CHAPTER EIGHTY-TWO

King Lear more broadly than any other of Shakespeare's dramas is a synthesis of history, emotionally vivified personal experience, and philosophy, fused in the depths of the poet's creative imagination, and expressed in the strange medley of fact and symbolism which is peculiar to dreams. We have all had dreams in which some intimate situation or problem has been symbolically presented to us, vitalized by old impressions, with values altered and personalities merging to take on an unrealistic though deeply valid significance. As our dreams well up out of our subconscious minds, so is a poet's work to a large extent a creation of his subconscious; the difference is a matter of degree and intensity: the more sensitive and imaginative a person is, the richer, the more active and accessible his subconscious mind. Here of course we have the most remarkable creative gift ever known in the field of literature combined with great learning, a wide eclecticism, and a supreme power of expression. The intensity of Oxford's imagination and the violence of his emotions coupled with a profound intellectual grasp and perception had brought him more than once near to madness. Lear, while destroyed by self-will, pride, and betrayal, is ennobled by suffering to a heightened sympathy and sense of oneness with humanity. And this is undoubtedly what happened to the Earl of Oxford.

In writing *Macbeth* and *King Lear* the dramatist drew upon many sources, and both plays belong, as we have observed, to several levels of time; or, it would perhaps be more accurate to say, cover disparate events topically, over a period of some thirty years. As has been seen both in the case of *Macbeth* and of *Hamlet,* he wrote from a mind stocked with old documents, stimulated by a passionate belief in the enduring verities. He had, one knows, a strong predilection for "old tales." So had the Greeks. Their dramas were based on legends.

There is indisputable evidence in the text of these plays that Oxford had been reading certain specific Scottish and French documents, steeping himself in the story of Darnley's murder and also that of the great French Huguenot, Coligny. He had perused all the records, in-

cluding letters to Leicester and to Burghley from Randolph and de Croc, as well as Buchanan's *Detection of the Doings of Mary Queen of Scots* and the appended *Oration;* and now he had returned to the account of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day which, in 1572, had so deeply shocked and stirred him; he had written his father-in-law an eloquent letter about it at the time.

Lord Oxford's uncle and former tutor, Arthur Golding, himself an ardent Protestant, a Puritan in fact, had published a life of Coligny several years after the St. Bartholomew massacre, and to that he seems to have returned at this period. Moreover, in 1590, *The Weeks,* by the French Huguenot poet, du Bartas, who had served under Coligny in the civil war in France, had been translated into English by John Sylvester, and passages from the *Furies,* the second Week, had been drawn upon in *Macbeth,* while another was paraphrased in *Troilus and Cressida.* All these had been assimilated by Oxford's sensitive intelligence and, together with the material we have already discussed, were transmuted by the creative process into the dramas, most comprehensively of all into the complex and titanic tragedy of *King Lear.*

Lilian Winstanley, who had apparently never heard of the Earl of Oxford, demonstrated, in 1922, that Shakespeare had unquestionably drawn upon Buchanan's Scottish records, letters in Burghley's files, and other state papers, though how she thought the Stratford man could have had access to these and other contemporary documents is not disclosed. She lists, as having influenced him, Pierre Mathieu's *Deplorable Death of Henry IV* and D'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques;* but since these were published in 1610 and 1612 respectively, the obligation must have been the other way round. This modern testimony regarding the dramatist's sources fits perfectly with that of Gabriel Harvey's *Marginalia,*[1] which belongs to 1598 or thereabouts:

> M. Spenser conceives the like pleasure in the fourth day of the first Weeke of Bartas . . . *Axiophilus* makes the like account of the Columnes, and the *Colonies* [*Colignys*] *of Bartas. Which he commonly addes to the Sphere of Buchanan.* Divine and *heroicall works:* and excellent *Cantiques* for a mathematicall wit.

Here we have corroboration of Miss Winstanley's astute deductions by a man who knew Oxford well. For Harvey declares that Axiophilus (Oxford) adds the Coligny story to that of Buchanan, which is precisely what Miss Winstanley demonstrates beyond possible cavil that he did in *King Lear.*

In thinking of the dramatic historical events, vivid to the Earl of Oxford through having occurred during his own lifetime (the Darnley murder when he was seventeen, Coligny's when he was twenty-two)—in thinking, we should rather say, of Oxford's refreshing his memory and impressions by delving among the old records and rereading the works of the earlier Huguenot poets—the "divine and heroicall works . . . and Cantiques"—we are reminded of a phrase he himself used in another connection, and, we hasten to add, with another meaning: "And my great mind most kingly drinks it up." [2]

It is one of his most notable accomplishments that he was able, in *King Lear,* to present with appropriate tragic magnificence and human pathos an "abstract and brief chronicle" of so comprehensive and turbulent a time. We shall never do Shakespeare justice until we appreciate the scope of this phase of his achievement.

