Quiet Virtue or Roaring Indignation: One Actor's Quest, and Ultimate Failure, to Reveal Complexity in Shakespeare's Cordelia

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QUIET VIRTUE OR ROARING INDIGNATION: ONE ACTOR'S QUEST, AND
ULTIMATE FAILURE, TO REVEAL COMPLEXITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S
CORDELIA

by

Mary Lucy Lockamy

A THESIS

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QUIET VIRTUE OR ROARING INDIGNATION: ONE ACTOR'S QUEST, AND ULTIMATE FAILURE, TO REVEAL COMPLEXITY IN SHAKESPEARE'S CORDELIA

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University of Nebraska, 2010

Advisor: Harris Smith

This thesis documents the performance process I underwent while tackling the role of Cordelia in William Shakespeare’s *King Lear* in the November 2009 production at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This document is the culmination of a three-year endeavor to attain a Master of Fine Arts in Acting.

There are three main sections. In Part One, I focus on Cordelia’s presence in the story of King Lear, before Shakespeare ever wrote his version, in order to compare and contrast earlier Cordelias to Shakespeare’s Cordelia. In this discussion and the ones that follow, I focus on the traditional conception of the character of Cordelia as simple and one-dimensional, and in the end, I argue that modern audiences, and I as the actor, are not satisfied with a character who exhibits her virtuousness only through steady calm and sweet composure.

Part Two comprises the journal I kept during the rehearsal process of *King Lear* from the first day of rehearsal until closing night. It is an informal and personal piece
that describes my frustrations, elations, musings, and discoveries that are all normal to an actor’s exploration of a role.

Part Three is a collection of critiques from the three main members of the Graduate Acting faculty at UNL. In this portion, each faculty member provides his or her insight as it relates to my performance of my thesis role and my general progress as an actor here at UNL.

I also include appendices to each section, including a brief selection of annotated bibliographies, images, journal entries, a theatre review, and feedback transcriptions.
Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand’ring bark,
Whose worth’s unknown, although his hight be taken.

Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle’s compass come,
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.
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Part One: Research

"Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say." I hear the swell of violins and feel the retreat of bright lights which now dwell on Edgar, the man who speaks this line at the end of King Lear. I play Cordelia, who, at this time, lies dead in the arms of her father Lear, played by Steven Patterson. Though Cordelia can play her part no more in this tragic story, her soul, her fire, endures. This sentiment led to her banishment in Act I, and now the wheel has come full circle – the man who “wins” in the end echoes her futile cry in the beginning. This document will examine the character of Cordelia and how she figures in the grand scheme of King Lear.

The graduate class of actors auditioned in May of 2009 for roles in King Lear by William Shakespeare. I was cast as Cordelia, Lear’s youngest daughter, whose tried and true heart remained loyal to her father until her dying day. I was neither surprised nor elated to be cast in this role. Before auditions, I sometimes dreamt of playing Goneril or Regan and having the chance to play dirty, to play the “bad girl.” I was very much aware, however, of the tendency of the theatre industry to type-cast, and I knew I looked the part of the “good girl.”

Uninspired, but curious, I decided I needed to give Lear another go. Until we were cast, I had only read the play a handful of times, and I was still haunted by a disastrous and passionless version I had seen performed by a professional company in North Carolina that should have known better. As I read, I focused mainly on the character of Cordelia and hoped to find a character more fleshed-out than the oversimplified, maudlin girl I had always thought her to be.
I was greatly surprised. The text revealed that it might be possible for an actor to present Cordelia as a strong-willed, perceptive, and complex woman capable of many colors other than just goodness and temperance. I was thrilled with the prospect of bringing her to life, but I was also frightened of having such big shoes to fill. While Cordelia does not have much stage time, she plays a huge function in the story; in fact, her refusal to flatter her father with flowery language is the catalyst for Lear’s fall. I knew first I had to dig deeper into the play itself (what is it really about?), Shakespeare’s possible influences, opinions of Shakespeare scholars and any other information I could garner in order to walk into the first day of rehearsal with a truly educated and rounded perspective on Cordelia.

I. William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare came into the world in late April 1564 in Stratford, England. He spent his early years in Stratford attending the King’s New School. It is not known when exactly Shakespeare finished grammar school, but he certainly did not attend University. This fact was to trouble several of his contemporary “university wits” down the road, who did not approve of an uneducated, common country boy from Stratford holding the reigns of the theatre world in London (Bentley 93-94).

At the age of eighteen Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, a woman of Stratford eight years his senior and also four months pregnant with his child. He had three children with her; one named Hamnet died at the age of eleven. Shakespeare did not stay in Stratford long, however. He spent most of his adult life writing, directing and acting in London (Chambers 134-141).
Shakespeare’s theatrical career in London was successful. Theatre companies, like many trades, struggled to endure in the Elizabethan and Jacobean world – most went bankrupt within several years, and only three or four survived at least two decades. Shakespeare’s company remained for almost fifty years (Bentley 88). His troupes often performed for the monarchs Elizabeth I and James I, and in 1603 his King’s Men became the official court players, sporting the “royal livery of red doublet, hose and cloak” (Ackroyd 417).

Shakespeare died on his birthday at the age of 53. Two former colleagues circulated the first collection of his plays, the Folio, seven years later in 1623. It included thirty-six plays. A thirty-seventh, Pericles, was most likely a collaborative venture, and it joined the other plays in later editions. Shakespeare was also the author of over 150 sonnets and several narrative poems (Barnet, “Overview” xvii-xviii).

Peter Ackroyd acknowledged Shakespeare as a “master dramatist who was also a consummately practical man of the theatre – or, rather, he was a master dramatist because he was a practical man of the theatre” (Ackroyd 270). Shakespeare knew the inclinations of the human soul – he knew what would make his audience giggle, cry, guffaw and cower in terror. And he knew how to make a profit. Ackroyd continued:

We also have the interesting spectacle of an utterly practical and business-like man who was able to create a world of passion and of dream. That is perhaps the greatest mystery of all. He had within himself legions. He saw the human truth in any argument or controversy. All the evidence of his plays suggest that if he expressed a truth, or even an opinion, an opposing truth or opinion would
then occur to him – to which he would immediately give assent. That was for him the natural condition of being a dramatist (Ackroyd 193).

II. *King Lear* in History

A. Dates of Composition and Sources

Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* between 1603 and 1606. Its printers, Nathaniel Butter and John Busby, entered the play into the Stationers’ Register on November 26, 1607 (Harrison 349). Four years earlier, Samuel Harsnett published a treatise attacking the practice of exorcism performed by Catholic priests called *A Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures* in March 1603. Because Edgar as Poor Tom evokes the names of the devils Harsnett used in his treatise, Russell Fraser marks 1603 as *Lear’s* earliest possible date of composition. *Lear’s* terminal date of composition is in 1606, as Edward Sharpham seems to have imitated Shakespeare’s Kent-donning-disguise scene in his play *The Fleer*, registered May 13 of that year (Fraser, “Date and Sources” 156).

The Stationers’ Register indicates a registration of a play (perhaps authored by Michel Drayton or Thomas Heywood or others) “sundry times lately acted” in May of 1605 called *The true chronicle history of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella* (Stationers Register 123). Philip Henslowe noted the performance of *Leir* by the Queen’s Men in April 1593 and again in April 1594, though it was not recorded until 1605 (Henslowe 21). Kenneth Muir believed Shakespeare actually played Perillus (Kent) in the Queen’s Men’s production.

Frank Kermode observed that most scholars lean towards the belief that someone decided to publish his *King Leir* in hopes of riding the coattails of Shakespeare’s success
with Lear (whose actors, if that assertion is true, were already treading the boards of the London stage) (Kermode 1297-98).

There may also be a real-life precedent for the play. In 1604, two daughters of an old courtier in London “suffering from senility,” stripped him of his rights and declared him insane. His third daughter, Cordell, enlisted the help of Lord Cecil to return her father’s assets to himself, and eventually she inherited her father’s property upon his death shortly after. Such a story likely made its way around the gossip circles of London, perhaps all the way into Shakespeare’s receptive ears. It is possible that this popular bit of news incited Shakespeare to write his own version (Mueller 305).

Whether Shakespeare wrote King Lear in 1603, 1604, 1605 or 1606, it is certain that Shakespeare was a master of imitation. He was a shrewd businessman who did not worry about inventing brand new stories to bedazzle the Elizabethan masses; nor did he simply slap down a mediocre piece of imitation for his players to perform. Shakespeare had an incredible talent of taking a familiar story and turning it into poetry, for “somehow, in the alchemy of his imagination, all seems changed. Words and cadences, when they pass through the medium of Shakespeare, are charged with superabundant life” (Ackroyd 256). In other words, Shakespeare had the gift of making a story epic, creating fantastic imagery for his audience and eliciting strong pathos from his crowd with the words he chose.

Shakespeare did not invent the King Lear plot. In fact, the story has existed since the 12th century. In the following pages, I will examine several Lear stories that came before Shakespeare’s, focusing on the character of Cordelia. By examining Cordelia’s various incarnations from the 12th century to Shakespeare’s time, I will show how
Cordelia is not a stagnant character; she evolves, or rather, she devolves. She is a complex character full of woe and emotion in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s version, but by the time we get to Shakespeare’s Cordelia, she is much more one-dimensional and a more “perfect” woman. As an actor playing Cordelia, it is disappointing that she lost these complex, more “human” qualities along the way.

The tale of King Lear first appeared in literature in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s 12th century account, *Historia Regum Britanniae*. In this monk’s story, Lear reigns over Britain and has three daughters: Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. Lear loves all his daughters but he loves kind Cordelia the most. The aging Lear wants to divide his kingdom among his daughters and their potential husbands. He sets up a love-test for his daughters, asking them to tell him the extent of their love. Goneril and Regan flatter him with grandeur assurances of their love, but Cordelia, unnerved by the falsities of her sisters, does not flatter her father, but simply states that she loves him as a daughter should love a father (Monmouth 36-37).

Lear angrily divides his kingdom between Goneril and Regan and leaves Cordelia nothing. Soon after, Aganippus, King of Franks, who has heard of Cordelia’s beauty, beseeches Leir for Cordelia’s hand in marriage. Lear responds that he would inherit nothing, but Agannipus marries Cordelia *sans* dowry anyway (Monmouth 38).

Years pass, and Goneril and Regan, with their husbands, rob Lear of his retinue and power, to which Lear, bitter and despondent, humbly travels to Gaul to implore Cordelia’s aid. Lear, Cordelia, and Agannipus soon invade Britain and battle against the armies of Lear’s sons-in-law. The former party wins, and Lear regains authority as the rightful King of England. He soon dies, followed by Agannipus, and Cordelia becomes
Queen. She rules for five years before being overtaken by Regan and Goneril’s sons. They throw her in prison, and, struck with grief, she kills herself (Monmouth 38-43).

Shakespeare borrowed heavily from Monmouth’s work. Besides the sub-plot of Gloucester and his sons, Shakespeare’s story is basically the same as the monk’s tale. As in Shakespeare’s Lear, Monmouth presents Cordelia as a kind but firmly honest being. When she refuses to flatter her father, she says, “Is there a daughter anywhere that presumeth to love her father more than a father? For myself, I have ever loved thee as a father, nor never from that love will I be turned aside” (Monmouth 37). In Shakespeare’s Lear, Cordelia uses exactly the same sentiment but with different words: “I love your Majesty according to my bond, no more, nor less” (Lr. 1.1.94).

Cordelia’s husband is the King of Gaul/France in both versions and takes Cordelia without a dowry. Aganippus is a particularly interesting man, as compared to the noble and tender-hearted King of France in Shakespeare’s Lear, for Aganippus was not taken by Cordelia’s virtuous speech or seized with pity by her orphaned state as was France; Aganippus was, rather, bewitched by her beauty, eager to provide heirs for Gaul, and “on fire with love of the damsel” (Monmouth 38). Aganippus wanted a hot wife and an even hotter bed. I prefer Aganippus.

The biggest difference between the two versions is when tragedy occurs. In Shakespeare’s Lear, Cordelia dies in prison (like in Monmouth’s version), but she dies because of Edmund’s orders. In the monk’s tale, Lear and Cordelia enjoy peace and prosperity, and Cordelia even rules England for a time. But she still dies, in both versions, before her time.
Monmouth does note Cordelia’s compassion and loyalty, but he presents a darker, more raw version of Cordelia. Cordelia does not come to England to save her father, as in *Leir*. She does not give him aid until he asks her for it. Imagine that Regan and Goneril lived in relative peace with their father, and he never journeyed to see his youngest daughter. Perhaps then she never would have journeyed to see him. Shakespeare certainly made his Cordelia more actively forgiving, more virtuous and less embittered.

Monmouth also exposes her darker side at the end of his story. When her nephews throw her in prison, she does not go calmly and bravely into captivity as she does in Shakespeare’s *Leir*, save for sadness over her father’s state: “For thee oppressed King, am I cast down; Myself could else out-frown false fortune’s frown” (Lr. 5.3.5-6). Monmouth’s Cordelia, captured and despairing, rages against the powers that be, and she chooses death over remaining subservient to the villains that overpowered her.

From Geoffrey’s account in the 12th century until the Renaissance, Lear’s perilous journey presented itself in some fifty stories. Among those to recount the tale were John Higgins in *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), Raphael Holinshed in *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577), William Warner in *Albion’s England* (1586), Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* Book II (1590) and the previously mentioned *The true chronicle history of King Leir* (performed in the 1590s).

In *A Mirror for Magistrates*, Higgins, as the poet, tells the story from Queen Cordila’s point of view. Higgins’ tale is much like Monmouth’s (and Shakespeare’s): Leir devises a love test for his daughters, and Cordila ignores the chance to flatter her
father for the exact same reasons she uses in *Lear*: “For nature so doth bind and dutie me compel, To love you, as I ought my father, well” (Higgins 61).

Cordila is an extension of Monmouth’s Cordelia and less like Shakespeare’s heroine: she is a bold, bitter and tortured soul. Higgins writes of Cordila’s banishment to France, and as in Monmouth’s version, she does not come back to England to save her father. Leire, robbed of his retinue and his dignity, treks to France to enlist the help of Cordila and her husband Aganippus (who, seemingly less lustier than Monmouth’s prince, fell in love with Cordila’s “noble virtues”) (Higgins 61). The three win back Leire’s throne, and after he (and later Aganippus) dies, Cordila inherits the crown.

The story takes a macabre turn. The villainous sons of Gonerell and Ragan seize the throne and throw Cordila in prison to die. Cordila, suffering from her loss of liberty, paints a vivid and morose picture of her suffering: of the “vermine flore,” of the “lothesome smell,” of “more distresse than any wretch alive” (Higgins 65). She eventually lies on the floor, resolved never to rise again. In her delirium of death, Cordila sees a ghostly vision named Despaire, “thy friend,” who gives her the choice of many weapons so that Cordila may put a quick end to her suffering. Cordila chooses a knife, but is hesitant. Despaire charges her to look back on her life. She had a loving husband, faithful courtiers, and a prosperous reign. She was happy. Now Cordila lives in squalor, forced to eat “moldy meates [her] mouth did hate” (Higgins 66-67).

Cordila makes a final plea to the gods to revenge those who brought her ruin, to grant her foes “immortal strife,” after which she plunges the knife into her breast (Higgins 68). Cordila spends her final moments seeped in thoughts of revenge. Shakespeare’s Cordelia - quick to forgive, begging the gods for healing and never
revenge - would never have done this. Higgin’s Cordila exhibits a much more vulnerable character: a woman scorned, who does not descend elegantly and heroically into death, but who kicks and screams and curses until her dying breath.

Holinhed’s tale of Lear mirrors almost exactly the stories of Monmouth and Higgins. Holinhed’s Cordeilla also uses the same genuine reason, as the previous Cordelias do, in explaining her love for her father: “I have loved you ever, and will continuallie (while I live) love you as my naturall father” (Holinhed 13). In this story, Cordeilla is a lovely soul, virtuous and honest. Lear travels to Gallia to beg her forgiveness, and Aganippus, Lear, and Cordeilla journey back to England, where they win the battle against the wicked daughters and their husbands. Lear rules for a short while longer, Cordeilla takes the crown, and some time later her nephews imprison her, “disdaining to be under the government of a woman” (Holinhed 13). Holinhed mentions only briefly Cordeilla’s time in prison, but she meets the same fate as Higgins’ Cordila – she suffers in isolation and then kills herself.

Warner does not mention Cordella’s death. He ends his story of Leir with the mention of Cordella’s crowning as Queene, but he also adds that she reigned for but a brief period, and that her nephews were set to “warre on her” (Warner 66), so we can safely assume that if Warner had chosen to continue the story, we would read of Cordella’s imprisonment and her ultimate death. Warner’s tale is the same as Holinhed’s narrative, save for Cordella’s time in prison. Cordella again uses her “according to my bond” logic when she states that her love “was such as did a child behave, And that how much himself was worth, so much she him did love” (Warner 65).
From the stories we have covered, then, it is obvious that Cordelia’s method of reasoning for abstaining to flatter her father was not an original idea of Shakespeare’s.

But what can explain the death Shakespeare’s Cordelia endured? Spenser’s account of Cordeill in *The Faerie Queene* is the same as the rest: Cordeill chooses sincerity over flattery, Lear travels humbly to France, and her nephews, “wozen strong through proud ambition” (Spenser 354), strip away her crown and banish her to prison. In Spenser’s story, however, Cordeill hangs herself in prison, and this plot detail became the inspiration for Cordelia’s death in Shakespeare’s *Lear*.

Of these stories, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* remains the only stage play, and also the most uplifting. *Leir* parallels Shakespeare’s tale in many ways, but *Leir* is closer to a fairy tale than a tragedy. This story contains wicked sisters, love at first sight, a victorious battle and a happy ending. Yet *Leir*’s Cordella and Shakespeare’s Cordelia are extremely similar. Though Cordella curses her sisters’ falsities and her father’s fallacies in the beginning of the play, her anger fades as she pines for her father’s forgiveness, though she knows his scorn was unjustified. She prays to God to ease her pain: “Bare foote I would on pilgrimage set forth,” “abstayne from any nutryment” and a “sackcloth weare,” just to see her father again (*Leir G*). In this story, we see a softer, more maternal, and more forgiving Cordella than ever before: the closest model of Shakespeare’s loving heroine.

Leir, badly battered from lack of food and shelter, Cordella and her new husband (disguised as country folk) meet near the seaside, and Cordella takes her father in and provides for him food and drink. A beautiful scene of redemption and forgiveness follows, and soon after, Lear is re-instated. The good triumph and the evil fall.
Though Cordella is noble and virtuous, Shakespeare’s Cordelia reigns in goodness. In *Lear*, once Cordelia hears of Lear’s mistreatment, she summons an army, crosses the Channel, searches for her father, and, once she finds him, nurses him back to health. None of the formerly mentioned Cordelias do this. Lear, instead, is the one who makes the journey. Each time, he is the one who beseeches Cordelia’s help. In *Lear*, however, Cordelia foregoes all comfort and safety in an effort to save her father. She is the first one to make a move, the first one to forgive. She knows not if her father will forgive her, nor does she care. His rescue is first in her mind.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare’s Cordelia takes action for the right reasons, and that her virtue is incredible. I bemoan a loss, nevertheless, of his heroine’s failure to explore onstage the emotions so common in the human experience. I can only imagine the dark places the mind may take someone while he or she is contemplating suicide. In *Lear*, Cordelia’s fall is tragic, certainly, but the audience never gets to see her wrestle with her inner vices, see her nerves exposed, or see her in a selfish, unrestrained moment. Even at her lowest, we see a Cordelia full of grace, composure, and compassion. Such behavior is certainly admirable, but I’m afraid it affects the depth of connection an audience member can have for a character so essentially *good*. As a modern audience, we desire to see characters on stage who make mistakes, who have foibles, because to err is essentially a *human* condition, and the ability to connect with characters like us can beneficially strengthen our bond with the play.

Part of the problem lies with the size of the role Cordelia has in *Lear*. She is a large presence in the accounts of Monmouth, Warner, Holinshed, Spenser, *Leir*, and she is even the title character and focus of Higgins’ tale. When she appears in Shakespeare’s
version, however, her role is greatly diminished. Cordelia has a little over one hundred lines (many of which were omitted in the UNL production), and she spends most of her time off-stage. Symbolically, her function in the story is huge: she represents infallible virtue so amiss in Lear, the lack of which leads to his downfall. Why then is her role so small in this epically large play?

