

ever more present. King Lear wishes for an easy escape from the painful death that he endures, and says 'If you have poison for me, I will drink it'<sup>4</sup> Lear repeatedly imagines that his life has ended, and repeatedly is only hopefully and incorrect. He wishfully imagines that he can die and not over live in pain. On coming to from madness, he says 'You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave/ Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound' (4. 7. 44-45). He endeavours to ensure everybody around him knows he is in pain; another cry for attention exposed. Lear speaks of his daughters, especially Goneril, attacking him physically. He tells Regan that her sister has 'struck' (2. 4. 155) him with her tongue and 'tied/ Sharp-tooth'd unkindness' (2. 4. 129-30) around his heart. Within this language he is turning his daughters against each other, and brings sadness upon Regan when she hears this. He also talks to Regan about his epiphany of his death, and with heavy irony says 'Dear daughter, I confess that I am old; / Age is unnecessary' (2. 4. 154-55). Lear's suffering in this play seems needless, and death does seem like the release that he needs and should be granted, however, as Ashley Chantler and David Higgins explain 'Aristotle's ideas about catharsis can help us to understand why watching the appalling suffering of characters (...) is not only a worthwhile but also necessary process'<sup>5</sup>. Shakespeare implies through this play that life itself is something to be endured, and death is only the happy promise one has 'When we are born we cry that we are come/ To this great stage of fools' (4. 6. 183-4). In the storm Lear tries to reduce himself to the life 'as cheap as beast's' becoming an 'unaccommodated man', 'a poor, bare, fork'd animal' without his 'lending's' (3. 4. 106-8). The storm serves as a metaphor for England's suffering as well as Lear's; as Lear's heart breaks 'into a hundred thousand flaws', the way England's heart will have broken at the untimely death of Queen Elizabeth I. Lear begins to realize he is in limbo; he is both dead and not dead, and speaks of himself as already deceased. When Gloucester wants to hold Lear's hand, Lear says 'Let me wipe it

<sup>4</sup> William Shakespeare, *King Lear* ed, R.A. Foakes, (London: A& C Black Publishers, 1997) 4. 7. 71. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

<sup>5</sup> Ashley Chantler and David Higgins *Studying English Literature*, (London: Continuum, 2010) p.38