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Storms of Fortune: Industrial Technology and Nahum Tate, c. 1680–c. 1900

When King Charles II issued licences for William Davenant and Thomas Killigrew to begin staging spoken plays in 1661, there was an enormous spike in the scale, frequency and vibrancy of public theatre performance.¹ The legal and financial support of the newly restored monarchy fostered a vibrant artistic culture. Towards the end of the nineteen years during which spoken plays were banned, spectacular theatrical and scenic effects that had previously been the preserve of aristocratic masques had been introduced to the theatres in the form of operatic spectacles, with the support of Cromwell. *The Siege of Rhodes*, *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* and *The History of Sir Frances Drake* avoided the ban on spoken plays by staging scenic spectacles linked by passages of sung recitative. Following the lifting of the ban on spoken theatre, older plays were staged and adapted while new plays were written. With the patenting of only two legitimate theatres, the rights to Shakespeare's plays were split between the two licensees. The performance rights for *King Lear* went to Davenant's company, the Duke's Men, and after at least two presumably failed attempts to stage Shakespeare's version in the 1660s and 1670s, Nahum Tate's adaptation was staged and published in 1681.

The relationship between Tate's adaptation and Shakespeare's play is complex. At the same time as radically changing the story, Tate acknowledged that his play grew 'in rich Shakespear's soil' (1969 [1681]: n.p.).

¹ There is a continuum, rather than a chasm, between the ban on spoken plays in 1642 and the lifting of the ban in 1661. As well as illegal attempts at performing spoken plays, publically performed dramatic work continued in various forms (for example, extremely condensed versions of plays, puppet shows and, hybrids with sung recitative). For an analysis of the interregnum theatre see D. Lewcock, *Sir William Davenant, the Court Masque, and the English Seventeenth-Century Scenic Stage, c1605–c1700* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2008).

Moreover, although Shakespeare's play was not fully restored until 1838, many actor-managers in the intervening years associated their production with the Bard in various ways, even if they were largely following Tate's version of the plot.² Garrick's 1742 production, for instance, followed Tate's plotline, but it was billed as 'KING LEAR with restorations from Shakespeare' and by the end of his career he had returned as many passages from Shakespeare's play as possible without disrupting the new plotline (Burnim 1973: 144).

Even though Shakespeare's original plots were not performed at this time, his legacy, fame and genius were under construction in Restoration and Georgian Britain. He became 'the national poet' through a series of pageants and festivals celebrating his life (Dobson 1992). Moreover, from the late seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Shakespeare began to colonize languages and imaginations across the globe. In 1769, for example, the same year as Garrick's Jubilee cemented Shakespeare's role as England's literary icon, his texts began their journey to the antipodes on Captain James Cook's ship, the *Endeavour* (Houlahan 170). Educated members of the public, such as Samuel Johnson (1765) and Charles Lamb (1810), turned to the new literary pastime of reading the plays. What we learn from both Johnson's and Lamb's writings is that although Shakespeare's *King Lear* was widely understood to be a superior work of dramatic literature, no one actually wanted to watch the horrors of Cordelia's death (Johnson) and Lear in the storm (Lamb) unfold on stage. Audiences preferred Tate's happier story.

To this end, I characterize Tate's version not as an artistic monstrosity or historical aberration, as it is sometimes understood, but rather, as a clever revision of Shakespeare's play that responded to contemporary social issues. That Tate's *History* managed to live on beyond its moment of first production is a testament to its viability as a play.³ But given I am interested in the relationship between Shakespeare and Tate in a more general textual sense, I also want to think of Tate, after Doris Adler, as a particular response to

² On the development at this time of the cultural phenomenon of 'Shakespeare's genius', see G. Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); M. Dobson, *The Making of the National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); J. Bate *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 1997).

³ Thank you to Dr John Severn for this point.

problems and paradoxes in Shakespeare's play (1985: 52–6).⁴ So although Tate's version occupied the stage, Shakespeare's presence loomed large over the plays and the wider cultural context. Before coming to the role of the storm, though, I must outline the differences between the plays because Tate's adaptation of *King Lear* so radically departs from Shakespeare's, any earlier analysis of the play needs to be adapted too.

To understand the differences between the storms, we first need a clear understanding of Tate's major alterations to the story. Tate's *dramatis personae* are very similar to Shakespeare's: Lear and his daughters, Cornwall, Albany, Kent, Oswald, Burgundy, Gloucester, Edgar and Edmund all feature, but he also gives Cordelia a 'Confidante', Arante. The Fool and France are omitted entirely. The absence of France means Cordelia remains in Britain after the banishment, and the absence of the Fool means there is no character persistently contradicting Lear's sense of self. But, as in Shakespeare, the division of the kingdom, Lear's disowning of Cordelia, and Edmund's desire to claim land as a bastard son are some of the main catalysts of the conflict.

Tate further entangles Shakespeare's plot and subplot by devising a romance between Cordelia and Edgar. In the division of the kingdom, Cordelia is banished by her father and rejected by Burgundy and, in the absence of France, Edgar presents himself as the second suitor. Cordelia initially rejects him, but undeterred, he pursues Cordelia throughout the play. Not being married to France, Cordelia is made much more prominent: as she remains in Britain, she is able to respond immediately to the turmoil there. Giving a more substantial role to one of the first professional actresses on the English public stage is a key reason for this change, but it has a significant impact upon the overall story as well. Lear's journey back to the throne and the new Edgar–Cordelia romance constitute the main plot of Tate's adaptation and both come to a climax during the storm.

In this regard, the most obvious difference between the two plots lies in their endings. In Shakespeare's play Lear dies and does not reclaim the throne,

⁴ Although Adler's perspective on Tate is now understood as dated and anachronistic, her idea that 'the conservative perpetuation of theatrical conventions associated with *King Lear* affords an ongoing method of addressing the same problems and potentials originally addressed by Tate' (1985: 52) is useful. Rather than viewing Tate and productions of Shakespeare's version after 1838 as radically different, this notion helps in to understand the tendency toward a more sympathetic view of Lear endured in the period up until the 1970s.

whereas in Tate's adaptation he survives but does not accept the crown.⁵ Instead he nominates Edgar and Cordelia as joint successors, which suggests a happy and united future for Britain. The final lines reflect the differing tones of the endings. Shakespeare's play ends with a grim reflection on the disaster that has unfolded in Lear's name. Delivered by Albany in Quarto and Edgar in the Folio, the play ends:

