

# KING LEAR ANALYSIS

## Act 1 Scene 1

Lines 55 - 100

### Introduction

#### Context:

- The extract is from Act 1 Scene 1 of King Lear. It is set in the Royal Court of Lear and involves the love test as Lear plans to split the kingdom among his three daughters.
- In this extract, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia attempt to express their love for Lear.
- Goneril and Regan flatter Lear with words of love while Cordelia believes in showing her affection through actions, which sets up the difference in nature of the daughters.

#### Approach:

- Elemental approach, where the analysis would be based on a combined linear and thematic approach.

#### Outline

- Characterisation of Goneril
- Characterisation of Regan
- Characterisation of Cordelia
- Characterisation of Lear
- Theme of appearance and Reality
- Theme of parent-child relationship
- Motif of blindness

### Body

#### Characterisation of Goneril:

- Goneril speaks in an eloquent and effusive manner to flatter Lear. She appears to love Lear, but in reality, has no sincere affection towards him.
- In her opening line, "I do love you more than word can wield the matter", bilabial sounds have been used to emphasize the irony in her statement.
- She says that words are unable to show her true love for Lear, but to the contrary, flatters Lear with her speech.
- Highlights the theme of appearance and reality and also foreshadows her betrayal
- In her following line, she uses hyperbole to exaggerate her love for Lear, "dearer than eyesight, space and liberty"

- At the same time, it also foreshadows the malicious acts that she is going to execute. Later on in the play, she commands the blinding of Gloucester and also deprives Lear of his space and liberty by removing his knights.
- Her speech is filled with superlatives, “beyond”, “dearer than” and alliterative sounds, “rich or rare”, “father found”. It helps to flower her speech and shows her scheming nature to deceive Lear.
- In her last line, there is a usage of anastrophe, “Beyond all manner of so much I love you”. The reversal of clauses places emphasis on the hypocrisy and irony in the statement as her love for Lear is not sincere and shows the audience that it is a veil for her true Machiavellian character. This once again highlights the theme of appearance and reality.

#### **Characterisation of Regan:**

- Like Goneril, Regan is materialistic and does not sincerely love Lear.
- In her opening line, Shakespeare has used a pun on the word “mettle”, which could refer to the spirit or the metal substance. This highlights that Regan is like Goneril, deceiving Lear for his wealth.
- Also she undertones words like deeds, when she says “I find she names my very deeds of love”. This once again shows the materialistic and deceiving nature of Regan as she compares words to deeds.
- There is a usage of the sibilance sounds, “she comes too short”, which gives Goneril a new facet as Regan compares herself to Goneril. It foreshadows her competitive and scheming nature, which in the later scene makes her undermine Goneril for her personal gain, as tensions arise because of the common love for Edmund.

#### **Characterisation of Cordelia:**

- Cordelia is a stark contrast to Regan and Goneril. She believes that true love cannot be expressed in the form of words. This is evident from her asides. In the first aside, she says, “Love, and be silent”, which shows that love does not encompass flattery. In her second aside, she mentions “I am sure my love’s more ponderous than my tongue”, which is a direct juxtaposition to Regan and Goneril.
- The asides after Regan and Goneril’s speech allow Cordelia to emotionally connect with the audience. It evoked sympathy for Cordelia as she is set up against her malicious sisters. Also, she is direct to the point and says “obey you, love you and most honour you”, which shows her honesty and sincerity towards Lear. It foreshadows the later part of the play, where she becomes the paragon of virtue.
- Cordelia also responds to Lear using a monosyllabic response, “nothing”. The monosyllabic response once again shows Cordelia believing that her love cannot be expressed by the fawning of words. She also mentions that “I love your majesty according to my bond, no more nor less, suggesting that the idea of parent-child relationship seems to be a filial obligation, or bond of natural affection between child and parent.

- The motif of nothing is also evident in Cordelia's speech. In this extract it emphasizes the emptiness in words and shows the honest nature of Cordelia. It is also related to the fool's opinion in Act 1 Scene 4, when he says, "I am a fool, thou are nothing", which shows the consequences of Cordelia's nothing leading to Lear losing her. Cordelia's uttering of "nothing" is echoed at the end of the play when she is dead, and "nothing" remains of her. But it is also important to remember that Lear really understands "nothing" about his daughters, just as Gloucester knows "nothing" about his sons. When Gloucester sees "nothing," he is finally able to see the truth, and when Lear emerges from the "nothingness" of his mental decline, it is to finally know that Cordelia has always loved him.

#### **Characterisation of Lear**

- Lear is commanding and has a lot of power. He uses the royal plural "we" to display his power as king and uses imperatives like "speak" and "tell" to command others.
- When he says to Cordelia "say to draw a third more opulent than your sisters", it is evident that Lear loves Cordelia the most. However, he has a superficial notion of love. He values speech over love, which gives insight into Lear's moral judgements, as he equates love to flattery. It shows his hubris, hamartia as he is easily flattered by compliments, which shows his moral blindness. The blindness is a motif in the play and also recurs in the body politic as seen in Gloucester's blindness to Edmund's deception in Act 1 Scene 2.
- When Cordelia replies with "nothing", he is shocked as he measures love by the fauna of words. This is brought about by the reply of Lear being monosyllabic and the usage of stichomythia, where there is a rapid exchange of words between Lear and Cordelia.
- The anaphora used by Lear "How, How, Cordelia" foreshadows Act 5 Scene 3, where Lear cries, "howl, howl, Cordelia" while holding on the lifeless body of Cordelia. It shows the tragic fall of Lear as him not accepting Cordelia's nothing led him to have nothing in the end.

#### **Conclusion**

- The extract plays an important role to introduce the characters of Goneril, Regan, Cordelia and Lear. The Machiavellian character of Regan and Goneril is directly juxtaposed to the honest and sincere nature of Cordelia. It also shows Lear's moral blindness as he is deceived by the words of Goneril and Regan. Following this extract, Lear banishes Cordelia from his kingdom.

### Lines 160 - 200

#### Context:

- Starts in the midst of the Love Test/Scene after Lear has disowned Cordelia for speaking what was on her heart and mind, unlike her two sisters.
- Kent, Lear's ever faithful and loyal servant, stands up for Cordelia in this extract and points out quite blatantly that Lear is bowing to the flattery of his other 2 daughters.
- On top of that, Kent also forewarns Lear about the dangers of listening to Goneril and Reagan and eventually gets banished by Lear.
- 2 new characters are introduced in this extract, the Duke of Burgundy and the King of France.

#### Approach:

- Elemental approach, where the analysis is linear whilst expounding on the various thematic ideas of the play.

#### Thematic Ideas:

- Emotion against Reason
- Inversion of natural order
- Words against Deeds
- Parent-Child relationships

#### Motifs:

- Blindness

#### Analysis

- The opening line of the extract sets the tone of the subsequent extracts. Kent beseeches his King to keep him by his side and to be "the true blank of thine eye".
  - "True blank" here refers to the white spot at the centre of the target and can be an allusion to the clear-sightedness of the pagan God Apollo in the next line. The God Apollo was noted to be an archer and one of clear-sightedness and of foresight. This brings out the motif of blindness, where Lear is blind to the guiles of Reagan and Goneril and their true intentions. Hence, Kent beseeches his King to let him remain at his side to keep Lear from being blind-sighted by his daughters' flattery.
  - It is also ironic to note that while Lear was the first to invoke the pagan God Apollo for his clear-sightedness, at that point in the play, he blind to his evil daughters' words.
- Kent again blatantly interrupts his liege lord, King Lear and actually corrects him by saying "Thou swear'st thy Gods in vain".
  - This highlights Lear's eventual loss of power, as he is being interrupted by his servants and the **inversion of the natural order** also, where now the servants are thinking better of themselves and correcting the King himself who is thought to be a demigod by the **Chain of Being**.

- Furthermore, there is also a pun here with the word “vain”
  - It is a double entendre where the first meaning could literally mean that Lear swearing to the Gods is futile or a second meaning which could refer to Lear’s vanity or his hamartia of hubris.
  - Hence, Kent uses the word “vain” to criticise Lear that he is letting his pride blind him to Cordelia’s sincerity which brings to mind the thematic idea of **emotion against reason**.
- It is again ironic to note that Lear still thinks himself a demigod when he has already abdicated his throne and split his kingdom to his Reagan and Goneril.
  - This is seen when Lear calls Kent a “Miscreant”, which refers to a heretic.
  - He is essentially calling Kent a breaker of faith and that he (Kent) is committing blasphemy. This shows that Lear still thinks that he is a demigod and by speaking out against him in public, Kent is breaking his faith or rather oath of loyalty to him.
  - It is also apt that in the next line, the Duke of Albany steps in along with the Duke of Cornwall to beseech Lear to stop, possibly asking him to stop from drawing his sword against Kent. Albany here is referred to as a symbol of patience, something that Lear lacks however, if we cross-reference to A3S2, Lear realises his shortcomings, hinting that there is indeed redemption after all.
- “Do, kill thy physician, and thy fee bestow”
  - There is a break in the iambic pentameter which comes in the form of a hypercatalectic line, where Kent likens Lear to a patient who is in need of treatment, but instead kills his doctor who is trying to treat him.
  - This places emphasis on the fact that Lear is not seeing reason and is letting his emotions get the better of him, emphasising the thematic idea of emotion against reason.
  - Furthermore, disease imagery is used here, where Kent likens Reagan and Goneril to the “foul disease” that corrupts Lear. Kent compares Reagan and Goneril to a disease that preys on Lear, highlighting their evil nature.
  - The evil that Kent refers to at the end of line 167 foreshadows the terrible things that Lear’s daughters would do to him.
- In Lear’s speech, he still uses the royal plural “we” and “us” despite the fact that he has already abdicated his throne to his daughters. Moreover he thinks himself to be infallible when he says “sought to make us break our vows” and “come betwixt our sentences and our power, which nor our nature, nor our place can bear”. This foreshadows his loss of power later on in the play.
  - He believes that his word is law and nothing he proclaims is wrong.
  - Furthermore, there is also the use of a transferred epithet in “strained pride”
    - This is ironic as Lear criticises Kent of being prideful to think that he can correct his King when in reality, it is Lear’s hamartia, his hubris that blinds him to the truth and in turn, causes him to have errors in judgement and make the wrong decisions.
- It is again ironic as Lear says “Our potency made good”

- This brings to mind that power is carried into effect. Lear seems to be reclaiming the power he gave to Albany and Cornwall, perhaps highlighting Lear's moral incapability of resigning the sovereign power in the very moment of disposing it.
- The use of the harsh 't' sounds in "take thy reward", "To shield thee", "turn thy hated back", "thy banished trunk" and "the moment is thy death", brings out the contempt that Lear has towards Kent.
  - The cumulative effect of all of this highlights the **blindness** that Lear is afflicted with as he cannot see past his own pride to the truth of Kent's words.
- Lear invoking the Gods again, but this time it is Jupiter.
  - It gives a sense of divine power in his command to banish Kent
  - However it is ironic on 2 fronts:
    - Lear has already given up the sovereign power to rule and pass judgement to Albany and Cornwall, he is just another man now, and thus, who is he to command/pass judgement on Kent
    - Use of divine power to condemn a person who is trying his best to restore the natural order.
- Kent has returned to the usual rhyming pentameter, highlighting his return to a calm disposition after his stormy exchange with Lear.
  - An example of a rhyming couplet is "Freedom lives hence and banishment is here".
    - This indicates the **inversion of the natural order** and values brought about by Lear's actions, as freedom in Lear's kingdom has been banished by him.
  - The next rhyming couplet was to Cordelia
    - This presents her with hope and highlights Cordelia's virtuous nature that even the Gods would welcome her, juxtaposing her character with those of her sisters, as seen in the lines.
    - However, this also foreshadows her eventual death in A5S3.
  - The next rhyming couplet is to Goneril and Reagan, ".....approve" and "....love"
    - This rhyming couplet is used as a verbal weapon, in a reminder lined with sarcasm to live up to their effusive speeches.
    - The use of "may" indicates that the good deeds that Goneril and Reagan promise Lear is not going to happen.
  - The juxtaposition of Cordelia and her 2 sisters highlights the thematic of **words against deeds** as Cordelia who spoke her heart and did not promise what she could not deliver was banished and disowned by Lear, while her sisters who flattered Lear were rewarded instead. This shows that Lear is unable to see past the flowery words of Goneril and Reagan and appreciate the sincere and truthful deeds of Cordelia.
  - This also brings to mind the **motif of blindness** as Lear is blind to the ulterior motives of Goneril and Reagan and is incapable of looking at the truth of things.
  - The last rhyming couplet serves as a foreshadowing for Kent's return to serve Lear.

- There is an inversion of the natural order here, as Lear offers the hand of Cordelia to Burgundy first instead of the King of France
- Moreover, he distances himself from Cordelia by saying “our daughter”
  - Again, we see that he is still using the royal plural “we” even after giving up his power. This goes to show his moral incapability of resigning the sovereign power he once held.
  - Furthermore, by trying to marry Cordelia off without her consent, Lear is enforcing his authority as King here. However, the ironic part is that he is no longer in power.
  - All of this emphasises the strain on **parent-child relations** between Lear and Cordelia.
- Lear also objectifies Cordelia by mentioning her as “present dowry”
  - Here, Lear sees her as nothing more than some object to be given away.
  - This perhaps also lends a more insightful look at Lear’s characteristics and shows how he places value in money and wealth. This materialistic perspective of Lear’s is evident in the play and its characters.
- Conclusion:
  - In conclusion, the banishment of Kent in this extract indicates the end of moral clarity in the kingdom and the beginning of chaos and conflict. Kent’s devotion to Lear is also especially poignant in his different attempts to open Lear’s eyes to the deception swirling around him. This extract is of particular dramatic significance as it focuses upon the importance of Kent as a loyal servant who possesses good judgment which is exposed by the end of Act 1, where the elder daughters of Lear execute their devious plans.
  - Furthermore, it also highlights the inability of Lear to look past his pride and the guiles of others which eventually leads to his own downfall.

### Lines 201-240 – Use my own analysis in the blue book

Context:

- Starts after Lear has disowned Cordelia for speaking what was on her heart and mind, unlike her two sisters and after banishing Kent
- Lear tries to marry Cordelia off to either King of France or Duke of Burgundy. Later after this extract, King of France accepts to marry Cordelia.

Approach:

- Linear - line by line approach

Thematic Ideas:

- Inversion of natural order
- Words against Deeds
- Parent-Child relationships

LEAR

Right noble Burgundy,

When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;

But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands:

- “Her price” - Lear objectifies Cordelia as if she now has lost her numerical value. She quantifies her love.
- “Stands” - Cordelia is portrayed like a statue, further objectifying Cordelia, dehumanizes her after she has been disowned by Lear for not expressing her love for Lear.
- Hypercatalectic (11 syllables) & terminal caesura in the form of colon - emphasizes on the last syllable “stand” which resemble Cordelia being lifeless after being disowned, points out to readers that Lear now only looks at Cordelia as merely an object as he detaches all his feelings towards her (parent-child relationship)
- Sibilance of “s” sounds, “Sir, there she stands” sounds of despise and deceit, further emphasize Lear’s despise towards Cordelia - reveals Lear hamartia of hubris.

If aught within that little seeming substance,

- Cordelia is objectified again as a “seeming substance”, and dehumanization. & sense of despise Lear has on Cordelia (parent-child relationship)
- use of sibilance “seeming substance” hints an angry tone that Lear is talking about Cordelia

Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced, And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,

- Cordelia objectifies like a knife or needle that “pierces” Lear’s “pleasure”. Strong imagery of Lear being “stabbed” by his once most favorite daughter shows evokes pathos for Lear but also reveals how he values words instead of deeds more. Further revealing his hamartia.

She’s there, and she is yours.

- Cordelia is again dehumanized as if she is a statue that can be taken by anyone.



## BURGUNDY

I know no answer.

- Oxymoron "know no"
- Hints a sense of hollowness in his answer, reveals his disinterest towards Cordelia once she has been disowned. Also hints slightly at Burgundy's characterization that he is materialistic, would only marry Cordelia if she had land, wealth, etc.

## KING LEAR

Will you, with those infirmities she owes,

- Condescending tone Lear talks about Cordelia as he points out of the "infirmities she owes". Shows how Lear completely looks down on Cordelia, further distancing the father-child relationship.

Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,

- The word "unfriended" shows how Cordelia has been "strang'd" as her relationship with Lear, her own father is distanced away after she has been disowned.

Dower'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath,

Take her, or leave her?

- When bartering, the final offer given is commonly "take it or leave it". She is once again dehumanized and objectified as Lear gives her away.

## BURGUNDY

Pardon me, royal sir;

Election makes not up on such conditions.

- Difficult to make decisions in such circumstances. Reveals the complexity and tension in this scene

## KING LEAR

Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that made me,

I tell you all her wealth.

