

# "The Eye of Anguish": Images of Cordelia in the Long Eighteenth Century

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## Abstract

Nahum Tate's version of *King Lear*, the version that defined stage productions during the long eighteenth century, transformed Shakespeare's Cordelia from a figure who could contain the definitions of both dutiful daughter and Christ militant into a romantic and sentimental heroine circumscribed by contemporary conventions of ladylike behavior and filial relation. More varied interpretation was provided by representations in other media: paintings as well as prints designed to illustrate editions of Shakespeare's plays. The variety of available artistic modes — conversation piece, portrait, history painting — provided a range of different ways, from the sentimental and domestic to the sublime, of comprehending Cordelia, juxtaposing a passive and grief-stricken feminine piety with an energized, though emotional, feminine agency. These competing versions of Shakespeare's heroine — interacting, influencing, commenting on each other — discover a complex fidelity that the stage version could not.

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## Framing Cordelia

After 4.1, in which Edgar discovers his blinded father and begins the journey to Dover, and 4.2, in which Goneril pivots from her dalliance with Edmund to her disgust with her husband, 4.3 comes as a scene without plot function (although providing a politic excuse for what would be the impolitic presence of the King of France at the head of an invading army).<sup>1</sup> Two speakers, each with part of a story, set before us pictures of Cordelia and then Lear that anticipate what we will be shown in the scenes immediately following: Cordelia's concern and love in 4.4, Lear's madness in 4.6, and their reunion in 4.7. Eighteenth-century productions, in opposition to the editorial judgments of Pope and Johnson, cut this apparently inessential scene, even as they added other "Restorations from Shakespeare." Perhaps the tendency of Garrick and other actor-managers to swell Lear's role by cutting the lines of the supporting players accounts for the excision.

But there may have been other reasons, having to do with the complexity of the Cordelia described here. In this scene, one of King Lear's anonymous "Gentlemen," his elevated language

set off by Kent's spare questioning, describes a scene of reading: the private spectacle of Cordelia, now returned as Queen of France at the head of an avenging army, reading letters relating her father's condition and her sisters' crimes against him:

*Gent.* . . . [S]he took them, read them in my presence;  
And now and then an ample tear trill'd down  
Her delicate cheek: it seem'd, she was a queen  
Over her passion; who, most rebel-like,  
Sought to be king o'er her.

*Kent.* O, then it mov'd her.

*Gent.* Not to a rage: patience and sorrow strove  
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen  
Sunshine and rain at once: her smiles and tears  
Were like a better day. Those happy smiles  
That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know  
What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence  
As pearls from diamonds dropt. (Johnson 1778, 4.3)

This depiction of Cordelia's sensibility and filial piety, defined through the high emotion of the gentleman's Petrarchan, but de-eroticized imagery, was thus lost from the play. Indeed, valuing these elements and recognizing their loss, Francis Gentleman, the editor of Bell's 1773 text of Garrick's performance edition, adds a substantial part of the description of Cordelia's tears, with the justification that "Cordelia's concern for her father is so delightfully depicted, that we must present our readers with the striking part of it" (Garrick 1981, 365 n.78).

The complicating, and indeed, competing image of the good daughter Cordelia as a powerful queen subduing a male rebel, even merely the personified *passion*, was perhaps discomfiting to the eighteenth-century audience. In fact, that image of the queen subduing the rebel who would be king is *not* a part of the bonus passage Bell's editor provides. But removal of this scene also softened the outlines of what could have been construed as Cordelia's anger. Kent's statement, "O, then it mov'd her" (in some editions, including Bell's, punctuated with a question mark) is clearly answered in the negative. To be "mov'd" encroaches on forbidden territories of unfeminine emotion that the gentleman's subsequent representation of Cordelia's speech elides:

*Kent.* Made she no verbal question?

*Gent.* Yes; once, or twice, she heav'd the name of father  
Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;

*Cry'd, Sisters! sisters! — Shame of ladies! sisters!  
 Kent! father! sisters! What? i' the storm? i' the night?  
 Let pity not be believed! — There she shook  
 The holy water from her heavenly eyes,  
 And clamour moisten'd her: then away she started  
 To deal with grief alone. (4.3; emphasis in original)*

The "clamour" of Cordelia's words is muted and sanctified by the gentleman's depiction. She speaks, or more properly is ventriloquized, only to be interpreted.

It is interesting, then, that even a scene that keeps Cordelia off stage until she can be represented and construed presents dimensions of the character that complicate the vision of the pious and victimized daughter. In Shakespeare's subsequent scene, also eliminated by Tate, Cordelia issues *commands* for the pursuit of her mad father: "A century send forth; / Search every acre in the high-grown field, / And bring him to our eye." In response, the Doctor prescribes simples, "whose power / Will close the eye of anguish" (4.4). That eye of anguish, of course, belongs to the father, whose "ungovern'd rage" (4.4), suffering, and guilt prevent him from seeing his own faithful daughter. Excised from the play during the eighteenth century, that eye of anguish might serve as an apt image for the re-shapings — the revisions — of Cordelia throughout the period. Shakespeare's Cordelia, defined both as the dutiful daughter on whose "kind nursery" (1.1) Lear can depend and as a figure of Christ militant ("O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about" [Shakespeare 1997, 4.4.24-25, 27-30]), contains within herself more complexity than Tate, his dramatic heirs, and their audiences would comprehend. That eye of anguish might also stand as an image of Cordelia herself, encapsulating her double status as seeing subject and suffering object. The ghostly nature of these passages, specifically their simultaneous textual erasure and marginal re-inscription, captures the way in which Cordelia simultaneously is defined by and manages to evade the nationalist type of the dutiful daughter. Cordelia's stage presence throughout the long eighteenth century was apparently circumscribed by contemporary conventions of ladylike behavior and filial relation. At the same time, however, more varied interpretation was provided by representations in other media: paintings as well as prints designed to illustrate editions of Shakespeare's plays. In these visual images, a passive and grief-stricken feminine piety and an energized, though emotional, feminine agency are juxtaposed. These competing versions of Shakespeare's heroine — interacting, influencing, commenting on each other — discovered a complex fidelity that the stage version could not.

### Britain's Daughter

With the anointing of Shakespeare as national poet in eighteenth-century England, his plays took on a significance modified by the nation's changing political needs. In the eighteenth century, the family served as an icon of the state, representations of its relationships and changing definitions reflecting political and cultural tensions. In the 1770s and 1780s, as Harriet Guest puts it, there was "a new emphasis on the values of the private, domestic, and familial" with, for example, George III's "representation of himself as a paternal authority, governing the nation through bonds of affection that extend[ed] his private and familial role into his relation to his subjects and his colonies" (Guest 2000, 159). In the 1790s, of course, the family became a particularly contested image of the nation through which political relationships, indeed the national identity, were worked out in novels and on stage. Within the family, the daughter occupied a highly charged position at a time during which, in Linda Colley's words, "women first had to come to terms with the demands and meaning of Britishness" (Colley 1992, 281). The daughter's plot, revolving around her relationship to parental and especially paternal authority, defined a larger relationship to God and king. Her obedience to the father's law suggested either dreadful conformity or sacred duty; her rebellion enacted either individual courage and social renovation or moral and social chaos. And as Jean I. Marsden has argued, shifts in political mythology can be clearly seen in the re-definition of Shakespeare's daughter figures: "the dutiful daughter [became] the pattern of national honour . . . responsible for the honour and peace of the nation" (Marsden 1998, 20).

