

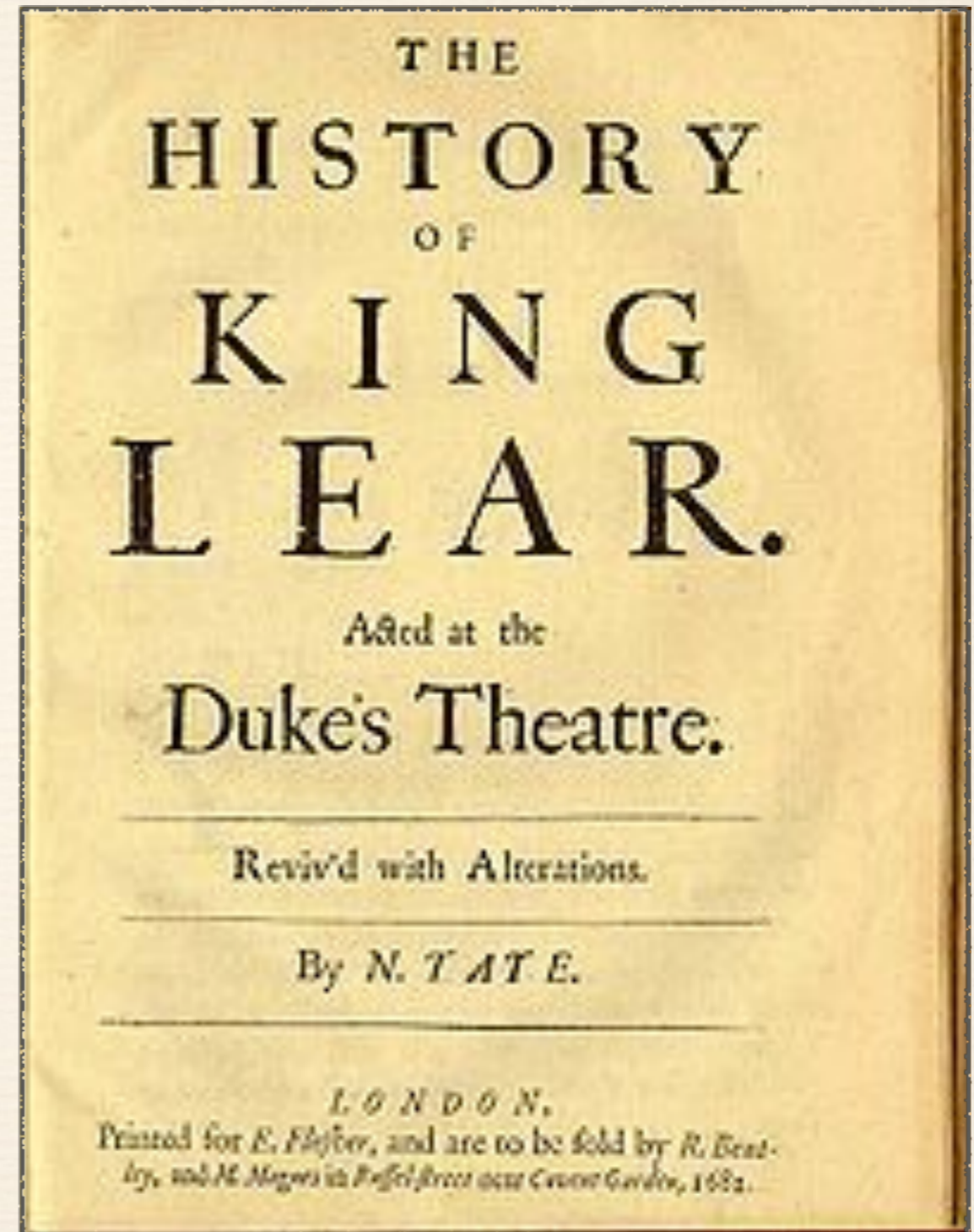
Love



The Theme of Love in King Lear

Different Views

- ❖ Pure / unselfish / uncorrupted love
- ❖ VERSUS
- ❖ Selfish / treacherous / lustful love



Thesis Statement - Possible Option

- ❖ *King Lear* shows us that pure, unselfish, uncorrupted love cannot be quantified and has a lasting, healing power that proves its mettle when tested against the destructive power of false, selfish, corrupt love.