- Using his Kingly/Divine Rights, Lear announces Cordelia's worth. This line reveals Lear's character of being materialistic as he quantifies Cordelia's worth by her "wealth". Using divine right as a King to condemn his own daughter - inversion of natural order.

## To KING OF FRANCE

For you, great king,

- "Great King" sense of respect Lear has for France

I would not from your love make such a stray,

To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you

- Lear would not risk the friendship between him and France by encouraging him to marry Cordelia

To avert your liking a more worthier way

Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed

- Lear blatantly insults Cordelia as a “wretch”. Revealing the discord between Lear and Cordelia (parent-child relationship)

Almost to acknowledge hers.

#### KING OF FRANCE

This is most strange,

That she, that even but now was your best object,

- France questions Lear with “most strange” to why he would disown his own beloved daughter.
- Cordelia now discussed as an object between Lear and France. As if they are bartering, hence further displays Cordelia’s dehumanization.

The argument of your praise, balm of your age,

The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time

- Use of superlative & anaphora - highlights Cordelia’s value in front of Lear and France

Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle

- Use of superlative to describe Cordelia’s action of not confessing her love to Lear.

So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence

- “Dismantling... folds” of a robe - clothing imagery where a robe is an imperial clothing that symbolize signs of power, authority, imperial sovereignty metaphorically represents how Cordelia is being stripped off from her family as she has been disowned by Lear.

Must be of such unnatural degree,

That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection

Fall'n into taint: which to believe of her,

Must be a faith that reason without miracle

Could never plant in me.

- Diction related to the unnatural: “strange”; “monster”; “unnatural” - discuss Lear’s unnatural actions to both divide his own kingdom and his disownment of Cordelia. Hints subtly at Lear’s hamartia

#### CORDELIA

I yet beseech your majesty,

If for I want that glib and oily art,

To speak and purpose not - since what I well intend,

- “To speak and purpose not” - juxtaposes words against deeds as professing her love to Lear will have no actual purpose

I'll do't before I speak,--that you make known

- Medial caesura in the form of dash indicates the broken syntax used by Cordelia which reveals her broken state of mind as she is unable to express her words properly (due to disjointed thoughts) from her disownment.

It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,

No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,

That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;

But even for want of that for which I am richer,

A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue

- Use of sibilance "still-soliciting eye" - cunning s sound indicates the immoral acts of "still-soliciting" = wealth-seeking & having "such a tongue" = lying. This reveals Cordelia's character of being honest and genuine in nature.

As I am glad I have not- though not to have it

- Medial Caesura of a dash - indicates Cordelia's honesty and genuineness in saying the truth

Hath lost me in your liking.

KING LEAR

Better thou

Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

- Lear focuses Cordelia's fault around himself, "pleased me better" gives the impression that Lear is narcissistic and only thinks about himself. This further reveals his hamartia of hubris.

KING OF FRANCE

Is it no more but this?--a tardiness in nature,

Which often leaves the history unspoke

That it intends to do? My lord of Burgundy,

- King of France recognizes Cordelia's intentions, her deeds, and not her unspoken words. (deeds against words).

What say you to the lady? Love's not love

When it is mingled with regards that stand

Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?

She is herself a dowry.

➤ Conclusion:

In conclusion, the disownment of Cordelia and Lear wanting to marry her off to either Burgundy or France brings up several themes, such as words against deeds, parent-child relationships, and inversion of the natural order. This extract also subtly hints the characterization of Lear and Cordelia, highlighting Lear's hamartia of hubris and Cordelia's honest and genuine character. The dramatic significance of this extract is to foreshadow how Lear and Cordelia would depart on a bad tone which later in the play Lear would regret as he is captured by Cordelia's men in Act 4 Scene 7.

○

## Act 1 Scene 2

### Lines 1 - 40

#### CONTEXT:

This extract can be contextualized on two levels, namely the main plot which revolves around King Lear, Cordelia, Goneril and Regan, and the sub-plot which parallels the main plot and involves Gloucester, his illegitimate son Edmund and his legitimate son, Edgar.

In the main plot, prior to this extract, King Lear has just disowned Cordelia, his youngest daughter for refusing to flatter him and similarly, Kent was banished from the kingdom for standing up for Cordelia. King Lear has also abdicated his kingdom between his two other daughters, Goneril and Regan. Goneril and Regan have revealed their plot against Lear, which hints at a darker impending plot, stirring excitement and suspense in the audience. Also, this extract precedes Goneril's rejection of Lear, which results in Lear entering into a deranged fit of madness.

This extract introduces the audience to the details of the sub-plot of the play through Edmund's soliloquy and Edmund's scheme in supplanting Edgar, which Gloucester foolishly falls for. Edmund was previously depicted as a passive, reserved and obsequious person as he was relatively silent and submissive, receiving insults after insults. Gloucester is insensitive to Edmund's feelings and heavily insults him as a "bastard", "fault" and "whoreson", whom he has "blushed to acknowledge". However, through Edmund's soliloquy in this scene, this idea is reversed as he is portrayed as a vile and cunning character, revealing his Machiavellian character as well as his frustrations towards society, emphasizing the thematic idea of appearance vs reality. Edmund's soliloquy also sustains the tension from the previous scene where Cordelia and Kent have been banished, and Goneril and Regan reveal their plot against Lear. Edmund's intentions to betray his legitimate brother, Edgar, in order to establish himself as the heir to Gloucester, is also revealed in this scene, bringing out the theme of the inversion of natural order. This is the basis of the sub-plot, which runs parallel to, and reflects many themes of, the main plot of Lear being betrayed by Goneril and Regan.

#### APPROACH: (sign-posting)

##### Literary Approach

- Characterization of Edmund (based on his soliloquy and conversation with Gloucester)
- Characterization of Gloucester
- Main Themes and Motifs
  - Motif of blindness
  - Theme of Appearance vs Reality
  - Theme of Inversion of Natural Order

## CHARACTERIZATION OF EDMUND

- Shakespeare has effectively used the first soliloquy of this play to characterize Edmund as a frustrated individual who is treated with disdain due to his “illegitimate” birth that he had no control over
  - Contrary to Regan and Goneril who are materialistic, Edmund does not simply want material wealth, he wants recognition and respect which he has been denied of due to his status - his strong desire drove him to commit backstabbing and deceptive acts which thus make him a complex character in the play
- In expressing his pent-up exasperation through this soliloquy, Shakespeare depicts Edmund as a person who is justified in his schemes to supplant his brother, Edgar
  - Edmund truthfully expresses his inner emotions and hence garners a form of sympathetic prominence for himself among the Jacobean audience - whom although would agree with the treatment Edmund gets, could have also viewed Edmund’s position from his perspective and understand him
- Usage of a soliloquy allows the audience to understand Edmund’s true emotions, which the other characters are oblivious to, thus creating a rapport between Edmund and the audience
  - Gloucester is oblivious to Edmund’s conspiracy - dramatic irony created which emphasizes Edmund’s Machiavellian character
  - Edmund’s enraged disposition and irascible tone in the soliloquy juxtaposes his proper attitude in earlier scenes and his dialogue with Gloucester
- Edmund’s soliloquy occurs in blank verse to concentrate his noble characteristics rather than his illegitimate traits
  - Edmund is a bastard and thus is supposedly inferior in society - however, he chooses to speak in verse instead of prose to highlight his discontent towards society for condemning him for the mistakes of his father
- Stage directions at the start of the extract introduces Edmund as Gloucester’s “bastard” son who hates the law of primogeniture and hates his position as a “bastard”
- At the beginning of his soliloquy, Edmund invokes “Nature” - similar to Lear who invoked “Jupiter” and “Hecate” in Act 1 Scene 1 - difference being that Lear’s invocation is not truly reflective of his inner turmoil but Edmund’s invocation rises out of the purest form of rage in that he is justified in his anger and deep-seated bitterness
  - Association and similarity of Edmund to Lear prepares the audience for negative foreshadowing of sinister events that are bound to happen next - evokes ominous mood
  - “Nature” has various meanings in this play, most notably of the bonds of nature, the ties of natural affection between parent and child
  - Edmund invokes the abstract nature which depicts him to side with nature and align himself with the beasts of the jungle as against custom, morality and order, as a way of justifying himself

- Audience sees Edmund's pent-up frustrations and realizes he wants nature on his side
- Shakespeare shows Edmund's unstable state of mind by invoking the Pagan gods and that also shows Edmund's rejection of man-made nature governed by Christian values that promote the right of primogeniture - highlights theme of conflict between nature and man-made natural order
- Irony in his invocation of "Nature"
  - Edmund wills to break the natural law of morality, order and natural bonds of family as he plans to mislead Gloucester into betraying Edgar, then backstabbing Gloucester himself
    - Breaking of bond of father and child parallels the disownment of Cordelia by Lear who is betrayed by Goneril and Regan (Act 1 Scene 1: "Here I disclaim all my paternal care")
- Laws of Man reject Edmund due to his status as an illegitimate child and therefore, Edmund appeals to the laws of nature, which allows him to take what he cannot have, by wit or by force
  - In Act 1 Scene 1, Gloucester "blushed to acknowledge" his "whoreson" - dismissive and flippant attitude angers Edmund
  - Edmund invokes the "goddess" of "Nature"- affirming his rejection of the patriarchal ideas of the societies of Man
  - "plague of custom" is an inheritance that only goes to legitimate children thus Edmund brands "custom" as a "plague" which emphasizes his contempt for the laws of Man - as if saying that the law is like a disease which renders him crippled as he cannot receive any inheritance from Gloucester as he is an illegitimate son - evident that Edmund resents the legal distinctions which may deprive him of his rights
    - Highlights theme of conflict between nature and natural order
      - Usage of rhetorical question "wherefore should I stand..." emphasizes his frustration and exasperation
    - Metaphor in comparing customs such as the law of primogeniture and the ill treatment of illegitimate bastards to diseases is because Edmund has suffered greatly from such customs
- Edmund questions the natural order of society and we can see his queries on social conventions present during the Jacobean era through his doubts
  - "The curiosity of nations to deprive me? For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?"
    - "twelve or fourteen moonshines" - use of natural imagery to indicate the age difference between Edmund and Edgar instead of counting the number of months, this reflects Edmund's invocation of nature earlier
  - Frequency of rhetorical questions emphasizes his inner rage and frustrations towards society
    - Resents the lag of months behind Edgar - if he had been born earlier, he would be the one receiving the inheritance according to the law of primogeniture

- Edmund attacks the notion of legitimacy, which is often regarded as the natural order of things, sanctioned by the law - justifying his anger and anguish
  - Shows how he is as competent as and no worse compared to Edgar in terms of physical strength or appearance, which are things under his control - “dimensions are as well compact, my mind as generous and my shape as true as honest madam’s issue”
    - Uses a string of similes to compare himself and Edgar
  - However because of his status of conception and being the younger son, which are things out of his control, he is deprived of his rights to the inheritance - key difference and reason that has caused his disdainful situation
- Edmund then continues into another series of rhetorical questions: “Why brand they us with base? With baseness, bastardy? Base, base?”
  - Use of alliteration of the ‘b’ plosive sound emphasizes his fiery indignation and rejection by society
    - Shows his internal vexation and how he feels his illegitimate birth has wrongly put him in negative light in society, he feels unfair and wrong
      - This sympathy for Edmund will again be evoked later on in the play when he does not want to hang Cordelia due to his good-naturedness
  - Conveys his inner rage and bitterness at society’s contempt for the low-born, the vile, inferior and illegitimate
  - “Why brand they us with base?” - brings out thematic idea of the **negative effects of discrimination** and the psychological trauma it causes
    - Use of inversion in sentence order or **anastrophe** as well as Edmund’s use of “they” shows how he feels separated from the rest of society due to his controversial idea that the illegitimate “bastard Edmund” is as good as the “legitimate Edgar”
      - Or maybe society has alienated him and treated him so cruelly and derogatorily that he rather isolate himself from them
  - His tone used is one of incredulity where it seems as though he is unable to comprehend the workings in society and the law of primogeniture and is instead disgusted at such a notion
  - He has a renaissance spirit and is a renaissance individual, challenging social conventions
- “Who in the lusty stealth of nature take more composition and fierce quality than doth within a dull stale tired bed go to the creating of a whole tribe of fops got ‘tween a sleep and wake.”
  - Edmund depicts love making in a marriage bed as being **jaded** and **routine**, within the laws of society
    - Personification of bed in “dull stale tired bed”
    - Degrades legitimate births to a “tribe” - collective noun for animals
    - Claims it produces “fops” or fools (like Edgar)

- His statement displeases the Jacobean audience, but it elevates his internal exasperation and might have provided him sympathy from the audience
- Edmund is implying that Edgar is made by this routine and is thus weaker than him and therefore the illegitimate will survive
- Use of syncope in “got ‘tween a sleep and wake” allows Shakespeare to maintain the blank verse rhythm of the soliloquy
  - Shakespeare usually uses blank verse with iambic pentameter framed by 2 prose sequences at the beginning and end - but in this scene, Shakespeare has inverted the structure to emphasize its significance
  - In this scene, Shakespeare employs blank verse in Edmund’s soliloquy to begin and end the scene, whereas the conversation between Edmund and Gloucester occurs in prose form - emphasis is moved to Edmund’s soliloquys that frame this scene - gives him a sympathetic prominence through direct address to the audience
- By allowing Edmund to express himself through the continuous string of exclamatory phrases and questions, the audience is able to understand his views and sympathize with him, which was the true purpose of the soliloquy
- The words “Legitimate Edgar” is contrasted with the next line where Edmund refers to himself as “bastard Edmund”
- Edmund’s self-worth is defined by his wealth and power
  - Contrasts with Cordelia who “cannot heave (her) heart into (her) mouth” as she states that self-worth is defined by how true she is to herself and others
  - “I must have your land.” - monosyllabic line - sense of resoluteness to obtain power
    - Motif of land as a symbol of power - parallels in main plot and sub-plot where Goneril and Regan had earlier passionately declared their love for Lear to attain land and hence power
    - “Well, then, legitimate Edgar, ...” - sense of sarcasm in Edmund’s mocking tone perhaps foreshadows a plan or conspiracy he has developed to achieve this notion and reveal it in his mocking tone
- “Our father’s love is to the bastard Edmund” - reference to Gloucester’s remark in Act 1 Scene 1 about Edgar being “no dearer in my account”
  - Edmund already has knowledge of the misunderstanding between that could have occurred between Gloucester and Edgar and perhaps this explains the mockery earlier on
  - Shakespeare creates a sense of continuity in the play, linking the two scenes by showing that Edmund’s plan only took place after hearing Gloucester’s remark
- Repeated use of the epithet “legitimate” to describe Edgar several times throughout Edmund’s soliloquy conveys his contempt and disgust at Edgar and the law and the concept of legitimacy, but also reveals his obsession of Edgar’s enviable status as the rightful heir to the inheritance
  - “Fine word, ‘legitimate!’” - he mocks it
    - He only considers the superficial goodness of the idea in only considering the word as “fine” but not the idea itself



- Disdainful mocking tone makes audience confront the idea of legitimacy and empathize with Edmund
- Use of **metonymy** in “my legitimate” to refer to Edgar is very effective in highlighting that Edmund’s frustration and schemes are not aimed at Edgar but rather what he represents to him, which is his legitimacy - perhaps Edmund could have truly loved Edgar but his vexation got the better of him
- “if this letter speed and my invention thrive” - use of personification again elevates the power of such devices, which Goneril and Regan use later on in the main plot
- In his soliloquy, Edmund hints at his cunning plan to fool Gloucester with “this letter”
  - Ambiguity in his description of his plan increases suspense in the play and foreshadows an ominous series of events in future
- “Edmund the base shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper” - determination to prove his self-worth to others
  - General use of the first person pronoun of “I” reflects Edmund’s self-centred nature - he does not hesitate to harm his brother and eventually his own father for his own betterment
    - His self-centred nature is also apparent in his plots as they are purely in his personal interest - he cannot rely on society so he must rely on himself to obtain power and wealth for himself
    - Association of Machiavellian characters from sub-plot and main plot
      - Edmund’s self-centred nature parallels Goneril and Regan’s characters whose superfluous speeches comprised many instances of the first person pronoun, but contrasts Cordelia’s speech where she uses “you” to represent Lear’s interests and not hers
  - “the base shall top the legitimate” - heavy use of synecdoche brings about the idea of inversion of social order and hence the accompanying chaos
    - Inversion of social hierarchy definitely reflects an inversion in the natural order - brings about a sense of foreboding of chaos
    - Through Lear and Gloucester, Shakespeare emphasized the tragic consequences when Man decides to take precedence over the natural law and order
      - They only understood the importance of the natural law and order after their children had betrayed them
      - Shakespeare brilliantly employed this double plot to acknowledge the importance of natural order which is a theme that resonates well with the audience of the Jacobean times
  - “I grow, I prosper” - use of asyndeton and his command to the Pagan gods to support him again shows him frustration that has instilled in him the need to fight back for his rights
- His final line of his soliloquy is another invocation, to the “gods” to help him
  - “Now gods, stand up for bastards!” - expresses his desperation and frustration
  - Ironic as his invocation of the goddess of nature is to plea with the Pagan gods of nature to help him do an evil deed which is unnatural - foreshadows tension and downfall

