

are treated pretty roughly by the 'cosmos' of *King Lear* and that the good and the bad are killed off indifferently. Why, if he wants to defend the old ideas, does Shakespeare destroy their ideal representative in Cordelia?

By the same charge *might* be brought against the story of the Gospels which very nearly end with the horrible drawing out *murder* of the ideal representative of man virtue. The difference of course lies in the Resurrection in the Gospel's conviction of the divinity of Christ, Christendom itself. Cordelia, on the other hand, is mortal and mortal. But to leave it at that is to ignore the force on whom the play is designed to make its effect. It is not a sentimentalisation to argue that—for all cosmic malevolence—Cordelia's virtue triumphs at least in the sense that for the audience it shines out like a good thing in a naughty world. We do not ourselves, after seeing the play, feel it a matter of indifference whether men behave like Goneril or like Cordelia, however indifferently they are treated by the gods; and Cordelia's vindication is in the efficacy with which her ideals survive the holocaust. She suffers, like Christ, for the salvation of others—not for herself but for us, the audience, who take part in the action of the play as its symbolic heirs, as we are the spiritual children of Christ. I should distrust the man who does not look away from *King Lear* humbled by the example of Cordelia.

What about *Lear's* death? Does he *really* think that Cordelia survives him? The idea that he does is a tradition which, though now well dug in, does not seem to be exactly before Bradley, who describes Lear as dying of joy, leaving Cordelia to be alive. This would mean that Lear's 'redemption' is based on a fraud—a point triumphantly made by Mr. Rosenberg, who, it seems to me, makes the wrong choice of two possible ways out, and sees 'Lear's redemption' in the deluded hope that Cordelia lives' as 'the last cruellest of the play's mockeries'. Now it is true that in lines 265 and 272 of Act V, Sc. iii (Arden), Lear *seems* to think Cordelia alive (though cf. Moberly's far-fetched comment on lines 269-70, quoted in the *New Variorum*); but the lines immediately before his death are as follows:

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, nō, nō life!  
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,  
Never, never, never, never, never!  
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, Sir.  
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,  
Look there, look there! (V. iii. 305-11)

I do not suppose there is any special significance in the omission of the last line and a half from the quarto, which also has no stage direction for Lear's death and gives l. 312 to Lear, not Kent. But surely ll. 305-8 are unequivocal (and as such may make us think again about 265 and 272). Lear knows very well that she will never come again; and to say otherwise, while it may increase the cosmic mockery, not only reduces his dignity and hence that of the play, but goes directly against the plain sense of the lines. Whatever Lear sees on Cordelia's lips at the end, it is not the breath of this world.

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#### DR. GARDNER'S DATING OF THE SONGS AND SONETS

Mark Roberts, in his long review of Helen Gardner's edition of Donne's *Elegies and Songs and Sonets*, made in passing a point which deserves fuller consideration than he probably had space for. He objects to Dr. Gardner's taking 'so very positive' a tone when she says that a great many of the *Songs and Sonets* 'can be dated with absolute certainty'. What Roberts does not discuss is whether we are entitled to object to anything other than the tone—whether, that is, the evidence which Dr. Gardner adduces in order to date the poems is convincing, or even plausible, *qua* evidence. I shall follow out her arguments.

In section I of her introduction ('The Love-Poetry of John Donne'), Dr. Gardner says: 'Donne himself has warned us against making any simple equation between the truth of the imagination and the truth of experience' (p. xviii), and adds a little later that the strength of the love-poems is 'a strength of the imagination' (p. xix). Nor, she goes on, 'can we legitimately assume that poems that express idealistic