The increasing cultural significance of Cordelia can be discerned in the multiplication of her image. While Lear's mad scene in the storm was a favorite subject for illustration throughout the century, images increasingly depicted the Lear/Cordelia plot: Cordelia's expulsion from the court, Lear's awakening to find her restored to him, Lear and Cordelia in prison, and Lear carrying the body of the dead Cordelia. The awakening and the final scene were, of course, never played on stage during the century. Janet Bottoms has pointed out that elocution texts for boys and girls exemplified this shift in interest: while William Enfield's *The Speaker* (1774) included Lear's "Blow, winds" speech, *The Female Reader* (1789) "included three 'pathetic pieces' from the play, two of them focusing on Cordelia" (Bottoms 2002, 108). As Richard Altick suggests, "Popular taste . . . had decisively shifted away from the sublimity of storms . . . to the pathos of the heroine who is at once victimized by, and unshakably devoted to, an ungrateful father. . . . As far as most artists were concerned, this was her play" (Altick 1985, 310-11).

Perhaps as a consequence of the political and social turbulence exacerbated by the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars that followed, and the recurrent incapacity of King George, fictional and stage adaptations of *King Lear* proliferated at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Even in that context, the definition of Cordelia was a contested one. Charles and Mary Lamb's 1807

*Tales from Shakespeare* describes Goneril and Regan as "monsters of ingratitude," against whom Cordelia's "innocence and piety" shine as "an illustrious example of female duty" (Lamb and Lamb 1979, 161-62). The Lambs' version acknowledges that Cordelia's refusal to speak "did sound a little ungracious," but any hint of rebelliousness is erased from their prose narrative through the claim of how "extravagantly" she loved and her desire to "put her affection out of suspicion of mercenary ends" (146). But other adaptations acknowledged the narrative of the daughter's rebellion. As Diane Long Hoeveler has noted, Amelia Opie's 1801 novella, *The Father and Daughter, A Tale in Prose* presented a fallen Cordelia and itself sparked further adaptations: *Agnese di Fitz-Henry*, an opera by Ferdinando Paër, and two stage versions, Marie Thérèse Kemble's *Tears and Smiles* (1815) and Thomas Moncrieff's *The Lear of Private Life* (1820). These domesticated versions of *Lear*, Hoeveler argues, provided a stylized display of suffering that defined a "universalized humanity": "Citizens of Britain were able to recognize their shared humanity — their shared 'Britishness' — only when they could see demonstrated intense guilt about failed filial duty, extreme shame about sexual licence, and hyperbolic grief about causing madness in one's family members" (Hoeveler 2009, 172). Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) stands as yet another adaptation, an exploration of the daughter's resistance to paternal tyranny (Ford 2002) or a condition-of-England novel "that foregrounds the threats the new generation poses to the estate and the state" (Calvo 2005, 91).

### Tate's *Lear* and its Revisions on Stage

Long before the flurry of adaptations at the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, another adaptation had defined Cordelia for the eighteenth-century stage. Nahum Tate's 1681 revision of Shakespeare's play had attempted to align "a Heap of Jewels, unstrung and unpolisht" into a production of more "Regularity and Probability" (Tate 1997, 295). To do so, Tate "improved" Shakespeare's verse, eliminated the Fool, and restored the happy ending of Shakespeare's source, *Leir and His Three Daughters*. On the way to that comic conclusion of Lear's reinstatement and reunion with the triumphant Cordelia, and in order to provide a "Probable" (295) motive for her refusal to speak her love for her father, who, in Tate's revision, would compel her to marry Burgundy, Tate added a love interest for Cordelia in the form of Edgar, Gloucester's "Rebel Son" (1.1.120).

Tate's alteration, intriguingly, offered more Cordelia than did Shakespeare's text, but in a conventionally feminine mode. As Frances Gentleman pointed out, "The great defect of Shakespeare's Cordelia is that she makes too inconsiderable a figure; is too seldom in view, and has not matter for a capital actress to display extensive talents in" (Gentleman 1770, 360). The Folio gives her only 115 lines, the Quarto 89 — fewer lines than Edgar, Kent, Gloucester, Edmund, the

Fool, Goneril, Regan, or Albany (King 1992, 223-26). By eliminating Cordelia's exile and marriage to France, Tate not only kept Cordelia in England, where she could roam around the heath subject to the attack of ruffians, but also followed father and daughter into the prison. Tate's version increased Cordelia's part to 210 lines (plus 26 lines in the Epilogue), making her role more equal to those of the other characters. After this expansion, later versions such as Garrick's and Colman's, in the general push to magnify the role of Lear, did curtail some of Cordelia's lines.

Unsurprisingly, the Cordelia depicted most often engendered pathos through her submissiveness and passive goodness. According to Francis Gentleman, "Cordelia is most amiable in principles and should be so in features and figure. There is no great occasion for strength of countenance nor brilliancy of eyes; she appears designed rather for a soft, than sprightly beauty; yet considerable sensibility, both of look and expression, is essential" (Garrick 1981, 307 n. 41). Gentleman's judgment indicates a shift from the heroine as Shakespeare defines her to the sentimental heroine made over at the hands of eighteenth-century stylists. In Shakespeare's play, Cordelia leads armies, an active, salvific role: "O dear father, / It is thy business that I go about; / . . . / No blown ambition doth our arms incite, / But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right" (Shakespeare 1997, 4.4.24-25, 27-30). In the Tate, Garrick, and Kemble versions, however, Cordelia's feminine powerlessness is valorized: "[A]s I may / With women's weapons, piety and prayers, / I'll aid his cause" (Garrick 5.1.73-75). Kemble's promptbooks define a Cordelia who "*throws herself at King Lear's feet*" in 1.2, kneels to Gloucester to entreat his care for her father in 3.2, and in the play's final scene successively "faints in [Edgar's] arms," "meets [the King] . . . , & throws herself at his feet," and finally is led by the King "into the centre of the stage — Edgar flies to meet her — they both kneel at the king's feet" (Kemble 1974; emphasis in original). This repository of the national honor is defined in terms of passive and feminine piety and prayers. In Thomas Davies's eyes, "[S]uch an example as Cordelia, of filial piety, except perhaps in the Grecian stage [in the role of Antigone], is not to be found in dramatic poetry" (Davies 1784, 2:329).

Tate's pleasingly feminine and submissive heroine solved one of the main problems of Shakespeare's play for some of the eighteenth-century audience. When Colman's production, restoring some of Shakespeare's play, eliminated the Cordelia/Edgar love plot, it deprived Cordelia, for viewers like Gentleman, of her only virtuous motive in refusing her father, thus "preserv[ing] that unjustifiable, cynical roughness, which Shakespeare has stamped upon Cordelia, in the barren, churlish answer she gives her father" (Gentleman 1770, 353). Tate's version of act 3, in which Cordelia kneels to Gloucester to "intreat / Thy succour for a Father and a King / An injur'd Father and an injur'd King" (3.2.66-68), was for Gentleman particularly effective: "Cordelia is prettily introduced, and the sentiments she utters render her extremely amiable . . . her filial duty is

pleasingly displayed" (359). As Peter Womack argues, the eighteenth-century felt uncomfortable with the "silence, opacity, disjunction" — the "transcendence" — of a play based on a sacred rather than secular worldview, and that discomfort was particularly located in the character of Cordelia: "the conventions by which [Cordelia's] role works are partly medieval: Shakespeare's complicated dramatic texture includes the stage image of a saint" (Womack 2002, 101, 104).

