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Staging the Fool and the "Stage of Fools": *King Lear* by Shakespeare and Kozintsev

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Ⅰ. Introduction

"When we are born, we cry that we are come to this great stage of fools" (Shakespeare, "King Lear" 4.6.181–82). So says Lear, no longer "King" Lear but a foolish old man, as he arrives at Dover Beach and meets Gloucester, the ex-earl who is now a blind wanderer. Having long denounced the imperial "we," Lear at Dover Beach implies that not only he, but all humans, are actors that perform their lives in the theatrical world; in such suffering all humans, regardless of titles, are equal. The greater tragedy comes when Lear fails to further elaborate his realization in words as his attention is diverted by the approaching horsemen. Earlier in the play, Cordelia has already demonstrated that truths, however important they may be, cannot always be articulated, which is why she chooses to remain silent at her father's demand to speak of her daughterly love. The one that gets closest to articulating this truth is the Fool, whose duty to uphold a theatrical face in front of his patrons ironically gives him the most profound insight on the theatricality of human life. The Fool's hints and riddles guide the old king towards his realization that titles and estates are not the essence of human, but mere roles that one play on the "great stage of fools."

The Fool's already significant role in exploring the theme of truth and human existence in *King Lear* is amplified in Grigori Kozintsev's 1971 film rendition of the Shakespearean play. Given that film is a medium communicating primarily through visuals, the startling, bleak images of peasants and warfare in Kozintsev's *King Lear* would rightly lead critics to consider the culture- and ideology-specific aspects of the film. According to Maurice Hindle, "[Kozintsev's] concern was to convey the essential meanings of the play both in the context of his perception of Russian social struggles and in an articulation which owed much to a distinctly 'Russian' cultural and artistic tradition" (40).

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Similarly, Sof'ia Nel points out that the task of the Soviet theatre is to "reveal the social and philosophical meanings of Shakespeare's drama in the light of the socialist consciousness" (qtd. in Gillespie 70). Combined with such social awareness of the director, the Fool becomes the representative of the oppressed people, and possessor of "the bitter wisdom of the destitute people" (85). This paper attempts to modify such stance by arguing that the amplified presence of the Fool in Kozintsev's film serves as the point of connection between the Russian director's film and the English playwright's drama, and conveys the universally relevant message that the play makes and the film continues. The Fool's role in both Shakespeare's and Kozintsev's *King Lear* is to demonstrate the theatricality of human existence; the focus on such universal theme adds greater significance to the director's perception of his own historical circumstance. The setting of the film is combined with the expanded presence of the Fool, and together it highlights the gravity and timeless significance of Lear's realization about truth and human life.

Ⅱ. *Theatrum Mundi*: Erasmus and Shakespeare

Most, if not all, of Shakespeare's plays explore how human life in the world is parallel to the presence of actors on stage. *Theatrum mundi*, or the idea of the world as God's theater, was particularly relevant for the playwrights that argued that the "feigning" happening onstage "was analogous to the feigning inherent in ordinary life, and that it was also a highly significant feigning that could reveal truth and thus teach men in the 'theater of the world' of their own nature" (Hawkins 175). The observation of the topic is mostly done by the fools of the play. The tradition of using fools as the voice of truth and wisdom starts from Desiderius Erasmus, in whose *The Praise of Folly* Dame Folly makes scathing arguments about the utter foolishness of the supposedly wise and noble people. In Dame Folly's opinion, the fools are honest whereas the wise ones are not: "[f]or whatever a fool has in his heart, he both shows it in his looks and expresses it in his discourse; while the wise men's are those two tongues which the same Euripides mentions, whereof the one speaks truth, the other what they judge most seasonable for the occasion" (Erasmus 48). Dame Folly's encomium is "often ironic and in places straightforwardly and severely critical of the self-deceptions and harmful stupidities of this life" (Olin 578–79). Erasmus uses complex irony with his speaker Dame Folly: "her pervasive

irony allows an almost infinite range of tones and attitudes: from gentle, loving mockery of normal human stupidity to powerful condemnation of intellectual pride and institutionalized violence. This complex use of irony is at once lighthearted and deadly serious; doubleness, ambiguity, and paradoxicality inform Folly's *encomium*" (Gross xiii). The supposedly ridiculous and trivial character "Folly" sends sharp remarks about the folly of the supposedly serious people. Through Dame Folly's voice, Erasmus makes a meaningful remark on the human life:

> And what is this life but a kind of comedy, wherein men walk up and down in one another's disguises and act their respective parts, til the property-man brings them back to the attiring house. And yet he often orders a different dress, and makes him that came but just now off in the robes of a king put on the rags of a beggar. Thus are all things represented by counterfeit, and yet without this there was no living. (37)

Dame Folly voices the theatricality highlighted in Shakespeare's plays, such as the notion of the world as a stage, and identities a disguise and act that can always be donned or shunned. Concerning Erasmus's goal in *The Praise of Folly*, Melinda A. Cro states: "Using the metaphor of the theatrum mundi, Erasmus encourages the reader to consider the world and their place therein from an observer's point of view in order to critically examine their existence" (15). Such ability to examine the state of human existence comes from the distance one maintains with others, and the awareness of oneself as a role-player. As Dame Folly proudly states in the beginning, she does not have the guile of the courtiers:

> I am no counterfeit, nor do I carry one thing in my looks and another in my breast. No, I am in every respect so like myself that neither can they dissemble me who arrogate to themselves the appearance and title of wise men and walk like asses in scarlet hoods, though after all their hypocrisy Midas' ears will discover their master. (10)

Being the one without guile of the wise men or courtiers, Folly is *not* one of such hypocritical figures she makes fun of. Such distance allows Folly to become the objective outside observer of human life.

In Shakespeare's works, the wise fool serves as disciples of Folly that can

critically observe the world and its people. The wise fool of Shakespeare usually serves as an uncomfortable comic relief, funny and teasing but at the same time scathingly frank and wise. For example, Touchstone in *As You Like It* delivers the essence of courtly manners (or lack thereof) in his speech about the cut of a courtier's beard and the degrees of lies (Shakespeare, "As You Like It" 5.4.37–77). Jaques is the melancholy philosopher in the play, but the way he entertains the Duke Senior by his cynical commentaries reminds the readers of the court fool that entertains the lord with his scathing wit. Taking the Duke Senior's comment on "[t]his wide and universal theatre" as a cue, Jaques starts off a long speech that observes the theatricality of human existence:

> Jaques: All the world's a stage,
> And all the men and women merely players:
> They have their exits and their entrances;
> And one man in his time plays many parts,
> His acts being seven ages … (2.7.142–46)

Jaques' speech gives what can seem a cynical, melancholy viewpoint of the essence of life; as Alan Taylor Bradford argues, Jaques' "Saturnine" melancholy "reinforce[s] the point of Jaques' speech: that human life is without meaning, purpose, or value" (175). However, Jaques' viewpoint is expressed within the idealized, pastoral setting of the Arden Forest; as Duke Senior points out, outside the happy community, there are parts of the stage that "presents more woeful pageants than the scene/ Wherein [they] play in" (2.7.140–41).

Ⅲ. The King and the Fool in Shakespeare's *King Lear*

In the world of Shakespeare, Britain in *King Lear* would be such a corner of the world-stage in which one of the most woeful pageants in Shakespearan canon takes place. In *King Lear*, the image of the human existence as actors on stage takes a much gloomier tone, even more so than Jaques' melancholy but nevertheless entertaining oration in the pastoral setting of the Arden Forest. The characters in *King Lear* are forced to experience the theatricality of life by outside circumstances. Without the benefit of the theoretical lesson provided by Jaques, Edgar and Kent must throw away their former identities and assume new ones simply to escape death. In order to escape his father's wrath and his

brother's scheme, Edgar must play the Bedlam Tom; forced into blindness and exile, Gloucester must play the helpless suicidal man; banished by the king yet keen to serve, Kent must play the knave. Cordelia remains faithful to her true self, but is banished by her own father from performing her role as daughter. Most importantly, Lear gradually takes up the "old and foolish" role that is far from the Lear he considered himself to be. Throughout the play, the Fool is the only one that does not change who he is, either by force or by need: this integrity makes him aware of the fact that he and others are acting, not living, their fragile identities. The Fool emphasizes to other characters that they are merely playing their roles by throwing riddles that show his awareness of the theatricality of human existence, the piece of truth that Lear realizes but fails to elaborate at the end of the play.