From Scotland he took the wild elements, the wastes of heath, and the extreme cold; from sixteenth century France the insane brutality of the persecution of a noble, passionate old man; from both the storm, and this "storm" from his own life also: "the tempest in my mind." From England he took the high cliffs of Dover. But from each of these sources he derived much more too, while the dramatic power and the pathos came from his own ravaged heart.

Lilian Winstanley summarizes the parallels between *Lear* and the Darnley murder as follows:

> (1) Darnley was supposed by his contemporaries to have been led to his doom mainly by false professions of affection and by his own excessive credulity. It was the special heinousness of Mary's crime against him in the eyes of Buchanan and the author of the *Oration* that she employed professions of her own affection to ensnare him to his doom.
>
> (2) Darnley was very rash and credulous in deserting all his own friends and placing himself entirely in the power of those who were false to him.
>
> (3) Darnley's murder is repeatedly termed a "parricide" [3] by Buchanan and others because a husband stood in the same relation to his wife as a father to a child.
>
> (4) A great conflict had proceeded between Mary and Darnley over the title of "king." He wished to have the full rights of the crown matrimonial and complained that his authority was only a shadow. Mary's determination to exclude him from power brought the tragedy to a climax.
>
> (5) Darnley's great faults were pride and haughtiness and a tendency to break into furious rages.
>
> (6) Darnley was accused of egregious folly by his enemies and many contemporaries record that his opponents termed him "the Fool" and "the Boy," but especially the fool.
>
> (7) Buchanan and the *Oration* accuse Mary of taking away the king's servants, of forbidding her own servants to obey the king, of commanding the ambassadors not to speak with him, of denying him money even for the necessities of life and of making him a beggar and an outlaw.

[1] Quoted in part, Chaps. Sixty-five and Seventy-four.

[2] Sonnet 114.

[3] *Edmund.* But that I told him, the revenging gods
'Gainst *parricides* did all their thunders bend. (III.1.46-7.)

(8) Buchanan and the *Oration* accuse Mary of denying the king house-room and of thrusting him naked out of doors *into desert-places and on heaths.*

(9) Buchanan and the *Oration* accuse Mary of compelling the king to take refuge in a ruinous house, tumble-down and ill-furnished, and to consort only with beggars.

(10) Darnley, having a strong suspicion of his impending fate, tried to escape to France but the attempt was frustrated.

(11) Buchanan and the *Oration* declare that the king was repeatedly the subject of the most bitter humiliations, Mary taking delight in insulting him for the sake of the insults.

(12) His body was found after his death in an open field, close by the body of his servant, both naked. There is a picture of this in the Plan of the Darnley murder kept in the Record Office.

(13) Bothwell himself had the unparallelled impudence to assert that the king was killed in a thunderstorm and that *either he himself in his madness* or the lightning had stripped his clothes from him. (Melville's *Memoirs.*)[4]

A few illustrations from the text of the play will point up its connection with the documents.

Crawford, in his *Declaration,* said:

> He would never think that *she who was his own proper flesh* would do him hurt . . . My opinion was she took him more like a prisoner than a husband. He answered that he thought little less himself save *the confidence he had in her promise only. Yet he would put himself in her hands though she would cut his throat* and besought God to be judge over them both.

> *Lear.* Is it not as *this mouth should tear this hand*
> For lifting food to 't? (III.4.15-16.)

> Is it the fashion that discarded fathers
> Should have thus little mercy *on their flesh?*
> Judicious punishment! 'twas *this flesh* begot
> Those pellican daughters. (III.4.70-73.)

The old king's faith in his daughters' promises is one of the most touching features of his misery.

Randolph wrote Leicester, July 31, 1565:

> . . . this Queen is now become a married wife, and her husband, the self-same day of his marriage, made a king. . . . His words to all men, against whom he conceiveth any displeasure how unjust so ever to be, are *so proud and spiteful, that rather he seemeth a monarch of the world* than he that long since we have seen and known as the Lord Darnley.

Lear says, when Gloucester asks if it is not the king:

> Ay, every inch a king:
> When I do stare, see how the subject quakes. (IV.6.108-9.)

[4] L.W.; pp. 147-8.

