' (2013: 141).

In life, my father actually showed me how to love and revere storms. We would take shelter when necessary, but often after the wind and rain we would be out knee deep the mud or down wading in the stormy sea. He taught me the wonder of being outside. My grandmother showed me how to be a resilient and self-assured woman. She illustrated how it might be emotionally difficult, but that it was nonetheless very possible.

Just as I was responding to the peer feedback for this manuscript, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. After the initial shock and terror that I might not live the future I imagined—to grow old with my partner and to see my son grow up—the next thought I had was about this book. After everything else, I thought, my own untimely end surely cannot thwart the publication of this book! O, to transcend this damned earthly condition! And so I have to thank my surgeon Associate Professor Sanjay Warrier, his theatre team, Ruth my breast care nurse and the other nursing staff at the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse for getting me through the treatment. An appreciation of the theatrical and historical certainly came in handy when undergoing the knife too (at least we have 21st century anaesthetics and the theatricality of the operating "theatre" is less so now than it was in the nineteenth century, I thought). I cannot know what lies ahead for me, but that this book made it into the world and that I might live to see some what comes of it beyond publication (good, bad, ugly)

is largely on account of them and Australia's extraordinary Public Health system. As it is eroded by cruel neoliberal policy making, may we never forget the right to health care and continue to fight for it.

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List of Illustrations

Note on the edition of *King Lear* in this book and referencing style

Unless otherwise specified, references to Shakespeare's plays are from *Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, R. Proudfoot, A. Thompson and D. Scott Kastan (eds), Methuen, London, 2001.

This is a conflated edition of the 1608 Quarto and 1623 Folio. In this edition, lines found in Folio but not in Quarto are marked with a superscript 'F' and those found in Quarto but not in Folio with a superscript 'Q'.

References to citations from Shakespeare's plays are placed in the body of the text. I have kept these quite simple. For example, the reference for Kent's remarks at lines 60 to 62 of Act 3, scene 2—'Alack, bareheaded? / Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel: / Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest' – would appear as (3.2.60–2). The forward slash indicates a break between two lines of verse.

In parts of the book where I refer to another of Shakespeare's plays I abbreviate the play title to its initials in the citation. For example, where Miranda in *The Tempest* says 'And now I pray you, sir – / For still 'tis beating in my mind – your reason / For raising this sea-storm?' the reference appears as (*TT* 1.2.175–7).

Preface: The Plot

King Lear is a figure from legendary prehistoric Britain and a character from fable and fairy tales. The earliest known version of the Lear story was printed in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britainae (*c. 1136). But the tale also shares structural similarities with stories that emerged from the oral tradition, such as Cinderella and the Prodigal Son. Shakespeare's version was an adaptation of a well-known story for production at the Globe Theatre by the theatre company The King's Men. The first known performance was on 26 December 1606, played before the company's patron, King James I of England in Whitehall. Since the emergence of this version, the cultural phenomenon of Shakespeare's genius has been posthumously constructed and spread over land and sea, along with the British Empire. Shakespeare's *King Lear* now serves as a cultural touchstone in the Old and New Worlds, and has been appropriated and adapted in various ways that both reinforce and critique the rise and spread of Anglophonic culture. For those unfamiliar with the *Lear* story, I offer up a plot summary because although the book tells a bigger story about hominids and meteors, Shakespeare's play is central to the tale.

In the first scene of the first act, Lear attempts to divest himself of all power in order to 'Unburdened crawl toward death' (1.1.40). We learn much later in the play that he is 'Fourscore and upward' (4.7.61) and so has presumably ruled for a long time. The method he devises for transferring power is a love test. His three daughters, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia, are invited to perform their love and, in return, they will receive a third of the kingdom as a dowry. The meaning of the speech is the subject of much debate, but the past tense of his opening lines 'Know we have divided / In three our kingdom' (1.1.36–7) is at least an indication that Lear has already decided how the kingdom will be parcelled out and posits the love test as a formality for the court. The two elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, speak first. They participate by declaring their geographically and cosmologically expansive love for their father and

receive their slice of land. Cordelia, Lear's favourite and youngest daughter, is troubled by the gratuitous displays of love and literally says 'Nothing, my lord' (1.1.87). Cordelia is yet to be wed and two suitors, the Dukes of Burgundy and France, stand by to vie for her hand once they learn of her dowry. Outraged by Cordelia's disobedience, Lear asks her to 'mend' her speech (1.1.93) or risk losing it all. She does not alter her course, but rather qualifies what she meant with regard to the question of duty. Her duty is, she says, to love her father and her husband equally. She cannot declare her total love for her father because that would fail to recognize her new duties as wife. Lear is unsatisfied by her justification. Enraged and – as I will come to argue – deeply ashamed, Lear then banishes Cordelia.

When his fabled love test does not go as planned, Lear attempts to backtrack. In retreating from the abdication, he only goes halfway. Lear retains a 'reservation of an hundred knights' (1.1.134) and 'The name, and all th'addition to a king' (1.1.137). But, as initially planned, 'the sway, / Revenue, execution of the rest' of the kingdom (1.1.137–8) are placed in the hands of Albany and Cornwall. In other words, Lear splits king and kingdom. In lieu of being cared for solely by Cordelia, Lear also plans to spend alternate months at his other daughters' houses. When Kent, a servant to Lear, tries to intervene and stand up for Cordelia, Lear banishes him too. France then accepts Cordelia without a dowry and leaves. Kent goes into hiding, vowing to come back in disguise to support the king. More so than perhaps any of the other tragedies, 1.1 is arguably a climax and all that follows is fallout.

In the critical history of *King Lear*, how one reads the action of the opening scene, how one understands the motives of Lear, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia, what one takes the split between king and kingdom to mean philosophically, poetically and psychologically, fundamentally shapes how the rest of the action is interpreted. Indeed, the play's critical history is striking for its wild divergence of opinion about the ethical dimensions of the tragedy. Who is at fault? What is Lear's motivation? Is Cordelia right or wrong for refusing to submit to Lear's terms in the love test? Are Goneril and Regan unequivocally evil from the outset or does their newfound power corrupt? These questions remain open within the play text. If the opening scene is taken as is, without trying to infer prior motives or symbolic intentions not presented in the script, at the very least on a conceptual level the scene sets the stage for a dramatization of

the problem of the King's Two Bodies (Kantorowicz 1960) which, I will show, comes to a climax – politically, affectively and structurally – during the storm when the mortal body of Lear is exposed to the wind and rain.

As well as this main plot, there is a parallel plot, which takes up the question of inheritance from a different perspective. It focuses on the Duke of Gloucester, his legitimate son and heir Edgar, and the bastard son Edmund. The play opens with some banter between Gloucester and Kent about the pleasures involved in the creation of a bastard son. Despite Gloucester's celebration of how Edmund came 'saucily' (1.1.20) into the world by way of the 'good sport' (1.1.22) of his conception, he is outwardly embarrassed about Edmund and proud of Edgar. Edmund, the putative antagonist, is not entitled to any inheritance because he is a bastard and the law prohibits such a transaction. In the second scene he sets in motion a plot to turn his father and brother against one another in order to claim the land for himself. He does so by pretending to his father that Edgar wants to kill him in order to share his inheritance with the bastard. He then tells Edgar that his father is so enraged at him for some misunderstanding that he must flee to save his life. That the second plot is also concerned with the question of generational change and inheritance suggests that the particular means by which 'The younger rises when the old doth fall' (3.3.25) is one of the central preoccupations of the play.

King Lear is not only about an individual's crawl toward death, but also about how families and societies deal with intergenerational transfer. The play thus represents how human fantasies of transcendence and immortal power are not only held within the minds of individual figures, but are also part of social and political structures. As such, the story opens up a space for meditating on how such lofty fantasies work when they come up against the intractability of earthly forces, such as finite bodies and powerful storms, at both a personal and political level. This tragedy is not catalysed by a regular political crisis, such as subterfuge or an overly ambitious prince, but rather comes about due to the incommensurability of the human body itself with the ideas governing the political system. The body is the crisis and Lear's error is that he recognizes that his flesh is finite, that his breath will expire, and he tries to act upon that bodily knowledge instead of his society's laws.

Lear's plan to stay with his daughters and the hundred knights turns sour rather quickly. The Fool, a kind of court jester, tries to coax Lear to understand

his situation as born of the division of the kingdom. Lear and Goneril have a dispute over his followers: Goneril claims they are treating her own servants poorly, and that the 'court, infected with manners, / Shows like a riotous inn' (1.4.234–5). She asks him to reduce the size of his entourage. Lear is outraged at the implication. In contrast, he insists his knights are 'men of choice and rarest parts' (1.4.255). They fight. Upon being confronted about the knights, Lear opts to go to Regan's house where he believes he will be accommodated on his own terms.

A lot happens in between Goneril's and Regan's houses. Indeed, throughout the play much of the action plays out *between* qualitatively different types of shelter – castles, houses, hovels, military camps – and frequently represents debates about the conditions under which Lear will take shelter. On this particular journey the Fool tries to playfully reason with Lear and get him to see why he is in the situation he is in. Kent picks a fight with the Messenger Oswald. When Regan and her husband Cornwall find this out, Kent is put in the stocks. Meanwhile, Edgar, who has been cast out by way of his brother's trick, seeks somewhere to hide. Feeling he has no safe house and nowhere to go beyond the kingdom, he hides within, disguised as a Bedlam beggar with 'presented nakedness outface / The winds and persecutions of the sky' (2.2.185–6). He becomes Poor Tom and we do not see him again until the storm. With the exception of Edgar's exile via disguise, all these incidents are fairly small. In many ways it seems difficult to imagine that in the next act Lear will be out in the storm calling upon the heavens for assistance.

When Lear arrives at Regan's house he is ostensibly outraged to find his servant in the stocks, but ultimately he is seeking a house for himself *and* his knights. Lear tries to garner sympathy from Regan by complaining about Goneril, but she does not sympathize with him, nor does she accept him into her home. Instead, she asks Lear to go back to Goneril, dismiss half his knights and ask for forgiveness. At this point Lear says he would 'Rather … abjure all roofs and choose / To wage against the enmity o'th' air – / To be a comrade with the wolf and owl' (2.2.400–2) than to return to Goneril with fewer knights. Lear is stubborn. He will not accept anything less than accommodation for both himself and his train.

Goneril then arrives at Regan's house as well. Lear refuses to return to Goneril's house with only fifty knights and so he declares he will stay with

Regan and the full complement. Regan quickly retorts by saying she will not accommodate 100 either, only twenty-five. Together they press Lear to explain why he actually 'needs' any knights at all. Lear's response does not appeal to base necessity, but defends excess by comparing the knights to his daughters' 'gorgeous' (2.2.461) clothes, the elaborate nature of which is arguably not necessary either. During his defence of necessary human extravagance, the storm begins to rumble. Lear refuses to relinquish the knights and take shelter, and so he leaves with his Fool into the stormy night. While Cornwall, Regan and Goneril take shelter, Gloucester equivocates, concerned for Lear's exposure. He is encouraged by Cornwall to forget about him and retreat indoors.

The storm, which occupies the heart of this tale about inheritance, ingratitude, loyalty, mortality, power, territory, legitimacy and love, is the subject of this book. Many more details of the storm scenes will come out during the book, so for now it will suffice to summarize as follows: In 3.1 Kent and a knight converse about the state of the kingdom, revealing that tensions are emerging between the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany. Kent sends a letter to Cordelia to bring her home. Meanwhile, Lear tries to bring the storm into line with his desires; when the storm does not respond, he chides it for collaborating with his daughters and when it persists in being non-responsive, he appeals to the storm to decide whose side it is on.

During 3.2 and 3.4 Lear actively refuses to take shelter six times and evades the question on other occasions. The whole time Lear is trying to coherently relate the storm to his situation. When the storm fails to fit his story, Lear starts to reflect on his own earthly situation, all the while remaining exposed. The rest of his followers, Kent, the Fool and Gloucester, who decides to go against the orders of Cornwall after all, encourage him to take shelter in a hovel. Lear finally agrees to take shelter after a prayer, not to the gods but to the 'Poor naked wretches […] That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm' (3.4.28–9). As if by magic, Poor Tom appears. Lear identifies with this strange man, who seems uniquely equipped to weather the storm, and tries to strip naked to be more like him. But of course, the authenticity of this moment is troubled by the fact that Tom is Edgar in disguise. After a brief exchange Lear invites Poor Tom back into the hovel and finally Lear takes shelter. When sheltered in the hovel Lear pretends to arraign his daughters for ingratitude one more time, before going to sleep.

In the storm the discussion about who is indoors and who is not is entirely metonymic. In every reference to the storm in this regard, the storm is the material and contiguous part that represents the whole political situation. On the one hand there is a practical consideration: Lear is old, the night is wild, shelter is necessary. On the other, everything the characters say about shelter doubles as a political statement about power, emotion or desire. For example, the conflict about the knights and Lear's refusal to take shelter is given meaning by the storm, but it is also about legitimacy and authority. That the characters are compelled to make unequivocal claims about who has the right to shelter and who does not exacerbates the conflict because it, in effect, forces the characters to reveal their political loyalties. The storm quickly moves the action from disagreement between a king and his daughters to civil war.

For example, during the storm scenes, Gloucester tells Edmund he is going to help the king. Then Edmund tells Cornwall that his father helped the king. At the end of Act 3, at the tail end of the stormy night, Gloucester returns to his castle. Cornwall and Regan pull out his eyes as punishment for such a display of loyalty to the king. A servant is so shocked by the violence exacted upon the old man that he stabs Cornwall, who then dies. What becomes spectacularly clear in and through the violence at the end of Act 3 is that this is not just a domestic dispute, there is real politicking going on. While Lear is preoccupied with seemingly personal disagreements with his daughters and the meaning of his exposure to the storm, in the background a mad scramble to claim authority in the vacuum left by the king's striking divestment of land and power takes place.

Act 4 is the journey from the hovel to the cliffs of Dover. The blinded Gloucester seeks to die and asks someone to help him find the edge of the cliff so that he can throw himself off. That 'someone' is Edgar, who tricks him by not leading him to Dover Cliff but getting him to 'jump' onto flat ground. When Lear arrives, he is crowned with weeds celebrating his mortal stench. But Cordelia has also returned with the French army on her heels to help her father. Their reunion offers a break from the grim world of war that has sprung up since the storm. Believing that Gloucester and Edgar are gone, Edmund appoints himself Duke of Gloucester and spies a space for himself in the main plot. He starts to woo both Goneril, who is still arguing with Albany about how to govern the land, and the newly widowed Regan. As soon as

Cordelia and Lear arrive at a British camp, seeking audience with the sisters, they are arrested by Edmund and taken away to prison by a captain.

Without going into all the specifics of the march toward the inevitably tragic ending, by the beginning of Act 5 the main characters have started to fall, one after the other. The Fool, who disappears during the storm, and Cornwall, who is stabbed by a servant, both die by the end of Act 3. On Gloucester's orders, Edgar leaves the old man sheltering under a tree and goes to aid the king. Although Edgar promises to return, the blind Gloucester suspects he will 'rot' in that place. On his way back, Edgar kills Goneril's messenger, Oswald. Goneril poisons Regan. Albany charges Edmund with treason and Edgar, who arrives at the beach camp, supports that charge by accepting a duel, in which Edmund is fatally wounded. As he dies he alerts those still standing that Lear and Cordelia are away in prison and informs them all of the death warrant on Cordelia. Edmund dies and Goneril kills herself. Then, Lear re-enters, howling, carrying the dead body of Cordelia. Soon after, Lear dies from grief. Kent disappears, presumably to kill himself. Edgar and Albany are the only ones left standing to survey the damage.

This story has replayed over and over again, throughout the duration of the becoming-modern, never modern, human and always-already-more-than-human naturecultures of the West, from its first known performance in London in 1606 to beyond my time of writing this book. How is the storm, the king's exposure to the weather, and his followers' concomitant desires for him to take shelter, integral to this tale?

Introduction: The Case for *King Lear*

The most obvious question to ask about this book is this: how is it possible to focus exclusively on a single theatrical storm? What makes possible such a seemingly narrow subject is the extraordinary scope of both historicist and presentist attentions (O'Dair 2011: 71) that have been paid to this canonical play, and the relatively limited investigations into the storm. Regarding the historicist questions, Shakespeare's is the first known iteration of the ancient Lear story that contains an extended meteorological event. Lear's impassioned cries are registered in Geoffrey of Monmouth's version (c. 1136) and a few flashes of thunder and lightning punctuate the anonymous *King Leir* (1605), but they are no match for the several spectacular scenes played out in the rain in the Bard's adaptation. It is only after Shakespeare that Lear has to contend with the fretful elements for any significant length of time. This version of the story has now been performed, read, criticized and adapted innumerable times since the first known production in 1606. Each production and interpretation attributes meaning to the storm. Which is to say, the storm is represented on stage to highlight certain themes or ideas, while in an essay it might be expediently glossed to justify a specific interpretation. One way of writing a book about a few storm scenes, then, is to explore the longue durée of their representation on stage and critical reception and to assess how the meaning of these scenes has changed over time. This task occupies Part Two of the book.

In terms of presentist concerns, *Lear* is also an important canonical text for the ecological turn in literary and performance studies for a range of reasons, from its references to non-human creatures such as wolves and bears (Shannon 2013), an array of plants from official corn to weedy hemlock (Archer, Turley and Thomas 2012) and multiple and contradictory deployments of the word 'nature' (Estok 2011; Egan 2006) to, of course, its climactic storm scenes (Jones 2015; Palfrey 2014; Mentz

2010).[1] Another way of writing a book about one theatrical storm is to develop an interpretation of how this event, at the centre of a story about mortality, family and sovereignty, might be understood in our ecologically vexed present. Part One uses theory and close reading to contribute to this growing body of Shakespearean ecocriticism focused on the storm.

That said, the troubles with writing a book focused exclusively on the storm are manifold. In the first instance the scenes are a blur of maddening dialogue, strange antics and wild weather. An audience will often find it hard to hear the details of the dialogue over the tumult of the staged effects. Moreover, Alexander Leggatt confesses, in his own performance history of the play, that he was 'astonished by how often [his] memory is at odds with the evidence' (15). In other words, all accounts of theatre productions are compromised by either an incomplete archival account, by their complexity, or by an individual's memory of the play. The storm's tumult makes a detailed account of the scenes ever more tricky.

On top of the contingencies of performance, the transhistorical cultural phenomenon that exists under the sign of *King Lear* has two significantly different textual versions, Quarto (1608) and Folio (1623), and it only gets more complex from there. Although the authorship of the revisions is the subject of some debate, Shakespeare is generally credited as author of, or at least some way involved in, these changes (Madelaine 2002: 2). The conflated editions, or versions that contain most of the lines from both early texts, are the work of editors, the first of which was Alexander Pope in 1714. It is not until the late 1970s that scholars started to look at the Quarto and Folio independently again. By the time of the first conflated print edition, Shakespeare's version of *King Lear* had been superseded on stage by Nahum Tate's romantic comedy adaptation in which Lear survives and Edgar and Cordelia get married, *The History of King Lear* (1681). The many different versions of the conflation generally contain all or most of the lines from the

[1] For animals see Shannon; for plants see Elizabeth Jayne Archer, Richard Marggraf Turley and Howard Thomas, 'The Autumn King: Remembering the Land in *King Lear*' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63 (2012): 518–43. For the multiple uses of the term 'nature' see Simon C. Estok 'Dramatizing Environmental Fear: *King Lear*'s Unpredictable Natural Places and Domestic Spaces' from *Shakespeare and Ecocriticism: Reading Ecophobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 19–32 and Gabriel Egan 'Supernature and the Weather: *King Lear* and *The Tempest*' from *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 132–71; for the storm see Steve Mentz's 'Strange Weather in *King Lear*' *Shakespeare* 6 (2010): 139–52, Gwilym Jones' *Shakespeare's Storms* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015) and Simon Palfrey, *Poor Tom: Living King Lear* (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 2014).

two texts, and some even contain elements inherited from Tate. Tate, for instance, situates the storm scenes on a 'heath', which was first transposed into Shakespeare's play in 1709 by Nicholas Rowe (Ogden 1997: 135).[2] The more authoritative contemporary versions, such as the Arden complete works that I use here, indicate which lines and stage directions are unique to the variant texts, but some less reliable editions fail to note their textual pedigree. All these versions are now in wide circulation in print and online. Moreover, each theatrical production will utilize a slightly different edition of the text, which is then edited in the rehearsal room by the director and actors to suit their own dramatic ends. The scholarly debate about *King Lear* is built upon this textual quagmire. More to the point, the brief sketch of the play's editorial history illustrates how texts, too, are entangled in intergenerational historical processes to such an extent that they almost take on a life of their own. With specific regard to the concerns of this book then, there is not a singular textual source from which to undertake a close reading of the storm.

Another issue regarding the present study's focus on the storm is that *King Lear* is also one of the canon's great humanist texts, representing the tragedy of a sovereign character and, at the same time, exploring cardinal human themes such as kingship, sovereignty, inheritance, territory, obligation, legitimacy, power, mortality and love. Jonathan Dollimore famously argues that, in contrast to criticism that casts it as a Christian or Pagan tale, Shakespeare so deeply rejected a religious tradition in *Lear* that we should consider it a work of 'essentialist humanism' (2004 [1984]: 189). The question of the human, if not the representation of the exceptionalism of the human condition, is a central theme in the play and its extensive scholarly history.[3] As such, turning away from focusing on the human drama in order to explore the material dimensions of the storm scenes could be seen to leave the extensive scholarly history of *King Lear*, if not the 'essence' of the play, in its wake. In recognition of this challenge, this book practises an ecocriticism that is suspended between humanist and posthumanist thought, exploring how its canonical representation of the human condition is

[2] After Ogden, Gwilym Jones's *Shakespeare's Storms* further unfolds the argument against locating the storm in a single setting, because the focus on location distracts from the storm event.

[3] Jonathan Dollimore's '*King Lear* (c. 1605–1606) and Essentialist Humanism' from *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) is the definitive essay exploring the play's humanist dimensions.

troubled and transformed by the storm.[4] Although I aim to contribute to the anti-human exceptionalist epistemology currently being developed by ecocritics and environmental humanities scholars, the critique of the human does not push us as fully into the realm of the 'ecology of self' in the manner of Robert N. Watson's essay on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for example (2011: 33–56). I am largely looking at the dialogue between Lear and the storm, and the quality of the storm's eruption or interruption in the story, rather than trying to read into the text intra-active or transcorporeal molecular exchange between weather and bodies.[5]

Given Shakespeare's version is both the first with a storm and the first with the properly tragic ending, one of the ways I could approach this task is to focus on how the storm shapes the play as tragedy. This path could also be seen to pose problems for ecological thought. As Joseph Meeker famously argues, tragedy is inimical to environmentalism *per se*. He contends that the destructive tendencies of Western civilization are reflected back to us in the tragic mode of storytelling, thereby reifying human alienation from non-human nature. By contrast, for Meeker, comedy is a generic mode in which survival and entanglement is represented. Subtly countering Meeker, Steve Mentz uses *Lear* to suggest that generic differences between comedy and tragedy are neither better nor worse objects for ecocritical reading, but rather 'resources' that show a 'continuum' of differing attitudes to nature (2011: 168). Even as a tragedy, however, *King Lear* can be a decidedly comic play, if darkly so. The most recent version of *King Lear* in my home city, Sydney, had Lecoq-trained Geoffrey Rush in the title role. It was laugh-out-loud hilarious, until the blinding of Gloucester – at which point the audience were silenced, shamefully caught out laughing in the face of certain

[4] Posthumanism is a large field of contemporary philosophy and literary theory that extends well beyond its brief invocation here. Suffice to say, it is a philosophical mode that challenges myths of human exceptionalism and opens up ways of non-anthropocentric thinking. For overviews see Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) and Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). Donna Haraway is also often considered a leading figure of posthumanist thought, although she does not like the term herself, arguing 'I never wanted to be posthumanist … because urgent work still needs to be done with reference to those who must inhabit the troubled categories of woman and human', *When Species Meet,* 16–17.

[5] I'm quite interested in feminist new materialist theories such as the idea of 'intra-action' developed by Karen Barad in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) and 'transcorporeality' as conceptualized by Stacy Alaimo in *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment and the Material Self* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2010). These ideas complement, contradict and, potentially, build on early modern humoral theory in interesting ways. This book does not take this complex path into rethinking embodiment, although there is scope for such a study.

disaster.[6] Theorizing how the storm shapes the play as tragedy would also involve arbitrating on whether the tragic or comic dimensions of the play are better for 'the environment', and such conclusions are beside the point of the present study.

The task of the present study is not to discover within the play the most sufficiently moralizing ecological messages to help us combat climate change. Rather, *This Contentious Storm* takes up *how* questions. How are affects and ideas in the play mobilized in relation to the weather? How is the weather used as part of an interpretation, what parts of the play does it emphasize or overlook? How is the weather historical and political and how does that influence interpretation? How do these meanings change over time? In calling the storm 'contentious', as Lear does in 3.4, he recognizes his own predicament and ours: the weather does not have singular or constant meaning, but rather becomes caught up and complicates the geopolitical circumstances, wheresoever the rain doth fall. Echoing Feste's song from *Twelfth Night*, the Fool implores that one 'Must make content with his fortunes fit, / For the rain it raineth every day' (3.2.75–6). If our fortunes are shaped by the rain, we make new meanings based on the particularities of the fortunes we are trying to fit in, around and in response to the rain. How does Lear do this and what does it mean in the context of the story?

One need not dig very deep to find pleas for the accurate communication of meteorological and climatological data for the purposes of bringing 'climate skeptics' over to the other side of the debate. Without even dipping our toes into the extensive body of scholarship that explores the social dimensions of scientific truths,[7] this book aims to show how, regardless of the state of technological progress, accurate or precise communication about the weather is almost impossible. The weather is a good conversation starter for precisely this reason; even if you and I have both experienced the same hot day in the same city in similar kinds of clothes, there is room for variation about what that meant for us, for our work days, our bodies. We might talk about it for hours because the experiences are not the same. In *Lear,* the storm is both embedded in the particularities of the story and then interpreted for particular social, artistic or political ends. There is no one ultimate meaning

[6] My own review of this production is published in *Shakespeare Bulletin* 34 (3) (2016): 528–33.

[7] See, for example, Donna Haraway 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (Autumn 1988): 575–99 and Bruno Latour 'Why has critique run out of steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern' *Critical Inquiry* 30.2 (Winter 2004): 225–48.

to this storm. The same is arguably true for all storms. Storms always signify multiple things; storms are necessarily overdetermined. So although I do not directly address the discourses around climate science communication in this book, it is in part a look at how the intensity and duration of weather takes up or absorbs meaning based on the kind of human narrative framing the event.

Through a descriptive analysis of historical interpretations and performances of the play, another aim of the book is to cultivate a rich and nuanced understanding of how it is not only now in a changing climate that the weather has held complex sociopolitical meaning, but also to explore how the weather has always been political and that these meanings have changed over time. There are particular elements of the Lear story that interest me in this regard. On the one hand, *King Lear* is a striking example of the ways in which we project fantasies of our selves onto non-human nature. Gloucester is the case in point here; he is constantly trying to fit the sky to his own ideological frame. On the other hand, as well as being about the weather, *King Lear* is also preoccupied with questions of our animal frailty, the finitude of an individual life, the tragedy of our earthly condition and the politics of exposure and shelter. In this regard the storm serves to materially complicate and literally represent, rather than merely symbolize, these themes. More than being a story about ungrateful daughters or a mad king, it is a meditation on the way the sky and the body delimit power. Although all Shakespeare's tragedies end in multiple deaths, *King Lear* is the only tragedy that is specifically about a king so capable he has to grapple with dying itself. The protagonist is not seeking revenge like Hamlet, power like Macbeth, or trying to alleviate the pangs of jealousy like Othello, but rather designing a way to 'Unburdened crawl toward death' (1.1.40). In representing Lear's pursuit of this unlikely and – as I will show in Chapter 3 – illicit objective, the play thus also represents the strange ceremonies, hierarchies, institutions and social conventions we construct in order to feign human transcendence. Come the storm, the weather moderates the relationship between mortal and immortal, between sovereign and outsider, between the sheltered and the exposed, and between established social hierarchies fighting to endure and an altogether different way of being in the world. Despite veering into loftier and more philosophical zones of the play, the overall study is animated by three fairly straightforward key questions. How to undertake a reading of the play that animates the storm as a literal presence in the text and material construct

on stage without forsaking the play's representation of inter-human conflict? Then, if this climactic storm is at all meaningful as a literal event, how then can we account for and respond to the centuries of Shakespearean performance and scholarship in which the storm is valued largely as a vehicle for the play's expression of seemingly immaterial aspects of the human condition? Finally, to what extent does an interpretation of *King Lear*'s human drama change when the storm is considered primarily in material and meteorological terms?

My answers to these questions draw on methods from ecocriticism, environmental humanities and more traditional literary and performance historiography. On the one hand, concepts and questions taken from classical meteorological philosophy, posthuman philosophy, feminist science and technology studies, material ecocriticism and affect theory help to both animate the storm's literal presence in the dramatic world and to conceptualize the characters' material and emotional relation to it. On the other, practices such as close reading and analysis of primary documents like pamphlets, prompt copies and production photographs in concert with contextual knowledge from extant theatre and cultural histories, alongside snippets from the extensive tradition of *Lear* scholarship itself, situate this storm within context of this particular story. Although I maintain an interest in the human conflict represented in the play, the interdisciplinary approach aims to open up ways of moving *Lear* scholarship into the more-than-human critical paradigm, where attentions to the complex and lively field of earthbound agencies and energies are being considered and valued *beside* or *with*, rather than beneath, the human. At the same time, the method of meteorological reading I develop in the first chapter aims to retrospectively involve the storm in extant critical debates born of its role as an iconic work of humanist dramatic literature.

Given so little is stable in the world of the play – the weather, Lear's emotions, the political situation in the kingdom are all a right mess – the structure of the book foregrounds the instability of the text. Instead of launching straight into the performance history, where we see more or less clear interpretations of the storm, I have opted to approach the subject by looking at the particular ways in which the storm is ambiguous. The three chapters of Part One focus on unsettling habits when reading the play. The ecocritical specificity of this section is not to deduce the play's particular ecological message or pin-point the meaning of the storm, but rather to observe the various ways in which the storm complicates the

story. While the storm is chaotic, it is chaos within a particular frame, relating to a particular set of sociopolitical concerns. Working hard to counter a critical tradition that opts to congeal the storm's spatio-temporal becoming into a reified thing with solid meaning – a metaphor for madness, for example – 'Part One: Ecocriticism' explores the storm's ambiguity. Chapter 1, 'Meteorological Reading', builds on the ecocritical manoeuvre to interpret the storm literally, by returning to the rhetorical or poetical dimensions of the storm but by characterizing and historicizing it as metonoymy. Chapter 2, 'What is the cause of thunder?', historicizes the ambiguous relationship between the storm and the rest of the action, by probing the metaphysical question of 'final causes' in meteorological natural philosophy and then theorizing the power held in the spectacle of the storm by way of an analaysis of Shakespeare's intertextual dialogue with Samuel Harsnett. In Chapter 3, 'Cataclysmic Shame', the specific instability of Lear's emotions is reconsidered in relation to the storm. I specifically address the way in which Lear's kingly obligation to perform immortality gives rise to shame around the body, and how that particular thread of the story climaxes when he disrobes in the storm. These first three chapters aim to show the plasticity of the storm, while at the same time trace the storm's specific role in the overall architecture of the play and the character development of the protagonist.

The final four chapters that constitute 'Part Two: Performance History' offer a chronological romp through the centuries in which Shakespeare's versions of the play have been performed, with a specific focus on how the storm was created and to what end. Although in the critical history of *King Lear* there is some degree of nuance as to what the storm symbolizes, my main focus in these chapters is to track the long emergence of the storm as metaphor for mind that comes to dominate Shakespeare criticism and also explore how that is changing today. I have approached this history through the British performance tradition, stemming from the Globe. Most of my examples are English, with a few exceptions.

There are evidently other ways of telling this story and many productions left out. I offer up this as one way of mapping the big history of *Lear*'s storm and, with the conceptual space opened up in the first three chapters, there is great scope for future work teasing out the specificity of Lear's relationship with the storm as it has been represented around the world both in productions of Shakespeare's play and in the various adaptations.

Part One

Ecocriticism

1

Meteorological Reading

> *It is by touching, however lightly, on man's relation to the signifier – in this case, by changing the procedures of exegesis – that one changes the course of his history by modifying the moorings of his being.*
>
> Jacques Lacan, 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious: or Reason Since Freud' in *Ecrits* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2004), 165

The epigraph quote does not foreshadow a psychoanalytic exegesis of *King Lear*. Rather, this chapter undertakes a meditation on the 'procedures of exegesis' with the hope that we can unmoor the habit of interpreting the storm exclusively as a symbol for a transcendental humanist theme, but without forsaking the complexity of human drama of these scenes. The metaphoric dimensions of the storm have been debated for a long time. Quintessentially, G. Wilson Knight's 'The Lear Universe' (1930) declares the play to be about the entire universe, life and all the ages of man, and claims that the entirety of the dramatic action is enclosed in nature's 'earthly womb'. On the one hand, the philosophy of *King Lear* is 'firmly planted in the soil of the earth' (2001: 203), but on the other:

> The violent and extravagant effects of the storm-scene kindle the imagination till it cannot watch, but rather lives within, the passionate event. Then follows the extravaganza of Lear, Edgar, and the Fool, with their variegated play of the fantastic to the sound of thunder, lit by the nimble strokes of lightning. This is purely a phantasma of the mind: Lear's mind capering on the page with antic gesture. (229–30)

That very same soil that would literally be turned to mud by a storm is 'purely' Lear's neurological phantasm. In the earthly cosmology mapped by Knight, 'storm' is a metaphoric substitute that is not literally applicable to the situation. Knight's reading is obviously coming from a very particular moment in the

Shakespearean critical tradition, but it is exemplary of how 'storm' is treated throughout the play's modern scholarly history.

Other early heavyweights of early Shakespearean criticism such as Harley Granville-Barker and E. M. Tillyard understand the storm more or less symbolically too. In 1927 Granville-Barker claimed that the only meaningful aspect of the storm was its affective impact upon Lear and that we are best to highlight the connection with his mind (1964: 266), while in 1943, Tillyard argued that although the storm manifests concretely on stage, 'the basic elemental conflict is as much a part of his thought as is the actual violence of the weather' (2001: 64). In summarizing the many ways in which meaning has been attributed to the storm in the intervening years, R. A. Foakes concluded that the metaphoric mode dominates:

> [t]he storm dramatised in *King Lear* functions in much greater depth at the centre of the action, as an extension of the turmoil in Lear's mind, as a symbolic embodiment of the confusion and discord in the Kingdom, and potentially as an expression of the anger of the gods. (2003: 184)

In other words, the weight of critical tradition suggests that 'storm' is not primarily significant in itself, but more meaningful as a reified symbol of something else. The value-laden idea of 'greater depth' coming in the metaphoric register betrays the anthropocentrism of the critical tradition. The storm is not really poetry unless it is serving to signify something else.

In contrast, many recent readings of the storm scenes have tacitly pushed back against the standard symbolic interpretations and emphasized the cataclysm's literal presence. Steve Mentz argued that the 'storm scenes literalise the play's crisis of authority' because the storm does not respond to the king (2010: 143). Gwilym Jones argues that 'the storm is consistent … and consistently *just a storm*' (2015b: 74, emphasis in original). Laurie Shannon describes the storm scenes as a representation of the 'literal problem of weather on skin' (2013: 141). These interpretations respond to a scholarly tradition that diminishes the significance of weather's material importance in the play, both in text and performance, and complement the growing field of Shakespearean ecocriticism interested in rethinking representations of 'nature' or the 'more-than-human' world in a time of ecological crisis.

The storm is not the only dimension of the scenes that has been rethought in literal terms, but also Lear's responses to the storm. Simon Palfrey argues that 'Lear … always speaks with absolute simplicity and literalness, and as a primitive king expects his words to come true. Nothing is abstract for the old king … just as he is genuinely submerged in the watery element, Lear hardly speaks in metaphor at all' (Palfrey 2014: 46–7). In other words, he is not speaking in veiled terms about some other themes, but directly addressing the cataclysm. More literally yet, in 3.1 Kent's exclamation, 'Fie on this storm!' (3.1.45) seems like nothing other than a doggedly base exclamation about the material meteorological event that intervened at precisely the wrong time in the dramatic conflict, making an unstable situation even worse.

Although reading literally might seem simplistic, seeing the storm as a discrete weather event opens up new readings of the play's poetic dialogue. Take for instance the following section of 3.4 where Lear is explaining why he does not want to take shelter in the hovel:

> Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm,
> Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee,
> But where the greater malady is fixed,
> The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear,
> But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea,
> Thou'dst meet the bear i'the mouth. When the mind's free,
> The body's delicate: this tempest in my mind
> Doth from my senses take all feeling else,
> Save what beats there, filial ingratitude. (3.4.6–14)

Lear's deployment of the pronoun 'this'–'this contentious storm' and 'this tempest in my mind' – seems to correlate the two types of cataclysm by virtue of the pronoun's lack of specificity; Lear's mental weather is poetically enhanced by association with a storm metaphor. But if one tempest is a bear, then the other is a roaring sea, so to speak. He does not read the meteorological storm as inside his mind, nor is he projecting his mad mind onto the skies. He is making a shaky distinction between literal and psychological cataclysms he is experiencing and, at this point in the play, he only barely has the language to do so. Any incidental conflation of the two cataclysms is less about the storm and more about Lear. More to the point, the reason he does not want to take shelter is that one storm is preventing him from feeling the

full effects of the other storm. The inference is that to take shelter would lead to an emotional collapse – so being caught between a rock and a hard place, so to speak, is his best option.

But Lear soon references 'this tempest' again: 'This tempest will not give me leave to ponder / On things would hurt me more' (3.4.24–5). What tempest is the referent here? Although it seems he is talking about the meteorological storm, the text it is ambiguous. Lear initially says that 'this tempest'–the one in his mind–prevents him from feeling the full material effects of 'this contentious storm'–a meteorological event that is contentious presumably because it is not serving Lear's purpose. But would the material or emotional storm hurt him more? Here Lear's emotions are precariously balanced between himself, his daughters and the storm. Crucially, in all three instances, the non-specificity of the pronoun 'this' neither indicates that the storm is a reflection of Lear's mad mind, nor does it represent the ontological instability of the meteorological storm. Rather it reveals the extent to which Lear is held in torsion between the physical storm and his emotional state.

A metaphoric interpretation implies that Lear could arrive at this point if the night was not literally stormy; that the matter and duration of the storm is not also involved in his process. But the material storm changes the stakes of the situation. Take, by way of contrast, Monmouth's history (c. 1136). Lear's emotional state during his period of exile is narrated but without a stormy intervention. In a notably theatrical flourish in a text largely written in the third person, Lear is given voice to tell his own tale:

> (W)ith deep Sighs and Tears, (Lear) burst(s) forth into the following complaint. / 'O irreversible Decrees of the Fates, that never swerve from your stated Course! Why did you ever advance me to an unstable Felicity, since the Punishment of lost Happiness is greater than the Sense of present Misery? The Remembrance of the Time when vast Numbers of Men obsequiously attended me at the taking of Cities and wasting the Enemies Countries, more deeply pierces my Heart, than the View of my present Calamity, which has exposed me to the Derision of those who formerly laid at my Feet. O Rage of Fortune! Shall I ever again see the Day, when I may be able to reward those according to their Deserts who have forsaken me in my Distress. (Monmouth, in Bullough 1973: 314)

Due to the absence of the storm Lear experience is different. In Monmouth, his primary realization is that he will not be able to seek adequate revenge on

his daughters because he has lost power. In contrast, by virtue of the storm's lack of response, the storm shapes Lear's dialogue. Initially he tries to conjure the storm, and when it does not respond he questions whose side it is on, the details of which will be explored in depth in chapter three. When the storm is interpreted as a metaphor alone, as 'Lear's mind capering on the page with antic gesture', there is nothing about the night itself that has a bearing on his situation; he's figuring it out on his own and the rest is merely decoration. In contrast, rather that being a set of individual feelings that Lear arrives at by his own mad volition or a clear-cut case of filial ingratitude, a literal reading of the scenes infers that Lear's psychological, bodily, sociopolitical and earthly situation is articulated by way of his attempted dialogue with and the ongoing physical exposure to a meteorological storm.

There are, however, limitations to literal reading. It can quickly move from simple to simplistic and can diminish the complex implications of the dramatic poetry. How to move from a literal reading of Lear's individual and delicately balanced emotions to, say, a discussion of the play's representation of sovereign power and death? Indeed, the first time I submitted an argument involving literal reading to a journal, the essay was unequivocally rejected with the anonymous reviewer commenting 'It is evidently more than just a storm'. Although I find Mentz's, Jones's, Shannon's and Palfrey's appeals to the literal convincing in the first instance, there seems to be another step in the path towards incorporating this storm in an ecocritical reading of the play.

Considering the storm metonymically stands out as a way of pressing 'lightly' on our 'relation to the signifier' in order to change 'the procedures of exegesis' (Lacan: 165). So, building on the work of Jones, Mentz, Palfrey and Shannon that call for literal readings of the storm, I argue that while the storm is always more than a psychological metaphor, more than a heavenly index of political strife, it is also always more than just a storm. Lear's dialogue with the weather is never exclusively with the cataclysm, but infused with the suite of concerns that occupy him at that point in the story. Kent's 'Fie on this storm' is, obviously a reference to his physical circumstances, but it also alludes to the more general political situation. 'Storm' is not a discrete symbol here, but a part that represents a whole. I thus propose 'meteorological reading' as way to theorize the storm as metonymy for ecocritical purposes and to open up a way of understanding why the storm is so frequently understood as a metaphor.

Considering the literal, ecocritical interpretation as metonymic opens up a way of exploring *how* the storm functions as the representative part, rather than this being the conclusion. If, as Mentz suggests, the 'storm scenes literalise the play's crisis of authority' because the storm does not respond to the king (2010: 143), then at the level of the letter we are being told to understand the storm as part of the wider whole; the storm meaningfully and expediently stands in for the whole as an integral part. How is this working?

The metaphoric and metonymic are different poles of signification. Paul Ricoeur observes that 'association by contiguity and association by resemblance … define metonymy and metaphor' respectively (2003 [1977]: 136). Metonymy, then, is a rhetorical term for meaningful relations that are proximate or nearby, while the similarity that makes a metaphor viable is also based on a separation. Roman Jakobson defined metaphoric and metonymic language as rhetorical continuum along which all meaning takes shape:

> The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The metaphoric way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic way for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively. In normal verbal behaviour both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other. (1971: 67)

While I do ultimately conclude that the storm in *King Lear* operates on a variety of different metaphoric and metonymic registers, both rhetorically and theatrically, I am interested in historicizing the metonymic here because it advances the ecocritical argument for literal reading. Ecocritics preference the metonymic end of this spectrum when emphasizing the literal connections between things, even though such reading is usually not framed in rhetorical terms. The return to the focus on the literal is in itself under the influence of a particular cultural pattern, an increase in extreme weather events, a changing climate and rising cultural and political anxiety about the literal movements in the earth's atmosphere.

In this regard, meteorological reading has three main dimensions. First, it is a theorization of the poetics of the literal and mundane by way of

metonymy, and also a method for understanding how the literal and mundane are historically circumscribed. At the same time, meteorological reading aims to view strictly metaphoric interpretations as products of a particular historical context. By strictly metaphoric I mean instances when the meaning of 'storm' emerges only insofar as it is not 'literally applicable' (*OED*) to Lear's situation; where the storm is brought into decorate our reading of the human condition or the political chaos, but is not considered part. The particularities of such interpretations will be explored in chapter six. Line by line, however, the play text moves between metaphoric and metonymic uses of storm and tempest. But because drama affords the opportunity for ironic distance between what a character says and what it means in the overall story, when individual characters refer to the storm in a metaphoric mode it does not necessarily overlap with what the storm ultimately means.

With regard to the literary arts generally, Jakobsen defines metaphor and metonymy as most akin to modern styles of poetry and prose respectively:

> It is generally realised that romanticism is closely linked with metaphor, whereas the equally intimate ties of realism with metonymy usually remain unnoticed … The principle of similarity underlies poetry; the metrical parallelism of lines, or the phonic equivalence of rhyming words prompts the question of semantic similarity and contrast … Prose, on the contrary, is forwarded essentially by contiguity. Thus for poetry, metaphor, and for prose, metonymy is the line of least resistance and, consequently the study of poetical tropes is directed chiefly toward metaphor.

While maintaining awareness of the anachronism in applying formalist analysis of modern literature to early modern dramatic poetry, it is worth noting that upon Poor Tom's arrival in 3.4, Shakespeare shifts the mode of Lear's dialogue from iambic pentameter to blank verse. We shift from a poetic mode to almost prose-like dialogue; all the while Gloucester's passages remain in a rhythmic pattern. As Lear's exposure to the storm endures, his language changes registers and starts to respond more directly to the environment around him, but Gloucester persists in trying to get Lear to take shelter and restore the order that existed before the storm. Building on Jakobsen, this move suggests that the storm occupies a strange and complex zone in the dramatic tale, between what is real and what is imagined, between

ideas and ideologies and the literal world or between the metaphysical and the physical.

Thus, what ultimately separates a meteorological reading from a literal reading is the task of bringing together historically situated aspects of the storm's signification alongside attention to its own presence as a potential or actualized theatrical event. This consideration is not only for the early modern scholar interested in how weather was represented in Shakespeare's time, nor is it just for esoteric field of Shakespearean ecocriticism interested in how new responses to the Bard might help to fight the environmental crisis. Rather, this method of reading weather is applicable across the vast array of discursive and historical approaches to Shakespeare and literary texts more generally, and is arguably helpful for scholars trying to come to terms with how these once-banal, 'backgrounded' (Plumwood, 1993) signs are caught up in the ideological fight about climate change.

To illustrate meteorological reading by way of a seemingly contrary example, in 1983 Michael Elliott, director of the Granada Television production of *King Lear*, opted not to film the storm scenes on location because it would emphasize its 'literal naturalism'. This Elliot saw as a problem because, in his reading of the play, he concluded: 'Shakespeare is not primarily concerned with the surface of things. The storm is in Lear's mind' (Elliot, in Lusardi 1991: 195). A straightforward appeal to literalism, interested only in the notion of the storm as storm, necessarily contradicts Elliot's interpretation. But a meteorological reading takes a slightly different perspective and posits Elliot's commentary as more revealing of his worldview and his own perception of the cultural significance of the weather in 1983, than Shakespeare's specific concerns as a dramatic poet. Elliot, we might say echoing Jakobsen, was under the 'influence of a cultural pattern' and, as such, gave 'preference' to metaphor. In this regard, it is also worth pointing out that anachronistic cultural assumptions about how Shakespeare may have used the weather inform Elliot's opinion too.

Just as the symbolic significance of the weather changes, the 'literal' or 'naturalistic' significance of the weather has also not remained constant over time. Thus, the ways in which the storm might be understood as metonymnically linked to the action, as a contiguous part that represents the whole, also changes over time. At Shakespeare's time of writing, the weather's literal cultural significance in England and continental Europe was far from

superficial. In Marlowe's *Dido,* Jupiter's threat to hang Juno 'meteor like twixt heaven and earth' (1973: 7) neatly captures how different meteorological phenomena such as hurricanes, whirlwinds, thunder and lightning, rain, hail, snow and even earthquakes were imagined until at least the early eighteenth century. In this context, the word 'meteors' denoted much more than just shooting stars. The word, stemming from the Greek *meteoros* – meaning 'lofty' – invoked the perceived heavenly origins of all kinds of weather. From Aristotle's *Meteorologica* in the third century BCE until well into the eighteenth century, meteorological events were generally imagined to moderate the relationship between the heavens and the earth. To put it in S. K. Heninger's words, 'rain falls on the New Atlantis for reasons quite different from those which explained why divine grace showered the City of God' (1960: 3). In this respect, interpreting the weather literally or naturalistically in the early modern period was not the superficial pursuit it seemed for Elliott when he directed a television version of the play in the early 1980s. On the contrary, attempting to interpret or read the weather was once linked to questions about the nature of the human condition, our contiguous relationships with God or the gods and our place within the cosmos. The weather was at once material *and* deeply political and philosophical, or, to put it another way, the seemingly self-evident boundary between the literal and the figurative has not always been drawn in the same place.