The play shows Lear's growing awareness of the theatricality of his surroundings, the court and the world. In the beginning, Lear is situated in the middle of a court in which performance of authority, power, and affection takes place. Cordelia is the only one that realizes the vain theatricality prominent in Lear's court. Hearing her sisters speak of their undying love for Lear, Cordelia ponders on what she should say. Although formal speech may have worked to express true feelings, Cordelia's sisters "have gone beyond forms with their extravagant speeches.… Cordelia is reduced to silence because her sisters' speeches, which Lear wrongfully praised, make the forms seem empty and insincere" (Stuart 171). She knows that the extremity of her sisters' words is mere "glib and oily art" (Shakespeare, "King Lear" 1.1.229); hence she concludes, "love and be silent" (1.1.53).

> Cordelia: Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
> My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
> According to my bond, no more no less.
> Lear: How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little,
> Lest you may mar your fortunes. (Shakespeare, "King Lear" 1.1.83–87)

Unlike his wise daughter, Lear does not see through the theatricality that adorns the two elder daughters' speech. Moreover, Lear considers theatricality as an important trait in defining one's fortune, and that plain words of truth must be "mended" as if they are not good enough. At this point, he does not know that genuine truths cannot always be verbalized in eloquent speeches. Having

failed to play the role of the loving daughter, Cordelia is banished without dowry to the King of France. Cordelia, knowing that her sisters' words did not articulate the truth, could only express her sentiment in straightforward, blunt words; this knowledge of the truth brews the tragedy that is to occur throughout the play.

Similar to Cordelia, the Fool realizes the gap between what is and what appears to be and hints at his knowledge through riddles and jokes. As Lear removes himself from the court and visits his two daughters, Lear realizes that his status as a king was removed from his person. While Lear tries to process this gap between appearance and truth, the over-elaborate proclamation of love from his daughters and their actual feelings towards their father, the Fool constantly reminds Lear of his fragile role as father and king. From the beginning of his appearance, the Fool is well aware of the theatrical aspect of everyone's lives; he reveals this by emphasizing that the identities that Lear and others possessed were based not on his person but the props and costumes he wore. So the Fool reminds Lear of his foolishness when he dismantled the props that constituted his kingship: "When thou clovest thy crowns i'th'middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt: thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away" (1.4.116–18). As Lear realizes that he is no longer respected as a king, the Fool reminds him that the "Lear" he took for granted to be a king is no more.

> Lear: Does any here know me? This is not Lear.
> Does Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?
> Either his notion weakens, his discerning
> Are lethargied—Ha! Waking? 'Tis not so?
> Who is it that can tell me who I am?
> Fool: Lear's shadow. (1.4.174–79)

In riddles that tell weighty truths, the Fool emphasizes that "such a king … *play*bo-peep/ And go the fool among" (1.4.129–30, emphasis mine). Just like Dame Folly who does not "carry one thing in my looks and another in my breast," Lear's Fool, who would "fain learn to lie" (1.4.131) but never does, is ever straightforward in his messages, and consistent. Working as a constant reminder that Lear's kingly identity depends on outwardly things—the "glib and oily art" of castles, crowns, appearance—the Fool tells Lear and the audience about how life and human existence are like.