The transformation of Cordelia to romantic and sentimental heroine, the dutiful daughter caught in the marriage plot of romantic comedy, seems, for many eighteenth-century readers and viewers, to have been a welcome one. Johnson, of course, famously cast his vote with "the publick" for Cordelia's "victory and felicity," writing that "I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia's death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor" (Johnson 1968, 704). Although in his *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons* James Boaden objected to the "inconsistency and absurdity" of Tate's version, he admitted to the effectiveness of the marriage plot, hinting at the cultural politics of the daughter's redefinition: "though it breaks upon the filial singleness of Cordelia's mind, and the lover takes his turn to reign with the father there, yet female interest should be had for our audiences if it can be admitted without serious injury to the work" (Boaden 1831, 235-36). Henry Fuseli, however, treated such perspectives on Shakespeare's play with scorn:

When Shakespear, to lesson mankind, afflicts innocence and virtue, nor in the latitude of the ravings, crimes, follies, he exposes, can find any reward on this side the grave for them; when to warn fathers against the dotage of predilection, the fury of prejudice, and the destructive consequences of flattery, he destroys the family of *Lear* and wraps *Cordelia* in the storm; one gentle feeler changes her dagger to a husband, and adulterates the simplicity of filial piety with love, and another could not for all the world read the play a second time, till he turned commentator. . . . But could you expect worse from those, who, with the gravity of a Welsh goat, discuss, whether *Lear's* madness was owing to his abdication of power, or the ingratitude of his daughters? (Fuseli 1767, 67-69, note).

Cordelia's plot, her very meaning, is at the center of interpretation of this play.

### From Stage to Page and Canvas

The substitution on the stage of Tate's *Lear* for Shakespeare's was symptomatic of a larger trend. Gary Taylor has argued that, beginning with the Restoration and continuing through the eighteenth century, Shakespeare's plays were mediated and reinvented both through theatrical adaptation and editorial intervention (Taylor 1989, 71). In particular, eighteenth-century

publication of Shakespeare enacted the contest between the powerful physicality and temporality of theatrical representation, on the one hand, and the almost Platonic constructions of the individual imagination, freed from the particularities of actors' voices and bodies, on the other. Alexander Pope, the editor of the 1723-1725 Tonson edition, for example, "set out to rescue Shakespeare from the theatre" (84). As a later eighteenth-century editor, William Warburton, put it, Shakespeare's "Works, left to the Care of Door-keepers and Prompters . . . struggled into Light . . . maimed and mangled" (1747, 1:vii).

This tension between the theatrical and the idealized notion of the play was grounded in a material difference. As Taylor suggests,

Shakespeare's plays had been, throughout the seventeenth century, actions. They happened; they enacted a story temporally; they were acted out by particular persons from beginning to end; they acted upon an audience assembled in a certain place at a certain time. In the eighteenth century they became things; they became, primarily, books. Books are spatial, not temporal; any reader can skip backward or forward, dip in, pull out, pause, repeat. Books can be cut up and rearranged, as time cannot. (108)

However qualified by Lukas Erne's argument that Shakespeare's plays "had a double existence, one on stage and one on the printed page" (Erne 2003, 23), Taylor's narrative expands Erne's contention that "performance tends to speak to the senses, while a printed text activates the intellect" (Taylor 1989, 23).

The urge toward illustration and painting of scenes and characters from Shakespeare's plays was essentially an invention of the eighteenth century and reflected this material shift from the theatrical to the ideal. Although the 1623 folio version of Shakespeare's plays included Martin Droeshout's engraving of Shakespeare as a frontispiece, not until 1709 was an edition of Shakespeare with illustrations of scenes from the plays — Nicholas Rowe's Tonson edition — published. The 100 years following Rowe saw at least twenty illustrated editions of Shakespeare, some including only a selection of the plays or scenes from the plays. Book illustrations of Shakespeare began as depictions of stage performances or, as Don-John Dugas points out, as "what the engraver imagined the plays not in the repertory would have looked like in performance" (Dugas 2006, 145). As the century progressed and as stage productions of Shakespeare multiplied, those illustrations were less tied to representations of the stage. Gravelot's illustrations for Theobald in 1740 exemplified this change: "The works he illustrated he illustrated as literature to be read and not as plays to be visualized on stage" (Ashton 1991, 37). In Colin Franklin's formulation, this is "Shakespeare Domesticated" (Franklin 1991).



Paintings of scenes from Shakespeare seem to undergo a similar transformation. Mid-eighteenth-century paintings by William Hogarth, Francis Hayman, Benjamin Wilson, and Johann Zoffany, disseminated also as prints, were records of specific stage performances — even promotions of those performances. According to Geoffrey Ashton, "[t]he theatrical conversation piece was very largely the creation of David Garrick's insatiable appetite for publicity" (38). Benjamin Wilson's *Mr. Garrick in the Character of King Lear* (1762) is a conversation piece derived from the stage performance, if not from the actual set. Garrick's Lear manages to look simultaneously frail and powerful in his passion or, as Gentleman's note to the play describes him, of "enfeebled dignity" (Garrick 1981, 310, n. 80). According to W. Moelwyn Merchant, "Garrick here is the King enraged and verging upon madness, with a rhetorical gesture, a stance and expression wholly of the theatre" (Merchant 1959, 195). There is no Fool in the scene (as there would not be on stage until 1834), and the figures are arranged at the front with the scenic drop behind them. The felled tree in the foreground, broken by the storm but already hollow, serves as a picturesque correlative for Lear. Storm clouds, lightning above the distant mountain, and winds lifting Lear's regal clothes and hair are elements repeated in later renderings. Stuart Sillars argues, however, that even within this painting, Wilson "mov[es] from the theatre into a fully-realised setting within the convention of Gothic landscape" (2006, 84).

Two later portraits, John Mortimer's head of *Lear* (1776) and William Blake's watercolor *Lear Grasping a Sword* (ca. 1780), move away from stage production. Both present the king as storm-tossed. In Mortimer's portrait, Lear's hair and clothes are in motion, eyes and hand raised into the storm as his words engraved beneath challenge the elements: "Here I stand your Slave! / a poor infirm, weak and despised old man / but yet I call you servile ministers. . . ." Blake's *Lear*, by contrast, embodies Lear's frailty: the king leans on his sword for support, bending his eyes on vacancy. Later painters moved even further away from recording stage performance. Commissioned for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, Benjamin West's history painting *King Lear* (1788-1806) like Benjamin Wilson's painting, focuses on the storm scene. But there's no suggestion of the stage here. The swirl of bodies and fabric as Lear tears off his "lendings" in the tumult of the storm evokes the sublime power and terror both within Lear and without. Artists such as James Barry and Henry Fuseli, influenced by Michelangelo and other Renaissance artists as well as by the valorization of the individual's experience of reading the play, adopted a kind of painting that attempted to capture a sublime or visionary moment in Shakespeare's poetic text. As Fuseli's Aphorism 96 asserted, "The middle moment, the moment of suspense, the crisis, is the moment of importance, big with the past and pregnant with the future" (quoted in Maisak 1996, 62).