Thus, if grace was thought to rain down upon the world, it was not a metaphor; the significance was immanent in the meteor itself. Thus weather literally was the part that represented the whole of God's grace or wrath, and other things in between. I take up the complex ways in which this manifested politically, philosophically and theologically in and through the Aristotelian notion of 'final causes' in Chapter two, but for now it shall suffice to simply outline the system in order to illustrate this claim. Figure 1.1 illustrates how the geocentric earth was imagined as enclosed by a series of spheres, which were believed to operate in mutually influential and fundamentally physical relation to each other. Within this classical geocentric paradigm, meteorological activity was causally linked to the heat of the sun, a confluence of terrestrial elemental forces and the rotations of the crystalline spheres around the earth. The outermost sphere of the Prime Mover generated all cosmological activity, but the weather occupied the sublunary spheres, between

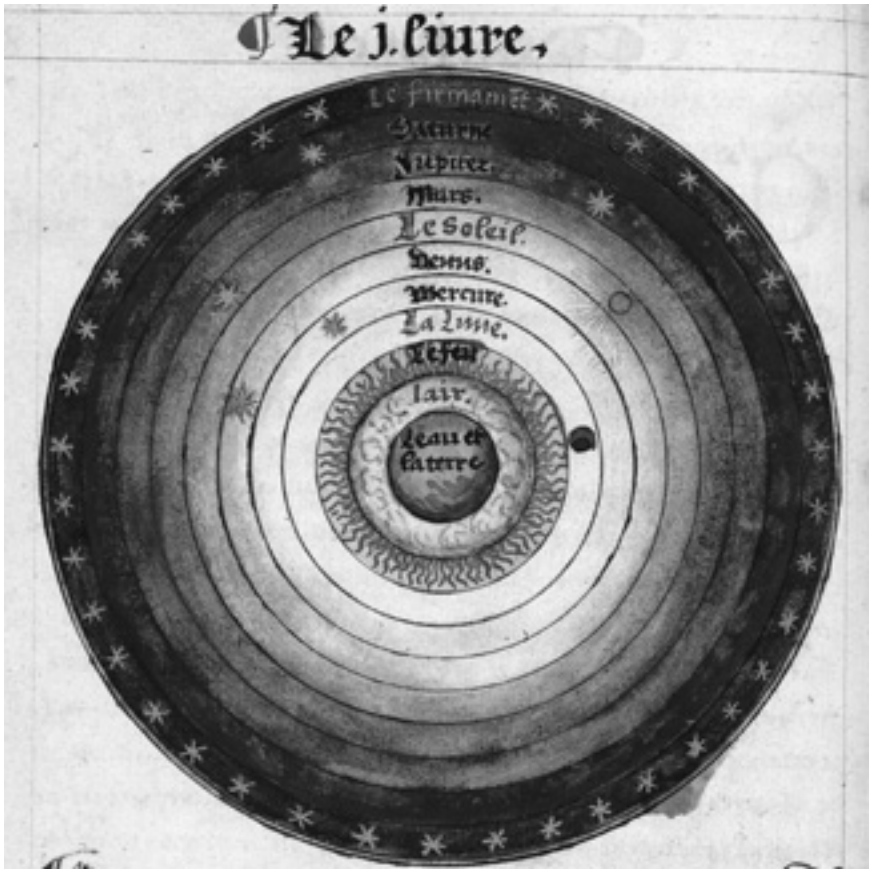

Figure 1.1 Oronce Finé. 'De mundi sphæra' from *Le sphere de monde: proprement dicte Cosmographie.* (Paris, 1549). MS Typ 57, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

earth and sky. In occupying the space between earth and sky, the weather literally moderated the relation between the material and the metaphysical, and was thus variously positioned as messenger (the bearer of both good news and bad) in the complex and mysterious relationship between the heavenly and terrestrial realms of the system. The weather was literally the point where humans, to paraphrase Karen Barad, met the cosmos half way.

Despite the rich cultural significance of the weather in the early modern period, when displaced from this context, we are left with a very different kind of vocabulary with which to interpret the storm. It is impossible to return to a time where the earth sat at the centre of the universe and the

meteors moderated heavenly messages to enjoy Shakespeare's provocative use of the weather in *Lear*, which Gwilym Jones argues was the perspective of early modern audiences encountering this storm (2015b: 78). In contrast, Michel Serres described the period between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries as the time of 'the erasure of the meteors' (1977: 229), implying that the weather effectively disappears from the Western cultural imaginary. Of course weather does not disappear, but where the meteors once delivered contentious messages from the gods, whose realm was made contiguous with earth by way of the meteorological passage, by the twentieth century Walter Benjamin argued that discussions of the weather indicated 'boredom' (1999: 101) and Roland Barthes noted that one speaks of the weather in order to say 'nothing' (1990: 81). In the New Atlantis the meteors fell from grace.

Meteorological reading is thus a historically situated interpretive practice and is also aware of other historically situated interpretations of the storm. While Lawrence Buell argued that reading setting as a meaningful 'presence … begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history' (1995: 7), the practice of meteorologically reading *King Lear* involves a subtle modification to this relationship. The natural history of *King Lear*'s stormy setting is not natural history as such, but rather the history of the representation of natural forces by Shakespeare and their interpretation and reinterpretation over time. The ways in which these representations influenced natural history is another question altogether.[1] The natural history of *King Lear*'s storm thus includes G. Wilson Knight's interpretation of it as Lear's mind and Elliot's concerns with the banality of literal naturalism, among many others. Meteorological reading prompts the reader to consider how their interpretation of the weather is historically and ideologically inflected. But meteorological reading also aims to restore the rich philosophical and cultural significance of the literal weather without anachronistic appeal to the divine and geocentric logic of classical and early modern meteorology. In other

[1] There is a growing body of work in feminist and queer literary theory and science and technology studies exploring the material links between representation and reality. This line of argument I understand as stemming from the work of Eve Kosofosky Sedgwick, on the one hand, and Vicki Kirby, on the other. This work explores the way in which language is performative within the world, in other words it *does* rather than simply describes, in Sedgwick following J. L. Austin, and the way in which language or text is nature, in Kirby following Derrida. I see my study as a step in between, focusing on the complexity of the text or performance itself, but not taking the extra step to fully theorize the relationship between word and world.

words, although there is no geocentric cosmos, the weather is still contiguous with social and political questions, albeit differently so. Meteorological reading aims to describe those differences.

To this end, meteorological reading is 'against interpretation' in the sense famously characterized by Susan Sontag. She argued that 'interpretation is not (as most people assume) an absolute value, a gesture of mind situated in some timeless realm of capabilities. Interpretation must itself be evaluated within a historical view of human consciousness' (1966: 6). The objective of reading of this canonical meteorological event is neither to once and for all determine the universal significance of the storm as divinely intended by Shakespeare, nor is it to clearly articulate what it means now for a presentist Shakespearean ecocritical practice troubled by a changing climate, but instead to see how the event moves through human history and to query some of the more ostentatious humanist fantasies authorized in its name.

The metaphoric and metonymic poles aside, another way to approach the meteorological is to emphasize, historicize and attempt to wrestle with the question of the storm's *duration* and *idiosyncrasy*. Gwilym Jones argues that the storm 'aesthetically and structurally … sustains the play' (Jones 2015: 67). He is right. A total of eight scenes are allocated to the representation of the stormy night, three of which are literally played out in the rain (3.1, 3.2 and 3.4) and another in which the king is sheltered in a hovel while the storm rages outside (3.6). While in the third and fifth scenes of the third act characters indoors discuss what actions they will take despite the terrible weather. The storm is foreshadowed by Lear when he claims he would 'Rather I abjure all roofs and choose / To wage against the enmity o'th'air' and to 'be a comrade with the wolf and owl' (2.2.400–2) than relinquish any knights. The actual storm is first directly brought into the action to at the end of 2.2 when Gloucester is cautioned to retreat indoors by Cornwall because there will 'be a storm' (2.2.479). As noted above, although *King Lear* is an ancient story, Shakespeare's is the first version of the old story to feature such a significant storm sequence and tragic ending.[2] As mentioned above, there is no bad weather in Monmouth's history (c. 1136), nor is there a storm in Holinshed's

[2] For a more extensive history of Shakespeare's intertexts see Geoffrey Bullough and Kenneth Muir.

version (1577), while in the anonymous *King Leir* (1605) there are only a few rumbles of thunder around a similar point in the plot. In sum, the storm – its duration, its significance in the action and the characters' reflections – is unique to Shakespeare's particular version, and a defining feature of the play.

As a digest of the range of sources, Shakespeare's *King Lear* is also historically and generically complex, and as such is peculiarly open to reinterpretation. On the one hand, Lear is a quintessential Shakespearean tragic character insofar as he is brought down by his own personal failings, but on the other, he is often read as a victim of history, fate or social forces beyond his control; as such he can be viewed both as a classical tragic icon and becoming-modern hero. The ambiguities of Lear's character also correspond with instabilities in the text's cosmic architecture, which is to say, as Lear does not comfortably sit within his character, the play as a whole does not coherently fit within any established cosmological framework or 'world'. Lear has one foot in the classical closed world and another in the modern open universe. While character's affective ambiguities will be explored in Chapter three, for now it shall suffice to say that the play is preoccupied with debates between differing worldviews: Gloucester believes in heavenly signs, Edmund is sceptical and Lear sits somewhere in between; all of these characters 'read' meteorological signs differently within the world of the play. Both John Danby (1945) and William Elton (1966) argue that the play seems to reach both forwards and backwards in history, referencing ancient pagan ideas, newer Christian ones and then, in some ways, hinting at modern scepticism. To widen the angle from story to genre, the two early versions of the play even categorize it differently: in 1608 it was printed as a history, in 1623 a tragedy. Thus, the play straddles history, tragedy, fable and fairy tale uneasily, if often productively. As Maynard Mack said, '*King Lear* is a problem' (2003 [1966]: 7). Although it is not conventionally understood as one of Shakespeare's 'problem plays', along with Leggatt, I submit 'the storm [as] the obvious problem of the play' (8).

Conventional historical inquiry reveals that this storm was unconventional in its day. So although *Lear*'s storm is now so familiar it seems clichéd, it is worth taking a moment to look at it in context and see why it is unique.[3]

[3] Leslie Thomson's 'The Meaning of '*Thunder and Lightning*': Stage Directions and Audience Expectations', *Early Theatre* 2 (1999): 11–24 and the introduction to Jones's *Shakespeare's Storms* provide far more extensive overviews of the conventions.

Shakespeare took advantage of the capaciousness enabled by the storm's duration to play with conventional early modern uses of turbulent weather in a range of ways. There are meteorological events that have a pragmatic structural function, such as the sea storms that deliver Pericles from port to port, those that establish the conditions for plays, such as *The Tempest*, and those that act as the premise to both *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night*. In contrast, the storm in *King Lear* is in the middle. It significantly muddies the established plot; during the storm the political conflict reaches its climax and the so-called 'parallel plots' begin to merge together. During the stormy night, which I take to span the whole of Act 3, Lear reaches an emotional limit in dialogue with the weather, Edgar as Poor Tom presents a spectacular performance of madness, the Fool disappears, a message is sent to Cordelia to bring her back from France, Edmund betrays his father, Gloucester's eyes are gouged out and Cornwall is stabbed; but precisely how the storm is materially involved in all these actions, beyond the implication made by Kent at the start of Act 3 that the storm makes it physically difficult to see, is decidedly unclear. At the very least, the storm does not merely 'blow over' and come to function as a sign of the human tumult. Instead, the storm becomes central to the political turmoil.

Aside from the pragmatic function of revealing who has shelter and who does not, the storm becomes more deeply entangled in the story by way of Lear's failed attempt to bring the storm into neat alignment with his desires. This is in contrast to the storm that rolls through the early scenes of *Julius Caesar,* for example. Cassius easily grabs hold of the thunder and involves it in his plot against Caesar. A frightened Caska [*sic*] asks, 'Cassius, what night is this?' (*JC* 1.3.42); Cassius replies 'A very pleasing night to honest men' (*JC* 1.3.43) and goes on to successfully argue that the thunder is 'instruments of fear and warning / Unto some monstrous state' (*JC* 1.3.70–1), thereby involving Caska in his plot. The device was ubiquitous enough to be parodied by Thomas Middleton in *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1606). The revenger, Vindice, suggests that the heavens have missed their cue: 'Is there no thunder left, or is't kept up / in stock for heavier vengeance? (*Thunder*) There it goes!' (4.2.196–7) (Middleton 1995). In both examples the characters have no trouble using the thunder for their own ends.

King Lear is not so fortunate. Just before the first stage direction, Lear is represented as desperately trying to maintain control:

> No, you unnatural hags,
> I will have such revenges on you both
> That all the world shall – I will do such things –
> What they are yet I know not, but they shall be
> The terrors of the earth! You think I'll weep,
> No, I'll not weep [*Storm and Tempest*]
> I have full cause for weeping, but this heart
> Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
> Or e'er I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad. (2.2.470–8)

Lear is already faltering *before* the storm, the storm serves to emphasize his failure. It is imprudent to make too much of the stage direction, because it was only added in the Folio version and no director is beholden to the position of the direction. In other words, in performance the thunder can begin rumbling whenever a director seems most dramatically useful for the particular interpretation. Nevertheless when reading the Folio or common conflation, the direction is always in the same place and there is something significant about the timing here. Lear is trying to build to a crescendo, claiming that 'all the world shall …', but he falters. No storm is there to buoy his plot. He has no idea how he will seek vengeance. The storm comes in at a later point, out of time with Lear's desires. Despite this, in a tragic attempt to keep up appearances, two scenes later he spends his time exposed to the storm trying to bring it into line with his aim. The storm never responds.

Continuing the celebration of the cataclysm's exceptionalism, Leslie Thomson and Gwilym Jones have noted that, unlike Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, *King Lear* courts but ultimately *resists* the widespread convention of associating bad weather with either divine or demonic supernatural forces (Thomson 1999; Jones 2015). On the one hand, Lear believes the gods are controlling the storm, but he soon realizes they are not. On the other, Gloucester thinks that the heavens provide clear political messages, but he is ultimately proved wrong. The antagonist Edmund, who believes in neither divine origins nor providence, nevertheless exploits others' beliefs in heavenly signs to serve his own political advantage, but he ends up dead too. I return to this conflict of worldview, and in particular Edmund's famous scepticism, in my discussion of the storm's theatricality in Chapter 2; for now it shall suffice to say that the absence of implied divine or supernatural forces have made the play especially appealing to scholars

reading the text in line with humanist and human exceptionalist philosophies. Indeed, the text has come to function as a touchstone for the representation of the human condition in a Godless modern universe (Dollimore 1984: 189–90).

The characters' conflict about worldview is an aspect of the play's representation of the difficulty of generational change. At the point where Edmund believes his plot is working, he exclaims: 'The younger rises when the old doth fall' (3.3.25). But the play as a whole suggests that questions of inheritance are not at all straightforward. If anything, the play dramatizes the problems with crafting a clear legacy, from Lear's perspective, and accepting inheritance, from his daughters'. In the first scene Lear divests himself of power in order to 'Unburdened crawl toward death' (1.1.40) and the play represents the catastrophic failure of his attempt to hand over power to the next generation. The question of who is at fault in this tragedy is directly or tacitly an aspect of almost all the scholarship on the play.

While it is possible to focus on the intergenerational drama in terms of its representation of personal traits, family dynamics or gender roles, this thematic also reflects the broader historical changes that Shakespeare was writing in and through. Scholars have argued in various ways that the decline of the classical and geocentric closed world and the rise of the modern and open universe is legible within *King Lear* (Markels 1991: 11–26); that the ideological shift from a religious to secular paradigm is evident in the various and incommensurable worldviews of the individual characters (Danby 1948; Elton 1966); that the political shift from the decline of feudal aristocracy and the rise of the capitalist nation state is represented in the conflict over Lear's entourage of knights and the unclear social status of characters that are left with a ruined and divided kingdom at the end (Delany 1977: 429–70). In sum, *King Lear*'s conflict centres around altering modes of inhabiting personal, political and, as this book will argue, environmental worlds, all of which are entangled with one another.[4] The story was first told in a time when the ideological architecture of those worlds was changing.

With regard to the historical context in which I make this argument, then, another shift is taking place. On an unprecedented scale we – in the Western,

[4] This configuration of different ways of framing interpretation echoes Félix Guattari's three different ecological scales from *The Three Ecologies* (London: Continuum, 2007).

hegemonic and quasi-royal sense of the term – are attempting to coming to terms with the entanglement of nature and culture, and the extent to which human activities are part of nature. It is thus a productive text to use to think through some of the broader social and political questions that are tied to the changing cultural significance of meteors within the Western hegemony, both in scholarship specifically focused on this text and in the broader scholarly community trying to get a handle on the rapidly transforming significance of weather in relation to climate change. *King Lear* is especially useful to think with because it represents some of the strange conflicts that can emerge during periods of great upheaval and change.

The most pressing problem with the weather is that it is temporally restricted and climate change spans across time; as such, the weather signifies our dilemma poorly. In mid-2010, British comedy duo Armstrong and Miller issued a dire warning on their TV show: 'You have until September the thirtieth to learn the difference between climate, a long-term trend averaged over many years, and weather, which is what's going on outside the window right now', or else you may end up in prison.[5] The skit imagines a world where it is illegal to link an isolated weather event to climate change; all citizens are issued with a fact book and asked to familiarize themselves with the science before the end of the month. The policy is designed to stop people falsely offering an unseasonably cool and rainy day as 'evidence' of the great global warming swindle, and threatens punitive punishment if they do. I appreciate the sentiments expressed in this sketch, which satirizes both the attempt to teleologically link an isolated weather event to an idea of how the climate might be in the future and anxieties about government intervention and political action on environmental issues. Still, bad sign reading, a common trope of contemporary climate scepticism, and the human habit of attempting to read the skies for some teleological purpose is not at all new. This habit of meteorological sign reading, rife with superstition, anxiety, false consciousness, misrecognition and bad prophesy has been a feature of the Western cultural imagination

[5] The sketch is in Series 2, Episode 6. It was first broadcast on the BBC in September 2010. At the time of writing details of the episode are available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00p27k7 (accessed 28 February 2017) and a poor quality clip is on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQlHaGhYoF0 (accessed 28 February 2017).

since the Greeks. Given the widespread resurgence of bad sign reading with regard to climate and weather, we need a way to readily understand such practices. Given that *King Lear*'s motley cast of characters practise bad sign reading throughout, the storm can function as a blueprint for the various ways in which weather becomes entangled with the particularities of an extant political conflict, the geography of a specific place and the ideological predispositions of the characters. I will explore the specifics of the history of bad interpretation regarding the weather in much greater detail in the next chapter.

As well as having duration in the play, being idiosyncratic in relation to contemporaneous works and providing a vector through which to process strange interpretations of the weather, the storm gives us a unique vehicle through which to read the weather longitudinally. Real-world meteorological storms – disastrous or not – are singular events in history; *King Lear*'s storm is reiterated and reinterpreted in each production, analysis, review, reprint and adaptation of the play across time. In other words, it makes little sense to ask what would have happened if Hurricane Katrina had struck New Orleans in the 1920s, or, indeed, if Cyclone Tracy had destroyed a city other than Darwin at Christmas-time in 1974, for example. But we can explore what the storm in *King Lear* meant for audiences in the Globe theatre in the early seventeenth century, for a scholar in 1810 as King George III is going mad, for a director in 1927 between the wars, and for an actor playing the role in the early part of the twenty-first century when the weather is starting to change.

Although *King Lear*'s storm is uniquely portable across history and geography, the storm is embedded within a very particular story. It is the most spectacular more-than-human feature in a play about an old king who attempts to entirely divest himself of power and responsibility in order to die. Thus tracing the long history of *King Lear*'s storm within the context of its particular story provides a unique perspective, not only on the significance of the weather, but how human–weather relations are complicated by moral, political and social ecologies. Thus, due to the centrality of this story in the Western cultural imaginary, the meaning of what Laurie Shannon describes as the play's representation of 'weather on skin' (2013: 141), is also at the same time deeply ideological and historical.

This short chapter has presented five key ideas that together constitute 'meteorological reading' as a method for 'touching lightly' on our relationship to the signifier in order to incorporate the weather literally into our understanding of the play without simultaneously forsaking its canonical study of the human. At the same time, however, I do hope that over the course of this book, by focusing so intently on the storm, our understanding of the significance of the humans represented in the play will also begin to shift.

First I argued that the primary rhetorical mode of the storm is metonymic. To consider it thus privileges the storm's literal presence in the dramatic world, but also invites questions as to how it is the part that represents the whole. Focusing on the storm's metonymic figurations reveals how its significance is overdetermined, but also offers a way of grappling with its ominous physical presence at the same time (a fact easily forgotten in reading, not so in performance). Although it was not a central part of this argument, considerations of the different dimensions of more-than-human metonymies has great potential for ecocritical, ecopolitical, ecopsychological readings of weather in other kinds of texts too. Despite privileging metonymy, however, I also explored how both the metonymic and metaphoric modes of signification are at work during the storm and how both are historically circumscribed.

The second dimension of meteorological reading is to explore and critique the historical and cultural context within which the weather comes to signify. This is perhaps both obvious and nonetheless easy to forget when grappling with the seemingly timeless materiality of the weather. I showed how during the early modern period the weather was providence, but by the twentieth century it was an indicator of nothing. As Brian Fagan's *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History* (2000) argues so well, different periods in history also have different climatic conditions and this has a material influence on history too. The primary consideration of the performance history chapters will be to attend to the ways in which the weather's symbolism, whether as God or as nothing, is operating under the 'influence of a cultural pattern', to echo Jakobsen. In the basic practice of meteorological reading the main point in this regard is that the chain in which 'storm' is the representative part of 'something else' – a kingdom, a social value, an affect – is linked differently depending on context; and so to with metaphor, where the meaning of discrete substitutions that are effective and affecting shift across history.

The third and fourth dimensions of meteorological reading are duration and idiosyncrasy, respectively. In other words, not all storms are created equal, some are long and distinctive and others are short and derivative. All dimensions have a bearing on the overall significance of the event. With regard to *King Lear* I showed how it was both the longest and most particular storm in Shakespeare's oeuvre. In the next two chapters these seemingly rudimentary observations will have a significant bearing on my argument regarding how the play forges a path through and in response to the storm. Finally, meteorological reading is presented here as a method for ecocritically reading the weather in our contemporary moment of climate change, and also is set up as something that has always occurred. Western humans have never been particularly good at reading the weather and yet we have always tried; the weather is a perennial site of bad sign reading, anxious prophesizing and, now, unstable scientific data. So while we might consider the struggle to accurately communicate climate change via weather events today as being an especially contemporary problem, meteorological reading posits the practice as another iteration of a long-standing tradition of vexed interpretations of the weather. This tradition will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

2

‘What is the cause of thunder?’: The Storm’s Three Ambiguities

Having spent the night out in the open, lashed by the storm, Lear asks Poor Tom: ‘What is the cause of thunder?’ (3.4.151). Lear has already asked several questions of Poor Tom and received quite baffling replies. At this point in the play Lear is either partly disrobed or naked, as is Tom. Meanwhile the Fool, Gloucester and Kent are trying to encourage Lear to take shelter. The most readily available interpretation of the question is that the ‘causes’ of the storm are entirely irrelevant and that Lear’s asking is merely proof of his madness. Gwilym Jones disagrees. He argues that it is one of the most important lines in the play. First, he claims that the question is not about causality but partiality: ‘whose’ is the cause of thunder? (2015b: 77) or which political side is the storm on? Second, Jones insists that because the question remains unanswered it effectively called upon early Globe audiences to ‘react to, understand through, the event of the storm’ (78). In other words, because it is unanswered in the dialogue the question functions rhetorically in performance and invites the audience to determine the implied answer. The trouble is that the implied answer remains ambiguous. Building on Jones’s analysis, this chapter reads through the event of the storm and identifies three ambiguities that complicate the quest for an answer.

Although the storm’s meaning is ambiguous, it is so in specific ways. The storm is situated within a very particular story about family, sovereignty and death, reflecting an ancient philosophical quandary about the role of the weather in relation to the human condition. The storm is not pure timeless atmospheric chaos, but tumult held within a particular frame. Thus, in order to better understand how one is actually pulled to ‘understand’ the play ‘through the event of the storm’ and to explore how one might arrive at a

deeper or different understanding of something after an encounter with the storm, the ambivalences of the storm are considered in quite specific terms. They are marked herein as 'dramatic', 'historical and philosophical' and 'theatrical' ambiguities.

Section One considers the storm's role in the minutia of the dramatic plot. Of particular interest here is the significance of Lear's exposure to and eventual sheltering from the storm in relation to his desire to relinquish the responsibilities of rule. I show on how the old king's desire for comfortable final years meaningfully intersects with his repeated refusal to take shelter from the storm. The literal intersection between his stated objective and the weather produces a paradox relating to the cultural and moral significance of human shelter and exposure and yields the question of what counts as an unburdened death. Section Two specifically interrogates the historical and philosophical ambiguity regarding Lear's question, 'What is the cause of thunder?' and explores its resonances with Aristotelian meteorological natural philosophy specifically and the history of meteorological thought more broadly. This section situates *King Lear* as both a criticism of and exemplary text from within that tradition of materialist thought. In particular I am interested in the question's referencing the meteorological problem of final causes or telos in the world. When viewed from this perspective, Shakespeare not only represents but also ironically plays with this enduringly open-ended question. In contrast to other texts from around that time, I will show how Shakespeare breaks with and arguably critiques the tradition of ascribing a purpose to the weather by way of Lear's quest to understand the storm. The third section explores the storm's 'theatrical ambiguity', or its potential to be spectacularized in a range of ways in performance. In this chapter I explore spectacle as it is written in the text by investigating Shakespeare's digest of various elements from Samuel Harsnett's critique of the theatricality of exorcism in the storm. When read this way, the storm is simultaneously critical of spectacle and a cardinal example of the blinding power of the spectacular to influence interpretation.

The point of this chapter from an ecocritical perspective is to complicate moralizing interpretations of the weather for particular political ends. As I noted in the introduction, the aim of this study is not to deduce one idea or ecological message from the play, or even a particular theory of the weather.

Instead, I explore the variety of ways in which the weather is co-opted by anthropocentric reading practices and how the significance of the weather in this regard changes over time. The striking variation in interpretation of the play over history (*King Lear* as tragedy, history, tragicomedy; Lear as hero, villain, madman, magician) hinges on plausibly being able to read the storm for all these particular ends. Using close reading techniques, the goal of this chapter is to explore how the storm is structured to support this tradition of equivocal hermeneutic practices.

Dramatic ambiguity

Lear's desire for an 'Unburdened crawl toward death' (1.1.40) orients Shakespeare's tragic retelling of the historical fable. Lear cannot just retire on his life savings, downsize to a nice apartment in Florida and take up golf, because kings do not officially die. They represent the immortal body politic: the chant 'the king is dead, long live the king!' represents the way in which the king's death is expediently mourned and glossed. The concept of the 'king's two bodies' will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 3. For now it shall suffice to say that there is no precedent for Lear's 'unburdened crawl'. So for Lear's ideal death to become or to be accommodated by the world, aspects of the world, if not the entire world itself, needs to be configured differently. 'In the division of the kingdom' (1.1.3–4) Lear attempts to 'shake all cares and business from our age' (1.1.38) and restructure his world in order to graduate the idea of unburdened death from desired possibility to actuality. At this point for Lear, being unburdened means shedding himself of the responsibilities of rule. Although at the end of the play his ideal death is proven actually impossible in the kingdom, the play gives rise to the question: under what circumstances could Lear's ideal death be possible? If Cordelia had never been banished everything would have been fine? If Goneril and Regan had accepted the knights in their castles and submitted to Lear's demands would his death have been unburdened? Or could a hovel be enough in certain circumstances? Or is it properly impossible within the world of the play?

Derrida's notion of the 'im-possible' is a useful concept to think with here because it describes the relation between the impossible and possible. For

Derrida, 'im-possible' signifies the paradoxical relationship between possibility and impossibility; the concepts are not opposites but rather 'say the same thing' (2007: 445). He goes on to argue that the 'event' reveals this relation:

> The history of philosophy is the history of reflections on the meaning of the possible, on the meaning of *being* or *being possible*. This great tradition of the *dynamis*, of potentiality, from Aristotle to Bergson, these reflections in transcendental philosophy on the conditions of possibility, are affected by the experience of the event insofar as it upsets the distinction between the possible and the impossible. (454)

Thus, he surmises, 'We should speak of the im-possible event … [as] the condition or chance of the possible' (454). For Derrida an 'event … must never be predicted or planned, or even really decided upon' (2007: 441). Jones also turns to Derrida in order to think about the storm as an event that just happens, that lies 'beyond anticipation' and that opens out onto what is 'to come' (2015b: 60). I offer up *King Lear* as a representation *par excellence* of the relation between the possible and the impossible with regard to the question of a king's 'unburdened death', and posit the two unanticipated events that give rise to the chance of the possible as Cordelia's 'nothing' and the storm.

Considering the trajectories of possibility in a tragedy, and one explicitly about the protagonist's desire to die, is a fraught practice. Any tragedy ends before it begins because the genre betrays the ending. Tragedies end in death or disaster for some of the important characters, particularly the protagonists named in the play's title: Macbeth, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet. There is no need for a 'spoiler alert'; we already know which direction these plays are headed. But Lear is different because he is not struck down prematurely on a pathway to power, revenge or love. Lear is afflicted with the wrong kind of death. How, then, is dramatic tension or audience interest sustained in this play where the protagonist's quest is always already oriented towards death? The event of Lear's dividing the kingdom and divesting himself of responsibility sets the action in motion and produces the idea of an unburdened death. Our interest in Lear's inevitable death is thus buoyed throughout by the possibility that at some point it might actually be unburdened, unencumbered, untaxed by responsibility and, presumably, peaceful.

Thus, the tragedy of *King Lear* is not that Lear dies, but that his death is so thoroughly burdensome. Lear has one of the most crushing deaths imaginable,

both literally and metaphorically suffocating from grief under the weight of Cordelia's dead body. The injustice of her death is the burden of his. In other words, the tragedy of *King Lear* is that an 'unburdened death' is rendered in impossible, but the play gives rise to the simultaneous hope that it might be otherwise, that it might be possible. As Stephen Greenblatt suggests, 'the close of *King Lear* in effect acknowledges that it can never satisfy this dream, but the acknowledgement must not obscure the play's having generated the craving for such satisfaction' (1988: 125). So I turn now to the text in order to explore the two ways in which the play lures us to believe Lear's death might become possible, one is symbolized by the castle, the other by the hovel. Both possibilities are theorized as such in and through Lear's exposure to the storm. The former is very conservative in the true definition of the term attempting to conserve or preserve the traditional laws of the kingdom, the latter proposes a potentially radical and revolutionary change and would imply a thorough reworking of the dramatic world. Lear's exposure serves to reveal these possibilities.

Cordelia's 'nothing' represents the conservative possibility that Lear could die an unburdened death on his own terms in the opulent surrounds of a castle. Lear tells us that this is what he had envisaged: 'I loved her most, and thought to set my rest / On her kind nursery.' (1.1.123–4). His later regret at banishing Cordelia should be considered as part of an assumption that she would have actually been able to provide what Goneril and Regan do not. Precisely whether or not Cordelia would have been able to calm Lear is ultimately unknowable, but in an interpretation of Cordelia's 'nothing', Emily Sun unpacks the way 'nothing' is a reification of the promise symbolized by Cordelia. Sun argues that Cordelia's response to the love test in 1.1 reflects a pragmatic and complex understanding of her duty. She will love her father, with a love in excess of duty, but also take up the responsibility of being either Queen of Burgundy or France. By embodying all these roles at once, she will somehow manage to enable an unburdened death for Lear and symbolically unify the kingdom. As she says in the first scene, she cannot 'speak' this 'love' for her father in front of the court because, Sun argues, it is in excess of her immediate duty. Duty is pragmatic; the love she promises is not (Sun 2010: 17–24). The event of Cordelia's 'nothing' momentarily represents the possibility or chance of Lear's unburdened death. In that moment, she might ensure

the enduring coherence of the kingdom, despite the division, and the continuation of the legitimate order. By banishing her, Lear literally shuts down the possibility she represents.

Cordelia endures throughout the play as a symbol of that possibility nonetheless; a conservative one not necessarily because it is old-fashioned or 'right-wing' or any other pejorative term we might append to contemporary conservatism, but rather because it represents the desire to conserve something that has been and seems to be slipping away. During the storm, the drama is in part sustained by the spectacular absence of the alternative future represented by Cordelia. Lear's exposure to the storm is likely the opposite of how we might tacitly understand her 'kind nursery'.

It is in relation to what Cordelia *might have* done differently that the old man's literal exposure to the cold night functions as a metonymy for Lear's supporters' sympathies. After the storm, Gloucester, for instance, expresses his unequivocal sympathy for Lear and, for doing so, has his eyes gouged out. When pressed as to why he sent Lear to Dover, he argues he sent him there out of reach of the daughters. But also because:

> The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
> In hell black night endured, would have buoyed up
> And quenched the stelled fires.
> Yet, poor old heart, he holp the heavens to rain.
> If wolves had at thy gate howled that stern time,
> Thou shouldst have said, 'Good porter, turn the key,
> All cruels else subscribed'. (3.7.58–64)

Gloucester sends Lear to Dover because there 'the sea', a metonymy for the French army, led by Cordelia, has the capacity to rise up and change the organization of power in the kingdom. In other words, he claims that vengeance delivered by armed force is the only thing capable of righting the injustice of Lear's literal exposure to the storm and that Cordelia is coming back to set things right again. The king's lack of shelter, the fact that he was old and out in the cold, wet, night, functions as the centrepiece of his sympathies, thereby implicitly suggesting that if Cordelia was already here this never would have happened.

With regard to the characterization of Lear's exposure as a horrible injustice, Cordelia symbolizes the possibility that Lear would not have actually

been exposed to the storm, that the world may be configured otherwise and that Lear's desired unburdened death might have been possible; under her care he could have kept the knights (or maybe would have had no need for the knights, given that he only claims the retinue *after* he banishes Cordelia) and remained sheltered from the storm. In this regard, Cordelia is the light and hope in the world and, indeed, she is often read from such a perspective. In sum, she represents the possibility of taking shelter in the opulence of the castle and an unburdened death where the mortal body is not merely sheltered but insulated from the stormy weather by fortified walls of wealth and power.

Concomitant with the conservative reification of Cordelia and the berating of Goneril and Regan for shutting Lear out, there is a radical possibility in the storm that is usually either overlooked or held up as a symptom of his madness: Lear is utterly uninterested in finding a dry house. He repeatedly rejects the opportunity to take shelter from the storm. Thus, despite the extravagant sympathy from Gloucester and Cordelia and all the blame that Lear heaps upon his elder daughters, Lear seems to want to be exposed. In reframing Lear's madness as, quite literally, an *avoidance of shelter*, his refusal to relinquish the knights in the first instance, or retreat to the hovel in the second, opens another pathway to an unburdened death. To conclude that Lear is mad given this contradictory mindset is precisely what Regan says: 'O, sir, you are old: / Nature in you stands on the very verge / Of her confine. You should be ruled and led / By some discretion that discerns your state / Better than yourself' (2.2.338–42). So what if instead we take Lear at his confounding word here, mad or not? Before the storm arrives, Lear had already said he would 'Rather I abjure all roofs and choose / To wage against the enmity o'th' air' and to 'be a comrade with the wolf and owl' (2.2.400–2) than to return to Goneril with half his train dismissed. Then, when in the storm, Lear either actively ignores or directly refuses to take shelter at least *nine* times. In taking seriously Lear's avoidance of shelter, the storm event promises him another possible way to reach his impossible goal, by means of a differently coded relationship between the weather and mortal bodies. More than just a vehicle to elicit Gloucester's, Cordelia's and, presumably, the audience's sympathies, the storm gives Lear another, different chance at an unburdened death. How does recognizing Lear's active avoidance of shelter change our reading of his exposure to the storm? More specifically, how does viewing his literal exposure from this perspective change a reading of the play?

In the storm, stubborn old Lear comes up against a meteorological force that finally has some kind of sway over him. Other than the Fool, the storm is the first 'character' in the play that is allowed to, in Lear's own words, 'come betwixt our sentences and our power' (1.1.171). He cannot banish the storm; he must allow it to speak back and to figure some kind of response. Once he realizes he is not controlling the storm, it gives Lear pause for questioning. His first question is about who will come to the defence of people, like himself, exposed to storms: 'Poor naked wretches … / That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm' whom or what will 'defend you / From seasons such as these?' (3.4.28–32). The question reflects an extraordinary change of mind and heart.

Simon Palfrey reads his prayer to the poor naked wretches as a reach toward a 'possibility'. For Palfrey this is a 'reach beyond jealous enclosures, [toward] a possibility to which Lear's present exposure gives powerful credence … And so as much as the suffering of which he speaks is actual enough … the mood is more pertinently of the possible: and of possibilities that can as easily be cataclysmic as redeeming' (2014: 50). But what is 'the possible' in this context? How might the suffering actually end? 'Before names and stations – or after them,' Palfrey continues:

> this is what we are: a brittle enduring, liable to be severed, viable to be put back together, and either way not to be blithely assumed, safe and whole before the fire. What is more, part of the suffering is precisely continuance. These things are far from view and perhaps far from mind: but they are not extinct. Suffering survives; life, in Lear's perfectly apt verb, *bides*. It endures, and in doing so waits for things to change. The change might be in the weather, in the times—or in our mindfulness. (50)

The trouble is that the possibility Palfrey lays requires a qualitatively different world order to that promised by Cordelia's 'kind nursery'. But the king is not really allowed to die in these circumstances. He is not allowed to bide. In this regard, Lear's exposure is literally and figuratively transgressive. The fact of his exposure is thus fuel for moral outrage and conservative backlash, as well as being the seed for a revolutionary uprising. King Lear is a one-man *coup d'état* against himself. On the one hand his shelter represents the stability of the kingdom, his exposure, on the other, represents a radical alternative.

Given Lear's avoidance of shelter in relation to the desires to shake all cares, the situation also suggests that the sheltered confines of the castle promised by Cordelia, refused him by Goneril and Regan, might not actually have had the capacity to unburden Lear anyway. In understanding the play *through* the event of the storm – the pathway that Jones argues is opened up by Lear's question, 'What is the cause of thunder?' – we see that the weather does not change course, nor does it neatly align with Lear's desires; instead Lear changes his mind about his situation in response to the weather.

After a lifetime in the castle, however, stubborn old Lear is poorly equipped to think beyond its sheltered confines and so has to keep asking questions to discover an alternative path toward an unburdened death. In other words, he did not plan his one-man coup very well. Once Poor Tom appears, Lear takes the opportunity to ask these questions. Initially he circles back upon his own misfortunes – 'Didst thou give all to thy two daughters? And art thou come to this?' (3.4.48–9) – but soon after, Lear asks Poor Tom a series of questions: why is he not dead given his 'unaccommodated' status, what are the causes of thunder, and what has he studied to know what he knows? Lear then invites the outsider into the hovel and finally takes shelter.

Lear's acceptance of shelter, however rustic, is both literally and figuratively a turning point with regard to the possibility of an unburdened death. It is not an unequivocal change in Lear's attitude to his daughters – he goes on to call for them to be arraigned in a mock trial and specifically for Regan to be 'anatomized' (3.6.74), and claims that women are 'centaurs', not half horse from the 'Down from the waist…' but 'sulphurous pit' (4.6.121–4) – but it is a significant shift in how he understands his own particular desires and the possible pathways towards an unburdened death. In the act of taking shelter in the hovel, Lear represents the possibility that an unburdened death does not necessarily require the opulence of a castle with the unequivocal support of everyone, but a small shelter and a few friends. After trying to establish a new world order on his own terms in the hovel, he finally comes to rest. Coming through this experience, by Act 4, Scene 6, King Lear is celebrating a very different kind of mortality by wearing a weedy crown, realizing he is not 'ague-proof' and embracing his mortal stench.

In and through Lear's literal exposure to the storm, the play simultaneously offers up the radical simplicity offered by the hovel, a supposedly vile thing

made precious by necessity, and the conservative luxury of the kingdom and castle, which Cordelia sees as her 'aged father's right' (4.4.28), as different pathways to an unburdened death.

Upon reunion, Cordelia and Lear hold very different opinions regarding how to respond to the circumstances. While Cordelia represents the possibility of a fully opulent and royally accommodated yet ultimately unburdened death, fought for with the 'arms' of France (4.4.27), Lear has other ideas. Cordelia wants to confront her sisters ('Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?' [5.3.7]) that denied Lear his rights. While Lear wants to 'away to prison' (5.3.8) without seeking revenge and reclamation to the throne, just Cordelia's companionship. Crucially, he does not 'abjure all roofs' forever. Instead he comes to believe that, although some form of accommodation is necessary, the ostentatious architecture of the castle is not. Indeed, the castle, and the responsibilities and burdens that it represents, seems to be part of his problem. Following the distinct conclusions arrived at by Lear and Cordelia, one could read *King Lear* as a play about the politics of sheltering from a storm and the ethics of different types of dwellings. While Laurie Shannon explored what it meant philosophically to lack a roof over one's head or to be cosmically unaccommodated (2013: 141), the next stage in this revisitation of the literal dimensions of the storm is to reflect on the meaning of different kinds of roofs.

The play is thus not only about seeking shelter in a pragmatic sense, it also offers a rich and complex ethical and political enquiry into the tensions between privileged excess and base necessity in relation to exposure. In *Succeeding King Lear: King Lear and the Possibility of Politics*, Emily Sun explores the relationship between literature and politics in the play and in some modern adaptations. She argues the text itself:

> *opens up a history*—that which gives rise to a succession of readers that keep returning to the play as to an originary locus for grappling with a problem. The question of the relations between literature and politics in modernity is not resolved by *King Lear* but rather articulated in a paradigmatic manner, such that later readers return to the play in their own attempts to deal with the question. (2010: 2)

For Sun, however, the storm is an adjunct to a fundamentally humanist drama about the political sphere, wherein exposure and shelter (or non-exposure, in

Sun's terms) are metaphors for an individual outside or inside the bureaucratic space of the 'polis' (36–46). For Sun, thinking about the inside and outside of the polis is largely concerned with the question of how human subjectivity is produced by administrative constructs. But the politics of *King Lear* is manifest in the literal delineations between indoors and outdoors – from castles to hovels and across high-grown fields – and is felt in the bodies of the characters with and without clothing. In this regard, neither the storm nor Lear's lack of shelter are only metaphoric; the thunder, lightning, wind and rain, combined with the aging king's plight, produce the play's philosophical and political dilemma and show up how it feels to be inside or outside the polis. The abiding dramatic ambiguity circles around the question of an unburdened death. What kind of shelter is acceptable in these circumstances? Could an extraterratorial hovel be a place for such a death, or is anything less than a castle morally outrageous

Historical and philosophical ambiguity

Lear's question, 'What is the cause of thunder?' references an insoluble, yet enduring, material and philosophical conundrum. Lear is asking what remained in Shakespeare's day an unanswerable but nonetheless abidingly meaningful question: 'What are the four causes of thunder?' The question is impossible to answer in full because of the problem of the weather's 'final causes'. In the Aristotelian natural philosophical model, all phenomena are determined by describing the material, efficient, formal and final causes, where explanatory priority is given to the 'final cause' or the purpose of something. In the *Physics*, Aristotle argues that 'Nature belongs to the classes of causes which act for something' (2009), but the weather is the exemplary exception to the rule because the ends are unpredictable and thus ultimately unknowable. What the weather is 'acting for' is unclear. So, despite the centrality of teleology to his overall method, the *Meteorologica* does not arbitrate on the weather's final causes. The example he offers is the relationship between rain and corn. Sometimes the end result of rain is that corn grows, but he could not claim that the corn's growth was the purpose of rain, because rain could result in the opposite end as well: 'if a man's crop is spoiled on the

threshing floor, the rain did not fall for the sake of this – in order that the crop might be spoiled – but that result just followed' (Aristotle 2009). So although, in the words of Thomas Aquinas, 'Rain results from the necessity of matter' (Aquinas 1999: 125) – when it rains, it rains – the ultimate purpose of rain is unknowable. The Fool infers this understanding of the weather in his song to Lear and the idea that he must make his fortunes 'fit' the weather, rather than hoping the weather will deliver a particular outcome (3.2.74).

Within the Aristotelian paradigm, it is impossible to think about the weather without reference to geocentric cosmology, especially given the role of the weather as moderator between the heavens and the earth mentioned in Chapter 1. Although Shakespeare was writing on the cusp of massive changes to Western cosmology, Copernican theories were only trickling into Britain by the early seventeenth century; they had certainly not yet dislodged the dominant geocentric worldview (Gatti 1989). Thus when Shakespeare was writing *Lear*, the popular meteorological imaginary to which he appealed in his plays was undergirded by a geocentric cosmology, even though new ideas were starting to take hold. So while we often think of Shakespeare as presciently modern, meteorology was only beginning to transform.[1]

Given the play was written at the beginning of this period of historical change, it pays to sketch an overview of the key conceptual problem lodged within the classical meteorological system: the problem of final causes. This will help explain the way in which pre-modern weather was directly implicated in complex cultural questions, how those political and theological

[1] The invention of Galileo's air thermometer is dated at 1597. Francis Bacon's major treatise on the scientific method, the *Novum Organum* or *New Organon*, was published in 1620. In this he called for a less superstitious understanding of the weather:

> Natural philosophy has, in every age, met with a troublesome and difficult opponent, superstition, a blind and immoderate zeal for religion. For we see among the Greeks, those who first disclosed the natural causes of thunder and storms to the yet untrained ears of man were condemned as guilty of impiety towards the gods. (Bacon 1620)

Francis Bacon also imagined a modern meteorological science in *The New Atlantis*, wherein 'great and spacious houses where we imitate and demonstrate meteors; as snow, hail, rain, some artificial rains of bodies and not of water, thunders, lightnings' in 1627 (Bacon 1624). These methods begin concretely to transform social and political institutions around 1660, with the founding of organizations such as the Royal Society. Further, Hook's description of 'A METHOD For making a History of the WEATHER' was published in 1667, in Thomas Spratt's *The history of the Royal Society of London for the improving of natural knowledge*, and most instruments that would become integral to modern meteorology emerged in the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries. In other words, with the exception of Galileo's thermometer, all this happened after Shakespeare wrote *King Lear.* If anything, the play could be taken as another example that things were about to change, but not enough to be heretical to contemporary beliefs. *King Lear* was not, after all, censored in its day.

questions manifested around the time of *King Lear*'s early performances, and in what ways they are mobilized in Shakespeare's construction of the storm sequence. But also, with regard to the presentist concerns of this book, this section begins to foreshadow the ways in which thinking about the weather as the climate changes resonates strongly with the vexed meteorological-political questions explored in *King Lear*.

Indeed, there is something untimely or seemingly classical about the ways in which contemporary meteorological events are being taken up and turned into political questions. Conversely, modern narratives of progress seem to be, in part, undone by the weather. In *Queer/Early/Modern* (2006) Carla Freccero theorized a temporal frame where time is understood to work 'counter to the imperative … to respect the directional flow of temporality, [and] the notion that time is composed of contiguous and interrelated joined segments or sequences' (4), where contemporary questions can be seen in early modern texts and vice versa. I will argue that despite the changes to the cosmological system and a seeming paradigm shift from the closed world to the open universe, despite Shakespeare as sometimes being seen as presciently modern, despite the idea of progress having a singular direction away from errors of earlier thinking, the seemingly retrograde cultural question of Aristotelian meteorology – surfacing in *King Lear* as the query 'what is the cause of thunder?' – strangely endures in Western culture today.

Aside from a few attempts to characterize individual elements by thinkers like Empedocles and Hippocrates, Aristotle developed the first systematic method for describing the weather in his *Meteorologica* around 350 BCE. After its translation into Latin in the twelfth century, it remained the authoritative text on the earth's weather system in the West for over half a millennia. In some accounts, Aristotelian meteorology seems to be superseded overnight by the rise of the modern scientific method, but in *Renaissance Meteorology: Pomponazzi to Descartes*, Craig Martin shows how Aristotelian-derived methods of observation and classification were still being used widely throughout the seventeenth and arguably into the eighteenth century (2011: 38–59). Moreover, the work of Jan Golinski and Katharine Anderson on meteorology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals the extraordinary difficulty of establishing the modern science of meteorology, largely because, to quote Golinski, 'atmospheric

phenomena occupy a domain of inherent uncertainty' (2007: 204). Grappling with such conspicuous unpredictability made it difficult for meteorologists to accrue the authority required of scientists (2007: 205). Emily O'Gorman argues that nineteenth century meteorologists were treated more like soothsayers than scientists (2014). Even now, in the highly technologized science of modern meteorology, the problem of unpredictability is the meteorologist's main occupational hazard. As Gary Fine argues, '[w]e believe that we can determine the relationship between the prediction and the subsequent event, allowing us to determine the accuracy of the claim'. But, he says, a key question remains unanswerable: 'did the weather occur as expected, and how can one judge if that is the case?' (2007: 175). For example, while rain might be predicted for a particular area, only certain parts of the area might actually receive rainfall, and even then it still might be in different quantities to what was predicted, or some areas might receive precisely the amount predicted, while others that were expecting rain remain dry. Even with sophisticated contemporary technologies, perfect weather prediction is like a mirage that is always just out of reach.

