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Albany's "milky gentleness"

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In an article published in 1960, Leo Kirschbaum attempted to justify Shakespeare's occasionally patchy characterization of Albany in *King Lear*. In sketching the Duke's transformation from a weakling dominated by an evil wife in the early scenes, to the pious statesman in the closing act, Kirschbaum wondered whether "Albany's growth from nonentity to greatness in *King Lear* [was] not worth Gloucester's eyes," suggesting the earlier atrocity was the necessary prelude to the Duke's later coming of age and "apotheosis."[1] Kirschbaum himself was quick to deny that he would attempt to answer this question. Rather, he argued simply that "Albany was meant by Shakespeare to be observed carefully."[2]

This paper will take up Kirschbaum's suggestion – but with a different approach. Kirschbaum and other critics in his wake have seemed to excuse Albany's meekness with the benefit of hindsight, as if what occurred in acts II and III was a necessary stage for the character to realize where his moral duty lay. This reading rests on the assumption that there is such a thing as a character's 'development' and 'coherence', two notions that are now moot, given that Albany is but a literary construct which does not *need* to be developed or coherent to serve a dramatic purpose (*pace* Aristotle). More importantly, I believe Kirschbaum's study only provides a partial

[1] Leo Kirschbaum, "Albany," *Shakespeare Survey: King Lear*, edited by Allardyce Nicoll, vol. 13, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1960, p. 20.
[2] *Ibid*.

analysis to the manner in which Albany is presented to us in the play. As a consequence, his reflection on the possible function(s) of this seemingly insignificant character fails to go beyond the traditional understanding of Albany as a 'good' character who provides a sense of moral closure to an otherwise bleak tragedy.

In what follows, I would like to attempt to answer a number of fairly simple questions: Who is Albany? What do we know about him? And… is it important? I wish to tease out the potential links between Shakespeare's Albany, a semi-fictional, semi-historical character taken from the annals of British mythical history, and the dukes of Albany of the early modern era. Given the play's topicality, notably with its probable reference to the new king's wish to unite his two kingdoms,[3] one may wonder whether there is more to Albany than meets the eye – *historically speaking*. After all, Albany has been given relatively scant attention for a character who, in the end, apparently inherits Lear's kingdom[4] – or does he?

Before going into further detail, it is important to note that an immediate difficulty in trying to examine these issues derives from the numerous differences between the Quarto (1608) and the Folio (1623) versions of *King Lear*, notably with regards to Albany's part and characterization. One could go as far as to wonder, like Stephen Urkowitz, whether the differences between both texts are not intimately linked with *Albany*, rather than with Edgar, a more obviously prominent character in the play.[5] Critics generally agree that the cuts

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[3] See, for instance, Philippa Berry, "Cordelia's bond and Britannia's missing middle: *King Lear* (c. 1606)," *Shakespeare's Feminine Endings: Disfiguring death in the tragedies*, London, Routledge, 1999, p. 135-166.

[4] In the words of one critic, "Although criticism of *King Lear* is second in abundance only to that of *Hamlet*, the most conspicuous thing about criticism devoted to Albany is that it remains almost non-existent," Peter Mortenson, "The Role of Albany," *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 16, n°2, 1965, p. 217.

[5] Steven Urkowitz, *Shakespeare's Revision of King Lear*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton

in F increase Edgar's role at Albany's expense, as in the play's concluding speech, attributed to Albany in Q, and to Edgar in F. Depending on which version of the text is chosen, it is either Albany (Q) or Edgar (F) who seems to be ultimately in charge of the kingdom. For critics such as Michael Warren, who pointedly reject the study of conflated versions of the play such as that offered in R.A. Foakes's Arden edition, "Although Albany does assert himself in the fifth act in both texts, he is much stronger in Q by virtue of the presence of three passages that are not in F."[6] Others, such as Donna B. Hamilton or Marion Trousdale, argue that these differences were of no lasting import, and that Albany and Edgar were historically interchangeable names:

> If we allow meaning here to be extrinsic and referential and see in the alternate endings two allusions to James, one of the things suggested by [genealogy] is that the difference between Albany and Edgar as signifiers at the ends of these plays may be less than we imagine.[7]

We will return to these textual and historical differences, despite the skepticism of critics such as the Arden editor, who remain

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University Press, 1980, chapter 5, in particular. Others believe, however, that Urkowitz's arguments are unconvincing and that he "consistently exaggerates the significance of these differences for the characterization of Albany and the meaning of the play as a whole," Sidney Thomas, "Shakespeare's Supposed Revision of *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 35, n. 4, 1984, p. 509.