The weight of this sad time we must obey,
 Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
 The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
 Shall never see so much, nor live so long. (5.3.322–5)

The lines are often delivered with most of the fallen characters lying dead on stage at the survivors' feet. Tate's ending, on the other hand, celebrates triumph, glorifies kingdom and, above all, champions love. While the happy ending is the most notorious feature of Tate's adaptation,⁶ it is worth noting again that in the long tradition of the Lear tale, from the oral fables to Monmouth to Tate, Shakespeare is actually the odd one out: his is the only version of the Lear story in which Lear and Cordelia die without first reclaiming the throne. In Tate's version, after having married Cordelia and assumed the throne, Edgar delivers this speech:

Our drooping Country now erects her Head,
 Peace spreads her balmy wings and Plenty Blooms.
 Divine *Cordelia*, all the Gods can witness
 How much thy Love to Empire I prefer!
 Thy bright Example shall convince the World
 (Whatever storms of Fortune are decreed)
 Truth and Vertue shall at last succeed. (1969 [1681]: 67)

So while we might scoff at the upbeat populist ending, *King Lear*, like most of Shakespeare's plays, was adapted during the Restoration period to suit the aesthetic styles and political tastes of a new generation of audiences.⁷ In a prologue to the printed text, Tate expressed that even though he radically

⁵ For a good analysis of the similarities and differences between the two plays in this regard see Atsuhiko Hirota, 'The Kingdoms of Lear in Tate and Shakespeare: A Restoration Reconfiguration of Archipelagic Kingdoms', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 21 (2013).

⁶ See, for example, Bratton, *King Lear* (14) and Murray, *Restoration Shakespeare* (153).

⁷ The first adaptation was in 1662, *The Law against Lovers*, an adaptation of *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Measure for Measure*, and the last in 1682, *The Injured Princess*, or *The Fatal Wager*,

changed the work of Shakespeare he hoped that ‘those whose Tasts [*sic*] are True’ will be delighted by his changes to the story (1969 [1681]: A6). Indeed, turning tragedy to triumph is a somewhat miraculous editorial feat, and so it pays to note how Tate made this plausible.

Alongside the differences outlined above, the storm provides the key conceit whereby Tate reroutes the tragedy towards triumph. From Lear’s point of view, Tate’s storm plays out in much the same way as it did in Shakespeare’s: he rails to no effect against the weather and is moved to pray for the poor naked wretches who, like himself, are exposed to the pitiless storm. Tate directly transcribes some of Lear’s more famous speeches in the storm and, as with Shakespeare, Lear is also goaded toward, and eventually retreats into, a hovel.

At the same time, however, Cordelia expresses concern at her father’s exposure and insists that she and Arante go out into the storm in search of Lear. Edmund eavesdrops on this exchange and finds himself attracted to Cordelia’s piety and beauty. He plans to rape her and bribes two ‘ruffians’ to kidnap Cordelia. The storm is the ideal time, he argues, because it will drown out her cries for help: ‘then too th’ Field / Where like the vig’rous *Jove* I will enjoy / This Semele in a storm, ‘twill deaf her Cries / Like Drums in a Battle, / less her Groans shou’d pierce / My pittying Ear, and make the amorous Fight less fierce’ (Tate 1969 [1681]: 28). Meanwhile Cordelia and Arante stumble upon the same hovel. Arante insists they take shelter, but Cordelia refuses to retreat, borrowing two of Lear’s lines from Shakespeare: ‘Prethee go in thy self, see thy own Ease, / Where the Mind’s free, the Body’s Delicate: / This Tempest but diverts me from the Thought / Of what wou’d hurt me more’ (Tate 1969 [1681]: 33).⁸ In Tate’s version, Cordelia’s concern for her father makes her impervious to the storm’s elements. So, of course, Arante leaves her alone outside in the storm, at which point Edmund’s ruffians strike. Cordelia cries for help and Edgar, who had been playing Poor Tom for Lear inside the hovel, hears her voice and rushes to her rescue. A grateful Cordelia then witnesses

an adaptation of *Cymbeline*. On adaptation in the period, see B. Murray, *Restoration Shakespeare: Viewing the Voice* (Cranbury, London and Mississauga: Associated University Press, 2001).

⁸ The lines from Shakespeare’s version used by Tate are: ‘When the mind’s free, / The body’s delicate: this tempest in my mind / Doth from my senses take all feeling else, / Save what beats there, filial ingratitude’ (3.4.11–14) and ‘Prithee go in thyself, seek thine own ease. / This tempest will not give me leave to ponder / On things that would hurt me more’ (3.4.23–5).

Poor Tom's concern for her father. Excited that he has saved Cordelia, Edgar accidentally drops his disguise and reveals that he knows her name. Cordelia becomes suspicious that this 'madman' holds such information and sees through his disguise. As such, Edgar reveals his true identity and Cordelia promptly falls in love with him.

The storm thus supplies Lear an opportunity to commune with the heavens about injustice and ingratitude and despite the storm's indifference, there are others nearby who do care for him and actively seek to right the wrongs. So rather than being a vehicle to elicit audience sympathy that underscores a timely cautionary tale about loyalty, unity, illegitimacy and divisiveness, the storm provides the leading actor with his moment of climactic performance and sets up the plot for the restoration of the monarchy. It is a 'storm of fortune', a tumultuous event over which that the good humans ultimately triumph.

Alongside its altered dramatic function of the event, the storm began to look different on the stage. According to J. L. Styan, the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century is a period of revolution in theatre architecture: the 'fifty years (following the Restoration) saw extraordinary innovation in almost all departments of the drama; in particular ... the playhouse' (1996: 237). Restoration playhouses were not like the Elizabethan and Jacobean public theatres; rather they were modelled on the private theatres like Blackfriars and architectural designs imported from continental Europe (Styan 1996: 237). Thus, the polygonal amphitheatres of early seventeenth-century London were replaced by large rectangular buildings, the main features of which were an indoor auditorium, a stage with scenery, a proscenium arch with one or two doors on either side of the forestage, balconies over the doors, and a music gallery (Styan 1996: 240–1). The actors and newly sanctioned female actresses (Howe 1992: 21) played close to their audiences on a shallow apron. Thus in the Restoration we see a move towards the kind of actor–spectator relationship that defines the modern playhouse.