And a letter from Randolph to Cecil, December 25, 1565, is also echoed in the text:

> "A while ago there was nothing but 'King' and 'Queen,' his majestie and hers, now *the 'queen's husband'* is most common."

> *Lear.* . . . Who am I, sir?
> *Oswald. My lady's father.*
> *Lear.* "My lady's father!" my lord's knave, you whoreson dog! (I.4.77-80.)

The following month, Randolph wrote Cecil again:

> I cannot tell what mislikings of late there hath been between her Grace and her husband; he presses earnestly for the matrimonial crown, which she is loth hastily to grant, but willing to keep somewhat in store until she knows how well he is worthy to enjoy *such a sovereignty.*

> It was [says Miss Winstanley] this *attitude of tutelage, of being kept in subjection* and put on his good behaviour which, from the beginning, *infuriated the proud heart* of Darnley. It is the *shadow of power* possessed by him which is so bitter to Lear and it is the *attitude of tutelage* adopted by his daughters which he so detests and abominates.[5]

> *Lear.* Does Lear walk thus? speak thus?
> . . . . . .
> *Who is it that can tell me who I am?*
> *Fool. Lear's shadow.*
> *Lear.* I would learn that; for by the *marks of sovereignty,* knowledge and reason, I should be false persuaded I had daughters.
> *Fool.* Which they will make *an obedient father.* (I.4.226 *et seq.*)

They emphasize his impotence. Regan says:

> O, sir! you are old;
> . . . you should be *rul'd and led*
> By some discretion that discerns your state
> Better than you yourself. (II.4.145-9.)

And

> I pray you, father, *being weak, seem so.* (II.4.201.)

In March 1566, Randolph wrote again telling of discord between Mary and Darnley, partly because he still pressed for the "crown matrimonial" and "partly for that he hath assured knowledge of *such usage of herself,* as altogether is intolerable to be borne." To this statement Miss Winstanley adds that "Darnley of course suspected Mary of the basest sensuality," and notes Lear's speech against Goneril:

> The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to 't
> With a more riotous appetite.
> Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
> Though women all above:

[5] Op. cit.; p. 155.

But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
Beneath all is the fiends';
. . . . . .
Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination. (IV.6.123-32.)

(This was also a blast from Oxford against the two women who had, as he seems to have felt, betrayed his love, one a queen, the other a "dark wanton," both given to sensual indulgence.)

The epithets Lear hurls at Goneril (I.4.253 and 262) are similar to those the maddened Darnley sometimes used for Mary:

Degenerate bastard! . . . Detested kite!

Albany's excoriation of Goneril (IV.2.59-68) gains point when it is remembered that Darnley had been created Duke of Albany in 1565: [6]

Albany. See thyself, devil!
Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman.
Goneril. . . . O vain fool!
Albany. Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,
Be-monster not thy feature. Were 't my fitness
To let these hands obey my blood,
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
Thy flesh and bones; howe'er thou art a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee.
Goneril. Marry, your manhood.—Mew!

This likewise expresses Mary's contempt for the man her former infatuation for whom had turned to hatred and whom she considered vain and ineffectual. Undoubtedly, compared with the violent and ruthless Bothwell, the twenty-one-year-old Darnley did indeed seem immature, effeminate, and inept. And according to the record, Mary was blinded by her passion for the utterly unscrupulous Bothwell, who is represented here by Edmund.

Murray had warned Mary of Darnley's excessive pride and "insolencie." And on May 21, 1566, Randolph wrote Leicester that

he is grown so proud that to all honest men he is intolerable; and he is almost forgetful of his duty to her already . . . What shall be judged of him that for bringing a message from the queen that was to his discontentment would have slain the messenger.

Goneril. Did my father *strike my gentleman* for chiding of his fool?
Oswald. Ay, madam.
Goneril. By day and night he wrongs me; every hour
He flashes into one gross crime or other,
That sets us all at odds.
. . . . . .

[6] Holinshed states, "In the month of July the lord Darnley, earl of Ross, was made Duke of Albany."

If you come slack of former services,
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer. (I.3.1-11.)

The clearly recognizable prototype of Oswald here is Rizzio. Holinshed records that for a time the order of names "in writings and protests" was first the King's, then Mary's; in 1565 it was altered, with the Queen's first, "and David the secretary had a stamp of the king's name which he affixed when he liked."