- Edmund has so far been portrayed as an enraged cunning person, and the true villainy of Edmund as a manipulative Machiavellian character similar to Goneril or Regan is only brought out in his interaction with Gloucester
- Stage directions of Edmund pocketing the letter - Edmund intentionally does this in front of Gloucester to lure him to have interest in the letter
  - Letter used as a dramatic tool - dramatic irony is created as the audience knows that the letter is part of Edmund's plan to deceive Gloucester in order to obtain his wealth and power, through Edmund's hint in his soliloquy earlier
- Edmund's Machiavellian character is emphasized through his plan
  - He arouses Gloucester's curiosity by cunningly being hypocritically polite, saying "So please your lordship, none."
  - He deflects Gloucester's questions with short and evasive answers, such as "I know no news, my lord" and "Nothing, my lord"
  - Motif of nothing - use of the word "nothing" parallels Cordelia's "nothing" in Act 1 Scene 1 but the motives behind the same word is different in both cases
    - Edmund's "nothing" carries with it a sense of vile cunningness as it is part of his devised plan to deceive Gloucester whilst Cordelia is sincere and says it as the truth with good intentions
  - Edmund's polite tone juxtaposes heavily with his resentful and mocking tone earlier on, showing how quickly he can put up a façade in front of others
    - Continuous use of antonomasia in "my lord" and "my lordship" shows his subservient and obsequious mask/façade which he puts up in contrast to his rebellious nature just seconds ago
    - Sudden but unbelievable shift in his personality would have shocked the audience and instilled his falseness, hypocrisy and villainy among them

#### CHARACTERIZATION OF GLOUCESTER

- Shakespeare portrays Gloucester as a person who is superficial in his observations and jumps to conclusions without proper investigation, as shows through his conversation with Edmund
- Previously in the sub-plot, Gloucester was depicted as an insensitive person by calling Edmund a "fault", "whoreson" and "bastard". While Lear's hamartia is his vanity and ego, Gloucester's hamartia is his moral blindness and insensitive attitude
- Gloucester is gullible and rash - which parallels Lear - this flaw causes him to fall into Edmund's trap
  - Asks to see the letter
    - "Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?"
    - "Give me the letter"
  - Unable to see that he is being deceived - highlights motif of blindness again in the play
- Gloucester enters the scene with a troubled state of mind because of Lear's drastic change in attitude towards Cordelia in Act 1 Scene 1 - appears not to notice Edmund's presence
  - Shows and reminds the audience of the start of chaos and turmoil in the kingdom

- Further reiterated by his recitation of events in chronological order - shock he received is emphasized by his consecutive rhetorical interrogative statements
    - Informs the audience of the departure of France in unexplained anger ("choler parted")
    - Informs the audience of Lear's departure for Goneril's palace, but with his power limited
- Use of word "tonight" telescopes time to indicate that the action in this extract is happening at the same time as the events in Act 1 Scene 1
- "Upon the gad? - Edmund, how now, what news?" - use of caesura shows the shift in Shakespeare's focus from the main plot to the parallel sub-plot
- Shakespeare has employed stage directions and props, particularly the letter, to show Gloucester's bluntness and superficiality in his observations
  - Gloucester is able to meticulously notice that Edmund pockets the letter, but he is unable to discern why Edmund did that
- In his response to Edmund's "nothing", Gloucester responds similarly as how Lear responded to Cordelia's "Nothing, my lord"
  - Edmund's "nothing" is of treacherous intentions whilst Cordelia's "nothing" was because she could not quantify her love for Lear in words as she could not "heave (her) heart into (her) mouth"
  - Like Lear who probed further for Cordelia to answer, Gloucester persisted in asking about the letter
- Gloucester claims that "if it be nothing I shall not need spectacles" - recurring motif of eyes
  - Deceiving appearance as even with spectacles, Gloucester was still blind to the intentions, purposes and origins of the letter
  - Ironically, only after he had been blinded by Cornwall in Act 4 Scene 1 that Gloucester realizes his "follies" and seeks forgiveness from the gods ("O my follies...Kind gods forgive me")
- Gloucester also claims "The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself", which is very similar to Lear saying "nothing will come out of nothing"
  - Recurring motif of "nothing" establishes the theme of appearance vs reality - the subjects of nothing are truly those containing considerable substances, be it Edmund's letter or Cordelia's love for Lear
  - In both plots, the subject of "nothing" serves as the direct impetus for conflict, chaos and confusion - Shakespeare manages to show that decisions based on superficial appearances are drastic

#### MAIN THEMES AND MOTIFS

- Motif of blindness
  - Lear and Gloucester are linked together through their blindness to the traps and cunning plans of their evil children

- “I shall not need spectacles” - motif of blindness emphasized
  - On one end, Gloucester described to have poor eyesight
  - On the other end, Gloucester is metaphorically blind to the deceit of Edmund, he cannot see that he is being deceived by Edmund
- Line 43: “Let’s see, let’s see” - he sees the letter but still remains blind to what the letter actually is - a sign of Edmund’s treachery
- This in turn foreshadows the plucking of Gloucester’s eyes in Act 3 Scene 7, where he eventually loses his physical blindness
- Bitterest cosmic irony
  - He loses his eyes later as a result of his blindness to Edmund’s treachery now
  - He lacks the insight to see through the deceit of Edmund and to make good choices
    - Example being in the later scene of Act 2 Scene 1 where he chooses to believe Edmund and the contents of the letter rather than his legitimate son Edgar
- Theme of Appearance vs Reality
  - Edmund states that the letter is “nothing” - however it is actually to be used to deceive Gloucester
    - Parallels Cordelia’s “nothing” in Act 1 Scene 1
  - This brings out Edmund’s Machiavellian character
    - Cunning, shrewd and thirsty for wealth and power
- Theme of Inversion of Natural Order
  - Edmund violates the law of primogeniture when he tries to take the inheritance through his cunning plan
    - To the Jacobean audience, they note that it is an unnatural order of things
  - Ironically, Edmund evokes the goddess “Nature” to help him and to “stand up for bastards” where bastards are deemed as the lowest level in the hierarchy of society. This evokes higher power to promote and upset natural order.

#### CONCLUSION: (Dramatic Significance)

- This extract ends with Edmund continuing his game of deception by fanning the flames and thereby increasing Gloucester’s suspicion and interest of the contents of the letter, which he eventually gets hold of. Edmund then pretends to defend his brother, such that his father would view him as upright and noble in contrast to the fake portrayal of Edgar being a betrayer in the letter.
- Shakespeare has effectively presented the development of Edmund from being a polite and subservient character to a Machiavellian character who is bitter and frustrated and scheming and is determined to overthrow the natural order of things.

- This heightens the sense of disorder in the kingdom with the emergence of another character disrupting the social order that reiterates the thematic idea of the inversion of natural order, which enhances the main plot.
  - The use of blank verse coupled with the soliloquy not only heightens the dramatic tension but also gives Edmund sympathetic prominence.
  - Various themes and motif of blindness are brought up in this extract through dramatic irony, with Gloucester's characterization and his foolishness paralleling that of Lear's moral blindness in the main plot. The deceptive and manipulative nature of Edmund foreshadows the brutal revenge that would cumulate from this sub-plot later on in the play.
  - Shakespeare has used numerous dramatic and literary devices in this extract, and hence this extract which focuses on the sub-plot, successfully accentuates the overall chaos in the play.
- 

## Act 1 Scene 4 (BAD)

### Lines 217-251

Context:

At this point in the play, Lear had divided his kingdom and has given them to his two daughters Regan and Goneril. He is staying in Albany's (Goneril's) palace and is still blind to the sinister and villainous nature of his two daughter, who he thinks love him the most. The lines 217-245 in Act 1 Scene 4 is the point where Lear begins to see the treacherous nature and hidden intentions of Goneril; it is the point where he begins to descent into madness. Although Cordelia is gone, loyal Kent is still present and disguises himself as Poor Tom.

Prior to this extract, Oswald (Goneril's knight) Lear's servants and knights notice that Goneril's servants no longer obey their commands. When Lear asks Oswald where Goneril is, Oswald rudely leaves the room without replying. Oswald soon returns, but his disrespectful replies to Lear's questions induce Lear to strike him. Kent steps in to aid Lear and trips Oswald. This scene is the turning point to Lear's reign as a King.

Approach:

I will be taking a linear approach.

Theme: Subversion of the Natural Order

Motif: Madness

Characterization:

- Lear
- Goneril
- Kent

Analysis:

Lear: Are you our daughter?

- The royal pronoun used here suggests that Lear still has some power left, or that he is still blind to his future downfall

Goneril: I would you would make use of your good wisdom,/ Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away/ These dispositions which of late transport you/ From what you rightly are.

- Here Goneril shows signs of arrogance and disrespects her father, clearly making a distinction between "you" and "I" when she mocks him for using the royal pronoun. This is in absolute contrast as she previously calls him "sir" when he was dividing his kingdom. This change in address vividly underscores the her in character and signals the unveiling of her evil intents.
- She is downright disrespectful and unbecoming of a daughter, especially one who previously proclaimed that she "loves (him) more than words can wield the matter".
- We can see the subversion of the natural order here when Goneril orders her father to "put away these dispositions which of late transport you from what you rightly are"; she orders him to change his behaviour and get his act together. Here, there is clearly a struggle for power, which was catalysed by the division of the Kingdom that Lear foolishly made.

Fool: May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse? Whoop, Jug! I love thee.

- Even an idiot knows when the normal order has been inverted and the cart is pulling the horse. The fool acts as the voice of reason in this play, and he can clearly see that the roles in the palace are reversed through the previous conversation between father and daughter. The theme of the inversion of the natural order, where the daughter rules over her father, is again emphasized.

Lear:

Does any here know me? Why, this is not Lear.

Doth Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?

Either his notion weakens, or his discernings

Are lethargied. Ha, sleeping or waking?

Sure, 'tis not so.

Who is it that can tell me who I am?

- Here is where we see the very beginning of Lear's descent into madness evident from the repetitive questions
- Theme of blindness is present from his question "where are my eyes?" This is ironic because Kent is his eyes and is right next to him.
- Lear's bewilderment of Goneril's betrayal is seen through the rhetorical question "who is it tha can tell me who I am?". He begins to doubt and question himself due to Goneril's betrayal

Fool: Lear's Shadow

- Here, agains the fool makes a sound judgment, reinforces his role in the play
- "shadow " refers to the shadow of his former glory and also a mere appearance of a King lacking authority

Lear: I would learn that; for, by the marks of sovereignty, knowledge, and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters,

- Reveals Lear's hopelessness as he realises that he lost his daughters (although he doesn't realise that he still has Cordelia), and also all his inheritance.

Fool: Which they will make an obedient father.

- Subversion of natural order as it is the children who should be obedient

Lear: Your name, fair gentlewoman

- Subversion of natural order here again as Goneril should address Lear in this manner, lacks intimacy between father and daughter here and Lear distances himself from her.

Goneril:

This admiration, sir, is much o' th' savor

Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you

To understand my purposes aright.

As you are old and reverend, should be wise.

Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,

Men so disordered, so debauched and bold

That this our court, infected with their manners,

Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust

Make it more like a tavern or a brothel

Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak

For instant remedy. Be then desired

By her that else will take the thing she begs,

A little to disquantity your train,

And the remainder that shall still depend

To be such men as may besort your age,

Which know themselves and you.

- Look at comments

**Commented [1]:** False reverence

**Commented [2]:** Intense disrespect here, subverting the natural order of daughterly obedience

**Commented [3]:** The quantification of Love; underscores Lear's fatal flaw

**Commented [4]:** disease imagery, highlights her rotten nature

**Commented [5]:** also a subversion of the natural order, and the corruption of nature

**Commented [6]:** idea of debauchery and decadence present here opposes to the royalty of a palace

**Commented [7]:** Disrespect towards Lear is repeated here as she belittles Lear's ability to judge and think

**Act 1 scene 4 Lines 251 – 281 – Not in any other notes (use this)**

Context:

- This extract occurs in A1S4, after Lear has divided his kingdom and in effect has lost some of his powers.
- The audience would have witnessed the plotting of Goneril and Regan against their father, King Lear, in contrast to their effusive speeches during the Love test in A1S1, thus surfacing their true colours.
- Immediately prior to this extract in this scene, King Lear is finally made aware of Goneril's true colours. Goneril orders Oswald to provoke a confrontation with Lear, which

resulted in a quarrel between Lear and Goneril, where Goneril had used this opportunity to ask Lear to disquantify his train and reduce his servants/ knights.

- In A1S4, we can see how all the good are in disguise, and the evil are reigning in power.
- A1S4 is the first interaction between Lear and Goneril since Lear had divided his land amongst his daughters and also the first time we are introduced to Albany, Goneril's husband.
- Prior to this extract, we can see how Goneril had exerted her powers over Lear, as she is now the Queen of half of Britain now. This is contrasted in A1S1 where she had proclaimed her love for Lear through her flattery

Approach: Linear coupled with thematic ideas

Thematic Ideas:

- Blindness vs Sight
- Good vs Evil/ Appearance vs Reality
- Inversion of Natural Order

Overview:

- Lear's speech and portrayal of his diminishing authority/ loss of power
- Inversion of the Natural Order
- Albany as a symbol of peace/ patience in the play (Characteristics' of Albany)

Analysis (linear):

- Lines 243 to 246 - Lear
  - In this scene, we can also see Lear's realisation that he had mistrusted Goneril.
  - The extract first starts off with the use of **plosive sounds** in the phrase "Darkness and devils", hence showing an **iambic dimeter or an inverted feet**. This foreshadows the inversion of the natural order seen in this extract. This alliteration of the plosive 'D' sounds gives an impact and emphasises Lear's rage at Goneril for mistreating him.
  - Lear then asks his knights to "saddle [his] horses", a command which is then repeated again in L250 ("prepare [his] horses"). This repetition of his orders emphasises to the audience that his knights had not listened to him, and even when his order was repeated, only one knight had left, thus highlighting **Lear's loss of Power and diminishing authority**.
  - Lear now reduces Goneril to a "bastard", a rank equivalent to that of Edmund. However, it is seen that both "degenerate" children had turned against their father, drawing a parallel between the sub-plot and the main plot.
  - The line "yet I left a daughter" is ironic as Lear thinks that his only 'good' daughter left who will not betray him is Regan, thus showing dramatic irony as the audience knows that Regan is also scheming together with Goneril in getting rid of Lear.
- Lines 247 to 249



- When Goneril says “You strike my people” in L247, the use of the first person pronoun further emphasises to us the shift in power, and how she is referring to the kingdom as her own, and not Lear’s. This shows an inversion in the natural order, as Lear who is Goneril’s father should have more power and authority over Goneril not just as a king, but as a father as well, yet it is seen that Goneril has more power and authority over Lear. Furthermore, highlighting Lear’s loss of authority to not only his daughter but in the kingdom.

- **ALBANY AS A PEACEMAKER IN THE PLAY**

- The stage action of “Enter Albany” shows us that this is the first time that we see Albany in this play. Albany is seen as a symbol of patience and peace in the play to diffuse tension, and acts as a constant reminder to Lear for the virtues that he lacks.
- As a peacemaker, Albany plays an important role in the play, especially in the later parts of the play - by revealing Edmund’s trickery, and not involving himself in Lear’s downfall. More prominently, he is absent from in A2S2, which is the scene where Goneril, Regan and Cornwall gather together to drive Gloucester out of his own house.
- “Patience” is thus a recurring idea in the play. For e.g. in A3S2, Lear says “I will be the pattern of all patience, I will say nothing”, and in A2S2 L249-260 “You heavens, give me the patience that patience, patience I need.”

➤ Lines 249 to 264

- LEAR’S SPEECH (closely linked to Edmund’s soliloquy)
- Both appeals to Nature, yet asking for the unnatural to occur → Nature VS Natural Order of Society
  - The use of ellipsis in L249 shows Lear’s oncoming madness.
  - We are then introduced to King Lear’s speech, where in just one short speech, he addresses 8 audiences - Woe (L249), Albany (L250 “sir”), Attendants (L250 “prepare my horses”), Ingratitude (L251), Goneril (L254 “to Goneril” - stage action), Cordelia (L259), King Lear himself (L262) and His people at the end of his speech (L264). The fact that he addresses 8 audiences in one speech thus emphasises to us his disorientated mindset and hence his approaching descent into madness.
  - The comparison to “sea-monster” in L253 shows a reference to the image of Satan in the middle ages.
  - L258 is an Alexandrian line, and a break is seen here by the use of a full stop in the middle of the line. (a line of verse of 12 syllables consisting regularly of 6 iambs with a caesura after the third iamb)
  - Anachronistic (something out of that time period) building imagery is seen in the line “Which like an engine wretched my frame of nature”. The image is then repeated again in “beat at this gate” in L263. This highlights to the readers that how one small fault of Cordelia removed whatever parental love from Lear’s heart, totally uprooting the building from its foundation.