[6] Michael Warren, "Quarto and Folio *King Lear* and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar," *Shakespeare, Pattern of Excelling Nature*, edited by David M. Bevington and Jay L. Halio, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1978, p. 100.

[7] Marion Trousdale, "A Trip Through the Divided Kingdoms," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 37, n. 2, 1986, p. 222. Trousdale quotes Donna B. Hamilton, "*King Lear* and the Historical Edgars," in *Renaissance Papers, 1992*, edited by Leigh Deneef and M. Thomas Hester, Raleigh, The Southeastern Renaissance Conference, 1983, p. 35-42.

unconvinced by historicist readings which suggest that *Lear* was "perilously close to presenting a fictional portrait of the king himself."[8] Given that the purpose of this paper is to go over some historical data to ascertain whether history has actually any bearing on our understanding of Albany, we shall dwell a great deal on Shakespeare's sources. As we shall see, Shakespeare has used rather confused sources to create a composite character exhibiting seemingly contradictory traits: how can we reconcile Albany's "milky gentleness" (I, 4, 337) and his "absolute power" (V, 3, 299) over the kingdom at the end of the play?

I. Dividing kingdoms, confusing sources

What do we know about Albany? One can distinguish at least four sources of information: what Albany says of himself; what the others say about Albany; what Albany does or does not do – on occasion, actions, or lack thereof, speak volumes; and what Shakespeare's sources tell us about Albany. I shall begin with the last.

In the anonymous play *King Leir*, first performed in the 1590s but published only in 1605, a year before Shakespeare's *Lear*, there is no Duke of Albany. Instead, there is a King of Cambria (modern-day Wales) and a King of Cornwall. Although one might be tempted to identify Cornwall in *Leir* with Shakespeare's Albany, as he is the husband of Gonorill (and not of Regan, as in *Lear*), Cambria is perhaps the better model for Albany. Indeed, Cambria is not only reminiscent of Albany's lacklustre, pious behavior, his realm also lies closer, geographically speaking, to Albany (Scotland) than to Cornwall.

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[8] Quoted by R. A. Foakes (ed.), *King Lear*, Walton-on-Thames, Thomas Nelson and Sons, Arden Third Series, 1997, p. 91. All references to *King Lear* are to this edition.

In *Leir*, the two kings' first appearance is enlivened by a joke as coarse as Gloucester's bantering lines on Edmund's bastardy in the opening scene of Shakespeare's play. Cornwall and Cambria meet on their way to Leir's court, and discover that both are to marry Leir's daughters (in *Lear*, both are *already* married). The kings discuss Leir's plan to divide the kingdom between them:

> CORNWALL. If I have one halfe, and you have the other,
> Then betweene us we must needs have the whole.
> CAMBRIA. The hole! how meane you that? Zblood, I hope,
> We shall have two holes between us.[9]

Despite this crude attempt at demonstrating his mirth before his prospective marriage, as if they were celebrating what one would now call a bachelor party, Cambria afterwards reveals himself to be both a pious and cowardly man, unhappily misled by a most wicked wife, like Albany in *King Lear*. In a soliloquy, Ragan glibly notes: "I rule the king of Cambria as I please,"[10] and repeatedly overrules his occasional pangs of doubt. Though Gonerill resorts to similar tactics with Cornwall, she is never as brazenly contemptuous of her husband. This difference excepted, it seems both sisters are clearly identified as the source of all evil. There is no seductive character like Edmund to set the two scheming sisters against each other and their weak husbands, and Gonerill and Ragan will always see eye to eye when fulfilling their parricidal intent.

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[9] *King Leir*, in Geoffrey Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, London/New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul / Columbia University Press, vol. 7, 1973, p. 348, scene 5, lines 452-455.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 360, scene 11, line 930.