The Jacobean theatre banned women from the stage. Acting troupes were composed only of men, and when the play called for a female role, boy actors answered the call. These boy actors were most often pre-pubescent, with voices that had not yet broken. Because of their higher voice and their smaller size, the theatre deemed them suitable for female roles. Theatre troupes, however, endured a high turn-over rate with boy actors because they kept “outgrowing” their roles, so troupes were constantly exposed to boys who were very green in terms of stage, and possibly life, experience. Playwrights thus had to assure that the female roles were small and simple enough for boys to handle. Most Shakespeare plays boast ten to twenty named parts for men, while females receive only two to four named parts (Bentley 125-126).

James Hill wrote that contemporary audiences are conditioned to expect plays that delve into human psychology. Shakespeare vividly examined the “inner life” too, but only through his male characters like Hamlet or Macbeth. Modern playwrights such as Ibsen, Shaw and O’Neill wrote their female parts for actresses whom they knew could play the mature and complex roles demanded by a full exploration of the female psyche. With his pre-pubescent boy actors, Shakespeare did not have that advantage, thus he “was forced to treat the anomalous Cordelia [and the other ladies] in much simpler terms” (Hill 235).
Female roles could not show much character development because of the common inexperience and inability of the boys to effectively show character complexities. Shakespeare “could not, as a rule, entrust the leading role to a boy actor” (Bentley 126).

There are, however, four plays in Shakespeare’s repertory that boast female roles as the leads: Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Imogen in *Cymbeline*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Helena in *All’s Well That Ends Well* (Bentley 125-126). Note that none of these plays are classified in Shakespeare’s repertoire as tragedies. Typically, characters in comedies are less complex (at least their emotional journeys are usually simpler) than those in tragedies, and in Shakespeare’s plays the same rule applies. The characters, male or female, in his comedies are generally simple and rather undeveloped, which explains Shakespeare’s likely ease with giving larger parts to his boy actors: less was demanded of them (Hill 237).

Gerald Bentley wrote that although Shakespeare’s women are basically stereotypes, it certainly does not mean that Shakespeare held an ignorant, one-dimensional opinion of them. He was “writing for the London stage, not striving to present a rounded picture of Elizabethan life for posterity” (Bentley 128). Women characters generally took a backseat, in terms of role size, because they could not appear on stage. Boy actors had to be the next best thing.

Cordelia’s diminished role size in Shakespeare’s *Lear* could also be explained by the addition of the Gloucester and sons sub-plot, influenced by Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia*, written in 1590. Walter Wilson Greg argued that the full text of *King Lear* (including Cordelia’s tiny part) was too long to be shown on the Jacobean stage uncut.
Shakespeare most likely cut some of the scenes (hence the Folio version) to shorten the play’s running time (Greg 95-96). Perhaps he determined that if he kept Cordelia’s role as large as it was in previous stories and added the characters of Gloucester, Edgar, and Edmund, the show would run entirely too long, and Londoners might then be more tempted to trade their attention to the stage for a mug of ale and a meat pie.

**B. Premier Performance**

The Stationers’ Register, which recorded the publication rights of *King Lear*, also noted its first recorded performance: “upon S. Stephan’s night at Christmas past” - December 26, 1606 in court at Whitehall (Stationers Register 161). Prior to their performance at court for the king, the Queen’s Men mostly likely performed *King Lear* for weeks or months at the Globe (Leggatt xv). Scholars can only speculate about the cast – though most agree that Richard Burbage, the leading man of the troupe, played Lear, as his epitaph of 1619 lists “‘kind Lear’ among his finest roles” (Wells 56). Robert Armin, a “melancholy type of singing comedian,” most likely played the Fool, while a boy actor played Cordelia (Bentley 129). Peter Ackroyd suggested that Shakespeare might have played the character of Albany (Ackroyd 234). We do know that in May of 1603, newly crowned James I made Shakespeare’s troupe the official players of the Court, and the King’s license named these men: “Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, Augustyne Phillipes, John Heninges, Henrie Condell, William Sly, Robert Armyn, and Richard Cowly” (Harrison 30). These men, except for Phillips who died in 1605, most likely composed the cast of *King Lear*.

Scholars do not know much about how audiences received the play, but we can make some probable assumptions. London performers had been telling the story of King
Lear since the 1590s. Recall that the Register also noted that it was “sundry times lately acted” (Stationers Register 123). By the time Shakespeare wrote his story, many people in the city were most likely very familiar with Leir.

In late 1606, Shakespeare was already a renowned playwright in London. He had critics, like any writer, but Shakespeare impressed far more than he disappointed. In 1598, Frances Meres praised Shakespeare’s “hony-tongue” and wrote that “as Epius Stolo said of Plato, so I say that the Muses would speak with Shakespeare’s fine filed phrase, if they would speake English.” He hailed the works of Romeo and Juliet, The Merchant of Venice, A Midsummer Nights Dream, Titus Andronicus and several more (Meres 281-282). William Camden noted Shakespeare in 1605 as one of the “most pregnant witts of these times, whom succeeding ages may justly admire” (Camden 8).

When King Lear came to the London stage, audiences most likely eagerly anticipated Shakespeare’s next great work. We can only imagine how surprised they might have been to see this familiar story, once a romance, now a tragedy. The audience may have been surprised, but they probably found it poignant, pitiable, and brilliant, for in the years following, Shakespeare’s audience continued to commend his work.

In 1610, John Davies of Hereford hailed Shakespeare as the “English Terence,” with a “raigning Wit” (Davies 76). John Webster admired Shakespeare’s “worthy Labours” and success, calling his industry “right happy and copious” (qtd. in Chambers 210). Nineteen years after Shakespeare’s death, Thomas Heywood wrote of “Mellifluous Shake-speare, whose inchanting Quill Commanded Mirth or Passion” (Heywood 206). It is thus reasonable to conclude that since Shakespeare’s contemporaries and those after his
death continued to hold him in high esteem, *King Lear* did nothing to alter his good reputation.

Another clue we have to the success of *King Lear* is a ballad entitled “A Lamentable Song of the Death of King Lear and his Three Daughters” in *The golden garland of princely pleasures and delicate delights* by Richard Johnson. Thomas Langley published Johnson’s songbook in 1620, but Stanley Wells speculates that it was sung and performed much earlier (Wells 57). The ballad’s plot follows closer to the older tales (from Holinshed or Warner) than Shakespeare’s *Lear*, and in the end, Lear and all his daughters die in battle. But its presence suggests that *King Lear* was favored enough to have influenced a song echoing the streets of London for many years (Johnson A2-A6).

It is evident that *King Lear* was a popular play for the general population of London, but perhaps more importantly, did King James I like it? It was, after all, first performed for him at Whitehall in December of 1606. There is no reason to doubt that King James was anything but satisfied with the players. They wore his royal livery, and they continued to perform for him in the continuing years. Shakespeare would have known better than to write any play that challenged the authority of a king so intent on ruling by the “Trew Law” of monarchies (James 62). He was more likely, in fact, to write plays that played to the biases of his patron, which is just what he did. In *King Lear*, and other Shakespeare plays of the Jacobean era, we see several hints that Shakespeare wrote to please his King.

We can imagine that James pitied the victimized and dejected Lear, a noble king whose own daughters deemed him unfit for rule and took away all of his powers. We can
imagine that James hated Goneril and Regan and cheered for Cordelia who fought for Lear’s reclamation of the crown.

King James was a dogged believer in the notion of divine right. He believed that there was one being supreme to the King, and that being was God. Be grateful, he wrote to his son in Basilikon Doron, that God “made you a little God to sit on his Throne, and rule over other men” (James 12). James, a Protestant, was suspicious of Church officials who tried to assert their powers over the Church, and he especially detested the Catholic Church and those who believed that the Pope was the head of the Church, not the Monarch.

James professed kingly authority using Biblical scriptures in Trew Law, claiming that King David of the Old Testament called kings Gods on earth, asserting that “Monarchie is the trew paterne of Divinitie.” It is our duty as Kings, he wrote, to “maintaine the Religion presently professed within their countrie” (James 64).

Alvin Kernan argues that Shakespeare did not approve of divine rule but instead casts a shadow upon the notion: that Lear (a “trew” monarch) was selfish and self-destructive, and this behavior led to nothing but disaster (Kernan 98). Shakespeare, however, most likely read or heard of King James’ distinction between “good Kings” and “usurping Tyran[s]” and chose to suggest that Lear experienced tragedy because he was a not a “good King” (James 21).

Good monarchs, wrote James, look after their children with patience, and that if a child “offendeth,” the father should respond with “fatherly chastisement seasoned with pitie” (James 65). A good monarch is not a “prey to his passions” as characterized by a
Tyran [sic]. A good king is calm and “emploieth all his studie and paines” to judge and rule rightly and fairly. A good king, he wrote, “dieth in peace” (James 21).

Perhaps one could argue that, encouraged by the stir of the dead Cordelia’s lips, Lear dies in peace, attaining a sort of spiritual redemption. I disagree. He has endured physical and emotional pain, betrayal by two unloving daughters, loss of power, and imprisonment. “Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life, And thou no breath at all?” he howls right before his heart stops (Lr. 5.3.308-309). He is maddened with sadness by the death of his beloved daughter, and he dies in anguish, not peace.

Lear also did not “emploieth all his studie and paines” to make decisions. He was, in fact, a “prey to his passions” when he banished Cordelia for “Nothing,” and he did not embody a rational father “seasoned with pitie.” Lear is a “Tyran,” and thus it is believable that Shakespeare could have used Lear as an example of a “bad” king in order to support James’ beliefs of how a King should rule.

Cordelia is another example of how Shakespeare endorses the concept of divine rule. In Basilikon Doron, James relished the bonds a parent can have with a child. He warned his son, however, that mistreatment of parents by their children was a “monstrous” and unpardonable crime (James 23). The “bad” ones, Regan and Goneril, scoff at respect that children should have for their parents. They ignore the King’s “trew paterne of Divinitie,” and they seek his ruin.

Sweet Cordelia, however, arrives to save the day. She unfortunately does not succeed in saving much of anything, not even her life, but the important thing to note is her stance on the divine right of Kings. Even though her father banishes her with scarring protestations of hate, she returns to save him. She loves him and honors the
parental bond James preached of, and she knows her sole mission is to fight for Lear’s reclamation of his God-given right: the Crown. When she spots him in the heath in Scene 4 of Act 4, she declares to her absent father that “it is thy business that I go about.” Her reasons: “love, dear love, and our aged father’s right.” Cordelia is Shakespeare’s conduit for securing the approval of James by appealing to the King’s very firm and public beliefs.

C. Performance History

After the premier performance for King James, the King’s Men continued to perform King Lear, though performance references are few throughout the 17th century. Alexander Leggatt suggested it is possible that it was not one of the more popular plays of Shakespeare’s repertoire (Leggatt xv). One must take into account, however, the eruption of the civil war in England in 1642, during which Parliament closed the theatres for almost twenty years. With the restoration of the crown to Charles II in 1660, the theatres re-opened and women were allowed on the English stage (Bellinger 249-250).

England was slow to accept English women on the stage compared to her European neighbors. In France, Spain, and Italy, female thespians performed since the late 16th century (Howe 19). English audiences, in both private and public settings, were not entirely ignorant of female performers; occasionally Italian troupes, which boasted female actors would tour the country (Orgel 9). When Charles II came to power, he welcomed women to the stage. So what prompted this change?

Perhaps blame it in part on the inevitable aging of the “boy” actors. Remember that the theatre was closed for almost twenty years during Parliamentary rule. In 1643, publishers circulated a pamphlet entitled An Actor’s Remonstrance, which suggested that
during this period of theatrical drought, experienced boy actors grew into men with no opportunities to train new boys; thus they grew “out of use like crackt organ pipes, and had “faces as old as our flags” (qtd. in Gilder 137).

Aging was no excuse for Colley Cibber, who doubted the abilities of boy actors to convincingly portray female roles, calling them “ungain Hoydens” who could only show so much “Grace” and “Master Strokes of Action” (Cibber 55).

Some citizens of the time, however, believed boy actors to be just as capable as playing complex and challenging roles as women. After watching the King’s Men perform _Othello_ in 1610, one awed spectator was moved by the believability of Desdemona’s death, and her face [the boy actor’s] “implored the pity of the audience” (qtd. in Howe 20).

Edward Kynaston, still performing in August of 1660, was one of the last celebrated boy actors (Gilder 140). John Downes, a theatre prompter, saw Kynaston perform, and later gushed in _Roscius Anglicanus_ that Kynaston radiated more passion and beauty than any other female actresses that succeeded him (Downes 46).

Most likely, argues Elizabeth Howe, the shift of women’s cultural roles impacted the shift from boy to female favor in theatre. Society in late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries tended to restrain the expression of female sexuality and its representation upon the stage. After the Restoration, the knot loosened as women gained a more powerful role and individuality, not in the public sphere, but in domestic life, as they took more control as “head of household” (Howe 21). The “infinite variety of the theatre, and the infinite variety of the seductress” thus evolved to be “celebrated rather than condemned” (Maus 609).
We must also take into account the increasing involvement of the ladies of the court, beginning in the early seventeenth century, with entertainments such as masques. Queene Anne and her ladies performed in several masques of Ben Johnson and Inigo Jones. In 1626, Charles I’s wife, Henrietta Maria, took the stage with a leading role in a French pastoral comedy (Howe 21). As with any culture, society tends to follow the lead of what the patricians do, and with theatre, it is no different. These royal ladies, performing for the private court, paved the way for the acceptance of female actors on the public stage once the Restoration let them act.

Charles II was also a lover of entertainment. During the Interregnum, he and his court spent much time at the public theatre in Paris, at venues where women actors openly, and with much applaud, performed. When England restored Charles II in 1660, it seemed natural that such a theatre lover, exposed to women’s presence in theatre, would now allow them to act on the English stage (Howe 23).

Charles II was selective when he granted licenses for the re-opening of theatres. He only allowed two theatres to open, run by two of his close colleagues: William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew. Both managers thus set out to train a handful of actresses, and Mary Saunderson was among the lucky few (Howe 23-24).

Mary Saunderson, later Mrs. Betterton, assumed the role of Cordelia in the Dorset Garden production of 1675 (Halio 97). She was best-known playing tragic ingénues and admired for her portrayals of virtuous women (Howe 74).

In 1681, Nahum Tate introduced London to his re-writing of the play, in which the story was sans fool, Cordelia married Edgar, and Lear reclaimed his throne. Elizabeth Barry, a beloved actress of the time, played Cordelia. At this time, her renown
off stage was arguably as sensational as her on stage work. She was considered a particularly licentious woman (though there is little proof) with a flamboyant and combative nature (Howe 30). One account claims that while on stage as Cordelia, Barry spoke, “Arm’d in my Virgin Innocence I’ll fly,” to which the audience, familiar with her promiscuous reputation, responded with a “Horse-laugh” (Howe 103).

Barry’s social reputation aside, audiences thought she was dazzling. Those who wrote about her acting praised her natural ability to not only speak with a commanding resonance, but to change “like Nature which she represents, from Passion to Passion, from Extream to Extream, with pericing Force, and easie Grace,” while changing the “Hearts of all who see her with irresistible Pleasure” (Dennis Preface).

Tate, wanting to highlight Barry’s talents and keep her on stage as much as possible, seemed to take the lead from the old authors of Leir and changed the focus back on Cordelia. Instead of leaving for France for the bulk of the play, Cordelia instead searched for her father in England, coming into contact with other major characters, such as Gloucester and Edgar. (Howe 119-120)

Samuel Johnson defended this version against an audience who might insist that with a happy ending, the play loses half its beauty. “But since all reasonable beings naturally love justice,” Johnson wrote, “I cannot easily be persuaded, that the observation of justice makes a play worse; or, that if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue” (Johnson 189). Johnson was clearly not the only one who supported Tate’s version, for it was so popular that it superseded Shakespeare’s Lear on the London stage for the next 150 years (Halio 35).
In his production of 1838, William Macready restored Shakespeare’s Lear: he brought the Fool back to the stage (played by a woman), deleted the love story, and revived the tragic ending (Green 272).

Hundreds of doomed Cordelias have tred the boards since Macready re-instated Shakespeare as Lear’s primary author. Companies globally have performed King Lear on stage and in film in many different languages. I will only focus, however, on English-speaking actors who have portrayed Cordelia recently and consider how their performances tie in with my own appearance as Cordelia in the fall of 2009.

Tonia Chauvet played Cordelia at Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London of 2001. Chauvet’s Cordelia confused Stanton Garner, who found her motivations unclear, and the actor herself “verbally awkward and physically inhibited” (Garner 139). Other reviewers, such as those from The Independent and What’s On Stage.com, do not mention Chauvet’s Cordelia at all (Taylor “King Lear, Shakespeare’s Globe, London”; Cooter “King Lear (Globe)”).

Claire Jullien played Cordelia at the Lincoln Center in 2004. She did not receive bad reviews necessarily, but critics did not think she was that good, either. She was just...there. Elyse Sommer was unimpressed by Jullien’s boring and bland character. Sommer wondered what made Cordelia so special that Lear loves her most (Sommer “King Lear”).

Ben Brantley was slightly annoyed by Jullien’s “sober-eyed” Cordelia, whom he deemed a “prig” (Brantley “Theatre Review: A Fiery Fall”). Matthew Murray thought Jullien played her character sufficiently, but she was mainly overshadowed by Lear’s powerful presence (Murray “King Lear”).
Kristen Bush played Cordelia in 2007 at the Public Theatre. Bush, like Jullien, was not condemned as a bad actor. Reviewers just had a hard time caring about her character. David Finkle thought she was a bit bland. He wrote that Bush, lacking in personality, did not command much concern from him, and that she had no “distinguishing regality” (Finkle “King Lear”). Hilton Als deemed her “barely noticeable” (Als “Kings and Kingmakers”).

Ben Brantley was not a fan of the entire production, writing, “I have never seen one that left me so utterly unmoved or that seemed so perversely out of touch with the play’s soul-wrenching depths as this whimsical storybook interpretation.” Cordelia, he felt, suffered from the princess complex: she was spoiled and smug, and because of that, well-deserved of banishment. “All of the girls are pills,” he wrote, “but Cordelia is the hardest to swallow” (Brantley “Howl?”). At least Levi Asher thought Bush’s performance “likeable,” but he is clearly among the few fans (Asher “Kevin Kline”).

Romola Garei also played Cordelia in 2007 at the Royal Shakespeare Company opposite Ian McKellan, who received rave reviews. Laura Hitchcock called Garei “beautiful and passionate” (Hitchcock “King Lear in Los Angeles”), but others were not so impressed. Natasha Hay found Garei’s “unusually headstrong” obstinacy in Scene 1 unnerving, and she was equally unnerved by the piercing and grating tone of Garei’s voice (Hay “Return of the King”). The same vocal quality bothered David Benedict, who found her “increasingly strained tones” in the Lear reunion scene quite displeasing, but he applauded McKellan, who carried the scene quite easily without Cordelia’s help. Wrote Benedict, “the affecting tenderness of being finally reunited with him [Lear] is down not to her [Cordelia’s] increasingly strained tones but the sweet grace of McKellen's broken
majesty” (Benedict “King Lear/The Seagull”). Simon Thomas also noted Garei’s “whiny” character, but since her role was small, her shortcomings did not affect the other sensational performances from the rest of the cast (Thomas “King Lear”).

Laura Odeh passed the “critic exam” with her performance at the Shakespeare Theatre in 2009. She played “with equal parts passion and steel,” wrote Peter Marks (Marks “A Magnificent ‘King Lear’”). Trey Graham admired this “steelier” Cordelia who appropriately and understandably refused to flatter her father not in a gentle, sincere way, but with the “pious rectitude of a daughter who’s none too sure the paterfamilias deserves to have his praises sung in public” (Graham “Reviewed”: Shakespeare Theatre Company’s”).