- The use of third person in Line 262 "O Lear, Lear, Lear!" shows Lear's exasperation and regret at his rash decisions and how Lear is distancing himself from King Lear, the follies of his past self.
  - The stage action of Lear "striking his head" further foreshadows to us Lear's oncoming madness.
- Lines 265 to 266
- We can also see a shift in Albany's role in this part of the play, where he once played a passive role, he now plays an active role, presenting himself as the King of Britain. The way Albany addresses King Lear as "My Lord" also shows how he is observing the decorum in giving the respect that Lear deserves. This also shows Albany's attempt to restore the natural order in his own way.
- Lines 267 to 281
- Lear once again invokes the powers of Nature, even addressing Nature and Goddess directly in Line 267.
  - The collision of consonant sounds in L275 "thwart disnatured torment" shows how the effect of harsh sounds makes this curse more horrifying, thus showing discord and a heightening of the emotions of anger and bitterness.
  - He dehumanises Goneril by referring to her as a "creature" and "serpant". The use of sibilance in "sharper than a serpent's tooth" shows Lear's hiss of anger. The image of a serpent also connotes evil and cunning, as even Satan appears to Eve as a Serpent in the Genesis.
  - The use of fricative sounds in L277 with the words "cadent", "channels" and "cheeks" shows Lear's anger towards Goneril at this point in time. – questionable.
  - There is a balance in rhyme, almost invoking a goddess nature, making it ritualistic like a prayer, yet ironically it has become a curse.

#### Dramatic Significance:

- The fact that Lear still thinks that he has one daughter left, Regan, who would not betray him, when we know that she is scheming together with Goneril in overthrowing Lear, creates sympathy for Lear, despite his ignorance and stubbornness that resulted in this situation.
- Tension and suspense is also seen here as we wonder how Lear would react when he finds out that Regan is actually worse than Goneril in her treatment towards Lear.
- Lear finally realises that he has committed a folly, though it is too late. Shows Lear in a pathetic state, having lost his power and authority and even submitting to others (Goneril). (ANAGNORISIS)
- We can also see how Goneril is portrayed as treacherous and ungracious in this extract

## Act 2 Scene 2

Lines 390 - 431

Anastrophe: inversion of syntax

Context:

- Act 2 Scene 2: This scene happens after Regan starts abusing her newfound power over Lear to strip Lear off his title.
- In previous lines, Lear is seen to be very old and weak as he had already given up his power over Britain.
- This scene is when Lear is being further stripped of power by both Goneril and Regan. This is done by suggesting to further reduce the number of knights (power) following Lear and letting Goneril and Regan have all of the power.
- This extract is the actualization of the plots that have been devised by Goneril and Regan since A1S3.
- This is the continuation of Lear's abuse by his daughters from A1S4 as he is now being abused by first Regan and then both of them in the later scenes.

Approach: Linear Approach to explain:

- Inversion of Natural Order
- Lack of Filial Piety
- Characterization of Regan and Goneril
- Lear's descent into madness

**Lines 390 - 395**

We can see that Regan's speech does not follow a blank verse like nobles should in a Shakespearean play, rather she uses prose in her exposition in trying to further de-power Lear. This can be seen from lines 390- 395, (hypercatalectic → breaking from the usual iambic pentameter that is reserved for nobles or those of noble qualities in the play), which emphasizes on Regan's characterization as a unfilial and disrespectful daughter towards her father.

In line 392, the use of the pronoun, "you" to address her father is also interesting as it also further emphasizes on her evil qualities, establishing her as one of the force of evil in the play. The lack of respect that Regan gives towards her father is shown from her **authoritative tone** in line 392-395. When comparing to the tone she used in A1S1, the use of loving and respectful (fake) tone during the love test further contrast the change in attitude towards Lear, further

emphasizing on Regan's disrespect towards Lear (them of lack of filial piety and characterization of Regan)

### Lines 396 - 405

Lear's speech depicts the shock that Lear experiences after hearing his daughters' responses when he was visiting them in their respective castles. He started with "Return....dismissed?" in line 396 (rhetorical question) to show the shock from hearing Regan's speech.

Throughout his speech, it can also be noticed that there are different types of caesuras present. Exclamation marks, and question mark are present in lines 396, 400, 404 shows his incoherent train of thought, which aptly represents his loss of words due to anger at his daughters. Furthermore, it also represents Lear's lack of sharpness of mind, which is a step closer to his descent into madness. The dashes (caesura) also further emphasize on his anger towards his daughters because they were both disrespectful towards him. (Lack of filial piety and Inversion of natural Order) The effects of each caesura vary as they serve different purposes

- Exclamation mark: emphasize on the anger that Lear is experiencing which creates a harsher tone when Lear is talking to his daughters previously (highlights anger and frustration on the betrayal)
- Question Mark: Rhetorical questions He asks rhetorical questions to repeat and emphasize on the absurdity of the requests/ orders that his daughters are making for him as they are practically abusing him at this point. Highlights his hamartia (hubris) that he is still prideful.
- Dashes: to show the incoherent trains of thoughts that Lear is experiencing from the shock of being disrespected as a king.

It can also be noticed that Lear's speech from lines 396 - 405 is in blank verse. This is to show that King Lear is still trying to retain his status as a noble even after he abolished his powers over the kingdom. Although he does not use the collective royal "we," it can be seen that he still regards himself as the one in power even though he has no more power than "the detested groom."

The stage direction, "Points at Oswald" is a sign of Lear's hubris as he regards himself better than the ordinary man even though he no longer has any power. Since Lear does not have any more power over anything, we can see his arrogance of thinking himself more highly than the common man, which is his hamartia. By staging Lear to point at Oswald, there is derogatory implications that Oswald is far below him.

Furthermore, Lear also mentions to "Persuade [him].....groom." as a tool to emphasize on his point that he would rather be a slave than be with his abusive daughter. This highlights the incoherence and frustration that Lear experiences from his daughters' betrayals. By mentioning so, Lear highlights the extreme anger that he feels towards them. From the madness that come

Goneril's short 1 line reply, "At your choice sir" is a significant part of the conversation because the reply here signifies the uncaring and unfilial nature of Goneril, and in extension Regan because they both agree with each other. The reply shows that Goneril does not care about Lear anymore as she personally replies that she would gladly let him be Oswald's servant. This shows the unfilial nature of the daughters towards Lear.

Animal imagery is used to portray the ferocious nature of Lear's daughters. → Wolf and owl → the evil in the play and used to characterized both daughters.

### Lines 407 - 419

Lear continues speaking in iambic pentameter which continues to show that Lear has not descended into madness yet. Throughout the speech, however, there is a tonal shift in the way that he addresses the issue with his daughter. In his speech here, he seems very much frustrated, disappointed and conflicted by the betrayal. As he valued their speech (Love test A1S1) more than Cordelia's pure love, He feels betrayed as the ones who flatter him the most end up being the ones who backstabbed him, which is why he is so angry towards them. This represents the relationship between parent and child and the lack of filial piety shown by G and R.

In his speech, Lear keeps referring to his body to be "corrupted" and diseased as the source of the corruption was his own daughters. Since Lear is not able to disown them, it can be interpreted that it is his fault that he is suffering now. This ties back to A1S1 where the division of the kingdom is done. As kings are not supposed to abdicate his throne, Lear has broken the divine mandate rested upon him by dividing the kingdom up for his daughters and he is being punished (tragic hero).

Line 410 is hypercatalectic line as it breaks from the usual 10 syllable line, to 11 syllables. Shakespeare's use of hypercatalectic lines emphasizes and focus the readers on the fact that Lear considers his daughters to be a disease in his body, an external virus that corrupts his being.

Use of first person personal shows that Lear does not view himself as being in power and finally recognises the outcome of his actions of splitting up the kingdom.

The organic imagery of having a disease and "plague sore" also echoes back to A1S1, where Kent says, "kill thy physician." In this extract the foreshadowing of becoming diseased after killing the physicians (those who are actually loyal to Lear, but banished due to Lear's hamartia) comes true and starts to "kill" Lear (mentally), which has been foreshadowed since the beginning of the play.

Line 425

Coup De Grace (Final blow)

#### **Line 420 - 431 (Except line 425)**

After Lear spoke with Goneril to seek refuge and did not succeed as he, in turn, was betrayed, he seeks to stay with Regan. However, like her sister, Regan also tries to take away the rest of Lear's leftover power (symbolized by the number of knights he has). It can be seen that reflecting on the vile nature of the daughters, Regan speaks in prose, which shows that is is not of noble qualities. This characterizes Regan as a part of the evil in the play as not only does she try to take everything away from Lear, but also betray her father and side with Goneril

Regan and Goneril have no more respect for Lear and their scheming nature is seen in how they work together to drive Lear into a corner with their quick succession of questions (Anacalasis: Repetition of the words five and twenty said by Lear to mock him) As Lear no longer has anymore power over the daughters, they do not respect him in contrast to the love test in A1S1.

#### **Dramatic Significance of the Extract**

- Characterize Regan and Goneril to be the evil forces of the play explicitly by characterizing them to be unfilial towards Lear and betrays Lear after they obtain the power they needed.
- Marks the start of Lear's descent to madness as he is betrayed by his own daughters
- Lear's anagnorisis

#### **Act 2 scene 2 Lines 432 – 475**

Contextualization of scene and extract

This extract is taken from Act 2 Scene 2, and it occurs after Goneril has dismissed Lear from her household, removing half his train (removing 50 of his knights from him). Furthermore, this extract takes place right after Lear has arrived outside of Gloucester's Castle and Lear has seen Kent (disguised), hung up in the stocks.

In this extract, Lear is speaking to his daughters, Goneril and Reagan, bargaining with them to let him stay in their castles with as many of his followers(knights) as possible. It is in this extract that Goneril and Reagan strip Lear of all of his followers save for Kent, the Fool and ONE knight.

Approach

A linear combined with an elementary approach will be used, with the following points being further explored:

1. Inversion of the Natural Order

2. Characterisation of Lear
3. Characterisation of Reagan
4. The significance of Nature and power

Main Points (linear approach)

**(lines 432 - 433)**

This line is a hypercatalectic line in the play, breaking the iambic pentameter. This hypercatalectic break emphasises the role reversal between father and daughter, where Goneril is more in command than her father. Additionally, where once Lear's servants used to tend to Goneril and Reagan, their servants now tend to Lear, this again highlights the inversion of the natural order the the losing of Lear's power as represented by the loss of even more of his followers.

**(lines 434 – 437)**

The extract starts off with Reagan echoing her sister Goneril's question in earlier lines ("why not, my lord?"). This echoing/harping on the fact that Lear should call upon either Goneril or Reagan's servants in their households, instead of his own followers. The echoing of remarks/questions creates a tense atmosphere in this extract.

Reagan's first line, line 434, is yet again a break in the iambic pentameter. This line is a hypercatalectic one, and is used to place emphasis on the following line, "we could control them". "them" in this case is in reference to Lear's followers, his knights, but could also be referring to Lear himself since the knights are a representation of Lear's power and control in the kingdom. It can be seen here that Reagan and Goneril seek to gain control of these knights, and in thus doing so they covet the power that comes with owning the kingdom and gaining control of Lear. Lear is reluctant to give away his power, and hence they seek to quickly take it from him. This is all seen from Reagan's following lines "I entreat you/ To bring but five and twenty: to no more/ Will I give place or notice."

There is also double entendre in the last few lines that Regan speaks. On one hand, Reagan wants only these few number of knights so that she can control them. On the other hand, this is a representation of the diminishing respect that Reagan has for her father. Once again emphasizing Lear's loss of power and his diminishing status.

**(line 438)**

Lear's reluctance and pain at being betrayed by his own daughters can be seen. "all" in this line refers to not only the kingdom he has given away but his heart. The terminal caesura used in this line also shows that Lear is cut off from this line by Reagan, signifying his further loss of power as earlier on in the play, Act 1, Scene 1, he was never cut off by his daughters who seemed to respect him.

**(line 439)**

Reagan dares to call Lear senile to his face, which shows her blatant disrespect of him. This change of tone from pseudo-polite at the start to now openly and directly challenging Lear is very harsh and is a foreshadow of the harshness with which Reagan deals with Lear later on in the play.

**(lines 440 – 443)**

Lear is still in denial that he has lost his power. He even reflects on the deal with which he distributed his kingdom up for his daughters, stating that the deal was for him to keep him 100 followers. The use of the first person "my" and "I" reveals Lear's self-centred nature, which is his hamartia which is hubris. And is a change from the royal 'we' and 'our' he used in the love test. This is yet another sign of his loss of power.

Lear's use of quantification in "with five and twenty" highlights Lear's calculative nature, just as how he was calculative when dividing up his kingdom during the love test scene.

**(line 444)**

Reagan is dismissive of Lear, siding with Goneril against her father, she regards Lear to be old and unreasonable. "no more with me" portrays the inversion of the natural order, due to the reversal in the position of power between father and daughter. Reagan is now the one in power and control, Lear holds no power over her as king, nor as father. This not only emphasises the complete inversion of the natural order, but also reveals Reagan's cruel nature. Furthermore, the use of a colon to add a slight pause between "my lord" and "no more..." creates a medial caesura which acts as a barrier between Reagan and Lear. The playwright has added this pause intentionally to create a more dramatic gap between father and daughter, emphasising the mercilessness of Reagan.

**(line 445-449)**

line 445 is a hypercatalectic line. This places emphasis on the context of this line and the following few lines. These lines are an illogical syllogism of Lear demonstrating his unstable state of mind, and is a precursor of Lear going mad. The hypercatalectic line, adds more emphasis onto the importance of the incoming madness.

lines 447 – 449: Lear is quantifying love in numbers yet again. Highlighting the materialistic aspects of Lear's character. (he quantifies how much his daughter loves him by how many knights he is allowed to keep if he were allowed to stay at her castle. This is an inversion of the natural order as the father seeks to gain acceptance and allowance from his daughter, instead of the other way around.)

**(line 450-452)**

Goneril is trying to reduce Lear's knights. By getting rid of his knights, it is an indication of Lear's loss of power and standing in the kingdom.

**(line 453)**



Reagan interjects here again, in her direct, merciless way, “ what need one?”. This is a direct contrast to the love scene in A1S1 where Goneril claims she loves Lear a certain amount and Reagan ‘beats’ her, claiming that she loves Lear even more. The deceitful nature of the two sisters is seen in this extract and reveals their characteristics to the audience.

**(line 454-456)**

The unreasonableness of Lear is shown at this point in “Reason not the need”, which shows the first stages of madness that he is descending into.

Furthermore the use of the alliterative plosive sounds “Basest Beggars” (poor tom) not exactly in reference to him, but it brings to mind tom to the mind of the audience), emphasize Lear’s contempt at R and G’s demands that Lear bring no knights with him if he were to shelter with G or R. The use of the hyperbole in this way even more emphasized his contempt and anger to the demands of his daughters.

Lear compares the life of a human to the life of an animal. That if a human were only given to him what is necessary, meaning not living in luxury or surplus, then his life worth as much as an animal. Characterisation of Lear and his materialistic nature is yet again highlighted in this scene through his view of how a man should live. In luxury, and not living off necessity like an animal. Seems to be trying to discipline R, that she should be as warm in the heart as she is gorgeous.

**(line 458- 462)**

Use of clothing imagery in “nature needs not what thou gorgeous wea’st”. Clothing imagery used here gives the impression of a garment donned by Reagan and Goenril to show off their beauty and their ‘better’ side to Lear can be used to mask the deceitful nature and mercilessness in the two sisters as well. Furthermore, this garment can easily be shirked off, as the two sisters are now doing and reveal the horrible nature and their true intentions of stripping Lear of all his power and status. The theme of appearance against reality is brought by this use of clothing imagery.

When Lear uses “scarcely keeps thee warm” he is actually referring to his daughter’s cold heartedness, and not keeping them actually warm. Additionally, at the end of line 459, a terminal caesura is used after “true need”. This places heavy emphasis on what Lear truly needs now. Which is actually “patience” as he says in the next line twice. The break in iambic pentameter through the use of a hypercatalectic syllable in “I need” further emphasizes the patience that Lear needs.

Lear challenges the chain of being here by invoking the “heavens” and “you gods”. This is because he still assumes that he has the power of a king. This is yet another act to show the inversion of the natural order, where man should come below gods and has no right to invoke them.

**(line 463 – 475)**

"if it be.. hearts"" it just goes to show that Lear now recognizes the true nature of Goneril and Reagan, cold hearted, and is now begging for them to take him in, for he has no place to stay.

"Fool me no so much / To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger" Lear is unrightfully invoking the pagan gods as common man should not be able to invoke gods. This is an inversion of the natural order as a common man should not be invoking the gods.

