

- **Oswald still speaking in verse which contrasts Kent**
- Kent goes back into verse line 125 talking about the King
- old vs new order Kent being flexible to change
- **Regan's three line are a shift in authority - authority subverted because she says her sister is more important than her father**
- **"fortune, good night: smile once more, turn thy wheel"** wheel of fortune imagery which is applicable to Edmund - good and bad luck
- Edgar's soliloquy - second person to have a soliloquy (Bedlam Beggar context!)
- Lear reacts to his man being put in the stocks
- **seeing his fool in the stocks is detrimental to his position and authority - loss of power**
- **use of tricolon device is significant to gain control and reassurance and for saying that he has a low life**
- **Fool's response: things are getting worse "fortune that arrant whore, Ne'er turns they key to the poor"**
- 'hysterica passio' believed to have come from the mother's womb
- **Lear using the language of command - repeated imperatives "follow me not" "stay here" to regain a sense of command over the situation**
- **"How chance the King comes with so small a number" - Kent is aware the King is losing power**
- **"all that follow their noses are led by their eyes but blind men, and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking" - Lear's power is rotting and men are leaving him**
- **use of imperatives "fetch me a better answer"**
- **Lear's mental disturbance shown; repeated use of questions and then responding to his own questions**
- **Gloucester uses a very patronising tone "Well, my good lord, I have informed them so"**
- **Lear still speaking in verse - shows some kind of control**
- **but undermined by the shouting, interruptions, questions**
- **"go tell the Duke... come forth and hear me" - imperatives**
- "down wantons down" p245 - Lear has left things too late
- animal imagery again - "most serpent like" page 248
- **"Your nimble lightnings, dart your binding flames into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty, you fen-sucked fogs, drawn by the powerful sun to a and blister!"** Lear uses nature as a force of evil
- the isolation of the word "thine" makes it very informal
- **"who put my man i'the stocks" - line 371 repeated on 388 "How come my man i'the stocks" question in what happened to Kent but his question goes unanswered**
- using class to insult "varlet"
- **"are not ashamed to look upon this beard" - the idea that Lear is owed respect because he is an older male - like later on when Gloucester has his beard hair plucked out in his own home this is very derogatory**
- repetition of "return to her" in Lear's speech page 252
- **Lear is dominant because he has the majority of the lines**, Regan being passive aggressive but line 420 pipes up, line 245 and line 438 "I gave you all" Lear is under attack, tag team between Lear and Regan
- **"to wage against the enmity o'th' air" - nature as an enemy, not very mother nature like**
- **Lear is infantilised because he is being disciplined**
- **natural/unnatural - "our basest beggars... allow not more what nature needs" feels as if he is treated in an unnatural manner - unnatural behaviour results in disorder**
- **"women's weapons, water drops" feminine thing to cry but shows he is vulnerable**

Goneril and Regan are ruthlessly in control. They have gained ground dramatically in Act 2 and have seized the initiative. Lear has been forced to confront the truth about his daughters and to face the folly of his decision.

Go on thinking about what makes this extract dramatically exciting. Here are a few ideas for you to think about:

1. It deals with the archetypal situation of power passing from the old to the young.
2. It taps into male anxiety about powerful women (see Kathleen Mcluskie's essay on "The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and King Lear" 1985 in the New Macmillan Casebook.
3. It has an extraordinary momentum as Goneril and Regan with practised efficiency, make every word count and force Lear to face the logic of their position.

- while characters dissembling madness feature, so does the idea that madmen lack hypocrisy and speak the truth - ironic
- When Lear rants about worldly hypocrisy whereby 'robes and furred gowns' of men of authority hide 'great vices', Edgar remarks, 'O matter and impertinency mixed,/ Reason in madness'
- Lear's speech indicates, the madness of the world, rather than of the individual, is the greatest evil - Tyron
- lot of people pretended to beg - draconic laws meant no begging - only allowed to beg if you were 'demonstrously unfortunate'

Theatre of the Absurd Act 4

the human situation is essentially **absurd**, devoid of purpose.

pessimistic vision of humanity struggling vainly to find a purpose and to control its fate

little dramatic action

Language in an Absurdist play is often dislocated, full of cliches, puns, repetitions, and non sequiturs

Shakespeare or end game - Jan Kott, Lear gave birth to absurdist theatre

theme of disorder is very absurdist

World War II was the catalyst that finally brought the Theatre of the Absurd to life.

the meaningless of man's existence, men were unemployed after the war

commercialisation

the holocaust, minority groups that suffered

the actions that Lear takes leads to a meaningless and pessimistic life

Influences:

William Allen - Mayor of London who was treated very poorly by daughters after dividing wealth among them.

Lawsuit where the eldest of three sisters attempted to get father (Sir Brian Annesley) declared as insane to possess property - Annesley's youngest daughter Cordelia successfully defended her father against her sister.

Women and Patriarchy:

Lear shows assertive, powerful and impressive female characters.

Ultimate subservience evident at end of play as all three sisters lie dead.

Women's rights restricted legally, socially and economically

Husbands/ fathers had absolute authority over women

Key Quotes:

- **"unburdened crawl towards death"**

relinquishing the crown=undutiful, sees the crown as an unwanted burden

highlights the transgression from power to weakness

expecting that he his ageing

- **"why brand they us with base"**

rejecting his upbringing as bastard - trying to empty the meaning of 'base', fighting for his status

base= unvirtuous, undignified, rude

brand = branding of sheep, cattle, his entire life

- **"who is it that can tell me who I am"**

fragmented identity, loss of Cordelia=loss of himself, first hint of madness

- **"Lear's shadow"**

brutal honesty - he has become a reduction of himself

Fool answering Lear's question or Fool is Lear's shadow

- **"I did her wrong"**