

Hi Gerry,

I have read your piece on *The Late Shakespeare*. Fantastic! You are right on the mark, especially with the REGISTER SHIFT OF THE TEMPEST IN KING LEAR. If I understand you correctly, Shakespeare has used the tempest as a moment of singularity, a moment of transformation like an axiomatic change. Am I right? I could not find where "he goes into a hovel for shelter that he should have been a better king..." Is this happening in Act III, Scene IV? If this is the case, your paper is, indeed, very rich of discoveries, and I cannot wait to see what you are going to come up with, next.

Benjamin West had also discovered the same thing that you have, and reproduced that moment of historical singularity in two of his masterful paintings: one on the madness of King Lear, Act III, iv, and the other, on the Promethean act of capturing the thunderbolt by Benjamin Franklin. Note the complete similarity of the pose between Lear and Franklin. That is not an accident. As the Chinese say in their use of the double meaning of the term "crisis," – *wei-ji* – the event of an axiomatic change represents both a tragedy and a great opportunity!



Benjamin West, *King Lear. Act III, Scene IV.*



Benjamin West, *Benjamin Franklin.*

To me, it is clear that West treated his portrait of Benjamin Franklin as the resolution of the tragic crisis of King Lear: "Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here." [Tearing off his clothes] (*King Lear*, III, iv, 111.) Lear's clenched fist expresses the fear of change required by his leadership, while Franklin's clenched fist expresses the calm joy of discovering the Promethean principle to be applied to the American Revolution. Same sort of crisis in leadership, different outcomes.

You are right, the change in the treatment of the last three Shakespeare plays is not "an accident." It is an axiomatic change, a register shift of that sort. That is clear. In other words, the tragic disaster of *King Lear* and the playful *Cymbelline*, *Winter's Tale*, and the *Tempest*, reflect two completely different worlds. However, what specific event caused that change for Shakespeare? I don't see what the historical specificity of the axiomatic change was for Shakespeare, nor do I see the specific Shakespeare paradox that had to be resolved. Am I missing something here? Please light up my lantern on this, when we meet, next time.

Let me formulate my question differently. What is clear to me is that the last three plays have resolved the crisis that the previous tragedies had not. But, where? Where does that register shift appear in the three last plays of Shakespeare? The way I see it, with the artistic composition of West, is that the tragic disaster was to Lear as the sublime opportunity was to Franklin, because of their different approach to love of mankind. So, where is the sublime opportunity of Shakespeare?

Until we meet again, may the winds always be in your back. If not, turn around, or just refrain from pissing.

Your friend,

Pierre