It is not until Lear is exiled into the wilderness and reaches Dover when he realizes the theatricality of human existence. The point that Dame Folly made about life becomes clear for Lear, albeit in a more gloomy way. Life is a comedy, or in Lear's understanding, a stage of fools on which people are tortured to play. As Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen point out in their introduction, "In the great theater of the world, with the gods as audience, we are the fools on stage. Under the aspect of Folly, we see that a king is no different from any other man. The trappings of monarchy are but a costume: this is both Folly's and Lear's discovery" (Bate and Rasmussen 2006). Having reached Dover, Lear reveals to the blind Gloucester and the audience his realization:

> When we are born, we cry that we are come
> To this great stage of fools: this a good block;
> It were a delicate stratagem, to shoe
> A troop of horse with felt: I'll put 't in proof;
> And when I have stol'n upon these sons-in-law,
> Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill! (Shakespeare, "King Lear" 4.5.181–86)

This speech is equivalent to the speech of Jaques in *As You Like It*, but not as elaborated and complete. Jaques points out how human existence is similar to that of the characters on a stage: temporal, multi-faceted, and no greater than a role in a play. This scene is the key moment in *King Lear*—more so than Lear's wandering in the wilderness—because it defines the true nature of human existence in the play using the image of theatricality that the Fool has consistently hinted in riddles. Concerning Lear's transformation, Herbert R. Cousen argues that "Lear learns the Fool's lesson, of course, and ultimately descends to madness—a variation on the epic journey to the underworld. No compensatory voice can reach Lear then, and so the Fool disappears" (119). However, the Fool's disappearance only indicates Lear's completed awareness of himself as a performer in the world-stage; while the Fool is there to guide Lear, he can safely disappear from the stage because Lear has successfully inherited the role of the wise fool.

Despite Lear's realization after his sufferings, the readers and audiences are given only a hint of Lear's newly gained wisdom. The audience is left in a status similar to the blind Gloucester; they have heard the beginning of Lear's realization of human existence, but not wholly. Gloucester is not prepared to hear the sermon of Lear: note how he laments "Alack, alack the day!" when

Lear starts his sermon on human existence: "Thou know'st, the first time we smell the air, we wawl and cry. I will preach to thee: mark" (Shakespeare, "King Lear" 4.5.178–79). Nor is Lear prepared to make a full sermon on the bane of the existence of humans. He starts off in a way similar to Jaques, but his attention soon drifts away to a rock nearby, then the riding cavalry that approaches him. The sermon does not resume, and the audience are left with a similar desperation they would have felt when Cordelia remained silent in front of her father in Act 1. Scene 1. The important truth is not verbalized for everyone's satisfaction, and the audience must interpret the single sentence in their own ways.

Ⅳ. Filming the "Stage of Fools": Kozintsev's *King Lear* (1971)

In Grigori Kozintsev's *King Lear*, Lear's sermon about the stage of fools is visualized through the Fool, who is present in the film from the beginning to the end. The Fool in Kozintsev's film contributes greatly to the visuals and sounds of the film, and thus becomes a key element in the movie that translates the key theme of the original play. In Kozintsev's film, the Fool is present from the beginning and the end, even after Lear's death; in addition to his physical presence, the music he plays sets the overall tune and atmosphere of the film. Sean McEvoy points out the different tools that a film must employ in adapting Shakespeare's play to the screen, and highlights the importance of the visual images: "Visual images can efficiently show those elements of the narrative which need to be told on stage. By all these means, verbally dense poetic theatre can be successfully transformed into film which is true to the original script…." (109). The Fool's presence from the beginning to the end of Kozintsev's adaptation serves as that powerful visual image, which retains the play's central theme while adapting the contents to what seems to be a vastly different landscape. The Fool appears with Lear in the first scene inside the court; the Fool remains onstage to the very end of the film instead of disappearing quietly like it was in the original play. Concerning the importance of the Fool in the film, Mark Sokolyansky remarks that:

> In some sequences the king and the Fool are shown as a syncretic pair. The Fool often produces ironic comments on the king's actions. In Kozintsev's opinion irony gives to the character of Lear the "range of negation" and

> "convincingness" in critical analysis of social links. That is why the Fool, with his sarcastic intonation, is so important. He cannot be separated from Lear and when he disappears his functions are taken over by the king himself. (206)

Thus, the original play needed not to have the Fool acting out the folly of human existence after Lear admits to everyone around him that he is a "foolish old man." However, Kozintsev chooses to keep the Fool from the beginning to the very end of the movie, thereby expanding the character's already significant role and adapting it to the rhetoric of the film. The very presence of the Fool throughout the film serves as a powerful visual and aural reminder of Shakespeare's message about human existence, and continues the universal message conveyed in the original play. Kozintsev does not hide the film's indebtedness to a specific cultural and historical context in its depiction of the poor and lowly; nevertheless, his interpretation of the Fool gives the culture-specific *mise-en-scène* of the film a universal quality.