In these paintings and illustrations, dramatic language (both Shakespeare's and Tate's), traditions of stage business, and the conventions of painting come together to inform the representation of Shakespeare's characters and scenes. Shakespeare's language, of course, not only gives cues to staging, but also describes landscape in the absence of scenery. Tate's language is particularly appealing to the eighteenth-century theatrical aesthetic. Barbara Murray notices that one of the features of Tate's "overblown" language is his creation of stage pictures or "emotional tableaux . . . in which emotional relationships are made visually clear" (Murray 2001, 163). Murray's example is Tate's act 3, in which Cordelia asks that Gloster

. . . Convey me to his breathless Trunk,  
 With my torn Robes to wrap his hoary Head,  
 With my torn Hair to bind his Hands and Feet,  
 Then with a show'r of Tears  
 To wash his Clay-smear'd Cheeks, and Die beside him. (Tate 1997, 3.2.85-89)

As Murray writes, "Cordelia despairingly creates a Pietà in the mind, a tableau in which special disposition, drapery and distinctive details are to be depicted, and that will be called for in the final act" (2001, 161-62). Indeed, this invocation of and reliance on tableaux as a repetitive structuring device is one of the features of the sentimental drama of the eighteenth century.

Just as such language creates and highlights visual relationships repeated throughout the play, gesture and "points" had a similar pictorial and structuring effect. In the eighteenth century, the practice of pointing defined a speech or scene through certain expected gestures and business. Mrs. Siddons, for example, was urged by Sheridan not to put down her candle in Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene: "it would be thought a presumptuous innovation, as Mrs. Pritchard had always retained it in hers" (Campbell 1834, 135). Points could be repeated from one production to another as well as within a performance. According to William B. Worthen, "[t]he formal point voiced and structured a moment of intense emotion, coordinating the passions of actor, character, and spectator" (Worthen 1984, 72). That emphasis on the moment seems to be another version of "freeing" the play from its linear definition. Indeed, Christopher Baugh argues for a connection between such stage protocols and the illustration and painting of Shakespeare's plays: "audiences would eagerly await such crucial stage business . . . as they might the well-known speeches. Actors' 'points' began to provide the easel painter with an iconography of Shakespeare that was more potent than the poetry itself" (Baugh 2003, 30).

While one dramatic performance might imitate another, painting too drew on the practice of imitation. Paintings such as Wilson's *Mr. Garrick in the Character of King Lear* or Van Bleeck's

*Mrs. Cibber as Cordelia* clearly owe their genesis to stage production; other artists relied more on the traditions of their own medium. As William L. Pressly suggests, even in painting Shakespeare, "the theory of imitation taught by the art academies encouraged artists to build on the works of past masters" (Pressly 1993, 10). Winifred Friedman has observed that in the paintings of the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery painting, rather than theater, was the model: "there was only the slightest and most occasional reflection of actual stage production. . . . For the most part, it was history painting as produced by the Old Masters which obsessed or oppressed the Boydell artists" (Friedman 1976, 20). A reviewer from *The Public Advertiser* (6 May 1789) even congratulated the enterprise for avoiding the representation of stage pictures: "There was some reason to fear that our painters would have sought for and gathered their ideas from the theatre, and given us portraits of the well-dressed Ladies and Gentlemen. . . . But this has been avoided; the pictures in general give a mirror of the poet" (quoted in Friedman 1976, 75). Book illustration, too, was often — and curiously, in the case of Bell's performance editions — divorced from theater. As Ashton points out, Gravelot's images for Theobald's 1740 edition "are by an artist who might never have been to the theatre, and are in the full-flush tradition of early eighteenth century French book illustrations" (Ashton 1991, 37). And just as stage practice defined "points" for an actor that might become part of a tradition passed from one production to another, so many of the depictions of Lear and Cordelia reflect the history not only of stage production, but also of previous painted or engraved images.

Over the course of the eighteenth century, painting Shakespeare became a publicly defined project of nationalistic, artistic, and commercial import. In 1786, Alderman Joseph Boydell proposed and within three years opened his Shakspeare Gallery in Pall-Mall, an undertaking which aimed to create a new school of English history painting inspired by Shakespeare, England's national poet. The high-relief sculpture in front of Boydell's gallery (now in the Great Garden behind New Place in Stratford-upon-Avon) places Shakespeare on a rock that, at least in the engraving, mimics the shape of England, between the figures of Poetry, wearing the masks of both comedy and tragedy, and Painting. Shakespeare listens to Poetry "with Pleasure and Attention" as she "celebrates his Praise on her Lyre," but his left hand rests on Painting. As the "List of the Large Plates" explains, "Painting . . . is addressing the Spectator, with one Hand extended towards SHAKSPEARE's Breast, pointing him out as the proper Object of her Pencil, while he places his Left-hand on her Shoulder, as if accepting her Assistance" (Santaniello 1968). Until Boydell's Shakspeare Gallery folded in 1805, paintings were commissioned and displayed, and engraved prints were sold in a variety of forms: individually, in folio collections, or bound with the texts of the plays. A number of similar ventures followed: Thomas Macklin's Poet's Gallery (1787), Henry Fuseli's Milton Gallery (1799), and James Woodmason's Irish Shakespeare Gallery (1793), which

transferred to London in 1794 as the New Shakespeare Gallery (Pressly 1993; Ashton 1991, 39). Eighteenth-century painting of Shakespeare was a lively endeavor.

Not everyone, of course, was enthusiastic about the proliferation of visual representation. Just as he was resistant to the power of theater to fetter one's imaginative figurings of Shakespeare's characters, Charles Lamb also objected to the confining power of painting as well as to the way that painting, quite explicitly in the Boydell project, appropriated Shakespeare to its own designs:

What injury (short of the theatres) did not Boydell's Shakspeare Gallery do me with Shakspeare? To have Opie's Shakspeare, Northcote's Shakspeare, light-headed Fuseli's Shakspeare, heavy-handed Romney's Shakspeare, wooden-headed West's Shakspeare (tho' he did the best in Lear), deaf-headed Reynolds's Shakspeare, instead of my, and every body's Shakspeare. To be tied down to an authentic face of Juliet! To have Imogen's portrait! To confine the illimitable! (quoted in Shawe-Taylor 2003, 115)

But in fact, the variety of artistic modes — conversation piece, portrait, history painting, book illustration — provided a range of ways, from the sentimental and domestic to the sublime, of comprehending Shakespeare's characters, including Cordelia.

Given this national, theatrical, and artistic context, the definition of Cordelia, the heroine of Shakespeare's bleakest national tragedy, is particularly vexed, burdened with often conflicting meanings. As Tate's revision transformed her on the stage from a tragic to a sentimental heroine, paintings and illustrations partook of both of those identities. But the power of that tradition was by no means unitary — though someone like Charles Lamb, for instance, might fear its force. Although certainly many images depicted the Cordelia defined on the eighteenth-century stage, what also emerges is a Cordelia whose visual presence is often more complex than that stage presence. While portraits (most often with some relation to the theater) tend to define Cordelia as a patient and pathetic suppliant, other images capture more of her energy and agency. The expulsion scene can present an active and resistant, though arguably fallen, Cordelia. While in the awakening and prison scenes, some artists emphasize the sweetly dutiful daughter, others depict a more powerful figure in contrast to a frail and diminished father. Even in scenes of her death, Cordelia's symbolic power can suggest her heroic stature.