Whereas Leir's elder daughters are thus portrayed as instances of unadulterated evil, both Cornwall and Cambria seem to pity the old king, unlike Shakespeare's Cornwall, who is as vicious and blasphemous in his conduct as his wife, Regan. In *Leir*, Cambria cannot tell right from wrong, and calls on the gods' help to solve the riddle of Leir's mysterious disappearance – a disappearance which Leir's daughters had intended to be eternal, having dispatched a murderer to rid them of their troublesome father. Cambria claims: "The heavens are just, and hate impiety, / And will (no doubt) reveale such haynous crimes."[11]

These lines echo Albany's repeated belief in, and recognition of, signs of divine retribution against sinners, which he points out to the audience with a series of deictics ('this', 'these', emphasized below). In one case, he warns Goneril of impending doom with lines starting with a conditional sentence ("If…") expressing a sense of urgency ("Send quickly"):

> If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
> Send quickly down to tame *these* vile offences,
> It will come. (IV, 2, 47-49)

Shortly thereafter, the duke celebrates the death of Cornwall, his dangerous rival and Gloucester's tormentor, noting again the suddenness of divine justice ("So speedily"), and apostrophizing the gods ("*you* are above; *you* justicers"):

> *This* shows you are above,
> You justicers, that *these* our nether crimes

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 383-384, scene 22, lines 1909-1910.

> So speedily can venge. (IV, 2, 79-81)

After these initial proofs of what he believes are signs of the gods' intervention, the Duke welcomes the news of his adulterous wife's suicide with famously uncharitable indifference in the last scene of the play:

> *This* judgement of the heavens that makes us tremble
> Touches us not with pity. (V, 3, 230-231)

Like Cambria in *Leir*, Shakespeare's Albany is pious. He is also deliberate and scrupulous, and resembles in this both kings in *Leir*, who both claim in different scenes that they will need time to make a decision on what to do about the old king's disappearance. Cornwall says: "till I know / The truth thereof, I will suspend my judgment"; Cambria says: "I will suspend my judgment for a time, / Till more appearance give us further light."[12] One can easily contrast the characters' modest wish to suspend *their* judgment with the sonorous judgment of the *heavens* Albany is so quick to recognize in *King Lear*.

When compared with the anonymous play published a year before Shakespeare's *Lear*, the dramatist's other sources say very little of the old king's daughters' husbands. Instead, they agree with Shakespeare's manner of matching the two kings or princes with Leir / Lear's daughters, differing in that respect from *Leir* where, as noted earlier, Cornwall is Gonorill's husband, and Ragan is wedded to Cambria.

In John Higgins's life of Cordeilla in the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), Gonerell is wedded to the king of Albany or Scotland, and Ragan

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 371, 385, scenes 18 and 22, lines 1365-1366 and 1959-1960.

to the prince of Camber and Cornwall; in *The Faerie Queene* (1596), Spenser speaks of the kings of Scotland and of Cambria – there is no mention of Cornwall.[13] The confusion with the characters' titles does not cease with Shakespeare. Nahum Tate's 1681 adaptation of the play adds to the confusion by speaking of the French town of Cambrai in lieu of Cambria in the scene when Gloucester is blinded by Cornwall.[14] The Duke says the Earl will have to "smell his way to Cambray."[15] This is particularly odd since Tate had purposely removed all references to France and the French invasion from his play.

Raphael Holinshed, however, provides a slightly different version of the story in his *Historie of England* (1587), a story indebted to Geoffrey of Monmouth's popular *Historia regium Britanniae* (*ca*. 1135). The Tudor chronicler calls the daughters' husbands *dukes* of Albania and of Cornewall, as does Shakespeare, and not princes or kings either of Scotland or Cambria.[16] This is an important detail given that, before Leir's division of the kingdom, Britain had only one king ruling over the different parts of the land (England, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall). It is true that other writers, such as Higgins,[17] speak of "British kings" in the plural, suggesting that the different kingdoms were under the command of an imperial-like figure, but it seems Lear's obsession with "The name, and all th'addition to a king" (I, 1, 137) in Shakespeare's play seems to warrant our taking the difference between 'dukes' and 'kings' seriously.

