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Tiffiney C. Baker
University of Nebraska at Lincoln, TiffineyK@hotmail.com

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I am Regan: The Preparation, Performance and Afterthoughts on the Character of Regan in *King Lear*

by

Tiffiney Baker

A THESIS

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The Preparation, Performance and Afterthoughts Concerning the Role of Regan in Shakespeare's *King Lear*

Tiffiney Carol Baker, M.F.A.

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Adviser: Harris Smith

In April of 2009 I was cast as Regan Cornwall in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's main stage production of *King Lear.* Throughout the summer I researched various aspects of the playwright, the play's origins, family dynamics and various other aspects concerning the world of the play in order to gain a clearer understanding of the character. The following is the documentation of my process divided into three sections. Section one contains historical research and a character analysis. Section two is a daily journal written during the rehearsal process. Section three contains interviews with the theater faculty concerning my performance.

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I dedicate this work to my dear husband K.C. without whose love, devotion, trust and support all my efforts would have been dust in the wind; to my classmate Jason Francis who we lost to cancer our third year of graduate school. Though I never mention him in this work it is only because the tragedy of his loss was far too profound to process in mere words. Lastly I dedicate this work to all my friends and family who tolerated my ranting phone calls as I dealt with the stress of completing my graduate education.

Thank you all

CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Regan has usually been considered a wicked and self-serving character. Robert Heilman writes of the sisters, ”In Goneril and Regan the collaboration of reason and appetite breaks down when individual, antagonistic passions, unchecked by any rational or suprarational control, turn the reason into an implement of destruction” (Heilman 247). Heilman’s description reveals a bias based on a common mistake many critics have made over the ages. Regan never makes a decision based on passion. The problem lies in the fact that Regan is usually referenced by clumping her with Goneril or her husband Cornwall. Regan is rarely given individual consideration. Most critics fail to notice that Regan and Goneril are not the same character and in fact follow separate paths. William R. Elton, in *King Lear and the Gods*, states, “As Edgar complements Cordelia in goodness, moreover, Regan complements her sister in evil” (Elton 118). Elton bases his argument on the fact that Regan uses reason rather than divine guidance to lead her kingdom. I would argue that for this very reason Regan is far from evil. The tendency to overlook Regan as a separate character has allowed critics to pass judgment without consideration of her motivations and challenges. Faced with ruling a divided country in a patriarchal society, Regan faces each challenge head on and still manages to maintain some level of dignity.

The primary influence of the critics’ negative opinions comes from the characters in the play itself. King Lear, Gloucester and Albany all at various times comment on Regan’s seemingly cruel, vicious and unnatural character. One must consider the source however. The primary voice of *King Lear* is the male voice and Regan is judged based on preconceived notions of how woman should behave based on the standards of the

patriarchal system.[1] In *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage* Sokol points out one of the foundations for Elizabethan society. "In Shakespeare's time…a family unified under its head (husband/father) was considered to be of primary importance for 'social order and political authority' and the legal autonomy of individuals within the family was subordinated to this" (Sokol 117). The Elizabethan audience's expectation of Regan was that she would tend to her father in his old age and leave the details of ruling the country to her husband. Regan's refusal to bow to her father's wishes upset the established hierarchy of the patriarchal system. Cristina Alfar states, "In King Lear, the power Goneril and Regan desire and the violence in which they participate defy orthodox notions of appropriate feminine conduct" (Abate 168). The qualities Regan display (i.e. ambition, violence and lust) are not considered proper female behavior. To those ingrained with the patriarchal mindset Regan appears to be villainous and "unnatural".

Regan is not the only overly ambitious woman in Shakespeare's plays. Lady Macbeth also possessed seemingly unnatural characteristics. Shakespeare even goes further producing evidence in Lady Macbeth's speech implying that cruelty and ambitions are decidedly unfeminine. "Come you spirits/ That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;/ And fill me, from crown to toe, topfull/ Of direst cruelty!"(I,v). Both Regan and Lady Macbeth must step away from the conventional female role of the compassionate, nurturing female figure in order to compete in the male dominated political world. Where the two diverge lies within their intent. Regan strives to protect that which has been entrusted to her, while Lady Macbeth plots an assassination in order to usurp the throne. Regan strives to maintain order, while Lady Macbeth disrupts it. The

[1] Customs in Renaissance England expected women to tend to the matters of the home such as child bearing and housekeeping and left very little opportunity for women to gain independence.

difference as Machiavelli indicates in *Il Prince* marks a distinction between the productive use and abuse of severe measures.

> "I believe that this comes from the good and bad use of cruelties. Good use (if the bad can ever be called good) is when they are perpetrated all at once, from the necessity of assuring oneself, and subsequently not repeated, but converted into as much utility for the subjects as possible. Bad use is when, although they may be few at the beginning, they are increased rather than extinguished with the passage of time" (Machiavelli 62).

Machiavelli argues the potential necessity for cruelty and Regan is never cruel unless the situation demands it. Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, murders to gain political power and murders again to cover her tracks.

What possessed Shakespeare to take such an interest in these unnatural career driven women? It is interesting to note that Shakespeare wrote several plays driven by powerful women, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth,* within one year of each other. Though little is known of Shakespeare's private life, this recurring theme of women in power seems to indicate an interest in the political turmoil which overshadowed the turn of the17th century. A glimpse into the political climate of Renaissance England reveals striking similarities between Regan's behavior and various aspects of the Elizabethan and Stuart courts.

Though no one knows the exact date, scholars estimate that *King Lear* was written some time between 1603 and 1606.[2] March 24, 1603 marked the death of Queen

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[2]Perhaps the most revealing are the sources for the subplot. The story of Gloucester and his two sons was taken from Sir Phillip Sidney's *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* published in 1590. The marked similarity between Edgar's Mad Tom antics and the accounts of an exorcism given in Harsnett's *Declaration of*

Elizabeth and the ascension of James Stuart of Scotland to the English throne. The latter years of Elizabeth's reign had been rocky and her popularity had declined considerably. Much of the country's wealth was tied up in the war to fend off the Spanish Armada. The rest remained in the hands of those the queen had favored with monopolies.[3] Parliament had cried out for reform for several years before Elizabeth changed her policies stating, "…she understood, that divers patents that she had granted, were grievous unto her subjects, and that the substitutes of the patentees had used great oppression" (Levine 140). Elizabeth's turnaround proved to be insufficient to satisfy the masses.

Shakespeare, like many of his contemporaries, used his plays as social commentary. A prime example is *Othello* which many scholars believe was inspired by Elizabeth's letter to the Lord Mayor of London to deport a Moorish ambassador and his entourage. In *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* Andrew Hadfield argues that Shakespeare uses *King Lear* as a subtle means of speaking out against the abuses of the monarchy. Albany makes a reference to the nature of Goneril and Regan's reign, "Sir, this I hear: the King is come to his daughter,/ With others whom the rigour of our state/ Forc'd to cry out" (V, i) Goneril's response "these domestic broils are not the question here" are reminiscent of Elizabeth's disregard for the lower classes. Andrew Hadfield suggests that *Lear* may have been a warning to King James "…not to lapse into the errors of his predecessor in her final years" (Hadfield 99).

Egregious Popish Impostures published in 1603 provides the basis for many scholars that *King Lear* could not have been written prior to1603.

[3] *In Privacy, Domesticity and Women in Early Modern England* Carole Levine expounds on Elizabeth's financial woes stating that by the end of the war the crown was £177,00 in debt. Compounded with plague and poverty, England's attitude towards its sovereign had much declined.

James I and his lavish new court appear to be reflected in King Lear's court. James and Lear both had a tendency to give preferential treatment to court favorites. King James tended to be over generous, bestowing privileges on those that many considered as undeserving flatterers. Margot Heinemann reveals the significance of Goneril and Regan's behavior in act I, scene i, "it seems that Goneril and Regan…were likely to be identified by the audience with what they saw as contemporary flatterers, cadgers, and upstarts at the Jacobean court" (Alexander 158). Just as members of King James' court knew how to manipulate the king to gain wealth and affluence, the member's of Lear's court knew the proper steps to take in order to secure wealth and power.