"let not women's weapons, water-drops stain my man's cheeks" this line is highly ironic as nearing the end of the play, in A4S7, it is Cordelia's tears that actually help to heal Lear.

Following this Lear goes on a long rather incoherent rant. The incoherence is shown through the use of the medial caesuras present, which signify the loss of mind, and also through Lear trying to call upon nature to work against her daughters ("terrors of the earth").

The use of "storm and tempest", setting the scene for the audience is highly significant to the play. Lear's invocations of the Pagan Gods are unnatural, but this is further emphasized by the unnaturalness of the storm. The storm could represent the state of the king or the state of the kingdom. The storm brewing could be signifying the madness of the king that is "brewing", or could also be used to represent the trouble that is brewing in the kingdom.

**Dramatic Significance of the storm and tempest**

Lear's invocation of the pagan gods is an unnatural one and the storm brewing suddenly is more unnatural. In this scene the storm can represent both the state of the king and his kingdom. **In this scene, the storm brewing signifies the start of the king's madness. Seen from the line 475, "I shall go mad," the brewing storm is the start of Lear's madness (draws parallelism between the two: body politic)**

As the state of the rightful king is also the state of his kingdom, line 474, " Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws" shows that the broken kingdom will further fall into deeper chaos. This can be seen from Acts 3,4 where the war to take back Lear's kingdom creates utter chaos. The brewing storm is also a foreshadowing of the future events in subsequent acts.

It can also

**Conclusion**

In Lear's final speech at the end of the extract, Lear has slowly descended into a maddened state of mind. This paired with the storm brewing (use of stage directions) has the effect of causing the audience to feel tensed and anxious for what is to come later in the play.

This extract thus acts as a plot to the play where evil is reigning over good (evil has the freedom and the power to control the kingdom, while good is still disguised). It also signifies Lear's total loss of power and his descent into madness.

---

## Act 3 Scene 2

### Line 1 - 40

#### Context

- After being betrayed by Goneril and Regan in Act 2 Scene 2, Lear heads off to the storm with the Fool and Kent (disguised as Lear's servant, Caius).
- Lear loses his knights at the end of Act 2 Scene 2 due to his daughters who took away his knights from him. Lear, without his bands of knights symbolises the loss of power which is made even apparent by the juxtaposition with the storm in this extract.
- While Lear is preoccupied with thoughts of his daughters' ingratitude and showing his descent into madness, the Fool tries to be the 'voice of reason' through the use of songs and riddles.

#### Main points

- The significance of storm
- Lear's state of mind, descending into madness
- Characterisation of Fool; and
- The significance of Kent's disguise

#### The significance of storm:

- Stage direction "*Storm still*"
  - To indicate that the storm started in Act 2 Scene 2 is still ongoing.
  - To symbolise the chaos and the unnatural order of things. In the Elizabethan times, people believed that unnaturalness and chaos would befall anyone performing an unnatural act. Cross-referencing to A2S2, Goneril and Regan's action is unnatural as it defies the natural order by betraying the King who is also their father. Hence, the storm parallels with the event happening in the play.
  - To set the stage for Lear's descent into madness. The storm is a theatrical device used by Shakespeare, acting as a macrocosm to reflect Lear's inner turmoil and mounting madness.
  - To show Lear's vulnerability and loss of power, compared to the previous regality in A1S1.

#### Lear's state of mind

- Use of imperatives “Blow”, “Crack”, “Spout” in Lear’s speech indicates how Lear is demanding and summoning nature to destroy the world. When compared to the imperatives he used in A1S1, he does not have any power over elements here (indicating the loss of power and inversion of natural order).
- Use of exclamation marks and monosyllabic words in Lear’s speech, “Blow winds cracks your cheeks! Rage, blow!” [line 1] indicates Lear’s anger and fury.
- Use of plosive words like ‘blow’, ‘drenched’, ‘drowned’, ‘bolt’, and sibilance words like ‘spout’, ‘steeple’, ‘sulphurous’, and ‘sing’ emphasize and accentuate Lear’s rage. The sibilance words may also be used to mimic the sound of the storm (hissing sound), accentuating the harsh reality of the storm.
  - Lear’s rage towards the element shows Lear’s descent into madness and the chaos within Lear’s mind.
- Lear’s destructive behaviour, wanting to obliterate the world shows his descent into madness and perhaps his anger towards his misfortune:
  - Using biblical allusion “Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!” [line 3] - allusion to Noah’s arc where Lear wants nature to drench and drown the world, demolishing all evils.
  - “Singe my white head!” [line 6], calling the lightning indicates Lear’s destructive attitude.
  - Use of apocalyptic language, “Strike flat the thick rotundity o’ the world,” [line 7] linked to his state of mind.
- Lear’s obsessions with filial gratitude he expected from his daughters affecting his inner turmoil. This is shown through the use of nature imagery to describe his view towards his daughters. “Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters” [line 15] - comparing his daughters’ ingratitude to the storm (parallelism between the destructiveness of both).
- Lear uses monetary connotations like “tax”, or “subscription” indicating that Lear has not recognised his folly that love is not quantifiable with numbers.
- “Here I stand your slave, a poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man” [line 19 - 20]:
  - Use of singular form ‘I’ instead of the royal ‘we’ he used in A1S1, indicates loss of power and inversion of natural order.
  - Degrading himself to ‘slave’ and the use of adjectives like ‘poor’, ‘weak’, etc. highlights his state of mind being resign and humble. This may show Lear’s loss of power and the beginning of Lear’s realisation of himself.
- Break in rhythm (iambic pentameter) indicates Lear’s inconsistent state of mind or his descent into madness due to the irregularity of the rhythm caused by the break. For example, “You sulphurous and thought-executing fires” [line 4] has 6 feet instead of 5 which is the break in iambic pentameter, highlights Lear’s broken thoughts.

#### Characterisation of Fool

- Down-to-earth / comical - shown by the change from Lear’s blank verse to Fool’s prose that is filled with riddles (Also signifies Fool’s lower status compared to Lear).
- Offers a rationale, reasoned perspective in contrast to Lear’s emotional stance.
- “Here’s a night pities neither wise men nor fools.” [line 13] - reasoned advice that left the audience to question who is the wise one and who is the fool. Though, Lear ignores the

Fool as he addressed the storm instead, "Rumble thy bellyfull!" suggesting Lear's descent into madness that he does not listen to the Fool.

- Fool compares the "headpiece" to the "codpiece" in line 26 and 27. Headpiece signifies reason (head/brain) and codpiece signifies passion (sexuality passion) which means that chaos ensues when passion is put before reason, thus subverting the natural order of things. This shows Fool as the voice of reason amidst Lear's turmoil.
- "The man that makes his toe What he his heart should make," [line 31 - 32], comparing Lear's daughters. Toe as in Goneril and Regan who never truly love Lear and heart as in Cordelia. When Lear give wrong emphasis to wrong daughters, it results in unnaturalness and subversion of natural order. This acts as a reminder to Lear that the chaos is due to his actions.

The significance of Kent's disguise

- Stage direction, "Enter Kent [disguised]"
  - This is a dramatic effect that accentuates the theme of deception, appearance against reality.
  - Kent disguises himself as a symbol of loyalty towards Lear.
- "No, I will be the pattern of all patience, I will say nothing." [line 37] - Cross referenced to A1S1 during the love test. It serves as a constant reminder to the audience that Lear's tragedy is brought by his pride.

Dramatic significance

- The extract highlights Lear at his peak of his rage, and the start of his madness.
  - Role of the Fool is demonstrated as a voice of reason that Lear is lacking.
  - Significance of 'chaos' foreshadows further events in the play like the invasion of France.
- 

## Act 3 Scene 4 – refer to extract analysis

Lines 1 - 40

Context: After the scene where Lear is shut off by his daughters and is left in the middle of a storm. Lear is nothing more than a common man.

This scene also introduces Edgar disguised as poor Tom. Here we can see the extent of the inversion of the natural order as represented by how the good characters are being forced into hiding or disguise while the bad ones are reigning

Approach:

- Significance of the storm

- Motif of tears
- Characterisation of Lear
- Characterisation of Kent

#### Storm:

- Contentious Storm (Line 6) reflects Lear's state of mind. It represents the conflict occurring in his mind as well as his kingdom. The storm foreshadows the eventual disorder and devastation in the kingdom due to Lear's action to divide his kingdom.
- The Storm also can be represented as the punishment by nature brought to Lear for disturbing the natural order by splitting his authority as a king
- Storm also act as the last barrier for Lear to protect his mind from the "tempest of his mind". In a sense, storm provide a physical distraction for Lear not to ponder too much on the conflict in his mind due to his daughters' betrayal. This is evident in lines (24-25) "This tempest will not give me leave to ponder on things would hurt me more". This also explains Lear's reluctance to get inside the hovel

#### Motif of tear

- "I will weep no more" (Line 17) - contrast with Lear at act 2 scene 2 where he stated that "he will not weep". This motif of tear also brings about the sense that Lear has finally accepted his lost of status and is not required to be seen as powerful all the time. It also shows his breakdown under the injustice and betrayal of his daughter.
- Brings in his hubris "to shut me out? Pour on, I will endure" (Line 18) this brings Lear's characterisation as someone stubborn and prideful

#### Characterisation of Lear

- Bitter realisation as Lear fall from a king to a man. Downfall due to him neglecting his obligation as a king and divided his kingdom
- Lear is seen to have a mood swing. Starting from line 23, Lear's tone and mood changes from irritated, angry and disbelieving to sympathetic and caring towards those around him
- "seek thy own ease" (Line 23) — sudden caring may reflect Lear's descent to madness and his state of mind. It may also reflect his despair.
- Lear is seen no longer cursing and invoking the gods and nature to do his bidding. Instead he developed the trait to pray genuinely and seems to accept the consequences of his actions.
- Motif of kneeling to pray (Line 28) signifies the change in moral conscience in Lear. This contrasts with act 2 scene 2 where he does so in mockery. Here Lear seems to do this in despair. The motif of kneeling is crucial in Lear's character as it signifies Lear's willingness to seek forgiveness from others, a trait of an ordinary man, not a king
- Lear's sudden need to pray also shows his realisation of his incapacity to deal with the reality and the degree of the punishment he must face for causing the disturbance in the natural order.

#### Motif of madness

- “O that way madness is, let me shun that; no more of that” (line 21-22)
- this speech gives the evidence to Lear’s descent to madness
- In addition to that, his previous speech is interrupted halfway by a dash. This shows Lear’s disjointed state of mind and his inability to form a complete sentence before changing his line of thought.
- Lear also frequently breaks the iambic pentameter throughout his speech. This signifies two things: His unstable state of mind as well as his anger towards Goneril and Regan for their betrayal.
- His madness can also be seen by his refusal to escape the storm despite Kent and the fool’s persuasion. It is evident that Lear feels that the chaos in his mind due to his conflict with his daughters are more dangerous and lethal to him than the chaos of the storm. This is ironic as seeing Lear confronting the storm may make Lear seem like a fearless character but actually, Lear is trying to escape from his inner conflict and is unwilling to confront it.

#### Characterisation of Kent

- Loyalty to Lear — “I had rather break mine own” (Line 5)
- This convinces the audience of the degree of loyalty Kent has for Lear as he is willing to sacrifice and serve Lear despite his banishment
- “Good my lord, enter” (Line 3)
- Shows Kent’s respect towards Lear despite him having no power at all. However, this may also be seen as a blind loyalty in Kent’s part as he does not understand the inner turmoil Lear is facing and keeps insisting that Lear enter the Hovel
- This brings the motif of blindness as Kent seems to follow Lear blindly. This shows how many of the characters in Lear seem to be plagued by blindness in one way or another

#### Introduction of Poor Tom

- Introduces the parallel appearance of madness. However the madness portrayed by poor Tom’s a fake one while Lear’s is genuine due to his grief and disbelief

In conclusion, this extract is a crucial turning point in the play where it shows Lear’s complete transformation from a king to an ordinary man as well as his transition to madness. The extract also brings light to Kent’s character showing that despite his loyalty, Kent does not entirely understand Lear and is just blindly following him.

---

## Act 3 Scene 7

**Lines 28 - 68**

### Context

Prior to this, Lear storms out of Gloucester's house and goes to Dover to meet with the French army. Meanwhile, Edmund shows Cornwall the letter Gloucester received; which contains news of the approaching French army and the plan to reinstate Lear as king. Upon reading this, Cornwall plans to capture Gloucester, which is where this extract starts from.

### **Approach**

1. Power
2. Exploration of gender and gender roles
3. Justice

### **Power**

- Cornwall's orders are swiftly met by his servants as can be seen in the stage direction "Some Servants rush off". This is in contrast to how Lear in Act 1 Scene 4 has to give the same order to prepare his horses twice and how in Act 2 Scene 2 Lear is ignored by Cornwall and Regan. The power dynamic between Cornwall and his servants is vastly different from that between Lear and his followers
- Cornwall, Regan and Goneril speak in prose as opposed to blank verse, commonly used by nobility. This highlights how the power that they hold is inauthentic. This is further accentuated by how Oswald uses blank verse later in the extract, marking an inversion of the natural order.
- Cornwall refers to Edmund as the "lord of Gloucester", indicating Edmund's ascension to power
- Rising quantification of Lear's knights "five-or six-and-thirty" foreshadows the rise of power of Lear
- Motif of "arms" to signify power; Lear goes to "well-armed friends", Gloucester's arms are bound is used to signify the return of power to the good. On the other hand, Regan rob's Gloucester with "robbers hands"
- Regan refers to Lear as "King", perhaps to show his eventual rise to power. It is also indicative of how even though she's in power now she still perceives Lear to be king; perhaps how her power is inauthentic
- Conclusion: Shakespeare portrays the evil forces to be dominant at this point of the play but hints at good returning to power

### **Gender**

- Regan and Goneril are the first to call for violence against Gloucester, demanding to "Hang him instantly" and "Pluck out his eyes", in comparison to Cornwall who calls to catch him. The two sisters are incredibly violent in comparison
- Cornwall tries to keep the sisters in check by saying "Leave him to my displeasure"; as if to assert his dominance. This is repeated throughout the extract where Regan interrupts Cornwall in the middle of "Bind him, I say -" to say "Hard, Hard. O, filthy traitor" or when Regan adds onto Cornwall "Cunning. And false." Her authoritative tone tells the audience that the dominant role in the relationship is played by Regan; an inversion of the natural order



- Gloucester describes Regan as an “unmerciful lady” but claims he’s “none”; an intentional ambiguity as to which quality of Regan he does not possess: mercilessness or femininity. This intentional ambiguity suggests a conflation of the two qualities
- The stage direction “Regan pluck’s [Gloucester’s] beard” physically represents the sense of emasculation Lear feels due to Regan and Goneril, as in Act 1 Scene 4 where Lear tells Goneril she “hast power to shake [his] manhood thus”. This strengthens the parallel between the main characters of the main and sub plots.
- The way evil feminine characters are depicted as inhumane, violent, animalistic is common in the play and is seen strongly in the argument between Albany and Goneril in Act 4 Scene 2: “Proper deformity shows...so horrid as in woman”

### Justice

- The idea of bondage is brought up repeatedly when Cornwall says they are “bound” to punish Gloucester, and is “bound” to act like Edmund; it is ironic since Cornwall feels like he is obligated to act evil
- Cornwall calls Gloucester a “traitor” and “thief”; once again ironic since Gloucester is the one loyal to Lear and Edmund is the one who has stolen the title of the earl of Gloucester
- Regan calls Gloucester a “fox”; ironic since she is the one who plots against Lear, and later Goneril
- Gloucester’s plea for Regan and Cornwall to “consider,” is markedly significant especially due to the medial caesura. The consider also rings amongst the audience, who consider the wrongness of the situation - Gloucester being assaulted to those he offered hospitality to. Emphasised by the hypercatalectic line of “Will quicken... I am your host.”
- The act of plucking Gloucester’s beard is inherently wrong in of itself and disrespectful to a senior and their host. This is further accentuated in how Gloucester claims Regan to “ravish” his beard, with very violent connotations.
- Gloucester describes Regan as having stuck “boarish fangs” in Lear; the use of theriomorphic imagery is similar to those Lear uses to address Regan and Goneril. The loyalty of Gloucester is held in stark contrast to the actions of Regan.
- Gloucester describes Lear as causing the “heavens to rain”; biblical allusion in reference to divine justice, shows the excess of evil on earth
- Gloucester will see “The winged vengeance overtake such children”, referring to the idea of divine justice once again.

### Dramatic Significance

This extract marks the peripeteia of Gloucester and the climax of the sub-plot: the blinding of Gloucester. We get further insights into the characters of Cornwall and Regan, and their relationship. The extract also foreshadows the return of good to power and hints at divine justice.

Lines 69 - 106

### Context

Takes place in Gloucester’s castle. Earlier in the scene, Cornwall learns from Edmund that Gloucester has sent Lear to Dover and is in support of the impending French forces. Gloucester

is captured and interrogated. This extract revolves around one of the most violent scenes in the tragedy- the blinding of Gloucester.