### "Poor perdu"

Many of the images of Cordelia, especially those derived from stage production, depicted a figure whose power was in her pathos, the soft heroine of sensibility that Gentleman described. Pieter van Bleeck's *Mrs. Cibber as Cordelia* (1755), like Wilson's painting of Garrick's Lear,

envisions a moment from a stage performance in which Cordelia, out in the storm in search of her father, is attacked by Edmund's ruffians and rescued by the disguised Edgar, a scene, of course, from Tate. Although the lightning, clouds, and uneven ground suggest an imagined terrain, the arrangement and gestures of the figures are derived from the stage. Cordelia, dressed in blue and white, a depiction which becomes conventional, is here the sentimental and threatened heroine, holding onto her maid Arante for support. Mary Nash suggests that this posture is characteristic of the actress: "the figure of Susanna Cibber suggests her melting style. She is always touching, or reaching out for, or being supported by some other player" (Nash 1977, 246).

This definition of Cordelia as a powerless or supplicating heroine of sensibility is emphasized in two portraits, one by Angelica Kauffman and the other by Thomas Wageman. In Kauffman's image, Cordelia kneels alone in a picturesque landscape, hair unbound and waving, arms beseeching. Her storm-tossed hair is a more restrained version of her father's; this Cordelia is not permitted the liberty of madness, or even passion. She can only wait and pray. Wageman's portrait of *Mrs. W. West as Cordelia* (1820) depicts an even softer, more powerless version. Lightly veiled, also with unbound hair, her hands and eyes raised in prayer, this Cordelia too is defined in terms of pious simplicity. Wageman's heroine simultaneously projects out of and is contained by the border, the portrait's three-quarter length and the tight framing preventing any hint of mobility. Such a passive definition seems to have been difficult to overcome, especially in portraits. Edward Francis Burney's apparent attempt at a more martial heroine, *Miss Brunton in Cordelia*, is unsuccessful: Cordelia, though wearing military plumes, standing before tents and over text signifying her military role, looks less like a warrior than a fashionable lady wondering which way to turn. Perhaps the title of this engraving suggests its real interest — more in Miss Brunton (who had not yet played the role) than in Lear's tender or untender daughter.

### "More ponderous than my tongue"

But despite the definition of Cordelia as passive and sentimental heroine, paintings and illustrations suggest not only the pious daughter, but also the strength and even the active energy of that piety. The expulsion scene is largely defined by Lear's power and Cordelia's resisting silence, perhaps a condition most easily interpreted as passivity. Two paintings, and I would argue two *related* paintings, of this scene vividly suggest a part of the range of possibilities. The unattributed *Cordelia Championed by the Earl of Kent* (1770-1780), which Richard Altick suggests "seems to have originated in a theatrical performance" (Altick 1985, 311 n.), depicts the pious and passive daughter, kin to the Cordelia of the portraits. Cordelia's body, clothed in white and blue, is oriented toward the front of the painting, but she turns at the waist back toward her father, head bent, eyes

lowered, hands clasped at her heart. The narrative dynamics swirl apart from her. Slightly right of center, in a region defined by its red tones, are Lear (reaching for his sword), two male courtiers (possibly Albany and Cornwall), and Lear's other daughters. The figures of Cordelia and Kent are balanced against them, with two dogs, quietly attentive symbols of fidelity, watching the dramatic scene. As the visual energy moves between Lear and Kent, whose upraised hand intercepts the king's glare, Cordelia is almost edged out of the painting. Despite her marginal position, however, the bright purity of her coloring, in contrast to the reds of the rest of the painting, draws the eye. Her piety and submission become an alternate focal point, set against the male passions of the rest of the painting.

Fuseli's *King Lear Casting Out His Daughter Cordelia* (1785-1790), commissioned for Boydell's Shakspeare Gallery and at 8.5 x 12 feet its largest canvas (Maisak 1996, 66), transforms this scene into an image of the sublime power of Lear's repudiation of his daughter. Fuseli's Cordelia is likewise a more substantial and more active emotional presence. As if underscoring the difference in his vision, Fuseli retains from the earlier painting the throne and curtains, the outlines of Lear's face, and the position of Cordelia's body. He moves his energetic and tyrannical Lear to the exact center of the painting. Kent's role in restraining Lear, as opposed to the histrionic gesture of the previous painting, is physical and emotional, his redemptive and heroic function, Sillars suggests, indicated by the folds of his cloak (Sillars 2006, 126). The force of Lear's curse, as expressed in the energy of his pointing finger, seems almost to push Cordelia back into the arms of an attendant while an adjacent dog, another visual echo of the previous painting, seeks comfort. But rather than bowing in the face of injustice, Fuseli's Cordelia turns away from conventional solace and back toward Lear with eyes of gentleness, love, and perhaps, as Petra Maisak suggests, pride (Maisak 1996, 67). Although the emotional content of this scene is highlighted, Fuseli also implies its political significance: the train of Cordelia's robe flows into the map of the kingdom, on which Lear tramples. This resistant and dutiful daughter signifies Britain.

The power and monumentality of Fuseli's vision, however, were not universally admired. Humphry Repton, in his catalogue to the Shakespeare Gallery, termed Fuseli's painting "one of the boldest effusions of a daring pencil," but also expressed reservations: "Shakespeare makes [Cordelia] bear her fate in silence; therefore the violence here is not warranted by the text. But there is an enthusiastic ardour in this astonishing Artist, which, while it delights, will sometimes 'o'erstep the modest bounds of nature'" (Repton 1789, 48). Ludwig Tieck saw an "affected and mannered" demonstration of "academic mastery" rather than poetic or psychological truth, objecting not only to Fuseli's depiction of Lear as an enraged giant "with no trace of the weak and childish old man as described by the poet," but also to his Cordelia: "Cordelia, whom the poet describes as meek

and loving, is the basest creature in this assembly" (quoted in Maisak 1996, 68). Perhaps the very substance of Cordelia's body, as well as the directness of her gaze back at her father, troubled Tieck. An article in the *Analytical Review*, which Sillars attributes to Fuseli, seems to anticipate the discomfort of his viewers at this conception of the pious daughter:

Goneril and Regan, with unblushing fronts, stand erect; but we own we expected to see the gentle Cordelia with down cast eyes, shrinking from the anger which terrified, even while it wounded, her ingenuous mind. The contempt which the hypocrisy of her sisters inspired, might naturally dictate her answer; but, at the moment the painter has chosen, she may be supposed to be overwhelmed with fear and tender compassion, for her still dear but mistaken father. (quoted in Sillars 2006, 128-29)

Fuseli imagines and captures the pregnant moment, but its palpability is too gross for an audience wanting a more spiritual and conventional heroine.

Two other treatments of 1.1 narrow to the domestic, but even so they suggest a Cordelia who is more than simply pathetic. In Smirke's painting of the end of this scene, Cordelia takes leave of her sisters and their husbands. Though she is gently assisted by France, who holds her fingertips in his hand, she depends on her own power rather than his support. Smirke's composition, as the two move away from the static group of sisters and husbands, recalls the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden. That precedent image might even hint that Cordelia is somehow fallen, a disobedient daughter, however virtuous. Gardiner's 1798 engraving shows a Cordelia without France (and with a rather oddly drawn arm pointing her way). Through her energy, light, and bulk — achieved through traveling cloaks and hat — she dominates the twined and recessed sisters she leaves behind.