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[13] See *ibid.*, p. 325-326 (lines 92-96) and 333 (stanza 29), respectively.
[14] I wish to thank Gordon McMullan for pointing this out.
[15] Nahum Tate, *The History of King Lear*, London, Printed for E. Flesher, 1681, p. 39 (III, 3).
[16] Oddly, Bullough claims Holinshed said Cornwall was Gonorilla's husband, and Albany Regan's: "[Shakespeare] did not follow [Holinshed] in making Goneril marry Cornwall and Regan Albany," Geoffrey Bullough, *op. cit.*, p. 274. Holinshed's chronicle provides no proof for Bullough's contention, however, and Shakespeare may have well been faithful to Holinshed's chronicle in this respect.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 328, line 180.

The chronicler and the dramatist, however, do not always accord with each other. According to Holinshed, the division of the kingdom was to be effected *after* the king's death, not before. In the end, however, Leir's early downfall is caused by the combined efforts of his daughters and sons-in-law to effect this planned division well before the natural and appointed time, as in Shakespeare:

> After that Leir was fallen into age, the two dukes that had married his two eldest daughters, thinking it long yer the government of the land did come to their hands, arose against him in armour, and reft from him the governance of the land, upon conditions to be continued for terme of life: by the which he was put to his portion, that is, to live after a rate assigned to him for the maintenance of his estate, which in processe of time was diminished as well by Maglanus as by Henninus [the dukes of Albania and of Cornewall]. But the greatest griefe that Leir tooke, was to see the unkindness of his daughters [...].[18]

Holinshed does not give further details on the two dukes, other than that they were both slain during the battle against the French. *Leir*, on the other hand, portrayed their cowardly flight from the battlefield, one on horseback, the other on foot – the Welshman is mocked by his pursuer who claims Cambria has "a light and nimble payre of legs."[19]

Thus, Shakespeare's original 'poetic' and historical sources barely utter a word on these secondary characters, focusing instead on the elder daughters' malevolence.

II. From cowardly milkiness to Biblical honey

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 318.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 401, scene 31, line 2627.

Shakespeare's play uses elements from all these sources to create a composite Duke of Albany. From Holinshed, one understands that the two men were dukes, one of Albany, the other of Cornwall, and neither princes nor kings. But Shakespeare has only one duke plotting against Lear, Cornwall, who dies from wounds sustained during a short and undignified quarrel with one of his own servants, not on the battlefield. Albany, on the other hand, though not a man of valour by his own account (V, 1, 24), triumphs over the French army and lives on to inherit the British throne. Neither Sidney nor *The Mirror* tell us what became of the elder sisters' husbands.

From the old *Leir* play, it seems Shakespeare has used Cornwall and Cambria's vocal expressions of concern for the old king, as well as their piety, and transferred them solely to Albany. Also transposed to him are remarks by other characters, such as Perillus' exclamation to Gonorill: "Nay, peace you monster, shame unto thy sexe: / Thou fiend in likenesse of a human creature."[20] As noted by Geoffrey Bullough and others, these lines are reformulated in Albany's famous outburst:

> See thyself, devil:
> Proper deformity shows not in the fiend
> So horrid as in woman. (IV, 2, 60-62)

To which one must add these lines, found only in the Quarto: "Thou changed and self-covered thing, for shame / Be-monster not thy feature" (IV, 2, 63-64).

Initially, it is Goneril who defines Albany's role and character before a sudden transformation reveals a more assertive, yet still doubt-ridden, inquisitive duke. Albany's first 'defining moment' is in act

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[20] *Ibid.*, p. 400, scene 30, lines 2581-2582.

I, when Goneril criticizes her husband's effeminate meekness with a polite paralipsis:

> This milky gentleness and course of yours,
> Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,
> You are much more attasked for want of wisdom
> Than praised for harmful mildness. (I, 4, 337-340)

Goneril will use the same terms in act IV, calling him "our mild husband" (IV, 2, 1), "Milk-livered man" (52) and "fool" (*ie.* 'wanting wisdom'), either before Edmund or to Albany's face, five times in the space of a few lines: "A fool usurps my bed" (28), "The text is foolish" (38), "Fools do those villains pity" (55), "a moral fool" (59), "O vain fool!" (62). By systematically associating Albany with milk, gentleness, mildness and folly, Goneril triggers a series of associations in the minds of the audience.