All of this is to highlight two things: first, the mainstream cultural understanding of meteorology at Shakespeare's time of writing was based on Aristotelian natural philosophy. Second, the onto-epistemological question at the heart of classical meteorology endures in modernity despite the paradigm shift, and the rise of new methods for measuring and predicting the weather.[2]

Unlike modern meteorology, however, the overarching goal of classical to late Renaissance meteorology was not weather prediction. It contrasted with the more esoteric field of 'astrometeorology', which was based on the superstitious interpretation of sunsets, animal behaviours and the like, and was

[2] In comments on a draft of this chapter, Greg Garrard suggested that my claim about the endurance of the meteorological dilemma was a bit problematic. I accept this criticism. He said that it 'represents a confusion between the lay conception of uncertainty ("we don't know what's going to happen") and the scientific conception, which is a statistical quantity that can be stated precisely. Quantifiable uncertainty (i.e. confidence interval) is, in many ways, the *opposite* of the lay sense of the term (hence many confusions about climate science).' Since it is beyond the scope of this chapter to think through this in more detail, I wanted to add in a footnote that while I agree that there is a difference between the statistically quantifiable methods of prediction and the classical methods of observation, there remains a gap between the prediction and the reality – even though the gap might be smaller, science does not perfectly circumscribe its objects. The weather/meteorology remains exemplary in this regard. This does not mean I don't trust scientific consensus, it just means I simultaneously acknowledge its limits.

charged with the curious task of speculating on the future.[3] In the classical model, the weather when it happened, what happened and the scale to which it happened was largely a surprise. The weather's formal properties were not understood as fixed, but rather mutable and changeable. Meteors were combinations of different elements, but their formation was taken as largely accidental. This incomplete or mutable materiality is a minor but conceptually important feature of classical meteorology. Martin identifies a long tradition of characterizing the meteors as nature's accidents and as formally incomplete. He shows how, in the thirteenth century, Albertus Magnus described the meteors as 'matter that is a state of becoming a simple substance' and how John Buridan, in the fourteenth century, used the term '*imperfect mixtures* to categorize meteorological effects in contrast to perfect mixtures such as, flesh, blood, milk or metals' (Martin 2013: 27). According to Martin, the mid-sixteenth-century meteorologist Marcus Frytsche described a meteor as something 'that happens in the upper regions of the air' and as 'close to being an element' (2013: 10). As Martin points out, the word 'happens' translates from Latin '*accidere*', thereby forging a conceptual and etymological linkage between the meteors and the notion of the accident; which, incidentally, coincides with Derrida's notion of the event as something that just 'happens'. The main point, however, is that among natural philosophers from the thirteenth century onward there is some degree of agreement that meteors are accidental, incomplete, imperfect and always in a state of becoming. Instead, the overarching aim of classical meteorology was to describe how the weather emerged and for what purpose. In other words it was a generalized systems theory and then, potentially, retrospective analysis. Aristotle's meteorological system was conceptualized within a cosmological model that placed the earth as the fixed centre of a series of concentric 'spheres' known as the heavens. The meteors occupied the spheres between the moon and the earth. The spheres below the moon were the sublunary or terrestrial spheres. The meteors were understood as the imperfect combinations of the four elements: earth, fire, wind and water. In Oronce Finé's painting in the first

[3] There is a branch of classical meteorology interested in weather signs and patterns but it is more or less distinct from the Aristotelian tradition. See L. Taub, 'Prediction and the Role of Tradition: Almanacs and Signs, *Parapegmata* and Poems', *Ancient Meteorology* (London: Routledge, 2003), 15–40.

chapter (Fig. 1.1) – which I selected for its illustrative beauty more than its specificity to the historical space of this argument – the lunar sphere is marked with a crescent moon and the sublunary spheres with representations of their dominant elemental forces: there are many ways of conceptualising the arrangement of the four elements, but in Fine's case, in descending order from the moon we see fire and air labelled in the two spheres, and water and earth at the centre. The drawing also captures the link between the earth, meteors and the heavens, and their concentric spatial arrangement as parts of a whole cosmos. But also noteworthy is the perceived scale of the sublunary spheres with regard to the rest of the heavens; although today we think of the earth's atmosphere as dwarfed by the enormous and infinite universe, the sublunary spheres took up a significant portion of the whole geocentric cosmos, and thus played a significant role in the cultural imaginary. Within Aristotle's cosmological framework, meteorology was the study and description of the way in which the different meteors were produced. 'Meteor' literally means 'something raised up' (Heninger 1960: 3); although the study of atmospheric disturbances and weather patterns is still called 'meteorology', the word 'meteor' refers today to just one atmospheric phenomenon, which is no longer considered meteorological: a small extra-terrestrial rock that burns up upon entering the earth's atmosphere. However, until the eighteenth century the word 'meteor' denoted a range of different atmospheric phenomena stemming from Aristotle's original classifications: hurricanes, whirlwinds, thunder and lightning, rain, hail, snow, rainbows, clouds, mist and dew. The term also covered other phenomena that no longer fall into the study of modern meteorology: coastal erosion, silting, oceanic salinity, comets, earthquakes and shooting stars.[4]

Meteors were imagined as complex combinations of the different elements produced by such means as the interaction between the heat of the sun and the rotation of the heavens around the earth. There were four qualities to the elements: hot, dry, cold and moist. Each element had two essential qualities: earth was cold and dry; air was hot and wet; fire was hot and dry, and water

[4] From our modern perspective, earthquakes are perhaps the most unlikely phenomenon to be classified as a 'meteor', given that they occur underground and that we now understand them as the movement of the tectonic plates. But for many centuries earthquakes were thought to be caused by powerful winds that found their way underground through openings in the earth's surface and, as such, they were classified as 'meteors'.

was cold and wet. Although any meteor could be produced anywhere given the right conditions, it was thought that, in the sublunary spheres, the airy and fiery meteors (lightning, thunder, comets and shooting stars) were produced higher up, whereas the earthy and watery ones (coastal erosion, salinity, wind, rain, snow, rainbows, clouds, mist, earthquakes and dew) occurred closer to the earth. Meteors fell into two main categories: vapours and exhalations: 'Vapour is naturally moist and cold', wrote Aristotle, 'and exhalation is hot and dry: and vapour is potentially like water, exhalation is potentially like fire' (1.3.27–9). Vaporous meteors were the various formations of water above the earth responding in complex ways to the heat of the sun.[5] Exhalations were a more eclectic mix of hot and dry phenomena.[6] We might summarise Aristotle's work and the practice of classical meteorology that followed as a way of categorising and classifying processes but in a way that shirked determinism. Nothing was understood as static or final.

Storms were understood on a spectrum of related but different meteors. For example, Aristotle characterizes thunder and lightning, rain and hurricanes as related but different:

> The windy exhalation causes thunder and lightning when it is produced in small quantities, widely dispersed, and at frequent intervals, and when it spreads quickly and is of extreme rarity. But when it is produced in a compact mass and is denser, the result is a hurricane, which owes its violence to the force which the speed of its separation gives it. When there is an abundant and constant flow of exhalation the process is similar to the opposite process which produces rain and large quantities of water. Both possibilities are latent in the material and when an impulse is given which may lead to the development of either, the one of which there is the greater quantity latent in the material, is forthwith formed from it, and either rain, or, if it is the other exhalation that predominates, a hurricane is produced. (3.1.11–18)

Although there is nothing especially surprising about the distinction as such – then, as now, a hurricane is qualitatively different from a light showering

[5] Rain, for example, was produced 'when the heat which caused (water) to rise leaves it … the vapour cools and condenses again as a result of the loss of heat and the height and turns from air into water: and having become water again, falls again onto the earth' (1.9.26–31). The vapours were the evaporation and condensation of water in relation to the sun.

[6] Aristotle described the two kinds of exhalations as follows: 'Exhalations that arise from the earth when it is heated by the sun … (are) of two kinds; one is more vaporous in character, the other more windy, the vapour rising from the water within and upon the earth, while the exhalations from the earth itself, which is dry, are more like smoke' (1.4.8–11).

of rain – I quote here in order to underline this point simply because in the limited scholarship hitherto devoted to the bad weather in Shakespeare, storms are rarely separated from isolated flashes of thunder and lightning in any significant way (Thomson 1999; Jones 2015). But of course a hurricane or storm is quite different in scale and duration from isolated instances of thunder and lightning and thus in representation can serve a similarly different functions or purposes within dramatic storytelling.

The Aristotelian method for observing and describing the weather is troubled by one rogue element: the perceived material link between the weather and a non-specific transcendent force located in the celestial spheres of the heavens. Meteorological movement, Aristotle argued, was generated by the rotations of the heavens around the earth: 'The (terrestrial) region must be continuous with the motions of the heavens, which therefore regulate its whole capacity for movement: the celestial element as source of all motion must be regarded as first cause' (9). The spheres above the moon were known as the celestial spheres; bodies in the celestial sphere were made up of one element only, ether. In a geocentric cosmos, the weather was the medium between the heavens and the earth. Although, as Aristotle says, the material causes of the meteors are the sublunary elemental forces and relations, 'the driving power of the eternally moving bodies must be their cause in the ultimate sense of their motion' (9). Which is to say, although there are sublunary laws that determine the movement and variations in the weather, the original source of motion is transcendent or heavenly. The imagined outside to the earthly sphere produces a transcendent logic within meteorological thought that historically has been used to explain the earthy material disruptions of the weather.

Given that the original cause of meteorological activity was heavenly or extra-terrestrial, then the final causes or purposes of the weather often had a heavenly origin too. Thus, providentialism was not a metaphor: the weather was generally understood as divinely ordained or part of some heavenly plan. Thus, when orthodox philosophers, poets, pamphleteers, artists, priests and dramatists drew a link between the meteors, the heavens and the human world, it was a description that referenced the way the material world was popularly imagined, at least in Europe, until the late seventeenth century. For example, the image of the Sabbath (Fig. 2.1) published in *The Nuremberg Chronicle* in 1493 (again selected more for its illustrative power than historical

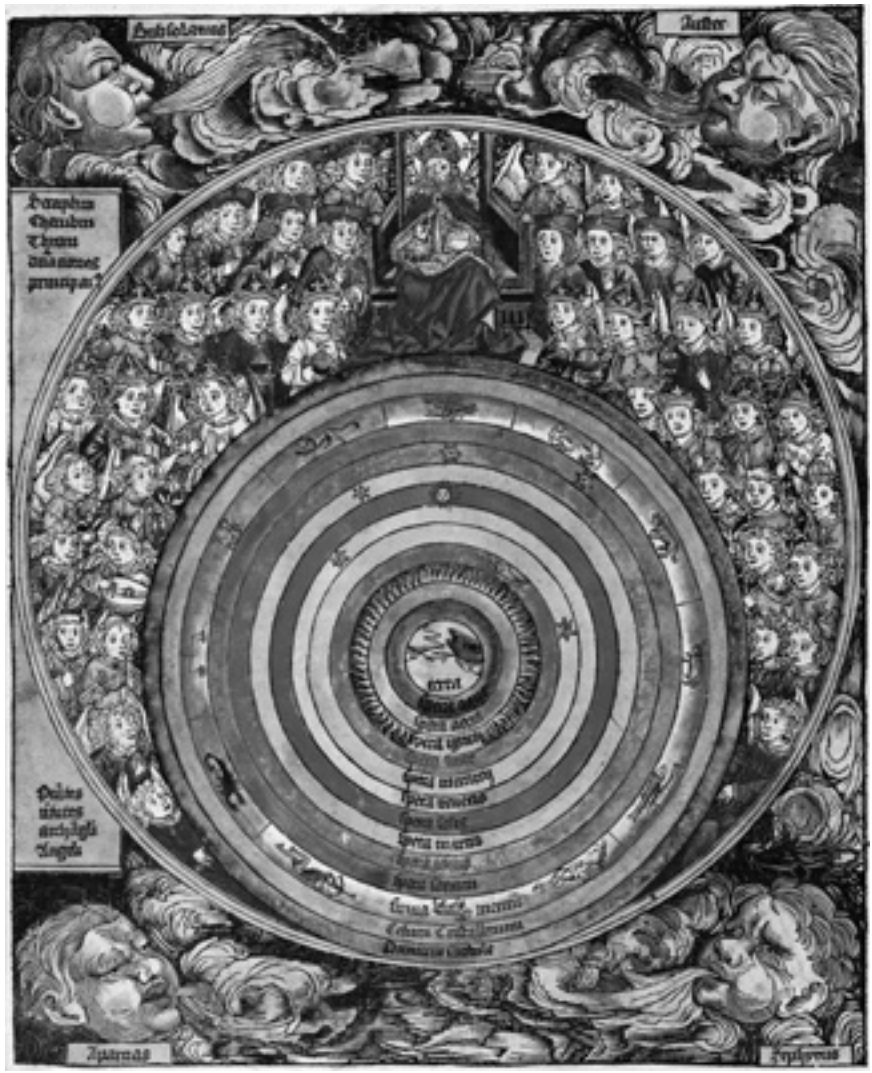

Figure 2.1 Hartmann Schedel. 'The Universe' from *The Nuremberg Chronicle* (Nuremberg, 1493). Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

specificity) represents the geocentric cosmos similar to the one pictured in Figure 1.1, but in this instance God and the angels inhabit the heavens. In other words, whosoever or whatever was imagined to occupy that outermost sphere of transcendent force was in some way seen as responsible for the weather; be it the Catholic or Protestant God, Greek or Pagan gods, this

transcendent imaginary formed the details of providentialist thought, which often materially hinged on worldly weather events.

As mentioned above, for Aristotle, deliberating on the final causes of the weather was impossible because no singular cause could ever be determined: abundance or dearth of rain could result in the life or death of the same plant – which is very different, according to his system, from trying to understand the purpose of human hair and other more stable material phenomena. Aristotle ascribed to hair the purpose of insulating the human head, the function of fat on kidneys was to protect them and the purpose of bird talons was 'rapine' (Aristotle: 2015). That said, he suspected others would be troubled by not knowing the weather's purpose and would attempt to describe the final causes of the weather.

He was right. There developed a long philosophical and theological tradition that took up the difficulty. The purposes ascribed to meteors were not nearly as earthy and pragmatic as those of hair, kidneys or claws; instead they were lofty, moralizing and largely anthropocentric. Given the weather's heavenly origins, the difficulty for natural philosophers was tied to questions of theodicy. How could one possibly imagine a moral order in nature and humans if the meteors are apparently both benevolent *and* destructive, and unpredictably so? More than just causing corn to grow or be spoiled, how could one actually fit the meteors into a neat moral or theological paradigm if both the good *and* the wicked were harmed in a flood, or if both priests *and* murderers could be struck by lightning?

There were no simple answers to these questions. As Martin demonstrates, the meteorological conundrum was not just taken up by a few esoteric scholars, but has a long and complex history. Philosophers from the Stoics and the Epicureans, through the Scholastic tradition, tackled the question. It was part of the Catholic eschatological imaginary and formed a key aspect of the theological debates across Europe after the Reformation, taken up in various ways by Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics, as well as Pagans, Atheists and Sceptics (Martin 2011: 38–59). In order to explain the extraordinary variety of positions on the final causes of the meteors, Martin activates the concept of 'multiple Aristotelianisms':[7] 'Aristotelian meteorology differed among courtly

[7] The original concept is outlined by Charles B. Schmitt in *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

elites, Italian university professors, members of Catholic religious orders, and Lutherans' (Martin 2011: 16). The multiple interpretations of Aristotle's work are especially interesting on the issue of meteors because it reveals the extent to which the weather has long been involved in polarized ideological debates.

A scholar to whom Martin makes special reference on this point is the sixteenth-century Catholic philosopher Pietro Pomponazzi, who drew an analogy between the timeless meteorological conundrum and the mysteries of religious faith. He embraced the ambiguity of Aristotelian meteorology and marvelled at the idea of not knowing. According to Pomponazzi, 'There are many things that seem bad to us, which are optimal, because we are ignorant of their purpose' (in Martin 2013: 46). Pomponazzi was dismissive of philosophers looking for answers to everything and argued that this 'unknowability' was essential for the practice of faith. For him, the fact that the final causes remain unknown gave rise to the problem of doubt, which, for a religious thinker, opened up the possibility of faith. While Pomponazzi did search for answers, his analysis revealed the basic relationship between the meteors and theological questions. What was a natural philosophical 'difficulty' according to Aristotle was, for Pomponazzi, the very problem of existence that necessitates faith.

But not all thinkers were as content with ambiguity as Pomponazzi, and the more politically motivated or evangelical writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries harnessed the fear of the unknown in order to make an unequivocal statement of faith. As such, the final causes of the meteors are frequently written about by religious thinkers of all denominations to manage their fears in relation to the unknown and unpredictable whims of God. Providentialist writings after the Reformation often exploit the enduring cultural investment in natural teleology in order to persuade individuals to subscribe to their particular religious denomination. Moreover, the Reformation added another layer of complexity to the problem of final causes for meteorology. Alexandra Walsham argues that 'the cross-fertilization of an eclectic body of opinions and beliefs … to interactions between different layers of culture and to processes of adaptation and assimilation' in varying interpretations of natural disasters goes 'some way to explaining how Protestantism was implanted in England' (70). In other words, the ways in which responses to disasters were theologically inflected was fundamentally

linked to shifts in political power. Reflecting on the weather's purposes was not only a way of exploring one's own faith, but was a way of differentiating an allegiance to one sect or another.

That said, investing the meteors with broader theological or political significance or purpose required a convincing story. Walsham describes how a given story could telescope the 'timeframe between wicked act and heavenly revenge … to enhance the teleological link between cause and effect' (76). For example, there is the famous story of Martin Luther whose religious epiphany, in 1505, was prompted by a violent thunderstorm; caught out in the storm, he exclaimed: 'Help me, Saint Anne, and I shall become a monk!' (Mullet 2004: 37). Luther survived and less than two weeks later he entered the Augustinian monastery at Erfurt. If there is more to this story than mythic appeal, then, as Jones has asserted, 'without one notable thunderstorm in 1505 … it is conceivable that the entire modern era of the west would have been radically different' (Jones 2015: 178). The storm can be retrospectively ascribed this purpose for Luther and, at least symbolically, serve as a plausible catalyst for the Reformation. Furthermore, myth or not, it has particular resonances with what will come to be the definitive features of Protestantism, in particular the notion of an unmediated relationship between God and the individual.[8]

Myth-making about the meteors' final causes remained an aspect of popular writing on weather events when Shakespeare was composing *King Lear*. The most widely available sixteenth-century English book on the meteors was William Fulke's *A Goodly Gallery with a Most Pleasaunt Prospect, into the Garden of Naturall Contemplation, to Beholde the Naturall Causes of All Kind of Meteors* (1563). This was an enduringly popular treatise based on geocentric cosmological principles and Aristotelian meteorology, and infused with Fulke's own Puritanical beliefs. The book had a wide enough readership to be repeatedly reissued and reprinted, in 1571, followed by another in 1602 with a slightly different title and title page and a second edition in 1634. A third edition was printed in 1639, reissued in 1640. The work was then reprinted again in 1654 with an entirely new title: *Meteors: OR, A plain Description of all kind of Meteors as well Fiery and Ayrie, as Watry and Earthy:*

[8] The storm features in more explicitly religious accounts of Luther's life. See, for example, D. Wilson, *Out of the Storm: The Life and Legacy of Martin Luther* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008).

BRIEFLY Manifesting the Causes of all Blazing-stars, Shooting-Stars, Flames in the Aire, Thunder, Lightning, Earthquakes, Rain, Dew, Snow, Clouds, Springs, Stones and Metalls, which was also reissued in 1655 and 1670.[9]

Working within the Aristotelian tradition, Fulke explores the full range of meteors, including earthquakes and metals, but unlike Aristotle, he actually makes comment on the final causes:

> Concerning the formall and finall cause, we have little to saye because the one is so secret, that it is knowen of no ma(n) … The essentiall forme of all substaunces, Gods wisdome comprehendeth, the universall chiefe and last End of all thinges, is the glory of God. Myddle ends (if they may be so called) of these impressions are manifold profites, to Gods creatures, to make the earth fruitfull, to purge the ayre, to sett forth his power, to threathen his vengeaunce, to punyshe the worlde, to move to repentaunce: all the which are referde to one end of Gods eternall glory, ever to be praysed. Amen. (Fulke 1571)

There are similarities between Fulke and Pomponazzi; both claimed the elusiveness of the weather's end purpose is a matter of faith. But while Pomponazzi embraced the ambiguity itself as evidence of God's greatness, the Puritan Fulke interpreted the variability of the meteors as a form of direct instruction from God: when the meteors were benign, the faithful should be grateful; when violent, they should be afraid and repent.

Whereas Fulke's commentary was a religious analysis of the broad natural philosophy of meteorology, pamphleteers responded to specific violent meteorological events within a particular geopolitical context. After a violent storm in 1613, opportunistic pamphleteers were quick to explain it in contemporary theological terms. Their aim was to capitalize on the trauma of the event: to encourage those with faith to remain strong and to convert the unfaithful. Despite what looked like random damage, the pamphleteers laboured to frame the disaster in terms of God's plan. Such publications were rife with the 'telescoping' of cause and effect that Walsham identified (76). There are three surviving pamphlets written in response to the wild weather experienced in England during the winter of 1613, less than a decade after *Lear* reached the stage.

[9] Publication data retrieved from English Short Title Catalogue, http://estc.bl.uk (accessed 26 February 2013).

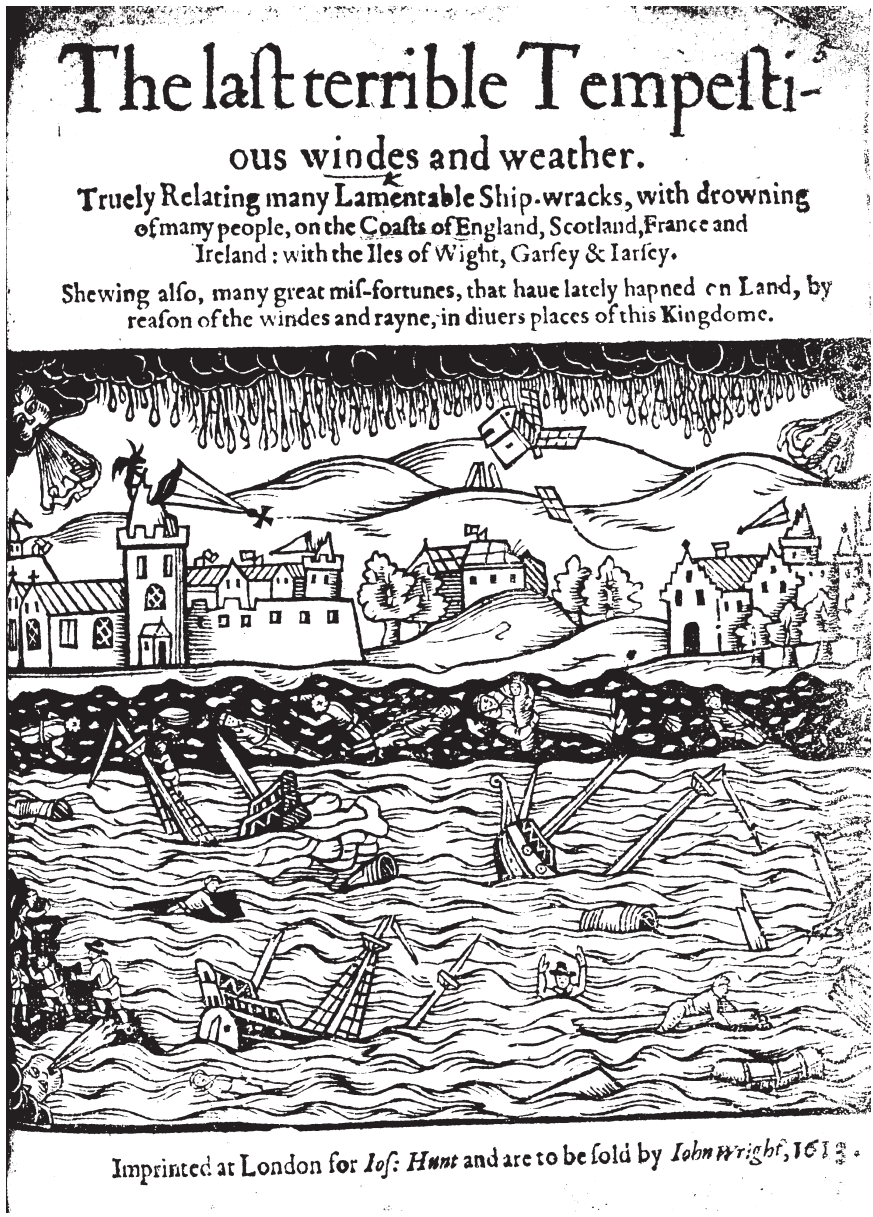

Figure 2.2 Anonymous. *The last terrible Tempestiuous windes and weather* (London, 1613). Woodcut. Pamphlet title-page.

Take, for example, *The last terrible Tempestious windes and weather. Truely Relating many Lamentable Ship-wracks, with drowning of many people, on the Coasts of England, Scotland, France and Ireland: with the Iles of Wight, Garsey & Iarsey. Shewing also, many great mis-fortunes, that have lately hapned on Land, by reason of the windes and rayne, in divers places of this Kingdome* (Fig. 2.2). By claiming to be 'truly relating' his events, the anonymous author implies that he is giving an objective description rather than making persuasive rhetorical argument; however, the pamphleteer's main goal is actually to reason out the destruction caused by the weather for theological ends, to promote his cause by encouraging repentance in his readers and, ultimately, to shut down lingering ambiguities. Like Fulke, he works to account for such destruction and suggests ways to respond to it:

> For as God is infinite in his mercie, So is hee infinite in his Justice; and as our transgressions are numberless, so are the severall rods and punishments uncountable that God uses to inflict upon us, sometimes by weake meanse to accompalish great things, and confound the mighty; and sometimes by elementall causes, as fire, aire, water, and earth, hee shewes his universal power. (A2)

This author's remedy for displays of wholesale destruction is abject repentance in order to encourage God to show mercy on the population in future:

> Then let us consider with ourselves in What dangerous estates wee are in When the Almighty is offended with us, and let us turn to the Lord though harty repentance … and then no doubt but God in his mercy will turne his favourable countenance towards us. (D)

This is an act of interpretation. It turns the mystery of meteorological violence into a clear moral story that corresponds with the author's own theological principles and moral agenda.

Turning back to Shakespeare now, the method of telescoping or linking cause and effect is often deployed by a particular character for specific actions with desired ends, to manipulate or moralize. Although he might be similarly selective, Shakespeare is never as earnest as the pamphleteers. He was not, after all, writing morality plays. Whether or not the dramatic ends are actually met in the play or not is not important. What is key is that in most cases the weather is taken up by a character and awarded a clear dramatic or narrative

function. Shakespeare takes a sceptical, often humorous, approach to such meteorologically related myth-making in *Julius Caesar* (1599). In 1.3 Cassius, anxious to have Caska [*sic*] join with him in his plot against Caesar, draws on the thunder to justify his argument. 'If you would consider the true cause' of thunder, he says:

> why, you shall find
> That heaven hath infused them with these spirits
> To make them instruments of fear and warning
> Unto some monstrous state. (*JC* 1.3.63–71)

Here Cassius strategically involves the thunder in the plot against Caesar; for Cassius, the thunder is a sign that the state is rotten. Does Cassius really believe this is what the thunder signifies, or is it a manipulative strategy to strengthen his argument against Caesar? That depends on how we read Cassius's motives. But, whatever they may be, Cassius exploits the storm for his own ends; he ascribes a final cause to the thunder in order to try and convince another person of his point of view. I do not assert that these representations reflect Shakespeare's tacit knowledge of the central problem of natural philosophy of meteorology, but rather to emphasize that the character's interpretation of the meteors draws on common practices from the day and can be understood within the rubric of Aristotelian meteorology as offering a particular position on their final cause. The purpose of the rain is to encourage the wicked to repent or to illustrate the rottenness of the state. In the example of *Caesar*, Shakespeare is clearly referencing the way the weather was used strategically for particular political ends, and incidentally co-opting that strategy for his own theatrical purposes.

In *The Tempest* (1611), the representation of the 'final cause' of the tempest rests entirely in the hands of Prospero, who creates the initial dramatic situation by conjuring up the sea storm. After the storm-tossed opening scene, which ends with everyone on board abandoning ship to what they anticipate will be their certain deaths, we meet Prospero and his daughter. Her father comforts Miranda, who laments the fate of those who have drowned ('Tell your piteous heart / There's no harm done' [*TT* 1.2.14–15]), and explains at considerable length to her (and the audience) how they came to be on the island. Miranda remains unclear about the purpose of the storm: 'And

now I pray you, sir, / For still 'tis beating in my mind – your reason / For raising this sea-storm?' (*TT* 1.2.175–7). At this point Prospero puts her to sleep by magical means. If Prospero were to tell Miranda she would perhaps be terrified of her father, and the story would not have any intrigue for the audience. During the course of the play, his objectives for conjuring the storm begin to appear: Prospero ordered Ariel to 'perform' the tempest in order to deliver his brother Antonio, and split the characters up so that, over the course of the next few hours, Prospero's revenge can unfold. By putting the 'author' of the storm 'inside' the play[10] and keeping all the other characters ignorant of Prospero's plot, Shakespeare reveals to us his own point of view on the dramatic purposes of storms. Here, that purpose is to bring about Prospero's revenge; but metatheatrically the purpose of the storm is to create the conditions for the drama itself. The play's title leads us to expect a story that is all about a tempest. Instead, what we get is a relatively brief, but very noisy, opening to a three-hour-long entertainment. Yet the storm remains the *sine qua non* of the entire play, rendering the action, up to a point, plausible.

Turning back to *King Lear*, we find a storm that functions very differently. In the next chapter I come to closely address the emotional details of Lear's dialogue with the weather; for now it shall suffice to observe that in the first storm speeches of 3.2 Lear tries to duplicate the putative success of the anonymous pamphleteer, Cassius and Prospero, and harness the storm for his own purposes, but without success. Lear calls upon the storm to become part of his own personal narrative and aid him in exacting revenge upon his daughters for their ingratitude. But he fails catastrophically. Ultimately, he cannot use the storm to convince anyone of anything because the storm is indifferent to his plight: try as he might, he cannot get the storm to respond to his cries. Instead, he has to respond to the storm.

One of the key reasons Lear gets into trouble is his proximity to the storm. *Contra* Lear, orthodox theologians and pamphleteers published their tracts calling for repentance in the wake of particular disasters; their opinions were forged from the safety of retrospection. In *The Tempest*, Prospero's trick relies

[10] For an exploration of the notion of Prospero as Shakespeare, with a focus on the actor's performance, see G. McMullan, '*The Tempest* and the Uses of Late Shakespeare in the Theatre: Gielgud, Rylance, Prospero' in *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing: Authorship and the Proximity of Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 318–53.

on the other characters being frightened by the storm but ultimately surviving to reflect on their new island home. Indeed, the scholarly perspective on the storm in *King Lear* is usually retrospective too; after the event, we reflect upon its effects and determine its overall significance once it has congealed into a thing rather than a process. But the characters in *Lear* do not enjoy the benefits of retrospection; they are caught up in the middle of the storm. Like them, in meteorologically reading the play, we are forced to contend *with* and proceed *through* the storm. As Steve Mentz argues, these scenes are 'Shakespeare's most direct interrogation of how a providential storm feels against your skin' (2010: 141). In narratives that ascribe a clear purpose to the weather, the material encounter and its providential significance do not usually overlap. However, in *Lear*, the storm's significance begins to take shape while the king is still feeling the rain against his skin; so its ultimate purpose is ambiguous. The question, 'What is the cause of thunder?' is thus never clearly resolved in the text but kept open and ambiguous. The play does not offer a conclusion on the question of the storm's purpose or final causes, but rather opens up space for a few possibilities. The first is for presenting it in performance in a way that emphasizes a particular interpretation, the storm's purpose as a cosmic enhancement of Lear's mental state or a natural symbol for political chaos, for instance. Second, in meteorologically reading this text, one is able sit at little longer with the uncertainty and consider what it means not to know.

Theatrical ambiguity

By the time Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, he had transmuted into metatheatre the most spectacularly theatrical feature of *King Lear*. In the second scene of *The Tempest*, after putting Miranda to sleep, Prospero reveals his reasons for 'raising this sea-storm' (*TT* 1.2.177). Although the audience comes to know the reasons, the characters other than Prospero and Ariel misrecognize the fundamental structure of their situation on account of the stormy spectacle, and act upon that misrecognition until the very end of the play. They think the storm is natural, but actually Prospero strategically plots it for a particular narrative end. The play would not be possible without the dramatic irony created by the split between the theatre of the shipwreck

narrative and metatheatre of the revenge narrative produced by the opening storm, 'Performed to point' (*TT* 1.1.194) by Ariel. In other words, the drama occurs in the space between the puppet mastery or metatheatre of Prospero and Ariel and the theatre of the shipwrecked royalty; without the chasm between the two realities enabled by the storm there would be no play.

The audience does not have the same acute awareness of the artifice of the storm in *King Lear*. Although there is metatheatre and dramatic irony in *King Lear*, to be sure, the storm is not the result of overt trickery. We take the storm more seriously because it seems a more realistic aspect of Lear's world and less like a deliberate theatrical construct or device. Nevertheless, the fact that Shakespeare reveals the theatrical purpose of the storm in *The Tempest*, provokes us to consider the effect of its masking in *King Lear.* The theatrical ambiguity here can be found in the space between the received reality of the dramatic world and the way Shakespeare draws attention to artifice via Poor Tom.

To understand the theatrical aspects of the storm and how they are entangled with the metatheatrical aspects of the scenes, I turn now to one of Shakespeare's key source texts, Samuel Harsnett's *A declaration of egregious popish impostures to with-draw the harts of her majesties subjects from their allegiance, and from the truth of Christian religion professed in England, under the pretence of casting out devils. Practiced by Edmunds, alias Weston a Jesuit, and divers Romish priestes and wicked associates. Where-unto are annexed the copies of the confessions, and examinations of the parties themselves, which were pretended to be possessed, and dispossessed, taken upon oath before her Majesties commissioners for causes ecclesiasticall* (1603), henceforth known as the *Declaration*. For over a hundred years, scholars have recognized this as an important inter-text for Shakespeare in the writing of *King Lear*. Frank Walsh Brownlow (1993: 107), Geoffrey Bullough (1973: 314) and Kenneth Muir (1977: 203) all agree that the *Declaration* is the most significant influence on Shakespeare's adaptation of the ancient tale. In the tract, Harsnett's work demystifies the strategies of fear and terror used by the Catholic Church in the practice of exorcism.

Shakespeare's engagement with Harsnett is superficially apparent in the similarities between Edgar's mad babbling in 3.4 and 3.6 and the strange names given to devils in exorcisms recounted in the *Declaration*. Harsnett's exorcists use the words 'Modo', 'Mahu', 'Fratteretto' and 'Fliberdigibett' (Harsnett in Brownlow: 191–336) and Edgar draws on the same weird names: 'The prince

of darkness is a gentleman. Modo / He's called, and Mahu' (3.4.139–40), 'This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet' (3.4.113) and 'Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness' (3.6.6–7). Edgar's brother Edmund has the same name as the chief exorcist in Harsnett's text. According to Bullough, the *Declaration* 'contributed greatly to [*King Lear*'s] atmosphere of trickery, deceit and the sense of a wickedness inexplicable by reason' (Bullough 1973: 301). For Muir the verbal borrowings prove that Shakespeare read Harsnett's tract many times (1977: 207–8). But Shakespeare's use of the text went much further, as Robert Stevenson observed many years ago: '[h]ad his purpose been the gathering of such fiendish names and phrases as he actually did cull from it, then any number of other immediately contemporary books on demonology would have much better served his purpose' (1952: 900–1). What is more likely, then, is that a larger set of ideas expressed in the work appealed to him and he wanted to explore it dramatically and in greater detail.

The *Declaration* is a scathing critique of the Catholic Church's practice of exorcism as a strategy to frighten and indoctrinate a population. It explicitly questions the way the Catholic Church used the theatricality of exorcism to invoke a relation with the heavens and cultivate power and authority. Harsnett pens the tract as an appeal addressed 'To the seduced *Catholiques* of England' to see through the theatrics of the exorcism (Harsnett in Brownlow: 195). Just as pamphleteers deployed narrative techniques to attribute particular theological purpose to storms, exorcists, according to Harsnett, exploited the theatrics of the exorcism for similar ends. In order to trivialize the practice and undermine its authenticity, Harsnett compares an exorcism to a theatrical performance: 'the Pope, and his spirits he sendeth in here amongst you, do play Almighty God, his sonne, and Saints upon a stage; do make a pageant of the Church, the blessed Sacraments, the rites and ceremonies of religion' (196). In reality, he argues, exorcists are just actors, who have no capacity to actually dialogue with the divine.

Stephen Greenblatt suggests that Harsnett offers a critique of the theatricality of authority and that, in turn, Shakespeare is interested in his use of the theatre as an 'explanatory model' (1988: 106) for demystifying the institutional ruse that was exorcism. On Greenblatt's reading, Harsnett characterizes exorcisms as 'stage plays, most often tragi-comedies, that cunningly conceal their theatrical inauthenticity and hence deprive the spectators of the rational

disenchantment that frames the experience of the play' (106). The 'quality of the ritual or the marks of possession' hardly matters; the most important aspect of the exorcism is its effect upon the spectator (100). By pointing out the theatrics of the exorcism, by demystifying its spectacle for the spectator, Harsnett's work utterly 'demolishes' (112) its authority. But, in an ironic twist, Shakespeare also borrows from Harsnett the idea of the inherent authority of theatricality, by which I mean the power both to move, to affect *and* to get the audience to believe in something: an idea, a person or a hope. In a 'drastic swerve from the sacred to the secular' (Greenblatt 1988: 126), the illusion *as illusion* cannot be further demystified and is therefore enduringly powerful. In other words, while it is possible to disarm the efficacy of a religious ritual that constructs a dialogue with the divine by pointing it out as artifice, the theatre is not pretending to do anything else and thus cannot be undone by demystification on those grounds. As such, Shakespeare appropriates the theatrical authority held by the Catholic Church for the secular theatre, giving the spectacle a quasi-religious authority.[11]

In many ways, there is no pretence in *King Lear* that the illusion is anything other than that: in 'the play, Edgar's possession is clearly designated a fiction, and the play itself is bound by the institutional signs of fictionality: the wooden walls of the play space, payment for admission, known actors playing the parts, applause, the dances that followed the performance' (Greenblatt, 120). And yet, the story has an extraordinary affective power upon the spectator. For some reason *King Lear* holds the authority to say a lot about the human condition. As I quoted above, the play generates a 'craving for … satisfaction' of Lear's unburdened death and has been interpreted as saying a lot of serious things about love, ingratitude, death, loyalty, legitimacy, sovereignty, shame and animality – the human condition, in many of its facets. This capacity to *affect* or *move* comes from somewhere. I suggest that the capacity to move is, in part, generated by the authority of the spectacle and the concomitant

[11] Obviously Shakespeare's theatre was not entirely secular; I'm also convinced that secularism operates like a theological position anyway. But, more to the point, I make a qualification here via footnote because Shakespeare was writing *King Lear* at the same time the Catholic sympathizers were plotting to blow up the Protestant king, no less. Religion was incredibly important and powerful at that time and the theatre had a role to play in the architecture of a society shaped by religion. So by 'secular theatre' I mean that Shakespeare's plays, *Lear* in particular, are not like morality plays promoting a particular theological position. And certainly beyond their early performances, they have been able to be taken up in a variety of different ways to explore different affective and ideological positions.

egregiousness (in both common 'outstandingly bad' and archaic 'remarkably good' valence) of having Lear run around in a storm aimlessly for two scenes.

Shakespeare's engagement with Harsnett on the question of the authority of theatricality comes to the fore in relation to the use of the storm as a spectacular device. In the *Declaration*, Harsnett makes extensive reference to stormy theatrical effects, likening the theatricality of the exorcism to the task of creating violent weather on stage:

> It served wonderous aptly *ad terrorem et stuporem incutiendum populo* [to stir up the people with astonishment and terror]: in steede of thunder and lightning to bring *Jupiter* upon the stage, by these dreadful frightful Exorcismes, thundring, clapping and flashing out the astonishing of Gods names, *Jehovah*, *Tetragrammaton*, *Adonai*, and the rest, to amaze and terrifie the poore people, and to possesse them with an expectation of some huge monster-devil to appeare. Who standing at gaze with trembling and feare, hearing the huge thunder-cracke of adjuration flie abroad, and no devils roare; and then seeing the Exorcist in a rage to throw away his thunder booke behind him, and hunt the devil with his owne holy hands. (287).

There are unmistakable parallels here between Harsnett's critique of exorcism and Shakespeare's construction of the storm in *King Lear*. As the exorcist accrues authority through performing the storm, so too does King Lear or the theatre makers responsible for the spectacle. The storm at the centre of the play serves to 'possesse [*sic.*]' the audience 'with an expectation of some huge monster-devil to appeare'; when it does not the expectation turns back upon Lear and the earthly antics of him and his followers. The key difference between Harsnett and Shakespeare, as Greenblatt is careful to point out, is that there is no explicit critique of the institution of the theatre itself in Harsnett; Harsnett only critiques the Catholic Church. But 'mere' illusion is the purpose of *Lear*'s storm; in this regard, the answer to Lear's question, 'What is the cause of thunder?' is arguably: to give the audience a chance to just absorb the spectacle and accept its significance.

Although the storm is not metatheatrical as it is in *The Tempest*, there is metatheatre in the storm: Edgar is in disguise. In a neat definition, Peter Hyland suggests that '[a]ll disguise devices […] are essentially metadramatic, since they reveal the artifice of performance by putting the disguiser, a conscious performer, into the fictional real world of the play'. But, he adds the

important caveat: 'in any specific play the playwright might have no particular or conscious interest in such metadramatic possibilities' (2013: 93). In some contexts, disguise has a particular purpose. In *Twelfth Night*, for example, Viola disguises herself as Cesario in order to travel. In *King Lear*, the purpose of Edgar's disguise is not straightforward. While ostensibly Edgar is hiding from his father, he does not actually have to hide from Lear. Edgar's fooling Lear as the poor naked wretch is, perhaps, another 'event' in the play, to call back Jones' idea that I referred to in the first section of this chapter; it is something that just happens by virtue of the fact that Edgar was in disguise. Moreover, in Edgar's famous aside to the audience – 'My tears begin to take his part so much / They mar my counterfeiting' (3.6.58–9) – suggests that the intensity of the situation is coming to infect the integrity of his disguise. And, like Edgar, the audience, reader and director are caught in torsion between knowing the 'artifice' of the situation on account of the disguise and grappling with feelings about the reality of Lear's exposure to the storm and of his stripping on account of Poor Tom's nakedness. Although it is a tragic or potentially comic case of mistaken identity, we are nonetheless invited to feel strongly towards it, with Edgar's aside functioning as a licence to invest in and to feel something towards the situation despite the illusion. Theatrically, then, the spectacle of the storm is extraordinarily powerful because we are both invited to see it as a construct by way of Edgar *and* we are brought to feel its full force nonetheless.

It is in this space between authenticity and disguise, the real and the ironic, that this theatrical spectacle is inherently ambiguous. On the one hand, it is possible to try, like Edgar, not to be moved and to maintain ironic distance from Lear's dialogue with Poor Tom because he is speaking to a character in disguise. Lear fundamentally misrecognizes his reality. On the other, there is something about Lear's situation that draws one in: the spectacle of an old man stripping naked in a storm, his impassioned and confounding cries to the heavens and his curiosity about the thunder and Poor Tom's history are compelling. It is hard not to be moved in some way; it is difficult to remain distant. Here is where the question of the authority of the spectacle itself is paramount. The authority of the *sturm und drang* in many cases eclipses the irony of the moment. This spectacle draws its authority not only from being flashy and bright and from confusing thought and activating feeling, but also by implying literal exposure. The implications of Lear's exposure as

a result of the stormy spectacle could trump any critique. It is on this point that Shakespeare seems to have played most cleverly with Harsnett by both harnessing the critique and co-opting the tricks at the same time. It is both a successful exorcism or purgation of affect in the audience (catharsis) and, like *Harsnett's Declaration*, a critique of the ruses of such wanton theatricality.

Conclusion

The ambiguities around the storm exist primarily in the text. In performance, the space of uncertainty can be somewhat closed down by concrete interpretive tools such as costume, light, sound, gesture, set design and vocal intonation. So in the first instance, this chapter's tracing three ambiguities in the storm serves to open up a space to think about the variety of interpretations of the event on the stage across the long history of this play in performance, which occupies the second part of this book.

What is interesting from an ecocritical perspective here is the weather's involvement in both plot and interpretation. On the one hand, the analysis has revealed the extent to which the weather event is embedded within the sociopolitical and psychological crafting of this canonical work. It becomes entangled in the play of human sympathies so central to the drama, it draws on a long historical tradition of philosophizing in the face of meteorological violence and it is using the spectacle in a non-didactic and complex manner to give rise to emotion and complicate interpretation.

The other dimension of the present study that this chapter opens up is one of ideological bias. I am especially curious as to how, despite these three fundamental ambiguities, the weight of the critical uptake of *King Lear* tends to fall on one side of the fence. Regarding shelter, Lear's exposure eclipses all considerations of the violent threats levelled at his daughters. Regarding the storm's significance, there is an overwhelming tendency to make meaning out of the storm, rather than working with and through its uncertainty as a process or event. In the next chapter I explore the moral dynamics of shame and posit some tentative suggestions as to why, despite these wild ambiguities, the bulk of *Lear*'s critical tradition displays strong sympathy towards Lear and offers concrete interpretations of the storm.

3

Cataclysmic Shame: Three Views of Lear's Mortal Body in the Storm

Shame arises each time we are unable to make others forget our basic nudity.

Emmanuel Levinas, *On Escape* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 64.

Shame breaks at least three paths through *King Lear*. Characters such as Kent, Goneril, Cordelia, Gloucester and the Fool map the first, the second goes right through the heart of the aging protagonist and the third, forged by the actor, leads out into the audience. Given the complexity of the affect – shame is a private feeling, shaming is a public action and the two do not necessarily neatly complement one another – precisely how shame works in the play and to what end takes the duration of this chapter to explain. The dynamics of shame, both as theorized below and as represented in the play, form the theoretical lens of the chapter.

Through the complex framework provided by the affect, the ecocritical intervention into extant scholarship on *King Lear* is quite simple. I work against the common reading of the storm as metaphor for Lear's emotions and instead characterize the storm as materially involved in the affective and political dimensions of Lear's stripping naked in the storm. Shame is put forward as one way of understanding how the conflict escalates with regard to Lear's exposed body. So although the *realpolitik* of this part of the plot is usually understood as occurring offstage, with the mobilization of competing armies and the issuing of warrants for Lear's arrest, this chapter uses shame as a way of considering the politics of Lear's spectacular emotional climax in and with the storm.

Using Lear's old, dying and becoming naked body in theatrical performance as an allegory, this chapter also aims to contribute to emerging debates in ecocriticism and environmental humanities around the question of death in the Anthropocene. While Lear is sovereign in a particularly arcane sense of the term, today sovereign subjectivity is bestowed upon wealthy people in liberal democracies with passports that enable travel for business and pleasure across national borders, castle-like shelter and ready access to exemplary health and aged care, while many are left out in the rain, both literally and metaphorically. Far from 'everyman', Lear is a chief executive officer for a multinational corporation or the chairperson of a large bank. He's a prime minister with a multi-million-dollar house on Sydney Harbour with stock invested in offshore or tax havens, while he presides over the privatization of the health care system, the expansion of coal mining and the incarceration of refugees. He's a racist president who sexually assaults women both in person and on Twitter, while owning eponymous skyscrapers in Manhattan and firing people on television for sport. Lear is far from the everyman. Lear is the one per cent. The final section of this chapter posits the dynamics of shame in the actor playing Lear as an allegory for why it is so difficult for these kinds of people to use their power to respond to the environmental crisis. Before directly exploring the different points of view on Lear's body, I define what shame is, how it works and then locate the mortality of the body as the material fact and philosophical concept at the centre of the play's affective drama.

Shame might seem like an unlikely emotion to undergird an ecocritical reading of an old man taking off his clothes in the storm. Donna Haraway suggests that shame is an affect that thwarts the kind of curiosity required for better relations with non-human others (2008: 19–23). The example she gives is Derrida's philosophizing while naked in front of his cat. If he were unashamed of his own body and differently curious about his cat, she suggests, his work on animals might have been more productive. She argues that getting rid of his shameful introspection would be necessary for a different critical position. In contrast, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argues that shame cannot be simply avoided in lieu of some other, better emotional state. For real cultural transformation, shame has to be worked with and through.

In her extensive work on affect in queer identity politics, which is neither in dialogue with Haraway nor readily cited in ecocriticism, Sedgwick argues for

the need to understand the multifaceted machinations of shame in order to be able to grapple with the often-frustrating and counter-intuitive dynamics of cultural politics (1995; 2003), within which I of course include environmental politics. While Haraway contends that, for Derrida, 'shame trumped curiosity and that does not bode well for *autre-mondialisation*'(2008: 23) or the creation of alterative worlds, Sedgwick asserts that shame can never be fully eradicated:

> therapeutic or political strategies aimed at getting rid of group shame, or undoing it, have something preposterous about them … The forms taken by shame are not distinct 'toxic' parts of a group or individual identity that can be excised; they are instead integral to and residual in the process by which identity itself is formed. They are available for the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, [and] *trans*figuration. (2003: 62–3)

In the context of queer theory and politics, Sedgwick argues that the affect has 'powerfully productive and powerfully social metamorphic possibilities' (63); this is because for someone who identifies as queer may want to work with and through their sense of shame in order to be who they are; their being is, in some people's eyes, shameful and yet they persist in bringing that self into the world; they create a new social world for that self in and through the torsions of what Sedgwick calls 'transformational shame'.