During this time mechanisms for changeable scenery and new techniques for scene painting were developed, variations of which are still used in theatres today. Although all these techniques were not necessarily used in *King Lear*, the technologies were starting to move the stage towards an animated, pictorial representation of the world. Elaborate rope systems and

cranes enabled motion in the set, so, for example, a tree could now appear to move in the wind and waves could roll like the stormy sea. In plays calling for magic, such as *The Tempest*,⁹ characters were often flown on ropes or platforms rigged up to the system. Such machinery, which had existed since Antiquity, was previously used in the construction of buildings rather than creation of theatrical illusions (Langhans 2000: 10); in the Restoration theatre these techniques were employed for creative ends. *Trompe l'oeil* painting techniques were also used upon moveable scenery to pictorialize the reality on stage. The illusion created by this painterly technique combined with mechanical development marks the real beginnings of the creation of a pictorial or 'naturalistic' stage.

For all the celebration of innovation on the Restoration stage, an anti-climactic detail is often overlooked: thunder, lightning, wind and rain were created with almost exactly the same technologies as the Jacobean stage. So, the storm was not *newly* spectacular, it was only *differently* so. Gas lighting was still over a century away, so artists in the period were entirely dependent on candles for ambient lighting. Sound was also acoustic, there was likely music for atmosphere, and old technologies like dried starch balls in small wooden boxes to emulate rain, as well as drums and the thunder-run for thunder, were still deployed for sound effects. It is the composite of these new devices and painterly techniques, alongside the older fiery technologies of the earlier theatre, that aided in the recreation of *Lear's* storm.

Although there is no extant information on the storm in late seventeenth-century productions of either Shakespeare's *King Lear* or Tate's *The History of King Lear*, it is possible to speculate again on the meaning of the storm in the redesigned theatres with the new devices and technologies, alongside the adapted dramatic work. The storm on the Restoration stage was a

⁹ For a good indication of the scale of stormy spectacles during the Restoration, see the stage direction for the opening scene of William Davenant and John Dryden's 1667 adaptation of the *The Tempest* – *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* (D'Avenant and Dryden, *The Tempest, or the Enchanted Island*, London: Jacob Tonson, 1735). Davenant and Dryden co-ordinated an extended supernatural visual and aural extravaganza that combined traditional sound and light effects with new technologies such as flying objects, movable scenery and painted backdrops. The lengthy stage direction draws a complete picture of the proscenium arch theatre, with a curtain and a frontispiece with royal ornamentation signalling the company's royal patronage, and raised stage in a covered auditorium. This is very different from the round, wooden, open-air space of the Globe. Also, we get a clear image of an orchestra set on the apron stage, indicating the growing divide between the audience 'pit' and the stage space itself.

spectacular event that enabled the dramatization of the notion that legitimate moral authority could survive times of extreme political and natural tumultuousness. In this regard, the storm can be read as both an expression of nostalgia for a time when royal power was thought to correspond to the movement of the meteors, but, more to the point, also a representation of nascent Enlightenment ideals of morality, nature and the exceptional human condition in the play's triumphant representation of truth and virtue despite variation in the weather. Indeed, Tate's storm points backwards and forwards in history just like the storm in Shakespeare's play, but with a much more affirmative vision of the powers of the human.

Aside from functioning differently within the plot and thus spectacularizing the triumph of legitimate order against the odds, in Tate's version the overall significance of the storm is also altered because the cosmological dimension of Shakespeare's dramatic poetry is edited considerably. This strategy is what Barbara Murray describes as 'The [Restoration] adapter's motive to develop the visual and metaphoric coherence of the originals for entertainment and to enhance their didactic function' (Murray 2001: 18). Tate himself outlines this rationale in the dedication. He observes that the:

Images and Language [in Shakespeare's *Lear*] are so odd and surprizing, and yet so agreeable and proper, that whilst we grant that none but Shakespear could have form'd such Conceptions, yet we are satisfied that they were the only Things in the World that ought to be said on those Occassions ... yet so dazling [*sic*] in their Disorder, that I soon perceiv'd I had seiz'd upon a Treasure. (1669 [1681]: n.p.)

Shakespeare's language is beautiful but anachronistic, almost unintelligibly so. Tate's job was to make the 'treasure' contemporary.

Within this, there is an observable tendency away from the explicitly cosmological aspect of Shakespeare's version. For example, when Shakespeare's *Lear* disowns Cordelia, he does so in explicitly cosmological terms: 'For by the sacred radiance of the sun, / The mysteries of Hecate and the night, / By all the operation of the orbs / From whom we do exist and cease to be, / Here I disclaim all my paternal care' (1.1.110–14). Tate radically minimizes the heavenly dimensions of *Lear*'s oath: 'For by the sacred Sun and solemn Night / I here disclaim all my paternal care' (5). In both cases the action is the

same and the good daughter is banished, of course, but Shakespeare's *Lear* is more explicitly cosmological, calling on goddesses and heavenly spheres as he casts off Cordelia. Furthermore, in Shakespeare's version, the exchange between Edmund and Gloucester in 1.2 clearly establishes the cosmic stakes of the drama. In his famous 'excellent foppery of the world' (1.2.119) speech, Edmund soliloquizes on his father's superstitious pagan worldview and at the same time expounds his own inherent scepticism. Tate, however, removes this soliloquy outlining the play's cosmic parameters, and gives Edmund instead a simple terse reiteration of his commitment to subterfuge: 'So, now my project's firm' (1969 [1681]: 9). Tate does not frame *Lear*'s motivations in cosmic terms; the differences between Edmund and his father are moral not cosmological and, as such, the play does not call into question or make an issue of, an individual character's belief systems in the same way.¹⁰

It is impossible to know if the differing cosmo-meteorologies in the plays relate to broader historical processes of 'paradigm shift' or if they are just side effects of the desire to streamline the plot. At the very least, topical political tensions expressed by way of Shakespeare's drama were no longer relevant or even legible by 1681; as such the characters' detailed reflections on their relations with the heavens likely seemed superfluous and confusing and was heavily edited.

Related to the diminished cosmic drama in Tate is the question of the extent to which emerging cosmologies had begun to change the dominant meteorological cultural imaginary at this time. The Royal Society was founded in 1660 and with this began the institutionalized scientific study of the natural world. In 1667 Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Naturall Knowledge* was published, consolidating the Society's work to date and including a section that described the new instrumental method for understanding the weather: 'For the better making a History of the Weather, I conceive it requisite to observe ... by a sealed *Thermometer*

¹⁰ Tate's version of *King Lear* is more easily thought of as a targeted reworking of the political drama, thus making his reworking of the cosmic drama incidental. The adaptation is now widely understood as supporting the monarchy, see for example C. B. Hardman, "'Our Drooping Country Now Erects Her Head': Nahum Tate's 'History of King Lear'", *Modern Language Review* 95 (4) (2000): 913–23. In order to produce the 'restoration' of the monarchy at the end, of course, Shakespeare's cosmic drama – and with it the significance of the storm – would have to be altered. Tate's purpose was not to challenge the cosmic worldview of the monarch, but rather to reassert it. But for my purposes it is more useful to think directly about how he edits the cosmic drama.