The reference to milk is more than just a way of calling Albany a milksop: it serves to recall a number of readily available parallels of a moral, religious, historical and political nature, which will ultimately lead us to speak of the Duke's so-called mild, gentle and foolish disposition. Within the Shakespearean canon itself, Goneril's attitude *vis-à-vis* Albany closely resembles that of a fellow Scotswoman, Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth says her husband "is too full o'th'milk of human kindness" to take matters into his own hands (*Macbeth*, I, 5, 17).[21] Whereas Goneril can count on her sister's assistance to remove the obstacles separating her from absolute power, Lady Macbeth must resort to the invocation of evil spirits to further her plans. She asks the

[21] All references to Kenneth Muir (ed.), *Macbeth*, London, Methuen & Co Ltd., coll. "The Arden Shakespeare" (Arden Second Series), 1984.

spirits to suck her woman's breasts "And take [her] milk for gall" (*Macbeth*, 1, 5, 48).

In Goneril's mind, Albany's milkiness refers not so much to his innocence and goodness as it does to his cowardice. The Duke is a "milk-*livered* man." The liver was thought to be the source of sexual appetite[22] as well as of courage. Milk, on the other hand, was associated with infancy and goodness, as seen above. Combining both elements in an adult male suggested cowardice. The *OED* quotes Cotgrave: "Wash thy milk off thy liver," and glosses it as "to purge oneself of cowardice."[23] To prove Goneril's point, one could argue that the duke appears to shirk responsibility in the first act, and is almost as cowardly as Cornwall and Cambria in *Leir*. In the old chronicle history, Cornwall prefers to leave the stage when his wife begins to argue with Leir, whom he fondly calls his 'father', insisting that he "cannot stay to hear this discord sound."[24] If Shakespeare's Albany remains on stage to clear his name in the corresponding scene, he does so with a somewhat lame excuse, telling the king "I am guiltless as I am ignorant / Of what hath moved you" (I, 4, 265-266). He only seems to express surprise at Lear's outburst, but does nothing about it, allowing his misgivings to be hushed up by Goneril's forceful choriambs: "Pray you, content / Come, sir, no more" (I, 4, 305-306).

It is only in act IV that Albany, now a "man so changed" according to Oswald (IV, 2, 3), will strongly censure Goneril's unfilial conduct and marital disrespect. But even after his transformation, Albany still

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[22] See, for instance, Patrick Cruttwell, "Physiology and Psychology in Shakespeare's Age," *Journal of the History of Ideas,* vol. 12, n 1, January 1951, p. 80.

[23] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 1989. The seventeenth-century lexicologist used it, however, to translate a French expression that has little to do with the *OED*'s gloss: "Vin sur laict c'est souhait, laict sur vin c'est venin," Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, 1st edition, London, Adam Islip, 1611.

[24] Geoffrey Bullough, *op. cit.,* p. 358, scene 10, line 850.

confesses his weakness: "I never yet was valiant" (V, 1, 24). His seemingly brave decision to challenge Edmund to a duel must be set against the Duke's knowledge that *another* challenger is actually waiting in the wings, itching for a fight with the adulterate bastard. Albany, it seems, is always reluctant to fight, and when he does, he fights by proxy. In one case, Albany entrusted Edmund to fight against the French, in another, he expected Edgar to cut down the overweening bastard.

Albany's 'milkiness' may refer to more than his cowardice, however. Milk may have also been understood as referring to Albany's *name*, by association. In Scottish Gaelic, Alba means Scotland, and the term was used to refer to the realm of the Picts and the Scots. But Albany also derives from Albion, itself thought to refer to the white cliffs of Dover, from the Latin *albus*, white – sundry English expressions wishing to denote whiteness typically speak of something as being 'white *like milk*'. Lastly, Albany may also echo the notion of *alba*, the Spanish for 'dawn', thereby suggesting that the Duke embodies a new dawn in Britain's history, as if he were leading his fellow countrymen to the proverbial Promised Land, "unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8), a land that resembles Lear's idyllic description of his realm in the opening scene, "With shadowy forests and champaigns riched, / With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads" (I, 1, 65-66). By linking Albany and Albion, one links Scotland to England, making Albany's dominions symbolically extend from the northernmost to the southernmost parts of the island of Britain.