Sedgwick's theorization of the affect can be brought into ecocriticism by considering how shame might intersect with the desire for cultural change that motivates a lot of work in the field. If we agree that 'ecocriticism is an avowedly political mode of analysis' and that such criticism is generally tied to 'a 'green' moral and political agenda' (Garrard 2004: 3), then shame is potentially useful to think with given Sedgwick's suggestion that the affect can either stifle, enable or, at the very least, complicate projects of social and political change. Coming to be in and through transformational shame is Sedgwick's definition of queer performativity; this is a type of worlding that is potentially socially and politically metamorphic, it works to shift the status quo by a sometimes pleasurable, and other times painful and difficult, process of remaking selves and society. Reading representations of human affect in relation to storms, questions about shame can open us out onto the world in different ways. We can investigate the seemingly complex and intractable feelings we have around the human condition and ask: to what extent do those feelings exist in isolation and to what extent they are socially and ecologically

conditioned? What aspects of our selves and political systems remain ashamed of our earthly condition, our bodies or our physical weakness in relation to cataclysmic storms? What will it take within us to live differently in relation to our bodies and cataclysmic storms? I am ostensibly using this chapter to destabilize the relationship between Lear and the storm to open up to the performance history that will follow in the second section. At the same time the self-contained argument of this chapter is that working through shame – of the transformational kind – around human weakness and death has potentially radical implications for human life and, in particular, our relations with the earth, at the same time this affect has equivalent potential to thwart any chance for change. The trouble with shame is that there does not seem to be any way around it, one must go through and either transform the self into a new kind of relation or retreat in attempt to preserve what is already known.

Shame is represented in the text as multi-valenced. Cordelia infers her sisters should be ashamed of themselves for their gratuitous complicity in the love test (1.1.283); in attempting to separate Lear from his knights, Goneril argues that the 'shame' the men bring upon the court 'doth speak / For instant remedy' (1.4.237–8); Lear thinks Goneril should be 'ashamed to look upon this beard' (2.2.385) for treating him so callously; Kent describes the stocks as his 'shameful lodging' (2.2.173) and Lear describes Kent's shackled situation as 'shame' (2.2.200). During the storm the Fool points out the relationship between shame and clothing by jesting that he is pleased Poor Tom 'reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed' (3.4.65). And, after the storm upon hearing of Lear's exposure, Cordelia reportedly cries out in disbelief that her sisters left him to the wild night and that they should feel ashamed of themselves for doing so (4.4.28). All these invocations of shame have a moral dimension and identify a gap between how one does act and how one should. Cordelia thinks Goneril and Regan should be more caring; Kent understands the stocks as an attempt to disgrace him for his actions. Here shame aims to make someone feel bad for their transgressions, but also hopes to correct their bad behaviour because, as I will show, a shame response can function as a kind of retreat from view or a pulling in of one's head. To shame someone is to request they assess themselves and change their relation to the social world. In these examples, however, one character attempting to shame another does not give rise to the supposedly shameful character actually feeling ashamed:

Goneril is unmoved by Lear's question, Goneril and Regan are not even privy to Cordelia's injunction, and Kent is unabashed.

Lear's journey is, in many ways, the opposite. In contrast to the directive to feel the emotion, Lear claims he is ashamed that his daughters have the capacity to make him angry and weep (1.4.288); later on Kent also suspects that 'A sovereign shame so elbows him' (4.3.43). Many scholars have also argued that Lear's cardinal emotion is shame and that from the love test onward, his journey is a protracted attempt to avoid feeling this most distressing emotion (Cavell 2002 [1958]; Zak 1984; Fernie 2002). At the same time, however, no one in the play explicitly suggests that Lear's behaviour is explicitly shameful, even though he is the only one that identifies with or is suspected to actually feel the emotion, and is the only character doing archetypally shameful things like taking off his clothes in public. In fact, many of the calls for others to feel shame, especially when directed towards Goneril and Regan, are linked to attempts to protect Lear by chastising the behaviour of others. Even Goneril, who calls the knights 'disordered' and 'debauched' (1.4.233) who bring 'shame' upon the 'graced palace' (1.4.237) is careful not to direct her criticisms towards Lear as an individual, rather she routes them through his knights and the Fool.

The actor, I will show in the third section, risks shame of a qualitatively different kind. The actor needs to perform Lear's dying in an exemplary and socially acceptable manner in order to be remembered for playing Lear. In accepting the role, the actor risks embarrassing himself deeply if he does not perform the role properly. Paradoxically in playing a dying character who failed to control the terms of his cultural legacy, the successful actor seemingly immortalizes himself in playing Lear and thereby secures his. Here the actor is given a role charged with the governance of all, but performs it in a shamelessly self-serving manner. In what ways does the theme of mortality reverberate out into the audience? In what ways does the actor's heroism in playing at such apparent wretchedness undercut any other ideas about bodies, mortality and worldly contingency that are represented in the play? To what extent can this criticism apply to our contemporary cultural kings?

At the centre of this chapter is a theatrical action and stage picture that remains ambiguous in the play's text: an old king tears off his clothes to expose himself to the weather and his followers attempt to restrain him. Upon contemplating Poor Tom's almost naked body in the storm, Lear initially

Figure 3.1 Benjamin West, *King Lear* (London, 1788, retouched by West 1806). Oil on canvas, 271.8 × 365.8cm Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Henry H. and Zoe Oliver Sherman Fund 1979.476 Photograph © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

suggests that Tom would be 'better in a grave to answer / with they uncovered body this extremity of the skies' (3.4.100–1). According to Lear, exposure to the weather is a fate worse than death. Less than ten lines later and in radical contrast, Lear decides that he would like to 'answer' the skies with his exposed body instead and exclaims 'Off, off, you lendings: / come, unbutton here' (3.4.107–8). The painting by Benjamin West (Fig. 3.1) and the photograph of Geoffrey Rush as Lear (Fig. 3.2) visually suspend this moment.

Given this extraordinary turnaround, it is perhaps easy to understand why Lear's psychic state is most frequently interpreted as madness. For instance, Kent R. Lehnhof, whose lucid exploration of *King Lear* via Levinas I return to several times in this chapter, references the idea that stripping was a 'sure sign' of madness at Shakespeare's time of writing and then claims that the disrobing 'provides conclusive proof that Lear is mad' (2014: 498–9). Lear's inconsistency is seemingly impossible to comprehend otherwise. Except, I submit, in and as shame in relation to the body and its vulnerability to death, the terms of which I shall explore below.

Figure 3.2 Robyn Nevin, Jacek Koman, Geoffrey Rush and Mark Leonard Winter in Sydney Theatre Company's *King Lear* (Sydney, 2015). Photograph © Heidrun Löhr.

Although Lear wants to undress, the play text does not prescribe how successful he is at disrobing. The perennial uncertainty of this moment in the text is our intellectual affliction as readers of Shakespeare. In the Folio the only stage direction is '*Enter Gloucester, with a torch*', but the Arden version I use contains the directive, '*Tearing at his clothes he is restrained by Kent and the Fool*'. Whether or not the text contains the direction is a moot point, because the Fool's next line implies the action by commenting on their attempt to restrain him: 'Prithee, nuncle, be contented: 'tis a naughty night / to swim in' (3.4.109). In other words, the play text remains ambiguous on just how much of Lear's old body one actually sees. The chapter operates under the incomplete image of an old man in a storm; he is held in torsion between the naked and clothed.

That this image is ambiguous does not mean that the text and performance thereof fail to present means for interpreting it. I rehearse three different views of Lear's body in the storm and analyse the ambiguous image from three angles. View One explores the significance of the other characters' reactions and some critics', the second asks what the exposure means for Lear, and the

third perspective probes what the image of this aging, exposed, fleshy, animal body means for actors playing the role. But it also is worth considering what the image means for *you* – scholar, student, lay reader, actor, director, costume designer, producer, theatre critic – what does it make you *feel*? Do you think his desire to remain exposed is a sign of madness, do you want him to take shelter, or do you hope he exposes his naked body to the storm?

Feelings about mortal bodies are complex, let alone the body of a king. Although death itself does not discriminate – we all die – within hierarchical social systems not all deaths carry the same cultural significance. And although Derrida instructs us never to think of life and death in a symbolic register – *'a man's life, as unique as his death, will always be more than a paradigm and something other than a symbol*' (1993: xv, emphasis in original) – Lear is a fictional character and a paradigmatic symbol for many things. Thus, the historical and philosophical specificity of what death means for and signifies through *Lear*/Lear is worthy of further attention, because Lear has an especially fraught relationship with death. Moreover, because Lear is a dramatic fiction we are freed from the reverence required in relation to the deaths of real living people (politicians and kings who are valorized in death despite overseeing atrocity in their life, for instance). Thus we can think about Lear as a paradigmatic symbol for the suite problems (both human and more-than) of a political system structured on the denial of sovereign mortality and constituted, at least in part, by the requisite performance of sovereign immortality.

The foundational paradox in constitutional monarchy is that of the king's 'two bodies'. Ernst B. Kantorowicz's seminal study *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (1960) explores this problem in full. His citation of early constitutional law lays bare the paradox:

> the Body natural, consisting of natural Members as every other Man has, and in this he is subject to Passions and Death as other Men are; the other is a Body politic, and the members thereof are his Subjects … this Body is not subject to Passions as the other is, nor to Death, for as to this Body the King never dies, and his natural Death is not called in our Law … the death of the King, but the Demise of the King. (1997: 13)

Despite the fact that the king is mortal, he symbolically cannot die. The king derives his sovereign authority from the legal and political apparatus of the

court and the territories of the kingdom, in exchange for power and authority. Quoting Shakespeare's *Henry V*, Kantorowicz defines the dilemma as follows: 'The king is twin-born' not only with greatness but also with human nature, hence 'Subject to the breath of every fool' (24). In order to circumvent the weakness the king's mortality brings to the immortal political apparatus of the kingdom, with the 'demise' of the king's 'body natural', another ruler must be waiting to take his place, thereby sustaining the immortal authority of the 'body politic'. The exclamation 'the king is dead, long live the king!' is an expression of the conceptual paradox in practice: when one king dies, the kingship and the kingdom live on through the body of another. That this phrase was chanted by the masses at a king's funeral demonstrates how a coherent feudal society is based not only upon the king's embodiment and performance of immortality but also a collective recognition of and acceptance of this paradox.[1] The role of the king, therefore, is to mask his mortality, and by extension his living body, in order to perform the immortality of the body politic not only for himself but for all those invested in its constitution.

The prohibition on the public revelation of the king's 'body natural' means that kings are liable to shame with regard to their bodies. The body itself, its fleshy fragility, is the taboo that constitutes the social. Thus exposing it as mortal either rhetorically (as Lear does in 1.1) or literally (as in 3.4) might not be met with a welcoming or warm gaze, because if the body is exposed as weak it threatens not just the individual, but also the whole social order. Taking up the different dimensions of shame – whether felt by a character or cast as an injunction – in relation to the king's mortal body natural reveals the extent to which fantasies of immortality explicitly (as in the play) or tacitly (as in the world) dominate Western society's moral imaginary. Although challenges to human exceptionalism have been developing in environmental humanities for a while, death itself, whether animal or human, is emerging as an important subject in the field (van Dooren 2014; Scranton 2015; Povinelli 2016). The Western individualized view of death is figured as especially problematic. Simon C. Estok frames death as the 'most horrifying intrusion

[1] In more general terms, Giorgio Agamben suggests that sovereign law paradoxically governs life by abandoning it (1998: 29). Sovereign law is founded upon a denial of life. The law cannot adequately account for the organic changes and mutations that take place over the course of a human life and as such, necessarily refuses to account for such changes and excludes death.

of nature into human affairs – affairs that are mistakenly perceived to be separate from nature' (2011: 112). Death is only horrifying, however, when it is seen as the factor that readily thwarts fantasies of transcendence and individual mastery; death is only horrifying when the earthiness of our bodies is something we would rather avoid. The human cadaver is, for Julia Kristeva, exemplary of the powers of horror within the Western psyche. The fear and shock of encountering a corpse '*show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live' (1982: 3). In other words, Western subjectivities are founded on the attempt to forget death. Walter Benjamin suggests that death nonetheless defines life stories: 'death is the sanction of everything a storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death' (1999: 93). The stories we tell about human life and death, and the way they are interpreted and culturally valued, can reveal a lot about the kind of authority life attempts to borrow from death. This is especially true in a story as guided by the quest for and question of an unburdened death as *King Lear*.

Ultimately, human corporeal finitude evidences human animality, earthiness and vulnerability but, as Estok's formulation of death as horrifying implies, the category 'human' – Western, white, male – likes to feign distance from such matters. Death is thus a useful site for ecocritique because the question of how death is represented and read directly corresponds with how human life is imagined in relation to our earthly condition. Human death is also a difficult space for criticism because it is so painful, so serious and, within a secular worldview, so final for an individual or sovereign subject. Using Lear, Lear's feelings about himself, other characters' points of view on Lear, the actor's embodiment of the character and the audience or scholar's reception of the play opens up a way into a much larger and more difficult cultural conversation about death, about how we 'do' death badly and how cultural values around the mortal body themselves need to change.

As illustrated in earlier chapters, *King Lear* is being taken up as a key canonical text for the ecological turn because of its more-than-human features and this book is no exception. But in focusing on what Lear and the actor's body might symbolize, this chapters suggests that *King Lear* has potentially more to offer ecocriticism as an allegory for the problems of the sovereign human's aversion to a lack of control, over the world and the body. Walter Benjamin argues that allegory is a way of communicating 'meaning that,

for whatever reason, cannot (or will not) be stated directly' (Wilkens 2006: 292). It is difficult to mount an argument that Westerners should learn how to die, and therefore learn how to live, differently, let alone pinpoint certain individuals and suggest that they in particular need to figure out how to die better in order to govern in and for the earth. It is likewise difficult to prove that shame – or its less intense cousin, embarrassment – are involved in our feelings about the finitude of our bodies. But responses to Lear's body and the enduring cultural power and value invested in this text can reveal dominant cultural sensibilities around mortality and the body.

Shame is complex[2] but there are two primary dimensions to shame as it is felt in an individual human body. First there are the sensations of shame within the self and the bodily twitches of a shame response, which are an indivisible part of the affect. The general feeling is variously described as painful, hot, distressing, a desire to flee or escape. The meaning attributed to these sensations are that it is 'an experience of the self by the self' (Tomkins, in Sedgwick and Frank: 136); for Levinas '[w]hat shame discovers is the being that discovers itself' (Levinas, in Hutcheison: 61); for Agamben, shame is 'the fundamental sentiment of being a subject' (Agamben, in Hutcheison: 61). There is something irreducibly personal

[2] Contemporary psychologist Paul Gilbert provides a good description of the various dimensions of shame. According to Gilbert, shame can 'be explained in terms of *emotion* (e.g., as a primary affect in its own right, as an auxiliary emotion, or as a composite of other emotions such as fear, anger or self-disgust); *cognitions and beliefs* about the self (e.g., that one is and/or is seen by others to be inferior, flawed, inadequate, etc); *behaviours and actions* (e.g., such as running away, hiding and concealing, or attacking others to cover one's shame); *evolved mechanisms* (e.g., the expression of shame seems to use similar biobehavioural systems to those of animals expressing submissive behaviour); and *interpersonal dynamic interrelationships* (shamed and shamer). Shame can also be used to describe phenomena at many different levels, including internal self-experiences, relational episodes, and cultural practices'. P. Gilbert, 'What is Shame? Some Core Issues and Controversies' in P. Gilbert and B. Andrews (eds) *Shame: Interpersonal Behaviour, Psychopathology, and Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p.4. For work on different historical understandings of shame see D. Konstan, 'Shame' in *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2006; B. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2008; V. Burrus, *Saving Shame: Saints, Martyrs and Other Abject Subjects*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2008; Ruth Benedict's famous study of Japan gave rise to the distinction between 'shame culture' and 'guilt culture' that is pervasive in modern anthropological thought: see R. Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*, Haughton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1989. For an exploration of shame in Renaissance drama see G. Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England*, Cornell University Press, Cornell, 1993. For a book of essays on shame in the work of philosophers Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, as well as novelists Hawthorne, Eliot, Lawrence, Faulkner and Morrison see J. Adamson and H. Clark, *Scenes of Shame: Psychoanalysis, Shame and Writing*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1999. For a collection of essays on shame in art see C. Pajaczkowska, and I. Ward (eds), *Shame and Sexuality: Psychoanalysis and Visual Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 2008.

about a feeling of shame. Shame is often differentiated from guilt in this regard too. 'Shame attaches to and sharpens the sense of what one *is*, whereas guilt attaches to what one *does*' (Sedgwick 2003: 37; emphasis added). Shame, as a brutal experience of self-consciousness, is often accompanied by a suite of other kinds of actions or bodily responses that correspond directly with the social dimensions of shame. In an attempt to alleviate the painful and distressing sensations of shame, the body reacts by blushing, looking downward, refusing eye contact and, in more extreme cases, running away (Tomkins: 136). In sum, the feeling of shame corresponds with a series of seemingly, but potentially unavoidable counterintuitive behaviours that in many cases can demonstrate that one is ashamed. So unfortunately, rather than hide shame or soothe its sensations, these bodily reactions exacerbate the pain of shame.

The other dimension of shame is that while it is a deeply personal emotion, it is also fundamentally social. Shame is first felt in the presence of a stranger; it is brought about by strangeness and the uncertainty about the self that is stirred in this unfamiliar terrain. Recalling Levinas from the beginning of the chapter, 'Shame arises each time we are unable to make *others* forget our basic nudity' (63, emphasis added). Here Levinas refers to an experience of metaphorical nudity, of a sense that arises in shame that others are seeing us for who we 'really' are (criminal, perverse, mean, poor, stupid, weak, unworthy, inauthentic, mortal). The colloquial advice to one who fears failure to 'imagine the class/auditorium/job search committee in their undies' flips the logic of shame on its head: to avoid being undone by the threat of embarrassment, imagine everyone who is watching you at their most embarrassing. Shame emerges when one suspects that the worst side or the necessarily hidden side of the true self is suddenly exposed for *others* to see. But in *King Lear* shame around the body is no metaphor; in Lear it is directly linked to his sense that, after the abdication, which he does in order to 'Unburdened crawl toward death' (1.1.40), others now see him as weak, mortal and naked. His shame is sustained for much of the play by a series of failed attempts to hide his body once more.

Clothing, or lack thereof, has long been linked to the dynamics of shame. Silvan Tomkins argues, that clothing may have 'originated in the generalisation of shame to the whole body, and the consequent need to cover it from the stare of the other' (1995: 134). Whether or not there is an evolutionary reason for the embodied shame response, shame and clothing have been paired in the

Western cultural imaginary for a long time. Adam and Eve move to cover their naked bodies only after God notices the original transgression and shames them for it. Before the expulsion from the garden, their punishment for original sin is self-consciousness about their bodies. Wandering carefree beforehand, the first transgression against God makes them feel ashamed about their bodies and causes them to cover up, to hide. But Lear is not only affectively impelled to cover his body because of the general cultural taboo on nakedness within the Western Judeo-Christian tradition, but *obliged* to cover the body from the stare of the other because he is constitutionally and culturally charged with the performance of a body larger than his own. Lear's move to undress, then, is a highly transgressive act that links the generalized taboo on nakedness in the Western world, to the specific legal and moral taboo on the exposure of the king's 'body natural' in British feudal law.

In the theatre, a director or actor-manager determines the degree of Lear's exposure to the storm or the quality of his embodied response to the skies and, by extension, the extent of everyone else's exposure to Lear's nakedness. Some Lears have bared their genitals: Ian Holm in 1997, John Bell in 1998, and Ian McKellen in 2008, for example. In 2016 Geoffrey Rush did too, darting around the stage with his penis exposed and pants around his ankles (though I was not provided with such an image for publication). Full nudity is, unsurprisingly, a mostly contemporary phenomenon. In 1845 Edwin Forrest represented Lear in heroic garb, triumphantly crowned with weeds,[3] though we need not go back as far as the nineteenth century to see a much more well-dressed Lear in the storm: in the 2010 Donmar Warehouse production Derek Jacobi looked similar to Forrest. But in the same year the Royal Shakespeare Company production, featuring Greg Hicks, allowed Lear to almost strip naked, with his torso exposed and soiled underclothes on. In other words, the representations of the stripped-down Lear move along a spectrum from slightly less extravagantly clad to full-frontal nudity. When reflecting on theatre history one is compelled to consider the meaning of these particular theatrical decisions case by case and context by context because just as the significance of the storm changes over time, so does the meaning of Lear's naked body. Reading, on the other hand, allows a sustained investigation into the significance of this

[3] See also R. A. Foakes, 'Introduction', in *King Lear* (London: Arden, 1997), p. 20.

ambivalent moment in the play text; it permits us to hover over the tension between Lear's impulse to disrobe and the others' attempts to keep him clothed.

Before proceeding further, I need to foreshadow the polarized reaction I have consistently received in relation to my exploration of shame in the play. The articulation of this argument has been inordinately difficult. When I first attempted this argument as part of my doctoral dissertation, this chapter divided my examiners between those who agreed with the line of inquiry and one who rejected it wholesale; I have delivered versions at conferences when colleagues have either hotly contested the basic tenets of argument or felt it explained the play in a new light; it also split my readers at the book draft and peer review stages, with one margin note suggesting 'this is my favourite chapter', while another gently introduced the possibility that it be cut altogether. I decided to include the chapter here and instead expose the usually hidden challenges of the writing process. In this case, while early criticisms may have been linked to the quality of the writing, the divided readership is relevant to the argument because it also points to the instability of shame as an emotion. In other words, what is shameful for one person may not be so for another. Sedgwick suggests that 'shame differs strongly between cultures, between periods … between different forms of politics … [and] it also differs simply from one person to another' (2003: 63). Thus, when I assert that Lear is ashamed of his mortal body because of the weakness it symbolizes to others, someone might disagree simply because they do not find nakedness shameful or, more often than not, they think something else, like Goneril's and Regan's speaking back, to be more properly shameful.

In spite of the divided responses I have received to this chapter, I am by no means the first to posit shame as the affective epicentre of *King Lear*'s conflict and the primary emotional affliction of the eponymous character. In 'The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*' (c. 1966) Cavell claims that 'in *King Lear* shame comes first, and brings rage and folly in its train' (2002: 287). Cavell is an early proponent of literal reading too. For him, Shakespeare was neither trading in symbols, nor was he writing allegories or fairy tales. For Cavell, Lear is neither senile nor puerile. Rather, Lear is trying to feel his way through the world. By following the plot as a dramatic case study of a character afflicted with a particular kind of emotional problem (just as we see Hamlet in thrall to doubt and Othello to jealousy):

> shame is the right kind of candidate to serve as a motive [for Lear], because it is the emotion whose effect is most precipitate and out of proportion with its cause, which is just the rhythm of the *King Lear* plot as a whole. (286)

William Zak's book-length study *Sovereign Shame: A Study of King Lear* (1984) investigates how shame is generative of the conflict within the play and traces the pattern throughout. Both Cavell and Zak also suggest that the failed abdication stimulates the emotional response. Building on Zak, Ewan Fernie's *Shame in Shakespeare* (2002) is the most extensive study of the thematic and dramatic function of shame across Shakespeare's body of work. Fernie claims that shame is a 'constant preoccupation, even obsession, in the work of William Shakespeare' (1), but that *King Lear* is the play in which 'Shakespeare's vision of shame is most lucidly and completely revealed … (and) is Shakespeare's most insistently significant play of shame' (173–4). Crucially, for all these scholars, shame is not contained within one character, or even a single scene, but shapes the action across the play.

Despite agreeing on the basic pattern of shame in the play, Cavell, Zak and Fernie offer slightly different interpretations of the quality of Lear's shame. Cavell argues that what sustains the dramatic action from before the play to beyond the end is Lear's shame that he needs love. Lear's 'avoidance of love' is the evading of shamefully revealing himself as needing real care and love, as opposed to unconditional, obligational and sycophantic adoration. Taking a different course, Zak argues that 'if, from the abdication onward, Lear flees the sense of disgrace in his acts there, he is also fleeing a deeper and more significant sense of personal worthlessness that make it difficult for him to stop to consider, let alone admit, his specific sins in the opening scene' (1984: 60). Zak understands Lear as fleeing his erroneous abdication. Building on Zak, Fernie specifies that, 'Lear's shame originates from his fear of waning power and his own mortality' (2002: 184). Of the three, Fernie gets closest to the bodily shame that I suggest is at work in the play.

That said, while it is possible to perform Lear as fearful in the first scene, I am unaware of an instance where Lear is performed in this way. Moreover, the tone of the abdication Lear neither implies an explicitly personal worthlessness nor does he seem especially *afraid* of mortality:

> Know that we have divided
> In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent

> To shake all cares and business from our age,
> Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
> Unburdened crawl toward death. (1.1.36–40)

The tone of this passage is forthright and decisive. Beginning with 'Know', Shakespeare's use of the intransitive verb combined with the past tense 'divided' is a direct command to the court: the speech act implores the court to comprehend that a division has already taken place and the rationale is so the king can, for lack of a better word, shun responsibility in his final years. His framing suggests that there will be no debate about the division and his reasoning; this meeting in court is merely designed to figure out some of the seemingly minor details of that division like what comes next. Although I disagree on the point of his fear, there is something about his desire for unconditional love, something erroneous about his abdication and something to do with his mortality that produces Lear's subsequent responses. This ambiguous 'something' I posit as shame of what the mortal body symbolizes culturally and the potential implications of that symbolism politically. This shame climaxes when he disrobes in the storm, when he undresses *for* the storm.

The rest of the chapter is structured in order to draw out how this works and how it climaxes as the ambiguous image of Lear trapped between the naked and the clothed. I do so by assessing the image and its surrounding narrative context from three different perspectives: from Gloucester, Kent, Cordelia and the Fool's perspective, and that of some other critics, then from Lear's point of view, then the actor playing Lear. In terms of opening out onto the performance history that follows, this chapter is interested in exploring how it is possible to have such heroic portrayals of Lear on one hand and such wretched ones on the other. But, as the rest of the chapter shows, there are different sides to the story. In terms of the ecocritical argument, my focus is on looking at how Lear's emotional body offers up a critique of fantasies of transcendence and ideas of sovereign immortality, but also how such fantasies are sustained by shame. In this regard, *King Lear* can act as a cautionary tale about the more oblique difficulties of moving into a different relationship with the lively earth via a new understanding of our own embodied mortality, not only because this task presents a range of individualized questions and challenges, but that it also requires a new social contract able to be accepting of a mortal, bodily and responsive mode of being in the world.

View #1: Other characters and some critics

In *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare Considered with Reference to their Fitness for Stage Representation* (1810) Charles Lamb considers the possibility of restoring Shakespeare's *King Lear* to the stage. The tragic plot had been more or less abandoned since it was supplanted in 1681 by Nahum Tate's adaptation; in the meantime Shakespeare's star had risen and there was renewed interest in his plays again.[4] Lamb's 'consideration' focuses on the differences between reading and watching, and on whether or not watching would be at all pleasurable. His famous remark, that *King Lear* is 'essentially impossible to be represented on stage' (1980 [1810]: 575) is generally taken out of context and used either to illustrate Lamb's poor insight, highlight the specificity of nineteenth-century stagecraft, or point to the timeless difficulty of staging Shakespeare's poetically complex work.[5] But, on closer inspection, something else guided his conclusion:

> So to see Lear acted, – to see an old man tottering about the stage with a walking-stick, turned out of doors by his daughters in a rainy night, has nothing in it but what is painful and disgusting. We want him to take shelter and relieve him. That is all the feeling which the acting of Lear ever produced in me. But the Lear of Shakespeare cannot be acted … The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual: the explosions of his passion are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom of that sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare. (574)

He primarily wanted to turn away from the shameful spectacle of Lear's aging body and towards Lear's glorious transcendent mind. When watching Lear in the storm on stage, Lamb speculates that he could not retreat from the horrible entanglement between the mind and the body. When reading, however, one can forget the body even exists.

[4] The story is, of course, not that simple. I go into the ways in which Tate and Shakespeare were consistently in dialogue with one another in the intervening years in Chapter 6.

[5] For example, R. A. Foakes reiterates: 'Hazlitt would have preferred to say nothing about a play that seemed, as Lamb said, "essentially impossible to be represented on a stage"' (*Hamlet Versus Lear: Cultural Politics and Shakespeare's Art* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], p. 69.). J. J. Joughin states: 'Charles Lamb, *Lear* approximates to a type of disaster "painful and disgusting", "beyond all art" and "essentially impossible to be represented on a stage"' ('*Lear*'s Afterlife' in Peter Holland [ed.], *Shakespeare Survey 55: King Lear and its Afterlife* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], p. 68.). And Valerie Traub affirms: 'Charles Lamb … concluded that "Lear is essentially impossible to be represented on stage"' ('The Nature of Norms in Early Modern England: Anatomy, Cartography and *King Lear*', *South Central Review*, 26 [1–2] [2009]: 42–81, 81).

Lamb's feelings are strong, but also curiously equivocal. Lear's exposure is 'painful and disgusting' and at the same time 'we want him to take shelter and relieve him'. This is the double movement some people can have in response to embarrassing and unsavoury behaviour, or toward antics that are shameful.[6] On one hand Lear's behaviour is simply repellent or disgraceful, but on the other, in the wish that he were acting differently, Lamb finds a place of sympathy or reverence towards him. Within this ambivalence is the sense that if Lear were more properly ashamed Lamb would not have to confront his nakedness. But who is Lamb protecting here? Is he concerned for Lear, or is he really protecting himself from contemplating the material reality that Lear's exposure represents?

As defender of Christian and patriarchal norms, Lamb decided he preferred to *read* Shakespeare's tragedy, thereby avoiding the sight of Lear's distractingly vile old body on the stage altogether:

> On the stage we see nothing but corporal infirmities and weakness, the impotence of rage; while we read it, we see not Lear but we are Lear – we are in his mind, we are sustained by a grandeur which baffles the malice of daughters and storms. (1980: 575).

Although Lamb identifies something weak and infirm in Lear, when reading the play he can forget about the storm's fury and altogether ignore the implied physical complexities of his physical situation. He can transcend the body and focus on mind. I use Lamb to introduce the perspectives of Gloucester, Kent and Cordelia with regard to Lear's exposure to the storm, because their concern and reverence for Lear similarly avoids contending with the significance of Lear's exposed body. Although it is generally taken as a given that Lear needs both sympathy and shelter, the question as to whether they are interested in protecting Lear or more interested in conserving themselves and the kingdom similarly needs to be asked of these characters.

[6] This is something that Sedgwick explores in her work on shame. When teaching shame she would ask listeners to visualise an 'unwashed, half-insane man' wandering 'into the lecture hall mumbling loudly, his speech increasingly accusatory and disjointed'. He would 'publicly urinate in the front of the room, then wander out again'. She then would ask the participants to imagine the 'excruciation of everyone else in the room: each looking down, wishing to be anywhere else yet conscious of the inexorable fate of being exactly there, inside the individual skin of which each was burningly aware.' Although all the people engaged in this thought experiment were ostensibly not like this figure, 'at the same time' Sedgwick suggests those in the room are 'unable to staunch the haemorrhage of painful identification with the misbehaving man'. That, she insists, is 'the double movement shame makes: towards painful individuation, toward uncontrollable relationality' (2003: 37).

For example, Kent and Gloucester actively try to get Lear to take shelter. Their suggestions to Lear are couched in terms of the dangers of his exposure to the storm and how he will be better off in the hovel. When they converse with others about the situation, however, their concern for Lear is more complex. This from Kent to Lear:

> Alack, bareheaded?
> Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel:
> Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest. (3.2.60–2).

His pleas to Lear are entirely about how taking shelter is for his welfare. Earlier in 3.1 when Kent is searching for Lear, the urgency of his quest is exclusively related to the political situation: 'There is division, / Although as yet the face of it is covered / With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall'; he reports espionage related to some unknown agenda which appears on the surface at least as a 'hard rein … / Against the old kind King' (3.1.19–28). This perfect pun – 'rein' against the body that will become literal 'rain' on the skin moments later – figures the storm as conduit between individual bodies and political structures. At the same time, however, it reveals how it is easy to consider 'rein' as political, but then slide into an exclusively individualistic mode of thought out in the 'rain'. Similarly, when Gloucester and Kent discuss Lear, they dart between the two. Kent pleads to Gloucester: 'Importune him once more to go, my lord; / His wits begin t'unsettle.' Gloucester replies, 'Canst thou blame him? / His daughters seek his death' (3.4.157–9). Their desire for Lear to take shelter is at once concern for Lear's private exposure and also an attempted response to the increasingly tumultuous political situation. At the centre of these actions, however, is Lear's exposed body, drained of all political significance by Gloucester's and Kent's sympathies. His body is the conduit of their concern for his exposure, on the one hand, and what gave rise to evil espionage and subterfuge, on the other. But between Lear and evil daughters there is nothing; nothing is said about the cardinal transgression of Lear's exposure in and of itself and the only time when Kent physically tries to stop Lear from doing something is when he moves to take off his clothes.

Cordelia's position is similar. After her departure to France in 1.1, we first see Cordelia again in 4.4 as she compassionately laments Lear's crown of weeds:

> Alack, 'tis he. Why, he was met even now
> As mad as the vexed sea, singing aloud,
> Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,
> With burdocks, hemlock, nettles and cuckoo flowers,
> Darnel and all the idle weeds that grow
> In our sustaining corn … Seek, seek for him,
> Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life
> That wants the means to lead it. (4.4.1–6; … 17–20)

The tone belies the sentiment; she is compassionate despite the fact that she also clearly thinks Lear makes a mockery of the crown and sovereign authority by reconstructing out of useless ephemeral plant life in the kingdom what should be gold and jewelled.[7] Although she is dismayed by his state, she recognizes in him a will to lead. At the same time, however, unwavering in her tone, she suggests he needs to be found in order to be 'governed'. This is very different in tone to Albany's line about Goneril – 'Go after her; she's desperate, govern her' (5.3.159) – but with a very similar inference. There is a desire to bring Lear around, ostensibly for his own well-being, but ultimately the inference is that he needs to be kept in check for broader political reasons. His 'ungoverned rage' would not in itself dissolve his life, but he would be victim to the wider politicking going on as a result of his rogue behaviour. None of this is said explicitly. The wider political implications of Lear's private disarray are not clearly articulated; which is to say, his exposed and, at least partly, disrobed body is not noted as politically important.

When it comes to the specific question of Lear's exposure to the storm, Cordelia pushes responsibility squarely back onto Goneril and Regan by claiming that they should be ashamed of themselves for letting him out in the night. Reporting on Cordelia's receipt of Kent's letter, a messenger suggests that she was focused solely on maintaining order both within herself and the kingdom. Her passions, that 'most rebel-like, / Sought to be king o'er her' (4.3.14), are nonetheless trained towards disbelief that her sisters would let Lear out in the night: 'Sisters, sisters, shame of ladies, sisters! / Kent, father, sisters! What, i'the'storm, i'the night? Let pity not be believed!' (4.4.28–30).

[7] For a wonderful exegesis of botanical metaphors in the play see Elizabeth Jayne Archer, Richard Marggraf Turley and Howard Thomas, 'The Autumn King: Remembering the Land in King Lear' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 63, 2012, 518–43.

Lear is not shameful for taking his pants off and running around adorned with a crown of weeds, but Goneril and Regan are shameful for throwing him out into the storm in the first place. This is, as Anna Kamaralli points out in *Shakespeare and the Shrew: Performing the Defiant Female Voice*, an incorrect way of describing what happens (2012: 130–1). Technically, they do not throw him out into the storm, rather they fight about the necessity of the entourage of knights, and he defiantly refuses the terms of the discussion and turns toward the storm. So, as with Kent and Gloucester, Cordelia also refuses to comment directly on the role of Lear's mortal body in this chaos; she only goes so far as to suggest he should never have been let outdoors.

All the sympathy that Lear receives avoids contending with the significance of his body. His body is the thing to be hidden for both his own good and the good of the kingdom. These characters cover or support the covering up of Lear when he tries to disrobe, and deflect all relevant criticisms of his exposure towards Goneril and Regan. Although Kent, Gloucester and Cordelia are evidently sympathetic towards Lear, in the context of the play they are trying to protect themselves from Lear, as much as they are trying to cover and shelter Lear himself. They are trying, to use contemporary parlance, to micro-manage his public image.

A similar avoidance of Lear's body also tacitly marks other responses to Lear's disrobing. For example, Lehnhof's essay, 'Relation and Responsibility: A Levinasian Reading of *King Lear*', specifically explores the way in which intersubjectivity is presented as an ethical ideal in the play. More generally, the essay theorizes how art itself can model ethics: the best authors 'wrestle with core philosophical questions, such as the meaning of life and the meaning of the human' and good art can 'imitate a form of ethical discourse by continually interrupting itself and calling itself into question' (507). *King Lear*, he suggests, does this 'in spades' (508), perhaps better than any other work of dramatic literature (509). Conversely he argues that such art, of which *Lear* is exemplary, gives rise to a certain critical and scholarly responsibility to open up the discussion by 'upsetting our apprehension in such a way as to reaffirm the richness of the text'. Such criticism, he continues, 'would not be defined by dogmatism … [but] would strive to keep our responsiveness from rigidifying into a stultifying totality' (509). His claim could be understood as expediently and beautiful describing the constant disruption to our apprehension

during the storm scenes that I characterised as ambiguities in chapter one. So I critique Lehnhof here in the spirit of his own provocation, because although his wonderful essay takes up questions of relationality and responsibility, it forecloses on the ethical and political ideas opened up or modelled by King Lear's stripping naked in response to Poor Tom.

Following Levinas, Lehnhof circumscribes Lear's relationship with Poor Tom as a form of 'egology' or 'an approach that reduces the other to an analogue of the self' (498). Lear's relation with Poor Tom, a wildly strange and largely incomprehensible moment in the play's text, is reduced to a 'tiresome play of the same' (498). In other words, Lear remains unchanged or unaltered by his encounter with Poor Tom. Lear's empathy, according to Lehnhof, is entirely self-serving; Lear does not open out to Poor Tom's difference but only his similarity. I agree with the terms of Lehnhof's argument on its own terms, but it does not correspond with my thinking about the storm. With regard to the notion of the 'king's two bodies', what is 'tiresome' and the 'same' about a king stripping naked in a storm in identification with a bedlam beggar? Although I agree that Lear remains thoroughly egotistical throughout, what Lear's 'I' symbolizes as king (or his now fraught and fractured version of the royal 'we') makes this moment of identification about much more than just his self. As king, an important part of his 'I' is how it signifies and what that means to *others*; less important in this moment is his relation with Poor Tom and more so his vexing of everyone else. His power as king is vested – literally meaning both established by law and wearing vestments, stemming from Old French *vestu* or clothed – by the gaze of others; a gaze that falls upon his cloaked body as a symbol of the immortal body politic. And so why I suggest that Lehnhof's analysis is similar to Gloucester, Kent and Cordelia is because just at the point of thinking through relationality between different dimensions of the drama, Lear's exposure itself is drained of all that brilliant significance, Lear is interpreted as an ego without a body, an exclusively selfish psychological force. But Lear's trouble throughout the whole play is his body and his sense that others are viewing him as naked and powerless. And Lear is quite right, Goneril and Regan think he is old and weak, as do Cordelia, Gloucester and Kent; the latter just couch the same sentiment in different terms. On meeting Poor Tom, then, Lear is confronted for the first time with someone living in and as his body, he relates selfishly because it is the first time he has encountered a figure as grotesquely mortal as himself.

The only figure that directly addresses the politics of Lear's nudity is the Fool, whose early jesting directly prods at Lear's misunderstanding of his status as king. Although Lear retains the title 'king' and the entourage in the first scene, the Fool suggests that this is not enough to ensure his security. 'Dost thou call me fool, boy?' (1.4.141) says Lear. The Fool replies: 'All thy other titles thou has given away' (142). The Fool recognizes that the privileges of the title 'king' are tied more specifically to territory and crown than bare body of the king. So too with rights to the castle:

> **Fool** I can tell why a snail has a house.
> **Lear** Why?
> **Fool** Why, to put his head in, not to give it away to his daughters and leave his horns without a case. (1.5.27–30)

Foreshadowing Lear's exposure in Act 3, the Fool points out how thoroughly disempowered the king is without castle, crown and territory.

The Fool also directly draws attention to Poor Tom's body and the affective dimensions of another's nudity. When Lear seeks to find out if Poor Tom is just like Lear, he asks if he also gave his daughters everything. The Fool points to Tom's only possession, the loincloth, as evidence that he is different from Lear because he hasn't given everything away: 'Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all shamed' (3.4.64–5). As if foreshadowing Lear's turn towards nudity and his attempt to give away literally everything only lines later, it is the Fool who directly addresses the scale of embarrassment that has come to occupy the scene. Where Kent and Gloucester try to pull Lear away, and while Lamb literally turns away and Lehnhof skates around the complexity by diminishing it as banal, the Fool, tethered as he is to Lear, is the only voice that conjures up the broader social and political implications of the affective dimensions of the scene as they circulate through and around Lear's body.

The first point of view on Lear's body in the storm is ashamed by the nudity. The critics and characters covered here look away from Lear's body and address it indirectly via other themes such as disgust, horror, ingratitude, egotism; whether or not the characters are feeling shame, there is a sense that the body cannot be a theme in and of itself, that it is improper and unclean. Lear's mortal body is not looked upon for what it is. Care and concern in the

context of this section looks very much like self-preservation. Even the Fool, who is able to directly describe the dynamics, suggests as much. He infers that no one in the world will read Lear's antics as he wants them to be read because he is exposed, outside and in a hopeless situation.

View #2: Lear

For all the aspects of dramatic irony that are understood to pattern *King Lear*,[8] its most obvious manifestation is that Lear is the one who does not know what is going on and we do. We might feel sorry for him, but ultimately he is the character that is either completely mad or knows the least about his situation. I want to suspend this position for a moment and suggest that Lear knows quite a lot about what it means to have to pretend to be immortal, and that throughout the whole play he is moved primarily by the desire to get people to bestow upon him respect and authority despite having declared himself mortal in the first scene. This section attempts to read with and through Lear's point of view in this regard.

Reading Lear's body by way of Levinas's description of shame alongside the idea of the king's two bodies complicates our view of his maddening self-absorption. Without doubt, Shakespeare drew a painfully egotistical character in Lear. But an investigation of the textures of that masculine self-involvement reveals the detailed way in which he constructed the old king's fraught relationship with his body. Given Lear's persistent association of his daughters with bodies, we are also able to consider how power sustained by the performance of immortality corresponds with the misogynistic aggression. Insane or otherwise, what follows is my reading of Lear's motivations when he comes to disrobe in the storm.

While in the epigraph for this chapter I quoted Levinas on shame and how it is stirred by a sense of how others view one's self, Levinas also theorizes the affect as it works within an individual:

[8] See William F. Martin, *The Indissoluble Knot: 'King Lear' as Ironic Drama* (Lanham, New York and London: University of America Press, 1987).

> [W]hat is the meaning of shameful nakedness? It is that one seeks to hide from others, but also from oneself … The necessity of fleeing, in order to hide oneself, is put in check by the impossibility of fleeing oneself. What appears in shame is thus precisely the fact of being riveted to oneself, the radical impossibility of fleeing oneself to hide from oneself, the unalterably binding presence of the I to itself … Nakedness is shameful when it is the sheer visibility of our being, of its ultimate intimacy. (2003: 64).

The body is the cardinal metaphor for theorizing shame as an emotional state. Shame as desire to flee the self is also how Zak characterizes Lear's actions too: 'from the abdication onward, Lear flees the sense of disgrace in his acts there' (1984: 60). For both Levinas and Zak, the body is a metaphor for the experience of shame. But for Lear the body is literally an affective hazard; Lear's body is his shame. As it is the king's responsibility to cloak his 'body natural' to maintain the constitution of the 'body politic', then in revealing his mortal body he risks both shame that he is not fulfilling his duties and the shame of actual and political weakness. Thus, it is possible to consider all of Lear's actions from the banishment of Cordelia, his curse upon Goneril's womb, his refusal to relinquish the knights, his dialogue with the weather, up to the meeting with Poor Tom and retreat into the hovel as an attempt to literally flee himself. If it were not for his body, he could potentially keep on ruling *ad infinitum* but the body itself, the same body that has always represented immortal rule, is thwarted by its own mortality. As an affect that underlines the fact of being 'riveted to one's self', shame also evidences the fantasy of mind/body dualism; just as shame is self-defeating, in shame the self discovers it cannot flee because it is part of the body.

The inability to escape his bodily condition is Lear's cardinal problem in the first scene: he could not escape his body to fulfil his duties as king, and tried to devise another way out. Lear stops fleeing in front of Poor Tom; he pauses for the one whose body is not hidden. Indeed, Lear stops and asks questions about this figure who seems to be living with his body. Quite unlike Derrida, whose curiosity was killed in front of his cat, the ashamed Lear becomes deeply curious about Poor Tom. 'What hast thou been?' (3.4.83) and 'Is man no more than this?' (3.4.101) are two of Lear's several questions. Lear's questions suggest interest in understanding a permissible kind of nakedness and in living in and with a body that is 'no more than this'. While

his nakedness remains shameful to others – Kent and the Fool try to stop him from undressing – his own sense of self begins to change at this point. For Lear, Poor Tom's body does not have to symbolize anything more than a body and this seems ideal. As a king long charged with the task of masking his mortal body, Lear desires to return to his body *as* his body. In attempting to foreground his body natural while holding onto the title 'king' however, Lear figures a challenge to the constitution of a political order based on the requisite performance of immortality.

The reason Lear's questions are political is because he does not want to relinquish the privileges of power – he wants the privilege without the responsibility. So although the questions seem deeply personal and self-absorbed, they ultimately relate to his status as sovereign rather than subject. It is on this point that Sedgwick's notion of 'transformational shame' is useful for thinking through the politics of Lear's move to disrobe. Lear is mortal; Lear wants to live as mortal. He is ashamed that *others* will not forget his nakedness and that their gaze will ultimately be disempowering because his authority requires widespread agreement on what his body symbolizes.

As I showed in the last section, Cordelia, Gloucester and Kent all view Lear as weakened or at risk because of his exposure. At this point, rather than trying to continue to evade mortality in order to cling to power, Lear works with and through the shame his mortality brings upon him to attempt to construct a new political order that allows for the sovereign to also be mortal. Lear stays out in the rain because it gives him space to consider what it would mean to be differently accommodated by the world. As with most readings of *King Lear*, this interpretation hinges on a particular reading of the ambivalent love test in the first scene. I interpret it like this: although Lear does not want to relinquish the privileges of power, he ultimately risks exposing his mortality and weakness in the abdication. He takes this risk because he assumes his daughters will comply with his wishes. In fact, he assumes Cordelia will be the most compliant. When Cordelia does not participate properly, he is left in court exposed as weak and mortal. This is an embarrassing moment for Lear, to say the least. His immediate response is to retreat from the abdication by banishing Cordelia and reclaiming the 'The name, and all th'addition to a king' (1.1.137) and a 'reservation of an hundred knights' (1.1.134). I shall return to these details presently.

Although Lear is evidently not ashamed when Goneril and Regan accept his abdication plan, something radically changes after Cordelia responds, 'Nothing, my lord' (1.1.87), to his request for her to speak. In the first half of the scene, Lear can be interpreted as shamelessly trying to produce an impossible fantasy: to carve out a place for the king to die with all respect and no responsibility. Cordelia calls his bluff. In this regard Cordelia can be, as she is, a divisive figure. On one hand she epitomizes goodness and love in excess of greed. In this figuration Cordelia is so pure and loving she cannot speak falsely of love, hence her recalcitrance. Cavell argues, 'Cordelia is alarming precisely because he *knows* she is offering the real thing, offering something a more opulent third of his kingdom cannot, must not, repay' (290). On the other hand, she can similarly be read as cold, cruel and obsessed with the rules. In Jane Smiley's feminist adaptation *A Thousand Acres* (1988), for example, Caroline (Cordelia) is not a perfect younger daughter or symbol of goodness, but an urbane lawyer trying hard to support her father while doing things by the book. When Cordelia mends her speech she is restrained and precise: 'I love your majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less' (1.1.92–3). Whether you read this as Cordelia holding the official line for either perfect filial love or unbreakable sovereign law, in both instances she unwittingly refuses the terms of Lear's transgressive abdication.