... a *Hygroscope* ... an Instrument with Quicksilver (Barometer)' (Hooke [1667] 2012). Moreover, as Vladimir Jankovic shows in *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather 1650–1820* (2001), around the time of Tate's version, members of the newly opened Royal Society were trying to 'rehabilitate' or explain in naturalistic terms marvellous or unusual meteorological events within a Baconian natural philosophical method. The desire to contain, measure and quantify meteorology within a closed atmospheric system struggled against the weather's unpredictability and strangeness. As such, according to Jankovic, Providentialist interpretations of weather events remained rife (50–9). Moreover, Craig Martin argues that, even though Aristotle's model is usually characterized as disappearing by the late seventeenth century, replaced as if overnight with the modern method of understanding the meteors, in reality the Aristotelian mode of thinking about the 'meteors' lingered for much longer (Martin 2011: 148–55). Those working for the Royal Society still used Aristotelian vocabulary such as 'exhalations', 'vapours' and 'heavenly bodies' at the same time as trying to measure its material constitution. Even Descartes' extensive work on meteorology in the period involves a mix of the classical and modern ideas (2001: 261–3). Ultimately, it is a period of slow, incomplete transition in the scientific, philosophical and cultural understanding of the meteors.

Although there were no landmark technological advances between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the great theatres for the 'imitation of the meteors' became bigger and more dynamic. For example, the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane was built just after the Restoration and initially accommodated between 1,400 and 2,000 audience members (Styan 1996: 274), but by the 1790s it was expanded to accommodate over 3,000 people, with some extant designs suggesting its capacity may have exceeded 3,600 (275). For pragmatic reasons, as the theatre got bigger, tragic acting styles became necessarily louder and more declamatory. It was presumably difficult for actors to be heard in the cavernous new spaces over the hum of such a large audience. Within these venues, the desire to create an animated and pictorial world on stage led to a new level of complexity and grandiosity as well. Indeed, Sarah Hatchuel argues that it is in this period that we can see the nascent desire for the production of a filmic or virtual reality start to manifest in the theatre (2004: 1–33). So, although the Georgian theatre was still

illuminated by candlelight and the storm was a combination of pyrotechnics and percussive sounds, the overall aesthetics of the performance, from human gestures to the quality of the setting, were likely integral to keeping an audience engaged in a story, the precise text of which was probably quite difficult to actually follow.

Two techniques nudged the theatre arts toward more three dimensional and dynamic staging. First, perspective scene painting was imported from opera production in Italy via the court masque (Styan 1996: 277), which enabled theatre artists to show the depth of a setting. Be it castle, court, heath, hovel, battlefield or beach, the background became more realistic. Second, this aesthetic was animated by the development of the stage ‘wings’, where moveable scenery and painted flats could be stored when not in use. Scenery and flats were also fitted to grooves in the floor, in order to be easily manoeuvred on and off stage as required (Styan: 274). The sets could change quickly and so as much as creating a greater sense of pictorial reality in the scenes, overtly theatrical transformations between places became part of the attraction.

Within cavernous theatre spaces, a more dynamic pictorial set and acting using large gestures to fill the expansive auditoriums, Tate’s *King Lear* with various additions from Shakespeare became extraordinarily popular. Performances were recorded almost every year between 1701 and 1800: 293 in total (Hogan 1968). The most admired performance (both at the time and by theatre historians) during the period was at the Theatre Royal under the leadership of David Garrick. He played the role eighty-five times between 1742 and 1776 (Cunningham 2008: 120). Cunningham also shows us how from 1745 onward, Garrick started to amend Tate’s text with additions from Shakespeare. Overall he kept Tate’s plotline and the happy ending, but he brought back the longer poetic passages that had been omitted in the earlier adaptation. Where Tate minimized the cosmic dimensions of the drama – Cordelia’s banishment by the ‘sacred radiance of the sun, The mysteries of Hecate and the night’ (G.1.2.73–4), Gloucester’s ‘late eclipses in the sun and moon’ (G.1.3.81) and Edmund’s ‘excellent foppery of the world’ (G.1.3.89) – Garrick restored all these passages. The purpose, though, was not to probe the relationship between worldview, loyalty and legitimate authority, Shakespeare’s probable concern in 1606, but rather to furnish the heightened romanticism

of the script and the pathos of what was increasingly promoted as a 'tragedy', even with Tate's triumphant ending. Little is known about the designs of his production of *Lear*.¹¹ Instead, the records are overflowing with descriptions of his virtuosic performance.¹² In the absence of this information, I have reconstructed a stormy stage picture based on knowledge of Garrick's performance, a surviving visualization of the scene and his creative relationship with the painter, Philip James de Loutherbourg. The storm was geared towards an increasingly spectacular and pictorial representation of a meteorological event. Benjamin Wilson's mid-eighteenth-century painting 'Mr. Garrick in the Character of King Lear' (date unknown), which now exists only as a mezzotint by James McArdell (1761), provides us with a good impression of what an eighteenth-century Lear may have looked like out in the storm on stage. Garrick seems triumphant, with a single ray of light touching his face. The landscape is pictorial, with trees in the foreground and rolling hills in the background, dark clouds loom and lightning strikes. Although Stuart Sillars argues that we cannot be sure that paintings of Shakespeare productions were sketches of the stage design,¹³ we can at least assume that the painting captures something of the tone of the performance, even if it is not a direct sketch of the stage picture itself.

A letter of praise sent to Garrick after one of his performances confirms as much:

Such violent starts of amazement, of horror, of indignation, of paternal rage, excited by filial ingratitude the most prodigious; such a perceptible, yet rapid gradation, from those terrible feelings to deepest frenzy; such a striking correspondence between the tempest in his mind and that of the surrounding elements ... Till at length the parent, the sovereign, and the friend shine out

¹¹ Given the amount of information on Garrick's performance of *Lear*, this struck me as odd. I am confident I have not missed something for two reasons. In Cunningham's *Shakespeare and Garrick*, the issue of design barely rates a mention. Furthermore, one of the first major historical studies of Garrick's work hit up against the same obstacle with regards to the storm: 'It is frustrating to think that the wealth of contemporary comment on his portrayal – in which the frantic part of Lear "seems never to have been rightly understood till this Gentleman studied it" – has left us with little more than a vacuous legacy.' K. A. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 146.