Throughout the film, the Fool is shown to get closer and closer to Lear physically, as if to show that the king and the fool are all actors on the same stage. As Lear gradually realizes the truth behind his daughters' theatrical speeches, the Fool's role grows in importance. Alexander Leggatt argues that "[w]hen the Fool rides on the outside of Lear's carriage, shouting things his master does not want to hear until the king finally hammers on the wall to silence him, it becomes clear that the Fool is Lear's conscience" (101). Kozintsev comments that he intended the Fool to be the laughed-at spokesperson of truth and the conscience of Lear:

> [T]he most amazing situation then appears: [the Fool] is laughed at not because he is a Fool but because he speaks the truth…. They think that nothing is funnier than the truth. They laugh at truth, kick truth with their spurs for amusement and relegate truth to the doghouse in order to make it a laughing stock. (72)

With the growth of the Fool's importance, his physical distance to Lear gets reduced. At the king's first parade to Goneril's castle, the Fool was tied in collars and dragged amongst the horses, hawks and dogs that accompanied Lear and his hundred knights. When Lear moves from Goneril's to Regan's, the Fool rides at the back of Lear's carriage and speaks directly to him before

he is beaten and silenced. In the wilderness, the Fool is right next to Lear, crying to him to find a shelter. From then on, it becomes clear that the Fool is very close to Lear, all the way to Dover and up to the king's funeral march. As such, Kozintsev depicts the importance of the Fool in Lear's lesson on human existence by gradually putting the Fool in Lear's close proximity.

The Fool's appearance at the beginning of the film emphasizes the extreme theatricality of the court. The beginning of the film is full of stiff, overly formulaic language and gestures that are reminiscent of the theater. Concerning this production, Kozintsev comments that "[t]he play begins with the theatrical—fine dress, pretence, props (the map, coats of arms), contrived speeches and assumed poses. The end of the play has stepped into the real world, on to the dirty blood-soaked earth. The wind has long ago torn the theatrical costumes; the rain has washed the make-up from the actors' faces" (63). Lear enters the throne room in front of the princesses and courtiers anxiously waiting for the king's appearance; Lear's face is covered by a carnival mask that the Fool is holding up. After the king expresses "our darker purpose" (Shakespeare, "King Lear" 1.1.35), Goneril expresses her love like a true actress. Her eyes are sincere, and her voice gradually rises dramatically as she runs up to the king and kisses his hand. After Lear banishes Cordelia, he runs up to a high scaffold on top of the castle wall and declares to the commoners kneeling at him that the youngest princess is disowned. As such, the king and the members of his court are filmed to look as if they are putting on a show on stage, with their exaggerated, theatrical poses.

In this stage of artifice concealing truth, the Fool is depicted as the only figure who acknowledges that there are more to people and language than just what can be seen at first glance. As the door opens, viewers of the film see Lear coming in with the Fool behind him, and the king's face is covered with a mask that the Fool holds; the authoritative entrance of the king is undermined by the sound the Fool makes and the funny mask he holds up, as if to signify that Lear's role as a king is just that, a role on a stage. According to Kenneth Rothwell, "the mask … foreshadows the unmasking of the king's pretensions to power and authority, as he progresses in Aristotelian terms from a self-deceived *alazonto* a painfully aware *eiron*" (180). The Fool carries this foreshadowing symbol, signifying his importance in Lear's gradual realization of theatricality. The king and the Fool sit in front of the fire, with their backs turned from the court. The Fool draws Lear's attention away from attending to "our darker purpose" (Shakespeare, "King Lear" 1.1.27) by either covering his eyes or