Regardless, Lear's reaction is the same: he banishes Cordelia, or deflects attention from his exposed body and makes her the shameful figure, the outcast, the recreant. The typical shame response is to try to hide shameful aspects of the self from the gaze of others. For Tomkins, the shame response is an innate bodily routine that leads to a reduction of facial or all forms of communication with others by turning away of the eyes and the turning down of the head. As Tomkins describes:

> when one hangs one's head or drops one's eyelids or averts one's gaze, one has communicated one's shame and both the face and the self unwittingly become more visible to the self and others. The very act whose aim it is to reduce facial communication is in some measure self-defeating. Particularly when the face blushes, shame is compounded. And so it happens that one is as ashamed of being ashamed as of anything else. (1995: 137)

Ironically, the impulse to hide or keep hidden those shameful aspects of ourselves reveals, often in a more painful way than before, that we have

something to hide in the first place. With shame, then, one can get caught in a feedback loop.

The 'sovereign shame' that Lear experiences, however, operates on a much larger scale, for which the bodily shame outlined above response is only metonymy. Bigger than the blushing body of Tomkins's example, Lear's shame response reverberates throughout the body politic. This is where the idea of the king's two bodies, and Lear's claim on the title king complicates shame. In shame, King Lear automatic response is banishment rather than blushing: the projection of shame onto another is a response enabled by power.[9] Thus, instead of hiding his own body by running offstage, Lear initially attempts to amputate the part of the body politic that brought shame upon him. Banishment is removing from an individual field of view the offensive subject; it is removing a part of his own body. In his last moments of courtly authority, he summons the forces of the cosmos to cast Cordelia out of the kingdom:

> For by the sacred radiance of the sun,
> The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
> By all the operation of the orbs
> From whom we do exist and cease to be,
> Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
> Propinquity and property of blood,
> And as a stranger to my heart and me
> Hold thee from this for ever. (1.1.110–17).

This is what shamefully averting the eyes looks like for a king: an attempt to reduce communication between different parts of the body politic by refusing to recognize a recalcitrant subject.[10] But, as with individual shame, the action is sometimes self-defeating and the shame is likely compounded. It is especially so in this case because it actively reshaped the entire body politic. A blush of this sovereign order meant that Lear could not go back to how it was before. The banishment came with a redrawing the borders of the kingdom; his shame parted the coronet between Albany and Cornwall.

[9] For a contemporary analysis of shame within the context of contemporary environmental politics see Charlotte Epstein, 'Shaming', in Jean-Frédéric Morin and Amandine Orsini (eds), *Essential Concepts of Global Environmental Governance*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 193–5.

[10] This particular reading of the love test was informed by Judith Butler's interpretation of Antigone in *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

Between 1.1 and 2.2 Lear is trapped in the same emotional feedback loop with regard to his mortal body natural and waning power as he is after the major conflict of the first scene. The pattern is as follows: Lear reacts strongly every time someone, especially Goneril, suggests he is old and tries to govern his actions. At his most vitriolic, Lear's responses to his daughters, especially to Goneril, focus on the body as giver of life or material evidence of family obligation. For instance, when Goneril encourages Lear to reduce his entourage, he no longer has the authority to banish her but he attempts to curse her body so it can no longer make life – 'Into her womb convey sterility, / Dry up her organs of increase' (1.4.270–1) – it is here that we start to see the irreducible association between mortal weakness, female bodies and sexuality for Lear.

The association is especially strong for Lear in relation to females that exhibit some kind of claim on authority or sway over sovereign power. Anna Kamaralli observes a neat distinction between Goneril and Regan, which might explain why Lear reserves his most vitriolic words for his eldest daughter:

> Goneril is a shrew in that she is outspoken in her criticisms of men, speaks disparagingly of her husband, with whom she comes into conflict, and is censured by her husband and father for her transgressive voice … Regan, with whom she is so ubiquitously identified … experiences no marital conflict and her words to her father are all conciliatory persuasiveness. When Lear and Goneril are in the same room the two cannot stop bickering. (128)

Goneril, like Cordelia, criticizes Lear and resists his authority in clear and direct terms. Goneril requests that Lear bring 'disordered rabble' of knights into line (1.4.247). Lear's response is to call upon 'Nature' (1.4.267) to 'stamp wrinkles into her brow of youth' (1.4.276). This is evidently not a direct response to her query about the knights, but more about what her newfound authority, embodied and female, means for his desire to mask his mortality to reclaim that which he has given away.

Beginning with the banishment of Cordelia, at each turn Lear's sovereign shame response manifests as a projection onto his daughters' bodies, accompanied by various attempts to stop the shame about his own from taking over. When Regan requests he return to Goneril with a smaller entourage, he refuses and instead characterizes Goneril as a disease that is eating away at his blood:

> thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter,
> Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
> Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,
> A plague sore, or embossed carbuncle
> In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee:
> Let shame come when it will; (2.2.413–18).

As part of an attempt to regain control of the body politic by masking his shameful body natural, the aggression directed towards Goneril's female body is a perfectly and irreducibly abject response to 'the baleful power of women to bestow mortal life' (Kristeva 158). For Lear, Goneril represents 'the mother' that gives 'life but without infinity' (159).[11] That he equates her with the body, and she exhibits power over his, only makes him feel more ashamed of the weakness his own body symbolizes. In attempting to regain control of the authority he held under the auspices of immortality, Goneril's newfound power (bestowed upon her by Lear, let us not forget) serves to underline the relationship between mortality and disenfranchisement. By 2.2 he is having trouble pushing all his emotions neatly back onto his daughters; by this time Goneril is getting under his skin, and he figures the hot flushes of shame as a 'disease of [the] flesh'.

As a king formerly charged with the rule of the body politic, his sense of self is expansive; if he seems monomaniacal it is because his body once symbolized everything in the kingdom except its own liveliness. In framing Lear's behaviour as a sovereign shame response that continues at least until he strips in the storm, identifies, to use a Shakespearean cliché, method in his madness; Lear becomes predictable, he follows a fairly familiar pattern. Moreover, although Lear's emotional cosmos expands to include the world beyond the human during the storm, this can be brought within this same affective logic. While his dialogue with the weather seems like the height of his insanity, when looked at carefully, Lear's emotional path grapples with the same kind of shame that he was fleeing in the first scene.When exposed to the storm Lear repeats a similar emotional

[11] Although further discussion on the politics of abjection in *King Lear* is beyond the scope of this chapter, two essays that have contributed to my understanding of how abjection works politically (i.e. not only in the formation of individual subjectivity) are Kate Livett's 'Thieves and Fascists: the Politics of Abjection in Radiohead's *Hail to the Thief (The Gloaming)*', *Australian Humanities Review* 41 (February 2007) and Sarah Anne Moore's 'The Politics of Garbage in Oaxaca, Mexico', *Society and Natural Resources* 21 (7) (2008): 597–610.

journey as the one that plays out between 1.1 and 2.2, except at a much faster pace and with a very different outcome. In 3.2 he moves from trying to hide the shame of self-exposure by feigning control over the heavens, to thinking the heavens are in cahoots with his daughters. In 3.4 things begin to shift and the storm comes to be seen as something separate, not representative of his prior rule, not collaborating with his daughters, but as a brut material force through which he might come to a new understanding of his body, emotions and life. By the end of the scene he experiences a transformative self-revelation as mere mortal with Poor Tom in the storm and by 4.6 he starts imagining a wretched form of sovereign authority that permits kings to be mortal.

To illustrate by example, Lear begins by commanding the elements in the same way he commanded the court in the first scene, calling upon the authority of the heavens to flatten the world in order to banish all those who do not show gratitude:

> Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
> You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers and oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
> Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
> That make ingrateful man. (3.2.1–9)

As he banished Cordelia in the first scene by the heavenly orbs, Lear instructs the heavens to destroy the world, with a barrage of powerful and violent verbs: blow, crack, rage, drench, drown, singe, strike, spill. He wants wild wind, hurricane and flood to destroy those who are not responsive to his demands. To those unaware of Renaissance meteorological beliefs, the king's engagement in an active dialogue with the heavens might seem mad. Although Lear's desperate dialogue with the storm is an extreme manifestation of a cosmologically inclined ego, to be sure, it is nevertheless in keeping with his character's worldview. Lear's hubris expressed in cosmic terms throughout the play. Here he extends himself into the skies in an attempt to regain control.

If the storm's indifference to Lear has any straightforward poetic function here, it is metonymic: Lear's lack of control over the storm is the part that

represents his lack of control over the entire kingdom. Nevertheless, the storm's material indifference to Lear is not just symbolic of his lack of control over the kingdom; it is an indifference to which Lear immediately responds. From his point of view, since before the banishment of Cordelia up to this point in the drama, the heavens have always undergirded his authority as king. Here, they seem to take a position akin to his ungrateful daughters.

So in his next speech to the storm he comes to be suspicious of the weather's motives. Again, seemingly mad, but also strictly in keeping with everything we know about Lear to this point, Lear's speech pleads with the storm not to join forces with his daughters:

> Rumble thy bellyful! Spit fire, spout rain!
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters:
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.
> I never gave you kingdom, called you children;
> You owe me no subscription. Why then, let fall
> Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man.
> But yet I call you servile ministers,
> That will with two pernicious daughters join
> Your high-engendered battle 'gainst a head
> So old and white as this. O ho! 'tis foul. (3.2.14–24)

In this second speech, Lear repeatedly uses the pronouns 'I' and 'you' to set up a distinction between himself and the storm and to place himself in dialogue with the weather. When the storm does not respond, Lear becomes suspicious that it must be conspiring with his daughters. Lear's talking to the storm is an attempt to figure out the relationship between his authority and the weather. Most of the characters in the play have tried to keep Lear from ending up in the storm: Cordelia tried to explain why she could only say 'Nothing' to his request, Kent tried to defend her, the Fool tried reverse psychology and Goneril and Regan tried to reason with him with regards to the knights. Nothing worked. But once he figures out that the heavens are against him too, he finally realizes he has run out of options and has nowhere to hide his mortal body. The non-responsive storm is the thing that finally provokes Lear to respond. In other words, Lear respects the authority of the heavens and seeks to turn it into his own.

It is around this sensational point – sensational in both the spectacular and the bodily meaning of the term – that Lear begins to reconnect with and rethink his body. The storm continues and Kent and the Fool encourage him to take shelter. Lear accepts the offer in terms that suggest he is working through shame rather than against it:

> My wits begin to turn.
> [*to the Fool*] Come on, my boy. How dost my boy?
> Art cold?
> I am cold myself.
> [*To Kent*] Where is this straw, my fellow?
> The art of our necessities is strange,
> And can make vile things precious. Come; your hovel. (3.2.67–71)

There is a significant difference in what Lear claimed was necessary in 2.2 and now, hence its strangeness. In the earlier scene, he rails about the necessity of a large entourage of knights to mask his wretchedness. When Lear laments, 'O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars / Are in the poorest thing superfluous; / Allow not nature more than nature needs' (2.2.456–8), he effectively classifies himself as 'not nature' or as human, and suggests he is allowed to have an entourage of an hundred knights because of his exceptional status. In this new context a hovel comes to be as valuable as the entourage. Necessity is a strange art indeed! Through the storm, Lear shows a renewed awareness of his body, and a new sensitivity to its materiality and attention to its basic needs. The might and power of the violent meteors dwarf him. The stubborn and irascible force has finally thwarted his capacity to hide his shame. Lear has no choice but to submit to this meteorological violence and reveal himself fully to himself and the cosmos.

Although at the end of 3.2 Lear moves towards taking shelter, he refuses multiple times. In fact, an often-overlooked aspect of the plot in readings that blame his daughters for his exposure is that he could have taken shelter in numerous ways at numerous times. In 3.4, Lear refuses shelter one last time in order to pray for those who are similarly exposed to the storm – those wretched and mortal individuals who are just like him. He could just take shelter but he is deeply curious about the significance of his exposure. By virtue of its extended representation, we are forced to be curious too. This prayer is infused with curiosity. Rather than being disgusted by the wretches' cheap and beastly lives, he wonders how these people endure such exposure without love:

> I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.
> *[Kneels]* Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
> From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
> Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp,
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou mayest shake the superflux to them
> And show the heavens more just. (3.4.27–36)

In agreement with Lehnhof, who suggests that we need to 'think twice about … applauding Lear's desire to identify with others' (498), his prayer which is sometimes read as an indicator of his Christ-like qualities is actually more about self-realization. His prayer is a 'tiresome play of the same' (498). Lear's prayer to those wretches exposed to the storm breeds self-reflection and self-revelation with regard to his own physical condition and material situation. While it is entirely selfish at an interpersonal level, the relationship it responds to in less tiresome manner is the sociopolitical one, the one that posits the sovereign self as immortal or transcendent, the one that needs the sovereign to take shelter in order to ensure the coherence of the kingdom. In this regard, his prayer implies that 'more just' heavens (heavens that allow mortals to be kings) require a different model of governance; a model not based on hierarchy, transcendence and exclusion.

In reading Lear's attempt to disrobe from his point of view, the impulse toward nudity in the storm can thus be interpreted as an image of a man now mostly unashamed of his mortal body, who recognizes – at least momentarily – that his trouble is not his body itself but the way it is socially and legally framed. At this point Lear's shame does not trump his curiosity, instead his shame shifts into a transformational and curious mode by virtue of his body's exposure: 'Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, / bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off you lendings / come, unbutton here' (3.4.106–8). He wants to be in his body. He has worked through some of the shame and revealed his nudity to others.

Lear's one success, then, might be understood as coming into his own body. That said, Lear does not manage to construct a successful kingdom wherein he is allowed to be both sovereign and mortal, he does not come to find solidarity

with his daughters whose bodies weathered his vitriol. But his wretched attempt to come into his body provides a cautionary tale for us. His failure shows the *social* barriers to living differently with our bodies in a society that circumscribes them in a particular way. That said, even Lear returns to the body in a fraught manner, it is still stifled by his misogyny and remains deeply resentful of having to go through that process at all. In the oftentimes closed world of the tragedy, however, Lear's taking off his clothes is – at least momentarily – an opening out onto another possibility.

View #3: The actor

When thinking about the politics of the mortal body in the environmental humanities, Lear's revelation as mortal has extraordinary potential. It functions, in isolation, as a criticism of Western modes of selfhood and fantasies of exceptionalism and transcendence. It also denounces modes of governance that require the performance of immortality, if not for the false consciousness it breeds, then for the pain and suffering of the individual required to uphold this impossible ideal. In working towards the conclusion of this long chapter and opening out onto Part 2, however, the question remains as to whether or not this perspective is ever apprehended by an audience in performance. Is Lear's point of view received as part of the wild spectacle of Lear in the storm? The short answer is 'most likely not', but I will spend the last few pages of this chapter explaining why and how.

Either despite or because of the extraordinary extent of Lear's failure and the burden of his death – ending up homeless, stripped down to undergarments, enduring the full force of a massive storm, sheltering in a hovel with an entourage of fools, crowning himself with weeds, celebrating his mortality and, soon after, dying of grief under the weight of his youngest daughter's dead body – the task of playing Lear is generally understood in heroic terms. Scholars, directors and actors repeatedly deploy metaphors involving mountains and mountaineering to describe both the play and the task of the actor playing Lear. Jan Kott claimed that *King Lear* was a mountain that everyone 'admires yet no one particularly wishes to climb' (1967: 101), while Peter Brook claimed that *King Lear* was a mountain whose summit had

never been reached (Brook in Marowitz 1963: 23). Paul Scofield suggested that Lear's heights might best be reached from above by a parachute rather than from below by climbing. Benedict Andrews, citing Brook's mountain metaphor, described his role as director as, 'helping a great actor to … climb this mountain' (Andrews, in Blake 2011). Laurence Olivier claimed that the great Shakespearean actors Richard Burbage, David Garrick, Edmund Kean and Henry Irving, all of whom were known for their rendition of Lear, were themselves like great volcanoes (1986: 59), and John Bell reflected on the volcanic quality to the character itself in his programme notes to Kosky's *Lear*. The dominant idea is that the play is a mountain and either the actor or the director is a mountain climber. Just as Edmund Hillary was knighted for being the first westerner to summit Mount Everest, many of the actors mentioned above were knighted for their services to the arts.

Alexander Leggatt observed the discrepancy between the fixity of mountain metaphor and the fluidity of the character in the play's performance history. While also citing a range of other people who deploy the trope, he claimed that the task of his book on *Lear* in performance was to undermine and repeal the mountain metaphor:

> It is striking how often the business of interpreting *King Lear* has been compared to mountain-climbing … Yet, this metaphor though it speaks eloquently of the plays challenges, misleads us by presenting it as a fixed solid entity, massive and inhuman. *King Lear* has never been fixed … *King Lear* [is not] a forbidding mountain that has to be scaled but [is] a living organism whose vitality lies in its capacity for constant growth and change. (Leggatt 2004: 14–15)

I agree with Leggatt: the mountain metaphor misses the point. The second part of the book is, like Leggatt's earlier study of the play in performance, geared towards repealing the storm metaphor too. However, that the metaphor endures and is so ubiquitously deployed, despite its seeming erroneousness, calls for it to be taken seriously. There is no earthly metaphor that implies anything more timeless and enduring than a mountain. Despite volcanic eruptions, landslides and erosions, mountains outlive castles, crowns, kingdoms and definitely the reigns of individual kings. Given it is a play about death, how can we read this enduring cultural valorization of *King Lear* as mountain, and the actor playing Lear as mountain climber?

I here account for the enduring mountain metaphor by way of looking at the dynamics of shame from yet another angle. During Lear's exposure to the elements the actor and the character have contradictory experiences with regard to shame. Which is to say, at the precise moment Lear comes to understand, accept and expose himself as mortal, the actor playing Lear, if doing so successfully, simultaneously and ironically immortalizes himself. For the audience, then, when Lear is at his most shameful, the actor is at his most triumphant. The actor's experience is only a triumph akin to climbing a mountain if the culture within which the actor is trying to operate posits mortal weakness as shameful. It only works if Lear's emotional journey from king to mortal is horrifying for the spectator or performer.

While this argument specifically relates to *King Lear*'s cultural reception, it has a broader, allegorical function. It is an indirect way of speaking what I feel, not what I ought to say. It is a way into talking about the luxury life that is afforded to contemporary politicians and business persons – heroes that climb the two big mountains of neoliberal democracies, the state and the corporation – and ecocritiquing the self-serving dimensions of those lives. These people will all die and yet their hubris as expressed in their life's work suggests an aversion to that earthly and bodily reality. It is really hard to know what motivates people to refuse to respond to this massive earthy crisis, but shame of weakness and shamelessness around the privileges of power seems a useful candidate for, at the very least, exploring the dynamics of this major historical impasse.[12]

So, a lot has already been said about shame in *King Lear*, comparatively little has been made of shame as a precondition of many theatrical performances, and nothing on how that intersects so neatly with the pattern of shame in this particular play. Similar to a king, shame is the dramatic actor's primary professional hazard, but for different reasons. Self-shattering shame is what an actor risks if the performance is unsuccessful or audience does not react positively to the performance. Indeed, Sedgwick argued that because of the potential double movement of shame, shame is actually synonymous with theatrical performance: 'Shame … transformational shame, *is performance*. I

[12] Given that allegory is a tentative expression of something that later will be expressed in full, it is important to note that I continue to pursue this line of thought in my postdoctoral work, currently under the umbrella title 'Weathering the City'.

mean theatrical performance' (2003: 38). To unpack this claim a bit further, Sedgwick argues that:

> whenever the actor … proffers the spectacle of his or her [self] to a spectating eye, the stage is set (so to speak) for either a newly dramatized flooding of the subject by the shame of refused return, or a successful pulsation of the mirroring regard through a narcissistic circuit. (2003 38)

What she means here, to use Shakespearean performance as an example, is that an actor puts forward himself *as* Lear, as many actors have done from Burbage to Rush. Further, the actor playing Lear wants to be seen or recognized *as* Lear. The 'spectating eye', or the audience, can refuse to return the desired gaze; the audience can see the actor or, worse still, a bad actor *instead* of Lear, and thereby institute great shame within the actor for being looked upon 'strangely' by an audience. Alternatively, the audience can feed the actor's narcissistic desire by watching the actor as he wants to be seen, by seeing either Lear or, better yet, a great actor successfully playing this famous character. *King Lear* troubles this formulation of shame *as* theatrical performance by the fact that the character is also experiencing a moment of transformational shame at the same time.

During the storm scenes, the actor playing Lear ends up in a curious double bind whereby the actor and the character experience opposing dimensions of transformational shame. In the play's first scene the character experiences 'a newly dramatized flooding of the subject by the shame of refused return' (Sedgwick 2003: 38), or the shame that Cordelia causes within the Lear by refusing to express her love during the division of the kingdom scene. But, if the actor playing Lear is doing his job successfully, that is, he is plausibly communicating the drama to the audience, then the actor, at precisely the same time the character is experiencing the 'shame of refused return', will necessarily experience 'a successful pulsation of the mirroring regard through a narcissistic circuit' (Sedgwick 2003: 38). In other words, if the actor is performing well throughout, the actor will be seen precisely as he wants to be seen, at the same time enduring the shameful experience of the character of Lear, who is not being seen as he wants to be seen. Shame thus provides us with a curious hermeneutic problem in *King Lear*. What aspect of the play are we actually watching? Do we focus on the meaning of Lear's shameful failure or merely marvel at the actor's success?

Come the storm, when Lear undergoes a shameful transformation and opens himself up to the storm and into a new mode of being, dwelling, living as mortal in and with the storm, the actor is experiencing a conservative triumph and succeeding in performing the role and, in many instances, immortalizing himself as a great Shakespearean actor. I suspect that at least part of the reason for the mountain metaphor is because the actor can courageously engage in the performance of such ostensibly shameful acts as exposing one's self to a storm and identifying with a madman, which makes the successful performances of Lear so memorable. At the same time, any political ideas about sovereignty, mortality and governance become further buried in the play.

I will now illustrate by example how this particular shame dynamic works in practice. The examples I draw upon are from different centuries and have very different interpretations of their professional dilemma: William Charles Macready was particularly bothered by the potential risks involved in playing Lear, while Laurence Olivier was entirely energized by it. Macready lost sleep and turned to alcohol when approaching the character of Lear because he was so worried about his posthumous cultural legacy, while Olivier modelled his career on the desire to be remembered retrospectively as the best actor of all time, with Lear as the crowning challenge. For both actors, their ultimate success at playing Lear was the key to establishing their posthumous legacy.

Macready reflects extensively upon his concerns about playing Lear in his diary:

> This is the last attempt of the great characters of Shakespeare that I have left unattempted, and the tone which the press takes up on it will materially influence my after life. I can put no reliance on the partial feelings of friends, – I do not feel that I have yet succeeded, but it is consoling to me to believe that I have not failed. Persons think that we carry the applause of the audience to our pillows, and that the sound still rings as a delightful lullaby in our ears. I have no such pleasure. I wish the night over that I may make up my mind to the impression diffused through the public mind. (1875: 420)

Macready seeks to successfully portray Lear, and he will not be satisfied until he sees the applause translated into language and published for posterity in the newspaper, so his success in the role will be impressed upon 'the public

mind' and remembered beyond his time. He repeats this anxiety before each performance until he is convinced he will be remembered as successfully performing Lear. He even reports on taking wine before a performance of *King Lear* on 23 May 1834:

> Went to the theatre; dressed; became excessively nervous; took wine; went on the stage – as nervous as the first night I acted in London, without the overbearing ardour that could free me from the thralldom of my fears. (1875: 419)

We can see in Macready fear of not being recognized as he wants to be recognized. In other words, Macready fears the shame that he will have to endure by failing to be recognized as Lear. Which is, in this context, a double shaming, metaphorically exposing himself as a bad actor and literally exposing himself to the audience at the same time.

Quite unlike Macready, Olivier is completely unashamed of the dilemma Lear presents for the actor. Instead, he is comfortable with the narcissistic bind a between the character and the actor, he sees no problem in approaching the role of Lear. Indeed he sees little distinction between Lear and himself:

> Frankly Lear is an easy part, one of the easiest parts in Shakespeare … We can all play it. It is simply bang straightforward … He's like all of us really, he's just a stupid old fart. He's got this frightful temper. He's completely selfish and utterly inconsiderate. (1986: 93)

He tacitly associates this character trait within Lear to the desires of the actor himself for recognition and praise from the audience:

> There is nothing more tempting than to hang on to the curtain at the end of a long evening and let the audience know that you have given your all for them. This was the night and the only night when you sweated blood to give them the definitive performance. This performance was for their grandchildren. (1986: 92)

On one hand, Olivier parodies other actors who, like Macready, play the role in order to be drowned in applause and praise; on the other, there is also a degree of self-deprecation, because he too, in spite of finding the role incredibly simple, knows well the desire to absorb the praise from the audience. When Olivier claims that the actor has given his 'all' to deliver the performance, this is both humourously self-indulgent and totally accurate; on one hand, his colloquial tone suggests a degree of self-parody regarding his own hubris

and hyperbole, but on the other he is quite seriously saying he risked the very constitution of his *self* for the audience in order to deliver that performance.

In this, Olivier suggests that he does not see the role of Lear as a huge test for himself, but rather a competition between his version of Lear and others actors' versions of Lear. This is the foundation of Olivier's approach to the role:

> One of the first productions I saw of *Lear* … was given by an actor called Randle Ayrton, who was then a famous British star … I went to see it with my mother-in-law who knew him … We went backstage afterwards to bandy the compliments and exchange the usual pleasantries. My mother-in-law gushed all over him. 'You were just like the Old Man,' she said. 'Just like the Old Man.' [Henry] Irving even then, so long after his death, was still referred to as the Old Man. Of course he was; he'd based it on himself, hadn't he? Listening to all the compliments flying, I came to a decision. I vowed to eradicate all knowledge of the Old Man from the public's memory forever. I was determined to become the Old Man myself. Let them impersonate me fifty years after my death. My will was granite. I was determined to become the greatest actor of all time. (1986: 96)

Curiously, Olivier's mother-in-law does not suggest that Ayrton was just like 'the Old Man' meaning Lear, but rather the 'Old Man', a previous actor who played Lear. The competition is who can be the most convincing version of himself *as* Lear and, importantly, remembered *as* the greatest version of himself *as* Lear for the longest time after his death. He wants his interpretation of Lear to linger in the minds of the public. This serves not only as a good example of the problematic relationship between Lear and the actor, but as an example of how certain performances of Lear enter the cultural imagination and impact upon the meaning of the character.

Olivier and Macready perform the affective feedback loop that is mediated by the risk of shame. The best and most memorable actor successfully makes himself in exchange for performing shame on Lear's behalf. In bearing himself to the storm, in performing transformational shame in and for the storm, the actor only affirms his self in the real world. In other words the actor's self is fortified at exactly the same time as Lear's is totally undone and remade.

Fortunately both Macready and Olivier believed they succeeded in the task of playing Lear. Regardless of how contingent their success was on all aspects of the production, and also on the audience, both actors locate their success in their own portrayal of Lear in the storm. Macready's own reflection upon

one of his performances (26 May 1834) as Lear confidently celebrates his own success:

> I threw nothing away; took time, and yet gave force to all that I had to do; above all, my tears were not those of a woman or a driveller, they really stained a 'man's cheeks'. In the storm, as indeed throughout, I was greatly improved upon the preceding night. I was frantic with passion, and brought up expectation to the dreadful issue of such conflict. (1875: 420)

Of course, these comments are taken from Macready's diary, but they are entirely about himself – the tears were Macready's tears, not Lear's. Although we might argue that the point of Lear's tears is to challenge his masculinity and sense of self, Macready so entangled himself in Lear's undoing that it seems his intention was not to undo Lear at all but to secure his legacy. They were tears of joy at his success, rather than tears of sorrow at Lear's failure.

Likewise, in Olivier's reflection on his acting, he quotes a reviewer's praising himself and his unique talents during the storm:

> I was able to get tremendous power vocally, so that during the storm scene the thunder and lightning were in the King himself as well as in the elements … Audrey Williams said '… the sheer torrential sound of (the storm) swept across the senses like Niagara, but in all this raving music one could still hear the tortured cry of a drowning man. … the scene wrung the heart as no other Lear at this moment has succeeded in doing.' (1986: 89–90)

In both instances demonstrated here, and arguably in all successful performances of Lear, the moment of Lear's transformational shame is the precise moment of the actor's personal triumph. And herein lies a problem in distinguishing the storm from Lear. Although the triumph of the actor relies on an intimate understanding of Lear's affective struggle in the storm, the triumph of the actor is what is heralded as the success. On top of this, as I covered in the first 'view', the spectacle of Lear's exposure is shameful to almost everyone else except Lear. Thus the more nuanced details of Lear's embodied struggle and self-revelation as mortal are all but forgotten.

Any attempt to communicate the idea of the mortal body is buried by the performance. *Contra* Lamb, who seemed unable to want to watch the horrible body in performance, Lear's is ironically more of a heroic tale for his wretchedness. In this regard the catharsis of Lear's exposure to the storm

allows an audience to confront all that is painful and disgusting in life and celebrate on behalf of an actor who was able to go through all that trauma and triumph. If anything, due to the dynamics of shame in the storm, *King Lear* in performance serves to validate fantasies of immortality rather than contravene them with a powerful representation of death. That said, in Part 2 I will explore productions that attempt to grapple with those more painful and disgusting dimensions of human existence without simply celebrating the actor's triumph.

Conclusion

Shame takes many paths through *King Lear*; it forms the foundations of moral injunctions, temporary imprisonment, political actions, erratic behaviour, misogynistic vitriol, family conflict, actors' anxieties and bodily behaviours. In all but one case, however, the act of shaming is largely corrective and conservative. It aims to shape behaviours and preserve a status quo. The example of Lear stripping in the storm, *for* the storm, provides a single moment of transformational shame, or a risky bodily poetics, that signifies some kind of other earthly relation. The performance history that follows in Part 2 demonstrates in slightly different terms how productions have dealt with the question of Lear's exposure, how they make the storm signify differently across the ages in relation to Lear and for the audience. These performances do not always attempt to open Lear out onto the storm literally, but in many cases use the storm as a metaphor for the confused self thereby closing off any real confrontation with the significance of Lear's body. In more recent productions, however, the body is starting to emerge as a site of significance and symbolic power, and the storm is returning to its literal, material form.

With regard to the broader ecocritical concerns of this book, Lear's struggle with shame and his partial transformation in the storm represent the kind of dangerous and difficult affectively charged political struggle that might be required by some to move beyond Western individualist hubris and out into another relation with earth others. The cultural phenomenon of *King Lear* represents the tragedy that there is no easy way forward; the shift into a different relationship with the weather, with the social, requires a thorough

remaking of the Western self. In this context, rather than encouraging Lear to take shelter, all we can do is to establish circumstances that encourage those that still place faith in individual transcendence or in an immortal body politic to orient themselves towards their bodies and the storm, like Lear. All we can do is assure them that beneath our clothes we are all naked and mortal too.

Part Two

Performance History

It is one of the fascinating effects of Shakespeare's plays that they have almost always seemed to coincide with the times in which they are read, published, produced, and discussed.

Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare and Modern Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008), xiii

4

Ecocritical Big History

Hans Christian Andersen and Charles Dickens attended the opening night of Charles Kean's 1857 production of *The Tempest* together. Andersen described the spectacle of the opening storm scene in his diary:

> During the overture, a storm was heard muttering, the thunder rolled, cries and screams were heard from behind the stage; the entire prelude was thus given while the curtain was still down; and when it was rolled up great waves seemed to be rolling towards the footlights, the whole stage was on a furious sea, a great ship was tossed back and forth … seamen and passengers tumbled about, there was a death shriek, the masts fell, and then the ship was swallowed up by the sea. (1871: 283)

Dickens later demystified elements of the fantastical experience by describing the craft behind it. Apparently, Andersen recounted, 'the whole ship was made of air-tight linen, which had been puffed out, and from which they … all at once let out the air' (1871: 283). On one hand, the story of their outing provides evidence of some of the particularities of Victorian theatre, but on the other it is an example of the complex relationship between technology and spectacle implicit in the staging of storms.

In the first instance, then, the discussion of theatrical weather in Part 2 calls for a measured consideration of the relationship between the visual effect, the artifice of which is sometimes but not always hidden, and the particular technologies behind it. Ideally for the purposes of the next four chapters I would have access to similar conversations between equally odd couples for every production of *King Lear* between 1606 and 2016, to provide a good sense of how the storm scenes were created and to what ends in each instance. History was not so kind. Instead, in order to describe the transmogrification of the storm scenes across the period, the next four chapters draw on a range

of primary and secondary sources to reconstruct the storms in selected stage productions.

I am not alone in the task of writing grand narrative histories. Indeed, in *The History Manifesto* (2014) Jo Guildi and David Armitage argue for a return to bigger historical narratives for the purposes of knowing the past differently in order to create a more equitable public future in a changing climate. What I aim for in the next four chapters, then, is their ideal of a 'a fusion between the big and the small, the 'micro' and the 'macro', that harnesses the best of archival work on the one hand and big-picture work about issues of common concern on the other' (121). The issue of common concern is that in the global north today we need to find a different way of living with weather extremes in a changing climate. We are becoming aware of how weather events can be used to justify particular political positions. How can the sustained grappling with the relationship between humans and the weather help us to understand that broader project? What does it mean to understand the weather as always having been involved in political debates rather than just a feature of the current environmental crisis?

Weather is a rogue earthly force, which is difficult to predict and impossible to control. Weather materially exceeds the grasp of humans. The same can be said, in a sense, of the weather in *King Lear*: the storm exceeds the grasp of any one character and also disavows Lear's loudly expressed fantasies of control. At the same time, the theatre makers and scholars across the work's history have been able to exert a degree of control over the form and meaning of the storm. Theatre makers can literally practise the fantasy of controlling the weather by building it on the stage; scholars can control interpretations of the relationships between humans and the weather. By way of adaptation, stage-craft and performance style, some of the more muddy, material and mortal dimensions of *King Lear* can, and have been, largely avoided. Thus, to begin this journey across the heath of history, I situate the seeming contradictions of Shakespeare's complex meteorological spectacle in the social and political milieu of London in 1606 and explore the significance of Lear's exposure to the storm in early productions.

That said, the meteorological spectacle on stage only accrues meaning when considered in relation to the story. As Gwilym Jones observed, 'Shakespeare's employment of storm effects [conflates] the poetic and the practical: the

language builds on, complicates and varies the effects' (2015a: 50). I take Jones' point as axiomatic throughout Part 2, with one key caveat: while Jones explores bad weather staged in Shakespeare's lifetime, this section of the book moves well beyond the playwright's death and thus must also acknowledge the textual instability of *King Lear*. As we already know, there are two distinct versions of Shakespeare's *King Lear* – the Quarto (1608) and Folio (1623) – which were traditionally conflated in popular and scholarly editions. Critical to any understanding of the gradually shifting significance of the storm, though, is the knowledge that between 1681 and 1820 Nahum Tate's adaptation, *The History of King Lear*, largely held the stage, and by 1838 Shakespeare's play had been mostly restored. Moreover, all versions and productions of the play were banned between 1810 and 1820 due to the madness of King George III. Given these variables, throughout Part 2 I explore the intersection of the technologies used and the overall aesthetic effect, alongside the particularities of the story being told, in order to characterize how the weather came to signify in a given context.

Although the form and significance of the storm changes, the constant feature of the storm scenes during chapters five and six is that it was always represented on stage as a literal meteorological event and taken by Lear as such. It was neither conceptualized and theatricalized as a psychological or political metaphor, nor was it constructed as a figment of Lear's imagination; it was always a storm. In this regard, the two theatrical questions presented by the play were, first, how to actually construct the spectacle on stage and, second, how to assign Shakespeare's rogue storm a purpose and meaning as such. In other words, any production of the play might be thought as offering a slightly different answer to Lear's question 'what is the cause of thunder?' – specifically, as we have seen in the discussion of Aristotle from chapter two, the 'final cause' or purpose of the literal storm. The question arises even in Tate's version, in which Lear's mad query is cut. We will see, therefore, how the literal or meteorological is given meaning through design, adaptation and interpretation. By the twentieth century, however, interest in literal spectacle dwindled for reasons that will be described below. At the same time, new interest in human interiority converged with experimental design strategies and the storm began to morph into a spectacular psychological metaphor and concomitantly interpreted as such in scholarship. Since the 1960s, however, an

interest in what the storm might signify beyond the individual human comes to the fore again, the details of which will be explored in the final chapter, 'Towards the Flood'.

Part 2 of the book has a dual function. On the surface it practices 'meteorological reading', the method theorised in chapter one. To recap, what distinguishes a meteorological reading from a literal reading is the task of taking into account the historically situated aspect of the storm's symbolism for the characters and audience alongside its implied material presence in the text. In performance there is another dimension to account for as well, which is the way in which the storm is actually constructed on stage. When taken as a whole, however, part two also tracks the changing cultural significance of the weather alongside *King Lear*'s metamorphoses across time. Thus, the ecocritical big history told here both tells a different history of a canonical tale by exploring its climactic more-than-human event and also reveals the ways in which the weather has always had an ideologically or politically charged cultural dimension, albeit in different and ever-changing ways.

The period covered in Part 2 is long: four hundred and ten years. While it is common for Shakespearean performance histories to cover this time span to give an impression of the changing interpretation of the human story and the characters, the focus on the storm alters the conventional 'performance history' agenda somewhat. Here I am interested in how weather is brought into the service of a dramatic tale recognized widely as one of the great meditations on the human condition. What is the storm's role in the production of that fantasy? The various meanings projected onto *Lear*'s storm are, therefore, indices of broader mainstream sentiments about the desired relationship between humans and the weather; which is oftentimes a fantasy of how we would like things to be rather than how they actually are. Rather than constructing a long chapter to theorise precisely what it means to practice 'ecocriticial big history' in Shakespearean performance studies, beyond these introductory notes, this section of the book illustrates the genre by practicing it.

5

The Spectacular Jacobean Theatre

The Quarto's title page and the Stationers' Register indicate that the first performance of *King Lear* was at Whitehall on St Stephen's night, 26 December 1606.[1] But it is widely accepted that *King Lear* was primarily written for the Globe, and was probably first performed there either just before or soon after the court performance, with Richard Burbage in the title role. Once in repertory, it would have been played at both the Globe and, after the company's acquisition of the second theatre in 1609, at Blackfriars. Without specific information about the staging of *King Lear*'s storm, we have to rely on conjecture about how such a complex spectacle might have looked, sounded and smelled in the company's two major theatres, and then to consider what it might have signified to early audiences within the context of Shakespeare's adaptation of an old and familiar story.

Due to the lack of scenic art and the concomitant descriptions of setting in the dialogue of plays from the period, Elizabethan and Jacobean stagecraft is often characterized as non-representational and contrasted with, for example, Victorian theatre with the proscenium stage, pictorial backdrops and moving set pieces. The received wisdom that Shakespeare's stagecraft was spare underscores a range of anachronistic assumptions about the stormy spectacle in the twentieth century that I will come to revise in the next chapter. Before that, however, I must alter the dominant assumption a little.

In the early seventeenth century, as today, meteorological effects were of a different order of theatre craft to set pieces and backgrounds; they were percussive, pyrotechnical and ephemeral, rather than structural and painterly.

[1] The only other recorded performance of *King Lear* during Shakespeare's lifetime was by a provincial company at Nidderdale in Yorkshire in 1610.

The King's Men likely invested a lot of time, money and labour into their creation. Gwilym Jones has already gone to some lengths to rethink the role of the storm in Shakespeare's theatre and I build on his line of thinking here. Jones argues that although 'little is made of the effect of the storm' by early modern theatre scholars, the 'thunder and lightning in an Elizabethan (and Jacobean) theatre would have been a hugely impressive and noisy affair' (2009: 5). So although the stage might not have been designed as a facsimile copy of the world, the weather was spectacularized for the audience.

There were many different kinds of meteors and multiple techniques for their creation. Effects were produced with a combination of chemicals, fire, wooden objects, mechanical devices and musical instruments.[2] The most widely used means of creating thunder was a device known as a 'thunder roll' or 'thunder run', which was a cannon ball rolled down a wooden trough. A drum was used to evoke distant rumbles of thunder. Lightning effects were produced with a variety of devices, combined with fireworks and other flammable substances. Sprinkling powdered starch or iron filings over a naked flame, for example, produced dazzling sparkles of light. In some productions calling for supernatural weather spectacles, chemical powders were combined with fire to produce differently coloured smoke. The 'thunderbolt', which was a different meteor altogether, had its own effect. According to Phillip Butterworth, 'thunderbolts were used as a signal or statement from God or heaven to an earthly recipient … a fizzing, flaming streak of fire delivered at rapid speed'. Pragmatically, the SWevels [*sic*], otherwise known as rockets-, fireworks- or squibs-on-lines, was used in the creation of the effect. The 'rocket-on-line', the name of which gives a clear idea of the device itself, is a firework run along a flameproof rope that created a streak of light and sound as it moved. The sound of rain was created by the use of dried balls of starch in a wooden box; depending on how it was handled the device could also create the noise of a low thunder rumble (Butterworth 1998: 42–6, 230). Considering storms in the indoor private theatre, Sturgess identifies two other devices specifically used in *The*

[2] On lighting the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages, see R. B. Graves, *Lighting the Shakespearean Stage, 1567–1642* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009) and P. Butterworth, *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre* (London: Society for Theatre Research Press, 1998).

Tempest,[3] but possibly also co-opted for a slightly different purpose in *Lear*: 'a sea machine (small pebbles revolved in a drum) and a wind machine (a loose length of canvas turned on a wheel)' (1987: 81). Whatever the combination, these technologies would have created a multi-sensorial – aural, visual and, to some degree, olfactory – event.

Then there is the question of how these effects related to the structure of the stage. While Andrew Gurr argues that the playhouses are merely 'convenient accessories to the business of playing' (1992: 115), the architectural differences between the two playing spaces would have had a significant impact on the appearance of the storm. Situated on the south bank of the Thames in London, the Globe was a large open-air public theatre built by the Lord Chamberlain's Men. This same company would be selected as the King's Men soon after James VI of Scotland assumed the throne of England as James I in 1603. The Globe was a public theatre able to accommodate between 1,500 and 3,000 seated in its three-tiered auditorium. The raised, apron stage thrust out into the central pit, where for a penny the 'groundlings' would stand to watch the performance.[4] As with the replica establishment in London today, performances took place in the afternoon and were dependent on natural light and good weather. Although the daylight would have dimmed the pyrotechnics and dulled the thunder run, theatrical weather outdoors was, as Jones points out, open to 'environmental irony' (2015b: 9). In other words, when actual weather intervened poorly or well with the action, players likely capitalized on their literal circumstances either for humour or enhanced dramatic effect.

The Blackfriars was effectively the opposite of the Globe: a private, indoor, rectangular auditorium with an estimated capacity of about 700 people, all of them seated, some on stools on the stage itself. In contrast to the daylight of the Globe, the dim oil- and candle-lighting of the indoor theatre and the sensitive acoustics of its cathedral ceilings would have awarded a special intensity to the spectacle of the storm scenes, both enhancing the sounds of the thunder, wind and rain and brightening the effects of the lightning. Moreover, music was a more significant feature of performances in the private

[3] On *The Tempest* at Blackfriars, see Sturgess, 73–97 and A. Gurr, '*The Tempest*'s Tempest at Blackfriars, *Shakespeare Survey 41: Shakespearean Stages and Staging,* S. Wells (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 91–102.

[4] On theatre-going in the early seventeenth century, see A. Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

than the public theatre. In their designated room to the side of the Blackfriars' stage, the musicians, doubling here as sound-effects men, would doubtless have added to the sound of the thunder-roll or thunder-sheet their own music (likely that of strings, woodwind and drums) in order to create the tumult of the storm (Sturgess 1987: 82–3).

As well as being a technically complex and durational event in both theatres, it is also probable that such a spectacle was popular with audiences. As Jones points out, 'the Globe and the Rose … were less than fifty yards apart … It is therefore quite possible that the audience and the players at the Rose would have been distracted, and intrigued, by the violent sounds coming from nearby' (2015a: 37). While this is a moot point with regard to *King Lear* because the competing venue was empty by the time of the first productions, the idea holds true: spectacular storms were probably used in a variety of ways as a 'marketing' strategy specifically designed to lure audiences away from rival companies. In the prologue to *Every Man in his Humour* (1598), Ben Jonson even expresses a hope that his audience will not demand such cheap and populist tactics:

> [The playwright] rather prays you will be pleas'd to see / One such to-day as other plays should be; / Where neither … / nimble squib is seen, to make afear'd / The gentlewomen, nor roll'd bullet heard / To say, it thunders, nor tempestuous drum / Rumbles, to tell you when the storm doth come; / But deeds, and language. (2000 [1601]: 2)

Like the storm, this prologue is also commercially strategic. In contrasting his own work to an unnamed multitude of 'other plays' that use spectacle in lieu of dialogue and action, he implies he is doing something different and more sophisticated. His use of the modal verb 'should' in the conditional mood of how things 'should be' signals his own position on the matter. Jonson implies that a staged storm detracts from the experience of theatre by anticipating one's emotions and directing an interpretation. Instead, the speaker of the prologue argues that the audience 'should be' satisfied with well-crafted dramatic stories over spectacle and he pleads with them to have better taste.[5]

Although Sturgess argues that Shakespeare 'had greater faith in the power of theatrical illusion' than Jonson (1987: 114), I showed in the second chapter

[5] In arguments with his scenic artist Inigo Jones, Jonson advocated simple staging. See, for example, D. J. Gordon, 'Poet and Architect: The Intellectual Setting of the Quarrel between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 12 (12) (1949): 152–78.

that *King Lear*'s storm does not actually aim to foreshadow action or frighten 'gentle-women' in any hackneyed manner, but rather plays with conventions in a complex way for particular narrative ends. In the context of the very early productions, then, what kind of story was this noisy and fiery storm event in the service of telling? What politics did it convey? What emotions did it manipulate?

In its earliest performances, the storm was not just a simple meteorological event, but one that defied audience expectations shaped by older, tempest-less versions of the story. As such, I suspect that, despite its textual ambiguities, as a literal event and new addition to *this* particular story told at *this* historical juncture, the primary effect of the storm was to elicit sympathy for King Lear by way of literal exposure and to, however obliquely, stoke support for King James. Although Laurie Shannon has argued convincingly that the dramatization of 'weather on skin' gave rise to Shakespeare's unique meditation on the human-animal divide and presented an idea of 'human *negative* exceptionality' (2013: 132, emphasis in original), building on the argument from the end of chapter three, I assume that in the theatre the nuances of the text's social commentary were secondary to the spectacle of Lear's exposure. So rather than focusing on the nuances of the storm's text, we need to consider how its fiery spectacle might have given rise to sympathy for Lear.

King Lear was a paradoxical allegory of the British political landscape in 1605–6. James Shapiro writes that 1606 was a 'good year for Shakespeare' but an 'awful one for England' (2015: 7). King James was reeling from the foiled attempt to blow up parliament in late 1605 and struggling with the English parliament over the question of whether to unite England and Scotland. James advocated unity; the parliament resisted. Thus *King Lear,* a play about disloyalty and division, was written in a context where concepts of loyalty and unity were paramount. Although James and Lear are opposite figures, in their actions, ages and temperament – Lear divides while James wanted to unite; Lear had ruled for years while at this time James had only held the throne for three; Lear is erratic while James was not – the wrecked kingdom and the tragic ending might have an almost cathartic effect on a people who nearly found themselves kingless a year earlier. In such a context, the spectacle of the storm and of Lear's exposure garners sympathy for a once-sovereign figure plagued by systemic disloyalty and illegitimate claims to power. Throughout the history of the play this will

not always be the case – we will not always sympathize with Lear and his status as legitimate sovereign will be deeply questioned by the end of the twentieth century – but the early incarnations of the play were not radically critical of kingship. To explain this deeply conservative interpretation of the play – which, I might add, utterly contravenes my own personal interpretation of one of the most ambiguous and potentially anti-authoritarian dramatic works in the canon – I return again to look more carefully at Shakespeare's use of Harsnett.

Shakespeare's thorough metabolization of Harsnett, which is key to understanding the storm's capacity to move people to sympathize with Lear, should also be seen as central influence on Shakespeare's adaptation of an old tale to resonate with the political landscape of 1606 as well. In this, the spectacular storm remains the key. Where Harsnett critiqued the theatricality of Catholic exorcism by pointing to the thunderous theatrics as illusory, Shakespeare enacted the same political critique in terms of Catholic illegitimacy *and*, in an extraordinary sleight of hand, co-opted the authority of theatricality by maintaining the illusory storm. So, while Brownlow argued that Shakespeare's storm should be understood in an analogical relation with Harsnett's exorcism – 'Shakespeare … presents his storm as an exorcism, with King Lear as its interpreter' (Brownlow 1993: 114) – in contrast I show how the relationship between the texts is far more complex. The storm was like an unreconstructed feature of the exorcism. For example, the purpose of Harsnett's critique of Catholic illegitimacy is to unmask the theatrical illusion of exorcism, thereby highlighting the illegitimate nature of the exorcist's dialogue with the heavens. In this regard, Lear might be thought of as the illegitimate exorcist. He attempts to conjure the storm, but his failure is spectacularized for the audience, just as Harsnett demystifies the exorcist's craft for the reader. But, in the context of the tragic story, the fact that the storm does not 'align' with Lear and that his attempted dialogue is unreciprocated does not exact an identical critique upon the old man. Thus Shakespeare is also the exorcist, whose art remains masked, thereby turning Lear into his unwitting victim. With regard to Harsnett, then, Shakespeare co-opts the authority of theatricality, or the power of the spectacle shape our sympathies, at the same time that Lear attempts to commune with a pitiless storm. Which is to say Lear is also in the position of the possessed victim, or the one suffering a cruel and unusual 'exorcism' at the hands of illegitimate powers.