¹² For a good analysis of Garrick's version of *King Lear* see V. Cunningham, *Shakespeare and Garrick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 119–61.

¹³ Sillars argues for a complex, multi-directional interaction between painting, illustration, text and production in both his books. See S. Sillars, *Painting Shakespeare: The Artist as Critic, 1720–1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) and S. Sillars, *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709–1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

in the mildest majesty of fervent virtue ... These, Sir, are some of the great circumstances which so eminently distinguished your action two nights ago. (1831: 158–9).

James Fordyce gives us insight into the audience's response to Garrick's *Lear*: he watched, and drew incredible satisfaction from, Garrick's portrayal of *Lear*'s emotions and how they were reflected in the heavens. Like in the image above, Fordyce describes a reflectivity between Garrick's performance and the storm. His achievement came about by means of a linking of gesture and weather, a full externalization of his affective state upon stage; during the storm this produced a 'striking correspondence between the tempest in his mind and the surrounding elements'.

Garrick's appointment of de Louthembourg as his resident scenic artist in 1771 reveals a lot about his technical ambitions for the stage design of the storm as well. By then de Louthembourg was already a well-known landscape painter, spending much of the 1760s exhibiting in the Paris Salon. It was not until after his employment with Garrick that he constructed the sublime landscape paintings and stormy shipwrecks for which he would become famous, but nonetheless, he was paid £500 per year to create sets and paint backdrops for Garrick's productions, including his productions of *Lear* (Burnim 1973: 72–3). Based on what we know of de Louthembourg's style as a painter and scenic artist, we can assume that he aimed to vividly and dynamically situate *King Lear* within a pictorial setting. The storm was likely set within a subtly moving set, with trees perhaps appearing to blow wind while being moved back and forth on the grooves in the stage, while flashes of light and thunderous noises punctuated the action.

After his time at Drury Lane, de Louthembourg went on to create *Eidophusikon*, which translates from Greek as 'image of nature'. This installation is important to describe not only because it inspires the design of one seminal nineteenth-century production of *King Lear*, but because it describes the limit of what was technically possible within the confines of live theatre during Garrick's reign. The *Eidophusikon* was a moving diorama, in part inspired by the dynamic stage picture, yet technologically more advanced. It was designed to mimic the more-than-human dynamism of nature.

Practically speaking, the *Eidophusikon* was a small space constructed within a room of a house, museum or theatre. The first public showing was in

de Loutherbourg's home in 1781, although it made its way into public display in following years (Altick 1978: 121). This room-within-a-room was darkened and there were a series of scenes constructed and performed for the viewer. Each new showing of the *Eidophusikon* slightly altered the scenes themselves, but for the very first showing the audience witnessed the passing of a whole day in a range of different locations and weather conditions, including a final storm scene.¹⁴ Through this experiment de Loutherbourg created some lighting technologies to indicate the passing of time that became important techniques in the theatre during the nineteenth century. For example, he created a method to change the colour of light. De Loutherbourg achieved the changes by means of small slips of coloured glass placed inside the candle lanterns. The scenes themselves were not only painted wood panels, but also draped with lighter fabrics that could be moved or removed to indicate more subtle changes. The creation of lightning and thunder was not greatly different to that of the earlier theatre: a sheet of copper suspended in air agitated by hand, a machine to agitate stones and balls to create a rumbling, and firecrackers to create flashes of light. But, within the context of the *Eidophusikon*, the illusion of the thunder and lightning combined with painted and lit backdrops, created the illusion of a moving image. The animated pictorial spectacle was so enthralling that that when a real thunderstorm passed overhead, one audience member was reported to have declared that de Loutherbourg's thunder was more realistic than nature itself (Altick 1978: 124).

The aesthetic goal was to add the dimension of time to a painting. One journalist for *European Magazine* (1782) at the time insisted that de Loutherbourg:

resolved to add motion to resemblance. He knew that the most exquisite painting represented only one moment of time action, and though we might justly admire the representation ... the heightened look soon perceived the object to be at rest ... He therefore planned a series of moving pictures which should unite the painter and the mechanic; by giving natural motion to accurate resemblance. (Quoted in Altick 1978: 121)

¹⁴ The scenes for the first showing were: '1. Aurora, or the Effects of the Dawn, with a View of London from Greenwich Park; 2. Noon, the Port of Tangier in Africa, with the distant view of the Rock of Gibraltar and Europa Point; 3. Sunset, a View near Naples; 4. Moonlight, a View in the Mediterranean, the Rising of the Moon contrasted with the Effect of Fire; 5. The Conclusive Scene, a Storm at Sea, and Shipwreck' (Altick 1978: 124).

The dynamism of the passing of natural time was animated for the spectator. The aesthetic experience was strangely reminiscent of Bacon's express desire over a century earlier in *The New Atlantis* for 'great and spacious houses to imitate and demonstrate the meteors' (2011 [1627]). But in this case the room that housed this microcosm was not built for the purposes of study, but instead built solely for the purposes of entertainment, wonder and visual stimulation. In the *Eidophusikon*, the wonders of nature were elicited by the wonders of human ingenuity and technology, producing the most popular spectacular entertainment in Britain and Europe in the eighteenth century.

From the *Eidophusikon* we can extrapolate some ideas about Garrick's desires for theatrical weather and also the audience's sustained desire for a dynamic meteorological spectacle. First it is important to note that de Loutherbouurg's display did not have the time constraints of the live theatre, the pressures of the plot, the duration of the scenes, variable pace of the dialogue and the complexities of scene changes; in other words, the shaping of the setting on account of the human drama. Its sole purpose was to animate the setting and meditate on the dynamics of a nature devoid of humans. De Loutherbouurg could only achieve such visual trickery when insulated from the temporal pressures of dramatic theatre. While it is likely that some of the aesthetic preoccupations would have been explored on Garrick's stage, especially his attempt to translate the two dimensions of the painting into a complete three-dimensional theatre world, his desires could not be fully realized due to technological limitations. Conversely, although the pictorial illusionism of the *Eidophusikon* could not be achieved on Garrick's stage, we can assume that this is something like what he was aiming for. He wanted to create a theatrical event with a pictorial resemblance to the world. In the case of his version of *Lear* with Tate's plot extended by Shakespeare's cosmic poetry, the scenes were of a wild cataclysm that dramatized a crucial moment in Tate's *Lear* where the good unite and triumph over the wicked. This is a fantasy of total control where rogue nature can be tamed through both theatrical engineering and a redemptive conclusion to the drama.