The effects of the different kinds of love

- ❖ Lear and Gloucester's views of love are the only inconstant elements we need to consider when approaching this theme.
- ❖ It is through them that we see the difference between the false love of their treacherous children and the true, absolute, unswerving love and devotion of their selfless children and followers.
- ❖ Both men come to realise the true worth of true love, albeit too late.



Lear

- ❖ Quantifies love: 'Which of you shall we say doth love us most?'
- ❖ He is not interested in the quality of his daughters' love at this stage.

Goneril and Regan

- ❖ Vying with one another to prove they love Lear the most, which is exactly what he wants.
- ❖ Lear cannot see that their declarations of adoration are false and worthless.



❖ Sir, I love you **more** than words can wield the matter;

Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty;

Beyond what can be valued, rich and rare,

No less than life, with grace, health beauty, honour;

As much as child e'er loved, or father found

❖ Goneril's words quantify love but are clearly absurd

Regan's response

- ❖ Sir, I am made
of that selfsame metal that my sister is,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only that she comes **too short**, that I profess
Myself **an enemy to all other joys**
Which **the most precious square of sense**
possesses
And find **I am alone felicitate**
In your dear Highness' love.

Cordelia's Response

- ❖ 'Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond; **nor more nor less.**'
- ❖ Is she playing Lear at his own game here? If he insists on quantitative love rather than qualitative love, perhaps she feels she should give him what he asks for, even if the dish she serves is unpalatable.

❖ Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall
carry
Half my love with him, **half** my care and duty:
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.

France and Burgundy

- ❖ Burgundy, like Lear, sees love as something which can be auctioned off to the highest bidder
- ❖ France knows that you cannot measure love this way: 'Love is not love when it is mingled with regards that stand aloof from the entire point'.



The Real Test of Love

- ❖ Characters' behaviour subsequent to the love test prove whether or not their love is true
- ❖ Goneril and Regan were motivated by greed and they treat Lear cruelly once he is of no further use to them.
- ❖ Their love is selfish and corrupt



Kent

- ❖ Truly loves Lear
- ❖ Tells him the truth out of love but Lear cannot see this
- ❖ Says he has loved Lear as a father, a king, a master and a patron
- ❖ Stays with Lear despite the risks involved
- ❖ Love and loyalty mean he does not see life as worth living without Lear: 'I have a journey shortly to go, my master calls me, I must not say no'.

Cordelia

- ❖ Everything she does is motivated by love, not any desire for personal gain: ‘No blown ambition doth our arms incite, / But love, dear love...’
- ❖ Her love is purely selfless and is a healing love: ‘let this kiss / Repair the violent harms that my two sisters / Have in they reverence made!’

Gloucester

- ❖ Flawed view of love
- ❖ Equates lust with love, for which he is punished: 'there was good sport at his making and the whoreson must be acknowledged'.
- ❖ Like Lear, he is willing to accept verbal proof and cannot see through Edmund's lies
- ❖ Gloucester is punished for his lust but is cared for by a loving and loyal Edgar
- ❖ His heart 'burst[s] smilingly' and he dies happy when he is reunited with Edgar