When considered in this context Regan's flowery speeches can not be deemed as evil. In *King Lear* Shakespeare establishes a culture in which flattery and favors to those in power are the primary means for advancement. In the case of Regan it is an obligation. Ralph Berry in *Shakespeare and Social Class* clarifies the state of the nation in *King Lear* and also during the reigns of Elizabeth and James.

> "*King Lear* is the picture of a feudal society, organized on strong vertical lines. The leaders have great power and call for loyalty and obedience. Those in subordinate positions can expect protection and occasional reward, but must never challenge their master. "(111).

This held especially true for members of the court, and in the case of *King Lear*, for Regan and her sisters. As the king's subordinate, Regan is obligated to obey her sovereign's commands.

There is also the matter of Regan's dowry to consider. Goneril and Regan had been married for some time, yet Lear had not provided their dowries. One can assume

that Lear chose to wait for political reasons. In *Shakespeare and the Nature of Love* Marcus Norlund illuminates the gravity of Regan's dowry as the essential component that will establish her kingdom: "This makes it possible for individual families or clans to amass considerable wealth and pass it along as inheritance, thus leading to unprecedented social stratification" (95). The dukes of Cornwall and Albany will stay loyal to the king if they stand to gain political and financial benefits through their marriages. Regan's influence over her father could increase her family's influence and wealth and thus it behooves her to make a good impression on the king.

Lear devised a seemingly fool proof plan to provide his daughter's dowries and insure loyalty from the outlying provinces. Lear's original plan to divide his kingdom in three may have worked. Ralph Berry provides some insight into Lear's plans to maintain the delicate political balance. "This division is not really arbitrary. Since the great Dukes are already in possession of their regional territories, Lear's settlement merely formalizes the present state of affairs with the addition of heartland areas" (104). Where Lear's plan fails is in his inability to separate his political life from his private life. When Lear requests a declaration of love from his daughters and receives a seemingly heartless reply from Cordelia he lashes out. In his fit of rage he disowns Cordelia stating, "Here I disclaim all my paternal care,/ Propinquity and property of blood,/ And as a stranger to my heart and me/ Hold thee from this forever" (I, i). Lear then tears the map and divides his country between Goneril and Regan. Harry V. Jaffa pinpoints the major destructive factor in Lear's alteration. "…it is clear that a balance of power can be better preserved where there are three distinct forces, no one of which can overmatch the other two, than where there are only two forces, however evenly matched" (Bloom 121). In his fit of rage

Lear deviates from his original plan leaving only two territories, rendering the country vulnerable to civil war.

What is interesting to note is that though Lear has essentially given up his authority he still holds some influence over the people. Goneril notes the potential pitfalls of an unstable king who still possess the heart of the nation. "If our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us" (I, i). In *Law & Love* Paul Kahn points out, "The shift in power among rulers makes acutely problematic the loyalties of the subjects" (52). This is most clearly made manifest in Gloucester who teeters between his desire to please Regan and his desire to please the king. As long as Lear survives as sovereign there is always the risk that he will undermine Goneril and Regan's authority.

As Lear and his followers become more problematic Regan grows increasingly desperate in her efforts to maintain control. William Elton vilifies Regan calling her a "politic libertine and hypocritical believer" but once again he fails to take into consideration the magnitude of Regan's dilemma (116). The first conflict which originates in Goneril's residence is the contention between Goneril and Lear with his hundred knights. Lear has already begun to undermine Goneril's authority running rampant and reeking havoc throughout the palace despite attempts at control. As Goneril states:

> "Not only, sir, this your all-liscens'd fool
> But other of your insolent retinue
> Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth
> In rank and not-to-be-endured riots. Sir

I had thought, by making this well known unto you

To have found a safe redress, but now grow fearful,

By what yourself, too, late have spoke and done" (I, iv).

Goneril has not been unreasonable yet Lear persists in his unruly behavior. Once Goneril takes steps to "disquantity his train" Lear threatens to sic Regan on her claiming "When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails/ She'll flay thy wolvish visage." (I,iv) Once again Lear fails to realize the magnitude of his actions. What Lear is essentially demanding is that Regan go to war with Goneril over a father's hurt pride.

Regan tends to be more subtle, but essentially understanding that her father is not in his right mind, she does what is best for her kingdom. When Lear arrives with his retinue and bemoans his treatment under Goneril Regan refuses to humor the old man stating, "Therefore, I pray you/ That to our sister you do make return;/ Say you have wrong'd her, sir" (II, iv). This may seem heartless on the surface, but Regan has many potential conflicts to consider. If Regan sides with her father she sides against Goneril who most likely has a military force just as strong as Regan. If Regan takes her father in, she too must tolerate the rabble in her household and risk undermining her own authority. In act I scene iv, once Goneril has put her father out, she sends Oswald to her sister stating, "If she sustain him and his hundred knights, When I have show'd th' unfitness-" (I, iv). She never finishes the line but the threat is implied. Caught between a king who has given away all his power and a sister who will stop at nothing to get what she wants, Regan's actions toward her father become an act of self preservation. To be rid of the idle king is the only peaceful option.

The second conflict arises with Gloucester‘s punishment for treason. Many critics wax indignant over Gloucester’s eye gouging, but once again the punishment was not wholly unjustified. Not only does Gloucester go against a direct order not to assist the king he also collaborates with an invading army. Regan and Cornwall are pragmatic in their approach punishing the traitor as well as setting an example for would be defectors.

The final strike against Regan is her sudden marriage to Edmund. This is where many critics confuse Regan and her sister. In Shakespeare’s original version of *King Lear* Goneril commits adultery, Regan does not. Cornwall died and there is no evidence that Regan had an illicit affair while he was alive. Furthermore, Regan’s marriage to Edmund secures her northern border. If Goneril had succeeded in killing Albany and marrying Edmund a very powerful earl in the Dukedom of Cornwall would have allegiances with the Duchess of Albany. Regan’s marriage to Edmund was a wise political and military strategy.

Perhaps much of the negativity concerning Regan’s character comes not from Shakespeare’s original Regan but from a later adaptation which surfaced during the Restoration. The first documented performance of *King Lear* was December 26, 1606.[4] The original production met with some success until the theatres closed in 1642. Little is known about the original cast except that Richard Burbage, the leading man of the King’s men, played Lear. The male roles were divided amongst the shareholders but, due to Elizabethan laws which forbade females from the stage, the female roles were customarily performed by boy players. If the boy players were inexperienced it would account for the relative lack of complexity of Regan’s character but Shakespeare’s Regan was not entirely evil.

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[4] E.K. Chambers marks the event on the Court Calendar in *Elizabethan Stage.*

During the Restoration Nahum Tate wrote an adaptation of *King Lear* entitled *The History of King Lear*. This version resorted to the original history in Holinshed's *Chronicles*[5] in which Lear was restored to the throne. Tate also assigned several of Cornwall's lines to Regan. The result is that Regan takes more initiative while executing punishments making Cornwall and Regan equals. Regan also actively pursues a relationship with Edmund prior to her husband's death. John Harold Wilson suggests that Tate's adaptation was inspired by the introduction of women to the English stage. In *All the King's Ladies* Wilson states, "No doubt the facts that Mary Lee, long the leading tragedienne and villainess of the Duke's Company, played Regan, while her ambitious young rival, Elizabeth Barry, played Cordelia, had something to do with the alteration" (104). Tate's version tailored the role to the strengths of mature female actresses, who could handle a more substantial role with far more dexterity than a boy player.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Shakespeare original text struggled to resurface, but Regan still remained purely villainous. Critics paid little attention to performers who played supporting roles thus there is scant documentation as to how Regan may have been portrayed. In 1742 David Garrick performed Lear with some of Shakespeare's original text restored. In 1809 John Kemble used Tate's work but his efforts were stifled when authorities prohibited the play due to similarities between Lear and King George who suffered from his own mental illness. Edmund Kean performed a version that employed more of Shakespeare's text but kept the happy ending. After three years he attempted the original ending but converted back to Tate's after three performances. It was not until 1838 that William Macready performed *Lear* in its

[5] Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of Englande, Scotlande and Irelande* were the source for many of Shakespeare's history plays. In the case of *King Lear*, the dramatist chose to deviate from the original account from Holinshed's original account.

original form. By this time Regan's character had been permanently marred by Tate's vicious, lustful rendition.