To foreshadow the next chapter briefly, what we can see from the vantage of retrospection in that the creeping dynamic pictorialism of the stage,

which was buoyed by technological advancements, was a nascent type of cinematic vision. In *Shakespeare on Silent Film: An Excellent Dumb Discourse*, Judith Buchanan in fact proposes that the origins of film can be seen in the spectacular nineteenth-century theatre (2009: 23–4). But, as I mentioned briefly above, Sarah Hatchuel dates the origins of cinema back to the eighteenth century:

In [Garrick's] production of *King Lear*, the storm scene was interspersed with thunder and bright flashes of lightning, and took place in a tormented landscape painted on shutters ... the use of lighting simulated the faint light of the moon, the brightness of the sun and even volcanic eruptions ... Garrick's merging of naturalism and magic is somehow predictive of modern cinema. (2004: 8).

Hatchuel takes some licence with regards to her specific account of the storm in Garrick's *Lear*, which seems more like a description of the Wilson/McArdell image that may have no correspondence with the stage picture at all. But even if Garrick's storm did not specifically achieve this degree of spectacle, her argument at least captures Garrick's ambitions for a particularly dynamic pictorial mode of representation. The idea of 'Nature as virtual reality' (Cronon 1995: 43) is not just a wacky contemporary concept Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles posited in the 1990s when working with William Cronon on cultural ideas about nature, but a long-standing fantasy of humans to imitate natural dynamism themselves. Indeed, Iain McCalman argued that de Louthembourg's *Eidophusikon* 'constituted a novel experiment in "virtual reality" two centuries before the computer-digitised technologies of Silicon Valley reified that term' (2007). When considering the long-view of the literal storm on stage, this move towards a virtual reality on stage is ironic because the desire to produce a meteorological event on stage is one of the factors in the demise of spectacular theatre. In the long run, the ambitions of artists like Garrick to produce a dynamic storied spectacle advances and mobilizes theatre technology in such a way that will ultimately lead to the advent of cinema, at which time the creation of stage storms becomes significantly less valuable commercially or creatively. Until that point, however, staged storms became more and more sensational. The main problem with Shakespeare's version of the play, and what long thwarted its restoration to the stage, was that it did not offer a clear moral message. In particular, the

utter injustice of Cordelia's execution left eighteenth century readers reeling. Thus Samuel Johnson was so 'shocked by Cordelia's death, that [he knew] not whether [he] ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till [he] undertook to revise them as an editor' (2010 [1765]). What could be the moral purpose of such injustice? In contrast, Tate's play presents good humans who are largely good throughout, and who come out triumphant and alive at the end, not only over bad humans, but rogue forces of nature as well. During the Victorian age, artists set themselves the strange and seemingly impossible task of maintaining the moral certainty of Tate, while restoring Shakespeare's more ambiguous plotline.

Due to the scale of the storm on the Victorian stage, it is sometimes characterized as the period of theatre history when resources were suddenly channelled into its staging. For example, in her otherwise superlative history of *Lear* in performance J. S. Bratton claimed the 'creation of the storm in Act III, indeed its staging generally, had not seemed until this period to be a particularly important element in the presentation of the play' (1987: 26). But Bratton conflates advances in theatre technology and the engorged archive of reports and criticisms that came with industrial age print culture, with artistic intention. In contrast, I have shown how staging the storm was always important, but the technologies that allowed the full, bright and mechanized production of the spectacle did not actually exist until the nineteenth century. Although Bratton's characterization of the importance of the stormy spectacle subtly misappropriates past storms, her claim certainly captures the scale of Victorian spectacular theatre and also the wealth of extant information from letters, diaries, newspapers and even photographs, in comparison to earlier periods. All of this is to say, if he had still been alive, I am almost certain that Garrick would have loved to tread the boards on the luminescent Victorian stage. Instead, those who were lucky enough to be born in the industrial age could capitalize on technologies such as gas and electric lighting for their own theatrical advantage.

The development of gas lighting in the first decade of the nineteenth century and its installation at the major theatres like Drury Lane, the Lyceum and Covent Garden by 1817 is the first significant development (Rees 1978: 36). Greater control over the lights enabled the auditorium to be darkened and the stage space lightened. Thus, a brightly lit stage picture could dazzle

the darkened audience. As the stage got brighter, the forestage was virtually done away with and performances moved largely behind the proscenium arch, thereby creating a clear division between the fictional world of the stage and the reality of the audience.¹⁵ Whereas in the Globe we might imagine the brightness radiating from the large open roof, by the nineteenth century the illumination came from the stage itself.

Such technological advances were not without their risks. Indeed, if the desires for a particular theatrical spectacle could be measured in part by their associated dangers, then it is worth thinking more on the gas used in theatres at this time. In doing away with the need for toxic powders and deadly flammable substances of the earlier age, gas brought with it perils of another kind. A *Times* article from the early nineteenth century reported that, 'after having sat through a whole evening at the theatre, play goers felt a burning and prickling sensation in their eyes, a soreness in the throat, and a headache which lasted for several days afterward' (Penzel 1978: 42). These are the symptoms of minor gas poisoning which, according to Penzel, was 'a direct result of the gas combustion which both depleted the air in the hall, and produced other potentially toxic by-products like carbonic acid' (1978: 42). The desire for spectacle almost incidentally poisoned thousands of players and audience alike. Clearly there was need for better ventilation in the theatre spaces, and gas technology did improve, but it was not until the invention of electric lighting, speedily installed in theatres in the 1880s, that the oppressively toxic problem was solved for good (Penzel 1978: 42).