When Odeh performed the role three years prior in Chicago (under the same direction of Robert Falls), she was admired for playing “not the usual pure soul” with complexity and a toughness not often seen in portrayals of her role (Jones “Extreme ‘Lear’ “). Rory Leahy praised Odeh’s “standout” performance, noting Odeh’s cleverness in emphasizing Cordelia’s “mettle and integrity over saintly sweetness” (Leahy “King Lear”).

Individual opinions are by nature subjective, but there some interesting similarities among these modern portrayals of Cordelia. Many critics do not like the performances from actors who played Cordelia, and the critics echo a common cry: she’s boring, she’s bland, she’s a “prig,” or she’s just unnoticeable.

Let me re-address the lack of commentary on Tonia Chauvet by several critics. Chauvet was not the only one to be overlooked. I noticed the same trend with many other modern Cordelias; she often is never mentioned in reviews. Cordelia’s role is small, yet
she plays a large role in the unfolding of the story; it seems unlikely that an audience would disregard her character. Is it perhaps that modern audiences find Cordelia so good that she becomes uninteresting, or irritatingly virtuous?

I believe they do. And to figure out why, we must consider contemporary expectations of theatre. Recall that we touched on the efforts of playwrights such as Ibsen, Shaw and O’Neill, who wrote complex parts for the “modern” woman. These authors were all emerging Realists who sought to portray life on stage as it was in real life. They were also relative contemporaries of Stanislavski, who revolutionized the actors’ approach to character. Stanislavski encouraged actors to examine their complex psychologies and to find realistic characters who pursued truthful objectives. What we see on stage and film today is a direct result of the Stanislavski “system.”

In the “pre-Stanislavski” world, especially in the time of Shakespeare, audiences were more concerned with the “moral dimensions of character,” that is, the characters were defined by the kind of moral choices they made (Hill 236). Arthur Sewell supported this same theory, and he wrote that the best way to understand Shakespeare’s characters was to use Elizabethan psychology over modern psychology. Elizabethan psychology, he wrote, was determined by the morals a character chose to embrace or ignore (Sewell 10); thus when Cordelia makes clear-cut moral choices (towards virtue), we judge her to be a “good” character, just as we deem Regan and Goneril “bad” when they make choices that seem to blaspheme morality.

Remember too that while Shakespeare presented tragic male characters (such as Hamlet and Macbeth) as complex as Hedda Gabler or Nora Helmer, he did not give his tragic female characters similar inner complexities likely because of the limits of his boy
actors. They had to be more one-dimensional, and this probably satisfied historical audiences.

III. Cordelia

This next section focuses on the character of Cordelia using the “Stanislavski” approach to character. Many teachers may train an actor in many different ways, but a large number of modern acting schools tend to rely most on the Stanislavski system. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, my acting teachers based their curriculum on Stanislavski, and the Johnny Carson School asserts the same Stanislavski “doctrine.”

I must admit it has been extremely difficult to connect Stanislavski to Shakespeare while taking on such a role as Cordelia, who, as research claims, is about as one-dimensional as they come. We do not even know if the Stanislavski method is even the best way to approach Shakespeare in general. David Mamet denounces the Stanislavski method completely and the “art” of “becoming” a character as ludicrous (Mamet 6-16). Bertram Joseph wrote that modern audiences tend to judge Elizabethan theatre with the same criteria as we judge contemporary theatre, by passing judgments based on realism and naturalism. This is unadvisable and ignorant, he believed, because “we have not been able to arrive at a clear understanding of the principles governing the Elizabethans in their art” (Joseph 115).

I have my own doubts as to the true effectiveness of the “system,” for in my experience, Stanislavski techniques have distracted rather than aided me. But I can only use the knowledge to which I have been most exposed, so what follows is an exploration
of Cordelia’s relationships, feelings and motivations that one must consider if one chooses to follow the general influences of Stanislavski. The text below makes up both pre-rehearsal and post-rehearsal observations.

Cordelia is the youngest and favorite daughter of her father Lear, the King of England. Shakespeare did not mention a mother, nor did he in other plays create bonds of mothers and their daughters. Gerald Bentley believed this might be because Shakespeare did not feel that boy actors could appropriately play a maternal role (Bentley 126). For my purposes, however, I have determined that Cordelia’s mother died while birthing Cordelia. Cordelia thus represents the last gift of her mother to her father, and because of that, Lear holds her in a more special place in his heart than he does his other daughters. Cordelia also believes that her sisters secretly blame her for their mother’s death.

Cordelia loves her father deeply. Lear has never been a man much for sentiment, and as a father, he did not often find time to spend with his daughters. When he did, it was hard for him to brush away the controlling and curt demeanor that a king must have when heading matters of the state and leading his lords to war.

Cordelia and Lear’s relationship, however, is special. Cordelia accepts her father’s nature, and she knows he loves her. He has developed a way of speaking tenderly to his favorite daughter, and he does not scorn her subtle and quiet disposition; rather he finds it endearing. Cordelia’s nature reflects that of his late wife. This is why Lear’s demand for love in the first scene, which he has never vocally desired before, baffles her.
Once rehearsals began, however, I noticed Stephen Patterson’s approach to his character of Lear, and he embodied a different father than the one I had imagined just from textual exploration. During the first rehearsals, the ensemble explored relationships with each other through different impromptu exercises led by the director. Patterson did not assume a gruff disposition with his daughters. He was confidently tender, sweet, involved. It was, however, obvious that he loved Cordelia the most, and her sisters noted and resented this unequal distribution of love.

Cordelia has always loved her sisters, but she has also been aware of their selfish and wayward nature. Lear does nothing to hide his favoritism for Cordelia, and she knows her sisters blame her for his bias and their resulting feelings of abandonment. As a child Cordelia did not spend much time with her sisters because they often ignored her. It was then that she developed a loving friendship with the Fool.

In Act 1, Scene 4, a Knight describes the Fool’s current state to Lear, explaining, “Since my young lady’s going into France sir, the Fool hath much pined away” (King Lear 1.4.74-75). Schmidt’s Shakespeare Lexcion and Quotation Dictionary defines “pining” as “to wear away, to languish” (Schmidt 2: 863). The Fool does not just miss Cordelia, he pines for her.

Trent Stork played the Fool in our production. He is younger than me, and he was not aged in any way, so I have imagined that he and Cordelia met as children of the same general age (he was the son of the previous court jester). Because Cordelia’s sisters ignored her as children, the Fool assumed a “brother” role, and he and Cordelia have looked after each other ever since. Cordelia’s banishment leaves the Fool in desperate
longing for his best friend, and Cordelia feels the same longing while living in France with France, her new husband.

Kent is also another character of importance to Cordelia. She has known him for as long as she can remember; he is like an uncle to her. Kent has always treated Cordelia with kindness and love, and she in return has given him the same sentiments. Their relationship strengthens throughout the play, as Kent becomes confidant and co-revolutionary to Cordelia as they seek to re-instate Lear to his rightful throne and subdue those who wronged him.

In Greek, Cordelia means “revealed heart” (Graham 49). Her heart truly motivates her, and I think this has led some scholars to conclude that she is the epitome of female grace and patience. I believe it is deeper and more primal than that. She cannot act any other way. She could not change if she wanted to: her heart guides her every move. She is not “near to perfection,” as Anna Jameson asserted (Jameson 89). She is bold and obstinate in resisting flowery flattery for her father; she is embarrassed by her public denouncement; she resents her sisters for their hypocrisy; she is heartbroken that Burgundy, the man she thought she was going to marry, rejects her, and she leaves her father’s kingdom banished, bitter and despondent. These are certainly not the emotions or qualities of a person who represents a paradigm of perfection.

Note that I composed the previous paragraph before rehearsals began. As I stated before, I was not able to deeply explore the aforementioned “colors” because of a directorial charge. Virginia did not want me to show these “inferior” emotions, rather she directed me to choose grace over anger, patience over bitterness, and acceptance over resentment.
In Act 1, Scene 1, Cordelia appears in court with her sisters to receive gifts of property from her father. She has known about this ceremony for a while, and though she does not care much about the quantity or quality of land she may receive, she knows it is an honor to receive such gifts from her father.

She is more excited by the prospect of marriage. Lear announces that both Burgundy and France have vied for her hand in marriage, and I have decided that Lear let Cordelia choose her betrothed. Earlier that day, she chose Burgundy, but she does not know that both Burgundy and France are currently in the palace, nor does she anticipate Lear’s public announcement of the engagement. This engagement announcement would have followed the division of property if all had gone as planned, but of course, the action takes a different path.

Lear takes Cordelia by surprise when he demands a declaration of love from his daughters, and Lear further complicates the matter when he expects to hear an articulate public profession. This goes against everything she believes in. She must choose between being false to herself and pleasing her father. She chooses authenticity, and her response to Lear’s love test is “therefore not to be accounted for in terms of the stubbornness of a spoilt child but as a public affirmation of moral distinctions and values which she believes are being publicly threatened and degraded” (Salgado 31).

She does not realize, however, that such a response would cause Lear to disrupt her world in such an extreme manner. Her disinheritance shocks her once again, but she remains firm in her beliefs. Cordelia could have chosen to grovel at her father’s feet, professing great love and begging forgiveness, and surely Lear would have absolved his favorite daughter and rescinded his decision. But she does not grovel. Though she fights
to point out the flaw of her sisters’ “glib and oily art” and challenges her father’s logic in
equaling her verbal reticence with “murder or foulness,” she accepts her banishment in
favor of the knowledge that she is not wrong (Lr. 1.1.226-229).

Burgundy’s rejection further disrupts Cordelia’s world. She would have given
anything to be with him, yet he drops her upon learning he will not inherit her dowry.
His rejection is crushing. She does not want to marry France, but she is deeply grateful
for his instant kindness and pity. Cordelia has grown up in a royal household. She has
been spoiled by material blessings. Though she does not want to marry France, she is not
ignorant of the ramifications of remaining single.

She certainly could have taken her banishment to the wilderness, as Cordella does
in Leir, but if she chooses to strike out alone, she would be forced to abandon the life of
comfort and safety she was used to having. So she goes with France.

In her absence, however, from 1.1 until 4.4, Cordelia falls in love with France. In
Kozintsev’s film version of King Lear, Cordelia and France marry on an isolated beach,
and they come to represent a love and peace so different from the events that follow
(Salgado 67). Cordelia finds happiness in love during her absence, but she is also
haunted by her banishment and the plight of her father, who was left under her
malevolent sisters’ care. Her compassion compels her to return and rescue her father: she
leaves one love to save another. Her husband’s departure from Dover back to France is
thus even more poignant and heartbreaking, for she never sees him again.

Thomas Greenfield reiterates this assessment of Cordelia in that “much of
Cordelia’s suffering and growth occurs offstage.” Her “grief over her father’s situation
has burdened her, tortured her, and changed her.” Cordelia arrives in Act IV “capable of
providing the honesty, directness, and courage that the action of the drama demands of her” (Greenfield 47).

Cordelia returns with an army, bound to find and restore her father to the crown. This is a formidable task for Cordelia. Not only must she find her father and face her sisters, but she is now in charge of an army, knowing that the armies of Albany and the late Cornwall are marching towards her. Lear’s shame causes him to hide from Cordelia, and she sends her soldiers into the heath to find him. Despite all this, her heart is still set on saving a father who so cruelly threw her out. Her reason: “Love, dear love, and my aged father’s right” (Lr. 4.4.28).

Any submerged bitterness Cordelia could possibly still possess falls away when Lear awakes and recognizes Cordelia as his daughter. This reunion is touching. Just for a few moments, the madness and disparity of a doomed human race fades away, and we encounter true love and redemption. Cordelia’s efforts are not in vain: sheforgives her father, and he delivers the love for which she so desperately longed. This peace does not last long, for after Lear recuperates, Cordelia, her father, and the army of France confront the opposing forces in Dover.

Edmund captures Cordelia and Lear in battle, and she knows she is going to be killed. Knowing this, she seeks a final confrontation from her sisters, but Lear insists that they retreat to prison and “sing like birds i’ th’ cage” (Lr. 5.3.9). Lear continues with a beautiful and delusional narrative, which breaks Cordelia’s heart. Her final moments, however, expose the depths of her great love for her father.
In conclusion, I want to return to Laura Odeh’s performance as Cordelia. What made her so special that she avoided the “curse of Cordelia” with favorable reviews? The answer may have to do with Odeh’s approach to her role, perhaps more “Stanislavski-like” than her peers. Critics were taken aback, and ultimately impressed, by her tenacity and complexity. I did not see her perform, nor do I presume I will, but I can now claim a certain authority of insight over Shakespeare’s heroine.

In order to play a Cordelia of “tenacity” and “complexity,” a “not the usual pure soul” Cordelia, one might express emotions on stage perhaps “un-Cordelia-like:” anger, bitterness, jealousy, selfishness. Whatever emotions Odeh felt, based on the reviews, I can say with certainty that she showed the audience many colors of Cordelia; colors far beyond her usual expressions of virtue and loyalty.

When I first began rehearsals, I had a clear idea of how I wanted to portray Cordelia. I had not yet researched Laura Odeh’s performance, but my inclinations mimicked the descriptions of her Cordelia. I was annoyed at the research that described Cordelia as a martyr, an almost saint and an “angel of loyalty” (Tamblyn 63). Cordelia is a real person, not a “conceptualized virtue” (Greenfield 45). So I set out to portray Cordelia as a complex, conflicted, and emotional woman.

This representation did not go over so well with the director, Virginia Smith. She fought for a simple, transparent Cordelia. “The audience has to know who’s good and who’s bad in this play,” Smith explained. She felt that Cordelia is not complex; she truly is a virtuous soul, and as that is her essence, she cannot be any other way. “Realize that a lot of you is in this character,” said Smith. Cordelia is plucky, honest, and unceasingly optimistic. She urged me to recognize those same traits within myself.
Up until Smith and I discussed Cordelia’s personality, I had been fighting the concepts Cordelia has traditionally represented. I ridiculed and worked to subdue her virtuous traits that I deemed boring and oversimplified. Then I realized that I needed to embrace those qualities as well. Smith was right to urge me to think about those traits I so readily dismissed. But I felt that she also unfairly assumed that virtuousness and righteous indignation are mutually exclusive, that Cordelia’s goodness could manifest itself only with coolness of spirit, not with the fire of compassion for other people.

I believe that, as a whole, Smith directed King Lear with impressive insight and creativity. But though I did not consciously acknowledge it until after the show was closed (when I felt that I no longer had to “believe” in the production), I think my character was misdirected. While I readily admit I had several shortcomings as an actor in this play (disappointing vocal inconsistencies for one), I felt cheated too early in the process. I was not allowed to “play” with deeper, darker, essentially more human aspects of Cordelia that I think benefited Odeh’s performance. Instead I felt stuck in a polarizing, tight little box.

As this research portion has shown, the personalities of pre-Shakespearean Cordelias reflect the “deeper, darker, essentially more human, aspects” that I write of. Now that modern audiences crave more complex characters (and theatre conventions allow for their presentation), I believe Shakespeare’s Cordelia should be played this way as well.

The journey from Cordelia pre-rehearsal to Cordelia on closing night was long and sometimes seemingly fruitless, but the struggle eventually paid off. I finished my final role at UNL, and I look forward life beyond graduate school.
Part Two: Journal

Thursday, October 8

First day of rehearsal! I have been extremely excited for so long. This is such a big story to capture, and I know it’s going to be a beautiful experience. Yesterday we explored with Viewpoints in Virginia’s class. We created a freeform, moving tableau-of -sorts of King Lear. We were one – I was not Lucy, the individual, rather I was part of something larger, something undefined, something spiritual. I think we all felt that – such ensemble work had disappeared a bit from our group – it being the third year and everyone now concentrated on themselves a bit more (what will we do with our lives after graduation?) – so it was lovely to connect to my classmates on the deeper, more simple level of being. To the point…we are an ensemble, and we will move forth as one. I will hold tight to that.

We began with presentations from the lighting, scenic and costume designers. I am eager to use the space Pat has designed. It is to be large, open, ancient – a perfect space to fill the heightened drama of the story. I was quite taken with the costumes. Lear is set in the Napoleonic era, and sketches for the men projected a sober regality, while the women’s wear was soft, classical and open. Cordelia wears white.

We began to read. I was immediately taken by a chill upon first hearing Steven’s voice. It was the voice of a king, commanding and strong, but it was a voice which comforted me, as a father’s voice should. So when he condemned me, that same voice terrified me. I did not expect every single blast of hate to affect me, but it did. There was such power in the air. It was shocking. Now, what I need to take from this, is to make
sure that in the rehearsal process, I keep the shock of his stinging words fresh. I can never get comfortable with it – it must destroy me every night.

I have worked a lot with Cordelia’s behavior in the first scene. As I discussed in the research part of my thesis, Cordelia has traditionally been deemed the spotless one, the woman who does no wrong, except perhaps, love too much. But I have found no such woman in 1.1. When I read this scene aloud, fire arouses in me – fire of shame, of anger, of jealousy, of assertion, of bitterness. In the read through, I connected to these feelings, and I had more power and venom in me than I have before. I have no idea where this will go – Virginia may direct me in a completely different direction, but this is, at least, what is in my gut. What I will do with those feelings will be the meat and potatoes. I look forward to exploring that.

I felt an immediate connection to Steven – my heart was open towards him, and his towards mine. I am so glad. It is the love for her father that drives Cordelia in Lear, and feeling comfortable and safe with Steven will make it easier to plug that love in.

**Friday, October 9**

We had a second read through tonight. Earlier today, in Scene Study class, Virginia gave all of us a few notes concerning Lear. Mine was surprising, but very helpful. She said I was articulating too much in my face. At first, I was quite confused – what does that even mean. But I talked to her after class, and she said it wasn’t a large deal, but my face was moving so much that it was distracting from my intentions in the scenes. She explained that I have mastered articulation (finally…it’s been hard to neutralize that North Carolinian accent - which I love dearly), but that now I need to tone
it down to just my mouth articulating, not my face – it looks weird. And I had no clue I was even doing it – since I cannot see how my face is moving. So I was very glad to get that note. I went home and worked on it and found it is a small adjustment to make, but it makes a big difference.

The read through went well tonight, though I felt off my game tonight. I wasn’t as emotionally accessible, and I hate when I’m that way. I want to beat on my heart and say, “open up you!” I had a busy day today, and I did not have time to warm-up, stretch and meditate in the morning. I have found that opening my heart to the day in the mornings has helped me access my emotions more readily during the rest of the day. I need to make sure I prioritize that now, especially taking on a role like Cordelia.

My main goal for this entire process is to surrender, to fall blindly into the abyss of the moment. Whenever I have truly done that in the past, everything else just follows. Dive in, Lucy, dive in.

**Sunday, October 11**

Concerning Cordelia’s physical movements as they relate to her character: Cordelia is 26. She is small, healthy and agile, but she does not walk quickly. She moves in a paced, determined way, which could possibly make her appear larger or older than she actually is. She is shy, but she is nevertheless quietly confident and sure of her beliefs. She breathes deeply and calmly. Her strongest chakra is her heart. She leads with her heart – high chest, shoulders back to let her heart give and receive love, lifted chin. She has the animal essence of an English Mastiff: loyal, dignified, loving and courageous.
Cordelia’s voice mirrors her walk – she speaks with deliberation and with a sense of calm. She is far from garrulous and does not speak whatever comes to her mind. She often only speaks when she has something important to say. Her voice is steady, “ever soft, gentle and low” (Lr. 5.3.274-275).

Monday, October 12

No rehearsal tonight. Instead I went to The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later. I happened to sit next to Steven, who was quietly going over his lines before the production. What a big role he has, and it is nice to see him taking it so seriously. He seems to be the ideal professional; it is such a pleasure to be able to work with him. I learned he has been acting professionally since he was eighteen; he graduated from high school and went straight to work. We talked about many other things as well, and I enjoy getting to know him slowly. I noted that I felt an immediate connection to him, so continuing that openness will surely help our stage relationship. The play was poignant and lovely and very well-received. Though a few times I let my mind drift and imagine the King Lear ensemble up there (or rather, down there – I was on the balcony). I got goose bumps.

I thought about my sisters today (Goneril and Regan). I think they were not always this way. They are older, and they remember our mother. They loved her, and after she died Lear turned all his attention to caring for me. They have despised me since. I see how they interact with their husbands, and it disgusts me. They order them around, and there is no love between any of them. Cornwall scares me; he is a slimy man who I believe would turn against my father in a heartbeat. I pity Albany. I see the way
my sisters are with their husbands, and I think, “This will not happen to me. I won’t let it. Not with Burgundy. He loves me.” Not so much.