King Lear is famously set in a prehistoric, pagan world, where gods are conspicuously absent.[25] And yet, there are important Biblical

[25] One may even speak of *deus absconditus*. See William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods*, Lexington, Ky., University Press of Kentucky, 1988 [1967], p. 171-263, in

echoes and patterns involving Albany, the most clearly pious character in the play. Thus, the only self-proclaimed prophecy in the play refers to the fate of Albion which might "Come to great confusion" (III, 3, 92) if a number of antithetical conditions are met. If Albion, as suggested earlier, was cognate with Albany, this prophecy which appears in the *center* of the play relates to the fate of the man who will inherit a "gored state" at the *end* of the play which he means to divide in "twain" (V, 3, 318-319). The prophecy in act III is pronounced, appropriately enough, by the Fool, as if to reinforce its link with Albany, the other character repeatedly called a "fool" by Goneril – given her insistence on the term, it may seem unwise to ignore its symbolic significance. Lear's Fool, it must be added, was also Goneril's *bête noire* in act I. Revealingly, Goneril mentions the Fool at the *beginning* of each of her outbursts against her father, as if the Fool were the source of all evil.[26] Thus, the Fool is arguably Albany's grotesque *alter ego* in Goneril's mind, a useless hindrance who always sides with Lear, an impotent, importune, "very foolish, fond old man" (IV, 7, 60).

III. Questioning Albany's messianic credentials

At this stage, one can begin to question the messianic credentials of Lear's eldest daughter's husband, whose "milky" and "mild" manners are constantly, and revealingly, contrasted with Gloucester's warring sons, who both exhibit martial qualities, Edmund leading the British army to victory, while Edgar will successfully fight against

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particular.

[26] "Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?" (I, 3, 1-2); "Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool [...]" (I, 4, 191).

Oswald and Edmund in single combat. We have discussed Albany's first 'defining moment', let us briefly turn to the others.

Albany's second 'defining moment' comes when he confronts his wife in act IV, scene 2. The Duke's arrival is prepared by Oswald's speech which piles antithesis upon antithesis. Goneril's steward remarks "What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him, / What like, offensive" (IV, 2, 10-11). In this scene, Albany vigorously tries to wrestle free from Goneril's attempts to define him as he used to be, that is, mild, cowardly, foolish. Revealingly, he does so by repeatedly resorting to religiously connoted attacks against his wife, who is painted as being as fiendishly evil as Lady Macbeth.

The scene is noteworthy for the extent to which it was 'revised' or otherwise altered in the Folio, in which three important series of lines are cut from the Quarto. The Folio version has only 47 lines, compared with the Quarto's 71 lines. On the one hand, the Quarto paints a vivid picture of hell, with "tigers, not daughters [...] / Most barbarous, most degenerate" (IV, 2, 41-44), with "visible spirits" sent down to punish the evil (47), devils (60), fiends (61), and cannibalistic "monsters of the deep" (51), in a tableau worthy of paintings by Hieronymus Bosch or Peter Bruegel,[27] while Albany plays the part of the divinely inspired preacher who berates sinners by resorting to impersonal apophthegms, perhaps as if he were inspired by the Holy Ghost:[28] "She that herself will sliver and disbranch / [...] perforce must wither" (35-

[27] One can think, notably, of Bruegel's "Fall of the Rebel Angels" (1569) in the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, in Brussels, where Albany's visible spirits are sent down to tame the vile offences of rebel angels.

[28] According to Lancelot Andrewes, the Apostles spoke "apophthegms" on Whitsun. In a sermon preached on Whitsun in 1608 before James I, Andrewes added: "Such the Spirit gave them to utter. Not the crudities of their own brain, idle, loose, undigested gear, God knows; no, but pithy and wise sentences," Lancelot Andrewes, *Ninety-Six Sermons*, edited by J. P. Wilson and J. Bliss, Oxford, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, vol. 3, 1841-43, p. 140.