Over the past century actors have begun to explore the family dynamic within *King Lear*. Peter Brook directed a bleak barbaric version of *King Lear* with Paul Scofield in the title role in 1971. One critic claimed of Scofield's performance "At one extreme, against a tough Lear such as Scofield, who played the love auction as a piece of state business to be got through, Lear's harshness conferred some sympathy on Goneril and Regan- although, in that antisympathetic world, they were proper citizens and unglamours too" (Rosenberg 50). Scofield's interpretation justifies Regan's actions, who saw her father as a dangerous man. John Murphy writes, "He's a childish tyrant lording it over his somewhat shaken and understandable intimidated daughters, Goneril and Regan" (www.bardolotry.com). Recent productions tend to explore the guilt on all sides rather than place the blame solely at the feet of the villainous sisters.

Judi Dench played Regan in the 1976 presentation of *King Lear* at the Royal Shakespeare Theater Stratford. Dench's choice to portray Regan as the intimidated daughter who had developed a stutter due to some childhood trauma implied that Lear was not as harmless as many are lead to believe. Gareth Evans remarks, " But it places those playing Goneril and Regan in a posture where their actions and words could be deemed to have reasonable justification" (192). Dench's back story helps bridge to gap between the Lear who is able to rule a kingdom peacefully to the age of 80 and the Lear who destroys his kingdom because of his injured pride.

Ian McKellan starred in Trevor Nun's 2007 production of *King Lear* and received high praise from critics. This rendition was adapted for film and aired in 2008 on PBS in

the Great Performances series. Monica Dolan's Regan was more concerned with alcohol than the events taking place around her. When Monica's Regan chose to acknowledge her surroundings it was usually in some petty fashion such as dousing Kent with wine while he was in the stocks and unable to defend himself.

Lee J. Cobb performed as Lear in a production by the Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center in 1969 of which critic Glenn Loney was generous with his praise. He remarks on the subtlety of Goneril and Regan stating, "Goneril and Regan were regally correct, held in check. They did not, as is all too often the case, seem like monsters from the first breath" (Loney 106). The key seems to lie in the actress not getting ahead of the action but allowing Lear to bring about his own downfall. Regan's actions must be solely centered on maintaining her status and staying one step ahead of everyone around her.

I intend to approach Regan through several different forms of analysis. The first is the animal essence, second is the Laban movement analysis as documented in *Mastery of Movement*[6] and third is through a script analysis. These methods will establish the overall mood, movement and relationships for the character.

Virginia Smith, director for the UNL production of King Lear, has decided to set the play in the Napoleanic era. Though the original King Leir lived during Pre-Roman England, the society Shakespeare creates is clearly more sophisticated with its titles and servants. Several ideas I think will be important to remember is that Regan is a princess. Having grown up at court her status and upbringing must color every move and decision she makes. Regan is never coarse and her years at court have taught her how to

[6] Rudolph Laban's analysis uses various combinations weight, space and time as a means of developing a character's movement.

manipulate others. As a princess in a feudal society she expects others to serve and obey. Regan should be charming yet dangerous if she does not get her way.

Upon considering the physicality for Regan I pondered on what type of animal characteristics she possessed. My first impression was that of a wolf, but after some consideration I settled on the spider. Regan tends to lay plots and draw others in. I picture her as someone who likes to be in physical contact with others so that she can manipulate them. Upon seeing Gloucester or Lear for the first time, she my reach out and touch them on the arm or even embrace them in hopes of getting them to let their guard down. Once she has her prey off balance she strikes whether it be haggling with the king about his retinue or coaxing Oswald into letting her read Goneril's letter.

After applying the Laban technique I decided the Regan would be a cross between gliding and slashing depending on her mood. The most important fact to consider regarding Regan's physicality is that she was reared as princess and her gestures must be stately and graceful. While attempting to convince Lear to return to Goneril's or to get Oswald to reveal the letter Regan would glide trying to set her prey at ease until she fails to get what she wants. Once Regan reaches a state of agitation she is inclined to snap as in the case of Gloucester's interrogation and her display of jealousy over Edmund and Goneril's past.

Regan's voice should be rich and mellifluous, thus her tendency to draw people in. If the director had chosen to use dialects Regan's would be standard British with a bit of a Welsh flare since Cornwall's Cornish is closer to Welsh. Regan's speech tends to get clipped when she is agitated though her voice can become smooth and rich when she has a goal in sight.

The script never clearly states Regan's age, but judging by the fact that Cordelia is old enough to be married off, I estimate that Regan is around 23 years of age and has been married for at least five years. Still in the prime of her youth Regan has no disabilities however she does not possess the strength of the working class. Setting *King Lear* in eighteenth century England requires that as Duchess of Cornwall, Regan spends a great deal of time at court where V. Green claims, "Social behaviour was then brilliant, flirtatious and sophisticated, but often insincere and superficial. (444) Regan is accustomed to luxury and as she increases in strength and wealth her outward appearance will reflect this.

Regan's relationship with Cornwall is interesting. Cornwall seems to highly value his wife's opinion and often goes to consult her before making major decisions. When the two are on stage together they often overlap, cutoff or repeat each other's sentences. Though Cornwall does the physical work of punishing and enforcing the law, Regan appears to be the brains of the operation. The two really seem to love and compliment one another well.

The relationship between Regan and Goneril deserves some consideration as well. Goneril is the older sister thus she has the higher status. I believe that Regan both loves and fears her older sister. There is always the threat that Goneril will take up arms and try to usurp Regan's authority, yet against the king the sister's remain united. Lear is a dangerous man and I think that Regan relies on her older sister to handle their ailing father. Regan also seems to follow Goneril's lead in most matters. When Goneril plots against Lear Regan complies. When Goneril forbids Gloucester from letting the king back into the house Regan agrees. When Goneril takes Edmund as her lover Regan does

the same in this instance as well. Regan may have political reasons for marrying Edmund but, I also feel there is a bit of jealousy for the older sister. Regan intends to grab the opportunity to get what her sister wants first for a change.

Lear and Regan only have two scenes together but I believe quite a bit is revealed in those two short moments. Regan's relationship with Lear is similar to her relationship with Goneril: she both loves and fears him. As Lear grows increasingly petulant Regan is at a loss for how to handle him. When Lear leaves declaring that he bring the "terrors of the earth" with him Regan can only take this as a legitimate threat. Perhaps Regan's greatest flaw is the ability to place her civic duties before her familial duties. Regan is willing to sacrifice her father for the stability of her country.

In the following two months I intend to apply all my research and observations and hopefully produce a fresh and intriguing Regan. My idea is to approach Regan from a practical standpoint focusing on the actions and relationships. If the process results in anything remotely resembling the ideas I have in my head I will consider this time of preparation well spent.

CHAPTER 2: THESIS JOURNAL

10/08/09

Tonight was our first read through. Prior to beginning we heard the design concepts and looked at renderings of our costumes. It looks as if I will have to pull a lot of weight behind me with the train, but I won't have to worry about corsets and butt rolls. What I will have to concern myself with is not stepping backwards, that could prove disastrous.

We also had the opportunity to meet most of the cast. Not everyone was there because some cast members were in *You Never Can Tell* down stairs. We were introduced to our understudies which was interesting. I have known who mine is for several weeks but it fails to take the edge off. I feel as if some one is gunning for my part. I guess this will be extra incentive to keep myself healthy.