In the rough draft of Part One of my thesis, I did not fully flesh out the back story of Burgundy and me. I had not yet decided upon one that I felt strongly drawn to. I have now: Burgundy and I met as children – he was thirteen and I was eight. He is the son of the Duke of Burgundy. I thought he was beautiful – he had dark eyes and dark hair, and he was proud and pleasant. And he had a daunting smile.

Fifteen years later we meet again at a royal banquet, and he took my breath away – again. Those same qualities he had as a boy he still retained. Just two years ago he visited more frequently, to court me (or rather, to court my father for me). We have played games in the courtyard, we have stolen biscuits from the kitchen, we have swum naked together in the river, we have made love on the isolated bank side. He is my other half. And then he leaves me. See, I am sure, even after my father’s disinheritance of me, that Burgundy will whisk me away, and we will live off of his inheritance. And even if we were both bound to live out our lives in poverty, we would be happy. But he does not, and France, I don’t even really know this guy! He takes me in, though, and I am grateful for that. I eventually begin to love him, not a lusty kind of love, but with a love grown out of respect and admiration.

**Tuesday, October 13**

First blocking rehearsal of 1.1. I feel both discouraged and determined. Virginia did not like 90% of my choices for the scene. She wanted a simpler, nicer, steadier Cordelia. She wanted a later tragic point for me. I raised the stakes too much, which
goes against a lot of what I have been taught here. I felt as if she wanted half of me, not all of me, so I was sincerely frustrated because her displeasure with my approach did not result from a truthful performance, for I was completely in the moment and acting from my gut; she just did not like the truth I was giving.

The second run through of the scene, I did exactly what she asked. She said afterwards I did just what she wanted, but I felt so less “in it.” I felt like I was merely a drama-tron spewing out words. I talked to her during break, and she explained herself better. I do understand her point of view, but I argued that my fear was that this new Cordelia will be seen as too idealized and spotless – she’s not, there’s a lot of rage and bitterness that I think exists in the scene. But Virginia replied that the audience needs to identify who’s the good and who’s the bad in this first scene. So, though I believe my approach shows more colors of Cordelia, I am going to go with her on this. What I can do, however, to appease us both, is I can still have the anger and rage inside me, so that it becomes a struggle to suppress it, adding – ooooh the golden apple of drama – conflict. I just feel like I need a bit more autonomy as an actor and feel like this is more of a collaborative project. But I’ve worked with Virginia before, and I know this is how she works. I just have to be a little more creative in making sure enough of “me” is still present, because at the end, after rehearsals are over and we have an audience, I am the one who has to put everything together and perform honestly and openly as me.

On a lighter note, we spent the first half of rehearsal on movement exercises and exploration – based on Viewpoints. The first exploration was based on activities at court. What I found was a lightness and a happiness that needs to exist at the beginning of the play. It will make the fall from it even more poignant. We used our prop in this scene,
and it was a catalyst in my connection with Steven. He was so loving and so tender. I felt equal to him, and I also felt the sharp, bitter glares from my sisters who were jealous of the fond attention Steven showed me. This illuminated depth of our love (Lear and I), which will now change my approach to him in Part One of the thesis. I made a choice that our relationship was less tender than it is now, but this is where it should be.

I explored my relationship with Burgundy – desire mounted, and I wished more than anything to wed to him. Oh Burgundy, why dost thou forsake me so? In movement exercises we paid attention to status, and I became much more aware of my regality and my place in the hierarchy of society.

**Wednesday, October 14**

I am not called tonight, nor will I be for a week more (fall break and the fact that Cordelia is absent during the middle chunk of the play off gallivanting in France). We did good Lear work today in scene class. We discussed our animal essences – mine being a Mastiff dog – loyal, vigilant, calm, loving – and discussing it made more sense of clearly Virginia’s push to simplify Cordelia’s emotions. The calm essence of such a dog can radiate in Cordelia - I like that.

We used our animal essences to morph from animal to human with the instruction to at least once don the crown, which sat in the middle of the floor. I discovered some powerful things – I developed tunnel vision a quarter of the way through: I saw the crown, and I saw other people wearing it, which inflamed me – it did not belong to anyone but my father, and so I started to look for him around the room. That was my sole mission – I looked behind curtains, under chairs, under the desk and in the closet, but
he was nowhere to be found. It was devastating, but at the end of the piece, I saw Ryan (Edgar) and, I think, Kyle (Cornwall) both edging for the crown. I prevented Cornwall from obtaining it by picking it up and putting it on the only head that deserved it – Edgar’s; and I then felt at peace.

We also simulated a storm with handkerchiefs, and I shielded myself for a few moments, then I found Kent, and he was my link back home, so I tied my scarf to his, and we made our way through the storm together. I saw my sisters twirling and dancing, and it made me so upset that I attempted several times to take away their scarves, but I never could, though I did steal Cornwall’s. Near the end of the piece, I finally gave up trying to take their scarves, for I thought that I did not need to enact revenge – they were going to come to ruin by themselves.

**Wednesday, October 21**

Fall break was lovely, though this week I have been in a daze. I don’t want to write too much on Jason’s situation, because I still can’t sort it out in my head, the raw emotions and all, and I cannot even come close to articulating how I feel. Our fellow classmate, Jason, has just been diagnosed with Stage 4 rectal cancer. He will have surgery tomorrow, I think, and he will not be able to play Gloucester in the show. We will miss him terribly, though Sam will now take over the role, and I believe he will do a wonderful job.

In class earlier today we discussed aspects of our character that we explored during break. I talked about stillness. During holiday I did not delve into any character analysis or voice work or line preparation. I focused on my self, my spirit. I have not felt
myself lately. I feel like I am rushing constantly, and there is a nagging feeling in me that urges me to slow down. I did. I went with my husband Justin to Mahoney State Park and we rented a cabin for two days. The cabin was on an isolated patch of land right by the river, and the weather was perfect. We hiked often, but mainly I sat on a bench in front of a large oak in front of the river. I did not ponder anything of large importance. I just sat happily and felt the warm breeze and the comfort of the sun. I felt so blessedly alive, my skin tingled from the knowledge that I was enjoying each second as it came. I became the stillness, and I was a body that at any moment could do anything, could feel anything. This is where I belong. I won’t bog you down, journal, with an overload of metaphysical sentiments, but this does connect to acting. The goal is to take this feeling of comfort and vitality onto the stage, in the moment, where nothing exists but that second, where the stillness and beauty of being remains a stable cell inside me, from which any emotion, any action is possible.

Tonight at rehearsal, I felt a general sense of good-will and eagerness to connect from the cast during warm-up. Though we are pre-occupied with thoughts of Jason and other personal matters, everyone was in good spirits. That made me feel safe. Tonight our focus was running Act 1 for the first time since blocking. It was often messy, but it ran smoother than I thought it would. I am starting to get my “sea legs” with 1.1, though I still have not put enough of “me” in Cordelia, for at times I felt disconnected, as if I were hovering over myself and merely observing, not being. Jump in, Luc. I have ditched my script for good (hallelujah). I am getting more comfortable with Virginia’s instruction to simplify Cordelia, and I played with subduing the anger she feels from being outcast so carelessly. The “I yet beseech your majesty” speech felt good playing
with that conflict – I think it will work, and we’ll have plenty of time to work on that in the upcoming weeks.

**Thursday, October 22**

Tonight was a simple rehearsal for me – I was called towards the end of the night to cross the stage with the French army with my father. I felt new power with that section, though. I told Virginia I think Cordelia would carry a sword as well as the soldiers. I don’t apprehend actually going into battle, but we are in English territory now, and it would be careless to rule out a possibility of guerilla warfare. In the cross, my focus is my father. I must protect him, and I will kill to protect him. I love those simple objectives. Hmmm, though aren’t all objectives simple – they should be, shouldn’t they?

**Friday, October 23**

Big scenes tonight. We rehearsed Cordelia’s return to England and her reunion with her father. I am disappointed, but I knew I would be. In fact, I told Justin over dinner tonight before I went to rehearsal that I was nervous about staging the reunion scene because I had built it up so much in my head that I knew I would be disappointed. So at least I knew it was coming. I do not like Virginia’s blocking at all of 4.7. She has put everyone on stage in a cluster on a platform up-stage left. I knew I probably wasn’t going to get just Lear and I downstage center as I had pictured in my head, but this is worse than I thought. She has me turning onstage to talk to Lear, so naturally, I couldn’t be heard. My instinct was to kneel and talk upward to him, but she does not want me to kneel, rather hover over him. It feels extremely unnatural and awkward. Tomorrow at
rehearsal I am going to talk to her, and suggest that I kneel, opening me up and giving me more room to move. At least, I will say, let me try, and see if it works. The emotional connection last night was there, absolutely, that part was beautiful, but it will not be beautiful to the audience if they can’t even see my face. Hmm, I am more frustrated than I thought. However, in the grand scheme of things, this blocking problem is not a big deal. We will work through it, it just initially threw me off big-time.

4.4 was much more fun and inspirational than I thought. I am running to the cliff to spot my father as he runs away. It is such an active, hopeful part of the play, I look forward to working more on it. I just can’t get this awkward staging off my mind. I really hope it works out. After rehearsal last night, I poured a glass of wine, kissed Justin and went into my bedroom to work on how I could make it better, using the aforementioned efforts that I will mention to Virginia tomorrow. I really think it will work. We shall see.

**Sunday, October 25**

Last night was a great rehearsal. I felt very focused and in high humor and spirits. I talked with Virginia before rehearsal concerning my problems with the 4.7 blocking, and she agrees – she doesn’t like the blocking either, but the fact that people have to carry Lear in on a chair is such an obstacle. So I don’t think major changes will be made, but she will let me try my minor changes tonight. I have been working on it constantly for days, and I hope I didn’t overwork and over-think it. I focused on the thought of my sisters, my flesh and blood, turning an old man out in a storm in which he could very well
die. How could they? I want to destroy them. Virginia may not like such an aggressive objective, but again, we shall see tomorrow night.

Steven and I strengthen our stage relationship every night. When we come on stage together bound and captured, I know we will never see each other again. This destroyed me last night. Virginia and I were on the same page in terms of the end of his speech strengthening me, giving me new resolve. We move boldly and bravely off to prison. Steven and I played with different ways of carrying, lowering, and holding my dead body onto stage. It’s quite difficult, we haven’t yet figured out a good way to do all three moves in a way that doesn’t give us both too much pain. But it really isn’t a long time to play dead, and I found myself better at it than I thought – scary. I found that nothing went through my mind. I had remarked to my husband before rehearsals began that I wasn’t sure how I was going to keep it together emotionally hearing Lear’s howling and despair over my death. But it’s funny – I felt nothing. I didn’t even feel alive, no thoughts, no emotions, no desires, no reactions. I suppose that’s the way I should be in the scene, but it is eerie nevertheless.

**Monday October 26**

I felt weary tonight. I haven’t gotten much sleep lately, and it gets harder and harder the older I get to efficiently function with a small amount of sleep. We ran Act 2 twice, and at least I can say things ran more smoothly the second time. Though I am concerned about one thing: my projection. I have not gotten a note about projection since my first show here. Last semester I made leaps and bounds in terms of discoveries of vocal power. Stan was quite proud of me. And I’ve continued my daily vocal exercise
work. But for some reason, I feel like I have regressed. Virginia has said a couple times that she cannot hear me – this only seems to happen in 4.7 – my reunion scene with Papa – huge, can’t let that go to waste. It’s not as if I don’t yet have the technique to efficiently and consistently project. For some reason in 4.7, my brain thinks intimacy, and my voice takes on a completely different color and resonance than it does in any other scene. Instead of coming forward, my voice tends to sink back in my throat, and it becomes almost raspy. It’s extremely frustrating, for I successfully project in my vocal exercises, and I have specifically focused on that one scene, and everything is good, but as soon as I get up there on stage in rehearsals, I drop it. I am going to discuss this with Stan tomorrow and see if we can come up with a better set of exercises to help with this problem. Ugh. This is one of the most frustrating things to me, but I will figure it out and fix it. At least time is on my side.

**Tuesday, October 27**

First full run tonight! We worked a lot in Stan’s class today on projection and ease of voice, and my focus was to work on smoothly swinging my voice going deeper each time (it’s so hard to describe it the way Stan does – but at least I understand what the exercise means). I pulled Stan aside before rehearsal to work even more. And I took a peaceful breath before we went out on stage.

Arrrggh! Emotionally, yes, I was there, I conveyed my feelings properly, my movements matched my inner world, and I at least hit all my blocking. But all my good intentions to improve my vocal quality failed. At least they did so in the later half of the scene. I will say, in the beginning I spoke clearer and with more resonance than I have
before in the scene, but as things continued and I was getting more involved in the action, I felt myself straining and running out of breath, and I am sure, failing to successfully project. I spoke with Stan soon after, and he told me to make sure I pronounced the first “Cordelia” strongly enough so that the audience knows who I am, and to work on riding my breath. I know exactly what he means. Why can’t I just do it?? I need to intensify my daily vocal work.

Ok, so I just talked to Stan again (I have my computer here at rehearsal). He said overall I am doing well. He also said he had absolutely no problem hearing me. At least I know that - now I can work on building from there.

The second act for me was absolutely horrible. I felt as if I was floating above my body looking down at a woman who was just nonsensically spouting words from her mouth. The worst part was 4.7 – I was totally disconnected. I went home and stewed a bit. I looked back at the text and was confused: I know exactly what I’m saying, I know how I feel, it’s just coming off way too slow and disjointed. I finally figured that if Virginia still wants people to see what they can cut, I will offer this small bit of monologue in 4.7.

So, now it’s Wednesday after Scene Study class, and we discussed problem areas with Lear. Virginia said my work thus far is good – I am making good physical choices and that my emotional exploration is vivid and solid. The thing I still need to work on is resisting the urge to find the tragedy – vocally and mentally. Cordelia, she says, is more plucky, more confident and optimistic. What’s good about this direction is that I, Lucy, am naturally that way anyway, so hopefully it will not be too much of a challenge to plug into.
We also discussed that dreaded roadblock part of 4.7, and I suggested cutting, and she said that she hoped that’s what I would suggest, so cut away! Fabulous, I will. This afternoon I looked at that part of the text, and cut everything that did not propel the action. It’s weird – I almost feel as if I’m selling out, as if I’m “solving” the problem by avoiding it completely. Yet, I cannot help but feel relieved, especially knowing cutting these parts serve the play and the audience’s understanding of it in the end. So no, I perceive that any guilt I may have of selling myself short will dissipate quickly.

**Wednesday, October 28**

Act 1 work tonight. We spent a long time on 1.1, running it three times, which we needed. Each time I was more comfortable on stage and more able to let my “me-ness” shine through. The only problem I had with the rehearsal was saying good-bye to my sisters in 1.1. The first two times we ran it, Virginia said I was still being too mean. I told her that the words reflect bitterness and anger, why should I not let any of that show through? She said Cordelia has to be the nice one, all the way through; she is good the whole time, and she never loses her cool. Boring, thought I, and how utterly inhuman. I pointed these things out to her during the break before our final run, and she asserted her point in a slightly different way than she had been, and it made much more sense to me: to see my sisters as cruel, but caring more about urging them to take care of our father. I tried that the third time, and it worked, I think, though I was thrown-off by trying three times to say my own name successfully (my tongue became tied). But overall, it was a successful rehearsal, and I look forward to solidifying this scene even more. I am not
called the rest of the week, so my focus during my time off will be on vocal projection and considerations of pluck.

**Sunday, November 1**

We did some solid work on Act 4 tonight. It was the first time we ran the reunion scene with Lear since the big cuts. It worked quite well, the scene flowed much better, my train of thought was not stagnant, and I felt much more comfortable. It’s funny, the scene I was most apprehensive about (because it was so short and seemingly introspective) is now my favorite to do. In 4.4 I run in after seeing my father on the heath (‘Alack, ‘tis he”). There is something so hopeful, so sure and confident about my words. I love them. They are mine.

Virginia offered a different view of the reunion scene tonight, and though my choices were duly justified by the script, I understand her suggestions, and I think they are appropriate. When Lear says “Do not laugh at me…,” I have been crying out of desperation, because before these lines Lear says, “Methinks I should know you and know this man…” At once I think that he recognizes me, and also Kent, but then he says, “…yet I am doubtful…” My hopes are dashed, and I am frustrated. Virginia wanted that cry to be an actual laugh, in that the good news is that Lear recognizes me, and we can fix the rest; we can tell him where he is, and we can soothe him with information. All is well, and all will be ok. We tried it, and it worked nicely.

The only thing still troubling me is my voice. The past couple of warmer-than-usual days have troubled my allergies, and I came to rehearsal with an already-itchy and sore throat. I had a terrible time of swallowing my words tonight, and Virginia could not
make out a couple of lines. I am meeting Stan soon for a private voice tutorial, and I want to pay special attention to pressing my words forward and out. This is frustrating, for I have intensified my daily vocal work, and my projection and color has greatly improved in the past few rehearsals. I don’t like being set back like this. I have just begun to read Cicely Berry’s *The Actor and the Text*, and she writes brilliant, practical things. Things like seeing dialogue as the passing of energy from one character to the next, the power of swiftness, and making sure that the thought controls the breath, not the other way around. I have been reading small bits during breaks, so I haven’t had much time to process the information I’ve read, but I need to, for then I can start implementing her advice on stage.

**Monday, November 2**

Tonight was a long night – we ran Act 2 scenes over and over, but I had a lot of fun, and we made some solid improvements. I think I’m coming down with something, for this is the second night in a row that I have coughed all throughout rehearsal. My throat is sore, and I feel achy. After rehearsal I hurriedly bought Zicam and cough drops – I cannot afford to get sick now. I did not have any mild revelations tonight, so nothing much to report, except that I am proud of our cast, and I think we are creating quite an ensemble piece. This has been challenging work thus far, but completely rewarding.
Tuesday, November 3

Tonight we ran the show. At this point, the show was running 2.45 hours, and Virginia told us major cuts were definite. She cut a couple of my lines, and I hope she does not attempt to cut more – I have very few words as it is. Tonight before rehearsal I took a look back at my objectives for the scenes I am in and decided they were more convoluted than they needed to be. I made them as simple as possible. I have been reading Mamet’s *True and False* (upon the suggestion of Dr. Grange), and I find it a highly encouraging book. I have always been a little unnerved by the over-reliance on the Stanislavski system, but I had never been taught otherwise. Stanislavski was taught ad nauseam at UNC, and it is taught here too. Mamet talks about courage – the courage to stand firm and say your line, and though I believe there is a bit more to a convincing piece of theatre than that, courage goes a long way. I have been working with the courage to let myself be enough. Why is it on some nights it flows steady while on others I stifle it??

Despite feeling a bit detached because of new cuts, I clipped along satisfactorily. Virginia was pleased with the new speed, and I need to continue to be mindful of the pace – picking up my cues, acting on the line and connecting my thoughts.

Thursday, November 4

I had a good time with my cast mates tonight. Everyone was in good spirits – Robie rattled off some prime dirty jokes backstage, and we all enjoyed a pleasant camaraderie. Now, as for the integrity of the show…naw, we did ok. I, however, could
have done much better. I was really feeling 4.4, but further into it I skipped Gary’s lines twice, and we had to do the whole scene again – I was very embarrassed.

My focus tonight was objectives, but I found myself thinking of my objectives in terms of “Now I’m thinking of my objective” during the scene, and it completely took me out of it. I’ve got to stop doing that, for I have found that what works for me is to initially know my objective during normal research and work on the script and then to forget about it, for if I’m truly connected and know what’s really going on, I aim for it anyway. I can get way too heady for my own good.

I have a killer headache tonight. I have got to rest – this has been a long, hard week. I look forward to a break during the weekend. I need to re-discover my general life bearings. I tend to feel very lost mid-rehearsal, but I always seem to come out of the fog soon after, and all is well.