Edmund Kean, one of the great actor-managers from the Age of Gas, produced *King Lear* at Drury Lane in 1820. So, although it is not until 1823 that Kean famously restored the tragic ending, his 1820 production was the first since the ban was lifted after King George III's death. During the ban, Kean reportedly studied the king's illness in order to lend the production contemporary relevance. It was also an international touring production of *King Lear*, which was taken to New York. Another reason why this production

¹⁵ For an overview history of the playhouse in the Victorian Age see J. L. Styan, *The English Stage: A History of Drama and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 302–37; R. Jackson, *Victorian Theatre: The Theatre in its Time* (New York: New Amsterdam Books, 1994); N. Auerbach, 'Theatre Before the Curtain', in K. Powell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3–16.

is noteworthy is due to its genealogical links with Garrick's designer de Louthembourg. Robert Elliston, the designer of Kean's production, drew inspiration for the staging of the storm scene directly from de Louthembourg's *Eidophusikon* (Bratton 1987: 28). Elliston's painted backdrop for his *King Lear* set was called 'after de Louthembourg's *Storm on Land*' (Bratton 1987: 28). Thus, we can chart an aesthetic lineage from Garrick's ambition to create an animated pictorial spectacle, through de Louthembourg's post-Drury Lane *Eidophusikon* experiment, to the technologically advanced live theatre of the mid-nineteenth century. What Elliston aimed to create in a live theatre context, de Louthembourg could only achieve when insulated from such pressures. According to Bratton, this storm itself was created with 'every infernal machine ever able to spit fire, spout rain or make thunder' (1987: 28). Although this was a landmark production, it was heavily criticized on account of the excessive storm. One reporter from *The Times* reflected upon what the storm scenes were and how that departed from what the storm scene 'should' be. He argued that the storm was:

less effective than many others, because the manager, by a strange error, had caused the tempest to be exhibited with so much accuracy that the performer could scarcely be heard amidst the confusion. He should have recollected that it is the bending of Lear's mind under his wrongs that is the object of interest, not that of a forest beneath the hurricane. (Quoted in Ford Davies 2006: 66)

Here, at the very point the storm is given its most spectacularly literal rendition on stage, we start to see psychological links emerge, first in Kean's study of madness, then in this reporter's analysis. The spectacle only gets more extravagant from here. Samuel Phelps's 1845 production of *Lear* at Sadler's Wells, for example, created a storm not only as an aesthetic experience, but also as a physical one, with one critic reporting in the *Athenaeum*: 'the wind whistles in the ears and blows in the faces of the audience, and the thunder rolls over the roof of the theatre' (in Bratton, 1987: 29). In the Victorian age, the industrialized stage, with bright playing area and dimmed auditorium, brought the stage representation of the meteorological storm to its apex.

All along I have argued that the pitiless meteorological storm becomes meaningful by way of a particular interpretation on stage or in criticism.

Despite this claim, and alongside many critics, I am inclined to think that Shakespeare's play, restored in full by 1838, made very little sense to both the players and to the audiences, largely on account of the storm. In 1810 Charles Lamb suggested that *King Lear* was not fit for representation on the stage, because Lear's circumstances are so wretched in the storm no one would want to watch them. Like the *Times* journalist quoted above, he was interested in the storm as a way of studying Lear's mind. Reflecting back on this claim in 1927, Harley Granville-Barker suggests that Lamb's point of view was clouded by the vapid extravagance of the stagecraft. The only way to make *Lear* work, he argued, was to create a symbolic association between the storm and Lear's mind. We return to Granville-Barker in the next chapter, but in contrast to his characterization of the problem I contend that *Lear* was essentially unfit for representation on the stage because the thoroughly romantic, heroic and humanist image of Lear that actors were trying to project by way of their ever more declamatory performance style does not actually fit with the tragic plotline and, in particular, with Lear's 'shameful' antics in the storm. In this regard, the storm, once again, supplies us with a key theatrical problem. In the play, Lear cannot control or even vaguely match the power of the storm: this is integral to the pathos of Shakespeare's play and central to the plausibility and trajectory of the plot. In contrast, on the nineteenth-century stage an actor-manager wanted to be seen as triumphant and the storm provided the opportunity for him to demonstrate his powers – both of performance and of spectacle – but the play complicates that interpretation because the storm hinders rather than helps Lear.

Given the desire to maintain Lear as hero but also to restore Shakespeare's plot, it is unsurprising that the role designed to point out the King's shortcomings, the Fool, was the last feature of the play returned to the stage. Cut by Tate, the Fool was absent until William Charles Macready restored the role in 1838. Lear's Fool is at least as cruel as he is funny. As H. F. Lippincott described:

Like the audience ... Lear expects to be diverted and entertained (by the Fool). But Shakespeare sends a fool of a different sort ... a speaker of truth ... who specifically counters the expectations of Lear and the audience. And it is clear from Lear's reaction that the Fool plays a new and unwelcome role. By his third speech, Lear has threatened the Fool with the whip, and by the fourth, the Fool has become 'a pestilential gall'. (1975: 249).

Shakespeare wrote the Fool knowing the company's other star actor, Robert Armin, would play it. Over 40 years old at the time *Lear* was written, he would have played opposite a slightly younger Burbage as a captivating double act. Fools were extra-juridical characters, generally allowed to speak their minds freely in both the court and the theatre without fear of retribution. While Feste in *Twelfth Night*, whom Shakespeare also wrote for Armin, is a comic truth-teller, the character of the Fool in *Lear* significantly challenges the perception of the protagonist, by persistently questioning and contradicting him throughout the first, second and third acts, until he disappears from the play and we learn later that he 'is hanged'. Moreover, *King Lear* alludes to *Twelfth Night*, which ends with Feste's song rounding out the celebratory, if somewhat ambiguous: 'When that I was and a little tiny boy, / with hey, ho, the wind and the rain' (*T.N.* 5.1.383–4). The 'wind and the rain' is the song's quaint poetic refrain, punctuating his recap of the story, neatly wrapping up the action and suggesting, in some ways, 'such is life'. When Shakespeare references *Twelfth Night* in *Lear*, the refrain of Feste's song takes on more sinister and literal significance. At the end of 3.2 when Lear agrees to seek shelter in the hovel, he claims that 'The art of our necessities is strange, / And can make vile things precious' (3.2.70–1). As if to increase the humiliation of turning towards the hovel, the Fool adds, 'He that has and a little tiny wit / with heigh-ho, the wind and the rain, / Must make content with his fortunes fit, / Though the rain it raineth every day' (3.2.74–7). Here the refrain is assimilated with the logic of the verse. Lear is really out in the storm, sings the Fool, because he is stupid and now it is raining; he has to try to make his desires fit his circumstances because there is nothing he can do about this rain.