It was galling to Darnley's supporters that Mary "gave the real authority and true supremacy in her counsels to Rizzio instead of to her husband." [7] And Rizzio is depicted by contemporaries as precisely the same kind of "domineering and contemptible" fellow that Oswald is. Just as Oswald came into conflict with Kent, so Rizzio's hostility to Murray was the cause of Murray's being banished. Murray's banishment, conflict with Rizzio, and hatred of Mary constitute his identity, in regard to the Scottish background, as Kent; but there the resemblance ends.

David Chalmers's *Chronicle* (1572) states,

This David [i.e., Rizzio] . . . a man of base lineage . . . came in great favour with her Majesty, but greatly misliked of all the people, yet she made him her *servitor and secretary.*

As Oswald deliberately insulted Lear and Kent, so did Rizzio behave with insufferable impudence towards Darnley and Murray. Melville calls him a "varlet of her chamber," who "grew so great that he presented all signatures to be subscribed by her Majesty." Oswald was likewise Goneril's "secretary," for she says (I.4.334-5):

How now, Oswald!
What! have you writ that letter to my sister?

Oswald was killed, and so was Rizzio. In each case, the death signalized the final break between husband and wife.

Randolph had written on another occasion about the way Darnley, frustrated by Mary's mistreatment, would strike out at messengers who brought him disappointing communications from her: this time he told Cecil,

With his dagger he would have struck the Justice Clerk that brought him word that the creation of his being duke was deferred for a time.

So is Lear almost overpowered by his sense of frustration and helplessness:

Lear. I will have such revenges on you both
That all the world shall—*I will do such things,—*
What they are yet I know not,—but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. (II.4.279-82.)

[7] L.W., p. 153.

This passage is especially touching for its connection with Lord Oxford. In going through Cecil's papers he must have come upon a letter he had written his father-in-law in 1584, when he had learned that Burghley was spying on him; and now, looking back with a kind of sardonic pity, upon his own frustrate anger and pride, he had put into Lear's mouth his own inchoate threat:

> If your Lordship take and follow this course [he had written] you deceive yourself, and make me take another course *that I have not yet thought of.*[8]

Miss Winstanley sagely observes:

> In the second part of the play Oswald passes out of sight but Goneril was at that time absorbed with her paramour—Edmund—and her rivalry with Regan; it is Edmund who is made the instrument for the final destruction of Lear. So again, when the Rizzio trouble was at an end between Mary and her husband it was only to give way to the still more serious Bothwell trouble and to Mary's infatuation for a man who was, just as Edmund was to Goneril, her leading soldier and also her leading noble.[9]

In the Spanish State Papers, Jan. 18, 1567, occurs the following:

> The displeasure of the queen of Scotland with her husband is carried so far . . . that . . . They tell me even that *she has tried to take away some of his servitors,* and for some time past finds him no money for his ordinary expenditure.

And the Scottish State Papers, April 5, 1566, state that

> The Queen is determined the house of Lennox shall be as poor as ever it was.

Since the Earl and Countess of Lennox were friends of Lord Oxford, his general sympathy for Darnley, whom he had surely also known at court, can be understood. He had shown compassion, and admiration too, for Mary Stuart as a result of her trial in 1586, representing her as Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* trial-scene. Whether his attitude had changed is beside the point. Here he is merely accepting the records as contributory material for his drama: he is not pronouncing judgment. The Scottish writings compare Mary to Medea: Goneril is quite as ruthless and terrible as Medea; but we have no assurance whatever that the Earl of Oxford ever considered Mary of Scotland such a creature. He is giving no literal representation here.

Goneril and Regan reduce the number of Lear's "servitors," or attendants, until he is bereft of all save Kent and the Fool. The *Oration* accuses Mary thus:

[8] Chap. Forty-three.
[9] L.W.; p. 191.

> You drove away his servants that should have defended his life; you thrust him out naked, alone, unarmed, among thieves to be slain; when in all this miserable state of your husband, your adulterer dwelt in your palace . . . your husband thrust away into solitary desert for a laughing-stock.

The parallel is too obvious for particularizing.

Darnley wrote Mary (according to Crawford's deposition): ". . . God knows how I am punished for making my god of you . . ." Lear had persisted in trusting in his daughters' love, or certainly in Regan's, in spite of their disdain. Buchanan tells how Darnley, upon hearing of Mary's illness, posted to court from a great distance, only to be received with "the most barbarous inhumanity" by "the nobility and all the officers of the Court that were . . . specially forbidden . . . to harbour him so much as one night." And the Queen was so afraid that the Earl of Murray would take him in that she ordered his wife to go home, get into bed, "and fain herself sick," so that "the king might be *shut out of doors.*" [10]

This is exactly what happens to Lear when, having left Goneril, he appeals to Regan.