**Friday, November 6**

Full run tonight. It went well. I was extremely connected in 1.1, and my only focus tonight was to be myself. I have been having a small character identity crisis, in that I have been directed to subdue any emotion other than hope and kindness. I understand why Virginia has directed me this way, but it has been hard for me to find myself in this purely altruistic Cordelia. The only thing that is saving me is remembering to identify emotions of spite, rage and anger as still there, but pushed below the surface, and, as I wrote previously, thus emerges the conflict between striving to do good while having these bitter feelings. I am extremely tired, I need to sleep.
**Monday, November 9**

I am extremely angry. I just hurled my water bottle across the floor, and that made me feel better. I am so exhausted by this charge to “make her simpler” – I’m not that simple, so why should she be?? Here’s the problem: we are running through Act 1 tonight, and we just went through 1.1 (I brought my computer to rehearsal). Everything’s going well – I’m feeling it, completely into the situation; I’m banished, then I come forward to beseech my father to let me stay. Yet I’m too emotional, and Virginia shouts out “simpler!” But I’m crying, I’m feeling these feelings, and everything my speech suggests on paper is a desperate, emotional attempt to return to my father’s good graces. I am approaching Virginia during break. She is going to have to tell me how I am supposed to be simple and unemotional in this speech, because I am obviously not getting it. She made me do it again, and I actually thought “be more robotic,” and you know what, she probably liked it. This is crap. I feel like quitting.

Having said that, of course I can’t. But this is the most frustrating thing: being so alive in a scene and being slapped down for it. Must I be compliant and at peace with a more robotic sense of self? Gahhhhhhhhhhhh!!

Alright, ok, I am calm now. So I did talk to Virginia during the break, making sure that I was completely collaborative and pleasant. She told me I need to go slower - and I said “wait, you’re letting me?!” We have all been told to speed things up, so it comes as a great relief to me to know I can take more time with that chunk. I think that will solve a lot of problems just by making that adjustment. I told her the problems I had with the “simpler” direction, and she said to imagine having a fight with Justin, in which a) I am extremely emotional and upset, but that b) I have a specific point I am trying to
get across, and I need to make sure he understands that point. Raise the stakes even higher. Think of it that way, she suggested. I can understand that rationale. So what I am understanding is that it needs to be slower and come from a place that relies more on logic than feeling. If I am paying more attention to my objective, everything else will fall into place, emotions and all. I am going to work on it that way until we run it again on Wednesday, and see how that plays. I know I over-reacted from tonight’s work, for Virginia is a good director, and she is leading me where I need to be led, but my frustration comes from wanting to portray a role as honestly as I can, and I think it’s a good thing that it is that important to me. I look forward to working to make this chunk better. Other than this small problem area, I believe things are going well. I am now released from rehearsal. I need to take a deep breath, exhale, and leave it all behind me for tonight. Time for some pumpkin bread and Indigo Girls.

**Tuesday, November 10**

I had a great time at rehearsal tonight. It was a final work through of Act 2, and things went much more smoothly than I had anticipated. 4.3 was a bit frustrating, for Virginia could not decide if she wanted a word cut out or not and if she wanted me to see Lear running away or not. She also strayed from her initial direction of Cordelia as completely hopeful and confident; this is good; I like the new layers, for now the scene runs closer to my initial interpretation. But I am glad we paid so much attention to it – it needed work. She was right: there was something funny about it, and I hope now it is fixed. So we tried it several times in several different ways, and by the end, I was worn out, for I run in, deliver my speech and run out again. It was quite aerobic. We finally
decided that it works best seeing Lear run away, happy to have seen him while saying “Alack, ’tis he,” but the worry and concern sets in right afterwards in that I just saw my father in rags and weeds, and what is worse, he appeared to be “as mad as the vexed sea.” The rest of the scenes went very well, and I got some great, helpful notes from Virginia. Emily Martinez has been at rehearsal the past few nights, sitting in the back row to make sure she can hear and understand the actors, and good news! She can hear every word from me!! I really think this production is going to be successful, I really do. I love my cast mates, and everyone is working extremely hard. We finished working at around 9.15, and she announced an early release (many “hoo-rah” ensued). I am going to get as much rest as I can tonight, for the next week is going to be intense. I love it though; I can’t wait to make this show even stronger.

**Wednesday, November 11**

Full run. We open in a week (I consider the 112 performance opening)! The run went somewhat smoothly – some places were swift and some places seemed a bit lackluster. I worked on my last plea to Lear, and I believe it to be much more effective now – Virginia said it was the most clear it has ever been, and it’s where it needs to be. Ok. Good. I know where it should live now. There are those times, however, where I still feel like I am at the edge looking down to where I need to be, where I feel as if I am floating above my body looking down. I need more courage. At this point, I know all my lines, my blocking, my objectives, etc., and now it’s just a matter of diving in. That is my biggest hurdle. It’s not something anyone has observed about my work during this process, but I feel the impotence in myself. But I need not focus on that, do I? What’s
that going to do? Mamet says that just as you leave your baggage at the door when you come to the theatre, you need to leave the theatre baggage on stage after performing. And that if there is something you didn’t accomplish that night, don’t agonize over it in your mind, do it next time. With that said, I still feel confident about opening next week.

**Thursday, November 12**

Tonight went well. I have never been more into 1.1 than I was tonight. It was an extremely powerful scene. I realized tonight, though, that during my sometimes agonizingly long break, I need to make sure I warm up again. When I returned in 4.3, I felt a little rusty. At least I have plenty of time to power through a few lip trills and tongue twisters. I have been getting better and better at being a dead body. Man, I really have nothing substantial to write tonight. I am just writing sentences to write them. Over and out.

**Friday, November 13**

It’s Friday, lordy, this has been a long week. I had an incredibly busy day today; I barely had time to eat dinner before I rushed off to school again for rehearsal tonight. I need rest, real at-least-8-hour-sleep rest. I brought my computer to rehearsal, so I am writing during my looooong break, though I need to warm-up again fairly soon for 4.3. 1.1 was ok, it was not great; certainly didn’t measure up to last night’s run of the scene. I was not there emotionally, not at all. And I know it has to do with my busy day – I had no time to open my heart chakra. I’m not sure if I have written about it yet in the journal, but opening my heart chakra is a necessary part of my process for roles in which I have to
cry. Virginia taught this process to me a year ago. I have been very consistent during the entire rehearsal process with crying – there has been maybe one or two times when I could not muster up a couple tears during the show. Cordelia is always crying; she’s such a softy. What I do is light a few candles, turn on calm music at home and do about five to ten minutes of yoga, just focusing on feeling at peace and aware of my beating heart and the privilege of being alive. I then put on music which usually makes me cry (it’s not hard – Hallmark commercials make me cry). The best songs usually have to do with the love of a soul mate (my Justin) or home (usually bluegrass – some lonesome crooner singing of heartache or the feel of the southern wind). And then I cry for about five minutes. And then I’m done. Something about that process awakens my ability to sincerely emote. If it’s too much crying I get worn out and numb, and I have to make sure it is done at least three hours before I have to cry again, otherwise I do not give my body time to recover. Today I barely had time to eat, let alone meditate. I *have* to make that a priority.

**Sunday, November 15**

Tech day! I have always loved tech days. I know they’re long and tedious, but it still excites me – all the technical elements coming together – now we’re even closer to sharing this story to an audience. What can I say about today? – tech days are never too inspirational, but I always learn even more each time how important it is to stay on task and keep my energy up, to always be ready to jump into a scene, to give it my all.

Wow, we finished tech at 6.30 and were able to do a full run at 7. I have never experienced such a smooth tech day – it was great. Our run went well. Virginia again
encouraged us to get caught up in the sweep of the play and let that carry us. It seemed to tonight – things were really moving, though we still need to shed five minutes from the first act. I am Cordelia now – I feel “me” in everything I say.

A few months ago, I would have never admitted it, but I was scared out of my wits of doing this play. It is a mammoth and emotional piece of theatre. I was fearful that I wouldn’t be able to believably be “good” enough for Cordelia. I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to make her words my own. I was afraid I would not be able to live up to her emotional extremes. But I have done all this. I am proud of myself. Now all I have to do is sustain it, make new discoveries every night, and keep it fresh.

**Monday, November 16**

Wow, everybody is absolutely exhausted tonight. But still we were all excited to wear our costumes for the first time and admire the parade of skirts, plumes, stockings and hats. Ah, but of course it has its pitfalls. I tripped three times. Thank goodness we have another night of dress rehearsal. In 1.1, Trent dropped me on our entrance, in a very slow and awkward way – the audience roared, and we had to start over. Oh man, it was hilarious. Then I had to get banished, which was not as fun. I am not sure what to say about my performance tonight. It wasn’t bad, but it certainly was not where it should be. My mind was not truly on the scene at hand, rather it was on wondering how I was going to make it downstream with my train and other bothersome accoutrements (though I must say that CeCe, the costume designer, did a wonderful job – the costumes are sturdy and beautiful). Virginia noticed this was the case for most of the cast – the costumes were acting us rather than the other way around. Again, thank goodness we have another go at
it tomorrow. The biggest note she had last night was articulation. She said several new people in the audience last night could hear us, but not understand the words we were saying. Several principals got specific notes on articulation, I did not, but I know there were a handful of times when I did not pay enough attention to my consonants. That will be a big focus for tomorrow.

**Tuesday, November 17**

Ugh. I tripped again, but that is not the cause of my frustration. There was nothing too specifically wrong about my performance tonight, but I was, in general, boring. I was not in it at all. I felt like such a fraud. That is the worst place to be. I did not dive on. I did not get any notes concerning such from Virginia, but I know I am guilty of a lackluster performance. So. I will not dwell on it, but I’m putting on my game face now. No more of that. Tomorrow night is the 112 audience – here we go!

**Wednesday, November 18**

Ok, things went very well. I did exactly what I set out to do – to immerse myself in the moment, to dive in. Who can tell if the 112-ers liked it or not. Truth be told, even I would get restless during a play this long. However, there were many giggles during the Edgar/Edmund fight and Beth’s dramatic run off stage with a dagger, so at least that means they were awake. We have a great show, we really do. I am extremely excited for opening night!
**Thursday, November 19**

I think tonight was the best opening night I have ever had. Nothing too amazing happened, I was just fully present in the scenes, and there was a great energy from the audience. 1.1 was the best it has ever been for me. I wish I could articulate the rush I had tonight, but that is one of the reasons why it was so thrilling – I was simply living in the moment.

**Friday, November 20**

Tonight went well too. I was not as emotionally connected in 1.1 as I was last night, but tonight, Act 2 was the best it has ever been for me…now if I could just combine last night’s Act 1 with tonight’s Act 2 in my magic time travel machine…I instinctively raised the stakes much higher in Act 2, and now I know I need to keep them that high from now on. 5.3 was horrible for me (in a good way) – I looked at Lear, and I saw my Daddy, and I knew this would be the last time I saw him, I knew it, and I crumbled. I am drained tonight, and I am very glad we have tomorrow off. Rest!!

**Sunday, November 21**

Ugh. Nasty. Before I write about today’s performance, I will say that Virginia came into the dressing room after the show, and said the performance was especially lovely and moving today…well, thank goodness I didn’t pull the show down too much. So 1.1, I was feeling it. Everything was fine. France beckons me to leave, and after I hug the fool, I hugely trip up the stairs, over my dress and barely catch myself before I fall. Then I proceed to trip over my own name “Cordelia,” and then I cannot remember
what to say next – big pause for a few seconds. Then I leave. Brilliant. I was mortified! I don’t think I have ever tripped over my lines that badly – ever! Tiffiney and Beth said it wasn’t that bad, but wow, it felt brutal to me. Act 2 was better (though how could it not be from my antics in 1.1), and I really enjoyed the moments I had on stage. Bring on the break. This girl needs one. At least now I am even more determined to come back with a bang next Wednesday. ‘Till then, my friends.

**Wednesday, December 2**

Last night we went to the understudy performance. I was very impressed with some of the actors – Nate, who played Edgar, Christian, who played Kent, and Michael, who played the Fool, were all very good. It was fascinating to watch the show, for I had forgotten how swiftly the action moves. I picked up on small moments of poignancy – lines said by others that I now understand more clearly. Tonight we performed for a small crowd. Tonight was my best performance yet. My words were so much clearer than ever before. I felt entirely present and comfortable. And I cried my little eyes out. I felt cleansed.

**Thursday, December 3**

Ah, and of course, the bottom drops out. I was very disappointed with myself tonight. Granted, the audience probably didn’t notice anything in particular – I didn’t mess up any lines or trip over my dress – I was just a space cadet. Last night was photo call, I got no sleep, and I met with upsetting personal troubles today. This afternoon I broke down, and I think I exhausted myself. I think my body afterwards went into
survival mode. I tried to shake off the mental and emotional numbness I was feeling before the show. I warmed up longer than usual – physically and vocally. I sipped tea, I gave myself pep talks to elicit energy. Didn’t work. During my long break, I was silent and still, trying to reserve any energy I had left and hopefully regain some. Right before I went on, I told myself that whatever happened was over. All I have is what is just in front of me; seize it. And the second act was much better, not awesome, but stable and more inspired. Tonight I am going to crash. Tomorrow is a new day. Carpe diem.

**Friday, December 4**

Thank the lordy tonight was much better! I managed to get a bit more sleep, even though I rushed around like a mad woman today – my parents arrived in town today, and entertaining seems a full time job. I was eager to get to the theatre, to redeem myself. I was so into 1.1 that I whisked around and poked Trent in the eye. Right in the eyeball. I felt horrible. I tended to him for a few moments, but then I had to go plead my Daddy to let me stay. And my crown almost fell off and was bobbling to the side of the head. I didn’t mind. I was still proud of my improvement from yesterday. After I got off stage I searched for Trent to see how he was. His eye was extremely red, and his contact had fallen out. I felt horrible! The rest of the show went well, and I think it had a nice swiftness to it tonight. I cannot believe there is only one more performance. I feel as if I have been thinking about, writing about, rehearsing for, and performing *King Lear* for years. And oddly enough, I want more than just the performance tomorrow. I would love to continue the run for a while longer, but I know all good things must come to an end.
Saturday, December 4

My parents and my beautiful husband were at the show tonight. I think they liked it. It was a very good show tonight. I didn’t want my moments on stage to end. I did, however, experience a glorious feeling of relief right before curtain call. I’m ready for the next adventure. I feel so lucky to have been able to bring this story to life with some wonderful people. It’s pleasant that the show ends right around holiday break. It feels like all the weight, though wonderful weight it was, built up during the semester is, at one time, dropping off. Now on to wassail in Carolina.
Part Three: Faculty Response

Harris Smith, Graduate Acting Professor, Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film

LL: From what you saw in King Lear, how would you way I’ve progressed as an actress: vocally, physically, and emotionally?

HS: Well I would hope, and it’s true, that you’ve improved in all three areas, right? Vocally, definitely you have more vocal variety than you did before, uh, you would get to that point, at least this is what I’ve noticed, that you got to that point sometimes emotionally where you’re voice would get kinda screechy, you know, and now you have more of that, uh, what Stan would call bass. It’s more filled out, it’s more mature of an instrument to work with so you have more choices as an actor on stage, which will kinda fun for you now in the future in other shows to start playing with that even more depending on what the character dictates, to start playing with a character with a higher vocal range or lower or things like that, so I think that’s exciting. Physically, you’re more grounded. You’ve just matured, I mean, with graduate school you’re going to have a nervous breakdown and leave the program or you’re going to get more grounded, I mean, you don’t really have much of a choice...

LL: ...Which was the main thing, pretty much, physically, that I was working on.

HS: Oh yeah, and especially with Lear, your last scene with you and Lear, with you and your father, there was so much more richness there, that there was a sense of maturity
that Cordelia didn’t have at the beginning of the play that she did in the end, and that
Lucy didn’t have at the beginning of her training, that I don’t know if Lucy could have
done that three years ago, and just the sense of confidence as the performer, and
confident, I don’t mean to say confidence, it’s a peace and understanding, just greater
knowledge of the character, she’s just come full circle, even though in the beginning, she
was coming from a sincere place in the first place, you know...
LL: But, I mean, she was in no way tested. She had a life of luxury, and there was
nothing too serious about her anyway...
HS: Yeah, there was never...she hadn’t been through it, she was sheltered. So physically,
and going back to last year, your stage combat, you took the test and did well, so as far as
your physical work coordination, you’ve grown in that way, and being able to make
choices based on your interpretation of the text. And I’d just say emotionally, even
though I was a little taken aback of you defending yourself when I was criticizing you
being consistent in your work, that’s something you wouldn’t have done before – like last
spring. You kinda got a little snippy, which is fine though, I mean, to stand up for
yourself, but that’s something you wouldn’t have done before. So I’m proud of you for
that, especially if it’s something you’re passionate about, that you have a vision about
artistically, that’s something you want to do, so you don’t compromise what your vision
is, but continuing, not saying you didn’t do this, but continuing to remain open to
whatever director, or whoever’s training you, has to say. So, yeah, all three years, you’ve
done what I’ve expected you do to. I think the door is actually just now open for you to
even explore more, so hopefully you’ll get a chance, go back home and do whatever you
do.
(Reading from my list of questions): “I know in movement class, with me it was all about groundedness. Do you think I have…” – Yeah, I guess I answered number two. Yeah, definitely more so. And continue, though, because life’s gonna beat you up, and then it’s going to take you...The best thing I found about graduate school, once again, and I kept saying this to you guys over and over, that it’s time to be selfish and it’s all about you and you can focus on you, because I’m assuming you guys are probably going to have kids, and it’s going to get taken away from you, so while you still have the opportunity before you have all those other commitments, continue to focus on yourself, to keep yourself grounded, emotionally and physically, to help you improve as an actor and as a human being. The more I teach movement, the more I think, this is more about people improving themselves, not so much about acting, but really you have to be healthy as an actor because actors are already stereotyped as being emotional and psychotic. So while you have that time, continue to focus on that. If you have a chance, take yoga or tai chi classes. Find a balance. Keep a sense of yourself, which usually for artists, it’s sort of easier for them to do.

(Reading from my list of questions): “How did you think the graduate students did with creating a close ensemble piece with this show?” – Fantastic, very proud of you guys. Every class is different. Compared to the last class, anything would have been better, you know, because of the way you guys worked together from day one, I never worried about that. So no, I thought you guys worked well together; I was proud of your work. If you go by what the reviewers and the critics say, that was obviously a witness to how strong
you guys were as an ensemble all the way around. Because, one, you supported each other all the time, so you could grow as artists and individuals, and that wouldn’t have happened if that support wasn’t there. So people who the reviewers had problems with in the past noticed that, “Oh, this person really stepped up to the plate.” And that wouldn’t have happened if that support wasn’t there. So that’s proof of how strong you guys were as an ensemble. The impact, not just Jason had, but all of you had, with the undergraduates...helped that a lot. But you were all there together.

*(Reading from my list of questions)*: “What do you consider were the strengths of my performance in this show? The weaknesses?” – I kinda just said it before. This is the tough part though. The strength was, that last scene was really strong, you were really connected. You had a wonderful actor playing your father – open, loving, awesome guy. And like I said before, I saw that the journey was made. And I don’t know if it was as much on you, and not that I’m trying to be polite at all, to me, in some ways, is I watched the text, uh, or watched the show, and then I’d look at the text – you just had commented on how sheltered she was – that, it was limited how much you could do with it. I think it was due to the text, like the scene with you and the Fool, doing your little greeting thing with your noses and all that stuff, you know, to show that you were young and fun and a little younger than your sisters, and that you had a sense of humor and you weren’t taking everything so seriously, because this was a very formal entrance with the king and everyone should be courteous and in their formal regalia, and here you, you and the Fool are running around kinda having fun. That would be the only weakness, but I don’t know if that’s in your performance, because there’s only so much you can do, because your
lines don’t lend you to really say, “Oh I’m young and innocent...” you know, so how much could you really do.

LL: Well, that’s basically what my thesis is on, in loose terms, it’s not the complete end-all through line, but so much of the research I’ve done...and Virginia led me to this directionally, because I tried to make Cordelia way more complex. You know, I set out, you know what, she’s so simple, she’s so goody-goody, that said, I’m gonna show some colors. And it was cut down. Completely. Because she said, “The audience needs to know who’s good and who’s bad.” And as soon as I became comfortable with Cordelia’s symbolic function in the story, I wasn’t able to play her correctly [under Virginia’s vision]. Because she is so, and I don’t want to say one-dimensional, but she is that transparent. I mean, she has her mantra, and she sticks to it, and everything else revolves around that. And that’s also her beautiful virtue as well. But it has been interesting, the battle, between trying to make her more interesting and colorful, coming to peace with that.