We finally got to meet Lear. Stephen is a small man but he has a big voice and he knows how to use it. During the read through he read with full commitment and clarity. It was inspiring. I tried to do things different vocally, paying attention to the nouns and verbs instead of the pronouns. I think what happened was that I read the lines as I had practiced them. I worry that it will be difficult to break out of my established rhythm. People always tell me that I fail to let what others say color my words. I am going to have to work extra hard to listen and find the discoveries so that I can add to the ground work I have laid out.

As I was reading I thought of all the justifications that I had written about earlier for Regan's behavior. I wanted to make her three dimensional with pure motives that only appeared evil because of the circumstances she was forced into. As I read, however,

I was caught up in the depravity and the joy of committing true acts of evil. It was fun to be one dimensional and completely absorb in my own desires. I am pretty sure that will not work for the rest of the rehearsal process, so as I work I shall strive to incorporate some of my earlier insights.

10/09/09

Today we had another read through. Earlier in the day Virginia gave us notes on how she would like us to read the text. She told me I was going entirely too fast. I thought so too at the time, but was so intent on driving through with the thought I could not slow myself down.

I think today's rehearsal went better. I made an effort to slow down and enjoy the language a little more. I think at one point I had almost convinced Lear to give me the larger portion of the property. I felt like I was doing my job at that point.

At the end of rehearsal Virginia told us that we need to look over the scansion for the verse sections. I also have to remember to pronounce endure "endiyoor" instead of "endoor." All I all it was a good night.

10/12/09

Tonight was fight call and though I was not on the list of called actors I went anyway. Jason and I helped Kyle and Jessica choreograph the eye gouging and the subsequent fight. I was a little angry because Jason wanted to direct the whole scene. I interjected with my ideas and in the end I think it worked out well. My only job was to say a few lines and stab Jessica in the back. It felt good to put actions to my line. I was

able to break up the phrases more logically. I need to practice my throat slitting technique a little if I plan to use it, but Virginia may take that bit out any way.

10/13/09

Virginia had us perform some movement exercises such as walking around in the character's gait and interacting with other characters. For the most part I ignored the servants unless I required something from them. I bowed to all the kings and interacted with those of equal or slightly lower rank. My main concern was in taking smaller steps, keeping the back straight and leading a little with the head. I felt natural, but still regal so I should be able to maintain it for the duration of the show.

After we walked for a while, Virginia asked us to form several tableaus. The first was "the king must be worshipped." I immediately dropped to one knee and grabbed the king's hand. Regan may not be Lear's favorite that does not mean she does not yearn for his affection. The next tableau was "court intrigue." Of course I used my kung-fu tiger and aimed it at the back on Goneril. There were several people surrounding me including Kyle as Cornwall and his many soldiers. The last tableau was "the storm" in which I stood off to the side and held my hands up in sheer pleasure to the sky.

The next exercise required that we move around to music with the themes of "a day at court", "court intrigue" and "the storm" themes. During the court scene it was painful to watch Lear dote on Cordelia and I found that I was looking for ways to interject or separate them. There were also the servants and knights who, if I was not putting them to work, were constantly floating about waiting on my pleasure. It is interesting to go about my business with very little regard for the underlings in the room.

While I never see them as equals I must refrain from making a scene to prevent gossip and negative opinions.

The "court intrigue" was strange. There was a lot of whispering and people talking with their heads close together. Kyle and I decided that it would be detrimental for our characters if Cordelia married into a higher social status, so we set out to foil the courtship between Cordelia and the King of France. Apparently our scheming worked because nobody knew who to believe and both of the suitors, France and Burgundy, were doubtful of Cordelia.

"The storm" theme required that most of the servants and knights swirl around Lear, Gloucester, Edgar and a few others. While the elders were getting whipped about I danced around and celebrated with my husband. Afterwards Virginia asked if I thought I was justified and I said yes. Regan has been overlooked as the middle child her whole life. With Lear out of the way Regan finally has a chance to come into her full power and I believe she revels in it even if only for a while.

After the exercises we staged act one scene one. I had made a decision weeks ago that Regan's goal was to top her sister and really try for that rich piece of land. Though my original thought was to bow before the king and kiss his hand, Virginia mentioned that the moment had to remain public. I kept the cross towards, but stopped short of touching the king. Instead of kneeling I kept the intent and curtsied afterwards. I think the affect was the same but this way the audience is involved as well.

10/14/09

This evening we blocked the second act. I noticed that there is a pattern in my blocking. Virginia seems intent on keeping Regan and Cornwall on the top level. I have to fight in order to come down and interact with the other characters. I understand she is concerned with the image of status, but it limits my ability to pull people in as I had imagined for my character. As rehearsals progress I will have to make an extra effort to work it in.

Virginia also commented on my voice work. She said that I was using a small conversational voice and I had to make it bigger. It felt big to me at the time but the second run through the scene I expanded my sound and tried to use a broader vocal range. It felt very phony and silly and I was afraid I would come across as simply being loud. I also had trouble focusing on making the language interesting and driving through with my intention. I guess that when I practice at home I feel as if I am expanding more than I actually am. That probably comes from living alone and having no outside ear to give me feed back. Once I had an idea of what I needed to do I made the effort to maintain the big voice, but it was a struggle. I think I lost it by my last line.

10/15/09

Tonight's rehearsal went well. We staged act III scenes iii, iv and vii. The beginning was a little frustrating because Virginia directed me to keep a distance between myself and Lear. I had envisioned that particular scene as Regan taking Lear's hand and treating him like a child. It seemed to work fine the way Virginia staged it and I think there is still room to play around with the blocking.

I can tell Virginia sees Regan as evil and while Regan does perform evil acts I have been working to give her some depth. When Lear gives his last speech to his daughters and storms off the stage into the storm I truly believe Regan is touched. The last exchange between Regan and Goneril is an effort to sooth their consciences. I hope no one thinks I am playing Regan too soft. I also worry that there is too much of a shift between the Regan who loves her father but never gets the chance to show it and the Regan who is able to encourage her husband to pluck Gloucester's eyes out. I have my reasons; I just hope they come across to the audience.

Just before we left for the night Virginia told me that though my speech was not contemporary, it was still too fast. She said that I am not giving each word its full value and I am losing my breath support. That is discouraging. After all these years I am going to leave with the same problems I came with.

10/16/09

These rehearsals are becoming a painful process. Every night I leave with the feeling that I have done something terribly wrong; that my entire way of approaching my character has been incorrect. I understand that Virginia wants Regan to be evil, but honestly I have trouble justifying some of the actions Virginia wants me to perform. Last night we worked the eye gouging scene and initially Virginia wanted Regan to leave her husband to die. I fail to see any evidence in the script that would indicate that Regan and Cornwall had such a cold relationship. What actually happens in the script is that Regan assists her husband off stage. We managed to find a happy medium with Cornwall dying on the stage as Regan tries to move him. She then runs off presumably to get help.

Maybe this whole process would be easier if I stopped trying to justify my actions and just followed my baser instincts such as greed, lust and hatred. I suppose I could try that in future rehearsals and probably get less flack for over thinking my character. Virginia said I was using the Stanislavski system which was not around during the 17th century. I guess I will try some other approach.

10/21/09

Over fall break I took some time to work on my vocal exercises. I focused on elongating my vowel sounds and supporting each syllable with my breath. I also played around with the consonants to see what kind of emotion they evoked. When I returned to class I told Virginia about the frustration I had experienced while performing these exercises. At one point I actually felt like clawing someone's eyes out. This emotion was not brought about by the exploration of sound. The rage I felt came from having to force myself to slow down when my mind simply wanted to finish the thought. Once the rage had subsided I was able to focus a little better and I think my work showed at rehearsal this evening.