36), “Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile” (39), “Proper deformity shows not in the fiend / So horrid as in woman” (60-61). On the other hand, the Folio version of the scene is deeply prosaic, with halting verse: most speeches are broken off after only one full line, itself not end-stopped. The result is a short, common-sounding and unseemly spat between man and wife. Albany is no longer the fiery doomsday preacher, but the embittered cuckold of a comedic “interlude” (V, 3, 90), as later noted by Goneril in another Folio addition.

Albany’s third ‘defining moment’ comes in the last act, when the Duke begins to speak with Lear’s imperious tone, abandoning the preacher’s fervor in the Quarto version of act IV. In act V, scene 1, Albany addresses Regan thus: “Our very loving sister, well be-met” (V, 1, 20), a manner of speech reminiscent of the king’s greeting to the dukes in the first act, which also emphasized their blood link and loving fealty: “Our son of Cornwall, / And you, our no less loving son of Albany” (I, 1, 40-41). Likewise, one can compare Lear’s attempt “To shake all cares and business from our age” with Albany’s concern with “this business” (V, 1, 24) and “most just and heavy causes” (27). Albany then uses the regal ‘we’: “*We* do require of you, so to use them / As *we* shall find their merits and our safety [...]” (V, 3, 44-45),[29] before venturing to put his authority to the test, when he decides to confront his “bespoke” wife (V, 3, 90) and his dangerous rival, Edmund. Again, the tone is imperial and Albany reminds us that Edmund’s soldiers were “All levied in my [i.e. Albany’s] name” (V, 3, 104), not unlike when Lear spoke of his train of a hundred knights as being part of “The name, and all th’addition to a king” (I, 1, 137).

[29] The first “we” is from F, but the Arden editor has followed Q in keeping “*I* do require [...].” On Albany’s regal “we,” see Mortenson, “The Role of Albany,” art. cit., p. 220-221.

Generally speaking, the Quarto offers us a character who asserts his authority over wife and subjects, all the while demonstrating qualities expected from a discerning ruler: a combination of piety, humility and discernment. We have already mentioned Albany's outbursts of piety in act IV, scene 2, and we have analyzed elsewhere the chiliastic undertones of act V, scene 3, when the Duke refers to the Last Judgment when he asks that the bodies of Lear's elder daughters be brought onstage (V, 3, 229-230).[30]

Albany's humility comes down from the old *Leir* play, in which the kings of Cornwall and Cambria suspended their judgment. Shakespeare adds Albany's readiness to give up all signs of wordly ambition, with his quick decision to bestow all manner of authority over the kingdom back to Lear, then to thrust it upon Kent and Edgar. Albany's humility is also shown by his tendency to question other characters. In act I, scene 4, all of Albany's speeches are questions to the king and to Goneril, in an effort to understand Lear's outburst of rage. In act IV, scene 2, Albany will repeatedly question the Messenger to learn of what has befallen Gloucester, this time providing choric comments on the horrors of the preceding acts (Gloucester's cruel blinding and Edmund's treachery).

Contrary to Cornwall, who questions through torture, while refusing to believe his victim's answers, Albany simply questions his witness as if he were conducting an investigation, withholding all judgment, leaving it to the gods to punish the guilty. This is particularly visible in the scene when Albany confronts his wife. Before judging her, he produces evidence (her letter to Edmund) which he wishes her to acknowledge: "Knowst thou this paper?" (V, 3, 158). The whole dialogue is Albany's cross-examination of the accused (Goneril and Edmund, suspected of treachery). It should come as no surprise that

[30] See my *William Shakespeare: King Lear*, Paris, SEDES, 2008, p. 22-26.

Goneril should answer Albany's remark, "I perceive you know [i.e. recognize] it" (155) by questioning Albany's legal authority: "Say if I do, the laws are mine, not thine. / Who can arraign me for't?" (156-157).

The resulting differences between Shakespeare's Albany and that of his sources suggests more than what Kirschbaum described as Albany's "apothesis." It suggests Shakespeare's effort at portraying an almost ideal *potential* ruler. Against the cruelty of the play's evil character stands Albany, milky, mild, embodying the mythical Albion, from the white cliffs of Dover to the farthest recesses of Scotland, promising a new dawn for a divided realm. This pious and humble Duke could thus serve as a saintly model for the early 17th-century Duke of Albany, James's son, Charles, who was *second* in line to the throne, a position which probably demanded greater humility and discretion than if he were the heir apparent.