HS: Yeah, she’s truth, the truthfulness with which she speaks in the opening scene which ultimate gets her dad all pissed off. And I’d say the only other thing, and remember this is under a microscope, audience members don’t even notice this. At times it seemed like you were working so hard technically, vocally, you know articulation, at times it seemed like you were having to overwork, which comes with maturity though. The more Shakespeare you do, the easier it’s going to come to you to do that, because it felt like you were chewing on the words sometimes. But that’s a little thing. Like I said, it’s just going to come with maturity. And this space, you’re never going to work in a space as bad as Temple, which in some ways is kind of a good thing. Like Utah Shakes, the
acoustics are much friendlier, anywhere else is much friendlier. So you’re not going to have to work that hard.

*(Reading from my list of questions)*: “Do you feel I have demonstrated a solid overall growth over the past three years?” – Yes, like I said, everywhere you’ve improved. As far as your weakest area, like I said, see and I’m kind of torn, because in movement, you had flashes of brilliance, so I wouldn’t say that’s your weakest area. I’d say your biggest challenge is still vocally. But you’ve showed growth in that area as well. Just keep on working at it and do things that interest you as an artist. Um, that’s all I have to say, cause I’ve kind of been giving advice as I go along. I’m proud of you, you should be proud of yourself. Job well done.

LL: Thank you, thank you.

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**Virginia Smith, Graduate Acting Professor, Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film, and Director of King Lear**

The biggest focus between Virginia and me during the rehearsal process was to find the simplicity in Cordelia – the unadorned stillness that comes from being a heroine so true to her heart. I asked Virginia, “Once I got the message of a “simpler” Cordelia, was my work for the rehearsal process through the performances consistent?”
She answered yes, it was. She also added that I still need to work on not doing too much, stating that the “good news” is that now I have discovered “part of the belief that your presence is enough that it can become such a powerful channel for the breath and the emotion that you and your character share.” I took several steps forward, Virginia wrote, but finding simplicity in character and the power that can come from just that is something I need to continue working on. She suggested characters to work on: Joan of Arc, Eurydice, Iphegenia, as well as contemporary ones. These are heroines of great strength and conviction. I asked about other ways I can find simplicity: “Breathe!” she wrote, “so that you can trust even walking on the stage will be enough.”

Virginia was very proud of the show, and she believed it was a success, especially as an ensemble piece for the graduate actors. “The love and trust you seven have built over the years was apparent and a real joy to me.”

Virginia was most pleased with my ability to connect and “give myself over” to whomever I was with on stage. She enjoyed watching the relationship I had with Lear, the Fool, and Kent. She felt I was well prepared, and noted that I was perfectly willing to be the dead body on stage during nights of rehearsals when that was my only task. She observed my struggle to find the true Cordelia and to get “everything [I] possibly could out of this lovely role,” and she felt that I succeeded.

Finding my power as a “person, an actress and as a character” is what I need to work on the most. Virginia was satisfied with my progress in Lear; now I need to focus on channeling and holding onto that power.

Virginia wrote that I have grown a lot over the three years because I have worked hard. “Your work in the show was strong,” she wrote. She was also very pleased with
my work in her scene study class last semester, where I “showed her lots of interesting work and many aspects of [myself].” You work very hard and care very much. You should be very proud of every aspect of Cordelia as your thesis role.” She urged me to continue that work and to keep acting, taking every opportunity I can.

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Stan Brown, Graduate Acting Professor, Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film

I asked Stan first about “stillness.” We have focused on that a lot in the past in his class, and I asked him about the core of stillness that needs to exist inside of us from which any energy or emotion can spring. “Did you see that in my work on Cordelia?” I asked. Of course there is an “unavoidable bias in observing another’s felt experience,” he wrote. But from what he could discern from his bias is that yes, he did observe it. He felt that I have come a very long way in this particular area since our first show here, An American Daughter. In that show, Stan observed that I tended to experience “acting” as a process mostly completed before the scene played out, as opposed to surrendering to living each moment as it comes on stage. “I watched your trust of being more “still” (open) in the moment grow as you matured into Cordelia,” he wrote.

Above anything else, he urged, seek stillness in every moment you can in life. “That one small but brave action (consistently taken) would ultimately reveal bottomless depths of ease in performance, laser sharp listening skills in scene work, a glowing presence, and a wild spontaneity.”
Stan was pleased with my progression in terms of my ability to “create and maintain professional (industry standard) voice and speech work,” meaning that I have become much sharper at understanding my “professional responsibility to be heard and understood, i.e. working closer to your optimum pitch, being more present with breathing, reshaping certain regional vowels.”

Because of my concern over Cordelia being too simple, I was afraid that I wasn’t putting enough of “me” into my character. I asked Stan if he saw enough “me” coming through in my performance, and he said he did see enough “me” coming through. The only times he observe me detach from this were moments when I seemed a bit preoccupied with maintaining vocal placement or articulation.

Stan felt that my biggest weakness is that I still have not found complete comfort with deeper vocal resonance in performance. My biggest strength as an actor, he asserted, is my “ability to deliver consistent quality work.”
Appendix to Part 1

Annotated Bibliography
*(Selection of Several Poignant Materials from Works Cited)*


In his biography of William Shakespeare, Ackroyd creatively and entertainingly takes the reader through the life of William Shakespeare, from his birth in Stratford, England, through his time as a top playwright in London, and back to Stratford for his death. While Ackroyd uses an extraordinary amount of factual research, much of the material must remain conjecture, as relatively few original documents exist that give us hard evidence as to Shakespeare’s ventures.


This collection of writings from various people during the early 17th century in England, tracks events, both major and mundane. Such topics discussed include court scandals, new plays, civil disputes, plagues, and petty crimes. The collection helps the reader better visualize the everyday life of both ordinary and privileged citizens of the Jacobean era.

Higgins, John. *A mirour for magistrates being a true chronicle historie of the untimely falles of such unfortunate princes and men of note, as have happened since the first entrance of Brute into this iland, untill this our latter age*. London, 1610.
This collection of legends in poem-form chronicles the lives of English historical figures, many of who endured a tragic end. Queene Cordila narrates her own story in Part One and lamentable relates the tragedy of her death by her own hands out of misery. Just as the title implies, this piece is written not only as entertainment, but also for “magistrates” who can learn from the follies and falls of earlier notable figures.

Howe, Elizabeth. The First English Actresses: Women and drama 1660-1700. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Howe investigates the very interesting topic of the emergence of female actresses in England following the English Civil War in the 17th century. Howe focuses on several actresses of great notoriety, not only on their stage careers, but also on their interesting, and sometimes scandalous, personal lives. She discusses how the seemingly sudden switch from all-male plays to female actors gracing the stage came about, and how this change impacted the traditional view of women’s place in society. Howe writes of Mary Saunderson, a celebrated Restoration actress known for her virtuous roles and was the first female to play the role of Cordelia in Shakespeare’s King Lear.

Mamet, David. True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor. New York: Vintage Books, 1999. This book is written for actors who are looking for more direct approaches to acting, actors who may have been previously confused or overwhelmed by the popular Stanislavski technique. Mamet deems the
Stanislaski technique overindulgent, superfluous and complete poppycock. He urges the importance of simply knowing your lines, pursuing a simple and truthful objective, and having the courage to stand on stage and speak. Mamet offers practical advice for the actor, such as maintaining good technique, resisting the pull to over-analyze a script, and the necessity of being able to separate real life from theatre life; just as we leave our problems at the door of the theatre when we come in, so should we leave them at the door when we go out.
Images of Cordelia

2. Imaginary portraits of Leir and Cordelia (Lear and Cordelia), from The Genealogy of the Kings of England (1560).


Mary Saunderson, first female Cordelia (Wikimedia)
Appendix to Part 2

Lear’s Flowers

In Act 4, Scene 3, Cordelia names all the flowers she saw her father wearing. Before this list was cut in rehearsal, I composed this collage of flowers that adorn Lear as he runs mad in the countryside. Finding these flowers helped me visualize a clearer image of Lear’s appearance.

Fumiter (Burdock)   Furrow Weeds
Hardocks

Hemlock

Nettles

Cuckoo Flowers

Darnel
Journal

Thursday, October 8

First day of rehearsal! I have been extremely excited for so long. This is such a big story to capture, and I know it’s going to be a beautiful experience. Yesterday we explored with Viewpoints in Virginia’s class. We created a freeform, moving tableau-of -sorts of King Lear. We were one – I was not Lucy, the individual, rather I was part of something larger, something undefined, something spiritual. I think we all felt that – such ensemble work had disappeared a bit from our group – it being the third year and everyone now concentrated on themselves a bit more (what will we do with our lives after graduation?) – so it was lovely to connect to my classmates on the deeper, more simple level of being. To the point…we are an ensemble, and we will move forth as one. I will hold tight to that.

We began with presentations from the lighting, scenic and costume designers. I am eager to use the space Pat has designed. It is to be large, open, ancient – a perfect space to fill the heightened drama of the story. I was quite taken with the costumes. Lear is set in the Napoleonic era, and sketches for the men projected a sober regality, while the women’s wear was soft, classical and open. Cordelia wears white.

We began to read. I was immediately taken by a chill upon first hearing Steven’s voice. It was the voice of a king, commanding and strong, but it was a voice which comforted me, as a father’s voice should. So when he condemned me, that same voice terrified me. I did not expect every single blast of hate to affect me, but it did. There was such power in the air. It was shocking. Now, what I need to take from this, is to make
sure that in the rehearsal process, I keep the shock of his stinging words fresh. I can never get comfortable with it – it must destroy me every night.

I have worked a lot with Cordelia’s behavior in the first scene. As I discussed in the research part of my thesis, Cordelia has traditionally been deemed the spotless one, the woman who does no wrong, except perhaps, love too much. But I have found no such woman in 1.1. When I read this scene aloud, fire arouses in me – fire of shame, of anger, of jealousy, of assertion, of bitterness. In the read through, I connected to these feelings, and I had more power and venom in me than I have before. I have no idea where this will go – Virginia may direct me in a completely different direction, but this is, at least, what is in my gut. What I will do with those feelings will be the meat and potatoes. I look forward to exploring that.

I felt an immediate connection to Steven – my heart was open towards him, and his towards mine. I am so glad. It is the love for her father that drives Cordelia in Lear, and feeling comfortable and safe with Steven will make it easier to plug that love in.

**Friday, October 9**

We had a second read through tonight. Earlier today, in Scene Study class, Virginia gave all of us a few notes concerning Lear. Mine was surprising, but very helpful. She said I was articulating too much in my face. At first, I was quite confused – what does that even mean. But I talked to her after class, and she said it wasn’t a large deal, but my face was moving so much that it was distracting from my intentions in the scenes. She explained that I have mastered articulation (finally…it’s been hard to neutralize that North Carolinian accent - which I love dearly), but that now I need to tone
it down to just my mouth articulating, not my face – it looks weird. And I had no clue I was even doing it – since I cannot see how my face is moving. So I was very glad to get that note. I went home and worked on it and found it is a small adjustment to make, but it makes a big difference.

The read through went well tonight, though I felt off my game tonight. I wasn’t as emotionally accessible, and I hate when I’m that way. I want to beat on my heart and say, “open up you!” I had a busy day today, and I did not have time to warm-up, stretch and meditate in the morning. I have found that opening my heart to the day in the mornings has helped me access my emotions more readily during the rest of the day. I need to make sure I prioritize that now, especially taking on a role like Cordelia.

My main goal for this entire process is to surrender, to fall blindly into the abyss of the moment. Whenever I have truly done that in the past, everything else just follows. Dive in, Lucy, dive in.

**Sunday, October 11**

Concerning Cordelia’s physical movements as they relate to her character: Cordelia is 26. She is small, healthy and agile, but she does not walk quickly. She moves in a paced, determined way, which could possibly make her appear larger or older than she actually is. She is shy, but she is nevertheless quietly confident and sure of her beliefs. She breathes deeply and calmly. Her strongest chakra is her heart. She leads with her heart – high chest, shoulders back to let her heart give and receive love, lifted chin. She has the animal essence of an English Mastiff: loyal, dignified, loving and courageous.
Cordelia’s voice mirrors her walk – she speaks with deliberation and with a sense of calm. She is far from garrulous and does not speak whatever comes to her mind. She often only speaks when she has something important to say. Her voice is steady, “ever soft, gentle and low” (Lr. 5.3.274-275).

**Monday, October 12**

No rehearsal tonight. Instead I went to *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*. I happened to sit next to Steven, who was quietly going over his lines before the production. What a big role he has, and it is nice to see him taking it so seriously. He seems to be the ideal professional; it is such a pleasure to be able to work with him. I learned he has been acting professionally since he was eighteen; he graduated from high school and went straight to work. We talked about many other things as well, and I enjoy getting to know him slowly. I noted that I felt an immediate connection to him, so continuing that openness will surely help our stage relationship. The play was poignant and lovely and very well-received. Though a few times I let my mind drift and imagine the *King Lear* ensemble up there (or rather, down there – I was on the balcony). I got goose bumps.

I thought about my sisters today (Goneril and Regan). I think they were not always this way. They are older, and they remember our mother. They loved her, and after she died Lear turned all his attention to caring for me. They have despised me since. I see how they interact with their husbands, and it disgusts me. They order them around, and there is no love between any of them. Cornwall scares me; he is a slimy man who I believe would turn against my father in a heartbeat. I pity Albany. I see the way
my sisters are with their husbands, and I think, “This will not happen to me. I won’t let it. Not with Burgundy. He loves me.” Not so much.

In the rough draft of Part One of my thesis, I did not fully flesh out the back story of Burgundy and me. I had not yet decided upon one that I felt strongly drawn to. I have now: Burgundy and I met as children – he was thirteen and I was eight. He is the son of the Duke of Burgundy. I thought he was beautiful – he had dark eyes and dark hair, and he was proud and pleasant. And he had a daunting smile.

Fifteen years later we meet again at a royal banquet, and he took my breath away – again. Those same qualities he had as a boy he still retained. Just two years ago he visited more frequently, to court me (or rather, to court my father for me). We have played games in the courtyard, we have stolen biscuits from the kitchen, we have swum naked together in the river, we have made love on the isolated bank side. He is my other half. And then he leaves me. See, I am sure, even after my father’s disinherition of me, that Burgundy will whisk me away, and we will live off of his inheritance. And even if we were both bound to live out our lives in poverty, we would be happy. But he does not, and France, I don’t even really know this guy! He takes me in, though, and I am grateful for that. I eventually begin to love him, not a lusty kind of love, but with a love grown out of respect and admiration.

**Tuesday, October 13**

First blocking rehearsal of 1.1. I feel both discouraged and determined. Virginia did not like 90% of my choices for the scene. She wanted a simpler, nicer, steadier Cordelia. She wanted a later tragic point for me. I raised the stakes too much, which
goes against a lot of what I have been taught here. I felt as if she wanted half of me, not all of me, so I was sincerely frustrated because her displeasure with my approach did not result from a truthful performance, for I was completely in the moment and acting from my gut; she just did not like the truth I was giving.

The second run through of the scene, I did exactly what she asked. She said afterwards I did just what she wanted, but I felt so less “in it.” I felt like I was merely a drama-tron spewing out words. I talked to her during break, and she explained herself better. I do understand her point of view, but I argued that my fear was that this new Cordelia will be seen as too idealized and spotless – she’s not, there’s a lot of rage and bitterness that I think exists in the scene. But Virginia replied that the audience needs to identify who’s the good and who’s the bad in this first scene. So, though I believe my approach shows more colors of Cordelia, I am going to go with her on this. What I can do, however, to appease us both, is I can still have the anger and rage inside me, so that it becomes a struggle to suppress it, adding – ooohh the golden apple of drama – conflict. I just feel like I need a bit more autonomy as an actor and feel like this is more of a collaborative project. But I’ve worked with Virginia before, and I know this is how she works. I just have to be a little more creative in making sure enough of “me” is still present, because at the end, after rehearsals are over and we have an audience, I am the one who has to put everything together and perform honestly and openly as me.

On a lighter note, we spent the first half of rehearsal on movement exercises and exploration – based on Viewpoints. The first exploration was based on activities at court. What I found was a lightness and a happiness that needs to exist at the beginning of the play. It will make the fall from it even more poignant. We used our prop in this scene,
and it was a catalyst in my connection with Steven. He was so loving and so tender. I felt equal to him, and I also felt the sharp, bitter glares from my sisters who were jealous of the fond attention Steven showed me. This illuminated depth of our love (Lear and I), which will now change my approach to him in Part One of the thesis. I made a choice that our relationship was less tender than it is now, but this is where it should be.

I explored my relationship with Burgundy – desire mounted, and I wished more than anything to wed to him. Oh Burgundy, why dost thou forsake me so? In movement exercises we paid attention to status, and I became much more aware of my regality and my place in the hierarchy of society.

**Wednesday, October 14**

I am not called tonight, nor will I be for a week more (fall break and the fact that Cordelia is absent during the middle chunk of the play off gallivanting in France). We did good *Lear* work today in scene class. We discussed our animal essences – mine being a Mastiff dog – loyal, vigilant, calm, loving – and discussing it made more sense of clearly Virginia’s push to simplify Cordelia’s emotions. The calm essence of such a dog can radiate in Cordelia - I like that.

We used our animal essences to morph from animal to human with the instruction to at least once don the crown, which sat in the middle of the floor. I discovered some powerful things – I developed tunnel vision a quarter of the way through: I saw the crown, and I saw other people wearing it, which inflamed me – it did not belong to anyone but my father, and so I started to look for him around the room. That was my sole mission – I looked behind curtains, under chairs, under the desk and in the closet, but
he was nowhere to be found. It was devastating, but at the end of the piece, I saw Ryan (Edgar) and, I think, Kyle (Cornwall) both edging for the crown. I prevented Cornwall from obtaining it by picking it up and putting it on the only head that deserved it – Edgar’s; and I then felt at peace.

We also simulated a storm with handkerchiefs, and I shielded myself for a few moments, then I found Kent, and he was my link back home, so I tied my scarf to his, and we made our way through the storm together. I saw my sisters twirling and dancing, and it made me so upset that I attempted several times to take away their scarves, but I never could, though I did steal Cornwall’s. Near the end of the piece, I finally gave up trying to take their scarves, for I thought that I did not need to enact revenge – they were going to come to ruin by themselves.

**Wednesday, October 21**

Fall break was lovely, though this week I have been in a daze. I don’t want to write too much on Jason’s situation, because I still can’t sort it out in my head, the raw emotions and all, and I cannot even come close to articulating how I feel. Our fellow classmate, Jason, has just been diagnosed with Stage 4 rectal cancer. He will have surgery tomorrow, I think, and he will not be able to play Gloucester in the show. We will miss him terribly, though Sam will now take over the role, and I believe he will do a wonderful job.

In class earlier today we discussed aspects of our character that we explored during break. I talked about stillness. During holiday I did not delve into any character analysis or voice work or line preparation. I focused on my self, my spirit. I have not felt
myself lately. I feel like I am rushing constantly, and there is a nagging feeling in me that urges me to slow down. I did. I went with my husband Justin to Mahoney State Park and we rented a cabin for two days. The cabin was on an isolated patch of land right by the river, and the weather was perfect. We hiked often, but mainly I sat on a bench in front of a large oak in front of the river. I did not ponder anything of large importance. I just sat happily and felt the warm breeze and the comfort of the sun. I felt so blessedly alive, my skin tingled from the knowledge that I was enjoying each second as it came. I became the stillness, and I was a body that at any moment could do anything, could feel anything. This is where I belong. I won’t bog you down, journal, with an overload of metaphysical sentiments, but this does connect to acting. The goal is to take this feeling of comfort and vitality onto the stage, in the moment, where nothing exists but that second, where the stillness and beauty of being remains a stable cell inside me, from which any emotion, any action is possible.