Tonight we ran act one and for the first time we were on the Howell stage. The set was taped out but I found I still had difficulty differentiating between one level or entrance and the next. As the end of rehearsal approached I found I lost focus and missed a few of my cues. I have to make sure to bring a snack to give me a boost of energy. Despite all this I felt good about tonight's rehearsal. I am working on solidifying my relationship with Kyle. Kyle thinks that Regan and Cornwall hate one another, but I fail to see any evidence of that. During the first scene I definitely think they are of a like

mind and are out to get as much land a possible. I feel that Regan has to have Cornwall's support. I have been whispering and nudging Kyle to get him to respond. I suppose the next step would be to take him aside and discuss the situation so that we can function as a team.

10/23/09

I felt rehearsal went very well tonight. The scheduled scenes were IV: ii and V:i and I feel as if I made some strong choices for each moment. During IV:ii Regan tries to pump Oswald for information. When he is not forthcoming she makes suggestions to throw him off then attempts to bribe him by offering advancements. Locking in to my spider imagery is really working for these scenes. Regan schemes and manipulates, and when she reaches out and actually touches people it is hard for others to resist.

The second scene with Edmund was fun. Once again I took Edmund in my arms and the scene became a romantic moment. Once Albany and Goneril arrived Edmund moved away from me. The first time we ran through the scene I allowed it. The second time as he moved I reached out and grabbed his arm forcing him to stay by side. It was a very powerful move. It forced Edmund to commit to our relationship and put Goneril in a weak position. I think this will make a strong springboard for Goneril's rage in our next scene together.

Virginia said my voice work was much improved. I must admit that I am relieved to hear that. If I leave this program with something as basic as not being heard as an problem I will consider my work here at UNL a failure.

10/25/09

I was late for rehearsal tonight. I thought it was at 6:30 but apparently Sunday rehearsals start at 5:00. Luckily I only missed the warm up; I hate when people have to wait on me. We blocked V: iii, it's a long scene in which five people die. My character is the first to go and as I realized a little too late, I have to enter the scene showing the effects of Goneril's poison. I was thinking of using an Alka-seltzer tablet to froth at the mouth, but that would probably be too much. By the end of rehearsal I decided to request a handkerchief and a blood capsule so that I may appear to cough up blood. I am sure that these symptoms do not correspond to my original choice of nightshade poisoning, but the blood would be a nice dramatic effect. And after all it is about the audience's experience.

I was a little off on my lines tonight even though I had the script in front of me. I failed to give enough attention to the other characters' lines and was late with my cue pick-ups. I will have to work on that for tomorrow.

Virginia tried to cut one of my lines and I simply refused. She suggested we fight for it and I was perfectly willing to take her on. Thankfully it did not come to that and I think I was able to convince her that the line should stay. "Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded ere you had spoke so far." It is a powerful line and gives Regan the drive she needs to trump Albany and open the path for Edmund's elevation.

The best part about tonight's rehearsal was the realization that I will be brought out on an *ekeclama*, or death wagon. I learned about the death wagon in theater history my second semester in graduate school and now it seems fitting that my thesis role should end on a death wagon. I feel as if my work has come full circle.

10/26/09

Tonight we ran act II twice. I never realized how much action is in this play. There must be five fights in the second act alone. I wish my character was more involved in the battle, but slitting throats is probably all that Virginia will let me get away with.

I was half off book for this run. I had the book in my arms because I was too nervous to go on without it. The first time through I barely used it at all, but the second time I relied on it more. I am uncertain if I was too tired to concentrate or if I was so discouraged by my mistakes the first time through I did not want to risk it the second time.

My poisoned bit is working nicely. I used the bloody cloth, but I think it will work better when I get a blood capsule and I have bloody saliva drippy from my lips.

10/27/09

Tonight's rehearsal was awful. We ran the entire show and I was off book for the whole run. Unfortunately my lines did not come to me as quickly as I would have liked. I found myself calling line unnecessarily. To be honest I was suffering from an upset stomach. Pain in the abdomen saps my energy faster than anything else I know. I had trouble focusing on my scenes. My voice was starting to sound strained and I kept getting my lines confused. I hope Virginia can forgive me.

I did feel I had a few successful moments, but there were some scenes that went terrifically last night that I could do nothing with today. I distinctly remember the scene between Goneril, Lear and Regan where I was able to make connections with each

character and find sympathy with Goneril's plight. This helped fuel my anger with Lear which in turn helped maintain a hardness when Lear starts screaming about his revenge. Even with these little discoveries I hate to hear what Virginia will have to say tomorrow.

10/27/09

Virginia's comments were not as bad as I had feared. She simply requested that I focus on the journey Regan takes throughout the show. We worked on the first act tonight and I really tried to focus on all the events as they unraveled and decide how Regan feels about the situation. There had been a lot of discussion that everyone knew how Lear had decided to divide the land prior to the announcement, but I think it will be more interesting to the audience if the daughters actually feel they have a chance at the larger chunk. I used Goneril's declaration of love as a time to think of my response, and then I made sure to top Goneril. When Cordelia spoke I grew irritated by her impertinency but was certain that she had done exactly what Lear truly desired. When Lear grows angry and disowns her, this of course, is a complete surprise, but a pleasant one. Kent's interjection, though perhaps not surprising, is unwelcome and it is at this moment my dislike for Kent begins to grow. Lear tears the map and divides it between me and Goneril and I am elated, but the King of France ruins everything by making Cordelia his queen. It appears no matter how hard Regan tries her baby sister will always come out better.

10/29/09

Tonight we reworked the real act two which began with Regan's arrival at Gloucester's castle and ends with Lear running off into the storm. When Kyle and I arrived on stage Virginia decided that Kyle and I needed to develop our relationship. I thought back on what I had originally decided, which was that Regan relied heavily on her husband and that she basically followed his lead. Now that I have been working with the script more I noticed that they often interrupt and talk over one another. I think Regan does it without even realizing; they have gotten that comfortable with one another. I believe Regan loves her husband. Unlike Goneril, Regan was lucky enough to be paired with someone she can get along with. This does not mean that they never get annoyed with one another, especially if they have been traveling all through the night.

We also worked the "shake down" scene with Regan, Goneril and Lear. I was working on playing the nice daughter, because in my opinion Regan would never openly stand up to her father on her own. Once Goneril arrives she finally has the support she needs to turn her back on her father. There were some nice moments with Lear. I finally developed the courage to walk over and touch Lear. It made the scene much stronger. The only problem we seem to be running into is making the daughters too compassionate. The final exchange with Gloucester must have enough indignation to justify their plot to kill the king in the later scene. I think we can get there; we just need to focus on Lear's last monologue and drive the intention through to the end of the scene.

10/29/09

Tonight we blocked act III. Most of the night was spent waiting around while Lear, Kent, Fool and Edgar worked and reworked the trial scene. The rest of us were a little spacey by the time we got on stage. We reworked the eye gouging and I think Virginia thought I was upset because she took out my slap and a few lines. Honestly, I knew some of my choices would be altered because they felt strange to me and I knew they must look a mess from the audience. By the time we finished I felt better. My positioning was stronger, and I felt I was still part of the action without being under foot.

The line cuttings were also useful in that I could feel the insults and react to them quicker without the additional lines. I could also detect where Regan might help her husband orchestrate the punishment. I think this new blocking will prove effective.

11/01/09

What an embarrassing rehearsal. I got there a little later because I knew I would not be on for a while. I did some vocal warm ups and some stretches. I ran through my scene a few times and was ready in the wings when it was time to go on. Once I got on stage I stepped on Oswald's lines, missed my cue to interrupt him and basically just jumbled everything. Virginia said she could not hear me, which, again, was frustrating. I felt that I was projecting, but I guess I my articulation was a little weak.

I think my other problem was that I was trying to get the subtler nuances of the scene. Regan has Oswald to herself and I think she is trying to win his loyalty. She tries several tactics and fails until she offers Oswald a promotion if he kills Gloucester. There is also a joke which I feel should be acknowledged when Oswald says, "You sister is the

better soldier." I guess I am afraid to take the time to laugh or snort. I will try to work it in next time.

Of course my other problem might have been my sinuses. The weather warmed up and I decided to go for a jog. My nose has been running ever since.