### Approach

#### Thematic approach

- Role of the servant
- Characterisation of Regan and Cornwall
- Characterisation of Gloucester

#### Role of the servant

Service (referring to servitude) is commonplace in Shakespeare's time. In Lear, the servants are minor characters- they often play no major speaking role and contribute little to the plot's development (with the exception of Oswald and later, Kent disguised as Caius). Often, Shakespeare includes the servant to a scene to provide a messenger's *rhesis* (a dramatically condensed account of events that happened offstage).

In this scene, we see three servants but they are such minor characters that Shakespeare does not even bestow on them names- they are simply known as Servants 1, 2 and 3.

The first servant plays a small (9 lines in total) but significant role in this scene- unable to bear the cruel act of violence before him, he courageously intervenes, challenging Cornwall to a sword fight and eventually wounding him. Echoes Kent's earlier act of disobedience, when Kent openly rebuked Lear for his foolish decision to banish Cordelia. Shakespeare heightens this sense of noble defiance through the use of *aposiopesis*- when the first servant interrupts Cornwall ("If you see vengeance-").

To a Jacobean audience, the servant's act of defiance is one of some magnitude- it threatens to rip the very fabric of a society built on master-servant relationships and the notion of social hierarchy (servants has the lowest divine order amongst humans in the Chain of Being). Reflected in Regan's shocked response to his audacious intervention- "a peasant stand up thus?". The use of the pun, "villain" in which Cornwall addresses the first servant, which could refer to "villain" or a peasant (in medieval times), perhaps reflects this parallel.

The other two servants also play a surprisingly dedicated role- they are given the whole stage briefly at the end of this extract where they comment on the monstrosity of the act they had witnessed and offer help to the blinded Gloucester- "fetch some flax and whites of eggs to apply to his bleeding face." (a way of soothing a hurt eye). This small act of compassion and whatever remnant of respect they demonstrate to the "old Earl" is in stark juxtaposition to the act of violence immediately preceding this. Serves as a 'balancing' scene.

Without these final lines, Act 3 would end with an almost unbearable pathos- with its inclusion, a glimpse of hope remains and reassures the audience that Shakespeare is indeed working his way to a restoration of some sort. It is painful ironic though, that all elements of good exist only in menial characters that are low in rank and status while evil is all-pervasive in men and women

of higher class. All this reflects the inversion of the natural order. Linguistically, Shakespeare also reflects this through the servants' use of blank verse, when conventionally, they are meant to speak in prose.

#### Characterisation of Regan and Cornwall

Cruel, cold-blooded and sadistic.

She goads Cornwall to gouge Gloucester's remaining eye out. "one side will mock another-th'other too"- an illogical syllogism which she uses only to encourage Cornwall to further Gloucester's torture. Regan appears to relish the promise of furthering Gloucester's pain and suffering.

She then kills a servant when he tries to intercede. The method of murder is particularly noteworthy- "*she takes a sword and runs at him behind*". The metaphorical backstabbing of Lear is now made literal, in this case, in killing the first servant. (interestingly, the metaphorical 'moral' blindness of Gloucester is also made literal later on)

After crushing Gloucester's hopes with news of Edmund's betrayal, she then orders the blinded Gloucester to be thrown out at the gates and "let him smell his way to Dover"- grimly mocking, sardonic tone. Other than evoking sympathy in the audience for Gloucester, it should naturally elicit disgust and hatred towards Regan who now appears in the audience's eyes, quintessentially evil.

The Machiavellian portrayal of Regan goes against societal expectations of women at that time- conventionally viewed as caring, docile motherly figures. Regan's violent and cruel nature reflects the inversion of the natural order- that women are now seemingly violent masculine qualities. A notion shared by the first servant who pointed out- "if you did wear a beard upon your chin". Her cruel nature is later associated with bestial nature- as the third servant points out- "women will all turn monsters".

Cornwall is equally cruel and sadistic. Taunting tone- "Where is thy lustre now?".

#### Characterisation of Gloucester

This extract marks Gloucester anagnorisis- when he learns, from Regan, Edmund's true nature following the peripeteia that is his blinding. Serves as a cathartic moment for the audience, evoking feelings of pity and fear for Gloucester. There is great pathos for his situation. Made more poignant by the pitiful tone in which he flounders blind- "All dark and comfortless? Where's my son Edmund?" and the anguished tone in which he realises "Then Edgar was abused?".

Dramatic irony- Gloucester only sees Edmund's true nature and the error of his ways when he is physically blind. The motif of blindness.

Gloucester's anagnorisis foreshadows Lear's in Act 5 Scene 3- with the death of Cordelia. In a way, this extract sets the audience up for the events that will soon unfold in the main plot. Gloucester acts as a character foil for Lear.

#### Conclusion/Dramatic Significance

This extract is dramatically significant in that it outlines one of the crucial moments in the subplot- the blinding of Gloucester. It also furthers characterisation of Regan and Cornwall as the Machiavellians that they have been portrayed as earlier in the play. Ideas of the inversion of the natural order are explored through the role of the servant and their pronounced involvement here. The extract also hints towards a coming resolution and initiates the convergence of the main plot and subplot.

---

## **Act 4 Scene 2 use this**

Lines 29 - 69

#### Context

Shortly before this scene, Lear experienced his anagnorisis and realized the mistakes he made. The servant who accompany him in the storm scene lead him to Dover where Cordelia, together with the French army are awaiting his arrival before their attack.

#### Approach

- Characterization of Goneril
- Characterization of Albany
- Theme of Justice
- Theme of Inversion of Natural order

#### Characterisation

- 1) Goneril
  - Cruel and Dangerous:
    - i) "I have been worth your whistling" Goneril literally tries to tell Albany that she deserves his attention, dramatic irony here as the audience knows that she was worth watching out for because she is so dangerous
    - ii) "Tigers, not daughters" animal imagery used to show how her lack of empathy and love places her beneath a human being. The use of a predator to describe Goneril also emphasizes her savagery in her treatment of Lear
  - Immoral
    - i) "A father, and a gracious man... have you madded": she is willing to drive her old father to madness despite his old age simply to obtain power,

highlighting the unfilial nature. The use of the "head-lugged bear" here further emphasizes how Goneril's cruelty puts her beneath an animal.

- ii) "Whilst thou, a moral fool": shows that Goneril believes morals are a form of weakness, and she calls Albany a "milk-livered man" for his virtuous characters (liver is the source of one's courage) Contrast in the morality of Albany and Goneril here highlights her lack of morals
- iii) "Filths savour but themselves": Gustatory imagery used here to emphasize the infidelity of Goneril as she lusts for Edmund even though she is already married. Albany suggests that the reason Goneril "savours" Edmund is because they are both "filth" for betraying their fathers for personal gain.
- iv) "Marry, your manhood, mew!": Even after Albany points out her cruelty for abandoning her father, she does not see the flaws in her character and simply mocks Albany for his morality. Alliteration of the soft, bilabial "m" sound emphasizes Albany's lack of masculinity

- Warped sense of morality

- i) "Fools do those villains pity who are punished": Goneril believes that what she has done is right because she thinks the victims, Lear and Gloucester, are criminals who deserve to be punished and she is merely delivering their punishment before they can commit their crime. Irony here as she is the true "villain" in this play for her cruelty towards her father.
- ii) "a head for wrongs": claims that she was wronged by Lear and is only giving him what he deserves, which is ironic since she is the one who betrayed Lear and left him to die in the storm.

2) Albany

- Virtuous

- i) "Most barbarous, most degenerate": use of superlatives here shows Albany's anger towards Goneril for her cruel treatment of Lear. Albany's loyalty to Lear is also shown here through his description of Lear as "a gracious aged man Whose reverence even the..."
- ii) "Were't my fitness to let these hand obey my blood...A woman's shape doth shield thee": Anger towards Goneril as he wants to literally tear her limb from limb as a punishment for her treatment of Lear. Despite this, he keeps his cool because he will not hurt a woman. Portraying to the audience that Albany is a good man, as in society, man should have masculine pride not to hit women.
- iii) "could my good brother suffer you to do it": Albany calls Cornwall a "good brother" sarcastically to highlight how both Goneril and Cornwall have turned on Lear even though he gave land and power to them. The irony in calling Cornwall "good" is further emphasized through the use of a hypercatalectic line.

Themes

1) Justice

- "She that herself will sliver and disbranch. her material sap perforce must wither": Reference to Lear's cursing Goneril with infertility in A1S4 ("into her womb convey sterility"). Natural imagery used by Albany suggests that Goneril's betrayal of her father is a crime against Nature, hence she will be punished accordingly.
- "If that the heavens do not... humanity must perforce prey on itself": If divine justice is not served to punish Goneril and Regan for their crimes, the belief in the body politics suggest that their society will prey on itself as the members of the royal family have. The grotesque image of cannibalism used here highlights the severity of Goneril's crime for betraying her father.
- "It will come": monosyllabic line with a terminal caesura in the form of a colon gives a sense of certainty to the justice that will be brought about by Goneril's crimes—possibly gives hope to the audience that the Natural Order will be restored.

## 2) Natural Order

- "rude wind": Nature is personified here, giving the sense that Nature itself is fighting against evil (Goneril) to restore order. Alternatively, the "rude wind" that opposes Goneril could be referring to Cordelia as she has brought the French Army with her to take back the Kingdom.
- "Proper deformity... as in woman": the inversion of the Natural order through Goneril's betrayal of her father has left her twisted and corrupted by her hatred--> Albany suggests that Goneril's moral and physical deformity is more horrifying than the devil's because deformity is "proper" and characteristic of the devil whereas it is abnormal for a woman to be so "horrid"—contrast to Lear's criticism of all women in A4S6 and shows that Lear was wrong to condemn women
- "changed and self-covered thing": Goneril's inversion of the natural order by betraying Lear has changed her into a "fiend", concealing her womanly features and lowering her to a "thing" rather than a human being emphasizes the effect of the inversion of the Natural Order.

### Conclusion/Dramatic significance of the extract

In this scene, the cruelty of Goneril is highlighted again. The virtuous character of Albany serves as a contrast to the cruel nature of Goneril, Edmund, and Cornwall. This contrast shows the actualization of the division between the 2 duke mentioned by Gloucester in A3S3 ("there is division between the dukes"). The division between the dukes also restores some hope in the audience by showing that a virtuous character is still in power.

---

## Act 4 Scene 7 use other notes

Lines 1 - 44

### Contextualisation

This extract is from Act 4 scene 7 and it occurs prior to two gentlemen, sent by Cordelia, finding Lear and bringing him to her. Cordelia has also just met up with Kent and Kent probably has told Cordelia of what he and Lear have been through.

At the same time, before this extract, the audience also witnessed the death of Oswald in the hands of Edgar.

### Key points:

- Restoration of the natural order
- Characterisation of Cordelia: humble + caring + sincere = paragon of virtue
- Pathos for Lear

### Approach: Linear approach

#### The extract opens with Cordelia thanking Kent for taking care of Lear. (lines 1-3)

- "how shall I live and work to match thy goodness?"
  - o Rhetorical question.
  - o Cordelia praises Kent for his loyalty and kindness to Lear.
  - o The rhetorical question emphasizes Cordelia's humility in thinking of Kent as being a person of greater "goodness" than herself, even though she herself is a kind and caring character.
  - o This is one of the good qualities of Cordelia and it aids in the characterisation of Cordelia as the paragon of virtue.
- "And every measure fail me"
  - o Catalectic line (7 lines instead of the usual 10).
  - o Structurally represents Cordelia's said shortcomings.
  - o Though she is a person of virtuous character, she says she cannot match up to Kent's "goodness".
  - o Further emphasizes Cordelia's humility.
  - o This is one of the good qualities of Cordelia and it aids in the characterisation of Cordelia as the paragon of virtue.

#### Cordelia tells Kent to change out of his disguise (line 6)

- "these weeds are memories of those worser hours"
  - o Clothing imagery.
  - o The rags that Kent wears (and Lear wore) are symbolic of Kent's and Lear's powerlessness after being banished by Regan and Goneril.
  - o This is important as it juxtaposes with the "fresh garments" that Lear is changed into, which symbolically represents Lear being restored to power.
  - o Hence evokes the theme of restoration of natural order.

#### Cordelia invokes the God's to heal Lear. (line 14)

- "O you kind gods!"
  - o Catalectic and monosyllabic for emphasis.
  - o Cordelia's invoking of the gods contrasts with Lear says "Away, By Jupiter" (CR: A1S1) where he banishes Kent.
  - o Cordelia's invoking of the gods is more respectful and she invokes the gods to do a good deed rather than a bad one.
  - o This reflects Cordelia's respectful and kind nature, hence portraying her as the paragon of virtue

#### **Lear's deranged state of mind (lines 16-17)**

- "Th'untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up"
  - o An untuned string instrument is a metaphor for Lear's state of mind; that he is unstable and insane.
  - § Cordelia puts it in a nice way to perhaps show her politeness and respect for Lear.
  - o Cordelia's wish is to "wind up" the string instrument to tune it once again.
  - o This metaphorically represents her desire to restore Lear's sanity.
- "Child-changed father"
  - o Oxymoronic as it puts "child" and "father" together.
  - o Cordelia likens Lear's thought process and actions to that of a child, thus showing his madness.
  - o It is ironic that Cordelia would use this phrase as she is Lear's child. Hence, this draws attention to the phrase.
  - § Attention is further drawn to this phrase through the use of alliteration in the word "child-changed".
  - o Perhaps, the phrase once again shows that Cordelia describes Lear's madness using very mild/nice diction/terms, which shows her politeness and her respect for Lear.

#### **Lear's restoration of power (lines 19-24)**

- "arrayed" and "fresh garments"
  - o Clothing imagery.
  - o Where the royal garments that are put on Lear symbolises power and respect given back to Lear.
  - o Hence it evokes the theme of the restoration of the natural order and that the play is at its 'resolution' stage of the story curve.
- "Enter LEAR in a chair carried by servants"
  - o Stage direction.
  - o As a visual representation of restoration of Lear's power.
  - o Hence it evokes the theme of the restoration of the natural order and that the play is at its 'resolution' stage of the story curve.
- "Be by"
  - o Alliteration.



- Draws attention to the phrase where the Gentleman requests that Cordelia be there when Lear wakes up.
- It perhaps shows the importance of Cordelia in the restoration of Lear's power and sanity and that without her, the natural order cannot be restored.
- Thus, it portrays Cordelia as a character of virtue.

#### Lines 26-29

- "O my dear father" and "thy reverence"
  - Cordelia shows respect to Lear as both a father and a king.
  - CR: A1S1 where Cordelia tells Lear "obey you, love you and most honor you"
    - § Cordelia continues to honor Lear as a king and father.
  - Shows Cordelia's respectful and humble nature, which are traits that amount to her being the paragon of virtue.
  - Also highlights the importance of Cordelia in restoring Lear to his rightful place as she takes the first step to treat Lear as king.
    - § This could evoke the theme of restoration of natural order.
- "restoration hang"
  - Dramatic irony
  - Foreshadowing Cordelia's hanging; CR: act 5 where Cordelia dies by hanging
  - Suggests the need for Cordelia's sacrifice to restore the natural order as she loses her life attempting to restore Lear to power.
    - § Cordelia likened to a Christ-like figure
- "let this kiss Repair those violent harms that my two sisters"
  - she attempts to make amends on behalf of her sisters, even
  - though she has done Lear no wrong/ harm-
  - CR: A1S1 where Cordelia says "Love and be silent"
    - § Cordelia uses her actions/deeds to prove her love for Lear. Here, her kiss shows her love for Lear.
  - Further emphasizes Cordelia's kind and caring nature à paragon of virtue.
- "Kind and dear princess"
  - Cordelia is acknowledged as a princess to Lear's kingdom rather than the queen of France.
  - Shows Cordelia's humble character.
  - Also shows her loyalty and respect for Lear that she would rather be acknowledged as his subordinate and daughter rather than someone of higher or equal status, i.e. queen of France.

#### Lines 30-40

- "warring winds" (bilabial sounds) and "deep dreaded bolted thunder" (plosive sounds)
  - Alliteration.
  - CR: the storm in A3S2 – "Blow winds" and "oak-cleaving thunderbolts".
  - We recall the harsh weather and ordeal that Lear had to go through and his intense suffering.