### "A soul in bliss"

Lear's awakening to discover his forgiving daughter was a favorite scene both in terms of representation and performance, most probably because of its appeal to sentiment. Garrick's production began act 5 with lines from Tate, as Cordelia and attendants watch "Lear asleep on a Couch": "His sleep is sound and may have good effect / To cure his jarring senses and repair / This breach of nature" (Garrick 1981, 5.1.1-3). According to Francis Gentleman's note, "in this short scene, where Lear appears so much enfeebled, both in mind and body, that mind and limbs scarce appear of any use, there are some as fine strokes for a good actor to lay hold of a feeling audience by, as any in the play" (Garrick 1981, 376 n.). Two main issues determine the impact of the scene: how enfeebled the father-king is and how powerful the daughter. In Gravelot's rococo 1740 engraving

to Theobald's edition (see Figure 1), the king's significance is not threatened by the daughter. Lear, debilitated but still enthroned, is the focal point. Though Cordelia protectively moves to encircle him with her arms, she is one among several figures involved in a similar motion. Cordelia here almost merges into the group of courtiers that surround Lear. Blake's watercolor *Cordelia and the Sleeping Lear* (ca. 1780) intensifies this encircling motion, but uses it to somewhat different effect. Lear's head and arm rest directly upon his daughter's lap, his profound slumber contrasting with her sorrowful face. The lines of hair and arm move the eye around the oval in a way that creates participation in this intimate scene. Although Cordelia is on top, because of that movement, neither Cordelia nor Lear is the focal point, neither dominant. Blake's image of father and daughter is really about the emotional character of that relationship and the viewer's engagement in it.

Fuseli's *Lear Awakens to Find Cordelia Beside His Bed* (1784), known only from an engraving, explores a very different kind of emotion. Fuseli invests the moment of awakening with an electric and erotic charge and returns the power to Lear. Lear's body, extended along his couch, rises and twists so that his face approaches from above the kneeling Cordelia, his hand extended to cover hers. The two figures almost merge in an area of light that defines the painting's focus. Illness and madness seemingly forgotten, he is powerful and energetic; she is loving and receptive, her lower position and kneeling posture suggesting a happy submission. The visual intersection of Lear's chain and the band around Cordelia's wrist suggests a linkage between the father and daughter that hints even at bondage. While Fuseli's painting restores the image of the father/king's power, its erotics insinuate its troubling character, the daughter's problematic submission.

As if to suggest the attraction of two very different models of womanhood and daughterly care, later images of the awakening scene alternate between Cordelia's pathos and her power. Robert Smirke's *The Awakening of King Lear* (1792) and Benjamin West's *Lear and Cordelia* provide a vivid example of this contrast. In Smirke's painting for Boydell, Cordelia is defined in terms of pathos. The father is a weakened though still kingly Lear, who has awakened in a throne rather than a bed. One hand grips the chair while the other hovers over Cordelia; his eyes stare into the void. Figurally, Cordelia functions to draw the eye back to the seated old man. Visible only in profile, her body leads the eye to Lear's face. Dressed again in blue and white, here recalling even more clearly the colors of the Virgin, her kneeling figure merged with her father's, she is less an individual than the figure of the comforting daughter.

West's painting, by contrast, is all energy, and that energy belongs to Cordelia. Pressly points out that West worked out the construction in two earlier versions but that here the lines "position the viewer in front of Cordelia, whose pose carries the eye from left to right to focus on the distressed old king" (Pressly 1993, 154). Sillars points to the compositional resemblance between



this painting and West's *The Grecian Daughter Defending her Father* as a key to its meaning: "Cordelia is by implication shown as possessing the heroic virtue of loyalty to her father" (Sillars 2006, 186). Cordelia's heroic stature is magnified by Lear's diminution. The weak and pathetic Lear, his flaccid, skeletal hands a metonymy of his condition, seems almost to cower in his chair while Cordelia is foregrounded, brighter and bigger than Lear, gesturing to herself as if in the midst of speech and grasping his hand in passionate and active attachment. Like Smirke's Cordelia, West's also wears white, but the effect is very different: she is also partly in and partly out of a flowing red robe, adding to the passion of the moment — a passion that belongs to Cordelia.

Other later images do capture some of the power of West's Cordelia, but even so that power is subtly modified: Buck's engraving of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons depicts Cordelia kneeling and a Lear, despite his semi-recumbent posture, more powerful and conscious than others. The composition, however, balances the two so that neither dominates, suggesting Mrs. Siddons's characteristic power and equal theatrical status. Her early biographer Thomas Campbell, in fact, pointed out that Mrs. Siddons took on the role of Cordelia only "for the benefit of her brother" (Campbell 1834, 119), and Thomas Dutton declared that she did not suit it: "For the representative of the lovely *Cordelia*, Mrs. Siddons is much too old, *matron-like*, and weather-beaten" (Dutton 1801, 74; emphasis in original), though perhaps what Dutton is getting at is an absence of girlishness. While in Buck's image Cordelia seems to be speaking, the caption gives Lear's lines: "I think that Lady, / To be my child Cordelia." This elaboration stresses the paternal recognition of the daughter, shifting the power subtly back to the father. John Thurston's image of Lear's awakening shows a more conventionally feminine Cordelia, but the composition focuses on her strength. She supports the supine and sleeping Lear, holding him to her. The glimpse of ermine on Lear's collar is a reminder of his kingliness, but Cordelia's arms, her body contain it. Beneath her feet, in a monumental-looking space, are Cordelia's lines praying for her father's "restoration." Cordelia, with "medicine on her lips," is here defined as a gentle, nurturing, life-giving figure (Shakespeare 1997, 4.7.26, 27).

Two final versions significantly weaken the image of Cordelia. Corbould's engraving features a Cordelia watching over her father with daughterly concern. The king, wrapped in his ermine robes, sleeps; Cordelia, though seated on his couch, does not touch him or even move into the space defined as his by the painting. Further, the figure of the doctor, more prominent than in any of the other images, stands above Lear, as if presiding, at the top of the image's pyramidal composition. Beneath the image are engraved the lines from Tate's version: "His sleep is sound and may have good effect to cure his jarring senses." Cordelia here is defined by watchful passivity. Wright's version returns to the submissive Cordelia depicted by Smirke. But while

Smirke's Cordelia embraced her father from a kneeling position, Wright's Cordelia, with a Lear who seems even more shattered and lost, kneels over her father's hand, bathing it with her tears. This Cordelia is a perfect type of sweetly submissive filial devotion.

### "Away to prison"

The expulsion and awakening scenes provide occasion for a Cordelia who resists or a Cordelia who nurtures. Such potential for action seems absent from the prison scene, where Cordelia's role calls for her rescue. Images of the prison scene, taken directly from Tate's version (5.6), would seem to define a more passive and pathetic Cordelia. The scene begins with "Lear asleep, with his Head on Cordelia's Lap" while Cordelia wonders, "What Toils, thou wretched king, has Thou endur'd / To make thee draw, in Chains, a Sleep so sound?" (5.6.1-2). When the Captain and the officers enter to kill them, Cordelia calls for help and pleads with the Captain to let her die first. It is Lear who moves in the space of a few speeches from sleep to the energy required to seize the officers' partisans and kill two of them. Jean Marsden notes that in Garrick's version, based on Tate, this scene "provides a vision of majesty restored. No longer pathetic or infirm, this Lear regains his vigour and his role as patriarch by defending his daughter" (Marsden 1998, 23). Kemble's promptbooks describe a Cordelia who "starts up speechless" as the ruffians lay hands on the king and then "[r]uns to the Captain." When Edgar enters, however, she "faints in his arms in the centre of the stage" (Kemble 1974). But interestingly, both images of the prison scene define an active or even dominant vision of the heroine. A 1767 engraving from the *Universal Magazine* depicts a moment from the play "as Perform'd by Mr. Barry & Mrs. Dancer at the Theatre Royal in the Hay Market." Lear, still holding his weapon, supports himself against the prison wall, his body shielding Cordelia from the two officers he has killed, but also setting up a center point on which to balance Cordelia against the officers. Rather than cowering, an exotic-looking Cordelia sits upright in her niche, brandishing a handkerchief with almost a swashing and a martial air. Indeed, she is the most aggressive-looking character in the frame.