11/02/09

Tonight's rehearsal went better for me personally. I was warmed up, I remembered my lines for the most part and I felt I was still getting some of the subtleties of the scenes. Harris came by and told me that I needed to be more sexual with Edmund. I told him I could never do that. Of course I was joking. When we ran V:iii Daniel and I did a lot more touching and rubbing and I think it work wonders for the scene.

Act V:i was still a little rough. There is one moment in particular, when Albany and Goneril arrive, that I feel no one really knows what they are talking about. I know Albany is still trying to avoid the fight and Goneril and Regan force him to go forth with the battle plans. At the moment it feels as if everyone is talking at each other and no one is processing any information.

Virginia said my voice work was on and off today. There were moments when I distinctly remember feeling as if I were rushing. I get so intent on driving home my point that I rush through the line. I must do better tomorrow and the next day and the next day…

We also discussed what poison I had settled on and what symptoms to display. I figured I would get cold sweats, cramping pains in my belly and eventually cough up blood. I think that will be a nice build that will prevent distractions from Albany's

challenge to Edmund. Steven suggested that I have a moment when I realize that Goneril has poisoned me. I wanted to work that in earlier, but I never felt confident with the blocking. Virginia says that we can try it out next time. It should be fun!

11/03/09

We ran the entire show tonight and I think it went fairly well except for line issues. I kept thinking it was my line when it was someone else's, or I would talk before it was my time. Other than that I made my entrances and exits. Virginia said my vocal work was good and she liked the sexuality. Last night we discussed Regan having the revelation that Goneril had poisoned her. I worked it in tonight and it worked beautifully. I definitely felt better about being part of the rest of the scene until I was taken off stage.

The scene with Oswald went much better. There is a moment when I am supposed to cut Oswald off and I am usually late. This time I forced myself to remember that the lines starts with "I". It worked! There is still one line I need to work on closing the gap. After I say, "Might not you transport her purposes by word," lines were cut and I am having difficulty connecting it to the next idea of "Let me unseal the letter.

I botched the blocking at the end of act two scene four. We had reworked it several times and I honestly could not remember what we had settled on. I should have consulted my script before hand.

10/03/09

Virginia did a lot of cutting for the first act to help cut back on the time. She only cut two of my lines and honestly they were giving me trouble anyway. The funny thing

was that Virginia was cutting as we were doing the scenes. The result was that everyone hurried through their lines because they did not want to lose more. We sped through the first act and it felt pretty good. The eye gouging scene is still a mess. The problem lies in the line cuts or the staging. It feels as if no one knows what his or her cue is. There are also long pauses in the lines while Gloucester gets strapped to the chair. Hopefully, Virginia will get it worked out.

10/04/09

Tonight was much like last night only much quicker. I felt more comfortable with my lines and Virginia didn't see fit to cut any of them. My only problem was working around Daniel's sword. I am supposed to grab him by the arm and spin him around, but his sword sticks out about three feet behind him. I even broke character a little on the second run. Hopefully Virginia forgives me. I think the move will still work, I just have to make a broader arc but there are also the costumes to consider.

I find that when I feign poisoning my breathing gets shallow and my lines are no longer supported. Each time we get to my line I have to make a special effort to resettle myself. I only did it the second time tonight, hopefully I can make it a habit.

10/06/09

I think everyone was exhausted tonight. I spoke to Stephen and even he said that by the storm scene he was no longer making coherent phrases. We did get through the entire show however, so that is something. The eye gouging is still a train wreck and I think Virginia said she was going to reblock it. Thank goodness!

Apparently a note went out weeks ago that we were substituting the word "fortune" for revenue. I seem to remember writing that down somewhere but somehow I failed to notice that it applied to me. It should be fairly easy to make the change.

10/09/09

Well everyone was feeling much better today. The understudies had a rehearsal on Sunday and I stopped by to watch a part of that. I regret that I missed Katie Gell performing the scene between Regan and Lear. I got there five minutes too late.

Tonight Virginia finally re-blocked the eye gouging scene. I think she got frustrated with my fast talking and Kyle not understanding her directions. I forced myself to slow down every time I spoke but Virginia still says that I am difficult to understand. I am at a loss of what to do. I try to breathe deep and support the language. Maybe I just have to do a longer warm up.

On a good note, the rest of my scenes went well. The scene between Goneril, Regan and Lear felt connected and motivated. We never stopped to rework it so I guess Virginia agreed.

10/10/09

What an awful rehearsal. We worked through act two and Virginia sent us home without a run through. Sadly enough, I am relieved. My work was pretty shoddy tonight and I was too embarrassed to face Virginia. My voice is tired and my focus is scattered. Virginia told me to slow down again and when I started to focus on that I lost my line. Actually I almost started crying. Maybe it's hormonal or maybe I just had an awful

experience in my audition class, but for some reason I had trouble staying positive and it reflected in my work.

11/11/09

We had two new audience members tonight: the sound technicians. We ran through the entire show with sound effects and the results were a little shaky. II:iv had a strange vibe. Somehow I felt as if Lear and I were not connecting. All the lines were there but there were strange pauses. I like to think the sound effects were distracting everyone.

Virginia said I needed to work on the relationship between Regan and Cornwall. I think I had the right idea before but I have lost it with some of the new blocking. I think another problem is that Kyle is so big and I feel overwhelmed by his size. Some of the remarks he makes under his breath catch me off guard. I am uncertain what I need to do. Maybe I should just show my annoyance and that will read as a true husband wife relationship.

11/12/09

I think the relationship came across much clearer tonight. I used Cornwall as a source of comfort at times. I also bossed him around a bit. Hopefully it is clear that when it comes to decision making, both Regan and Cornwall have an equal say in the matter.

My timing was a little off today. I found myself engaged in the action of the other actors and would miss my cue. I did however get the one cue I have been missing since

rehearsals began. Cornwall says, "Seek out the traitor Gloucester" and I immediately respond with "Hang him instantly." That line has always seemed random, but I directed it to the soldiers as they were leaving and it worked better.

Other than my late cues everything appears to be working well. I am beginning to find the cruelty earlier on in II:iv. The sooner I can establish Regan's mean streak the easier it will be to justify her later actions.

11/13/09

Virginia spoke to me just before we began the run tonight and told me I needed to work on my enunciation. I spent the entire show concentrating on pronouncing each consonant and producing round vowel sounds. Prior to each scene I used my hand to mimic a sock puppet and ran through my lines. I think it helped. I can still recall moments when words would slip out before I could fully control my mouth. Other times I was able to monitor my speed and keep my speech at a reasonable pace. I took a great deal of effort, but allowing me that level of concentration meant I never missed a cue.

Harris Smith watched our rehearsal and gave us notes afterward. He suggested that I *get more mileage* out of such phrases as "sweet lord" and "blind traitor." He also suggested humor in "Fortunes alms." I had never considered that line in that particular light, but I think that will help me color the line with sarcasm and disgust, which is what I had been working towards.

All in all it was a good night.

11/15/09

Today was our technical rehearsal and it went surprisingly well. We finished with the cue to cue by 7:00 and had time to run the show and get home an hour before the scheduled end of rehearsal. I personally was exhausted but I managed to make it through the show with only two mistakes I can remember. The first was substituting "pray" for "advise" and the second was leaving out the line "You may gather more." I still get nervous when I have long speeches and that one line feels random compared to the rest of the monologue. I have been picking up my cues and everything feels pretty good. We shall see what happens when we add the costumes.

11/06/09

It feels as if the show has become nothing but an articulation exercise. I really cannot focus on much else besides speaking every syllable of every word properly. I warm up. I practice various vocal exercises at home. I slow down my lines. I am at a loss of what else to do.

On another note, we had our first dress rehearsal. I was a little confused about what I was supposed to wear at various times. I made sure to have on everything except my first cape by the end of the show. I tripped over my skirt on a few entrances but otherwise everything went well.