Illegitimate power, which is centralized in and as the Catholic Church in Harsnett, is distributed through *King Lear* in his daughters and Cornwall, but, in particular, embodied in and articulated directly by Edmund, the bastard antagonist. 'Edmunds' is the name of Harsnett's exorcist and Edmund occupies that illegitimate political position in the play. Both 'Edmunds', the antagonist in *Lear* and the exorcist in Harsnett, were characters charged with exploiting others' beliefs in the heavens for their own material gains. In the *Declaration*, Harsnett explores how Edmunds cynically preys upon the beliefs of others to maintain the church's authority. In *Lear*, Edmund directly plays with his father's beliefs in heavenly signs in 1.2. But it is not until the storm that Edmund makes his main power play. Where Edmunds the exorcist uses storms as theatrical tricks, Edmund the bastard's trick during the storm is subterfuge. He takes the opportunity of his father's articulated sympathy with Lear's exposure to the storm to pragmatically move to claim his land. Upon gleaning information about Lear from Gloucester in 3.3, based on trust established during their earlier exchange about the heavens, he reports Lear's plans and his father's sympathies to Cornwall in 3.5. Thus, the storm is treated as a theatrical spectacle akin to exorcism by magnificently co-opting the authority of the exorcism's theatricality in and for the theatre. At the same time, Shakespeare reflects a similar political position to Harsnett criticizing illegitimate figures exploiting the beliefs of others.

The key difference is that Shakespeare has distributed the contemporary politics of the *Declaration* throughout the story, in the setting, protagonist and antagonist, while at the same time using the power of stormy illusion to garner the utmost sympathy for Lear: in terms of the play's resonance with audiences in 1606, the dazzling loud and bright spectacle and the concomitant meditation on loyalty and unity emerging from the Sovereign's literal exposure to a meteorological cataclysm was all that really mattered in the end. In this regard, the sympathy Lear probably garnered from the audience – due to the spectacle of his exposure to the cold night and the pitiless meteorological storm – was central to the way in which the play would have resonated with the contemporary political landscape. My sense is that *although* Lear is appallingly behaved, during the storm an audience would come to realize that he is still worthy of basic human kindness, and a dry and warm house. The spectacle produces bipartisan sympathy: no matter what side of politics you

are on, most would agree that Lear should be sheltered. The message: support the beleaguered king.

A few other contextual details lend support to this interpretation. First, we know that the Master of Revels did not censor the play so, at least in the early productions, any lingering ambiguities did not cause serious offence. Lear was evidently not mistaken for James, and the play was not taken as critical of his rule. Moreover, despite its textual ambiguity, as a theatrical event *King Lear* is not very subtle. Indeed, this genealogy will come to show how productions are *either* spectacularly supportive of authority *or* radically critical of the establishment, just as we might understand King Lear as *either* old and requiring support and loyalty; extravagant, hot-tempered and deserving of nothing; *or*, even, appallingly behaved *and yet* still deserving of basic human sympathy. As I mentioned above, the gunpowder plot was just over twelve months before the first known performance of *Lear* for the king at court and so questions of religious affiliation and political loyalty remained paramount. In this regard, it was not a time for Shakespeare and the Company to risk ambiguous messaging with regard to the legitimacy of the king's authority. Also, given that James's two young sons were also the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall, Andrew Gurr argues the play was not only a broad argument for loyalty and supportive of the king's agenda, but also 'a token of support for James's desire to unify his kingdoms' (2002: 51), given the utter chaos that results from their division in the play. After the death of Richard Burbage in 1619, an elegaic poem was written about all his great protagonists, including 'Kind Lear.' According to Jeffrey Kahan, that Lear was perceived as 'Kind' suggests that he successfully played the role in 'the key of victim' (2008: 2).

In other words, in its first fiery and spectacular incarnations at Whitehall, The Globe and Blackfriars, the storm's predominant function was to emphasize Lear's exposure and produce sympathy for the old man. Lear's so-called madness, which is now more frequently considered the primary purpose of the storm, was likely an adjunct dimension of this character that can be viewed variously as a humoural condition, psychological affliction or an affective response to his regret at having banished Cordelia, but it was secondary to the dramatization of the spectacle of his exposure to the elements. Thus, the meteorological storm itself, situated across a landscape that is neither court

nor battlefield, provided a theatrical space that allowed those remaining loyal to Lear to try to recover what was lost in the division and others to act upon the systemic instability to establish new authority. So despite the suite of ambiguities that I identified in the second chapter, there were no radically modern or ambivalent messages delivered to audiences in early productions. The openness of the play text on account of Lear's exposure to the storm, the storm's unclear dramatic function and its spectacular authority to move audiences to feel something are critical to its capacity for future reinterpretations, but these result from subsequent changes to the play's political, social and cosmological context.

That said, given the aim of this section is to chase the storm across history, it is also worth scaling up our thinking about the significance of the spectacle of the storm in the Globe and how that relates to broader historical changes underway at the time. As I showed in chapter one, the play has been read as foreshadowing a number of large-scale historical processes, only nascent in England in 1606: the decline of feudalism, the rise of capitalism, the decline of the religious and the development of the secular worldview. The *King Lear* cosmos is not closed or complete, but rather open and ambiguous. Lear's invocation of ancient gods references the past, to be sure, but the storm's indifference to him can also point to a modern godless universe. Given the play's provisional representation of processes of historical change, in the guise of a story about abdication, inheritance and generational change, the storm's lack of supernatural import invites an interpretation of the play as a radical story about what it *feels* like physically and emotionally to experience a paradigm shift, one of the primary blows to human narcissism, what Derrida after Freud calls the 'cosmological trauma' (2006 [1993]: 121). Lear's changing personal feelings about 'this contentious storm' can be understood symbolically as markers of process of historical change. In 1606 audiences may have also felt they were on the edge of big changes too, especially given the widespread political instability in Britain at the time. Although this argument is only really plausible from the vantage of retrospection, there is a crack in 'nature's moulds' (3.2.8) occurring culturally at the very time Shakespeare's storm refuses to align with any known cosmic order.

Crucially, the crack that occurs to nature's moulds is radically different to the one Lear called for. By refusing to be an obedient entity, the storm

creates a fissure in the architecture of the heavens down to the walls of the Globe theatre itself. In other words, if the stage was a microcosm of the early modern world, then the Globe was the example *par excellence* because, taken as a whole, in name and architecture, it resembled the geocentric cosmos: the heavens were objectified in the roof above the stage and the stage itself represented the earth at the centre. In *Playhouse and Cosmos* Kent van den Berg claims that 'the architecture of the playhouse objectifies in its basic spatial relationships the metaphoric relations of play and reality that Shakespeare establishes in dramatic fiction' (1985: 23). Staged storms literally originated in the 'heavens' of the theatre, with thunder and lightning resonating from the attic room above the actors' heads. Hamlet famously describes how the roof, walls and pillars not only structurally resembled the cosmos, but were also decorated as such: 'This goodly frame the earth / … / this brave o'erhanging firmament, / this majestical roof fretted with golden fire' (*Ham.* 2.2.300–3). In *King Lear,* Lear does not simply describe the heavens, but rather calls upon them to physically correspond with his power or take pity on his plight. In his famous storm speeches in 3.2 Lear calls upon the theatre itself to become a 'frame' for his actions too: 'Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks' (3.2.1) calls upon the heavens to do his work, to restore his sovereign authority. But tragically, the frame does not shift to align clearly with his new situation, nor does it align with any character's particular belief system. It is as if the story of *King Lear* begins in one world and ends up in a new and unfamiliar cosmos.

At the same time, however, the weather is not entirely evasive and the relation between the actual weather's unpredictability and Lear's non-responsive storm is deeply ironic when considered in relation to performances of the play. On one hand, the fantasy of humans controlling the weather is explicitly dramatized by way of Lear's desperate attempt to commune with the meteors and, at the same time, realized in theatre artists' god-like manipulation and control of the stage environment. In Bacon's utopia, *The New Atlantis* (1627), the 'great and spacious houses where we imitate and demonstrate meteors; as snow, hail, rain, some artificial rains of bodies and not of water, thunders, lightnings' are supposedly new modern scientific institutions (2011 [1621]). Although some scientific practice during the period that follows becomes a spectator sport, such as the gory operating 'theatres' of the nineteenth century, meteorologists never managed such a feat. Instead, in the centuries to come, the great houses

for the imitation of the meteors become the live theatres of London where, with chemicals, fire, instruments, flying machines and eventually technologies of gas and electricity, spectacular storms were imitated and demonstrated for audiences.

Conclusion

Contrary to the received idea that the Jacobean theatre was largely symbolic and unspectacular, building on Jones's work, this chapter has shown how the storm would have been a spectacular moment in the performance and theorized what the dazzlingly staged storm might have signified to an early audience. In the next chapter, rather than the Restoration coming to be a period whereby theatre becomes spectacular, the big historical narrative I chart here identifies changing technology, new artistic techniques and evolving architectural styles as a source of innovation on the stage and thus a different kind of meteorological spectacle begins to develop.

6

Storms of Fortune: Industrial Technology and Nahum Tate, c. 1680–c. 1900

When King Charles II issued licences for William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew to begin staging spoken plays in 1661, there was an enormous spike in the scale, frequency and vibrancy of public theatre performance.[1] The legal and financial support of the newly restored monarchy fostered a vibrant artistic culture. Towards the end of the nineteen years during which spoken plays were banned, spectacular theatrical and scenic effects that had previously been the preserve of aristocratic masques had been introduced to the theatres in the form of operatic spectacles, with the support of Cromwell. *The Siege of Rhodes*, *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* and *The History of Sir Frances Drake* avoided the ban on spoken plays by staging scenic spectacles linked by passages of sung recitative. Following the lifting of the ban on spoken theatre, older plays were staged and adapted while new plays were written. With the patenting of only two legitimate theatres, the rights to Shakespeare's plays were split between the two licensees. The performance rights for *King Lear* went to Davenant's company, the Duke's Men, and after at least two presumably failed attempts to stage Shakespeare's version in the 1660s and 1670s, Nahum Tate's adaptation was staged and published in 1681.

The relationship between Tate's adaptation and Shakespeare's play is complex. At the same time as radically changing the story, Tate acknowledged that his play grew 'in rich Shakespear's soil' (1969 [1681]: n.p.).

[1] There is a continuum, rather than a chasm, between the ban on spoken plays in 1642 and the lifting of the ban in 1661. As well as illegal attempts at performing spoken plays, publically performed dramatic work continued in various forms (for example, extremely condensed versions of plays, puppet shows and, hybrids with sung recitative). For an analysis of the interregnum theatre see D. Lewcock, *Sir William Davenant, the Court Masque, and the English Seventeenth-Century Scenic Stage, c1605–c1700* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2008).

Moreover, although Shakespeare's play was not fully restored until 1838, many actor-managers in the intervening years associated their production with the Bard in various ways, even if they were largely following Tate's version of the plot.[2] Garrick's 1742 production, for instance, followed Tate's plotline, but it was billed as 'KING LEAR with restorations from Shakespeare' and by the end of his career he had returned as many passages from Shakespeare's play as possible without disrupting the new plotline (Burnim 1973: 144).

Even though Shakespeare's original plots were not performed at this time, his legacy, fame and genius were under construction in Restoration and Georgian Britain. He became 'the national poet' through a series of pageants and festivals celebrating his life (Dobson 1992). Moreover, from the late seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Shakespeare began to colonize languages and imaginations across the globe. In 1769, for example, the same year as Garrick's Jubilee cemented Shakespeare's role as England's literary icon, his texts began their journey to the antipodes on Captain James Cook's ship, the *Endeavour* (Houlahan 170). Educated members of the public, such as Samuel Johnson (1765) and Charles Lamb (1810), turned to the new literary pastime of reading the plays. What we learn from both Johnson's and Lamb's writings is that although Shakespeare's *King Lear* was widely understood to be a superior work of dramatic literature, no one actually wanted to watch the horrors of Cordelia's death (Johnson) and Lear in the storm (Lamb) unfold on stage. Audiences preferred Tate's happier story.

To this end, I characterize Tate's version not as an artistic monstrosity or historical aberration, as it is sometimes understood, but rather, as a clever revision of Shakespeare's play that responded to contemporary social issues. That Tate's *History* managed to live on beyond its moment of first production is a testament to its viability as a play.[3] But given I am interested in the relationship between Shakespeare and Tate in a more general textual sense, I also want to think of Tate, after Doris Adler, as a particular response to

[2] On the development at this time of the cultural phenomenon of 'Shakespeare's genius', see G. Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); M. Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660–1769* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); J. Bate *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997).

[3] Thank you to Dr John Severn for this point.

problems and paradoxes in Shakespeare's play (1985: 52–6).[4] So although Tate's version occupied the stage, Shakespeare's presence loomed large over the plays and the wider cultural context. Before coming to the role of the storm, though, I must outline the differences between the plays because Tate's adaptation of *King Lear* so radically departs from Shakespeare's, any earlier analysis of the play needs to be adapted too.

To understand the differences between the storms, we first need a clear understanding of Tate's major alterations to the story. Tate's *dramatis personae* are very similar to Shakespeare's: Lear and his daughters, Cornwall, Albany, Kent, Oswald, Burgundy, Gloucester, Edgar and Edmund all feature, but he also gives Cordelia a 'Confidante', Arante. The Fool and France are omitted entirely. The absence of France means Cordelia remains in Britain after the banishment, and the absence of the Fool means there is no character persistently contradicting Lear's sense of self. But, as in Shakespeare, the division of the kingdom, Lear's disowning of Cordelia, and Edmund's desire to claim land as a bastard son are some of the main catalysts of the conflict.

Tate further entangles Shakespeare's plot and subplot by devising a romance between Cordelia and Edgar. In the division of the kingdom, Cordelia is banished by her father and rejected by Burgundy and, in the absence of France, Edgar presents himself as the second suitor. Cordelia initially rejects him, but undeterred, he pursues Cordelia throughout the play. Not being married to France, Cordelia is made much more prominent: as she remains in Britain, she is able to respond immediately to the turmoil there. Giving a more substantial role to one of the first professional actresses on the English public stage is a key reason for this change, but it has a significant impact upon the overall story as well. Lear's journey back to the throne and the new Edgar–Cordelia romance constitute the main plot of Tate's adaptation and both come to a climax during the storm.

In this regard, the most obvious difference between the two plots lies in their endings. In Shakespeare's play Lear dies and does not reclaim the throne,

[4] Although Adler's perspective on Tate is now understood as dated and anachronistic, her idea that 'the conservative perpetuation of theatrical conventions associated with *King Lear* affords an ongoing method of addressing the same problems and potentials originally addressed by Tate' (1985: 52) is useful. Rather than viewing Tate and productions of Shakespeare's version after 1838 as radically different, this notion helps in to understand the tendency toward a more sympathetic view of Lear endured in the period up until the 1970s.

whereas in Tate's adaptation he survives but does not accept the crown.[5] Instead he nominates Edgar and Cordelia as joint successors, which suggests a happy and united future for Britain. The final lines reflect the differing tones of the endings. Shakespeare's play ends with a grim reflection on the disaster that has unfolded in Lear's name. Delivered by Albany in Quarto and Edgar in the Folio, the play ends:

> The weight of this sad time we must obey,
> Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
> The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
> Shall never see so much, nor live so long. (5.3.322–5)

The lines are often delivered with most of the fallen characters lying dead on stage at the survivors' feet. Tate's ending, on the other hand, celebrates triumph, glorifies kingdom and, above all, champions love. While the happy ending is the most notorious feature of Tate's adaptation,[6] it is worth noting again that in the long tradition of the Lear tale, from the oral fables to Monmouth to Tate, Shakespeare is actually the odd one out: his is the only version of the Lear story in which Lear and Cordelia die without first reclaiming the throne. In Tate's version, after having married Cordelia and assumed the throne, Edgar delivers this speech:

> Our drooping Country now erects her Head,
> Peace spreads her balmy wings and Plenty Blooms.
> Divine *Cordelia*, all the Gods can witness
> How much thy Love to Empire I prefer!
> Thy bright Example shall convince the World
> (Whatever storms of Fortune are decreed)
> Truth and Vertue shall at last succeed. (1969 [1681]: 67)

So while we might scoff at the upbeat populist ending, *King Lear*, like most of Shakespeare's plays, was adapted during the Restoration period to suit the aesthetic styles and political tastes of a new generation of audiences.[7] In a prologue to the printed text, Tate expressed that even though he radically

[5] For a good analysis of the similarities and differences between the two plays in this regard see Atsuhiko Hirota, 'The Kingdoms of Lear in Tate and Shakespeare: A Restoration Reconfiguration of Archipelagic Kingdoms', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 21 (2013).

[6] See, for example, Bratton, *King Lear* (14) and Murray, *Restoration Shakespeare* (153).

[7] The first adaptation was in 1662, *The Law against Lovers*, an adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Measure for Measure*, and the last in 1682, *The Injured Princess*, or *The Fatal Wager*,

changed the work of Shakespeare he hoped that 'those whose Tasts [*sic*] are True' will be delighted by his changes to the story (1969 [1681]: A6). Indeed, turning tragedy to triumph is a somewhat miraculous editorial feat, and so it pays to note how Tate made this plausible.

Alongside the differences outlined above, the storm provides the key conceit whereby Tate reroutes the tragedy towards triumph. From Lear's point of view, Tate's storm plays out in much the same way as it did in Shakespeare's: he rails to no effect against the weather and is moved to pray for the poor naked wretches who, like himself, are exposed to the pitiless storm. Tate directly transcribes some of Lear's more famous speeches in the storm and, as with Shakespeare, Lear is also goaded toward, and eventually retreats into, a hovel.

At the same time, however, Cordelia expresses concern at her father's exposure and insists that she and Arante go out into the storm in search of Lear. Edmund eavesdrops on this exchange and finds himself attracted to Cordelia's piety and beauty. He plans to rape her and bribes two 'ruffians' to kidnap Cordelia. The storm is the ideal time, he argues, because it will drown out her cries for help: 'then too th' Field / Where like the vig'rous *Jove* I will enjoy / This Semele in a storm, 'twill deaf her Cries / Like Drums in a Battle, / less her Groans shou'd pierce / My pittying Ear, and make the amorous Fight less fierce' (Tate 1969 [1681]: 28). Meanwhile Cordelia and Arante stumble upon the same hovel. Arante insists they take shelter, but Cordelia refuses to retreat, borrowing two of Lear's lines from Shakespeare: 'Prethee go in thy self, see thy own Ease, / Where the Mind's free, the Body's Delicate: / This Tempest but diverts me from the Thought / Of what wou'd hurt me more' (Tate 1969 [1681]: 33).[8] In Tate's version, Cordelia's concern for her father makes her impervious to the storm's elements. So, of course, Arante leaves her alone outside in the storm, at which point Edmund's ruffians strike. Cordelia cries for help and Edgar, who had been playing Poor Tom for Lear inside the hovel, hears her voice and rushes to her rescue. A grateful Cordelia then witnesses

an adaptation of *Cymbeline*. On adaptation in the period, see B. Murray, *Restoration Shakespeare: Viewing the Voice* (Cranbury, London and Mississauga: Associated University Press, 2001).

[8] The lines from Shakespeare's version used by Tate are: 'When the mind's free, / The body's delicate: this tempest in my mind / Doth from my senses take all feeling else, / Save what beats there, filial ingratitude' (3.4.11–14) and 'Prithee go in thyself, seek thine own ease. / This tempest will not give me leave to ponder / On things that would hurt me more' (3.4.23–5).

Poor Tom's concern for her father. Excited that he has saved Cordelia, Edgar accidently drops his disguise and reveals that he knows her name. Cordelia becomes suspicious that this 'madman' holds such information and sees through his disguise. As such, Edgar reveals his true identity and Cordelia promptly falls in love with him.

The storm thus supplies Lear an opportunity to commune with the heavens about injustice and ingratitude and despite the storm's indifference, there are others nearby who do care for him and actively seek to right the wrongs. So rather than being a vehicle to elicit audience sympathy that underscores a timely cautionary tale about loyalty, unity, illegitimacy and divisiveness, the storm provides the leading actor with his moment of climactic performance and sets up the plot for the restoration of the monarchy. It is a 'storm of fortune', a tumultuous event over which that the good humans ultimately triumph.

Alongside its altered dramatic function of the event, the storm began to look different on the stage. According to J. L. Styan, the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century is a period of revolution in theatre architecture: the 'fifty years (following the Restoration) saw extraordinary innovation in almost all departments of the drama; in particular … the playhouse' (1996: 237). Restoration playhouses were not like the Elizabethan and Jacobean public theatres; rather they were modelled on the private theatres like Blackfriars and architectural designs imported from continental Europe (Styan 1996: 237). Thus, the polygonal amphitheatres of early seventeenth-century London were replaced by large rectangular buildings, the main features of which were an indoor auditorium, a stage with scenery, a proscenium arch with one or two doors on either side of the forestage, balconies over the doors, and a music gallery (Styan 1996: 240–1). The actors and newly sanctioned female actresses (Howe 1992: 21) played close to their audiences on a shallow apron. Thus in the Restoration we see a move towards the kind of actor–spectator relationship that defines the modern playhouse.

During this time mechanisms for changeable scenery and new techniques for scene painting were developed, variations of which are still used in theatres today. Although all these techniques were not necessarily used in *King Lear*, the technologies were starting to move the stage towards an animated, pictorial representation of the world. Elaborate rope systems and

cranes enabled motion in the set, so, for example, a tree could now appear to move in the wind and waves could roll like the stormy sea. In plays calling for magic, such as *The Tempest*,[9] characters were often flown on ropes or platforms rigged up to the system. Such machinery, which had existed since Antiquity, was previously used in the construction of buildings rather than creation of theatrical illusions (Langhans 2000: 10); in the Restoration theatre these techniques were employed for creative ends. *Trompe l'oeil* painting techniques were also used upon moveable scenery to pictorialize the reality on stage. The illusion created by this painterly technique combined with mechanical development marks the real beginnings of the creation of a pictorial or 'naturalistic' stage.

For all the celebration of innovation on the Restoration stage, an anti-climactic detail is often overlooked: thunder, lightning, wind and rain were created with almost exactly the same technologies as the Jacobeans. So, the storm was not *newly* spectacular, it was only *differently* so. Gas lighting was still over a century away, so artists in the period were entirely dependent on candles for ambient lighting. Sound was also acoustic, there was likely music for atmosphere, and old technologies like dried starch balls in small wooden boxes to emulate rain, as well as drums and the thunder-run for thunder, were still deployed for sound effects. It is the composite of these new devices and painterly techniques, alongside the older fiery technologies of the earlier theatre, that aided in the recreation of *Lear*'s storm.

Although there is no extant information on the storm in late seventeenth-century productions of either Shakespeare's *King Lear* or Tate's *The History of King Lear*, it is possible to speculate again on the meaning of the storm in the redesigned theatres with the new devices and technologies, alongside the adapted dramatic work. The storm on the Restoration stage was a

[9] For a good indication of the scale of stormy spectacles during the Restoration, see the stage direction for the opening scene of William Davenant and John Dryden's 1667 adaptation of the *The Tempest – The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* (D'Avenant and Dryden, *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island,* London: Jacob Tonson, 1735). Davenant and Dryden co-ordinated an extended supernatural visual and aural extravaganza that combined traditional sound and light effects with new technologies such as flying objects, movable scenery and painted backdrops. The lengthy stage direction draws a complete picture of the proscenium arch theatre, with a curtain and a frontispiece with royal ornamentation signalling the company's royal patronage, and raised stage in a covered auditorium. This is very different from the round, wooden, open-air space of the Globe. Also, we get a clear image of an orchestra set on the apron stage, indicating the growing divide between the audience 'pit' and the stage space itself.

spectacular event that enabled the dramatization of the notion that legitimate moral authority could survive times of extreme political and natural tumultuousness. In this regard, the storm can be read as both an expression of nostalgia for a time when royal power was thought to correspond to the movement of the meteors, but, more to the point, also a representation of nascent Enlightenment ideals of morality, nature and the exceptional human condition in the play's triumphant representation of truth and virtue despite variation in the weather. Indeed, Tate's storm points backwards and forwards in history just like the storm in Shakespeare's play, but with a much more affirmative vision of the powers of the human.

Aside from functioning differently within the plot and thus spectacularizing the triumph of legitimate order against the odds, in Tate's version the overall significance of the storm is also altered because the cosmological dimension of Shakespeare's dramatic poetry is edited considerably. This strategy is what Barbara Murray describes as 'The [Restoration] adapter's motive to develop the visual and metaphoric coherence of the originals for entertainment and to enhance their didactic function' (Murray 2001: 18). Tate himself outlines this rationale in the dedication. He observes that the:

> Images and Language [in Shakespeare's *Lear*] are so odd and surprizing, and yet so agreeable and proper, that whilst we grant that none but Shakespear cou'd have form'd such Conceptions, yet we are satisfied that they were the only Things in the World that ought to be said on those Occassions … yet so dazling [*sic*] in their Disorder, that I soon perceiv'd I had seiz'd upon a Treasure. (1969 [1681]: n.p.)

Shakespeare's language is beautiful but anachronistic, almost unintelligibly so. Tate's job was to make the 'treasure' contemporary.

Within this, there is an observable tendency away from the explicitly cosmological aspect of Shakespeare's version. For example, when Shakespeare's Lear disowns Cordelia, he does so in explicitly cosmological terms: 'For by the sacred radiance of the sun, / The mysteries of Hecate and the night, / By all the operation of the orbs / From whom we do exists and cease to be, / Here I disclaim all my paternal care' (1.1.110–14). Tate radically minimizes the heavenly dimensions of Lear's oath: 'For by the sacred Sun and solemn Night / I here disclaim all my paternal care' (5). In both cases the action is the

same and the good daughter is banished, of course, but Shakespeare's Lear is more explicitly cosmological, calling on goddesses and heavenly spheres as he casts off Cordelia. Furthermore, in Shakespeare's version, the exchange between Edmund and Gloucester in 1.2 clearly establishes the cosmic stakes of the drama. In his famous 'excellent foppery of the world' (1.2.119) speech, Edmund soliloquizes on his father's superstitious pagan worldview and at the same time expounds his own inherent scepticism. Tate, however, removes this soliloquy outlining the play's cosmic parameters, and gives Edmund instead a simple terse reiteration of his commitment to subterfuge: 'So, now my project's firm' (1969 [1681]: 9). Tate does not frame Lear's motivations in cosmic terms; the differences between Edmund and his father are moral not cosmological and, as such, the play does not call into question or make an issue of, an individual character's belief systems in the same way.[10]

It is impossible to know if the differing cosmo-meteorologies in the plays relate to broader historical processes of 'paradigm shift' or if they are just side effects of the desire to streamline the plot. At the very least, topical political tensions expressed by way of Shakespeare's drama were no longer relevant or even legible by 1681; as such the characters' detailed reflections on their relations with the heavens likely seemed superfluous and confusing and was heavily edited.

Related to the diminished cosmic drama in Tate is the question of the extent to which emerging cosmologies had begun to change the dominant meteorological cultural imaginary at this time. The Royal Society was founded in 1660 and with this began the institutionalized scientific study of the natural world. In 1667 Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Naturall Knowledge* was published, consolidating the Society's work to date and including a section that described the new instrumental method for understanding the weather: 'For the better making a History of the Weather, I conceive it requisite to observe … by a sealed *Thermometer*

[10] Tate's version of *King Lear* is more easily thought of as a targeted reworking of the political drama, thus making his reworking of the cosmic drama incidental. The adaptation is now widely understood as supporting the monarchy, see for example C. B. Hardman, '"Our Drooping Country Now Erects Her Head": Nahum Tate's "History of King Lear"', *Modern Language Review* 95 (4) (2000): 913–23. In order to produce the 'restoration' of the monarchy at the end, of course, Shakespeare's cosmic drama – and with it the significance of the storm – would have to be altered. Tate's purpose was not to challenge the cosmic worldview of the monarch, but rather to reassert it. But for my purposes it is more useful to think directly about how he edits the cosmic drama.

… a *Hygroscope* … an Instrument with Quicksilver (Barometer)' (Hooke [1667] 2012). Moreover, as Vladimir Jankovic shows in *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather 1650–1820* (2001), around the time of Tate's version, members of the newly opened Royal Society were trying to 'rehabilitate' or explain in naturalistic terms marvellous or unusual meteorological events within a Baconian natural philosophical method. The desire to contain, measure and quantify meteorology within a closed atmospheric system struggled against the weather's unpredictability and strangeness. As such, according to Jankovic, Providentialist interpretations of weather events remained rife (50–9). Moreover, Craig Martin argues that, even though Aristotle's model is usually characterized as disappearing by the late seventeenth century, replaced as if overnight with the modern method of understanding the meteors, in reality the Aristotelian mode of thinking about the 'meteors' lingered for much longer (Martin 2011: 148–55). Those working for the Royal Society still used Aristotelian vocabulary such as 'exhalations', 'vapours' and 'heavenly bodies' at the same time as trying to measure its material constitution. Even Descartes' extensive work on meteorology in the period involves a mix of the classical and modern ideas (2001: 261–3). Ultimately, it is a period of slow, incomplete transition in the scientific, philosophical and cultural understanding of the meteors.

Although there were no landmark technological advances between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the great theatres for the 'imitation of the meteors' became bigger and more dynamic. For example, the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane was built just after the Restoration and initially accommodated between 1,400 and 2,000 audience members (Styan 1996: 274), but by the 1790s it was expanded to accommodate over 3,000 people, with some extant designs suggesting its capacity may have exceeded 3,600 (275). For pragmatic reasons, as the theatre got bigger, tragic acting styles became necessarily louder and more declamatory. It was presumably difficult for actors to be heard in the cavernous new spaces over the hum of such a large audience. Within these venues, the desire to create an animated and pictorial world on stage led to a new level of complexity and grandiosity as well. Indeed, Sarah Hatchuel argues that it is in this period that we can see the nascent desire for the production of a filmic or virtual reality start to manifest in the theatre (2004: 1–33). So, although the Georgian theatre was still

illuminated by candlelight and the storm was a combination of pyrotechnics and percussive sounds, the overall aesthetics of the performance, from human gestures to the quality of the setting, were likely integral to keeping an audience engaged in a story, the precise text of which was probably quite difficult to actually follow.

Two techniques nudged the theatre arts toward more three dimensional and dynamic staging. First, perspective scene painting was imported from opera production in Italy via the court masque (Styan 1996: 277), which enabled theatre artists to show the depth of a setting. Be it castle, court, heath, hovel, battlefield or beach, the background became more realistic. Second, this aesthetic was animated by the development of the stage 'wings', where moveable scenery and painted flats could be stored when not in use. Scenery and flats were also fitted to grooves in the floor, in order to be easily manoeuvred on and off stage as required (Styan: 274). The sets could change quickly and so as much as creating a greater sense of pictorial reality in the scenes, overtly theatrical transformations between places became part of the attraction.

Within cavernous theatre spaces, a more dynamic pictorial set and acting using large gestures to fill the expansive auditoriums, Tate's *King Lear* with various additions from Shakespeare became extraordinarily popular. Performances were recorded almost every year between 1701 and 1800: 293 in total (Hogan 1968). The most admired performance (both at the time and by theatre historians) during the period was at the Theatre Royal under the leadership of David Garrick. He played the role eighty-five times between 1742 and 1776 (Cunningham 2008: 120). Cunningham also shows us how from 1745 onward, Garrick started to amend Tate's text with additions from Shakespeare. Overall he kept Tate's plotline and the happy ending, but he brought back the longer poetic passages that had been omitted in the earlier adaptation. Where Tate minimized the cosmic dimensions of the drama – Cordelia's banishment by the 'sacred radiance of the sun, The mysteries of Hecate and the night' (G.1.2.73–4), Gloucester's 'late eclipses in the sun and moon' (G.1.3.81) and Edmund's 'excellent foppery of the world' (G.1.3.89) – Garrick restored all these passages. The purpose, though, was not to probe the relationship between worldview, loyalty and legitimate authority, Shakespeare's probable concern in 1606, but rather to furnish the heightened romanticism

of the script and the pathos of what was increasingly promoted as a 'tragedy', even with Tate's triumphant ending. Little is known about the designs of his production of *Lear*.[11] Instead, the records are overflowing with descriptions of his virtuosic performance.[12] In the absence of this information, I have reconstructed a stormy stage picture based on knowledge of Garrick's performance, a surviving visualization of the scene and his creative relationship with the painter, Philip James de Loutherbourg. The storm was geared towards an increasingly spectacular and pictorial representation of a meteorological event. Benjamin Wilson's mid-eighteenth-century painting 'Mr. Garrick in the Character of King Lear' (date unknown), which now exists only as a mezzotint by James McArdell (1761), provides us with a good impression of what an eighteenth-century Lear may have looked like out in the storm on stage. Garrick seems triumphant, with a single ray of light touching his face. The landscape is pictorial, with trees in the foreground and rolling hills in the background, dark clouds loom and lightning strikes. Although Stuart Sillars argues that we cannot be sure that paintings of Shakespeare productions were sketches of the stage design,[13] we can at least assume that the painting captures something of the tone of the performance, even if it is not a direct sketch of the stage picture itself.

A letter of praise sent to Garrick after one of his performances confirms as much:

> Such violent starts of amazement, of horror, of indignation, of paternal rage, excited by filial ingratitude the most prodigious; such a perceptible, yet rapid gradation, from those terrible feelings to deepest frenzy; such a striking correspondence between the tempest in his mind and that of the surrounding elements … Till at length the parent, the sovereign, and the friend shine out

[11] Given the amount of information on Garrick's performance of Lear, this struck me as odd. I am confident I have not missed something for two reasons. In Cunningham's *Shakespeare and Garrick,* the issue of design barely rates a mention. Furthermore, one of the first major historical studies of Garrick's work hit up against the same obstacle with regards to the storm: 'It is frustrating to think that the wealth of contemporary comment on his portrayal – in which the frantic part of Lear "seems never to have been rightly understood till this Gentleman studied it" – has left us with little more than a vacuous legacy.' K. A. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 146.

[12] For a good analysis of Garrick's version of *King Lear* see V. Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 119–61.

[13] Sillars argues for a complex, multi-directional interaction between painting, illustration, text and production in both his books. See S. Sillars, *Painting Shakespeare: The Artist as Critic, 1720–1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) and S. Sillars, *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709–1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

> in the mildest majesty of fervent virtue … These, Sir, are some of the great circumstances which so eminently distinguished your action two nights ago. (1831: 158–9).

James Fordyce gives us insight into the audience's response to Garrick's Lear: he watched, and drew incredible satisfaction from, Garrick's portrayal of Lear's emotions and how they were reflected in the heavens. Like in the image above, Fordyce describes a reflectivity between Garrick's performance and the storm. His achievement came about by means of a linking of gesture and weather, a full externalization of his affective state upon stage; during the storm this produced a 'striking correspondence between the tempest in his mind and the surrounding elements'.

Garrick's appointment of de Loutherbourg as his resident scenic artist in 1771 reveals a lot about his technical ambitions for the stage design of the storm as well. By then de Loutherbourg was already a well-known landscape painter, spending much of the 1760s exhibiting in the Paris Salon. It was not until after his employment with Garrick that he constructed the sublime landscape paintings and stormy shipwrecks for which he would become famous, but nonetheless, he was paid £500 per year to create sets and paint backdrops for Garrick's productions, including his productions of *Lear* (Burnim 1973: 72–3). Based on what we know of de Loutherbourg's style as a painter and scenic artist, we can assume that he aimed to vividly and dynamically situate *King Lear* within a pictorial setting. The storm was likely set within a subtly moving set, with trees perhaps appearing to blow wind while being moved back and forth on the grooves in the stage, while flashes of light and thunderous noises punctuated the action.

After his time at Drury Lane, de Loutherbourg went on to create *Eidophusikon*, which translates from Greek as 'image of nature'. This installation is important to describe not only because it inspires the design of one seminal nineteenth-century production of *King Lear,* but because it describes the limit of what was technically possible within the confines of live theatre during Garrick's reign. The *Eidophusikon* was a moving diorama, in part inspired by the dynamic stage picture, yet technologically more advanced. It was designed to mimic the more-than-human dynamism of nature.

Practically speaking, the *Eidophusikon* was a small space constructed within a room of a house, museum or theatre. The first public showing was in

de Loutherbourg's home in 1781, although it made its way into public display in following years (Altick 1978: 121). This room-within-a-room was darkened and there were a series of scenes constructed and performed for the viewer. Each new showing of the *Eidophusikon* slightly altered the scenes themselves, but for the very first showing the audience witnessed the passing of a whole day in a range of different locations and weather conditions, including a final storm scene.[14] Through this experiment de Loutherbourg created some lighting technologies to indicate the passing of time that became important techniques in the theatre during the nineteenth century. For example, he created a method to change the colour of light. De Loutherbourg achieved the changes by means of small slips of coloured glass placed inside the candle lanterns. The scenes themselves were not only painted wood panels, but also draped with lighter fabrics that could be moved or removed to indicate more subtle changes. The creation of lightning and thunder was not greatly different to that of the earlier theatre: a sheet of copper suspended in air agitated by hand, a machine to agitate stones and balls to create a rumbling, and firecrackers to create flashes of light. But, within the context of the *Eidophusikon,* the illusion of the thunder and lightning combined with painted and lit backdrops, created the illusion of a moving image. The animated pictorial spectacle was so enthralling that that when a real thunderstorm passed overhead, one audience member was reported to have declared that de Loutherbourg's thunder was more realistic than nature itself (Altick 1978: 124).

The aesthetic goal was to add the dimension of time to a painting. One journalist for *European Magazine* (1782) at the time insisted that de Loutherbourg:

> resolved to add motion to resemblance. He knew that the most exquisite painting represented only one moment of time action, and though we might justly admire the representation … the heightened look soon perceived the object to be at rest … He therefore planned a series of moving pictures which should unite the painter and the mechanic; by giving natural motion to accurate resemblance. (Quoted in Altick 1978: 121)

[14] The scenes for the first showing were: '1. Aurora, or the Effects of the Dawn, with a View of London from Greenwich Park; 2. Noon, the Port of Tangier in Africa, with the distant view of the Rock of Gibraltar and Europa Point; 3. Sunset, a View near Naples; 4. Moonlight, a View in the Mediterranean, the Rising of the Moon contrasted with the Effect of Fire; 5. The Conclusive Scene, a Storm at Sea, and Shipwreck' (Altick 1978: 124).

The dynamism of the passing of natural time was animated for the spectator. The aesthetic experience was strangely reminiscent of Bacon's express desire over a century earlier in *The New Atlantis* for 'great and spacious houses to imitate and demonstrate the meteors' (2011 [1627]). But in this case the room that housed this microcosm was not built for the purposes of study, but instead built solely for the purposes of entertainment, wonder and visual stimulation. In the *Eidophusikon,* the wonders of nature were elicited by the wonders of human ingenuity and technology, producing the most popular spectacular entertainment in Britain and Europe in the eighteenth century.

From the *Eidophusikon* we can extrapolate some ideas about Garrick's desires for theatrical weather and also the audience's sustained desire for a dynamic meteorological spectacle. First it is important to note that de Loutherbourg's display did not have the time constraints of the live theatre, the pressures of the plot, the duration of the scenes, variable pace of the dialogue and the complexities of scene changes; in other words, the shaping of the setting on account of the human drama. Its sole purpose was to animate the setting and meditate on the dynamics of a nature devoid of humans. De Loutherbourg could only achieve such visual trickery when insulated from the temporal pressures of dramatic theatre. While it is likely that some of the aesthetic preoccupations would have been explored on Garrick's stage, especially his attempt to translate the two dimensions of the painting into a complete three-dimensional theatre world, his desires could not be fully realized due to technological limitations. Conversely, although the pictorial illusionism of the *Eidophusikon* could not be achieved on Garrick's stage, we can assume that this is something like what he was aiming for. He wanted to create a theatrical event with a pictorial resemblance to the world. In the case of his version of *Lear* with Tate's plot extended by Shakespeare's cosmic poetry, the scenes were of a wild cataclysm that dramatized a crucial moment in Tate's *Lear* where the good unite and triumph over the wicked. This is a fantasy of total control where rogue nature can be tamed through both theatrical engineering and a redemptive conclusion to the drama.

To foreshadow the next chapter briefly, what we can see from the vantage of retrospection in that the creeping dynamic pictoralism of the stage,

which was buoyed by technological advancements, was a nascent type of cinematic vision. In *Shakespeare on Silent Film: An Excellent Dumb Discourse,* Judith Buchanan in fact proposes that the origins of film can be seen in the spectacular nineteenth-century theatre (2009: 23–4). But, as I mentioned briefly above, Sarah Hatchuel dates the origins of cinema back to the eighteenth century:

> In [Garrick's] production of *King Lear,* the storm scene was interspersed with thunder and bright flashes of lightning, and took place in a tormented landscape painted on shutters … the use of lighting simulated the faint light of the moon, the brightness of the sun and even volcanic eruptions … Garrick's merging of naturalism and magic is somehow predictive of modern cinema. (2004: 8).

Hatchuel takes some licence with regards to her specific account of the storm in Garrick's *Lear*, which seems more like a description of the Wilson/McArdell image that may have no correspondence with the stage picture at all. But even if Garrick's storm did not specifically achieve this degree of spectacle, her argument at least captures Garrick's ambitions for a particularly dynamic pictorial mode of representation. The idea of 'Nature as virtual reality' (Cronon 1995: 43) is not just a wacky contemporary concept Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles posited in the 1990s when working with William Cronon on cultural ideas about nature, but a long- standing fantasy of humans to imitate natural dynamism themselves. Indeed, Iain McCalman argued that de Loutherbourg's *Eidophusikon* 'constituted a novel experiment in "virtual reality" two centuries before the computer-digitised technologies of Silicon Valley reified that term' (2007). When considering the long-view of the literal storm on stage, this move towards a virtual reality on stage is ironic because the desire to produce a meteorological event on stage is one of the factors in the demise of spectacular theatre. In the long run, the ambitions of artists like Garrick to produce a dynamic storied spectacle advances and mobilizes theatre technology in such a way that will ultimately lead to the advent of cinema, at which time the creation of stage storms becomes significantly less valuable commercially or creatively. Until that point, however, staged storms became more and more sensational. The main problem with Shakespeare's version of the play, and what long thwarted its restoration to the stage, was that it did not offer a clear moral message. In particular, the

utter injustice of Cordelia's execution left eighteenth century readers reeling. Thus Samuel Johnson was so 'shocked by Cordelia's death, that [he knew] not whether [he] ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till [he] undertook to revise them as an editor' (2010 [1765]). What could be the moral purpose of such injustice? In contrast, Tate's play presents good humans who are largely good throughout, and who come out triumphant and alive at the end, not only over bad humans, but rogue forces of nature as well. During the Victorian age, artists set themselves the strange and seemingly impossible task of maintaining the moral certainty of Tate, while restoring Shakespeare's more ambiguous plotline.

Due to the scale of the storm on the Victorian stage, it is sometimes characterized as the period of theatre history when resources were suddenly channelled into its staging. For example, in her otherwise superlative history of *Lear* in performance J. S. Bratton claimed the 'creation of the storm in Act III, indeed its staging generally, had not seemed until this period to be a particularly important element in the presentation of the play' (1987: 26). But Bratton conflates advances in theatre technology and the engorged archive of reports and criticisms that came with industrial age print culture, with artistic intention. In contrast, I have shown how staging the storm was always important, but the technologies that allowed the full, bright and mechanized production of the spectacle did not actually exist until the nineteenth century. Although Bratton's characterization of the importance of the stormy spectacle subtly misappropriates past storms, her claim certainly captures the scale of Victorian spectacular theatre and also the wealth of extant information from letters, diaries, newspapers and even photographs, in comparison to earlier periods. All of this is to say, if he had still been alive, I am almost certain that Garrick would have loved to tread the boards on the luminescent Victorian stage. Instead, those who were lucky enough to be born in the industrial age could capitalize on technologies such as gas and electric lighting for their own theatrical advantage.

The development of gas lighting in the first decade of the nineteenth century and its installation at the major theatres like Drury Lane, the Lyceum and Covent Garden by 1817 is the first significant development (Rees 1978: 36). Greater control over the lights enabled the auditorium to be darkened and the stage space lightened. Thus, a brightly lit stage picture could dazzle

the darkened audience. As the stage got brighter, the forestage was virtually done away with and performances moved largely behind the proscenium arch, thereby creating a clear division between the fictional world of the stage and the reality of the audience.[15] Whereas in the Globe we might imagine the brightness radiating from the large open roof, by the nineteenth century the illumination came from the stage itself.

Such technological advances were not without their risks. Indeed, if the desires for a particular theatrical spectacle could be measured in part by their associated dangers, then it is worth thinking more on the gas used in theatres at this time. In doing away with the need for toxic powders and deadly flammable substances of the earlier age, gas brought with it perils of another kind. A *Times* article from the early nineteenth century reported that, 'after having sat through a whole evening at the theatre, play goers felt a burning and prickling sensation in their eyes, a soreness in the throat, and a headache which lasted for several days afterward' (Penzel 1978: 42). These are the symptoms of minor gas poisoning which, according to Penzel, was 'a direct result of the gas combustion which both depleted the air in the hall, and produced other potentially toxic by-products like carbonic acid' (1978: 42). The desire for spectacle almost incidentally poisoned thousands of players and audience alike. Clearly there was need for better ventilation in the theatre spaces, and gas technology did improve, but it was not until the invention of electric lighting, speedily installed in theatres in the 1880s, that the oppressively toxic problem was solved for good (Penzel 1978: 42).

Edmund Kean, one of the great actor-managers from the Age of Gas, produced *King Lear* at Drury Lane in 1820. So, although it is not until 1823 that Kean famously restored the tragic ending, his 1820 production was the first since the ban was lifted after King George III's death. During the ban, Kean reportedly studied the king's illness in order to lend the production contemporary relevance. It was also an international touring production of *King Lear,* which was taken to New York. Another reason why this production

[15] For an overview history of the playhouse in the Victorian Age see J. L. Styan, *The English Stage: A History of Drama and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 302–37; R. Jackson, *Victorian Theatre: The Theatre in its Time* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1994); N. Auerbach, 'Theatre Before the Curtain', in K. Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3–16.

is noteworthy is due to its genealogical links with Garrick's designer de Loutherbourg. Robert Elliston, the designer of Kean's production, drew inspiration for the staging of the storm scene directly from de Loutherbourg's *Eidophusikon* (Bratton 1987: 28). Elliston's painted backdrop for his *King Lear* set was called 'after de Loutherbourg's *Storm on Land*' (Bratton 1987: 28). Thus, we can chart an aesthetic lineage from Garrick's ambition to create an animated pictorial spectacle, through de Loutherbourg's post-Drury Lane *Eidophusikon* experiment, to the technologically advanced live theatre of the mid-nineteenth century. What Elliston aimed to create in a live theatre context, de Loutherbourg could only achieve when insulated from such pressures. According to Bratton, this storm itself was created with 'every infernal machine ever able to spit fire, spout rain or make thunder' (1987: 28). Although this was a landmark production, it was heavily criticized on account of the excessive storm. One reporter from *The Times* reflected upon what the storm scenes were and how that departed from what the storm scene 'should' be. He argued that the storm was:

> less effective than many others, because the manager, by a strange error, had caused the tempest to be exhibited with so much accuracy that the performer could scarcely be heard amidst the confusion. He should have recollected that it is the bending of Lear's mind under his wrongs that is the object of interest, not that of a forest beneath the hurricane. (Quoted in Ford Davies 2006: 66)

Here, at the very point the storm is given its most spectacularly literal rendition on stage, we start to see psychological links emerge, first in Kean's study of madness, then in this reporter's analysis. The spectacle only gets more extravagant from here. Samuel Phelps's 1845 production of *Lear* at Sadler's Wells, for example, created a storm not only as an aesthetic experience, but also as a physical one, with one critic reporting in the *Athenaeum*: 'the wind whistles in the ears and blows in the faces of the audience, and the thunder rolls over the roof of the theatre' (in Bratton, 1987: 29). In the Victorian age, the industrialized stage, with bright playing area and dimmed auditorium, brought the stage representation of the meteorological storm to its apex.

All along I have argued that the pitiless meteorological storm becomes meaningful by way of a particular interpretation on stage or in criticism.