Blake's 1779 watercolor depicts the opening moments of the scene. This painting, of course, owes more to the stage than does Blake's *Cordelia and the Sleeping Lear* (Figure 16). Although there is no real opportunity for action here, Cordelia's position is protective and nurturing. She is also more dominant than might be expected: she bends over Lear's prone mass, and her flowing mantle hovers above him, allowing her to occupy horizontal as well as vertical space.

### "Dead as earth"

For images of Cordelia's death, artists turned, of course, back to Shakespeare's play. Although the scene in which Lear entered cradling the dead body of Cordelia was not played on stage until 1823, and then only temporarily, the Cordelia represented on stage might certainly help determine her incarnation on canvas. Visions of this scene could feature some version of Shakespeare's inscrutable and heroic Cordelia or even Tate's sentimental heroine, wandering as if by accident into the wrong plot. And yet, even while depicting Cordelia at the moment she is most a victim, artists could emphasize her symbolic power and very physical presence. James Barry's versions of the scene are both the earliest and among the most interesting. His 1774 *King Lear Mourns the Death of Cordelia* was expanded at the request of Boydell in 1786-1788 as *King Lear Weeping Over the Dead Body of Cordelia*.

For the earlier painting, Barry modeled the positions of Lear and Cordelia after Annibale Carracci's *Pietà* and *Mourning Over the Dead Christ*. Given that allusive composition, Cordelia becomes the salvific (though failed) heroine, Lear the father of sorrows. Soldiers in the background look up at Lear's anguished face, tears on the cheek of the forwardmost. At the center of the painting, Cordelia's body — clad in white, pale gold, and dark blue — has weight.<sup>2</sup> Yet for all its dramatic power, this painting was not derived from the stage. Depending on the viewer's critical perspective, that isolation from the stage either created or undermined the painting's iconic effect. For at least one viewer, a writer for the *Morning Chronicle*, its transcendence of the theatre defined its impact:

A painter of less original genius than Mr. Barry would have made Mr. Garrick his model for Lear and by that method would have played up to the imagination of the public, by making them umpires how far he had succeeded in the *likeness* or not; but Mr. Barry considered Shakespeare as the poet of Nature, who drew his characters without intending them for particular individuals. (quoted in Messina 2003, 61; emphasis in original)

A 1774 review in *The Public Advertiser*, however, cited with outrage what the writer saw as Barry's deviation from Shakespeare's vision:

Had Shakespeare's Ideas been as demoniac and extravagant as Mr. Barry's, we should never have enjoyed those artless Scenes which compose his inimitable Lear. The Artist certainly meant it as a Burlesque: Cordelia represented by a Fat Billingsgate Fish-woman overpowered with Gin, and Lear personated by an old Cloaths-man, or Jew Rabbi picking her pocket. Even this can carry no Idea of the Extravagance of this Production. (quoted in Pressly 1993, 11)

The physicality of Barry's painting did not suit all tastes. The solidity of the bodies — and particularly what Maria Grazia Messina has described as "the slumped abandon" of Cordelia's body (Messina 2003, 74) — cancels the diminutive and feminine ("artless"?) character necessary to the safely beautiful. Barry captures the sublime: Cordelia as Christ without possibility of resurrection in this world.

During the next decade, Barry's massive revision for Boydell depicts a warrior's death, and in this version the national context is more developed. In contrast to the intimacy of the earlier painting, with its focus on the faces of the figures and only a suggestion of stormy sea and sky in the background, in the revised version there is much more within the frame — figures as well as landscape. This new version recalls not only the Pietà, but also heroic paintings like Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe* or John Singleton Copley's *The Death of Major Pierson*. Cordelia is given the stature of a fallen military hero, a soldier in the cause of British identity. The vanquished are represented, but all but disregarded in the face of the larger tragedy: Cordelia is elevated, while the dead Goneril and Regan lie almost underfoot, and Edmund's body is lowered head first out of the painting. Repton admired "[t]he landscape, representing a Camp near Dover, when Druidical Temples might be supposed standing" (1789, 51). The presence of a Stonehenge-like structure in the background, above Cordelia's head, highlights this drama's national significance and Cordelia's connection to it. Sillars suggests that this setting "tighten[s] the link between historical and literary painting and, in locating the scene within a specific temporal plane, simultaneously reveal[s] a contemporary concern for national identity and assert[s] as a part of that identity the universal heroic values of Shakespeare" (Sillars 2006, 92). It also seems to assert the heroic values — heroic in a national sense — of Cordelia.

Even this image of Cordelia as fallen warrior, however, is qualified. Scott Paul Gordon reads Barry's revised version as a "patriot" narrative of the end of monarchy and its replacement by a "fraternal, republican order" represented in the persons of Albany and Edgar, who now occupy the center of the painting (Gordon 2003, 493, 495). Cordelia's body, Gordon argues, "forge[s] bonds between important men," but Cordelia herself is less significant than the nature of those bonds, the revolutionary transfer of political power that the painting celebrates (504, 505).

Book illustrations of this scene cannot achieve the monumental power of Barry's history painting. Richter's 1790 engraving of *Lear Bearing Cordelia*, set within a decorative, Gothic-style ruined arch, reasserts Cordelia's dead and pretty passivity and frames the death as picturesque. This Cordelia is the girlish heroine. Though Lear carries Cordelia's body awkwardly, the disposition of her body is artful, unlike the sprawl of Barry's Cordelia. A third person enters the scene, his hands suggesting surprise or horror, but in this decorative version it is not a horror the viewer can share.

Fuseli's image for an 1805 edition of the plays, however, aims at the sublime. In his fourth Lecture, Fuseli argued that "each individual form to be grand, ought to rise upward in moderate foreshortening, command the horizon, or be in contact with the sky" (quoted in Messina 2003, 63). Lear, alone on a barren promontory, strains under Cordelia's massiveness. Her breasts, her arms, her thighs are weighty, pushing the focus to earth. Lear, however, muscles straining, looks up at the sky, and his cloak floats above. In fact, this image is more about Lear than about Cordelia, as its caption (providing the stage direction and Lear's "Howl! Howl! Howl!") suggests.

Finally, Howard's version returns to the image of the Pietà, referring to Barry's painting for Boydell, but unable to achieve any portion of its power. Lear's hair, the lightning on the distant mountain, and even the suggestion of a Druid temple in the distance recall not only Barry's painting, but picturesque leanings toward sublimity. The static, even orderly, disposition of the figures, and especially of Cordelia's body, however, works against the sublime or even the nationalistic. While the focus is on the conjunction of Cordelia's and Lear's faces, the dead daughter here seems to have been robbed of any larger portent. It is as if Howard's goal is to reproduce the familiar (Barry's imagery), leaving only a diminished version of the pathos the dead heroine might generate.