Shortly before we began the run some guy gave me an eye dropper with fake blood in it. Apparently I was to squeeze it on Jessica Meredith's neck when I slit her throat. I had no safe place to store the eye dropper and I was uncomfortable tucking it up my sleeve with the cap off. I had on a white dress and did not want to risk getting it

dirty. When the moment came to open the eye dropper it had gone to far down my sleeve. When I went for Jessica to slit her throat the dropper flew out of my sleeve and landed down stage. I left it there. Personally I am angry that they waited so late in the rehearsal process to give me the prop. I could have worked with it without the risk of getting my costume dirty and the pressures of trying to get through a run. I think we should just drop the idea.

11/17/09

I could not sleep last night. As a result I was exhausted the entire day and I never got to take a nap. I barely made it through the dress rehearsal. At one point I was actually nodding off in the Studio Theater. I made all my entrances, got all my cues and remembered my lines. I had to physically make an effort to stay focused and when it was all over Virginia had no complaints. The show went well; I just hope I never have to suffer through that experience again.

A half hour before the run began, Stan Brown, my voice instructor, arrived. He gave me a role of newspaper and told me to beat something with it while saying my lines. I tried the exercise for several minutes but was too tired to gain much from the exercise. As the show progressed I felt that I was sliding in and out of my supported breath and my articulation came and went. It was a difficult night but I did the best I could.

11/18/09

Today I slept in. I still made it to class but I took a nap and skipped my workout to catch up on much needed rest. Tonight the Theater 112 students attended the preview

and it was nice to have an audience, even if they did not respond the way we expected. I forced myself to slow down to insure that the students got the story and I found myself using a lot of primal sounds.

There is still one moment that needs a little something extra. When Cornwall comes down the stage talking of his revenge on Gloucester, I have no lines but I feel as if I need to be more involved. Maybe I should take his hand or give a "Yar!' or something. Anything that would make me feel more involved would be better than what we have now. Otherwise the show went well. Jessica Meredith has a bloody rag to hold on her wound. I was supposed to get blood from Jarrod as I passed behind him to smear on Jessica's neck. The moment went by too fast, however, so there was no blood. Maybe if I get the eye dropper back I can just squeeze some on my hand and drop the eye dropper behind the chair. I will look into it tomorrow.

11/19/09

Opening night! Tonight I was suddenly reminded why I put myself through all the worry and strain. As the show began I suddenly felt the urge to share the story with the audience and I remembered that sharing is all I really care about. The audience was never rowdy or overly responsive but I sensed that they were engrossed in the story. I tried not to play to the audience but worked to make each moment as honest a possible by listening and responding and I think it worked. My Regan may not have been melodramatically evil but my actions provide plenty of opportunity for the audience to hate me. Even if the audience does sympathize with Regan a little I fail to see that as a flaw. No one is innocent and even the guilty parties are justified to some extent.

11/20/09

Our second night felt a little different but I still feel we did good work. The audience laughed more than we expected but they paid for the ticket so they can respond however they so choose. I think a lot of the humor came from the audience's dislike of Goneril and Regan. Whenever we were insulted the audience, with their laughter, cheered for the underdogs. I think Steven might have been thrown off because the "shakedown" scene lacked it's usually intensity. Of course Steven is a professional and it may have been a deliberate choice.

Tonight I suddenly realized how much I rely on his energy to drive me through the rest of the scene. When Steven delivered "unnatural hags" in a more subdued tone I had to clench my fists and breathe a little deeper to stir up my emotions. I usually try to match Regan's emotional arc with Lear's: like father like daughter. This time I had to stray and find my own source of indignation. I think the scene still worked beautifully; it just made Regan and Goneril appear twice as evil, which is always a good thing.

11/23/09

I woke up around 9:30 this morning intent on doing a light workout so I could be reasonably warmed up for the matinee at 2:00. I only made it through half of my work out because I was not feeling well. I had a light breakfast and went to the theater to prepare for the show. I did my vocal warm ups and felt pretty good until I got into my costume. I felt that my breathing was inhibited, but I am uncertain if it was caused be the costume or allergies or maybe my workout earlier. Through the entire show I felt as if I

were gasping for breath and it made me feel rushed and frazzled. Nothing I did helped me relax. I tried hissing, warrior breathing and the grape picking exercises but my chest remained tight.

The show was a little sluggish and there were a few incidents such as a missed entrance, people tripping or slipping but otherwise it was a good show.

12/01/09

Tonight was the understudy pick up rehearsal which I was supposed to attend. Unfortunately I contracted a nasty virus over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend which left me with a fever of 101º and a nasty cough. I attempted to go to the performance but after parking and walking half a block towards the Temple building I realized I was not going to make it.

I did manage to get out earlier in the day and speak to one of my classmates. Ryan informed me that my understudy, Katie Gell, is in worse condition than I am. Apparently she lost her voice. I wonder if she was still able to perform in the pick up rehearsal. I am hoping that this cough will die down by tomorrow; my fever seems to have dropped a few degrees. I think I will go to bed early tonight and hope for the best.

12/02/09

The understudy went on tonight. I went to class earlier in the day and thought I would be okay for the performance. When I got home I started to feel weak and shaky. My nose started to run and I knew I would not be able to make it through the performance. Daniel and Robie had told me that Katie had a wonderful performance

during the pickup rehearsal so I called her up around 3:00 and asked her if she felt well enough to go on. I called Amber so that she could make the necessary arrangements, but she sent me a text message a little later asking me to attend the photo call.

I arrived at the theater around 9:00 and sat in the back to watch the end of act one and most of act two. I thought Katie did a wonderful job, but I was surprised at Steven and Sam's performances. There was so much subtlety and humor that I never had the chance to see before. I think a good deal of Steven's understanding comes from having seen others perform the role. Not that Steven is incapable of fleshing out the role himself, but there is something to be said for working with a professional and learning their process. I tried to incorporate some of Steven's tricks into my process but it seemed as if many of his decisions were made prior to his arriving at rehearsal. Perhaps I can pull him aside and discuss some ideas with him before he goes.

12/03/09

I was determined to perform tonight but I felt weak this morning. I taught my Theater 114 class at 9:30, but a wave of fatigue came over me some time around 11:00. I decided to go home and take a nap, which meant that I missed my Auditions course. I think my instructor was worried because he e-mailed Katie Gell to warn her that she might have to perform for me again. As it turned out, that nap worked wonders. I woke up in a state of panic because I thought I was late for the show, but once I got reoriented and made some soup I felt much better.

I went to the theater early to walk around the stage, warm up, and run a mini version of the show just to refresh my blocking. My greatest concern was my voice. I

knew that if I failed to support my sound properly there was no way I was going to be able to finish out the week. I did some deep breathing, hissing, humming, buzzing, anything I could think of to wake up the diaphragm. The problem was all the coughing made everything sore and tense. It took a little time, but I felt pretty good. The other problem was the temperature. The Howell Theater appears to have virtually no insulation and at times it felt as if the wind was blowing right through the wall. During the performance I tried to stay in a warm location. The cold air tended to irritate my sinuses.

The performance went very well. It was fun to be on stage again, experiencing each moment and remembering why I made the decisions I did. My voice held out, even with the scream during the eye gouge. With a little more rest and hydration, I should be even better for tomorrow.

12/04/09

I still felt awful today. What was once a cough and fever has transformed into drainage and sinus congestion. The adjudicator for KCATCF was scheduled to attend tonight and I was afraid he/she would not be able to understand me. I took some Alka-Seltzer cold and Sinus and sorely regretted it shortly thereafter. My mind grew sluggish and my mouth and sinuses were so dry I was afraid I would tear something. I missed a few moments during the performance because it was difficult to concentrate. The audience probably never noticed but I like to be active the entire time. I made it through the performance and the adjudicator remarked that I was the only actor who he could hear consistently throughout the show. This is a major feat for me. I have been struggling for

years with projection and articulation and to finally be recognized for my progress is a great feeling.