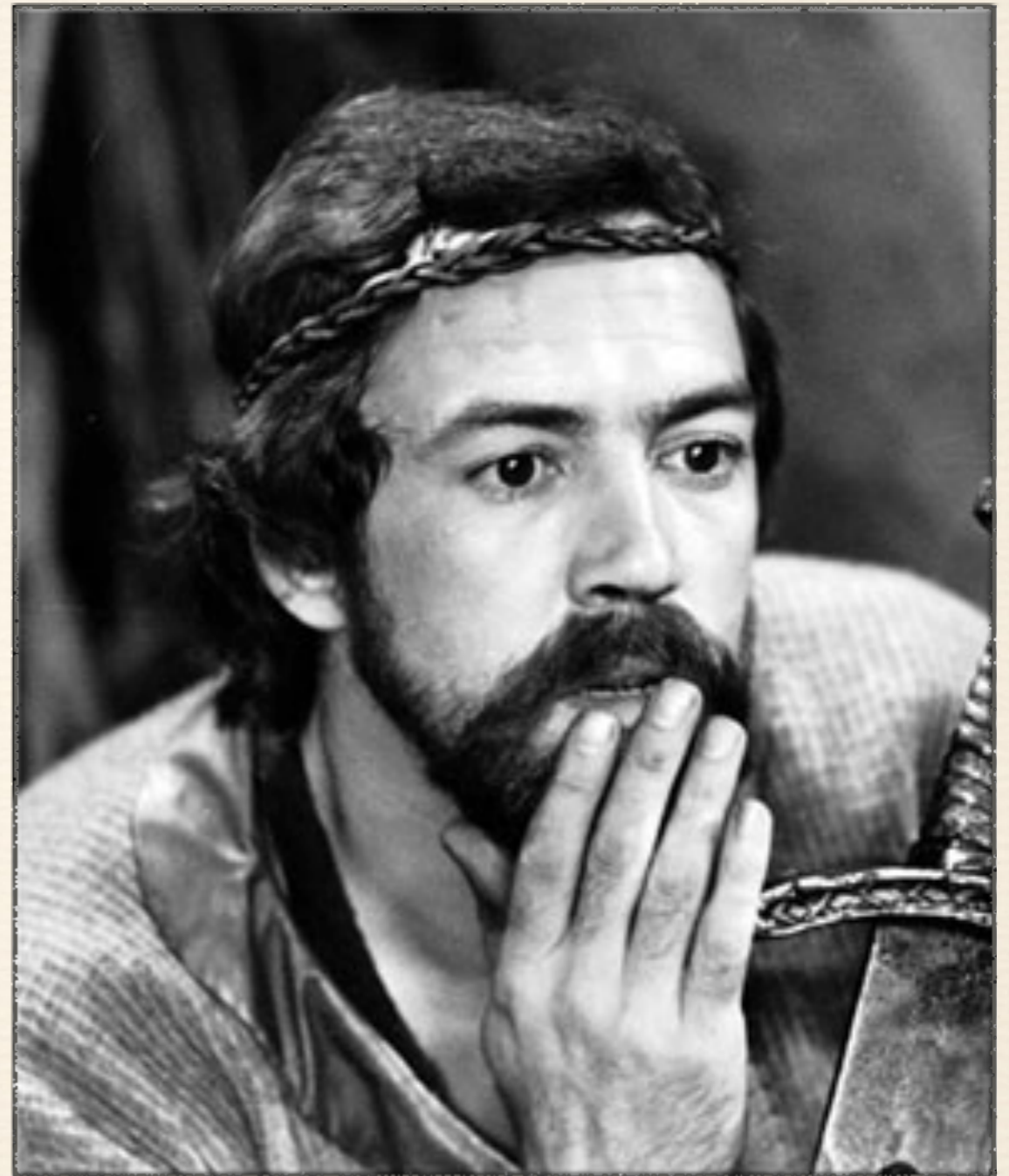


Edgar

- ❖ Colder view of love than Cordelia?
- ❖ Sees that Gloucester deserves to be punished for his love: 'The dark and vicious place where thee he got / Cost him his eyes.'
- ❖ Like Cordelia, he shows true love by remaining with his father despite being banished and mistreated

Edmund

- ❖ Totally self-serving
- ❖ Cares about nobody but himself
- ❖ ‘Yet Edmund was beloved
The one the other poisoned for
my sake,
And after slew herself’
- ❖ Corrupt and warped view of
love: happier to die because he
knows a woman killed her sister
and then herself for love of him



Goneril and Regan

- ❖ Destroyed by sexual love
- ❖ They do not know what true love is: they claimed to love Lear because they were motivated by greed and now they claim to love Edmund because they are motivated by lust.
- ❖ Lust divides and kills them



Final Impression

- ❖ Cordelia, Kent and Edgar represent true love. They suffer banishment, are misjudged and mistreated but do all in their power - regardless of what it costs them - to help loved ones
- ❖ Goneril, Regan and Edmund represent selfish, corrupt, lustful love and all are destroyed by it.
- ❖ Lear and Gloucester die, but not before they know the redemptive love of Cordelia and Edgar respectively.