### "The promised end"

Eighteenth-century stage productions of *Lear* were unable to comprehend a vision in which the good daughter's virtue was not rewarded. Samuel Johnson, of course, held that Cordelia's death was "contrary to the natural ideas of Justice." Not only was Tate's revision, he asserted, validated by its audience's vote of approval, but the effect of such a violation was too shocking to bear (Johnson 1968, 704). Charlotte Lennox argued that "Had *Shakespeare* followed the Historian, he would not have violated the Rules of poetical Justice; he represents Vice punished, and Virtue rewarded; in the Play one Fate overwhelms alike the Innocent and the Guilty, and the Facts in the History are wholly changed to produce Events, neither probable, necessary, nor just" (Lennox 1753, 3:290-91). Thomas Davies agreed about the discomfort produced by Shakespeare's play, seeing it even as dangerous:

If these scenes are really so afflicting to a mind of sensibility in the closet, what would they produce in action? What exquisite grief and unutterable horror would such a painter as Garrick, in the last scene of the play, have raised in the breast of a spectator? Who can endure to look for any considerable time at the agonizing woe in the countenance of Count Ugolino drawn by the inimitable pencil of Reynolds? But were you to produce that subject on the stage, in action, none but a heart of marble could sustain it. (Davies 1784, 2:265-66)

For Davies, painting seems less dangerous because it is more subject to the viewer's control than the less escapable power of the theater. But, in fact, I have not located *any* paintings or illustrations of Tate's happy ending, in which Cordelia and Edgar, rewarded for filial piety with the promise of a crown, "kneel at the king's feet" (Kemble 1974).

Even given the contested definitions of female identity and of family relationships in the long eighteenth century, visual representation of Shakespeare seemed to be able to do what stage performance could not: find a space for Shakespeare's bleaker vision. Marsden argues that the "good daughters" of the eighteenth century "represent the ideal subject: worshipful, obedient and loyal" (Marsden 1998, 29). Perhaps the erasures of stage performance, with its corollary depiction of the receptive Cordelia given as a reward to Edgar ("take her crown'd / The imperial grace fresh blooming on her brow" [Tate 1997]), required an opposite cultural representation: not only the pious and deserving daughter, but Cordelia as the strong, militant, loving, wronged, forgotten, sacrificed subject. The eye of anguish that eighteenth-century theater audiences turned away from the spectacle of the wronged daughter could sometimes be opened in the closet, the library, or the public gallery to discover both her heroism and the enormity of her injuries.

### Notes

1. This essay has developed over a long period of time, and my debts of gratitude are correspondingly large. Georgianna Ziegler and Erin Blake of the Folger Shakespeare Library and Annette Fern of the Harvard Theatre Collection were particularly helpful at the early stages of this project. Members of the 2004 SAA seminar on Comparative Visual Cultures, led by Evelyn Tribble, and Hilary Schor and Paul Saint-Amour, co-directors of "Adaptation and Revision: The Example of *Great Expectations*," a 2007 NEH Summer Seminar, suggested very profitable avenues for investigation. Dorothy Shawhan, Jeanne Addison Roberts, Beverly Moon, Antje Anderson, and Laurie Kaplan not only read and commented on earlier drafts, but also shared my excitement about these images. Christy Desmet provided a careful and challenging reading, as well as most helpful and substantive suggestions for revision. John R. Ford has generously read and reread this essay in its many incarnations with inspiring insight. The author and general editors gratefully acknowledge as well the invaluable assistance of Allison Kellar Lenhardt in locating the rights-holders and obtaining permissions for the images in this essay.
2. The 1774 painting by James Barry is in a private collection. See Permission note for Figure 26 for more information.

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Figure 2. Benjamin Wilson, James McArdell, engraver. *Mr. Garrick in the Character of King Lear*. London 1761. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 3. John Mortimer. *Lear*. From *Shakespeare's Characters*. [London], 15 March 1776. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 4. William Blake. *Lear Grasping a Sword*. ca. 1780. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 5. Benjamin West. *King Lear*. 1788. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 6. Shakespeare between the Dramatic Muse and the Genius of Painting. Stratford-upon-Avon. Property of the author.

Figure 7. Thomas Banks, Benjamin Smith, engraver. *The Alto Relievo in the Front of the Shakespeare Gallery, Pall-Mall. Represents Shakespeare seated between the Dramatic Muse and the Genius of Painting, who is pointing him out as the proper Subject for her pencil*. London. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 8. Pieter Van Bleeck. *Mrs. Cibber as Cordelia*. 1755. Yale Center for British Art.

Figure 9. Angelica Kauffman. *Cordellia*. n.d. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 10. Thomas Charles Wageman. *Mrs. W. West as Cordelia*. In *The New English Drama*, edited by William Oxberry. Volume 10. London, 1820. Harvard Theatre Collection.

Figure 11. Edward Francis Burney. *Miss Brunton in Cordelia*. 29 December 1785. Bell's British Library. London, 1788. Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 12. Anonymous. *Cordelia Championed by the Earl of Kent*. 1770-1780. Yale Center for British Art.

Figure 13. Henry Fuseli. *King Lear Casting Out His Daughter Cordelia*. Engraving. 1 August 1792. In *Dramatic Works of Shakespeare*. London: Boydell, 1803. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 14. Robert Smirke. *Cordelia Departing from the Court*. Engraving. In *Dramatic Works of Shakespeare*. London: Boydell, 1802. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 15. William Nelson Gardiner. *King Lear*. London: Harding, May 1798. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 16. William Blake. *Cordelia and the Sleeping Lear*. ca. 1780. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 17. Henry Fuseli, John Raphael Smith, engraver. *Lear Awakens to Find Cordelia Beside His Bed*. London: Smith, 1784. The Trustees of the British Museum.

Figure 18. Robert Smirke, *The Awakening of King Lear*. 1792. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 19. Benjamin West. *King Lear and Cordelia*. 1793. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 20. Adam Buck. *Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons as Lear and Cordelia*. London: Roach, 1801. Harvard Theatre Collection.

Figure 21. John Thurston. *King Lear: O my dear father . . .* 16 April 1805. In *King Lear*, edited by E. Manley Wood. London: Kearsley, 1806. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 22. Henry Corbould. *King Lear: His sleep is sound . . .* In *King Lear*. London: Longman, 1817. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 23. John Masey Wright. *King Lear: I pray, weep not*. London: n.d. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 24. *King Lear. Act V. Scene the Prison, as Perform'd by Mr. Barry and Mrs. Dancer. The Universal Magazine*, September 1767. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 25. William Blake. *King Lear and Cordelia in Prison*. ca. 1779. Tate Gallery, London.

Figure 26. Archibald Macduff, *King Lear Mourning over the Body of Cordelia*. Etching and aquatint, 1776. Interpretation of the original painting by James Barry, *King Lear Weeping over the Body of Cordelia*, 1774. The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, 2011.

Figure 27. James Barry. *King Lear Weeping Over the Dead Body of Cordelia*. 1786-1788. Tate Gallery, London.

Figure 28. James Richter. *Lear and Cordelia*. 1 April 1790. In *King Lear*. London: Bellamy and Roberts, 1791. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 29. Henry Fuseli. *Enter King Lear Supporting the Dead Body of His Daughter*. In *Plays of William Shakespeare*. Volume 8. London: Rivington, 1805. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 30. Henry Howard. *Lear*. In *King Lear*, edited by Samuel Johnson, George Steevens, and Isaac Reed. London: Longman, 1807. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



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