12/05/09

We closed the show tonight and I simply wished that I had felt better. My nose was a little runny but not enough to warrant that terrible cold and sinus medicine again. I made sure to slow down and articulate. Somehow it did not feel like a final performance. I think it was because everyone was so wrapped up in the Nebraska/Texas football game that was playing on everyone's laptops. It was so strange. King Lear died, Edgar ascended to the throne, we took our bows and everyone disappeared to gather around the computer screen. I was teary eyed and made sure to give Steven a big hug since I was sure I would not see him again. Then the place was silent and empty. I think everyone really missed out on something special by being so wrapped up in their computers. A wonderful professional, the caliber of which many of us will never get to work with again, finishes a performance in one of the greatest tragedies of all time and no one is there to acknowledge it.

CHAPTER 3: INTERVIEWS

The following is a question and answer conducted with Virginia Smith concerning my performance.

Q. Do you feel that making Regan more complex by adding qualities such as compassion for her sister and patience with her father muddied or weakened the story line?

A. The story line was not at all muddied or weakened in complex realistic characters rather than simple villains? The King your father showed favorites, and was cruel to you. It's hard for me to disassociate myself with the rightness of the decision from the very beginning, but I think playing her with no compassion for her sister or her father, no love for her husband would turn it into a melodrama. It doesn't interest me at all.

Q. How would you compare my success in establishing relationships between Regan and Cornwall and Regan and Edmund?

A. I think you did well. The decision to really fall for Edmund when you first see him could have been more apparent and strong, but we mustn't miss the run to Cornwall for support after you throw out your father. I loved that scene when the three of you screw your resolve to the sticking point. I also can understand that Regan would have to make other plans after Cornwall's untimely death. She's a survivor and Edmund is the one who can give her the most protection and legitimacy.

Q. What were your goals for me vocally and do you feel that I attained them?

A. I wanted you to be clearly heard and understood through out the hall. I think pace is still something you have to wrestle with for a while. It's a great quality to be able to set a fast pace, but you need to be able to select what is appropriate for each style and character. You still need to explore and enjoy the authority and power in setting the pace that's appropriate for the tactics. You were very successful in improving. I think you still have work to do as you mature into your career.

The following is an interview conducted with my voice instructor Stan Brown.

Stan: First of all I believe that you achieved what it was that you needed to achieve and what I wanted you to achieve with Regan in *Lea*r. That is from your first performance in *An American Daughter* until *Lear* what I have been most concerned with is your *consistent* ability, because you can do it and I've seen you do it, to support vocally and to maintain an adequate space inside you mouth while your speaking. And I know, being an actor myself, that that can be difficult and it's something I have to find every time I work. Because one does not walk around, all the time in full performance mode voice, it might be difficult to know that that adjustment is needed beyond just being loud on stage. It can make you feel less sincere, less you when your doing it, but part of a performance, especially when your doing Shakespeare is about being an instrument on stage. And that instrument is a part of what I call the artifice of theater. Meaning that we are seeing people go through realistic events but as the actor there is a certain portion of your performance that is "that little man behind the curtain", like in the *Wizard of Oz* where

you are pushing your buttons and pulling your levers and trying to make everything look right, but all the audience sees is the big green head on fire. You achieved that in *Lear* all I saw was the big green head on fire. What I would urge you to do even more as far as going farther is concerned is practice maintain and connecting with your voice in a way that is even further back in your mouth. Find that very thin line between what you recognize as speaking and singing. Even if you have to sing to initiate the proper mouth opening at first, do it. Then allow personality or whatever it is to come into the process. That is the only thing I would have pushed you to do, but I had no problems.

Tiffiney: What would it have done for the voice?

Stan: There were some ends of lines that kind of petered out. And I know that if you had started with a bigger opening you still could have followed with the same trajectory that ultimately did fall off, but by the time you petered out it would not have made a difference because you started with a bigger opening from the beginning.

I would say you have no problems connecting emotionally, you even seem to have fun sometimes in terms of getting in people's shit. If you go into an audition and you're doing Shakespeare you want to take that in there with you because, it's going to make the people who are sitting on the other side of that table conclude in their minds, "Oh this is somebody I can trust." Or at least that seems to be what I encounter and what I have seen in terms of people casting. They need to know that if they are giving somebody a part, that person can handle the language. And I'm just going to go there and say this. With black folk it sometimes seems as if we have to work even harder to

show folks that we can use the language. So I would encourage you to go there so that you are not categorized in the minds of people who make their choices based on basic cosmetic answers. They don't have time to look into your soul and say "I'm sure that with time and nurturing and the right amount of "wahju" mouth this person can do it." So you have to be as close to a finished product as you can. Just vocally speaking you've come a long way.

APPENDIX: REVIEW

Review of 'King Lear' at the University Theatre

By Sarah F. Sullivan

Considered by many to be one of William Shakespeare's greatest works, *King Lear* was definitely given its due on the stage of the Howell Theatre in UNL's Temple Building Thursday night.

The classic play revolves around two noble families, families whose children keep their treachery and greed close to the chest and disguise it as loyalty. Lear (masterfully played by guest Actors' Equity Association Actor Steven Patterson), King of Britain, prepares to divide his kingdom among his three daughters. The daughter who shows the most love for him will receive the largest portion of the land.

While daughters Goneril (Beth King) and Regan (Tiffiney Baker) gush and spout off empty words, Cordelia (Lucy Lockamy), her father's favorite, chooses to speak honestly. It is a meager attempt in contrast with her sister's fine speeches and Lear is so angered that he disinherits Cordelia and divides the kingdom between his two silver-tongued

daughters. Lear quickly realizes that the daughter he cast off was the one who truly loved him and through a series of events, quickly descends into madness.

Alongside this plot are the events surrounding the Earl of Gloucester (Sam Hartley) and his two sons, Edgar (Ryan Kathman) and Edmund (Daniel Gilbert). Edmund, Gloucester's vengeful illegitimate son, quickly rises in the ranks as he betrays both his father and brother in order to gain their positions and power, spinning a web of treachery and lies around them both.

Shakespeare is a tricky craft to master. It requires a great deal of talent to confidently deliver the dialogue and emotions so that even those in the audience who have never seen Shakespeare will understand what you're saying. In addition, timing is everything and casts easily run the risk of dragging a piece down without it. *King Lear* has both an extremely talented cast and impeccable timing. Though the play ran a solid two and a half hours, it flew by, thanks to the sound acting presented by the cast and smooth, well-timed transitions that easily maintained the pace of the piece.

The set, designed by Patric Vendetti, is an impressive one. Imposing gray and brown stone steps extended upwards with excellent symmetry, giving it the illusion of great height. Its only flaw seemed to be that the sound didn't carry so well from the very top of the stairs. Often the actors' voices were slightly muted when standing in that place. However, it seemed less noticeable in the second act.

Though the entire cast put forth very strong performances, there were standouts among them. Trent Stork as Lear's Fool was a joy to watch, especially as he bounced and danced easily up and down those stairs without even a fumble. Completely immersed in the part, Stork joked and teased the cast unmercifully, putting forth some amazing facial expressions in the process. Robie Hayek offered a jocular and resilient Duke of Kent, while Beth King and Tiffiney Baker delivered wonderfully wicked performances as Lear's greedy daughters.

Daniel Gilbert pulled off a malicious and scheming Edmund--his monologues throughout the play displayed a real connection with both the character and the audience. Ryan Kathman was equally impressive as brother Edgar, moving easily from cheery nobleman to a convincing madman.

And of course, there is King Lear. Steven Patterson brilliantly led the cast and his delivery was both consistent and painstakingly crafted. Patterson was just as comfortable as a sane Lear as he was when the king descended into madness. It is obvious by the second act that Patterson's Lear is at ease in his insanity, lounging on the stage in his cape of greenery, proudly wearing his crown of woven flowers and ferns. It was a truly excellent performance.

In closing, this show is one that *must* be seen by both Shakespeare fans and people who aren't usually crazy about it. Director Virginia Smith wrote in the program,

"It is my hope that the journey has made you think or caused a discussion or has touched your heart."

King Lear definitely fulfills those hopes and in some ways, exceeds them.

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