> *Lear.* No, I will weep no more. In such a night
> To *shut me out!* (III.4.17-18.)

The identical expression, "shut out," is used. As Mary instructed the Countess of Murray not to take Darnley in, so Goneril instructed Regan. (I.4.331 *et seq.*)

Miss Winstanley makes the point that, taking the story at its face value, there is no reason why Goneril and Regan should so hate and persecute their father; it cannot be from greed, for they have acquired everything. It is obviously because they are portrayals, embodiments, not to be taken as realistic persons.

The *Oration* says that the Queen sent Darnley away

> into desert and barren craggy mountains, without provision, into open perils and in a manner without any company . . . commonly perilous with haunt of thieves,

and draws a comparison between him and Mary, "rich, noble, and finally a queen"; which situation Miss Winstanley finds epitomized in Lear's words to Regan:

> . . . thou art a lady;
> If only to go warm were gorgeous . . . (II.4.267 *et seq.*)

Darnley's death was sought, just as Lear's was. The parallels are too numerous to cite. But Gloucester tells Kent (III.4.160):

> His daughters seek his death.

[10] Op. cit.; p. 169.

Lear's words are infinitely touching:

> I will die bravely *as a bridegroom.* What!
> I will be jovial: come, come, *I am a king,*
> My masters, know you that? (IV.6.199-201.)

It had been only a short time since Darnley had been "a bridegroom" and become "a king."

Buchanan speaks of the intense cold of the winter, and Edgar gives a vivid picture of the bleakness of the heath (III.4.45-6):

> Through the sharp hawthorn blow the winds.
> Hum! go to thy *cold bed* and warm thee.

The weather in the play is a hostile force, but lacking the studied malignancy of human brutality. Darnley's was indeed a "cold bed."

Another analogy is the jealous hatred which became articulate between Mary Stuart and Bothwell's wife. Edmund says (V.1.55-7):

> To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
> Each jealous of the other, as the stung
> Are of the adder.

The letters Goneril wrote are compared by Miss Winstanley to Mary's Casket Letters, with graphic illustrations. Lady Bothwell wrote her husband "in rivalry." [11] In the end, Mary was "confronted and ruined by her love-letters to Bothwell," just as Goneril is by hers to Edmund (V.3.155-61):

> *Albany.* Shut your mouth, dame,
> Or *with this paper* shall I stop it. Hold, sir;
> Thou worse than any name, *read thine own evil:*
> No tearing, lady; I perceive *you know it.*
> (*Gives letter to Edmund.*)
> *Goneril.* Say if I do, *the laws are mine, not thine;*
> *Who can arraign me for it?*
> *Albany.* Most monstrous!
> *Know'st thou this paper?*
> *Edmund.* Ask me not *what I know.*

We must interrupt ourselves here to compare Goneril's authoritative position with that taken by Lady Macbeth when she says:

> What need we fear *who knows it,* when *none can call our power to account?* (V.1.39-41.)

Bothwell took the same stand. The Laird of Ormiston confessed that Bothwell had said to him, "None dare find fault with it when it shall be done."

In one of her sonnets, No. 6,

> Mary accuses her rival of borrowing her love-letters and love-poems from literary sources and declares that Lady Bothwell expresses her love for her husband in phrases which are not her own:

[11] Op. cit.; p. 183.

> *Et toutesfois ses parolles fardeez*
> *Ses pleurs, ses plaincts remplis de fictions,*
> *Et ses hautz cris et lamentations*
> *Ont tant gaigné que par vous sont gardéez*
> *Ses lettres aux quellez vous donnez foy*
> *Et si l'aymez et croyez plus que moy.*[12]

A letter from Drury to Cecil, dated April 30, 1567, states:

> The Lady Bothwell is now for the yielding to the divorce of another mind, and says she will never say untruly of herself, but will die with the same name of the Lady Bothwell.[13]

There had even been a rumor circulated that Mary had had Lady Bothwell poisoned, as Goneril in fact poisoned Regan. Giovanni Correr in France reported this on March 30, 1567. Mary did not poison her but continued to be intensely jealous of her even after her own marriage to Bothwell, as Goneril is of Regan.

In the Burghley State Papers, 1568, under the heading of *An Abstract of Matters Shewed to the Queen's Majesty's Commissioners by the Scots,* there occurs the following entry:

> She wrote to Bothwell from Glasco, how she flattered her said Husband, to obtain her purpose.

Goneril and Regan of course shamelessly flattered Lear before they destroyed him.