Tonight at rehearsal, I felt a general sense of good-will and eagerness to connect from the cast during warm-up. Though we are pre-occupied with thoughts of Jason and other personal matters, everyone was in good spirits. That made me feel safe. Tonight our focus was running Act 1 for the first time since blocking. It was often messy, but it ran smoother than I thought it would. I am starting to get my “sea legs” with 1.1, though I still have not put enough of “me” in Cordelia, for at times I felt disconnected, as if I were hovering over myself and merely observing, not being. Jump in, Luc. I have ditched my script for good (hallelujah). I am getting more comfortable with Virginia’s instruction to simplify Cordelia, and I played with subduing the anger she feels from being outcast so carelessly. The “I yet beseech your majesty” speech felt good playing
with that conflict – I think it will work, and we’ll have plenty of time to work on that in the upcoming weeks.

**Thursday, October 22**

Tonight was a simple rehearsal for me – I was called towards the end of the night to cross the stage with the French army with my father. I felt new power with that section, though. I told Virginia I think Cordelia would carry a sword as well as the soldiers. I don’t apprehend actually going into battle, but we are in English territory now, and it would be careless to rule out a possibility of guerilla warfare. In the cross, my focus is my father. I must protect him, and I will kill to protect him. I love those simple objectives. Hmmm, though aren’t all objectives simple – they should be, shouldn’t they?

**Friday, October 23**

Big scenes tonight. We rehearsed Cordelia’s return to England and her reunion with her father. I am disappointed, but I knew I would be. In fact, I told Justin over dinner tonight before I went to rehearsal that I was nervous about staging the reunion scene because I had built it up so much in my head that I knew I would be disappointed. So at least I knew it was coming. I do not like Virginia’s blocking at all of 4.7. She has put everyone on stage in a cluster on a platform up-stage left. I knew I probably wasn’t going to get just Lear and I downstage center as I had pictured in my head, but this is worse than I thought. She has me turning upstage to talk to Lear, so naturally, I couldn’t be heard. My instinct was to kneel and talk upward to him, but she does not want me to kneel, rather hover over him. It feels extremely unnatural and awkward. Tomorrow at
rehearsal I am going to talk to her, and suggest that I kneel, opening me up and giving me more room to move. At least, I will say, let me try, and see if it works. The emotional connection last night was there, absolutely, that part was beautiful, but it will not be beautiful to the audience if they can’t even see my face. Hmm, I am more frustrated than I thought. However, in the grand scheme of things, this blocking problem is not a big deal. We will work through it, it just initially threw me off big-time.

4.4 was much more fun and inspirational than I thought. I am running to the cliff to spot my father as he runs away. It is such an active, hopeful part of the play, I look forward to working more on it. I just can’t get this awkward staging off my mind. I really hope it works out. After rehearsal last night, I poured a glass of wine, kissed Justin and went into my bedroom to work on how I could make it better, using the aforementioned efforts that I will mention to Virginia tomorrow. I really think it will work. We shall see.

**Sunday, October 25**

Last night was a great rehearsal. I felt very focused and in high humor and spirits. I talked with Virginia before rehearsal concerning my problems with the 4.7 blocking, and she agrees – she doesn’t like the blocking either, but the fact that people have to carry Lear in on a chair is such an obstacle. So I don’t think major changes will be made, but she will let me try my minor changes tonight. I have been working on it constantly for days, and I hope I didn’t overwork and over-think it. I focused on the thought of my sisters, my flesh and blood, turning an old man out in a storm in which he could very well
die. How could they? I want to destroy them. Virginia may not like such an aggressive objective, but again, we shall see tomorrow night.

Steven and I strengthen our stage relationship every night. When we come on stage together bound and captured, I know we will never see each other again. This destroyed me last night. Virginia and I were on the same page in terms of the end of his speech strengthening me, giving me new resolve. We move boldly and bravely off to prison. Steven and I played with different ways of carrying, lowering, and holding my dead body onto stage. It’s quite difficult, we haven’t yet figured out a good way to do all three moves in a way that doesn’t give us both too much pain. But it really isn’t a long time to play dead, and I found myself better at it than I thought – scary. I found that nothing went through my mind. I had remarked to my husband before rehearsals began that I wasn’t sure how I was going to keep it together emotionally hearing Lear’s howling and despair over my death. But it’s funny – I felt nothing. I didn’t even feel alive, no thoughts, no emotions, no desires, no reactions. I suppose that’s the way I should be in the scene, but it is eerie nevertheless.

**Monday October 26**

I felt weary tonight. I haven’t gotten much sleep lately, and it gets harder and harder the older I get to efficiently function with a small amount of sleep. We ran Act 2 twice, and at least I can say things ran more smoothly the second time. Though I am concerned about one thing: my projection. I have not gotten a note about projection since my first show here. Last semester I made leaps and bounds in terms of discoveries of vocal power. Stan was quite proud of me. And I’ve continued my daily vocal exercise
work. But for some reason, I feel like I have regressed. Virginia has said a couple times that she cannot hear me – this only seems to happen in 4.7 – my reunion scene with Papa – huge, can’t let that go to waste. It’s not as if I don’t yet have the technique to efficiently and consistently project. For some reason in 4.7, my brain thinks intimacy, and my voice takes on a completely different color and resonance than it does in any other scene. Instead of coming forward, my voice tends to sink back in my throat, and it becomes almost raspy. It’s extremely frustrating, for I successfully project in my vocal exercises, and I have specifically focused on that one scene, and everything is good, but as soon as I get up there on stage in rehearsals, I drop it. I am going to discuss this with Stan tomorrow and see if we can come up with a better set of exercises to help with this problem. Ugh. This is one of the most frustrating things to me, but I will figure it out and fix it. At least time is on my side.

**Tuesday, October 27**

First full run tonight! We worked a lot in Stan’s class today on projection and ease of voice, and my focus was to work on smoothly swinging my voice going deeper each time (it’s so hard to describe it the way Stan does – but at least I understand what the exercise means). I pulled Stan aside before rehearsal to work even more. And I took a peaceful breath before we went out on stage.

Arrrggh! Emotionally, yes, I was there, I conveyed my feelings properly, my movements matched my inner world, and I at least hit all my blocking. But all my good intentions to improve my vocal quality failed. At least they did so in the later half of the scene. I will say, in the beginning I spoke clearer and with more resonance than I have
before in the scene, but as things continued and I was getting more involved in the action, I felt myself straining and running out of breath, and I am sure, failing to successfully project. I spoke with Stan soon after, and he told me to make sure I pronounced the first “Cordelia” strongly enough so that the audience knows who I am, and to work on riding my breath. I know exactly what he means. Why can’t I just do it?? I need to intensify my daily vocal work.

Ok, so I just talked to Stan again (I have my computer here at rehearsal). He said overall I am doing well. He also said he had absolutely no problem hearing me. At least I know that - now I can work on building from there.

The second act for me was absolutely horrible. I felt as if I was floating above my body looking down at a woman who was just nonsensically spouting words from her mouth. The worst part was 4.7 – I was totally disconnected. I went home and stewed a bit. I looked back at the text and was confused: I know exactly what I’m saying, I know how I feel, it’s just coming off way too slow and disjointed. I finally figured that if Virginia still wants people to see what they can cut, I will offer this small bit of monologue in 4.7.

So, now it’s Wednesday after Scene Study class, and we discussed problem areas with Lear. Virginia said my work thus far is good – I am making good physical choices and that my emotional exploration is vivid and solid. The thing I still need to work on is resisting the urge to find the tragedy – vocally and mentally. Cordelia, she says, is more plucky, more confident and optimistic. What’s good about this direction is that I, Lucy, am naturally that way anyway, so hopefully it will not be too much of a challenge to plug into.
We also discussed that dreaded roadblock part of 4.7, and I suggested cutting, and she said that she hoped that’s what I would suggest, so cut away! Fabulous, I will. This afternoon I looked at that part of the text, and cut everything that did not propel the action. It’s weird – I almost feel as if I’m selling out, as if I’m “solving” the problem by avoiding it completely. Yet, I cannot help but feel relieved, especially knowing cutting these parts serve the play and the audience’s understanding of it in the end. So no, I perceive that any guilt I may have of selling myself short will dissipate quickly.

**Wednesday, October 28**

Act 1 work tonight. We spent a long time on 1.1, running it three times, which we needed. Each time I was more comfortable on stage and more able to let my “me-ness” shine through. The only problem I had with the rehearsal was saying good-bye to my sisters in 1.1. The first two times we ran it, Virginia said I was still being too mean. I told her that the words reflect bitterness and anger, why should I not let any of that show through? She said Cordelia has to be the nice one, all the way through; she is good the whole time, and she never loses her cool. Boring, thought I, and how utterly inhuman. I pointed these things out to her during the break before our final run, and she asserted her point in a slightly different way than she had been, and it made much more sense to me: to see my sisters as cruel, but caring more about urging them to take care of our father. I tried that the third time, and it worked, I think, though I was thrown-off by trying three times to say my own name successfully (my tongue became tied). But overall, it was a successful rehearsal, and I look forward to solidifying this scene even more. I am not
called the rest of the week, so my focus during my time off will be on vocal projection and considerations of pluck.

**Sunday, November 1**

We did some solid work on Act 4 tonight. It was the first time we ran the reunion scene with Lear since the big cuts. It worked quite well, the scene flowed much better, my train of thought was not stagnant, and I felt much more comfortable. It’s funny, the scene I was most apprehensive about (because it was so short and seemingly introspective) is now my favorite to do. In 4.4 I run in after seeing my father on the heath (“Alack, ’tis he”). There is something so hopeful, so sure and confident about my words. I love them. They are mine.

Virginia offered a different view of the reunion scene tonight, and though my choices were duly justified by the script, I understand her suggestions, and I think they are appropriate. When Lear says “Do not laugh at me...,” I have been crying out of desperation, because before these lines Lear says, “Methinks I should know you and know this man...” At once I think that he recognizes me, and also Kent, but then he says, “...yet I am doubtful...” My hopes are dashed, and I am frustrated. Virginia wanted that cry to be an actual laugh, in that the good news is that Lear recognizes me, and we can fix the rest; we can tell him where he is, and we can soothe him with information. All is well, and all will be ok. We tried it, and it worked nicely.

The only thing still troubling me is my voice. The past couple of warmer-than-usual days have troubled my allergies, and I came to rehearsal with an already-itchy and sore throat. I had a terrible time of swallowing my words tonight, and Virginia could not
make out a couple of lines. I am meeting Stan soon for a private voice tutorial, and I want to pay special attention to pressing my words forward and out. This is frustrating, for I have intensified my daily vocal work, and my projection and color has greatly improved in the past few rehearsals. I don’t like being set back like this. I have just begun to read Cicely Berry’s *The Actor and the Text*, and she writes brilliant, practical things. Things like seeing dialogue as the passing of energy from one character to the next, the power of swiftness, and making sure that the thought controls the breath, not the other way around. I have been reading small bits during breaks, so I haven’t had much time to process the information I’ve read, but I need to, for then I can start implementing her advice on stage.

**Monday, November 2**

Tonight was a long night – we ran Act 2 scenes over and over, but I had a lot of fun, and we made some solid improvements. I think I’m coming down with something, for this is the second night in a row that I have coughed all throughout rehearsal. My throat is sore, and I feel achy. After rehearsal I hurriedly bought Zicam and cough drops – I cannot afford to get sick now. I did not have any mild revelations tonight, so nothing much to report, except that I am proud of our cast, and I think we are creating quite an ensemble piece. This has been challenging work thus far, but completely rewarding.
Tuesday, November 3

Tonight we ran the show. At this point, the show was running 2.45 hours, and Virginia told us major cuts were definite. She cut a couple of my lines, and I hope she does not attempt to cut more – I have very few words as it is. Tonight before rehearsal I took a look back at my objectives for the scenes I am in and decided they were more convoluted than they needed to be. I made them as simple as possible. I have been reading Mamet’s True and False (upon the suggestion of Dr. Grange), and I find it a highly encouraging book. I have always been a little unnerved by the over-reliance on the Stanislavski system, but I had never been taught otherwise. Stanislavski was taught ad nauseum at UNC, and it is taught here too. Mamet talks about courage – the courage to stand firm and say your line, and though I believe there is a bit more to a convincing piece of theatre than that, courage goes a long way. I have been working with the courage to let myself be enough. Why is it on some nights it flows steady while on others I stifle it??

Despite feeling a bit detached because of new cuts, I clipped along satisfactorily. Virginia was pleased with the new speed, and I need to continue to be mindful of the pace – picking up my cues, acting on the line and connecting my thoughts.

Thursday, November 4

I had a good time with my cast mates tonight. Everyone was in good spirits – Robie rattled off some prime dirty jokes backstage, and we all enjoyed a pleasant camaraderie. Now, as for the integrity of the show…naw, we did ok. I, however, could
have done much better. I was really feeling 4.4, but further into it I skipped Gary’s lines twice, and we had to do the whole scene again – I was very embarrassed.

My focus tonight was objectives, but I found myself thinking of my objectives in terms of “Now I’m thinking of my objective” during the scene, and it completely took me out of it. I’ve got to stop doing that, for I have found that what works for me is to initially know my objective during normal research and work on the script and then to forget about it, for if I’m truly connected and know what’s really going on, I aim for it anyway. I can get way too heady for my own good.

I have a killer headache tonight. I have got to rest – this has been a long, hard week. I look forward to a break during the weekend. I need to re-discover my general life bearings. I tend to feel very lost mid-rehearsal, but I always seem to come out of the fog soon after, and all is well.

**Friday, November 6**

Full run tonight. It went well. I was extremely connected in 1.1, and my only focus tonight was to be myself. I have been having a small character identity crisis, in that I have been directed to subdue any emotion other than hope and kindness. I understand why Virginia has directed me this way, but it has been hard for me to find myself in this purely altruistic Cordelia. The only thing that is saving me is remembering to identify emotions of spite, rage and anger as still there, but pushed below the surface, and, as I wrote previously, thus emerges the conflict between striving to do good while having these bitter feelings. I am extremely tired, I need to sleep.
Monday, November 9

I am extremely angry. I just hurled my water bottle across the floor, and that made me feel better. I am so exhausted by this charge to “make her simpler” – I’m not that simple, so why should she be?? Here’s the problem: we are running through Act 1 tonight, and we just went through 1.1 (I brought my computer to rehearsal). Everything’s going well – I’m feeling it, completely into the situation; I’m banished, then I come forward to beseech my father to let me stay. Yet I’m too emotional, and Virginia shouts out “simpler!” But I’m crying, I’m feeling these feelings, and everything my speech suggests on paper is a desperate, emotional attempt to return to my father’s good graces. I am approaching Virginia during break. She is going to have to tell me how I am supposed to be simple and unemotional in this speech, because I am obviously not getting it. She made me do it again, and I actually thought “be more robotic,” and you know what, she probably liked it. This is crap. I feel like quitting.

Having said that, of course I can’t. But this is the most frustrating thing: being so alive in a scene and being slapped down for it. Must I be compliant and at peace with a more robotic sense of self? Gahhhhhhhhhh!!

Alright, ok, I am calm now. So I did talk to Virginia during the break, making sure that I was completely collaborative and pleasant. She told me I need to go slower - and I said “wait, you’re letting me?!” We have all been told to speed things up, so it comes as a great relief to me to know I can take more time with that chunk. I think that will solve a lot of problems just by making that adjustment. I told her the problems I had with the “simpler” direction, and she said to imagine having a fight with Justin, in which a) I am extremely emotional and upset, but that b) I have a specific point I am trying to
get across, and I need to make sure he understands that point. Raise the stakes even higher. Think of it that way, she suggested. I can understand that rationale. So what I am understanding is that it needs to be slower and come from a place that relies more on logic than feeling. If I am paying more attention to my objective, everything else will fall into place, emotions and all. I am going to work on it that way until we run it again on Wednesday, and see how that plays. I know I over-reacted from tonight’s work, for Virginia is a good director, and she is leading me where I need to be led, but my frustration comes from wanting to portray a role as honestly as I can, and I think it’s a good thing that it is that important to me. I look forward to working to make this chunk better. Other than this small problem area, I believe things are going well. I am now released from rehearsal. I need to take a deep breath, exhale, and leave it all behind me for tonight. Time for some pumpkin bread and Indigo Girls.

**Tuesday, November 10**

I had a great time at rehearsal tonight. It was a final work through of Act 2, and things went much more smoothly than I had anticipated. 4.3 was a bit frustrating, for Virginia could not decide if she wanted a word cut out or not and if she wanted me to see Lear running away or not. She also strayed from her initial direction of Cordelia as completely hopeful and confident; this is good; I like the new layers, for now the scene runs closer to my initial interpretation. But I am glad we paid so much attention to it – it needed work. She was right: there was something funny about it, and I hope now it is fixed. So we tried it several times in several different ways, and by the end, I was worn out, for I run in, deliver my speech and run out again. It was quite aerobic. We finally
decided that it works best seeing Lear run away, happy to have seen him while saying “Alack, ‘tis he,” but the worry and concern sets in right afterwards in that I just saw my father in rags and weeds, and what is worse, he appeared to be “as mad as the vexed sea.” The rest of the scenes went very well, and I got some great, helpful notes from Virginia. Emily Martinez has been at rehearsal the past few nights, sitting in the back row to make sure she can hear and understand the actors, and good news! She can hear every word from me!! I really think this production is going to be successful, I really do. I love my cast mates, and everyone is working extremely hard. We finished working at around 9.15, and she announced an early release (many “hoo-rah” ensued). I am going to get as much rest as I can tonight, for the next week is going to be intense. I love it though; I can’t wait to make this show even stronger.

**Wednesday, November 11**

Full run. We open in a week (I consider the 112 performance opening)! The run went somewhat smoothly – some places were swift and some places seemed a bit lackluster. I worked on my last plea to Lear, and I believe it to be much more effective now – Virginia said it was the most clear it has ever been, and it’s where it needs to be. Ok. Good. I know where it should live now. There are those times, however, where I still feel like I am at the edge looking down to where I need to be, where I feel as if I am floating above my body looking down. I need more courage. At this point, I know all my lines, my blocking, my objectives, etc., and now it’s just a matter of diving in. That is my biggest hurdle. It’s not something anyone has observed about my work during this process, but I feel the impotence in myself. But I need not focus on that, do I? What’s
that going to do? Mamet says that just as you leave your baggage at the door when you come to the theatre, you need to leave the theatre baggage on stage after performing. And that if there is something you didn’t accomplish that night, don’t agonize over it in your mind, *do it* next time. With that said, I still feel confident about opening next week.

**Thursday, November 12**

Tonight went well. I have never been more into 1.1 than I was tonight. It was an extremely powerful scene. I realized tonight, though, that during my sometimes agonizingly long break, I need to make sure I warm up again. When I returned in 4.3, I felt a little rusty. At least I have plenty of time to power through a few lip trills and tongue twisters. I have been getting better and better at being a dead body. Man, I really have nothing substantial to write tonight. I am just writing sentences to write them. Over and out.

**Friday, November 13**

It’s Friday, lordy, this has been a long week. I had an incredibly busy day today; I barely had time to eat dinner before I rushed off to school again for rehearsal tonight. I need rest, real at-least-8-hour-sleep rest. I brought my computer to rehearsal, so I am writing during my looooong break, though I need to warm-up again fairly soon for 4.3. 1.1 was ok, it was not great; certainly didn’t measure up to last night’s run of the scene. I was not there emotionally, not at all. And I know it has to do with my busy day – I had no time to open my heart chakra. I’m not sure if I have written about it yet in the journal, but opening my heart chakra is a necessary part of my process for roles in which I have to
cry. Virginia taught this process to me a year ago. I have been very consistent during the entire rehearsal process with crying – there has been maybe one or two times when I could not muster up a couple tears during the show. Cordelia is always crying; she’s such a softy. What I do is light a few candles, turn on calm music at home and do about five to ten minutes of yoga, just focusing on feeling at peace and aware of my beating heart and the privilege of being alive. I then put on music which usually makes me cry (it’s not hard – Hallmark commercials make me cry). The best songs usually have to do with the love of a soul mate (my Justin) or home (usually bluegrass – some lonesome crooner singing of heartache or the feel of the southern wind). And then I cry for about five minutes. And then I’m done. Something about that process awakens my ability to sincerely emote. If it’s too much crying I get worn out and numb, and I have to make sure it is done at least three hours before I have to cry again, otherwise I do not give my body time to recover. Today I barely had time to eat, let alone meditate. I have to make that a priority.