- Evokes pathos for Lear
- "poor perdu"
  - Alliteration.
  - Likens Lear's previous situation to be like a sentinel placed in such an exposed position that he can hardly escape death.
  - Shows Cordelia's sympathy à paragon of virtue.
  - Evokes pathos for Lear.
- "mine enemy's dog Though he had bit me should have stood that night Against my fire"
  - CR: A3S1 where Lear is chased out of the castle by Goneril and Regan.
  - this juxtaposes between the dog which was allowed to keep warm in Cordelia's house and Lear who was chased out into the storm, heightens pathos for Lear, who is reduced to such a pitiful state, a state that is even worse off than that of a dog.
  - Also juxtaposes Cordelia's caring and sympathetic character to Regan + Goneril's cruelty and heartlessness. Heightens the virtuousness of Cordelia.
- "To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn, In short and musty straw"
  - Biblical allusion to the parable of the prodigal son.
  - But there is a role reversal where Lear, the father, has suffered but now returns to Cordelia, the child; i.e. prodigal father.
  - Brings up the thematic idea of unnaturalness where Lear's act of abdication caused unnaturalness and the inversion of social order which results in dire consequences that Lear has to suffer.
  - Creates pathos for Lear.
  - But also the idea of Cordelia playing the role of the righteous character that accepts Lear back despite what he has done to her also brings us back to the idea of Cordelia being the paragon of virtue.

#### Line 44

- "How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty"
  - Repetition/parallelism to emphasize Cordelia's genuine and extreme concern for Lear.
  - The fact that this line is a hypercatalectic line also further stresses the same idea^.  
§ Cordelia's caring character à paragon of virtue
  - The repetition of Lear being acknowledged as the king, i.e. "royal lord" and "your majesty", brings to mind the idea of Lear being restored to power and status.  
§ Re-emphasizes the importance of Cordelia in restoring Lear to power and status.  
§ Also shows Cordelia's respectful nature.
- Other points (throughout the extract)
- Cordelia speaks in blank verse
  - Highlights her power and status.
  - Emphasizes her humble nature, hence paragon of virtue.
- Mainly iambic pentameter: "Had you not been their father these white flakes"

- Shows harmony now that the natural order has been restored

#### **Dramatic significance:**

The extract is situated at the play's "resolution" stage of the story curve. The atmosphere of this extract is a happy one showing the good triumphing over evil. This eases emotional tension among the audience after all the dramatic tension and conflict of past scenes. This parallels the main plot to the subplot as Cordelia restoring Lear to life from his imagined death parallels Edgar helping Gloucester after his imaginary fall off the cliff. The audience is once again reminded of Cordelia as a paragon of virtue in this play as she is portrayed as a Christ-like figure, bearing no bitterness or anger towards Lear's past follies.

This extract thus marks a pivotal point in the play where Lear is restored to his regal status and is restored back to life from his imagined death by Cordelia. It also signifies the return of order into the kingdom as Cordelia returns to the play since her banishment and prepares the audience for a moving reconciliation scene between Lear and Cordelia.

This extract also helps to build up to the plot twist at the end of the novel when Cordelia is killed and the hopes of Lear and Cordelia being happy together are dashed. This is essential to make the end more tragic as *King Lear* is a tragic play.

#### **Lines 45 - 85**

#### **Introduction**

##### **(A) Contextualization of Extract & Summary**

- This extract is from Act 4, Scene 7 and it occurs right after Lear has been captured by the 2 gentlemen who were sent by Cordelia.
- At the same time, before this extract, the audience also witnessed the death of Goneril's steward, Oswald. At the start of this scene, Lear enters in a chair carried by servants and is dressed in royal garments- Lear being elevated and clothed in royal garments is a significant visual tool as it signals Lear's restoration of his regal status and restoration of his sanity.

##### **(B) Approach,m,**

A linear combined with elemental approach would be utilized, with the following points being explored in greater detail:

- Portrayal of Cordelia's character as a paragon of virtue in this play
- Lear's development and changes in his character as a result of him being healed emotionally and mentally.
- The return of Cordelia marking the restoration of natural order.
- Various thematic concerns brought out in this extract.

### **Main Points (Linear Approach)**

- Context of the extract sets up a serene, peaceful, tranquil atmosphere which is in contrast to other scenes thus far; where other scenes are marked by tension, violence, conflict and terror; auditory effect as soothing music is played- perfect setting for Lear's recuperation and for reconciliation between father and daughter
- When Lear wakes up, Cordelia addresses him as 'my royal lord' and 'majesty' – honoring Lear, still regards him as King; restoration of Lear's title, something which he held dear; again through her words, Cordelia attempts to restore the natural order, restore Lear back to his regal status (3rd point- where the return of the Cordelia marks the return of natural order). She addresses him with respect, loyalty and love, and helps Lear recall the position he held.
- Cordelia switches tone as from a daughter speaking to a father, in line 25 'O my dear father' and line 30 'been their father' before he wakes up, to that of a subject speaking to a king- creates a slight sense of apprehension from Cordelia and the audience as to how Lear would react upon meeting Cordelia
- 'you do me wrong to take out o' the grave' - signs that Lear is still delusional and confused; wants to die to escape his sufferings; this parallels with the sub-plot where Gloucester also wants death but is restored to life by Edgar in A4s6, likewise, Lear is restored from his imagined death by Cordelia, and forced to endure almost more than they can bear.
- 'Thou art a soul in a bliss, but I am bound upon a wheel of fire that mine own tears do scald like molten lead' Lear imagines Cordia as in a Christian heaven, and himself as suffering one of the torments of the damned. Lear views Cordelia as a Christ-like figure that has revived, save

him- accentuates Cordelia's values of goodness and sincerity and purity; again highlights the idea that Cordelia is the paragon of virtue in this play (1st point)

- 'upon a wheel of fire that mine own tears/ do scald like molten lead' - paints a hellish image of pain and suffering; his physical and mental torture is encapsulated in this imagery- perhaps this is a punishment for his folly; the phrase is cathartic (catharsis: the process of releasing strong feelings, for example through plays, as a way of providing relief from anger, suffering, etc.)

- 'wheel of fire' is an image that recalls the suffering of Ixion, punished by Jupiter for seeking to seduce Juno, and bound on an ever-whirling wheel in hell, but it has wider resonances. The Ixion myth is interpreted as a political allegory showing the disastrous result of irresponsible rule, and as an allegory showing the disastrous result of irresponsible rule and as an allegory of ingratitude. The wheel of fire has two significances in this context – 1) wheel of fire as the sun, which Lear evoked in A1S1 "for by the sacred radiance of the sun" - this emphasizes how his downfall has been entirely caused by his past failures 2) wheel of fire- signifies the wheel of fortune, an Elizabethan concept where everything and the wheel comes full circle- as said by Edmund in A5s3- 'is come full circle' ; here the wheel comes full circle for Lear from his initial banishment of Cordelia to their present reunion

- 'mine own tears/ do scald like molten lead' - besides painting a hellish image of -Lear's pain and agonizing experience which creates pathos for Lear, this phrase also tells the audience that Lear is crying. The act of Lear crying symbolizes the fact that he accepts his follies, where his tears represent his frailties, his humility. This is a stark contrast to Lear in the earlier parts of the play in A2s2 where he is proud and arrogant; declaring that 'let not women's weapons, water-drops, stain my man's cheek'; stark contrast between Lear then and now, shows Lear's development, his humility, (2nd point) this creates a sense of hope in the audience who is anticipating the reconciliation between Lear and Cordelia;

- Perhaps these 'tears' are also a result of his curse on Goneril where he condemns her in A1S4 saying 'let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of you, with cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks' - taste of his own medicine?/ wheel comes full circle- evoking pathos for Lear

- 'Sir do you know me?' - Cordelia does *not* reveal her identity, and *still is in reverence* of him. Her gentle prodding serves to bring him to present reality. However Lear is still confused, which is evident in his reply to Cordelia- 'You are a spirit, I know; where did you die?'- shows that he has yet to recognize his surroundings/ has not yet orientated himself

- This results in a building up of anticipation within the audience as to whether Lear will eventually be able to come out of his madness and recognize and accept Cordelia as his daughter again

- 'Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?' These 3 successive questions shows that Lear is orientating himself and it shows him transiting back into sanity, 'fair daylight' - also suggests hope; creates a hopeful atmosphere; this contrasts to the dark and gloomy storm scene in A3s2, where Lear was in despair

- 'I should ev'n die with pity' – juxtaposed to Lear's revered state at the beginning of the play, to the disorientated and pitiful state he is in now.

- Furthermore, Lear's language in this extract dramatically contrasts with his language in the storm scene; now Lear speaks in a simple, collected manner compared to the storm scene where he uses poetic revengeful words to curse his daughters such as 'you sulphurous and thought-executing fires' 'crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once'- the change in his use of language is a reflection of the change in his state of mind; mentally healed, gradually restored to his sanity (2nd point)- in this extract, he is less agitated

- 'I know not what to say' - emphasizes the thematic idea of futility of speaking, echoes Cordelia's asides in A1S1 in the love test where she says 'what shall Cordelia speak?' This is also an expression of Lear's disorientation, which is an indication that he is trying to grasp his surroundings. More pity is evoked when Lear is so disorientated.

- 'I feel this pinprick' – Lear manages to feel something so miniscule. This is juxtaposed to the storm scene, where even the storm does not affect him at all because the hurt of ingratitude from his daughters outweigh the pain from the storm. The fact that Lear manages to feel a pinprick now is indicative of the fact that Lear is slowly getting over the hurt of ingratitude.

- Cordelia restores natural order not only through the way she addresses Lear, but also through her actions- where the act of Cordelia kneeling in this extract is significant; offers a visual emblem of the restoration of order- Cordelia kneels before Lear to asks him to pronounce a benediction, a Christian prayer of blessing, over her- an indication that she still recognizes Lear as a king, under the mandate of God, he still holds the power to bless her; she is restoring natural order through this act- again it can be seen that the return of Cordelia marks the return of order (3rd point)

- The act of Cordelia restraining Lear from kneeling is very impactful- first it shows Lear's humility

- Secondly, it serves to dramatically contrast the characters of Regan and Cordelia- Lear kneels before Regan in A2S2 and begs her to 'vouchsafe his raiment, bed and food'- not only is Regan not moved, but she calls Lear's action of kneeling down as 'unsightly tricks'- shows her contempt and disrespect for her father; in this extract, Lear attempts to kneel before Cordelia but is prevented from doing so- accentuates Cordelia's respect for Lear, and her attempts to restore natural order again(3rd point); moving

- 'I am a very foolish, fond old man'; 'I fear I am not in my perfect mind'; 'yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant'; 'I am a man' – the words 'I am' are repeated 5 times by Lear from lines 60 to 69-encapsulates Lear's humility and at the same time his fragility as well; through the 5 'I am's, he lists his weaknesses and confesses his flaws (2nd point) [The use of anacalasis where the words, "I am" is particularly significant in encapsulating Lear's humility and fragility, leading to the generation of pathos for Lear as the audience listens to the emphasis on the personal pronouns instead of the royal pronoun used by Lear in the early scenes of the play.]

- 1st 'I am' - I am a very foolish, fond old man- pathos felt for Lear as he admits his fall from regal status to a 'very foolish, fond old man'

- 'I think this lady to be my child Cordelia' this marks the climax of his speech as Lear finally recognizes Cordelia; use of the word 'my' the possessive form of I, shows Lear's acceptance of Cordelia as his daughter once again, this also brings up the thematic idea of naturalness where natural order is restored- Lear as the father, and Cordelia as his 'child'; this scene of reconciliation is in stark contrast to A1s4 where Goneril is asserting her power over Lear which leads the fool to remark, 'Which they (referring to Goneril and Regan) will make an obedient father' –role reversal of Lear as a child and Goneril and Regan as his parents chiding him; contrast between inversion of order when Lear interacts with Goneril and Regan to restoration of order when Lear is with Cordelia serves to accentuate the point that the return of Cordelia marks the restoration of natural order (3rd point)

- This perhaps also signifies the end of Lear's moral blindness that has so plagued him throughout the play as he realizes that Cordelia is the one who truly loves him

- 'And so I am, I am' – Cordelia's reply shows her exhilaration that she has finally been accepted by her father and that he has not lost his senses. The second 'I am' is extra-metrical, but seems a deliberate expansion, expressing Cordelia's love, and anticipating her repetition in line 75.

- 'Be your tears wet?' 'If you have poison for me, I will drink it – Lear finds it unbelievable that someone he has hurt is crying for him (subtly alludes to the biblical notion of forgiveness) 'You have some cause, they have not' – Lear admits he has done wrong here, where he admits that Cordelia has the right to 'not love' / hate Lear

- 'Do not abuse me' – Lear refuses to accept praise and power from Cordelia and Kent because he is deeply scarred by the hurt his other daughters have brought upon him. The fact that he is wary of others victimizes Lear and evokes pathos for him.

- 'yet it is danger to make him even o'er the time he has lost' – what the Gentleman says here foreshadows Lear going mad in A5S3.

- 'Pray you now, forget and forgive; I am old and foolish' – Lear's restoration to sanity is clear here, where his grudges of ingratitude are receding when he makes a general appeal, perhaps asking not just Cordelia but everyone to forget and forgive all the horrors of the past.

- In Lear's speech, the audience notes the joyful scene of reconciliation between Lear and Cordelia. This eases emotional tension among the audience after all the dramatic tension and conflict of past scenes. This parallels the main plot to the subplot as Cordelia restoring Lear to life from his imagined death parallels Edgar helping Gloucester after his imaginary fall off the cliff. The audience is once again reminded of Cordelia as a paragon of virtue in this play as she is portrayed as a Christ-like figure, bearing no bitterness or anger towards Lear's past follies. This extract ends on a hopeful note as the return of Cordelia marks the restoration of natural order.

## Conclusion

This extract thus marks a pivotal point in the play where Lear is restored to his regal status and is restored back to life from his imagined death by Cordelia. (However, at the end of the scene after Lear and Cordelia leaves, Kent and the gentlemen discuss about war with the gentleman saying 'the arbitrement is like to be bloody' which hints at further chaos and conflict.)



It also signifies the return of order into the kingdom as Cordelia returns to the play since her banishment. The moving reconciliation scene between Lear and Cordelia not only portrays if Cordelia's character as a paragon of virtue in this play, but it also shows Lear's development and changes in his character as a result of him being healed emotionally and mentally, which marks the beginning of the restoration of natural order.

---

## Act 5 Scene 3 **not great**

### Lines 1 - 40

#### Context

1. Occurs after the war in the background has ended. French (Good) has lost the battle and Cordelia as well as Lear has been taken as prisoners by Edmund.
2. At the end of the extract, it is hinted that Edmund wishes to have Cordelia and Lear executed.

#### Dramatic Significance

1. This extract is the beginning of the resolution. The fact that the resolution begins with the capture of Cordelia and King Lear ties in with the Tragic nature of the play.
2. This extract also helps to set up further plot (the hanging of Cordelia) and serves to create suspense in the audience as to whether justice shall prevail.

#### Focus of Analysis

1. Analysing various elements of tragic ending and its effects (pathos?)
2. The idea of divine justice and injustice
3. Characterization of Cordelia as paragon of virtue and Lear (Particularly his mental degradation)
4. Creation of suspense

#### Analysis (Linear Approach)

1. Begins with Edmund's dialog about "guarding" both Lear and Cordelia before finally punishing them. Suggests that evil has won over good, creates a depressing and gloomy resolution which is particularly characteristics of a Tragic play
2. Idea of divine justice is also invoked. Edmund talks as if he is waiting for divine justice to occur but, in reality he is just about ready to dish out the punishment himself at the end of the extract. Mirrors earlier part of the play act 3 scene 7 where Cornwall says that he cannot dish out punishment to Gloucester without formal trial but pluck out his eyes anyway in the name of divine justice. Reflects Edmund as a part of the evil congregation and suggests that there is probably no divine justice to protect them when evil has taken over.
3. "We are not the first who with the best meaning have incurred the worst" - references the idea of injustice. That even the great people can suffer the worst fate because of misfortune which is out of their control. Creates pathos in viewers as they realize that even Cordelia who is the paragon of virtue cannot escape from the chain of misfortune.
4. It is also monosyllabic to create emphasis on this idea of misfortune which is a key essential element of Tragedy

5. "For thee. I am cast down." "outfrown false fortune's frown." casts Cordelia again as a paragon of virtue. She puts priority to the "king" although he is no longer in power over the situation.
6. The fricatives though, may suggest a different tone. Cordelia may be a paragon of virtue but she cannot escape misfortune. The fricatives may hint at this irony that despite what she says about enduring bad luck, she may have realized that she cannot survive this.
7. "No, no, no, no" shows that Lear is in denial again. Suggests that Lear is starting to lose his mind and becomes delusional again as in earlier part of the play where the phase of denial follows Lear's descent to madness.
8. Mirrors, "Howl, howl, howl, howl" which is Lear's denial at the end of the play, where Lear is delusional by the death of Cordelia such that he thought she may come back to life.
9. Lear then begins to narrate his imaginary life in prison with Cordelia. The dream-like quality of his illusion seems to betray the reality of life in prison which again hints at his disillusionment and denial of his condition. This invokes pity from the audience as audience has to watch Lear goes delusional twice!
10. "And pray, and sing, and tell old tales and laugh" is monosyllabic line which adds stress to the paradise-like quality of life in prisonment.
11. Imagery of God throwing incense for human is a reversal of human throwing incense for God. This further solidifies Cordelia's good and blameless character that is Christ-like/God-like. (Check the notes also, there is another meaning to it.)
12. "Fire us hence like foxes" - Thereomorphic imagery used to describe both Lear and Cordelia. The choice of animal is interesting. In Christianity, it is well known that fox symbolizes cunningness and it is not rare that foxes are casted as bad. This perhaps suggest a kind of role reversal where the good is seen as the bad now since there is no divine justice and evil decides what is just.
13. Lear seems to still have hope for divine justice as he waits for divine justice to dish out divine punishment for evil. "Ere they shall make us weep. We'll see em starve first." monosyllabic line gives stress to the condemnation. This is ironic as by this point, viewers would have realized that Lear wouldn't get avenged by divine punishment thus invoking pity. The stress which reflects Lear's conviction on divine justice further enhances this (situational) irony.
14. "Come hither, captain. Hark." - has an ominous air. Viewers are well-acquainted with secret scheming in the play and would quickly realize that something bad is going to happen. This creates suspense as they anticipate for what is to come.
15. As Edmund gives the instruction, there is a hint of materialistic nature in it as shown by "noble fortunes." Referencing act 1 of the love test where love and piety is traded for kingdom, now camaraderie can be traded for money. Shakespeare seems to suggest that to be blinded by materialism is a grave mistake.
16. Use of medial caesura in the form of colon puts emphasis on the sentence "that men" are as the time is. which seems a tad ironic as most of the happenings in the play happens because of women, not men.