Despite this claim, and alongside many critics, I am inclined to think that Shakespeare's play, restored in full by 1838, made very little sense to both the players and to the audiences, largely on account of the storm. In 1810 Charles Lamb suggested that *King Lear* was not fit for representation on the stage, because Lear's circumstances are so wretched in the storm no one would want to watch them. Like the *Times* journalist quoted above, he was interested in the storm as a way of studying Lear's mind. Reflecting back on this claim in 1927, Harley Granville-Barker suggests that Lamb's point of view was clouded by the vapid extravagance of the stagecraft. The only way to make Lear work, he argued, was to create a symbolic association between the storm and Lear's mind. We return to Granville-Barker in the next chapter, but in contrast to his characterization of the problem I contend that *Lear* was essentially unfit for representation on the stage because the thoroughly romantic, heroic and humanist image of Lear that actors were trying to project by way of their ever more declamatory performance style does not actually fit with the tragic plotline and, in particular, with Lear's 'shameful' antics in the storm. In this regard, the storm, once again, supplies us with a key theatrical problem. In the play, Lear cannot control or even vaguely match the power of the storm: this is integral to the pathos of Shakespeare's play and central to the plausibility and trajectory of the plot. In contrast, on the nineteenth-century stage an actor-manager wanted to be seen as triumphant and the storm provided the opportunity for him to demonstrate his powers – both of performance and of spectacle – but the play complicates that interpretation because the storm hinders rather than helps Lear.

Given the desire to maintain Lear as hero but also to restore Shakespeare's plot, it is unsurprising that the role designed to point out the King's shortcomings, the Fool, was the last feature of the play returned to the stage. Cut by Tate, the Fool was absent until William Charles Macready restored the role in 1838. Lear's Fool is at least as cruel as he is funny. As H. F. Lippincott described:

> Like the audience … Lear expects to be diverted and entertained (by the Fool). But Shakespeare sends a fool of a different sort … a speaker of truth … who specifically counters the expectations of Lear and the audience. And it is clear from Lear's reaction that the Fool plays a new and unwelcome role. By his third speech, Lear has threatened the Fool with the whip, and by the fourth, the Fool has become 'a pestilential gall'. (1975: 249).

Shakespeare wrote the Fool knowing the company's other star actor, Robert Armin, would play it. Over 40 years old at the time *Lear* was written, he would have played opposite a slightly younger Burbage as a captivating double act. Fools were extra-juridical characters, generally allowed to speak their minds freely in both the court and the theatre without fear of retribution. While Feste in *Twelfth Night,* whom Shakespeare also wrote for Armin, is a comic truth-teller, the character of the Fool in *Lear* significantly challenges the perception of the protagonist, by persistently questioning and contradicting him throughout the first, second and third acts, until he disappears from the play and we learn later that he 'is hanged'. Moreover, *King Lear* alludes to *Twelfth Night,* which ends with Feste's song rounding out the celebratory, if somewhat ambiguous: 'When that I was and a little tiny boy, / with hey, ho, the wind and the rain' (*T.N.* 5.1.383–4). The 'wind and the rain' is the song's quaint poetic refrain, punctuating his recap of the story, neatly wrapping up the action and suggesting, in some ways, 'such is life'. When Shakespeare references *Twelfth Night* in *Lear*, the refrain of Feste's song takes on more sinister and literal significance. At the end of 3.2 when Lear agrees to seek shelter in the hovel, he claims that 'The art of our necessities is strange, / And can make vile things precious' (3.2.70–1). As if to increase the humiliation of turning towards the hovel, the Fool adds, 'He that has and a little tiny wit / with heigh-ho, the wind and the rain, / Must make content with his fortunes fit, / Though the rain it raineth every day' (3.2.74–7). Here the refrain is assimilated with the logic of the verse. Lear is really out in the storm, sings the Fool, because he is stupid and now it is raining; he has to try to make his desires fit his circumstances because there is nothing he can do about this rain.

Although Macready is best known for the restoration of the Fool today, he struggled with the concept of returning the role to the stage, ironically because he was concerned that the Fool would make his rendition of Lear less memorable. In particular, he feared the Fool would undermine Lear's heroism. He described the moment he was persuaded to include the Fool in his diary:

> Speaking to Willmott and Bartley about the part of the Fool in 'Lear', and mentioning my apprehensions that … we should be obliged to omit the part, I described the sort of fragile, hectic, beautiful-faced boy that he should be, and stated my belief that it never could be acted. Bartley observed that a woman

> should play it. I caught at the idea, and instantly exclaimed Miss P. Horton is the very person. I was delighted at the thought. (Macready 1875: 97).

In Shakespeare's day the Fool would have rivalled Lear's presence on the stage, but the Fool only made sense to Macready as a weaker and less plausible figure, as a speaker of nonsense rather than truth. Thus, it is within the context of a theatre that was awkwardly trying to maintain the air of heroism and mitigate the script's bleakness, despite restoring Shakespeare's text, that the pictorial representation of the storm reaches its spectacular climax. As the next chapter will show, there is a significant shift in the aesthetics and meaning of the storm in the twentieth century. Artists and critics came to explore the internal life of Lear – once a notion of human interiority was articulated – which was then reflected in stage productions of *King Lear*. The historical long view opened up in chapters five and six reveals a particular perspective on the transaction that occurs between theatre and cinema at the end of the nineteenth century, which in part paves the way for this new kind of aesthetic to emerge on the twentieth-century stage. With regard to *Lear*'s storm, Bratton characterizes the change in theatre aesthetics as a form of artistic exhaustion: nineteenth-century theatre artists 'exhausted the possibilities of mechanical imitation,' and thus, 'designers and directors turned to explore the possibilities of stylisation and the underlining or expansion of the storm's symbolic significance' (1987: 29). With the view of situating the modern characterization of the storm as a psychological symbol within a rich historical context, I draw this chapter to a close by exploring how the exchange between theatre and cinema technologies intersects specifically with what I am calling 'the end of the meteorological storm' in *King Lear*.

The enduring desire to stage a meteorological storm, which I identify initially in the use of pyrotechnics and noise machines in the Jacobean theatre, played an important role in the research and development of early film technologies. One technology that was particularly important in the transition of theatre to film was the magic lantern. It was an early form of image projector technology, the desire for which appears as early as 1666 in the diaries of Samuel Pepys (Altick 1978: 117). The lantern really came into its own during the Victorian age, however, when gas technologies supplied it with an adequately bright light source. The magic lantern enabled a coloured

image to be projected on a wall or curtain. This technology was enhanced by mounting the lantern to small train tracks, so the image could change in size and give the appearance of an object moving towards or away from an audience (Rees 1978: 81–4).

A magic lantern used by Edmund Kean to create a vivid and chaotic storm illusion in his 1820 production clearly links the theatrical storm to the development of film technologies (Rees 1978: 84). Altick describes how the magic lantern brought luminous vitality to the stage:

> Overhead were revolving prismatic coloured transparencies, to emit a continually changing supernatural tint, and to add to the unearthly character of the scene. King Lear would appear at one instant a beautiful pea-green, and the next sky-blue, and, in the event of a momentary cessation of the rotary motion of the magic lantern, his head would be purple and his legs Dutch-pink. (1978: 214).

While now such a bright colour scheme may appear decidedly unnatural or comic, even gaudy, in Kean's day the effect successfully created the alternate reality of the theatrical illusion. According to one critic in *European Magazine*, 'the celebrated storm scene was given on a principle quite new to the stage, increasing the effect and almost fixing the reality' (Rees 1978: 85). Although it might not have succeeded in making the stage reflect the world naturalistically, King Lear's multicoloured light bath at the very least made the stage appear to the audience as a world of its own. Thus, such theatrical illusions are clear precursors to the idea of a screen upon which an altogether distinct reality is projected. While theatrical and cinematic technologies are historically intertwined, the art of the pictorial spectacle was eventually made redundant by the cinema, because images of actual storms could substitute for the clunky, cumbersome and expensive machines required to produce such a multifaceted spectacle in the theatre.

At the same time as the cinema was taking over the theatre, changes started to appear in the theatre arts. The last Lear of the Victorian age, and the last Lear of a theatre before cinema, exemplifies the turn away from spectacular meteorological storm towards a new kind of stage picture and interest in the theatrical representation of Lear's psychological complexity. Sir Henry Irving's *King Lear* (1892) was legendary, but depending on whose account you read, it was either a ground-breaking success or a terrible

failure. Sir Laurence Olivier was motivated by Irving's legacy to eclipse his fame and become the greatest actor of all time (1986: 93), while in the foreword of one of Irving's biographies, Sir John Gielgud proudly declares that Lear is one part that Irving failed to master (Bingham 1978: 8). The failure is attributed, in part, to his prosaic interpretation of the play, moving away from the magical spectacle of Edmund Kean, and other Victorian actor-managers such as Charles Kean and Macready, towards a simpler stage image (Rees 1978: 85). Despite this, Irving was praised for his realism: 'No such realistic representation of the storm is within our recollection' (Hughes 1981: 132).

The audience saw within Irving's production a new kind of reality in the design. The way in which Irving achieved this was to harness the technologies of the Victorian spectacular theatre but to different ends. The designs for Irving's *Lear* were drawn from sketches done by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Ford Maddox Brown in 1844 (Speaight 1973: 68). According to Robert Speaight: 'these incorporated the imagery of the Pelican Daughter, and a theme from the Bayeux Tapestry. The figure of the King as a clown was reproduced for Lear's awakening to sanity. The period suggested was after the departure of the Romans, and before the Norse invasions' (1973: 68). Irving's storm still mimicked the meteors by means we have already explored, but the desire to probe the details of Lear's experience in the storm through adorning the stage with historical and poetic symbols in the set design foreshadows the abstraction of the storm event itself that will come in the next century. In Irving's *Lear* there is a turn away from the external toward the internal, a dulling down of the bright meteorological spectacle and a move to reinterpret the cosmic dimensions of Shakespeare's *King Lear* as psychological complexity. Before Irving, the main drive was to represent the storm as a meteorological event and to make it fit, insofar as was possible, with the desire to cultivate sympathy for Lear or to represent an image of triumphant humanity. In significant contrast to real storms, then, *Lear*'s storm is not something that disrupts or radically undoes the human order. On the contrary, in the context of the story, it is an event that becomes something for the good to overcome and even when it is not, theatre makers try to infer that meaning. In the context of theatre arts, the storm provides an opportunity for artists to display their exceptional

capacity to mimic the meteors at the same time. But, after centuries of artists aiming to create a meteorological storm on stage, a lot changes in the next century.

7

Lear's Head: The Rise of the Psychological Metaphor, 1908–1955

I pause here and rewind this hitherto chronological genealogy to go back to eighteenth-century paintings and drawings of Lear's windswept head. (This is an analogue history; can you feel the duration of time turning back?) King Lear's horizontal hair and impassioned visage was a popular motif in eighteenth-century drawing and painting. In studies of the old king from the 1770s and 1780s by Joshua Reynolds, George Romney, John Mortimer and William Blake, Lear's face and his long white hair occupy the frame. Meanwhile, James Barry incorporated this visual trope into a series of full-scale neoclassical paintings of the play's final scene, the most famous of which is the c. 1777 version 'King Lear Weeping Over the Death of Cordelia' (Figure 7.1). The painting is ostensibly set in prehistoric England, the apocryphal time from which the Lear story emerges, as denoted by lively activities around Stonehenge in the background. The painting also mimics the composition of an image of Christ mourned by followers after being taken down from the cross (Sillars 2006: 91). In the top left-hand corner of the image, clear skies, with clouds haloed by the sun, provide evidence that a storm has passed. Nonetheless, Lear's hair is blown by a wind that does not affect anyone else in the painting. Lear holds his hand to his head and by way of his white hair, wind becomes a visual metaphor for his internal weather. In the context of the Lear story, the painting invokes the meaningful links between the storm and Lear's passions. At the same time, it privileges the interpretation that the storm is in Lear's mind.

The painting is neither an ahistorical representation of the play's final scene nor a misreading of the storm, but a historically situated meditation on

Figure 7.1 James Barry, *King Lear weeping over the dead body of Cordelia* (London, 1786–8). Tate, Purchased 1962; Photograph © Tate, London 2017.

human suffering, using Lear as an archetype. Stuart Sillars breaks down the 'system of references' that merge in this image. It offers:

> a powerful critical statement about the play, elevating Lear's grief to that of the classical ideal of the suffering father and intensifying Cordelia's death by the parallel with the crucifixion while simultaneously denying the power of the resurrection, and forcing us to experience immediately the unnaturalness of the death of the child before the parent in a human, not divine frame. (2006: 91)

In order to represent human suffering Barry separates the storm from its placement in the play to embellish his expression of Lear's heartbreak.[1] In doing so, Barry produces a metaphor precisely because it is not 'literally applicable' (*OED*) or contiguous with Lear's bodily situation. The symbolism

[1] While this image captures emergence of a tradition of equating the storm with Lear's individual condition, this image remains in wide circulation today, as one of the images on the *King Lear* Wikipedia page, as the cover image of the booklet for a 2012 conference on 'Shakespeare and Emotions' at the University of Western Australia and as a graphic on a smartphone case.

is produced by way of a creative act of magical transference based on likeness and separation.

There is a break between these romantic renderings of Lear's head and the attempt to spectacularize the storm as psychological metaphor on the modern stage. We saw in the last chapter that, throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the storm was constructed on stage as a spectacular meteorological event, and when taken up in interpretations or reviews of the play it was discussed in predominantly literal terms. On stage during this period, there was little need to worry about the complexities and paradoxes of the storm because Tate had heavily edited the cosmological drama that enclosed Shakespeare's version and removed the spectacular contradictions inherent in Lear's quest for shelter. Under Tate, the storm became an event over which legitimate forces triumphed. From the time when Shakespeare's *King Lear* was restored to the stage in 1838, theatre artists genuinely struggled to make sense of a cosmo-meteorological event that was couched in such thoroughly anachronistic terms, which I will explain in more detail below. But at the same time the industrialized Victorian spectacular theatre facilitated the representation of a literalized storm event that had only been imagined in previous centuries. Thus, artists seemingly prioritized spectacle over significance, with the noise of the theatrical mechanisms reportedly drowning out much of the dialogue anyway.

Directors and set designers were faced with a multivalenced problem when staging the storm in the modern theatre. On the one hand, we shall see how they wanted to produce Shakespeare for a range of reasons from quality and difficulty to prestige. On the other, with *King Lear* they had to contend with the dilemma of how to make sense of the anachronism of the storm event. Maynard Mack cautioned us against 'exaggerating the losses' suffered in the translation of Shakespeare to the stages of different periods, but at the same time he points to the storm as something of an exception (2005: 23). In contrast to characterizations of the play as timeless and universal, I showed in chapter one that the storm's timeliness and singularity with regard to Shakespeare's representation of the particular philosophical and political question of the weather's 'final causes' begat the central hermeneutic quandary presented by the storm. The challenge of characterizing the storm's aesthetic and poetic purpose was especially pronounced in the time frame covered in this chapter

wherein the meteors have fallen from grace and, at least for the first half of the twentieth century, seemingly have no cultural significance. So when the weather's decline from omen to atmospheric mechanism is combined with the completely counter-intuitive actions of Lear and Edgar during the storm, the seeming 'loss' of that wider cosmo-meteorological predicament makes these scenes especially difficult to read, dramatize and meaningfully interpret *as such*. That said, rather than viewing the shift to a new context as a loss of former knowledge of ecological entanglements, this chapter presents twentieth-century interpretations of the storm as psychological or political metaphor as historically situated readings of the play, which allow directors, actors and scholars to manage the suite of anachronisms presented by the cosmological drama in the text generally, and enable the play to adapt to the stylistic concerns of the modern theatre.

The same argument sounds slightly different in ecocritical terms. By way of this study of the storm, I argue that the characterization of the storm's meaning in adjunct or discrete and metaphoric relation to the human evidences the broader philosophical and political 'backgrounding' (Plumwood 1993) of the weather itself for much of this period. For Plumwood, backgrounding 'results from the irresoluble conflicts the relationship of domination creates for the master, for he attempts both to make use of the other, organizing, relying on and benefiting from the other's services, and to deny the dependency which this creates' (48). I will argue here that artists in the first half of the twentieth century insisted that the storm service a purely anthropocentric story, thus producing the kind of stormy metaphor we saw in Barry's painting. Even when the storm breaks out of Lear's mind, it does not return to the 'foreground' in literal terms. As such, a straightforward appeal to literalism fails to account for the complexity of the storm in the latter half of the twentieth and early into the twenty-first centuries. In the second half of the chapter, then, I turn to teasing out the return of the non-human presence in the play, concomitant to, but not necessarily in direct dialogue with, a growing awareness of the environment's material role in human affairs. The new meteorological spectacle is neither an attempt to replicate the cosmology of the Globe, nor the technophilic literalism of the Victorians. Instead, the weather starts to become meaningful *as weather* when understood as deeply entangled in the socio-political-affective drama of *King Lear*.

'Symbolical gestures' (Max Reinhardt 1908)

The theorist and theatre designer E. Gordon Craig never officially worked on a production of *King Lear*, but his ideas and sketches influenced Max Reinhardt's 1908 production at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin (Styan 1982: 53). Craig outlined his philosophy in 'The Art of the Theatre: The First Dialogue: an expert and a playgoer conversing' (1905). The dialogic form enabled him to contrast his new ideas with audience expectations based on old conventions. He used the voice of the 'playgoer' to set up the received perspective on the theatre arts and, in contrast, the voice of the 'stage-director' to ventriloquize his new philosophy. The director lets the playgoer know that the new:

> Art of the Theatre is neither acting nor the place, it is not the scene nor the dance, but it consists of all the elements of which these things are composed: action, which is the very spirit of acting; words, which are the body of the play; line and colour, which are the very heart of a scene; rhythm, which is the very essence of dance. (Craig 2009 [1911]: 73)

Here Craig advocated stripping theatre back to its basic energetic elements in order to rethink and remake the whole dramatic world. His 1920 woodcut (Figure 7.2) of one of *King Lear*'s storm scenes shows human silhouettes in action mirroring a dynamic, abstract storm of lines and shapes; theirs is a dance of formal similarity.

Although Craig actually turned down Reinhardt's offer to design the production and the woodcut of the storm came much later, he created sketches of the play and developed a concept of how the storm might be staged in the early twentieth century. In these sketches the transfer of the storm from a pictorial and literal to a conceptual plane begins to take place in the theatre. In a note on one of his sketches, he explained how his philosophies might inform a staging of the storm:

> If we should have no snowstorm [*sic*] visualised, but only the man making his symbolical gestures which would suggest to us a man fighting against the elements … this would be better … Following that line of argument in its logical sequence, then, would it not be still more near to art if we had no man, but only movements of some intangible material which could suggest the movements of which the soul of man makes battling against the soul of nature. (Quoted in Innes 1983: 180)

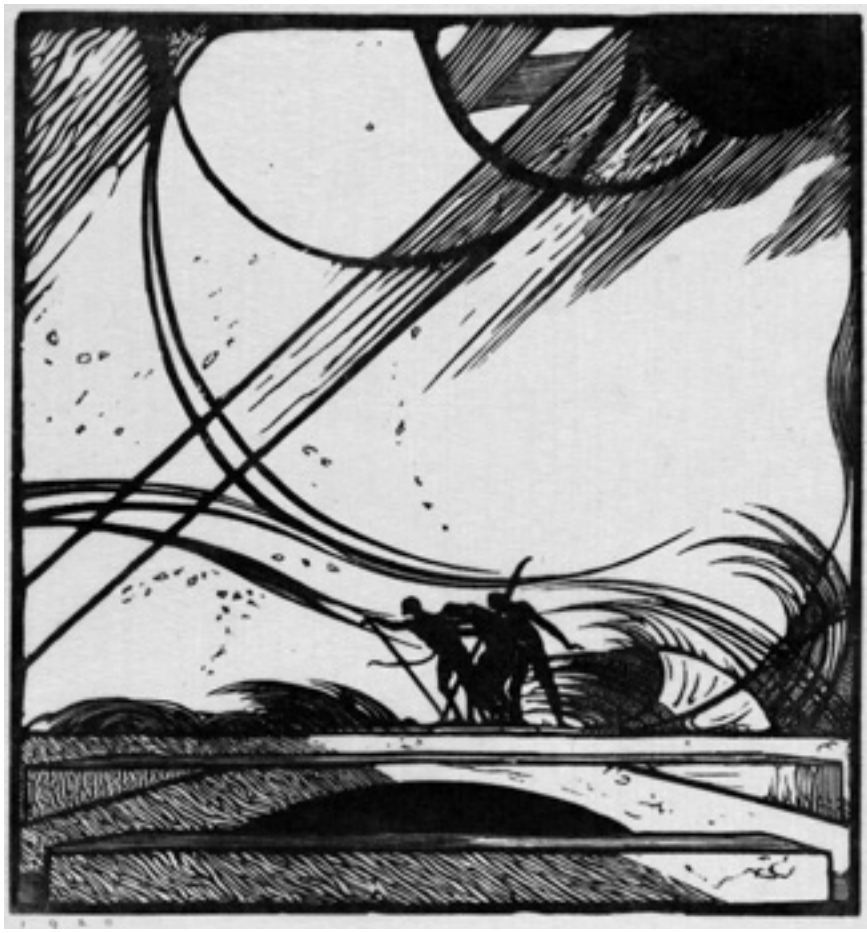

Figure 7.2 Edward Gordon Craig. *The Storm, King Lear* (1920). Wood-engraving on Japon paper, copy 103 of 150. Photograph © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Publication is with the consent of the Edward Gordon Craig Estate.

Craig seeks to eschew not only pictoralism but materiality in order to move towards representing the conflict of immaterial essences of man and nature. As Christopher Innes has pointed out, the key word in Craig's note on the storm was 'intangible'. Innes focuses on the word to underline the fact that Craig never had to actually realize this seemingly impossible vision on stage. Nonetheless, it signals the beginning of a radical rethinking of the confrontation between the body of the actor and the tumult of elements in productions of *King Lear*.

Reinhardt used Craig's theories as a way to making Shakespeare modern, contributing to what Henry Kahane described as Reinhardt's method for reimagining the classics:

> The new art of the stage picture did away with the scientifically designed historic restoration in favour of the artist's free vision of past periods, thus shifting the focus from accurate objectivity to a recreation of the spirit of the whole period in question. Reinhardt developed this … approach with unique virtuosity; it became a hallmark of his style. (1975: 325)

His ambition to renew the theatre makes the German production a more striking object of inquiry than the first English production in the twentieth century (Norman McKinnell 1909). In Reinhardt's work we see a very clear break with the Victorian spectacle, whereas it took a little longer for the shock of the new theatre to have any significant impact on the aesthetics of mainstream British productions of Shakespeare. As J. L. Styan observes, Reinhardt was 'among the first directors to approach the great plays with eyes unclouded by the traditional staging of the Victorian age' (1982: 51). Furthermore, although he was best known as a prolific director of contemporary plays from continental Europe, by Maeterlink, Strindberg and Wedekind, Reinhardt regarded Shakespeare as the greatest playwright of all time, 'an incomparable piece of good luck that has befallen the theatre' (quoted in Styan). Reinhardt saw the revival and redesign of Shakespeare as an important task for the development of modern theatrical institutions (Kahane 1975: 327). Although all artists arguably use Shakespeare to showcase their capacity for creative innovation, this objective has particular potency and difficulty in *King Lear*'s translation into the modern theatre. Unlike his British predecessors, rather than competing for the most spectacular meteorological event by combining technologies to mimic the weather in the world, Reinhardt was interested in a qualitatively different kind of stormy spectacle. The move away from meteorological mimicry and towards an abstract storm is not framed as a lack of interest in the weather itself, but rather as a way of making Shakespeare modern.

The main difficulty in working with Craig's philosophies is in actually translating his abstract ideas into a functional design for a conventional dramatic narrative. To take on this task, Reinhardt enlisted Carl Czeschka, a graphic designer most famous for his work at the *Weiner Werkstätte* (Vienna Workshops). Costumes and set dressings used boldly printed black and white textiles, drawing on Czeschka's work as a functional art object designer. For the storm, he used an almost bare stage with an austere unadorned

castle façade made to look like concrete. The production drew upon new technologies such as electric lighting in order to animate the playing space. By the early twentieth century British and European theatre makers had much greater control of light and so the audience were seated in a darkened auditorium with a well-illuminated stage. Despite producing a stage that made no clear reference to any specific historical place or time, *Donner und Blitz* (thunder and lightning) were still created. Lightning was made with flashes of electric light, and thunder may have been created acoustically with sheets of metal rattled, by a recorded sound effect played on a phonograph or by drums. So ultimately, although the design was underpinned by a radical theatrical philosophy that did not aim to reproduce a pictorial storm on stage, the always already abstract meteors undermined the task.[2]

Nonetheless, when considered in relation to the earlier theatre, this production represents a significant departure from the spectacular pictorial representation of prior performances. Reinhardt's storm expressed the relation between 'man' and 'nature' as one of abstract metaphysical energies, rather than complex conceptual-material entanglements. The desire for the theatrical creation of symbolical gestures placed bodies on stage struggling to make sense of their abstract surrounds, but, at the same time, the stage was only able to gesture toward the symbolic insofar as he never entirely transcended the literal spectacle of the thunder and lightning. Nonetheless, in morphing the spectacle out of the literal and into a realm of ideas, Reinhardt's production began the task of making Shakespeare new and adapting his works to fit the aesthetic and ideological demands of the modern stage.

[2] One of the only traces of the storm scenes that I have been able to locate is a heavily annotated and somewhat illegible page of Reinhardt's 1908 prompt copy. The dark annotation indicates that a *Donner* sound effect interrupted Lear's first speech in 3.2. The *Donner* is preceded by a *Blitz*, scrawled above it. Another word in that seems to be *Gewitter* (thunderstorm) precedes the start of Scene 2 as well. To its left in red is the word *Sturm* (storm). Unfortunately the archives provide no detailed information regarding the way in which the thunderstorm was generated.

'Not in itself … dramatically important' (Harley Granville-Barker 1940 and George Devine 1955)

In 1940, Harley Granville-Barker came out of retirement to direct a production that played at London's Old Vic. Granville-Barker's direction and design of *King Lear* reflected his reading of the play as expressed over a decade earlier in his *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1927). Rather than trying, like Reinhardt after Craig, to create a stage picture where the soul of man came into conflict with the soul of nature, Granville-Barker aimed to theatricalize the internal conflict of an individual man. So before looking at his stagecraft, it is worth revisiting his preface to *Lear* not only because it presents an interpretation of the meaning and purpose of the storm that he then translated onto the stage, but also because it is one of the more famous and influential criticisms of the play from the first half of the twentieth century.

Granville-Barker began his preface by debunking Lamb's and Bradley's famous claims that *King Lear* was unstageable. He argued instead that it was not the play, but the way in which it had been staged that gave rise to such claims in the first place (Granville-Barker 1964 [1927]: 260). In an earlier chapter, I explored Lamb's meditation on *King Lear*. The reason he thought it could not be staged was that the stormy spectacle emphasized Lear's physical weakness and distracted our attention from his psychological complexity.[3] Granville-Barker argued that because Lamb was writing at a time when pictorial spectacle was the order of the day, it was perfectly understandable that he did not think the play could be staged. The trick, according to Granville-Barker was to stage the play and, in particular, design the storm scenes, to express precisely this magnificent inner turmoil, rather than detracting from it as Lamb complained.

To do this he insisted that the design needed take emphasis away from the storm itself and work instead to represent Lear's interior struggle. The symbolic design, he argued, was not only what he had in mind, but what Shakespeare had in mind too. He insisted that what went 'wrong' with *Lear*

[3] Bradley's opinion was similar, but Granville-Barker was more sympathetic to Lamb's point of view. He argued that Bradley's belief that *King Lear* could not be staged was based upon his own academic prejudice, but that Lamb's judgement was simply clouded by his historical context (Granville-Barker 1964 [1927]: 261–4).

in the nineteenth century, and the reason why Lamb could not envisage it on stage, was that the relationship between the text and the stage for which it was originally intended had been forgotten:

> In this hardest of tasks – the showing of Lear's agony, his spiritual death and resurrection – we find Shakespeare relying very naturally upon his strongest weapon … the weapon of dramatic poetry. He has, truly, few others of any account. In the storm-scenes the shaking of the thunder-sheet will not greatly stir us … in impressive scenery, he has none. (Granville-Barker 1964 [1927]: 266)

In many ways, Granville-Barker is right. The Victorians did take the pictorial spectacle to a new limit, Shakespeare was quite good at writing dramatic poetry and, in the Globe, Lear was probably on a stage without props or scenery. But, as I argued in chapter five building on the work of Jones, the rich cosmo-meteorology of the early modern period, combined with the multiple tools used create thunder, lightning, wind and rain effects in both the public and private theatres contradicts these claims. Not only was the storm itself a spectacular and important feature in early productions of these scenes, its cultural framing was quite different to the modernist and existentialist sensibilities emerging in the early twentieth century.

Granville-Barker's claim to authenticity for his symbolic production lends extraordinary authority to his thoroughly modern interpretation of the storm and his conceptual 'backgrounding' of the setting. Granville-Barker argued that the scenes were originally designed solely for the purposes of Lear's self-reflection:

> The storm is not in itself … dramatically important, only its effect upon Lear. How, then, to give it enough magnificence to impress him, yet keep it from rivalling him? Why, by identifying the storm with him, setting the actor to impersonate both Lear and – reflected in Lear – the storm. (1964 [1927]: 266)

Granville-Barker's reading removes any independently meaningful or functional aspect in the storm, beyond its significance for Lear. Given the potentially contradictory logic of the storm's own impressiveness but without rivalling Lear, presumably either Lear takes the storm as a sign of his own magnificence or at the very least the audience will. By couching his claims in an educated, but still anachronistic, assumption about spectacle in the early

modern theatre, Granville-Barker instantly gives credibility to his distinctively modern interpretation of the storm.

When Granville-Barker came to direct *King Lear*, the cosmic crisis catalysed by the storm, so central to Shakespeare's version, was no longer relevant. By 1940, meteorology was a militarized, industrialized and instrumentalized science. Meteorologists adopted the task of predicting the weather so that military operations, business activities or everyday lives might be better organized around the variability of the weather.[4] Rains of bombs were a far more imminent threat than rain itself, with the qualitatively different *Blitz* ('lightning') of the Blitz only one year away from damaging the very theatre that housed this production (Dymkowski 1986: 129). Thus any metaphysical questions about the relationship between the actual meteors and the human were scarcely relevant. The human had totally colonized the stage.

Granville-Barker's staging shifted emphasis away from the external tumult of the storm itself and focussed on spectacularizing Lear's internal cataclysm.[5] Lear, played by John Gielgud, and the Fool were placed on a virtually black stage, lit only with spotlights. Nothing else was visible on the stage. The storm was evoked quite simply by means of the recorded sound effects of thunder, wind and the occasional flash of light. Granville-Barker was criticized for this move, because the abstraction in staging did not otherwise blend with his use of traditional acting and realistic sound effects (Dymkowski 1986: 183). But, as Dymkowski underlined, the director's point was to create a focus on Lear (181). Those who liked the production saw it as an educated and intelligent version of the play: 'This production is one of the glories of the Shakespearean stage because of [Granville-Barker's] understanding of the text', claimed one reviewer (quoted in Speaight 1973: 136). Gielgud was also seen to have delivered an 'Olympian performance' (quoted in Babula 1981: 135).

The move to redesign the scenes along similarly anthropocentric and metaphoric lines continued in George Devine's second production of *King Lear* in 1955. Unlike Granville-Barker, Devine turned the whole setting into a kind of psychological cosmos to house an intra-human drama. Devine again

[4] For a sociological study of the professional work of a meteorologist and the cultural application of the modern science of meteorology see G. Fine, *Authors of the Storm: Meteorologists and the Culture of Prediction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

[5] This section is indebted to Christine Dymkowski, *Harley Granville-Barker: A Preface to Modern Shakespeare* (1986), 180–90, who describes the storm sequence at length.

cast Gielgud as Lear and hired the Japanese-American sculptor and architect Isamu Noguchi to design the set and costumes. In other words, he cast a traditional Shakespearean actor in the title role and employed an experimental designer to construct the stage picture. Devine had a deeply conceptual approach to the dramatic action that he wanted to be reflected in the design. His vision was for:

> a permanent surround framing a series of fluid locations which, above all, would enable the play to expand beyond the confines of representational scenery … costumes free of historical associations … [and] a symphonic division of the play into three movements.

Noguchi's design consisted in 'the elemental shapes of the universe: egg-forms, triangular caverns, air born prisms, a multifaceted ramp, and other mobile abstract pieces'. During the storm scenes these elemental forms were made to move in time with the action of the play text: 'an ominous group of black shapes [that] dilated and contracted like the iris of an eye according to mood and rhythm' (Wardle 1978: 153). Furthermore, Noguchi's costumes lacked all traditional signifiers of monarchical hierarchy, such as crowns and ceremonial robes. Pictorialism was replaced by simple colour, line and shape geared towards a setting that wholly reflected the character's emotions (Figure 7.3).

The production was not well received, reviewers seeing the strange décor and costumes as distracting.[6] Gielgud himself regarded the production as a complete failure, blaming Devine for his stranglehold over the artistic vision. According to some reviewers, he reverted to his classical style of acting as soon as the public came in (Wardle 1978: 153). The result, wrote Irving Wardle, was 'a universal poetic setting with orthodox English classical acting going on inside it' (154). Regardless, Granville-Barker and Devine's productions attempted to transfer the storm into a symbolic realm. In Devine the whole dramatic world was a reflection or extension of human emotions given abstract expression. In a different, but related manner, Granville-Barker's representation of the storm as within Lear was a grand spectacularization of his mind. Despite its deep entanglement in the story of *Lear*, in these

[6] 'Stage is strewn with geometric or symbolic shapes. Fool's face is diamond-patterned. Décor very distracting', J. C. Trewin, *Shakespeare on the English Stage*, in Babula, 138; 'Confusing setting and distracting costumes', Anonymous, *London Times,* in Babula, 138.

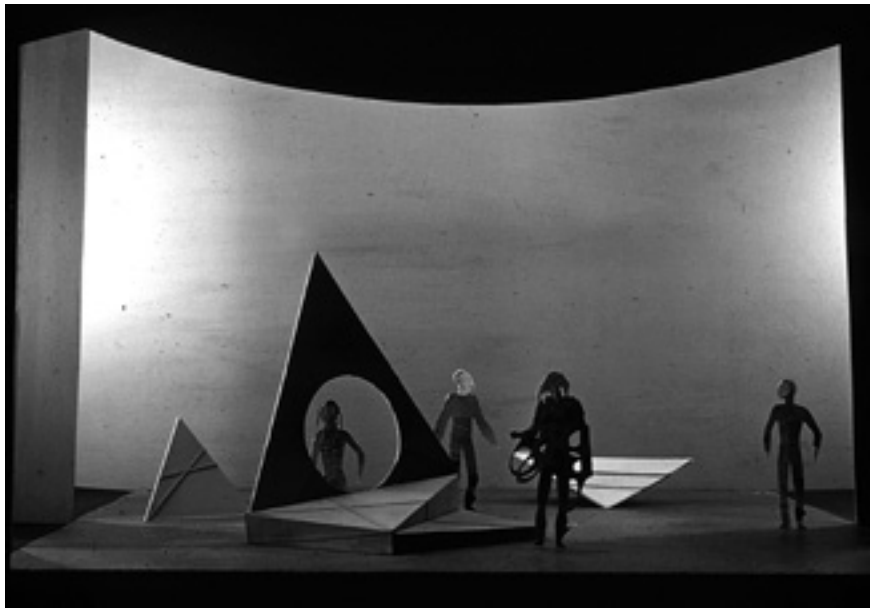

Figure 7.3 Isamu Noguchi. Model of King Lear's set (1955) © The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum/ARS. Licensed by Viscopy, 2017.

examples the storm is made to express the seemingly transcendental human condition. As such, the storm is not literally applicable to the situation and thus becomes merely metaphoric.[7] These observations are not entirely new to our knowledge of Shakespeare in performance, but what is important to underline in an explicitly ecocritical performance history is that the concerted attempt to construct the storm as a metaphor for Lear's mind, or the human condition more generally, reflects the modernist backgrounding of nature. In the drive towards abstraction and minimalism, it is the storm, not the human drama, that recedes from view.

[7] It is worth mentioning that, in a different but related sense, the human body itself was used in the staging of the storm scene in productions of *The Tempest* around that time as well. Robert Atkins's 1934 production, for instance, dramatized the storm by means of a 'large number of ladies [as] impermanent waves … undulat[ing] with conviction' (quoted in C. Dymkowski, *The Tempest: Shakespeare in Production*, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 75). Atkins again in 1938 and Michael Benthall in 1951 used women dancing to evoke the tumult of the storm. Both these suggest similar movement away from the meteors, towards abstract ideas of tumult and chaos, reflecting discretely human and political concerns. That the human body was also used to represent the storm in *The Tempest* shows how movement away from the pictorial representation of the meteors was not isolated to productions of *King Lear*, but that the particular strategies for turning more fully toward the human differ depending on the story being told.

Although the psychological metaphor is the most straightforward or obvious interpretation of the storm, what this chapter has served to show is that it is a product of a particular time in history and a particular set of aesthetic and philosophical concerns, rather than being the one, authentic and right way of interpreting this baffling moment in the text. In casting this historical light on the psychological metaphor, this chapter hoped to denaturalize it and position it as just one of many interpretations responding to more than just the text. This was a particularly powerful and formative time in Shakespearean stage production, however, and although in the next chapter developments that move the interpretation away from the purely psychological are highlighted, productions that physically constructed the storm as a psychological metaphor laid the interpretative groundwork for a modern Shakespearean performance tradition that endures today.

8

Towards the Flood, 1962–2016

Something changes in the 1960s and the storm starts to take on a new kind of significance. The psychological metaphor that developed so swiftly in the early part of the century still dominated stage productions. In parallel, the storm's presence starts to be regarded as more than just a psychological metaphor. It is not immediately *literally* meaningful as a storm in the dramatic world, but it starts to signify more than just the internal complexity of a singular individual. This chapter focuses on several examples that together constitute a narrative of the storm's return to significance, from Peter Brook's landmark production in 1962 starring Paul Scofield, to the most recent production in Sydney, Australia, directed by Neil Armfield and starring Geoffrey Rush. At the same time, however, I will show how, despite attempts to emphasize the storm, there are still famous, widely viewed and critically acclaimed productions that use the storm to serve as a metaphor solely for Lear's internal complexity.

'A sort of chorus'

The cultural significance of *King Lear* shifted in the 1960s (Kott 1966). R. A. Foakes analysed this event in *Hamlet versus Lear: Cultural Politics and Shakespeare's Art* (1993):

> *King Lear* changed its nature almost overnight: the main tradition of criticism up to the 1950s had interpreted the play as concerned with Lear's pilgrimage to redemption, as he finds himself and is 'saved' at the end, but in the 1960s the play became Shakespeare's bleakest and most despairing vision of suffering. (6)

Moreover, Foakes argues, at this time *Lear* supplanted *Hamlet* as Shakespeare's 'greatest' work. Although we are likely to be more sceptical of the idea of an artwork's essential greatness today, the general implication was that this particular play was suddenly recognized and championed by many as a superlative cultural object to which the latter half of the twentieth century was most affectively and politically attuned:

> After 1960 … *King Lear* has come to seem richly significant in political terms, in a world in which old men have held on to and abused power, often in corrupt and arbitrary ways; in the same period *Hamlet* has lost much of its political relevance, as liberal intellectuals have steadily been marginalised in Britain and in the United States. (1993: 6)

How theatre artists represented *Lear*'s newly bleak vision of human suffering on stage is equally important to understand.

Rather than being constructed as a triumphant hero, Lear began to be seen as forerunner to the anti-heroes of Samuel Beckett's drama. Peter Brook's 1962 and 1964[1] and Martin L. Platt's 1976[2] productions were described by reviewers as in some way embodying an existentialist philosophy and a particularly Beckettian aesthetic. Other productions, such as those of Trevor Nunn in 1968[3] and 1977,[4] did not specifically inspire comparison with Beckett, but were nonetheless performed on a bare stage with a grey and bleak setting. Brook also supplied the preface to Jan Kott's *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1964), which contains the essay '*King Lear* or *Endgame*', a surprising comparison between the two plays. Within these more ambiguous, less heroic visions of the *Lear* world, the representation and significance of the storm changes again. Focusing on Brook's version, this section explores how his staging produced a more sinister interpretation of the play, how the storm was represented and interpreted and to what extent this can be said to have captured the 'zeitgeist' of the early 1960s.

Brook's production was incredibly influential. His version of *Lear* premiered at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1962, then in 1964 toured to Eastern Europe and

[1] 'Drawing his inspiration from Samuel Beckett, Brook has superimposed the world of *Waiting for Godot* on that of *Lear*.' Robert Brustein, *New Republic*, in Babula, 142.

[2] 'The production reflects the Jan Kott–Peter Brook stark vision of the play.' C. Mc-Ginnis Kay, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, ibid., 148.

[3] 'Performed on a bare stage to lend universality to the production.' R. Speaight, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, ibid., 143.

[4] 'The stage [was] bare with a semicircular back wall intermittently pierced by doors.' J. S. Bost, *Educational Theatre Journal*, ibid., 150.

New York before returning to London. Brook then produced a film based on the play in 1971. Brook's assistant director Charles Marowitz lamented the show's success: 'The show had become not an imaginative, brilliantly executed, somewhat flawed and erratic Shakespearean production, but a "milestone"' (Marowitz 1963: 121). While it seems prudent to follow Foakes and view Brook's *Lear* as the effect of a larger cultural process, not the primary cause of the radical shift in the cultural perspective on the play in the hands of one brilliant director (Foakes 1993: 59–65),[5] something happened at the level of performance to provoke such changes.

Harsh, bleak and cold are useful adjectives to describe the overall design and mood. Characters were clad in simple but suggestive costumes made of thick and heavy materials like leather; the walls of the castle were unadorned but towered over the characters. In contrast to John Gielgud, who aimed to produce a sympathetic old Lear, troubled by madness and outcast by his daughters, with Paul Scofield in the title role Brook's production conjured Lear as a much darker, less sympathetic figure. Recalling the experience of watching the opening night in Stratford-upon-Avon, Alexander Leggatt described the audience as having experienced 'culture shock' (42) with some feeling as though they had witnessed the 'true' meaning of the text and others 'angry' at the new interpretation.[6]

One of the other key aspects of Brook's production was the ending. He laboured to ensure that the play was an 'endgame' that could not incidentally be interpreted as a story about redemption and renewal. Indeed, the overarching aim of the production might be understood as an exercise in overturning earlier interpretations of the play. As we have seen, Shakespeare's rewriting of *King Lear* was ambiguous: in the folk tales, the histories and the anonymous play (as also in Tate's version), the king's position is ultimately validated by his restoration to the throne and/or reunion with his good daughter. In Shakespeare's play, Lear's experience with the non-responsive storm, the brevity and strangeness of his reunion with Cordelia and his death

[5] For an article that takes Marowitz's lamentation further and criticizes Brook's production as a misreading of the play, see L. Lieblien, 'Jan Kott, Peter Brook, and *KingLear*', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 1 (2) (1987): 39–49.

[6] Alexander Legatt attended the opening night of this production in Stratford-upon-Avon and recounts the experience, describing the production and reception in great detail, in *King Lear* for the 'Shakespeare in Production' series.

from grief all undermine this certainty. Such uncertainty might cause one to reflect upon Lear's errors and consider the king as the agent of his own destruction. But equally and more frequently, his isolation, 'pelican daughters', exposure to the storm and fantasies of spending his remaining years in prison with his youngest daughter might make us sympathize with Lear and give rise to a stronger critique of, for example, the actions of Goneril, Regan, Cornwall or Edmund. Our longing for Lear's restoration is potentially more fervent because it is withheld. Such is the lure of catharsis.

Thus, something more significant had to take place on stage finally to thwart a cathartic resolution. Marowitz explains how his idea was implemented:

> At the end of the play … I suggested that, instead of the silence and repose, another storm – a greater storm – was on the way. Once the final lines had been spoken the thunder could clamour greater than ever before. Brook seconded the idea, but instead of an overpowering storm, preferred a faint, dull rumbling which would suggest something more ominous and less explicit. (1963: 113–14)

They also enacted some strategic cuts to the text, such as the servants' display of sympathy for Gloucester during the blinding scene. The rumbles of thunder at the end in particular refuse an easy interpretation that Lear is vindicated by Albany and Edgar's survival. As indicators of future strife, not of peace and calm, the storm undermines any suggestion that, by obeying the 'weight of this sad time', Albany and Edgar will learn from Lear's mistakes. If anything the second storm suggests historical repetition: they will make the same mistakes as Lear again, or else that cruelty is an essential, not a contingent, aspect of the human condition.[7]

At the centre of Brook's creation of an endlessly cruel Lear world was also the 'first' storm, which functioned as a complex social and political metaphor. Large sheets of rusty metal flown into view from above symbolized and produced the thunder, while flashes of electric light supplied lightning. The bodies of Lear and the Fool indicated the wind's presence, with Lear's body poised as if walking headlong into a gale, and the Fool flitting about behind him 'like a leaf' (Leggatt 2004: 47). The storm sheets were shaken during the scenes and made loud sounds as well as adding to the bleak modernist design of the set. The technology used to create the thunder was actually similar to

[7] Thanks to Greg Garrard for the latter point about the second storm.

that used in eighteenth and nineteenth century productions, but here the metal sheets were visible to the audience and thus, in the manner of Brecht, the design reveals the artifice of the effects thus alienating the audience from the spectacle. The rusty thunder sheets also were a significant part of the built environment of the Lear world by virtue of their aesthetic coherence with the rest of the set. Alexander Leggatt recalls how 'the storm scene worked not just because it abandoned the realism that was bound to fail in any case, but because it treated Lear's encounter with the storm not as an exercise in special effects but as a dialogue' (2004: 38). At the same time as suggesting that a literal interpretation was an inevitable failure and so still not meaningful as weather in itself, Leggatt shows how this 'storm' was nonetheless deeply embedded within the architecture of the play as a social and political metaphor.

Despite the emphasis on symbolism, the overall effect was very different to that of the other metaphoric storms from earlier in the twentieth century. In the prompt copy, thunder and lightning effects consistently punctuated Lear's lines; clearly they were designed as a dialogue. In this regard, the storm was neither a reflection in the macrocosm of trouble in the microcosm, nor was it a spectacularization of Lear's mind, but a response from some other kind of force. Perhaps it could be imagined as part of Lear or the human world, or else as the entropic energies of his past decisions ricocheting throughout the infrastructures of the kingdom, for example. Brook's particular staging of the storm has been read in two main ways. Bratton argues that Lear's speeches in the storm are deeply psychological: he was able to compete with the storm because the power of the storm was within him (Bratton 1987: 30). In contrast, Jeffrey Kahan hypothesizes that 'Brook used the storm as a sort of chorus to Lear' (Kahan 2008: 70). Like Leggatt but contra Bratton, the storm *as chorus* ultimately awards the atmosphere around the play a significant dramatic function.

As a 'sort of chorus' in a dialogic relationship with Lear, this version reinforces a distinction between what the storm is in itself and what it means for Lear and the other characters. Given that one of the central challenges in reading 'through' the event of the storm is the potential to confuse and conflate what the storm means for the individual characters, especially Lear, and what the storm does in the play overall, the device of the chorus provides a useful way to characterize its functional presence in the dramatic world that does not rely on a didactic appeal to its ultimate literalism.

In Greek drama the Chorus served the dual role of framing and commenting on the main action, a collective force of individuals that existed outside the central action, and yet shed light upon it. According to Nietzsche, 'the chorus is a living wall against encroaching reality because it … depicts existence more truly, more authentically, more completely than the man of culture who sees himself as the sole reality' (2003: 41). What is useful for us in Nietzsche's analysis of the chorus is that as a device it pushes back against human fantasies of individualism and control. Before the storm many of the characters view themselves as the only reality, and yet the disruptive presence of 'storm' arguably troubles those senses and the constitution of that reality. Earlier productions that tried to equate the storm with Lear or to externalize the internal human conflict missed how the storm structurally, conceptually and materially gives rise to and radically limits Lear's fantasies of control. Here the idea of the storm as chorus does not go so far as to suggest that Nature itself has that function, but that a non-human collective force can communicate philosophical ideas by virtue of their entanglement within a human story.

Although Brook avoided literally representing the weather in the play, the way in which he presented his cruel Lear world in cinema was very different. Unlike his earlier attempt at filming the play in 1953 – a surprisingly horrible television version with Orson Welles in the title role using a walking stick to indicate his age (he was only in his late thirties at the time) and punctuate his emotions – his 1971 film engaged the camera in storytelling, shot on location instead of set and, at the same time, conjured a similarly bleak interpretation to the stage production.[8] The script was heavily cut and the subplot virtually excised, so much so that Roger Ebert suggested it might as well have been called *Peter Brook's King Lear*. Where there were traditional difficulties in staging, Ebert claimed Brook 'substituted his own cinematic decorations.' (Ebert 2012 [1971]). While the play and the film are evidently separate artistic

[8] Like the stage production, the film avoids catharsis. The deaths of all three daughters, who die offstage in the play, are shown on screen. Goneril's end is triggered by the death of Edmund; after receiving the news of Edmund's death, all hope of another life seems to vanish for Goneril and she kills her sister by violently pushing her to the ground, then kills herself by smashing her head against a large rock. Then, in a short, semi-close-up shot and with a neck-snapping sound effect, we see Cordelia's execution. The final lines, delivered by Edgar, are not reverentially delivered over Lear's dead body but rather interspersed with shots of Lear slowly falling to the ground dying. On Brook's cinematic strategies, see R. B. Parker, 'The Use of *Mise-en-Scene* in Three Films of *King Lear*', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1) (1991): 75–90.

phenomena, when thinking about the broader cultural phenomena of *King Lear* storm', the two should be viewed together as part of a large-scale decade-long *Lear* project that was an integral part of the broad cultural redefinition of this story.