Although Macready is best known for the restoration of the Fool today, he struggled with the concept of returning the role to the stage, ironically because he was concerned that the Fool would make his rendition of *Lear* less memorable. In particular, he feared the Fool would undermine Lear's heroism. He described the moment he was persuaded to include the Fool in his diary:

Speaking to Willmott and Bartley about the part of the Fool in 'Lear', and mentioning my apprehensions that ... we should be obliged to omit the part, I described the sort of fragile, hectic, beautiful-faced boy that he should be, and stated my belief that it never could be acted. Bartley observed that a woman

should play it. I caught at the idea, and instantly exclaimed Miss P. Horton is the very person. I was delighted at the thought. (Macready 1875: 97).

In Shakespeare's day the Fool would have rivalled Lear's presence on the stage, but the Fool only made sense to Macready as a weaker and less plausible figure, as a speaker of nonsense rather than truth. Thus, it is within the context of a theatre that was awkwardly trying to maintain the air of heroism and mitigate the script's bleakness, despite restoring Shakespeare's text, that the pictorial representation of the storm reaches its spectacular climax. As the next chapter will show, there is a significant shift in the aesthetics and meaning of the storm in the twentieth century. Artists and critics came to explore the internal life of Lear – once a notion of human interiority was articulated – which was then reflected in stage productions of *King Lear*. The historical long view opened up in chapters five and six reveals a particular perspective on the transaction that occurs between theatre and cinema at the end of the nineteenth century, which in part paves the way for this new kind of aesthetic to emerge on the twentieth-century stage. With regard to *Lear's* storm, Bratton characterizes the change in theatre aesthetics as a form of artistic exhaustion: nineteenth-century theatre artists 'exhausted the possibilities of mechanical imitation,' and thus, 'designers and directors turned to explore the possibilities of stylisation and the underlining or expansion of the storm's symbolic significance' (1987: 29). With the view of situating the modern characterization of the storm as a psychological symbol within a rich historical context, I draw this chapter to a close by exploring how the exchange between theatre and cinema technologies intersects specifically with what I am calling 'the end of the meteorological storm' in *King Lear*.

The enduring desire to stage a meteorological storm, which I identify initially in the use of pyrotechnics and noise machines in the Jacobean theatre, played an important role in the research and development of early film technologies. One technology that was particularly important in the transition of theatre to film was the magic lantern. It was an early form of image projector technology, the desire for which appears as early as 1666 in the diaries of Samuel Pepys (Altick 1978: 117). The lantern really came into its own during the Victorian age, however, when gas technologies supplied it with an adequately bright light source. The magic lantern enabled a coloured

image to be projected on a wall or curtain. This technology was enhanced by mounting the lantern to small train tracks, so the image could change in size and give the appearance of an object moving towards or away from an audience (Rees 1978: 81–4).

A magic lantern used by Edmund Kean to create a vivid and chaotic storm illusion in his 1820 production clearly links the theatrical storm to the development of film technologies (Rees 1978: 84). Altick describes how the magic lantern brought luminous vitality to the stage:

Overhead were revolving prismatic coloured transparencies, to emit a continually changing supernatural tint, and to add to the unearthly character of the scene. King Lear would appear at one instant a beautiful pea-green, and the next sky-blue, and, in the event of a momentary cessation of the rotary motion of the magic lantern, his head would be purple and his legs Dutch-pink. (1978: 214).

While now such a bright colour scheme may appear decidedly unnatural or comic, even gaudy, in Kean's day the effect successfully created the alternate reality of the theatrical illusion. According to one critic in *European Magazine*, 'the celebrated storm scene was given on a principle quite new to the stage, increasing the effect and almost fixing the reality' (Rees 1978: 85). Although it might not have succeeded in making the stage reflect the world naturalistically, King Lear's multicoloured light bath at the very least made the stage appear to the audience as a world of its own. Thus, such theatrical illusions are clear precursors to the idea of a screen upon which an altogether distinct reality is projected. While theatrical and cinematic technologies are historically intertwined, the art of the pictorial spectacle was eventually made redundant by the cinema, because images of actual storms could substitute for the clunky, cumbersome and expensive machines required to produce such a multifaceted spectacle in the theatre.

At the same time as the cinema was taking over the theatre, changes started to appear in the theatre arts. The last Lear of the Victorian age, and the last Lear of a theatre before cinema, exemplifies the turn away from spectacular meteorological storm towards a new kind of stage picture and interest in the theatrical representation of Lear's psychological complexity. Sir Henry Irving's *King Lear* (1892) was legendary, but depending on whose account you read, it was either a ground-breaking success or a terrible

failure. Sir Laurence Olivier was motivated by Irving's legacy to eclipse his fame and become the greatest actor of all time (1986: 93), while in the foreword of one of Irving's biographies, Sir John Gielgud proudly declares that *Lear* is one part that Irving failed to master (Bingham 1978: 8). The failure is attributed, in part, to his prosaic interpretation of the play, moving away from the magical spectacle of Edmund Kean, and other Victorian actor-managers such as Charles Kean and Macready, towards a simpler stage image (Rees 1978: 85). Despite this, Irving was praised for his realism: 'No such realistic representation of the storm is within our recollection' (Hughes 1981: 132).

The audience saw within Irving's production a new kind of reality in the design. The way in which Irving achieved this was to harness the technologies of the Victorian spectacular theatre but to different ends. The designs for Irving's *Lear* were drawn from sketches done by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Ford Maddox Brown in 1844 (Speaight 1973: 68). According to Robert Speaight: 'these incorporated the imagery of the Pelican Daughter, and a theme from the Bayeux Tapestry. The figure of the King as a clown was reproduced for *Lear's* awakening to sanity. The period suggested was after the departure of the Romans, and before the Norse invasions' (1973: 68). Irving's storm still mimicked the meteors by means we have already explored, but the desire to probe the details of *Lear's* experience in the storm through adorning the stage with historical and poetic symbols in the set design foreshadows the abstraction of the storm event itself that will come in the next century. In Irving's *Lear* there is a turn away from the external toward the internal, a dulling down of the bright meteorological spectacle and a move to reinterpret the cosmic dimensions of Shakespeare's *King Lear* as psychological complexity. Before Irving, the main drive was to represent the storm as a meteorological event and to make it fit, insofar as was possible, with the desire to cultivate sympathy for *Lear* or to represent an image of triumphant humanity. In significant contrast to real storms, then, *Lear's* storm is not something that disrupts or radically undoes the human order. On the contrary, in the context of the story, it is an event that becomes something for the good to overcome and even when it is not, theatre makers try to infer that meaning. In the context of theatre arts, the storm provides an opportunity for artists to display their exceptional

capacity to mimic the meteors at the same time. But, after centuries of artists aiming to create a meteorological storm on stage, a lot changes in the next century.