> Finally she wrote to Bothwell that according to her Commission, she would bring the man with her, praying him to work wisely . . . and especially to make good watch that *the Bird escaped not out of the Cage.*

Since Burghley's papers were accessible to Oxford, he must certainly have read this; in any case, he used the same image in one of the loveliest passages he ever wrote:

> *Lear.* . . . Come, let's away to prison;
> We two alone will sing like *birds i' the cage:*
> When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgivenness: so we'll live,
> And pray, and sing, and *tell old tales,* and laugh
> At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
> Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,
> Who loses and who wins, who's in, who's out;
> And take upon 's the mystery of things,
> As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out
> In a wall'd prison, *packs and sets of great ones*
> *That ebb and flow by the moon.* (V.3.8-19.)

This is utterly Oxfordian, the expression of a disillusioned courtier, of the man who had written Sonnets 25, 66, 124, 125, the poignant

[12] Op. cit.; p. 184.
[13] Ibid.; cit. State Papers, Foreign Series.

passage from *Richard II:* III.2.155 *et seq.,* and the dialogue between Falstaff and Prince Hal—*1 H. IV:* I.2.25-33—about how the "minions of the moon" ebb and flow like the sea.

The Darnley murder was commonly connected with the crimes of the House of Lorraine: an interesting fact in view of the French historical significance of *King Lear.*

Miss Winstanley's treatise upon this drama's correspondence with the records of the Darnley murder and that of Coligny in the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day comprises more than half a book, with *Macbeth* filling the remainder.[14] We have a great deal more ground to cover and much less space: thus our treatment must be confined to the main features.

The epic quality of this powerful drama derives to a large extent from its French source. To begin with, Admiral Coligny, old though he was, as age went in that day, was nevertheless forceful, passionate, heroic. Like Lear reminding his persecutors that he was old—"a head So old and white as this" (III.2.23-4)—Coligny appealed to his murderers to respect his white hairs. He was also capable of towering rages and, "when angry, rated the whole royal family of France with the utmost fury." Moreover, his trustfulness in their protestations of affection—Catherine de' Medici's, Charles IX's, and Marguerite de Valois's—was childlike and complete. To his Huguenot friends he appeared to be "almost besotted with excess of confidence." He was called "father" by the members of the royal family. The pride, pathos and wretchedness of Lear are, historically, like those qualities in Darnley; but his regal dignity and courage are the dignity and heroism of the great Huguenot, Coligny.

However, there is still further explanation of the epic scale upon which this tragedy is written; for such was the mood that informed the Huguenot records of Coligny's fate: the *Cantiques* to which Harvey referred. The epitaphs in the Huguenot *Mémoires* [15] use exalted and stirring language. They "repeatedly termed Coligny the father of his country torn in pieces by his ungrateful children."

In these *Mémoires* "the St. Bartholomew Massacre and the Darnley murder are treated as parallel crimes, both inspired by the Catholic League," whose purpose was to put Mary Stuart on the throne of

[14] Subscribing to the Stratford man's dates, as she perforce did at the time she wrote, she stressed the importance of the Gunpowder Plot, which is actually not connected at all with any of Shakespeare's plays. We have explained (Chap. 59) that other equivocators, including Ballard of the Babington plot, preceded Garnet, though Oxford would have known about Garnet well enough. We have also explained the further allusions which she took to apply to 1606. Her idea was that the Gunpowder Plot had "reminded" people of Darnley and of St. Bartholomew's Day.

[15] They are written in Latin and need not be quoted here, but the imagery is often similar to Shakespeare's.

England,—both atrocities "planned by the House of Lorraine and Catherine de' Medici." [16] In fact, Buchanan's account of the Darnley murder is inserted in "the midst of a narrative of the affairs of France." Both crimes are consistently characterized as "parricides," as we have previously noted. One Huguenot writer remarked that the King treated Coligny *"en son père propre."* But Catherine, who also called him "father," is said to have prodded her son to murder Coligny by taunting him with being the tool of the old Huguenot, who himself, she asserted, played the part of a king:

> . . . *l'amiral joue le roi, fait de lui l'instrument de ses ambitions.*[17]

Coligny was indeed commonly thought of as "the second king of France." [18] He was widely beloved, as Fitz-william wrote Cecil, August 26, 1566:

> The admiral is of great power and well-beloved of all the best soldiers in France. It is thought that he has at commandment 30,000 men.