**Sunday, November 15**

Tech day! I have always loved tech days. I know they’re long and tedious, but it still excites me – all the technical elements coming together – now we’re even closer to sharing this story to an audience. What can I say about today? – tech days are never too inspirational, but I always learn even more each time how important it is to stay on task and keep my energy up, to always be ready to jump into a scene, to give it my all.

Wow, we finished tech at 6.30 and were able to do a full run at 7. I have never experienced such a smooth tech day – it was great. Our run went well. Virginia again
encouraged us to get caught up in the sweep of the play and let that carry us. It seemed to tonight – things were really moving, though we still need to shed five minutes from the first act. I am Cordelia now – I feel “me” in everything I say.

A few months ago, I would have never admitted it, but I was scared out of my wits of doing this play. It is a mammoth and emotional piece of theatre. I was fearful that I wouldn’t be able to believably be “good” enough for Cordelia. I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to make her words my own. I was afraid I would not be able to live up to her emotional extremes. But I have done all this. I am proud of myself. Now all I have to do is sustain it, make new discoveries every night, and keep it fresh.

**Monday, November 16**

Wow, everybody is absolutely exhausted tonight. But still we were all excited to wear our costumes for the first time and admire the parade of skirts, plumes, stockings and hats. Ah, but of course it has its pitfalls. I tripped three times. Thank goodness we have another night of dress rehearsal. In 1.1, Trent dropped me on our entrance, in a very slow and awkward way – the audience roared, and we had to start over. Oh man, it was hilarious. Then I had to get banished, which was not as fun. I am not sure what to say about my performance tonight. It wasn’t bad, but it certainly was not where it should be. My mind was not truly on the scene at hand, rather it was on wondering how I was going to make it downstream with my train and other bothersome accoutrements (though I must say that CeCe, the costume designer, did a wonderful job – the costumes are sturdy and beautiful). Virginia noticed this was the case for most of the cast – the costumes were acting us rather than the other way around. Again, thank goodness we have another go at
it tomorrow. The biggest note she had last night was articulation. She said several new people in the audience last night could hear us, but not understand the words we were saying. Several principals got specific notes on articulation, I did not, but I know there were a handful of times when I did not pay enough attention to my consonants. That will be a big focus for tomorrow.

**Tuesday, November 17**

Ugh. I tripped again, but that is not the cause of my frustration. There was nothing too specifically wrong about my performance tonight, but I was, in general, boring. I was not in it at all. I felt like such a fraud. That is the worst place to be. I did not dive on. I did not get any notes concerning such from Virginia, but I know I am guilty of a lackluster performance. So. I will not dwell on it, but I’m putting on my game face now. No more of that. Tomorrow night is the 112 audience – here we go!

**Wednesday, November 18**

Ok, things went very well. I did exactly what I set out to do – to immerse myself in the moment, to dive in. Who can tell if the 112-ers liked it or not. Truth be told, even I would get restless during a play this long. However, there were many giggles during the Edgar/Edmund fight and Beth’s dramatic run off stage with a dagger, so at least that means they were awake. We have a great show, we really do. I am extremely excited for opening night!
**Thursday, November 19**

I think tonight was the best opening night I have ever had. Nothing too amazing happened, I was just fully present in the scenes, and there was a great energy from the audience. 1.1 was the best it has ever been for me. I wish I could articulate the rush I had tonight, but that is one of the reasons why it was so thrilling – I was simply living in the moment.

**Friday, November 20**

Tonight went well too. I was not as emotionally connected in 1.1 as I was last night, but tonight, Act 2 was the best it has ever been for me…now if I could just combine last night’s Act 1 with tonight’s Act 2 in my magic time travel machine…I instinctively raised the stakes much higher in Act 2, and now I know I need to keep them that high from now on. 5.3 was horrible for me (in a good way) – I looked at Lear, and I saw my Daddy, and I knew this would be the last time I saw him, I knew it, and I crumbled. I am drained tonight, and I am very glad we have tomorrow off. Rest!!

**Sunday, November 21**

Ugh. Nasty. Before I write about today’s performance, I will say that Virginia came into the dressing room after the show, and said the performance was especially lovely and moving today…well, thank goodness I didn’t pull the show down too much. So 1.1, I was feeling it. Everything was fine. France beckons me to leave, and after I hug the fool, I hugely trip up the stairs, over my dress and barely catch myself before I fall. Then I proceed to trip over my own name “Cordelia,” and then I cannot remember
what to say next – big pause for a few seconds. Then I leave. Brilliant. I was mortified! I don’t think I have ever tripped over my lines that badly – ever! Tiffiney and Beth said it wasn’t that bad, but wow, it felt brutal to me. Act 2 was better (though how could it not be from my antics in 1.1), and I really enjoyed the moments I had on stage. Bring on the break. This girl needs one. At least now I am even more determined to come back with a bang next Wednesday. ‘Till then, my friends.

**Wednesday, December 2**

Last night we went to the understudy performance. I was very impressed with some of the actors – Nate, who played Edgar, Christian, who played Kent, and Michael, who played the Fool, were all very good. It was fascinating to watch the show, for I had forgotten how swiftly the action moves. I picked up on small moments of poignancy – lines said by others that I now understand more clearly. Tonight we performed for a small crowd. Tonight was my best performance yet. My words were so much clearer than ever before. I felt entirely present and comfortable. And I cried my little eyes out. I felt cleansed.

**Thursday, December 3**

Ah, and of course, the bottom drops out. I was very disappointed with myself tonight. Granted, the audience probably didn’t notice anything in particular – I didn’t mess up any lines or trip over my dress – I was just a space cadet. Last night was photo call, I got no sleep, and I met with upsetting personal troubles today. This afternoon I broke down, and I think I exhausted myself. I think my body afterwards went into
survival mode. I tried to shake off the mental and emotional numbness I was feeling before the show. I warmed up longer than usual – physically and vocally. I sipped tea, I gave myself pep talks to elicit energy. Didn’t work. During my long break, I was silent and still, trying to reserve any energy I had left and hopefully regain some. Right before I went on, I told myself that whatever happened was over. All I have is what is just in front of me; seize it. And the second act was much better, not awesome, but stable and more inspired. Tonight I am going to crash. Tomorrow is a new day. Carpe diem.

Friday, December 4

Thank the lordy tonight was much better! I managed to get a bit more sleep, even though I rushed around like a mad woman today – my parents arrived in town today, and entertaining seems a full time job. I was eager to get to the theatre, to redeem myself. I was so into 1.1 that I whisked around and poked Trent in the eye. Right in the eyeball. I felt horrible. I tended to him for a few moments, but then I had to go plead my Daddy to let me stay. And my crown almost fell off and was bobbling to the side of the head. I didn’t mind. I was still proud of my improvement from yesterday. After I got off stage I searched for Trent to see how he was. His eye was extremely red, and his contact had fallen out. I felt horrible! The rest of the show went well, and I think it had a nice swiftness to it tonight. I cannot believe there is only one more performance. I feel as if I have been thinking about, writing about, rehearsing for, and performing King Lear for years. And oddly enough, I want more than just the performance tomorrow. I would love to continue the run for a while longer, but I know all good things must come to an end.
Saturday, December 4

My parents and my beautiful husband were at the show tonight. I think they liked it. It was a very good show tonight. I didn’t want my moments on stage to end. I did, however, experience a glorious feeling of relief right before curtain call. I’m ready for the next adventure. I feel so lucky to have been able to bring this story to life with some wonderful people. It’s pleasant that the show ends right around holiday break. It feels like all the weight, though wonderful weight it was, built up during the semester is, at one time, dropping off. Now on to wassail in Carolina.
Appendix to Part 3

Full Transcripts of Faculty Responses

Harris Smith - Graduate Acting Professor, Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film

LL: From what you saw in *King Lear*, how would you way I’ve progressed as an actress: vocally, physically, and emotionally?

HS: Well I would hope, and it’s true, that you’ve improved in all three areas, right? Vocally, definitely you have more vocal variety than you did before, uh, you would get to that point, at least this is what I’ve noticed, that you got to that point sometimes emotionally where you’re voice would get kinda screechy, you know, and now you have more of that, uh, what Stan would call bass. It’s more filled out, it’s more mature of an instrument to work with so you have more choices as an actor on stage, which will kinda fun for you now in the future in other shows to start playing with that even more depending on what the character dictates, to start playing with a character with a higher vocal range or lower or things like that, so I think that’s exciting. Physically, you’re more grounded. You’ve just matured, I mean, with graduate school you’re going to have a nervous breakdown and leave the program or you’re going to get more grounded, I mean, you don’t really have much of a choice...

LL: ...Which was the main thing, pretty much, physically, that I was working on.
HS: Oh yeah, and especially with Lear, your last scene with you and Lear, with you and your father, there was so much more richness there, that there was a sense of maturity that Cordelia didn’t have at the beginning of the play that she did in the end, and that Lucy didn’t have at the beginning of her training, that I don’t know if Lucy could have done that three years ago, and just the sense of confidence as the performer, and confident, I don’t mean to say confidence, it’s a peace and understanding, just greater knowledge of the character, she’s just come full circle, even though in the beginning, she was coming from a sincere place in the first place, you know...

LL: But, I mean, she was in no way tested. She had a life of luxury, and there was nothing too serious about her anyway...

HS: Yeah, there was never...she hadn’t been through it, she was sheltered. So physically, and going back to last year, your stage combat, you took the test and did well, so as far as your physical work coordination, you’ve grown in that way, and being able to make choices based on your interpretation of the text. And I’d just say emotionally, even though I was a little taken aback of you defending yourself when I was criticizing you being consistent in your work, that’s something you wouldn’t have done before – like last spring. You kinda got a little snippy, which is fine though, I mean, to stand up for yourself, but that’s something you wouldn’t have done before. So I’m proud of you for that, especially if it’s something you’re passionate about, that you have a vision about artistically, that’s something you want to do, so you don’t compromise what your vision is, but continuing, not saying you didn’t do this, but continuing to remain open to whatever director, or whoever’s training you, has to say. So, yeah, all three years, you’ve done what I’ve expected you do to. I think the door is actually just now open for you to
even explore more, so hopefully you’ll get a chance, go back home and do whatever you do.

*(Reading from my list of questions)*: “I know in movement class, with me it was all about groundedness. Do you think I have...” – Yeah, I guess I answered number two. Yeah, definitely more so. And continue, though, because life’s gonna beat you up, and then it’s going to take you... The best thing I found about graduate school, once again, and I kept saying this to you guys over and over, that it’s time to be selfish and it’s all about you and you can focus on you, because I’m assuming you guys are probably going to have kids, and it’s going to get taken away from you, so while you still have the opportunity before you have all those other commitments, continue to focus on yourself, to keep yourself grounded, emotionally and physically, to help you improve as an actor and as a human being. The more I teach movement, the more I think, this is more about people improving themselves, not so much about acting, but really you have to be healthy as an actor because actors are already stereotyped as being emotional and psychotic. So while you have that time, continue to focus on that. If you have a chance, take yoga or tai chi classes. Find a balance. Keep a sense of yourself, which usually for artists, it’s sort of easier for them to do.

*(Reading from my list of questions)*: “How did you think the graduate students did with creating a close ensemble piece with this show?” – Fantastic, very proud of you guys. Every class is different. Compared to the last class, anything would have been better, you know, because of the way you guys worked together from day one, I never worried about
that. So no, I thought you guys worked well together; I was proud of your work. If you go by what the reviewers and the critics say, that was obviously a witness to how strong you guys were as an ensemble all the way around. Because, one, you supported each other all the time, so you could grow as artists and individuals, and that wouldn’t have happened if that support wasn’t there. So people who the reviewers had problems with in the past noticed that, “Oh, this person really stepped up to the plate.” And that wouldn’t have happened if that support wasn’t there. So that’s proof of how strong you guys were as an ensemble. The impact, not just Jason had, but all of you had, with the undergraduates...helped that a lot. But you were all there together.

*(Reading from my list of questions):* “What do you consider were the strengths of my performance in this show? The weaknesses?” – I kinda just said it before. This is the tough part though. The strength was, that last scene was really strong, you were really connected. You had a wonderful actor playing your father – open, loving, awesome guy. And like I said before, I saw that the journey was made. And I don’t know if it was as much on you, and not that I’m trying to be polite at all, to me, in some ways, is I watched the text, uh, or watched the show, and then I’d look at the text – you just had commented on how sheltered she was – that, it was limited how much you could do with it. I think it was due to the text, like the scene with you and the Fool, doing your little greeting thing with your noses and all that stuff, you know, to show that you were young and fun and a little younger than your sisters, and that you had a sense of humor and you weren’t taking everything so seriously, because this was a very formal entrance with the king and everyone should be courteous and in their formal regalia, and here you, you and the Fool
are running around kinda having fun. That would be the only weakness, but I don’t know if that’s in your performance, because there’s only so much you can do, because your lines don’t lend you to really say, “Oh I’m young and innocent...” you know, so how much could you really do.

LL: Well, that’s basically what my thesis is on, in loose terms, it’s not the complete end-all through line, but so much of the research I’ve done...and Virginia led me to this directionally, because I tried to make Cordelia way more complex. You know, I set out, you know what, she’s so simple, she’s so goody-goody, that said, I’m gonna show some colors. And it was cut down. Completely. Because she said, “The audience needs to know who’s good and who’s bad.” And as soon as I became comfortable with Cordelia’s symbolic function in the story, I wasn’t able to play her correctly [under Virginia’s vision]. Because she is so, and I don’t want to say one-dimensional, but she is that transparent. I mean, she has her mantra, and she sticks to it, and everything else revolves around that. And that’s also her beautiful virtue as well. But it has been interesting, the battle, between trying to make her more interesting and colorful, coming to peace with that.

HS: Yeah, she’s truth, the truthfulness with which she speaks in the opening scene which ultimate gets her dad all pissed off. And I’d say the only other thing, and remember this is under a microscope, audience members don’t even notice this. At times it seemed like you were working so hard technically, vocally, you know articulation, at times it seemed like you were having to overwork, which comes with maturity though. The more Shakespeare you do, the easier it’s going to come to you to do that, because it felt like you were chewing on the words sometimes. But that’s a little thing. Like I said, it’s just
going to come with maturity. And this space, you’re never going to work in a space as bad as Temple, which in some ways is kind of a good thing. Like Utah Shakes, the acoustics are much friendlier, anywhere else is much friendlier. So you’re not going to have to work that hard.

(Reading from my list of questions): “Do you feel I have demonstrated a solid overall growth over the past three years?” – Yes, like I said, everywhere you’ve improved. As far as your weakest area, like I said, see and I’m kind of torn, because in movement, you had flashes of brilliance, so I wouldn’t say that’s your weakest area. I’d say your biggest challenge is still vocally. But you’ve showed growth in that area as well. Just keep on working at it and do things that interest you as an artist. Um, that’s all I have to say, cause I’ve kind of been giving advice as I go along. I’m proud of you, you should be proud of yourself. Job well done.

LL: Thank you, thank you.

________________________________________________________________________

Virginia Smith - Graduate Acting Professor, Johnny Carson School of Theatre & Film, and Director of King Lear

________________________________________________________________________

1. Once I got the message of a "simpler" Cordelia. was my work for the rehearsal process through the performances consistent?

Yes, it was quite consistent. But you still have to work to not do too much. I guess the good news is that you have discovered part of the belief that your presence is enough and
that it can become such a powerful channel for the breath and the emotion that you and the character share. You were very successful in taking several steps forward, but it's something that you still have to work on.

**What can I do in the future to improve upon that?**

Work on Joan of Arc, Eurydice, Iphigenia. (Contemporary women too.) All the strong ones and find the heroine in yourself. Breathe. So that you can trust that even walking on the stage will be enough.

2. **Do you think the show was a success?**

Yes, I do. I was very proud of it.

3. **I know I bonded with my cast mates more than any other show I've been in. Do you think we became a close ensemble?**

Yes, especially in the grad actors. I'm never sure how to get troops of soldiers who mostly wait back stage to really take ownership of the play. The love and trust you seven have built up over the years was apparent and a real joy to me.

4. **What do you consider were the strengths of my performance in this show?**

You were so willing to give yourself to your partners. The relationship with the Fool, with your father, and with Kent were so clear and really lovely. You were well prepared. You spent much time as a dead body with never a suggestion that you might not be
needed. You struggled hard to get everything you possibly could out of doing this lovely role and you succeeded.

Weaknesses? As I mentioned before, you still have more to learn about your own power as a person, as an actress and as a character. I was very gratified with the progress you made, however.

5. Do you feel I have demonstrated a solid overall growth over the past three years?

Yes. You worked hard and have grown a great deal.

6. Any comments you would like to make about my work on the show or work in general or any other words of advice?

Your work in the show was strong. Your work in class last semester was also very strong. You showed me lots of interesting work and many aspects of yourself. You work very hard and care very much. You just need to act, act, act. Please don't just sit in Lincoln for the next year.

You should be very proud of every aspect of Cordelia as your thesis role.
1. I know we talked a lot in recent classes about the core of stillness that needs to exist inside of us from which any energy or emotion can spring. Did you see that in my work on Cordelia?

Great question!!! I'm not sure I can answer it because of the unavoidable bias in OBSERVING another's FELT experience.

With regard to "stillness", you have DEFINITELY come a very long way since "American Daughter". Early on in American Daughter rehearsals I noticed that you experienced "acting" as a fairly completed process prior to living in each moment of the scene. I watched your trust of BEING more "still" (open) in the moment, grow as you matured into "Cordelia".

If you were going to plunge straight into an acting career, I would strongly urge you (above all else) to continue inviting more and more and more "stillness" into your moment to moment life on stage. That one small but brave action (consistently taken) would ultimately reveal bottomless depths of ease in performance; laser sharp listening skills in scene work; A glowing presence and a wild spontaneity. Whether you're acting or not, Lucy, PLEASE continue inviting "stillness" into the REAL LIFE moments of
your life. That one small but brave action (consistently taken) will ultimately make life
sooooooooooo much more livable.

2. From what you saw in *King Lear*, how would you say I’ve progressed as an actor
(vocally, physically, emotionally)?

You're progressed successfully in your ability to create and maintain professional
(industry standard) voice and speech work. That is, you KNOW that you have a baseline
professional responsibility to be heard and understood. You know that there are specific
vocal adjustments which allow you to be professionally responsible. i.e. working closer
to your optimum pitch/being more present with breathing/reshaping certain regional
vowels.

3. Did you see enough “me” coming through in the performance?

Yes. Only moments when you worked hardest at maintaining your vocal placement did
you detach from "you".

4. What do you consider were the strengths of my performance in this show? The
weaknesses?

Strengths: Your ability to deliver consistent quality work.

Weaknesses: Needing more physical comfort with your deeper vocal placement in
performance
King Lear Review from the Journal Star, November 19, 2009

Review: University Theatre offers impressive 'Lear'

By Larry L. Kubert/For the Lincoln Journal Star | Posted: Thursday, November 19, 2009 11:45 pm

One of the finer more recent productions of a Shakespearean play is playing the University Theatre stage.

In “King Lear” — Shakespeare’s homily to the bane of greed, power and ambition — director Virginia Smith, her cast and crew have produced an effort that smacks of intensity.

Immediately impressive is Patric Vendetti’s monolithic, multitiered set design, which both channels the viewer’s eye and allows for a variety of playing areas.

The technical side is further magnified by Angela Sharman’s impressive lighting and Max Holm’s well-suited sound.

But the tragedy would be little without a strong Lear. In this production, Equity actor Steven Patterson crafts a title character whose declining mental stability is presented with deliberation and delineation.

Patterson’s Lear is a compilation of emotions, organized and dispensed with tightly measured skill.

The university production also possesses a trove of superb performances from its major supporting cast.

Robie Hayek is excellent as Kent, offering a controlled nontraditional image of a heroic figure.

Initially less pleasing is Ryan Kathman’s Edgar, but by the second act, the actor’s intent of character growth is demonstrated.

Equally accomplished are Sam Hartley (Gloucester), Trent Stork (Fool), Daniel Gilbert (Edmund), Kyle Broussard (Cornwall) and Tiffney Baker (Regan).

The University Theatre performance of “King Lear” is a majestic and masterful effort.
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