Although there were similarities in the tone of the play and film, the means by which Brook evoked the mood were strikingly different. His film was based on a series of exercises on the relationship between *King Lear* and Artaud's 'Theater of Cruelty'.[9] According to Artaud:

> Everybody will at once take (cruelty) to mean 'blood'. But '*theater of cruelty*' means a theater difficult and cruel for myself first of all. And, on the level of performance, it is not the cruelty we can exercise upon each other by hacking at each other's bodies, carving up personal anatomies, or, like Assyrian emperors, sending parcels of human ears, noses, or neatly detached nostrils through the mail, but the much more terrible and necessary cruelty which things can exercise against us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall in on our heads. And the theater has been created to teach us that first of all. (1958: 79)

By 'cruelty' he means the impact of non-human things upon the human body; it is this non-human cruelty Artaud wants to activate in his vision for the theatre. Cruelty is the terror inflicted by the non-human world upon the human body: the sensory invasion of tastes, smells and vibrations, and the physical threat posed by volcanoes, earthquakes and, of course, storms. Artaud calls for our senses to be attacked by forces beyond our control and for us to remake ourselves in the face of their onslaught. In Brook's film version of *King Lear* the world itself is employed to express this concept.

Brook set the film in winter, on a bleak, icy, and windswept landscape, shooting it on location on the North Jutland Peninsula in Denmark (Davies 1990: 17). The atmosphere is frozen, light is grey and dull, and characters are dressed in thick furs. The sky looms low above their heads, threatening at any moment to fall. Brook described why he chose to set it on such a landscape:

[9] Lear is often conceived of as a 'theatre of cruelty'; see for example, P. Brook, '*Lear* – Can it be Staged?' in *The Shifting Point: Forty Years of Theatrical Exploration 1946–1987* (London: Methuen Drama, 1988) and E. Sun, *Succeeding King Lear: Literature, Exposure and the Possibility of Politics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010). Although he does not make the explicit link with Artaud, Kott refers to the 'cruelty' of the Lear world as well; see '*King Lear*, or *Endgame*' in J. Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary,* 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1967), 104.

> The most realistic elements of the film version of *Lear* were taken from the life of the Eskimos and the Lapps … because [their life] is still controlled by the basic natural conditions, by the contrast between heat and cold … [W]e realized that we could take the visual aspect of the film from a society whose principal problem and principal function is to manage to survive under the specific climactic conditions. (Brook 1994 [1988]: 204)

Brook does not suggest that the Inuit and Sàmi are innately cruel people. Rather by situating the cruel Lear story within such an environment, Brook explores how the environment shapes the story. By shooting on location, the background subsequently comes to function as a rich psycho-social metonymy, wherein the pitilessness of the weather is an aspect of the brutality of the *polis*.

At the time reviewers were unsure precisely how to interpret the film and took it as both literal and metaphoric. In the *New York Times*, Vincent Canby was freed from the need to make comparison between Brook's stage and film adaptations: he 'missed the *King Lear* that was staged here seven years ago by Peter Brook' and 'happily unburdened of the need to make comparisons'. As such he was especially attuned to the environmental aspect of the play: 'mostly in the wintry dune country of Denmark's Jutland Peninsula, is set in a time where the sun seems to be receding not because of any seasonal course but because the entire universe is moving towards an exhausted end' (Brook 1994 [1988]: 205). Here the Lear story is a horrible entropic fantasy where the climate is heading toward an icy apocalypse. For Anthony Davies, charged with comparing the film to the play in a more direct sense, the weather is read as a metaphor: Brook constructs 'a landscape of the mind, a place dreamed by its inhabitants, one whose temperatures, textures and lights alter with moods, acts, speeches of the characters' (Davies 1990: 17). The landscape is read as a psychological metaphor to such an extent that the non-human itself was understood to 'have absorbed some of the life of the characters in them' (17).

But there is nothing very dream-like about the landscape; the landscape is brutally material. It has produced these characters and the characters have had to adjust to living in such a place. Like the stage play, in the film the characters wear heavy leathers and thick furs, and by virtue of their clothing and dwellings their drama is able to play out in the open despite the harshness of the climate. The wind howls throughout every scene in the play and the

clothes and hairs of the characters are blown about amplifying the significance of the exposure; when Kent's shoes are taken off and he is put in the stocks, the maliciousness of the act is compounded by the punishing weather. When Lear is not given lodging with his entourage, the ingratitude of the daughters and his stubborn attachment to the knights is, again, made all the more terrible on account of the cold. Given the ongoing harsh conditions the storm serves to make a bad situation worse. During the storm scenes the camera is literally caught up in the deluge, drops of water run down the lens and it is fogged up with condensation, the dialogue is very difficult to hear and the characters are at times almost impossible to see. Whether human nature's cruelty is simply reflected in or metaphorized by the play's setting or if the climatic conditions are deeply involved in producing the humans within this landscape depends on one's theoretical orientations. At the very least, in order to produce the same kind of brutal tone as he did on stage, Brook's film adaptation foregrounded the literal setting of *King Lear*, from the fact that Poor Tom might actually be bitterly cold when he is out in the weather in a loincloth to the materiality of the storm itself.

Going back to re-read the stage production now in light of the ecological turn in literary and cultural studies, the lack of reference to the literal meteors in the production, the changing significance *King Lear* in the 1960s, Brook's production and its widespread success in 1962, can in retrospect be seen as related to the publication of Carson's *Silent Spring* and the rise of modern environmentalism in the same year.[10] Although Brook was not an environmentalist, and Foakes cast the new *Lear* as a product of post war and Cold War human politics rather than broader ecological concerns, we now know that the Cold War and knowledge of climate change are thoroughly entangled (Masco: 2012). Moreover, Cheryl Lousley argues 'that we can see in *Silent Spring* the first outline of the representational challenge that ecocriticism faces: not the *representation of nature*, but the *politicization of environment*; or, in other words, how to make complex socio-ecological interactions socially visible as political concerns?' (2013: 3). The flipside of a similar dilemma might be said to occur in this timely reshaping of *Lear*: not the representation of the human as part of nature, but how to make human hubris an

[10] Alexander Leggatt notes that this is also the year the Beatles emerged from oblivion (1991: 33).

eco-political concern? Despite the obvious irony, the play had, since the late seventeenth century, been largely associated with the triumph of the human subject *over* illegitimate moral order and cruel forces of nature, often both women and storm. Thus although there is no overt ecological messaging in Brook's stage production and the storm is undoubtedly an anthropocentric symbol, we can retrospectively read into it the *zeitgeist* with regard to nascent mainstream awareness of environmental degradation by virtue of its timely criticism of the human hierarchies. Moreover, the weather in the film makes this cruelty more than just political metaphor, awarding the storm a role in shaping the human social order.

Kott's idea that 'nature' in *Lear* resembles 'non-nature' in Beckett offers another way into thinking Brook's non-literal stage storm in ecocritical terms:

> The scene of tragedy has mostly been a natural landscape. Raging nature witnessed man's downfall, or as in *King Lear* played an active part in the action. Modern grotesque usually takes place in the midst of civilization. Nature has evaporated from it almost completely. Man is confined to a room and surrounded by inanimate objects. But objects have now been raised to the status of symbols of human fate, or situation, and perform a similar function to that played in Shakespeare by forest, storm, or eclipse of the sun. (1964: 93)

The design of *Endgame* places the characters in a hermetically sealed room where they are obliged to climb a ladder in order to see the world outside through small windows.[11] The stage picture looks like a human skull with the windows as the eyes. By way of the austere design and the seemingly plotless play, Beckett at once represented human alienation from the more-than-human world and the business of living as waiting to die. Like *Lear*'s storm, Greg Garrard has shown us that the whole of *Endgame* is often read symbolically as a bleak allegory about the modern human condition (2012: 387). But Garrard recuperates the literal in *Endgame*: rather reading the play as an anti-ecological study of the exclusively human condition by hermetically sealing the characters off from nature, he argued that the play is 'literally ecological' (390) insofar as the play is a 'tragi-comic exploration of the end of nature *and* the fact that *we cannot see it*' (393, emphasis in original). What we

[11] On the stage aesthetics of Beckett, see L. Essif, *Empty Figure on an Empty Stage: The Theatre of Samuel Beckett and his Generation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); J. Kalb, *Beckett in Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

might learn about *King Lear* from Beckett, or Garrard's flipping the logic of ecocritical literalism by way of his reading of *Endgame*, is the extent to which, paradoxically and simultaneously, this play represents the 'the end of nature' (Garrard 2012: 387) and the idea that 'there is no outside of nature' (Kirby 2011: x). There is no pastoral dream outside the skull or outside the kingdom; just different types of shelter and degrees of optic apprehension. Similarly, in Brook's staging of *King Lear* we discover that the storm does not necessarily have to be represented as literal weather to indicate to an audience that there are forces within the world that exceed and challenge the power of the human that are neither transcendent nor supernatural.

'An intergalactic Fourth of July'

In the 1980s and 1990s, parallel to the great acceleration in productions of *King Lear* within the ever-evolving mainstream traditions, after the Victorians, after-Granville Barker and now, after-Brook, contemporary auteur theatre directors began to use *King Lear* to rethink both establishment theatre craft, accepted cultural understandings of Shakespeare's plays and the literal limits of the *Lear* world itself. Erika Fischer-Lichte argues that such artists 'have all used *Lear* in search of proof that their various developed theatre aesthetics are capable of unfolding new aspects or even whole new interpretations of the tragedy' (Fischer-Lichte 1997: 201). There is nothing innately innovative about a theatre artist using their production to trying to unfold new aspects of the tragedy: from Garrick to Reinhardt and beyond, many artists use Shakespeare to define themselves as great innovators of the mainstream theatre. Moreover, because *King Lear* is about aging and mortality, if it is not a way of grounding one's early career, actors, directors and actor-managers may view it as their legacy production, as I illustrated in chapter four. But with particular regard to the late twentieth century new wave referred to by Fischer-Lichte, *King Lear* comes to function as a rite of passage to be undertaken by experimental theatre directors to prove their skill and originality within their particular set of new stylistic concerns. Among the directors taking on the tragedy were the American, Robert Wilson (1985–90) and the Australian, Barrie Kosky (1998). These directors have since become establishment figures in their own right,

largely due to their qualitatively different theatre craft and their provocative meddling with the theatrical canon.

Both artists are known for 'authoring' their own theatrical collages based around a particular concept, combining all the tools of the theatre to create grand cacophonous spectacles.[12] So for both Wilson and Kosky, staging 'William Shakespeare's' *King Lear* was a departure from their usual theatre making practice because they directed an individual play authored by another writer, rather than a self-devised theatrical event. Wilson commented on his particular reason for presenting Shakespeare's play:

> I don't have to make theatre with *Lear* … Shakespeare already made the theatre. What I have to find is a way to put this theatre on a stage with enough room around those words so that people can hear them and think about them. I don't believe in talking back to a masterpiece. I let it talk to me. (Quoted in Holmberg 1996: 30)

For Wilson, *Lear* was already a palimpsest of ideas and his job was to channel it. But both he and Kosky broke with conventional representations of the play by bringing to the text their experimental stagecraft and dramaturgy. They played with the play, in much the same way as they might otherwise explore a cultural trope or theme. Their 'play' was in the excessive cutting Shakespeare's text, sampling other poetry and song, and drawing on a range of different theatrical technologies such as light, sound and video projection to create a chaotic and cinematic theatre world.

Their storms were neither literal nor metaphoric, which is to say neither of these storms 'refer' only to the weather, to the mind or the polis. As spectacular events, I will argue that they 'propose' new and chaotic modern cosmologies or entanglements between the physical and metaphysical. Thus, after describing the productions and their reception respectively, Isabelle Stengers's idea of the 'cosmopolitical proposal' will frame an analysis of these spectacularly confusing theatrical events. Stengers's cosmos 'bears little relation to the world in which citizens of antiquity asserted themselves

[12] For reflections on the unconventional theatre practice of Wilson and Kosky see M. Robinson, 'Robert Wilson, Nicolas Poussin, and Lohengrin', in E. Fuchs and U. Chaudhuri (eds), *Land/Scape/Theater* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2002), pp. 159–88; E. Sheer, 'Barrie Kosky's "*The Lost Echo*" Awaken the Gods', *The Monthly,* October 2006, retrieved from http://www.themonthly.com.au/theatre-edward-scheer-awaken-gods-barrie-kosky-s-lost-echo-295 (accessed 29 February 2012); J. McCallum and T. Hillard, 'Shocking Audiences Modern and Ancient', *Australasian Drama Studies* 56 (April 2010): 131–53.

everywhere on their home ground, nor to an Earth finally united, in which everyone is a citizen' (in Latour 2005: 994). This new cosmos is not an ordered whole. Instead, she continues, cosmos 'refers to the unknown constituted by … multiple divergent worlds and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable' (995). I argue that when considered in the context of the dramatic narrative of *King Lear,* the spectacular incoherence of the Wilson and Kosky storms can invite a contemporary rethinking of the entire dramatic world, bringing the messy materiality of the meteorological storm back onto the stage, so to speak, alongside the human and the political. Thus, in using Stengers to reconsider the Lear world as a 'cosmos', I do not suggest that these artists had a romantic vision for an the Lear world as an ordered whole, but rather used their ambitious productions of the stormy play to produce a new universe that is both open, unstable and contains forces beyond the human.

Robert Wilson's production of *King Lear* began with a workshop version staged in Hollywood in 1985 (Sullivan 1985); the complete production was slated to premiere in Hamburg in 1987, but did not officially premiere until 1990 in Frankfurt, with the German actress, Marianne Hoppe, in the role of Lear. Writing about the early workshops, long before Hoppe became involved, one reviewer highlighted Wilson's love of theatrical illusion: 'Wilson abhors the modern predilection for exposed lighting and technical elements. He is a showman, a stage magician, an illusionist.'[13] As I described in the previous chapter, Victorian spectacular theatre demonstrated a certain desire for illusion, and harnessed contemporaneous technological capacity, to represent a reality as pictorial and dynamic as the world itself. So although Wilson's theatrical style could be conceived of as a return to the grand illusionism of the nineteenth century in terms of his drawing on a range of new and old technologies, he did not aim to replicate a naturalistic world on stage. He had digested too many modern methods to be capable of such retro pictorialism. Come the storm, he did not aim for meteorological verisimilitude, but the creation of a new kind of cosmo-meteorological spectacle.

Rather than being limited to the inflexible architecture of a conventional theatre, Wilson had almost total control over the staging. The production took place in Frankfurt's Bockenheimer Depot, a former streetcar repair warehouse

[13] Reference unfortunately mislaid.

that was transformed into an enormous arts space. Within this cavernous and undefined space, Wilson's stage was purpose-built for the production. It had a large carpeted apron with centre stage marked by a painted lightning bolt and a thin line of shadow cast by a rod (Fischer-Lichte 1997: 202). Behind the stage was a large cyclorama at the back of the stage, illuminated by a rear projector. The screen carried motion picture images of storms during the scenes. According to one critic, 'The sense of depth that light creates behind the translucent rear projector … [gave] the illusion of infinite space' (Holmberg 1996: 124). Like a Globe built for the New Atlantis, the stage mimicked the world. Instead of invoking closed spheres of the geocentric cosmos however, the cavernousness of the Depot's architecture implied an open, infinite and chaotic expanse.

The storm itself was a pastiche of different weather-related images and effects, from the metaphoric to the literal. Arthur Holmberg describes a few of them:

> The sources of Wilson's images are manifold … He liked the way Marianne Hoppe, exhausted, slumped her head over a wall to rest. It became part of *King Lear* … He saw a tree ripped asunder by a storm in Frankfurt. It became part of *King Lear*. (86)

Wilson was also fond of grand apocalyptic images and according to Holmberg, his interest in the representation of the apocalypse fed into his vision for the storm:

> A key image in Wilsonland is the apocalypse. Images of catastrophe – natural and manmade – haunt his work like the spectre of Armageddon … In *King Lear*, the storm became a war of the worlds; suns, moons, and stars crashed into each other, bursting into an intergalactic Fourth of July. (117–18)

Elsewhere the storm illusion was described as 'cosmic fireworks … on the blasted heath' (124). Wilson's stage illusion was similar to de Loutherbourg's *Eidophusikon* – a painting with the added dimension of time – but in this case the painting was a hybrid-work of many styles, from Romanticism and Photo Realism to Cubism and Abstract Expressionism, all combined into one. Unconstrained by the need to replicate a particular vision of the natural world, Wilson constructed an explosive stormy stage picture where emotions, ideas, politics, history and weather were animate parts of the cosmos.

As well as the construction of a spectacular storm centrepiece, Wilson laboured to highlight particular themes in the Lear story: aging and death. The play began with Hoppe reciting the words of William Carlos Williams's 'The Last Words of My English Grandmother', a poem that tells the story of a grandmother's final trip in an ambulance. She has no wish to be in the ambulance, but neither does she want to be part of the world any longer.[14] The character in the poem is like Lear: Lear is unwilling to accept death, but also wants no responsibilities in the world either. By casting a female in the role of Lear, Wilson universalized the experience of an isolated 'crawl toward death' in the play.[15] But also, by casting a female in this role, he complicated the way the audience identified with the dramatic narrative, by referencing feminist performance of the 1960s and 1970s, and foregrounding the gender politics of the play: the father–daughter relationships and the related questions of burden, blame and responsibility. Thus, at the same time as universalizing the experience of dying, the act of cross casting also calls attention to the body of the protagonist in a new way and situates the production in a very particular historical moment where women can be cast in leading male roles, the reverse of the all-male early modern stage.

In 1998, Barrie Kosky directed a similarly unconventional, albeit very different, interpretation of the play at the Sydney Opera House, with Australia's most famous twentieth-century Shakespearean actor, John Bell, in the title role.[16] Like Wilson, his exploration was enabled by experimentation with the dramatic form: he heavily cut the dialogue, used light and soundscapes, non-representational sets, cross-dressing, elaborate yet stylistically divergent costumes, and gave Lear a retinue of perverse animal-like figures instead of knights. Kosky created a monstrous cosmos on the stage. Although he did not have the same amount of sway over the architecture of the stage itself,

[14] Here is the relevant section of the poem: 'Oh, oh, oh! she cried / as the ambulance men lifted / her to the stretcher – / Is this what you call // making me comfortable? / By now her mind was clear / Oh you think you're smart / you young people // she said, but I'll tell you / you don't know anything … What are those / fuzzy-looking things out there? / Trees? Well I'm tired / of them and rolled her head away.' W. C. Williams, *William Carlos Williams: Selected Poems*, C. Tomlinson (ed.) (London: Penguin, 1972), 127.

[15] On female Lears, see L. Senelick, 'Brush up your Shakespeare', in *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 487–8.

[16] Kosky told the *Sydney Morning Herald* at the time: 'Stylistically the production combines the aesthetics of the evil empire in *Star Wars* with a dash of Nazism and the eerie poetic of William Blake.' Retrieved from http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/theatre/brush-up-your-shakespeare-20111020-1m9sp.html (accessed 29 February 2012).

he unequivocally seized control of the stage picture from the actors' and characters' hands. Indeed, in most of Kosky's productions he is seated in a raised orchestra pit playing piano and conducting the action as if it were his own symphony.

Like Wilson, Kosky's storm invoked a cosmic framework of a contemporary kind; it did not reflect or spectacularize the political or affective situation in any straightforward manner. Initially the storm scenes referenced older productions that highlighted the psychological metaphor and juxtaposed that with wild experimentation. Act 3.1 was cut in its entirety and all that remained of Act 3.2 was Lear's two main speeches beginning 'Blow winds' and 'Rumble thy bellyful'. Lear dominated. There was no Fool as a foil. Bell played the storm scene under the proscenium arch, in front of a ballooned red crushed-velvet curtain, his face picked out in a tight spotlight. As in Granville-Barker's production, these speeches in the storm emphasized Lear's psychological state and referenced the long tradition of fetishizing Lear's head in relation to the storm. But the production went on to disavow the psychological metaphor by not containing the storm within Lear's face for very long. Following the famous storm speeches, the curtains opened, and, as strobe lights flashed, Lear darted madly around the stage. Lear's knights accompanied him dressed in black and white polka dot pants, with oversized prosthetic phalluses hanging outside of their trousers; during the storm they also wore enormous headpieces shaped like the heads of animals and various non-human monsters. Poor Tom entered covered in mud or shit, and both Lear and Poor Tom played around the stage for an extended period of time. Although the dialogue was cut back, the storm scenes remained long. Flashes of light and sounds of thunder, music, hybrid cow-monsters, filth covered Tom and Lear and fragments of the text contributed to the spectacular cacophony of Kosky's storm.[17]

Like Wilson, Kosky's *Lear* took the occasion of the storm to explore other themes represented in the dramatic poetry. The parade of phalluses and shit-smeared characters is evidence of Kosky's ongoing preoccupation with the

[17] There is a rare account of Kosky's *Lear* in Richard Madelaine, 'As Unstable as the King but Never Daft (?): Text and Variant Readings of *King Lear*', *Sydney Studies in English* 28 (2002), retrieved from http://escholarship.usyd.edu.au/journals/index.php/SSE/article/view/562 (accessed 3 October 2011). A grainy in-house video recording is available for research-purpose viewing from the Bell Shakespeare Archives. See http://archives.bellshakespeare.com.au (accessed 10 April 2011).

relationship between gender identity, sexual desire and taboo.[18] His other driving theme in this production was cosmological doubt. In a programme note, Kosky samples John Donne's 'First Anniversary':

> And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
> The Element of fire is quite put out;
> The Sunne is lost, and th'earth, and no man's wit
> Can well direct him where to looke for it.[19]

Written in 1611, not long after *Lear*, Donne's first work of verse was a eulogy to his patron Elizabeth Drury. But these famous and oft-sampled lines are generally held up as evidence of the emerging new world order, mourning for the loss of coherence of the geocentric cosmos and questioning the meaning of life in the movement towards modernity. Taken as a programme note, or epigraph to the theatrical event, then, the production operates under the sign of cosmic doubt and uncertainty. Not just doubt in a transcendent god and coherent world order, of course, but perhaps calling into doubt in the cultural function and significance of this particular Shakespearean tragedy.

The role of the leading actors within both of these themed and stylized productions of *Lear* was decentred and diminished. The resulting conflicts between actor and director were quite public, with both leading performers stridently critiquing the director's interpretation of the text. Hoppe's retort was especially pointed:

> This Wilson can't fool me. I started out at the Deutsches Theatre with Max Rheinhardt [*sic*]. I know what a director is. Wilson is not a director. He's a lighting designer. A Wilson actor runs here or there only because there's a change in the lights. On a Wilson stage, light pushes the actors around. Light is important, but in Shakespeare, language is also important. I can speak the lines the way he wants, but I don't believe Shakespeare wrote the part of Lear to be recited by an autistic child. (Quoted in Holmberg 1996: 137–8).

Her criticism was similar to that of John Bell, who was not surprised that the Kosky *Lear* received 'bags of hate mail', and who felt it necessary to look over

[18] Kosky's durational and spectacular meditation on taboo, desire and myth was *The Lost Echo* (2006); for an exploration of this work see Charlotte Farrell, 'Barrie Kosky's *The Lost Echo*: Rethinking Tragic Catharsis Through Affective Emergenc(e)y', *Peripeti. Tidsskrift for dramaturgiske studier* 17 (2012): 67–77.

[19] Retrieved from http://archives.bellshakespeare.com.au (last accessed 2 April 2011). Webpage no longer available.

Kosky's shoulder to make sure he did not 'misinterpret the meaning of an entire speech' (Bell 2003: 263).

Both productions received wildly mixed reviews in the press, which in many ways echoed the criticisms of the actors. One Australian critic reporting on Kosky's production relayed that 'I heard some people walk out at the interval … older people … saying "I think this is just incredibly self-indulgent". And I think some young people might love it and others might think, "I don't have a clue what's going on"'.[20] Key negative phrases that come up in mainstream media responses to the production are 'misdirected' (Nowra), 'stylistic inconsistencies' (Segal), 'not memorable' (Rockwell) and 'interminable periods of tedious spectacle' (McQueen-Thompson 1999: 15). But some of the same reviewers celebrate the directors' 'crisply executed stage pictures' (Rockwell on Wilson) or his 'willingness to locate a Shakespeare interpretation outside the strict confines of known historical spaces' (McQueen-Thompson on Kosky 1999: 14). As with much postmodern work, mixed critical responses indicate that the works were not boring or badly acted, but *incoherent* on a number of levels. In a witty summary of the consistencies, Kate Herbert described Kosky's as 'like Bella Lugosi meets *South Park* in a Hollywood musical with Walt Disney looking on'. Both productions were a visual, textual, aural and performative mash-up that did not always make explicit sense to an audience and that diminished the role of the leading actor in lieu of a wild spectacle.

These tensions between actor and director, and audience and production, arguably cut to the heart of the play's central dilemma, namely the tension between how Lear initially wants the storm to be and what the storm actually is. The storm is *the* more-than-human feature that unequivocally disavows Lear's desire. When the storm is cast as a psychological or political metaphor the storm coheres with or in some way is made to reflect the human drama, rather than being interpreted as representing a force of its own. These actors and audiences had expectations for the storm to cohere with their particular interpretation of the play, as being a study into the mind of a mad king or the architecture of a corrupt kingdom, but those expectations were not met. Instead a wild spectacle – indifferent not only to everyone's desires, but also to

[20] K. Herbert, 'Review', *Herald-Sun*, 'Where there's a Will', http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/stories/s12376.htm (accessed 11 March 2011).

the specific temporal limitations and geographical indications of Shakespeare's text – ensued.

Ironically, these perverse, irreverent and doggedly postmodern spectacular illusions could be viewed as more 'authentic' versions of *King Lear* than the earlier twentieth-century representations of the play in some ways. First, they do not aim to contain the storm's significance by relegating it to a psychological or political metaphor, nor do they simply aim for meteorological verisimilitude. Instead, they dramatize the stormy setting as, on the one hand, spectacularly difficult to interpret in coherent relation to the human narrative and, on the other, as an attempt to build a world around Lear, rather than creating the world as Lear. These theatrical cosmologies represent entangled social, political, scientific and meteorological forces. The vitriolic reactions to the productions serve to re-emphasize frustration at the storm's indifference and its refusal to be contained by clearly human systems of signification: the reviewers would have preferred the Lear cosmos to reflect their understanding of the play, but instead the actors and audience become the 'flys' to the 'wanton boys' Wilson and Kosky who play everyone for sport, leaving all baffled and asking, like Lear, 'What is the cause of thunder?' or 'What is the purpose of this spectacle?'

Despite seeming nonsensical to many audiences and the leading actors, Stengers's idea of cosmopolitics can assist in thinking this a postmodern phase of the play's performance history. In 'The Cosmopolitical Proposal' Isabelle Stengers turns to the figure of the idiot – 'a conceptual character … who always slows the others down' – to propose a new kind of epistemology. The idiot is the person without answers, but who nevertheless should be taken seriously. The idiot is the person who does not make sense or who cannot make sense. 'Don't ask him why' she implores, 'the idiot will neither reply nor discuss the issue. The idiot is a presence or … [someone that] produces an interstice … His role is not to produce abysmal perplexity but the idiot demands that we slow down, that we don't consider ourselves authorized to believe we possess the meaning of what we know' (995). Within the world of the play, Edgar is this idiot. And although Lear attempts to ask him 'why', by virtue of his non-response Lear is forced to reflect upon how he knows what he knows. Here, too, Kosky and Wilson might be thought of not as visionaries but as idiots, who produce spectacles apparently more meaningful as

expressions of their own egos than the play. Nonetheless, the directors use the storm as a site for their experimentation. In this regard, the storm becomes 'the cosmic idiot's murmur … indifferent to the argument of urgency, as to any other' (1003). Whether indulgent, incoherent or visionary, Wilson's and Kosky's storms open up a space for rethinking not only the individual human or social political order in *Lear* but their entanglement with the wider weathered world. Crucially, following Stengers, we need to be accepting of confusion. A complete and comprehensive knowledge or understanding of that new order will not emerge quickly, if at all.

'Nine tonnes of water'

This stormy history of *King Lear* in performance began in London in 1606 and travelled through time with a fairly unidirectional and limited sense of its passing over the last four chapters, demonstrating, by way of a series of select examples, how the specific design and performance of the storm played a key role in the theatrical reimagining of the play across successive generations. To bring this journey to a conclusion, I look briefly at four relatively recent productions which all occurred around the same time: David Farr for the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon (2010) and the Roundhouse in London (2011); Michael Grandage for the National Theatre at the Donmar Warehouse (2010–11); Benedict Andrews's *Lér Konungur*, for the National Theatre of Iceland in Reykjavik (2010–11); and Marion Potts for the Sydney Theatre Company at the Opera House (2010).[21] Both Farr's and Andrews's productions used real water on the stage, while in contrast, Grandage's and Potts's production represented Lear on a bare stage with only light and sound to indicate the storm. The striking differences between these four productions reveals the extent to which the storm remains central to the overall design and interpretation of the play and can today be used to either advance conservative humanist readings or to critique the dominant political class in a changing climate.

[21] Andrews's production opened in 2010 on 26 December, the day on which the very first *Lear* of which we have any record was staged, in 1606.

With Greg Hicks in the title role, David Farr's production charted a fine line between traditional Shakespearean character acting and physical experimentation. The production was not located in a particular historical period but seemed to move through history. It was initially set in a factory, which served as an industrial age castle. The characters were clothed in large fur coats, suits, crowns with chunky jewels and long gowns, but by the time the storm broke many of the characters were wearing modern military uniforms and the factory seemed no longer to be iron-clad, but rather made of flimsy plywood – which the Fool was physically able to kick down. While the design moved through historical time in the background, the drama itself, rooted in conventional contemporary character acting, played coherently in the foreground. The tone of the production was dark and cruel, reminiscent of Brook's interpretation almost half a century earlier. Embracing the large-scale spectacle for his storm scenes, Farr brought together elements of metaphoric abstraction and meteorological literalism. A complex system of pumps, tanks and drains enabled real water to fall as rain on the stage – not the entire stage, however, simply upon Lear who stood upon a small podium centre stage. The thunder was made up of scratchy metallic and sound effects, evoking at once affective, political and meteorological storms, with the architecture of the world straining under bureaucratic and climatic pressures. The lightning consisted in flashes of both strobe and fluorescent lights, which represented both the meteorological lightning, and also failing electrical wiring in a doomed kingdom.[22] This staged storm represented the agency of the thunder, lightning, wind and rain on the one hand, but also aimed to thoroughly materially and conceptually entangle the more-than-human world with the built environment on the other.

Like Farr, Benedict Andrews's *Lér Konungur* combined bold character acting and spectacular meteorological realism, but rather than situating it across history, Andrews situated it in the present.[23] His version of contemporary

[22] In a private conversation on 26 August 2010, Greg Hicks (Lear) explained to me the advantages of being on a podium and set apart from everyone else at that point: feeling real water on his face enhanced his capacity to understand the emotions behind Lear's lines.

[23] This production is described by E. Blake, 'Praise Rains Down on Lear', *Sydney Morning Herald,* retrieved from http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/theatre/praise-rains-down-on-lear-20110104-19f5m.html, 12 February 2011; 'B. Andrews, Benedict Andrews', retrieved from http://benedictandrews.com, 12 February 2011; 'Lér Konungur', retrieved from http://www.leikhusid.is/Syningar/Leikarid-2010-2011/syning/1071/Ler-konungur (accessed 12 February 2011).

urban realism included human clothing, accoutrements and dwellings, as well as material elements like water and electricity. He stripped his stage back to its walls and painted them black and dressed the characters in conservative contemporary business clothes. Rather than picturing every aspect of the Lear world in a photorealistic manner, design was used to highlight aspects of key scenes. For the division of the kingdom, the stage was cleared of any permanent structures and filled with hundreds of helium balloons, reminiscent of an American political convention.[24] The scenes following the storm, in the hovel and Cornwall's castle, were played in white rooms that looked like the wings of a demountable office space or kit home, with the real storm water continuing to fall outside. Whereas Farr situated *King Lear* across time, Andrews located it in 2010, a neoliberal capitalist and corporate kingdom.

To an even greater extent than Farr, the central element of Andrews's storm was water: all the actors exposed were drenched by nine tonnes that fell, like heavy rain, for 30–35 minutes.[25] As the photograph below shows, the stage was lit to highlight the rain and the characters, and left bare, except for fragments of burst balloons used in as set dressing in the division-of-the-kingdom scene. While the empty stage served to emphasize Lear's psychological dilemma, the sheer force and relentlessness of nine tonnes of water meant that the actors, like their characters, were obliged to endure the storm.[26]

Although these two productions create a contemporary social, historical and meteorological cosmos, referencing the deep entanglement of political and ecological forces, such an interpretation is not ubiquitous. Indeed, arguably the influence of productions from the mid-twentieth century, in which psychological metaphors drove the design, continues. The Bell Shakespeare Company production, directed by Marion Potts and again starring John Bell, at the Sydney Opera House in 2010[27] and the Royal National Theatre

[24] See the notebook images on Andrews's website, retrieved from http://www.benedictandrews.com (accessed 12 February 2011).

[25] In private correspondence with me (as well as on his website), Andrews has confirmed the duration of his storm.

[26] Andrews is known for direction that sets up an endurance task for the actor. An eight-hour two-part spectacular for the Sydney Theatre Company, his *The War of the Roses* (2008) included adaptations of Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Richard III*, alongside *Henry V* and *Henry VI*. For the duration of *Richard II* and *Henry VI* showers of gold confetti and ash were made to fall on the stage. See R. Higson, 'With Cate Blanchett, all that glisters may really be gold', retrieved from http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/with-blanchett-all-may-be-gold/story-e6frg6o6-1111118546278 (accessed 11 March 2011).

[27] See http://www.bellshakespeare.com.au/whatson/past/2010/kinglear (accessed 29 February 2012).

Figure 8.1 Arnar Jonsson, Palmi Gestsson and Olafia Hronn Jonsdottir in the National Theatre of Iceland's *King Lear* (Reykjavik, 2010) Director: Benedict Andrews, Set: Borkur Jonsson, Costumes: Helga I. Stefansdottir. Photography by Eddi. Reproduced with kind permission from the company.

production at London's Donmar Warehouse (2010–11),[28] directed by Michael Grandage and starring Derek Jacobi (Figure 8.2), were both minimalist in terms of design, reminiscent of a much earlier trends in staging. These productions were given almost free rein to explore the protagonist's psychological complexity, neither actor having to 'contend with the fretful elements' – their speeches reflecting upon their own internal sorrows and punctuated by the thunder. Indeed, the sound effects were so quiet in Grandage's production that Jacobi could whisper the speeches in the storm, a peculiarity that privileged Lear's private struggle. In the next act, Jacobi wore a crown of weeds, which was like a crown of thorns and gave him an ultimately redemptive and Christ-like image. This staging emphasized the storm only as an extension of Lear's psychological situation. Although, as Brook showed, it is possible to invoke the presence of a 'storm' without resorting to literal water on stage, by gesture, movement, characterization and design, the absence of a force to be

[28] See http://www.donmarwarehouse.com/pl114review.html (accessed 29 February 2012).

Figure 8.2 Derek Jacobi in the Donmar Warehouse Production of *King Lear* (London, 2010). Photograph © Johan Persson/ArenaPAL.

reckoned with in both these productions meant the default interpretation of the psychological spectacle prevailed.

'The future'

At the time of writing, the production of *King Lear* freshest in my mind was by the Sydney Theatre Company (STC), directed by Neil Armfield, with Geoffrey Rush in the title role. Before going into the details of that experience to conclude this history, it is time for a confession: ever since starting this project, although I love Shakespeare's *King Lear,* storms, and the particular storm in this play, I really hate King Lear. He is a thoroughly misogynist, power-drunk old fart who to my mind does not deserve a skerrick of sympathy. In many ways this project was a masochistic attempt to grapple with the widespread cultural reverence and compassion directed towards such a reprehensible figure. With this in mind, on 1 January 2016, I saw the STC production at the Roslyn Packer Theatre, 'The Ros', in Sydney. It was recently renamed because of a sizeable endowment from James Packer, one of Australia's richest men. By funding the arts and honouring his mother, Packer was seeking to stave off critics for his blatant abuse of power

in commandeering prime public land for a casino and luxury apartments around the corner from the theatre, named after the Cammeraygal woman, Barangaroo. The production opened on 26 December 2015, 409 years to the day after the first known performance by the King's Men at Whitehall.

That said, I never thought it would be possible for a lower-middle-class ecofeminist millennial such as myself to actually cry in a Shakespearean production, let alone *King Lear*. As much as I genuinely love the play, reading and watching it was always a scholarly exercise in coming to terms with the wild history of the text or the variant performance traditions. Schooled in feminist new historicism, I read from my body and through the lenses of adaptations by Jane Smiley and Sarah Kane. In this regard, during graduate school my supervisor was always troubled by my support for Goneril and Regan and utter lack of compassion for Lear, his marginalia relentlessly labouring both to fix my punctuation and draw out my sympathies. But at the end of the recent Sydney Theatre Company production, I cried. It was not a howl like Lear, but several dramatic tears rolled down my cheeks. This affective response was somehow drawn out by way of this production.

The production was tragi-comic, Lear and the fool ribbing each other throughout Act 1, with the 'boom-tish' of the snare and cymbal actually deployed to punctuate their terrible jokes. The stage was all black until Gloucester's blinding and then, after the interval, it was all white until the end of the play. And yet, come Act 3, the storm raged. Hundreds, maybe thousands of litres of water were dumped on stage. Large fans blew away stray props and set pieces and set clothes flapping about wildly in the wind. Edgar was completely naked and Lear ran around with his pants around his ankles for much of 3.4. Rush's training as a clown made his embodiment of the absurdity of the scene, a result of his stubborn attachment to the knights, all the more wretched.

What enabled the tragic to work in concert with the comic in this production, set within the seemingly 'black and white' moral universe of the stage, was the dramatization of Lear's similarities with Goneril and Regan. There was no moral dichotomy in this play. Rather than driving the emotional line down the centre with Lear, Cordelia, Kent, Albany, Gloucester and the Fool on one side and Goneril, Regan, Cornwall and Edmund on the other, Lear's similarities with his elder daughters were unmissable. Throughout

Acts 1 and 2 they made each other chortle with the ridiculousness of their arguments, which accelerated as if in a game of one-upmanship until the end of Act 2. If one line could be picked out to define the production it is the following from the Fool: 'I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are' (1.4.173). In contrast, Cordelia was painfully serious and she spoke too well, too clearly and too slowly; she was too honourable, as opposed to the others who were all too happy to indulge whatever affective whim might grip them in a given moment.

Despite the comedy that swept the moral high ground away from Lear by way of his juvenile love of a theatrical barney, the resulting production was deeply dark and serious. As online theatre reviewer Kevin Jackson said:

> *King Lear* is hardly fare of good cheer for a Christmas or the start of a New Year night out, in Sydney (or anywhere else). It is, however, a great 'thing' for those of us ruminating on the behaviour of our species, the homo sapiens, at the beginning of a new century of our 'recorded' history, in anticipating the future of us all. Of, even, the planet earth, itself. (2015).

In this production, any vaudevillian holiday cheer stopped around the same time as the storm began. Or, if laughter continued, it was in response to the horror of what was unfolding, tinged with discomfort and guilt of earlier giggles wasted on cynical enjoyment of the indulgent antics of the political class. Come the storm, the ineptitude, greed and ambition underscoring Lear's fight with Goneril and Regan was exposed. In the way that the storm brings all the threads of the plot together, in this production the weather served to tack the production sharply from comedy to tragedy. After the blinding of Gloucester before the interval break, it felt terrible to ever have laughed at all.

Moreover, by making, in particular, Regan's lavish love of excess a trait inherited from her father, this production gave me a clear moral position on the play. It gave me a way to read with the storm and brought me to tears. For me, *King Lear* in our time is a critique of excess. The fight between Lear and his daughters, which culminates in Lear's defence of extravagance by comparing his knights to his daughters' love of unnecessary objects, reflects clearly on a Western upper-middle-class addicted to stuff, unable to let go of lavish lifestyles. Lear would '*Rather* I abjure all roofs and choose / To wage against the enmity o'th' air – / To be a comrade with the wolf and owl' (2.2.400–2,

emphasis added) than to return to Goneril with fewer knights. My tears came from either mourning a realization that nothing can actually be done about this love of luxury, or as a strange physiological index of the overwhelming sense of the work still to be done. The storm, in this context, was metonymy, metaphor, synecdoche or symbol, and an irreducibly elemental otherness that called out the ridiculousness of some creatures that call themselves human.

Epilogue: The Art of Necessity

R.A. Foakes claimed that '*King Lear* is released from history, and can therefore be seen as an essentially a contemporary play' (1993: 181). Moreover, Maynard Mack asserted that, 'each exploration (of *King Lear*) is an exploration of ourselves' (2005 [1966]: 83). As a Yale Professor, Mack's 'our' presumably refers to the universal class: the dominant, masculine Western humanoid. In other words, *King Lear* is remade in every age in response to *prevailing* cultural concerns of the time. Indeed, Shakespeare remade the ancient Lear story in the early seventeenth century, responding in oblique ways to contemporary political challenges faced by King James I and IV, but he also set square in its centre a storm that invoked both classical debates about the weather's meaning and nascent modern anxieties about its meaninglessness. The play emeged during a period of substantial change in human history; it was always already historically in-between, and nowhere is this more evident than in the storm. The play seems released from history or able to be remade because it has an ambiguous meteorological centrepiece that allows for the projection of both ancient and contemporary concerns. But now our contemporary concern is the ancient question of the storm. As Bill McKibben said '[o]n a stable planet, nature provided a background against which the human drama took place; on the unstable planet we're creating, *the background becomes the highest drama*' (in Martin 2011: 4).

At the time of writing this epilogue, the upper-middle to upper classes living in the cities of developed nations of the global north, the privileged selves that are reflexively explored in main stage productions of *King Lear* in London, New York, Sydney, Berlin and so on, are, in many ways, insulated from the effects of climate change. Coastal or riverfront metropolises, with the immediate exception of Miami,[1] are designing, building and updating

[1] Miami is understood widely as the first major western metropolis to be severely affected by rising sea levels. For media coverage of the issue see Robin McKie 'Miami, the Great World City, is Drowning While the Powers That Be Look Away', with the 'looking away' having interesting or, perhaps, tragic resonances with the shame response outlined in chapter three. Retrieved at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/11/miami-drowning-climate-change-deniers-sea-levels-rising (accessed 12 May 2016).

seawalls, and levies to make these places resilient in the face of storm surges and sea level rise. New storm water drains are being built in an effort to manage increases in nuisance flooding and keep roads open. Air-conditioned offices cut through the heatwaves, enabling productivity to continue whatever the weather; houses or apartments with central heating systems or decent clothing help insulate from the cold snaps; private cars ferry many people to and from work; it is shelter all the way down – add supplies of Vitamin D available to order online, a rich person never need go outside, feel outside. Within the world of those well accommodated by the system there remains a degree of anxiety about what is yet to come, manifest, as Jarius Grove so eloquently put it, in the 'apocalyptic tone recently adopted by everything' (2015). But what is also now clear is that it is people abandoned by or, indeed, banished from the current system, those suffering poverty and the violence of resource and commodity wars that push back against colonialism, those excluded from legal process and detained indefinitely in island prisons, those living in low-lying island nations without the resources or geographical scope to migrate within one's borders, indeed, those in less well-paid jobs working amid the wealthy as support staff to the middle and upper classes, who are the ones that will suffer the most. After abandoning the masses, 'we' are left concerned not really about the gradual rising temperatures, the melting permafrost, the species extinctions and the acidifying oceans but about how all that might incidentally interrupt a morning commute to work, delay a flight, make a holiday to the Great Barrier Reef less picture-perfect, and, in particular, how a storm made extra-strong and unwieldy by virtue of the extra carbon in the atmosphere might be able to cut through the layers of insulation, tear back the seawall, brick wall and raincoat, and invade us all the way to the skin.

The storm, not as proxy for some other theme but as the primary material concern, gives rise to the question and challenge of the earth-bound human response. Thus, the question of Lear for today is not 'What is the cause of thunder?' or what is the storm's meaning and purpose in the world, but Regan's shocking and seemingly cruel question: 'What need one?' (2.2.455). The question seems spectacularly cruel when asked of Lear, especially given the all he gave and the speed with which the rest of it is stipped away, but it needs to be able to be asked of people surrounded by an excess of stuff defending the right to it with strange and unwieldy

arguments moving between denial, indifference, anger, shame: 'O, reason not the need' (2.2.456). Inheritance can be problematic and such is the world we inherit. So, really, what need one knight, one car, one international flight, one holiday home, one solar-powered pool pump, one leaf-blower, one wide-screen television, one more iPad, one electronic pepper grinder, one investment in a fossil fuel company. 'What need one?'

The flipside of Regan's question is, of course, what does one need? While it is easy to moralize about excess, to appeal to one's 'reason', the brute asceticism of the hovel is not exactly the ideal alternative. Once Lear realizes that the storm is neither on his side nor his daughters', his 'wits begin to turn' and he feels cold. Although he will come to ignore Kent and refuse to enter the hovel later in the play, at this point Lear accepts by way of a moment of self-reflection: 'The art of our necessities is strange, / And can make vile things precious. Come; your hovel' (3.2.70–1). Whether he means 'our' in the royal sense of the kingdom or 'our' in the sense of all human beings, that Lear comes to view the hovel as a viable option for shelter is indeed strange. Earlier on the same night, Lear had responded to Regan's question by defending extravagance by arguing that he *needed* an entourage of one hundred knights to embellish his wretched and cheap existence and that he will seek vengeance upon those who try to separate him from what he so deeply needs.

The question of human necessity is at the centre of *King Lear* and the play offers two paths or two dwellings that metonymically represent this dilemma: one path leads to a castle and the other towards a hovel. The castle cannot be the ideal shelter. The question of who has the right to be in the castle is a key dimension of the tragedy, it is excessive, it was exclusionary of all without the divine right, and it is now the proxy of the private suburban mansion, urban penthouse, lifestyle property. The castle is always the symbol for the dwelling that some people can access and that a multitude of others cannot. But, if the play critiques the castle, in either its historical or contemporary form, the hovel does not come to stand in as an ideal alternative mode of dwelling either. The play does not come to glorify the hovel and see within it a great path to an austere and trouble-free future for Lear either. The scene sheltering in the hovel is wretched and sad, Lear's mock-trial a spectacle more shameful and ashamed than his body itself. Thus, the question 'what need one?' and its obverse 'what does one need?' is the question that remains.

There is a long tradition of thinking beyond necessity and arguing for something more than we ostensibly need as a matter of great importance to humans. Lear does it. So does Audre Lorde. In an essay entitled 'Uses of the Erotic', Lorde argues something akin to Lear before the storm, but with a different political implication, Lear asks his daughters to 'allow not nature more than nature needs' (2.2.448) and permit him to have the entourage of knights. 'Not nature' for Lear is a human exceptionalist claim. Lear seeks to mask his base animality and for his exceptionalism to be on display by way of the knights. For Lorde, 'not nature' is a critical and radical political project. Lorde, argues,

> The principle horror of any system … which defines human need to the exclusion of the psychic and emotional components of that need … reduces work to a travesty of necessities, a duty by which we earn bread or oblivion for ourselves and those we love. This is tantamount to blinding a painter and then telling her to improve her work, and to enjoy the act of painting. It is not only next to impossible, it is also profoundly cruel. (55)

Desire, an extravagant erotic want beyond that of reproduction, an excessive impulse to claim a life beyond that which is immediately provided, also needs to be understood and valued as necessity.

To take *King Lear* as a fable for our time, then, is not as simple as arguing that those in the West have to reduce themselves to the bare necessities and that those in developing nations cannot desire more than they have. Thus, the line from Lear that seems most resonant in and for the contemporary context is provoked by the storm's failure to respond to his cries and the associated sensation of feeling cold in the storm: 'the art of our necessities is strange' (3.2.70). As an artform, necessity is not a universal and timeless or innate and measurable dimension of the human condition but something contextual, pliable and experimental that can potentially be unfamiliar, foreign or seemingly other. Necessity can be the stranger we might turn away from in shame, or it can invite a mode of being that we open up to due to an enduring interest or change of circumstance. *King Lear* is contemporary again in this time of environment crisis as an authoritative and affective invitation into the ethical question of human necessity, due to the king's contentious exposure to the meteorlogical storm.

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