Golding, Oxford's uncle, stated in his *Life of Jasper Colignie:*

> It is certain that that house had the right of sovereignty . . . they had power of life and death over the people of their signiory and to coin money . . . and to raise taxes.

Boulé, in *Catherine de' Medici and Coligny,* said that the Admiral was haughty and dominating, violent in altercation, and that he had at one time offered the king ten thousand men, quite as if he himself were a monarch. This he virtually was in the Loire district, the Loire River being called the "Lear" in Fabyan's Elizabethan chronicles: a fact which clearly indicates the contemporary public's awareness of *Lear's* historical significance.

It was of course Coligny's power and influence which aroused Catherine de' Medici's jealousy and fear. And it was in mockery of his regal position that the Parisian mob crowned his effigy with wild flowers, as Lear crowns himself in the play.

Jeanne de Navarre is the French prototype of Cordelia: she was quiet, modest, hated and maligned by Catherine, while bearing all so patiently that she once compared herself, in a letter to her son, with the patient Griselda. She earnestly warned Coligny against Catherine's flatteries, seeing through them as Cordelia saw through those of her sisters:

> I know you what you are;
> And like a sister am most loath to call
> Your faults as they are nam'd. (I.1.270-2.)

[16] L.W.; p. 192.
[17] Op. cit.; p. 198; quot. Henry Martin.
[18] Ibid.; p. 197; quot. Boulé.

All this is made more striking by the fact that Catherine and the other members of the royal family always called Jeanne "sister." Such was the convention of the time.[19]

Miss Winstanley says, "The *Mémoires* dwell on the character of the Queen of Navarre . . . she was wonderful in her constancy and firmness and truth." She was in exactly the same position with regard to Catherine and Marguerite that Cordelia was to Goneril and Regan. In the end, Catherine murdered her, just as Cordelia was murdered by the agent of her sisters, Edmund. Jeanne had given up first her lands and possessions for her convictions, then her life itself, just as Cordelia did.

Henry of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV, is, within the French frame of reference, the original of Edgar. Pierre Mathieu, Historiographer-Royal of France, compares France to a father who preferred his illegitimate son, Henry Duke of Guise, to his lawful one, Henry of Navarre. This is certainly a distinct and clear-cut derivation from Oxford. But the allegory is even more complete. For the historian relates how Navarre, though he was banished and lived in poverty, remained loyal to France, while the illegitimate Guise triumphed, only to betray his country to Spain. When his country was on the verge of utter destruction, Navarre came to the rescue and saved it.

Miss Winstanley says, apropos of the parallel between Henry of Navarre's loyalty to France and that of Edgar to his father, Gloucester:

> France suffered hideous mutilation, the country is blind; but Henry comes to succor it and brings renewed hope.[20]

She speaks of the fact that in *King Lear* the "storm" recurs three times, just as the civil wars in France did.

It seems that Navarre's worst faults were of lust and gaming, the very failings Edgar admits to:

> . . . one that slept in the contriving of lust and waked to do it. Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured the Turk. . . . (III.4.87-90.)

The way Oxford wove in these shortcomings of Henry IV with those of himself and Southampton, thus providing a protective coloration, so to speak, is amazingly adroit. Elizabeth and a few others would have seen through it, but he had contrived a perfect alibi.

Henry had a great belief in astrology, as Gloucester is shown to have (I.2.108 *et seq.*), a superstition which is ridiculed by Edmund.

In *Les Tragiques,* D'Aubigné laments the terrible circumstances in the civil wars of fathers set against sons, who drive their fathers into

[19] Elizabeth and Mary Stuart habitually referred to each other as "my good sister."

[20] P. 202.

exile and fight duels with one another, of old men groping over the bodies of their dead children, of the floods of tears shed, of lightnings followed by bitter cold, of the loathsome food—rats, mice, even human dung. He gives a list of all the things Edgar says he eats, adding still more hideous items.[21]

> *Edgar.* Poor Tom, that eats the swimming-frog; the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt, and the water . . . eats cow-dung for sallets; swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog; drinks the green mantle of the standing pool. . . . (III.4.126 *et seq.*)

The identity of Edgar with Henry of Navarre is further particularized when he lapses into a southern dialect. (IV.6.236 *et seq.*) Navarre had been reared among peasants and spoke the marked southern dialect of Béarn. Because of his peasant qualities of physical hardihood and endurance, he was called *"le roi montagnard"* by his enemies.