The dukedom of Cornwall was traditionally reserved for the eldest son of the English monarch, while the dukedom of Albany was bestowed on the younger son of the Scottish sovereign. At his baptism in 1600, Charles was created Duke of Albany, a title previously held by Lord Darnley, father of James I, and James himself, then king of Scotland. Charles's brother Henry was made Duke of Cornwall at James's accession to the English throne in 1603. When Henry died in 1612, Charles inherited his brother's title, thus becoming Duke of Albany as well as Duke of Cornwall. In these new circumstances, Shakespeare or his posthumous editors may have found it worthwhile to subtly reduce the oft-mentioned "division" between the two dukes by toning down the figure of Albany, and highlighting instead the coming of age of Edgar, a more neutral and familiar figure, reminiscent of, among others, Edgar Ætheling, also known as Edgar the Outlaw, heir to King Edward the Confessor in the second half of the 11th century.[31]

[31] See Hamilton, "*King Lear* and the Historical Edgars," art. cit. The Norman invasion of

Other issues may have prompted a politically-motivated 'revision' of the Quarto. In the words of Edmund, Albany was "full of alteration / And self-reproving" (V, 1, 3-4), an indecisiveness deemed dangerous in the face of war. A few moments later, the Duke displays commendable patriotism, deciding to oppose the French invader, all the while recognizing the justice of the French cause, in a short passage that is found only in the Quarto:

> For this business,
> It touches us as France invades our land,
> Not bolds the King, with others whom I fear
> Most just and heavy causes make oppose. (V, 1, 24-27)

Shakespeare's English audience could hardly have forgotten the risks of an invasion from (Catholic) France, especially threatening if it had the tacit or effective support of Scotland. English audiences may have recalled how, in the 1520s, Henry VIII had feared the return of the then duke of Albany from his French exile, which could have reignited a costly war with Scotland.[32] According to Richard Wilson, this may have been additional proof of Shakespeare's Catholic sympathies:

> The Duke's confusion is so contorted that some suspect corruption. But his words in fact betray the lingering faith of Jacobean Catholics in the fantasy of the so-called Enterprise of England: an Armada from Europe. Thus, it is very telling that Albany's hesitation in the battle is erased from

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William the Conqueror in 1066 would put an end to Edgar's royal pretensions, confining him for many years to Scotland.

[32] See G. R. Elton, "Anglo-French Relations in 1522: A Scottish Prisoner of War and His Interrogation," *The English Historical Review,* vol. 78, n. 307, 1963, p. 310-316, for instance. John Stewart, 2nd duke of Albany, had served as regent during James V's minority until 1524, at which date he was forced to return to France, in exile.

> the Folio, along with the regret of the English party that "friend hath lost his friend" on the other side (V, 3, 56).[33]

Such dangerous thoughts were papered over in the play's 'revision', effecting a censorship reminiscent of the Duke's hushing up of his own wife's indiscretions: "Shut your mouth, dame, / Or with this paper, shall I stop it" (V, 3, 152-153) – a paper whose contents, in the end, we never get to see.[34] The divided nature of Albany therefore mimicks the potentially divided sympathies of the dramatist himself, if not that of a putative 'real', historical duke. Thus, the cumulative effect of Shakespeare's changes to his sources, of the Duke's various 'defining moments', and the differences between Q and F, suggest conflicting answers to our initial query on Albany's character and significance. Albany may initially strike us as a harmless non-entity, but a closer look reveals a politically significant and multi-faceted enigma: pious, humble, but also subtly imperious.

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[33] Richard Wilson, "'All-shaking thunder': *King Lear* and the Gunpowder Plot," *Lectures du Roi Lear de William Shakespeare*, edited by D. Lemmonier-Texier and G. Winter, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008, p. 19.

[34] Edgar had found at least *two* letters on Oswald. He reads Goneril's out loud in act IV, scene 6, but we do not know what Regan had intended for Edmund.