### Lines 255 – 290 pretty good analysis

#### Context:

1. Extract taken from Act 5 Scene 3 of King Lear
2. Prior to this extract, Goneril and Regan have been found dead, and Edmund has in his dying moments revealed his order for Lear and Cordelia to be executed.

#### Dramatic Significance:

1. This extract reveals the death of Cordelia, as well as Lear's mental degradation which hints at his approaching death, thus setting up the end of the play.

#### Approach:

1. The two main points that will be explored in this extract are
  - a. The creation of pathos for Lear
  - b. Lear's denial and his mental degradation which sets up his eventual demise
  - c. The use of tools???

#### Analysis:

##### **Creation of pathos for Lear:**

1. The extract opens with stage directions where Lear is seen carrying Cordelia in his arms onto the stage. This is heavily contrasted with the previous optimism after Regan and Goneril's death, which only serves to exaggerate the tragedy of Cordelia's death, thereby creating a gloomy and sad mood, heightening pathos for Lear.
2. Furthermore, the image of Lear carrying Cordelia is similar to the image of Pieta, a sculpture of Mary carrying Jesus Christ after his death. This not only once again presents Cordelia as being a Christ-like figure but also evokes pity for Lear, as a parent who just lost his child.
3. There is irony in how in Act 1 Scene 1 Lear wants to have an "unburdened crawl towards death" but here he is physically **burdened with the lifeless body of Cordelia**, his most loved daughter, and hence once again heightening pathos for Lear.
4. At this point, on stage is Lear and his 3 daughters like in Act 1 Scene 1. But unlike in Act 1 Scene 1, his 3 daughters are dead and he is about to be as well, adding to the sad and gloomy atmosphere of the scene, and showing how the play has come full circle.

5. The gloomy atmosphere is further accentuated by the harsh consonants in 'dead' and 'stones' in the opening lines of Lear in this extract.
6. Lear begins with "Howl Howl Howl Howl" in line 255. It is a monosyllabic spondee line which repeats "howl", and this use of anaphora and onomatopoeia highlights Lear's grief and shock at the death of Cordelia.
7. The word "howl" also sounds similar to the word "how", and perhaps this can be C.R back to Act 1 Scene 1 when Lear says "How how Cordelia". Not only does Shakespeare once again repeat what happens at the beginning of the play at the end of the play to show how the play has come full circle, but perhaps there is some irony present in the fact that previously, Lear was about to punish Cordelia but now he is in grief over her death. Perhaps it might even be indicative of how Cordelia's death was caused by Lear's actions?
8. Or if Lear is imperative, he is perhaps commanding the others around to "howl" their grief as well, since the pain of Cordelia's death is too much for him to bear alone. This is further evidenced from his following lines where he says "Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so that heaven's vault should crack".
9. Line 257 is a catalectic Alexandrine line with a medial caesura after the word "crack". The medial caesura comes in the form of a colon and hence this line serves to emphasise the second half of the line "she's gone forever.", which was repeated in line 268. This creates a sense of finality and sadness and evokes a sympathetic response from the audience for Lear.
10. The first half of that line Lear says "That heaven's vault should crack". This parallels the storm scene where Lear in Act 3 Scene 2 cries "rumble thy belly full! Spit fire, spout rain!". In both instances, Lear is seen lashing out at the people who have caused injustice, but unlike in A3S2, Lear is doing it now not for himself but for Cordelia, showing Lear's insurmountable grief. → evoke pathos
11. In the first half of line 259 Lear says "She's dead as earth". This monosyllabic lines once again gives the sense of finality to Cordelia, and perhaps the use of the simile likening her death to earth seems to allude to the biblical saying: "for you are dust, and to dust you shall return".
12. However the use of the word "earth" instead of "dust" is certainly ambiguous. Earth often conveys the idea of life and perhaps the irony in the statement "She's dead as earth" is the beginning of his denial and delusion of Cordelia's death
13. There is also apocalyptic imagery used in line 261 where Kent says "is this the promised end", which might perhaps refer to Lear's hope for "unburdened crawl toward death", but might also be referring to the end of the world or the last judgment. This idea is echoed again in line 262 by Edgar in "image of that horror" and this idea not only gives

the sense of finality but the horrifying image it portrays exaggerates the tragedy of Cordelia's death and once again evokes pathos for Lear.

14. In line 264 and 265, Lear says that if Cordelia lives, it is a chance which... This brings to mind the repercussions of Lear's actions, thereby creating sympathy for Lear. Thus this extract also portrays the devastating consequences of Lear's fateful acts and mistakes than begin in Act 1, heightening the poignancy and pathos as the audience witness the price that Lear has to pay.
15. This is seen again when Lear asks Kent who he is in line 276 and says that his eyes are not the best. Firstly, the deterioration of eyesight is indicative of Lear's old age and hints at his approaching death. Secondly, the motif of sight and blindness is brought up again where Lear's 'blindness' was what caused him to not see the true characters of Goneril & Regan in Act 1, and also led to the banishment of Cordelia and Kent. Therefore not only are the repercussions of his acts are brought up, his worsening condition also evokes pity for Lear.
16. His pitiful state is then highlighted over and over by Kent, firstly in line 278 and 279 where he says "If fortune...behold". Lear is referred to as the latter here, and can perhaps be C.R back to A4S6 when Lear is compared to as a "natural fool of fortune".
17. Kent then in lines 286 and 287 comments on the fall of Lear, in his "difference and decay" and "sad steps", which not only highlights Kent's loyalty but portrays Lear's pitiful fall, accentuated through the plosives 'd' and the sibilant /s/ sounds.
18. Furthermore he adds to the gloomy dark mood in lines 288-290 where he says "all's cheerless, dark and deadly".....

#### **The mental degradation of Lear which leads to his eventual demise**

1. This is seen in "howl howl howl howl" where it hints at Lear's regression to primalistic behaviour, hinting at the worsening of his mental state. Furthermore, perhaps since within the play those who are evil have been described as animals like when Albany calls Goneril, Regan and Cornwall "tigers" in A4S2, his primalistic behaviour reflects how Lear blames himself and recognises that this is the result of his mistakes in A1S1.
2. In line 255 he calls the other good people around "men of stones", similar to the way he called Goneril a "marble-hearted fiend" in Act 1 Scene 4. His verbal attack on the good around him is also seen in line 267 where he says "a plague upon you murderers, traitors all", which can be C.R back to A2S4 where he calls Goneril and Regan a disease or a plague. This shows Lear's insurmountable grief and how he is unable to distinguish between evil and good, and is wholly overwhelmed by Cordelia's death.
3. His mental instability is also seen when he denies the death of Cordelia. This is ironic as seen in line 258 where he says he knows when one is dead and when one live, and this

only serves to emphasise Lear's inner turmoil, which leads back to the first point on creating pathos for Lear.

4. His denial is first seen when he says "Lend me a looking-glass" in line 259, right after there is an air of finality in "shes dead as earth". This immediate contrast shows Lear's delusion and inability to reconcile with the fact that Cordelia has died. Furthermore, the constant back and forth in the state of Cordelia, whether she is dead or alive serves to create confusion. In line 263 Lear says "This feather stirs, she lives". It gives hope to audience, only to take it away, turning the tragedy of Cordelia's death to the tragedy of Lear's inability to accept her death, creating pathos for Lear.

### **Lines 291 – 325 Use this**

Starts at Albany "He knows not what he says", ends at the *Exeunt with dead march*

#### Context

Prior to this extract, Lear and Cordelia were captured by Edmund and ordered to be killed. Meanwhile, Regan and Goneril have both died, while Edgar has challenged Edmund to a duel. Edmund is wounded in the ensuing duel. Before dying, he has a change of heart and conveys a message to the captain to spare Lear and Cordelia. However, it is clear that his efforts are futile as Cordelia has died before this extract, leaving Lear heartbroken and in an isolated mental state of turmoil.

Main Points:

- Apocalyptic and tragic end brought about by Cordelia's death
- Lear's tragic arc
  - Madness in isolation
  - Blindness
  - Heartbreak
- Albany assumes control

Approach:

Linear, covering the theme of the reversion of the natural order (restoration of order) and the motif of words and deeds

\*note to friends, this is arranged 70% linearly but to make the notes clearer and neater, the lines of the characters for example Edgar, though apart, may be placed together for easier reference.

**Albany, symbolises righteousness:**

- Use of the royal plural 'us' and 'we' shows the rise in power of Albany

- "That's but a trifle here" signifies that Edmund's death has no consequence as it is the wheel of fortune for Edmund where although he had turned the wheel of fortune in the middle of the play where he was at the top of the wheel of fortune instead of Edgar, circumstance once again spins the wheel, and Edgar regains the top and Edmund, literally fallen to the ground beneath Edgar from a mortal wound, finds himself at the bottom.
- His speech is reminiscent of Lear's speech in A1S1
  - "Know our intent" recalls "express our darker purpose"
  - "To him our absolute power" recalls Lear relinquishing his power to the daughters
    - Albany shows that he is loyal but ironically this will not happen as Lear will soon die. However, in name Lear is reinstated to become king, reverting the natural order to its proper state
    - Kent is possibly foreshadowing his own death, as Lear is to die soon, and Kent also states that he is old and is to die soon.
- Assesses the nature of the current situation
  - "Great decay may come" is a **transferred epithet** and nihilistic imagery that Cordelia and Lear were good characters but they were condoned to death.
  - "Wages of the virtue... cup of their deservings" - **antithetical parallelism** shows the Manichean binary. Ironically not many "friends" are alive, and those who bear wages are burdens
- Effect of Caesura and Alexandrian line in "You, to your rights" shows the restoration of the natural order where Albany gives Edgar and Kent their places

### Significance of the third messenger

- Carries vital information which helps with the collapse of time

### Lear's death

- Spondaic and trochaic exclamations echoes his madness, contrasting against the iambic pentameter and emphasising his grief. The repetition of "no, no, no" recalls the motif of nothing, and Lear is truly left with nothing because he failed to recognise the wisdom of the first "nothing" Cordelia said.
- "And my poor fool is hanged" - **tone of endearment as the fool disappeared after A3S6**
- Use of **thereomorphic imagery** is pronounced to bemoan the senselessness of Cordelia's death. The animals he raises are timid animals, "dog, horse, rat", showing that Cordelia is superior to these animals. At the same time, this dehumanizes Regan and Goneril as he refers to them as cruel animals.
- "No, no, no life?" and "thou no breath at all" - **rhetorical questions which are mutually exclusive thus showing Lear's mental instability**
- "Never never... never" and "Pray you undo this button" - **mix of plosive imagery and trochaic pentameter** to emphasise the extent of Lear's grief for Cordelia.
- His death shows that Lear has overcome his hamartia
  - "Thank you sir" **shows humility**



- "Look on her" Lear's last lines focus on seeing Cordelia, showing that he is no longer blind to his daughter's love but at the same time it also shows the Lear is delirious because Cordelia is dead.
- "O..o..o" - O gets smaller, shows Lear losing his life which is a paralinguistic feature

### Edgar

- Edgar's state of denial is expressed through the repetition of "my Lord" and "Look up, my Lord" where he tries to wake Lear up showing how difficult it is for him to accept Lear's death
- "Oh, he is gone indeed" - paralinguistic feature, end stop line signified the end of Lear's life.

\*\*Both Edgar and Kent accompanied Lear to self discovery and thus their reaction to Lear's death signifies their loyalty to Lear

### The tragedy of Kent

- "Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass. He hates him" - use of caesura and hypercatalectic lines expresses the dissonance in Kent's thoughts, how he is unable to properly think after Lear dies
- Break, heart, I prithee break": shows that Kent has a heart after Lear's, since Lear himself dies of a broken heart. This has been foreshadowed numerous times in the storm.
- However, before death Lear does not recognise the servant Caius as the earl of Kent, and hence does not recognise what Kent has done for him.
- Kent uses a metaphor comparing the world to a device of torture to show Lear's immense pain through "rack of this tough world/ stretch him out longer" showing that Lear's death is welcomed due to the emotional suffering he has endured in life.
- "He but usurped his life" - shows that Lear died a strong man, a tutular character
- The tragedy of Lear leads to the tragedy of Kent, portrayed through a heroic couplet which give his words a tone of finality: "My master calls me...". Kent is loyal to the end, that he is willing to follow Lear into death - emphasised by "Go" and "no" which are rhyming couplets
- His final word, "no", echoes Lear's "no, no, no", referring to the motif of nothing, showing how he understands Lear's heart.

### Final words by Albany and Edgar

- Establish them as potential contenders of the throne through the ambiguous use of plurals which could mean a royal plural
  - o Use of heroic couplets give the play a sense of finality
  - o However, more importantly establish the tragedy that has just occurred, ending the play on a cathartic note for the audience

### Albany

- "Rule in this realm": **alliteration** emphasises the notion of kingship, as Albany invites Edgar and Kent to rule with him. As the mantle has been relinquished by Lear, for the natural order to continue another must take his place
- "gored state sustain": diction indicates the state of Lear's kingdom – deeply wounded, bleeding and in tatters, reflecting the impact of Lear's hamartia. "State" may also refer to Lear's own person, which has been metaphorically mangled by the events occurring thus far.

### Edgar

- "The weight of this sad time we must obey"
  - Monosyllabic lines add on weight to the atmosphere
  - "Sad time" is a **transferred epithet** revealing the sincere feelings of Edgar and Albany of Lear's death
  - "We", the royal plural is used signifying the relinquishing of the throne
- "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say": the **motif of words and deeds** has evolved throughout the play, and at this final moment Edgar shows that Lear's old order – **emphasising words over deeds – no longer stands, allowing them to speak freely. Moreover, the nature of the events that have conspired give Edgar and Albany an emotional catharsis that allows them to speak freely.**
  - Contrast to A1S1 where the focus was more on words than feelings and A4S7 where Cordelia has 'no words'
  - "Oldest" and "young" - antithesis to emphasise the next line
- "...Shall never see so much, nor live so long": the motif of blindness is addressed here; by the end of the play all blindness has been cured as both Gloucester and Lear reach their anagnorasis. Edgar proclaims that the old have suffered so that the young need not make the same mistakes, and they have been blind so that the young can see, giving hope in a time of despair.
- Iambic Pentameter and Rhyming couplet of "young" and "long" gives a sense of finality to the play
- Para-rhymes used to link the sense of closure, no indication of who is going to share the throne, however with closing lines given to Edgar not Albany it could hint to us that Edgar is the one who is going to take over Lear's place.

### [dead march]

- music suitable for a funeral reinforcing the sombre mood surrounding the play's end and Lear's death
- Contrasts with the other musical cues that have accompanied various characters' entrances; they now exit dead
- The final tableau may or may not be carried in procession, showing the carnage that Lear has effected

**Tragedy: order → disorder → order [plot sequence of the play]**

**Significance: the play's ending**

- An open ending; there is no proper resolution. Although Lear's arc has come to an end, issues still remain unresolved, such as the fate of Kent and that of the throne.
- Shakespeare shows that Lear's arc as a tragic character is the most important in the play, more than the kingship and state of the kingdom.
- Yet, the ending is also unjust, leaving the audience questioning the nature of divine justice in the play as commented upon extensively by Gloucester "flies to wanton boys". Lear's reunion with Cordelia is tragically interrupted with her death, and he does not die cathartically, but in absolute grief.
- This gives the audience a moment of catharsis as they dwell upon the play's ending.

**\*\*Possible question:**

- Do you think there is closure of play?
  - Restoration of order
  - Ambiguous who is going to share the throne