We have spoken of Catherine de' Medici's repeated warnings to her son regarding Coligny's power. Golding recorded that the Admiral's men were given "the strictest warlike discipline, so that they were neither to curse nor to swear, nor to make havoc and spoil"; which corresponds with Lear's protestation as to the quality of his knights (I.4.263-6):

> My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
> That all particulars of duty know,
> And in the most exact regard support
> The worships of their name.

Goneril and Regan are determined to reduce Lear's following, breaking his heart by their ruthlessness. In precisely the same manner Coligny's retinue was drastically limited. "As head of a royal house, he had been allowed *a hundred nobles* as his attendants," and in 1569 he was ordered to reduce his staff "to *fifty lances.*" [22]

> *Goneril.* Here do you keep *a hundred knights and squires.* (I.4.240.)
>
> *Lear [to Regan].* She hath abated me of *half my train.* (II.4.158.)
>
> *Regan.* . . . what! *fifty followers?*
> Is it not well? What should you need of more? (II.4.237-8.)

It was in this same year that Coligny was severely wounded at the battle of Moncontour. He was carried away on a litter, just as Lear is (III.6.94):

> *Gloucester.* There is a litter ready: lay him in 't.

Coligny was succored by Jeanne de Navarre, as Lear is by Cordelia. She employed a famous doctor, Ambrose Paré, who had formulated

[21] Miss Winstanley observes that it is obvious that either D'Aubigné is drawing upon Shakespeare or that he and Shakespeare are describing the same things.

[22] Op. cit., p. 206.

a new and kinder treatment for the insane, including the provision of music to lull them. The doctor Cordelia brings to Lear orders music, with a suggestion of the French idiom:

> *Doctor.* Please you draw near. Louder the music there. (IV.7.24.)

Miss Winstanley points out that Lear's curse of sterility upon Goneril (I.4.275-89) reproduces the destiny of Catherine de' Medici, "who was sterile for a long time after her marriage, and whose children grew up to conflicts with her, to bitter jealousies among themselves . . . one of the most evil broods who ever cursed France."

It seems that the narratives of the Coligny murder, including that of the *Mémoires,* customarily began with the glory of the marriage feast of Henry of Navarre to Marguerite of Valois,[23] as if to heighten the incredible callousness of the studied brutality. *King Lear* is concerned *in the first Act* with Cordelia's marriage. As the *Mémoires* put it:

> *L'Amiral convié à la Cour aux nopces d'une soeur de Roy, après milles sermens et milles caresses, y est massacré.*

So Goneril's and Regan's protestations may be spoken of as "a thousand oaths and a thousand caresses," after which they set about to cause their father's death. This foundation of his drama explains Oxford's indifference to verisimilitude: he was not interested in realism *per se,* but in truth. He was retailing "abstracts and brief chronicles of the time" in symbolic terms appropriate to their magnitude and horror.

Coligny was murdered, his naked body exposed to the jibes and jeers of the populace. Hurled into the Seine, it was dragged out again and hanged on a gallows, beneath which a fire was lighted. "Singing ribald songs," the Paris mob "crowned his effigy with straw."

> After his death [writes Miss Winstanley] Coligny's very furniture was judged and condemned to be destroyed, and in *King Lear* we have the bitter irony of the trial of the joint-stools.[24]

The Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day was carried on by the light of torches, the trapped victims dazed and helpless before the phalanx of fire bearing down upon them. The figure which Oxford had applied in one aspect to Drake's fire-ships and in another to the treacherous nocturnal murder of Banquo was even more sombrely apposite here:

> *Fool.* Look! here comes a walking fire. (III.4.111.)
>
> *Lear.* To have a thousand with red burning spits
> Come hizzing in upon 'em. (III.6.15-16.)

[23] Op. cit.; p. 120.
[24] P. 195.

In Latin Elegies, the Massacre is symbolized "as a great thunderstorm sweeping the land and . . . Coligny as the father of his country exposed by his ungrateful children to the tempest." One of these reads:

> *Terra dolens tremuit, diris ululata querelis*
> *Heu patria, et patria concidit ipse Pater.*[25]

The Earl of Oxford pitched his dramatic symphony upon the same exalted key and, with his marvellous power of orchestration, produced one of the grandest masterpieces in the realm of art.

Lear, braving the storm, shouts against its fury:

> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
> You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
> Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
> That make ingrateful man!
> . . . . . .
> Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
> . . . . . .
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
> I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
> You owe me no subscription: then, let fall
> Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man. . . . (III.2.1. *et seq.*)

Thus cried the proud Lord Oxford near the close of his life, battered by the last storm of all, which, though it cleared a little before the end came, left him only a shadow of the great King Earl that he had once been.

[25] P. 210.