diverting them. As Gamini Salgado points out, "[w]hen in the first scene an extra pair of hands appears from under Lear's cloak and stretches toward the fire, we sense that the Fool is in some way an aspect of Lear" (qtd. in Leggatt 101). The Fool remains close by Lear, and Lear smiles and plays with the Fool just like any old man playing with a child or a dog. In the first part of the movie the Fool is closely knit with the aged Lear, making it obvious to the viewers that this Lear is indeed very old and perhaps not as solemn and authoritative as one would expect a king to be. The interaction between Lear and the Fool suggests that the king is also a man: he can be regal and authoritative and frail and elderly at the same time. The duality of Lear visualized by the presence of the Fool emphasizes the theatricality that Kozintsev considers as crucial in *King Lear*. The Fool continuously plays up the "foolishness" of the aged king, and leads Lear to succumb to the weary old man when he should be playing up his regal, authoritative status to its utmost. By doing so, the Fool emphasizes the multifaceted role that Lear has in the play, and people have in life.

The most distinctive role that Kozintsev's Fool plays occurs after his mysterious disappearing point in the original play; this change from the original ironically brings the film even closer to Shakespeare's play, as the Fool continues the film's message on the theatricality of human existence. Whereas Shakespeare does not clarify what happened to the Fool when Lear finally reached Dover, Kozintsev makes it obvious that the Fool followed him hence and reached Cordelia's camp as well. As Lear lies asleep by Cordelia and other men, the physician and Cordelia decide to wake the old king; the physician approaches the Fool, telling him thus: "Please you, draw near. Louder the music there!" (*King Lear*). Concerning this scene, Kozintsev remarks as follows:

> … the mournful pipe plays; the exhausted, bloodstained soldiers warm themselves over the fire; the stable boys search for a place to water their horses; a very old man climbs off a wagon and kneels before a young woman; she also kneels and asks for his blessing. There is a gust of wind like the beat of a wing. All one needs to get it out of one's head is that the woman is the Queen of France and the old man the King of Britain; this does not mean anything any more. (64)

After Lear's realization of the initial foolish theatricality of human life, the social roles that he and Cordelia were supposed to play lose meaning. The Fool is present in this moment of reality and presides this transition from

madness to sanity, playing the same music which was played in scenes of Lear's movement from one place to another. What was a bold, authoritative music played by trumpets and accompanied by sounds of horses and men marching is transformed into a tune from a "mournful pipe" by the Fool. In this scene the Fool takes over, the film and the audience, not only through the visual but also the sound; thus, the Fool completes his guidance of Lear from the court to the seashore of Dover, and from the false show of authority to the bare human—and more humane—existence.

In the final scene, the Fool enacts Lear's speech "When we are born, we cry that we are come/ To this great stage of fools" (Shakespeare, "King Lear" 4.5.181–82), albeit in the scene of death instead of birth, and stresses the universal message conveyed by Shakespeare. Concerning the role of the Fool at the final stage of the film, one scholar has commented that the "Fool (now transformed into a Russian village idiot) sits amidst the rubble grieving over the loss of his master and of his own identity" (Rothwell 182). However, the Fool does much more than function specifically as "a Russian village idiot"; the Fool, depicted as a member of a specific cultural/national group, actually functions as a commenter of human condition that is universal and timeless. In the final scene, on his flute, the Fool plays the same tune that was played in the background of the marching scenes throughout the film. The tune was played by trumpets when Lear in his angry fit started off towards Goneril's castle, as well as when Lear marched to Gloucester in search of Regan. Later on, the same tune played by the Fool becomes a mourning song for the funeral march. The Fool is seated on the ground, his body tightly rolled into a ball as if he were a child, crying and sobbing as the dead bodies of Lear and Cordelia are carried away. As the soldiers kick him and pass him by, the Fool clutches his flute and starts to play Lear's marching song. Adding theatricality to the funeral procession with his music, and himself enacting the directions mentioned by Lear earlier on, the Fool puts the "stage of fools" in action. The bitter sadness triggered by Lear's "great stage of fools" speech is re-invoked by the Fool, and the emotional charges that came with the most despairing line of the play is revived. In Kozintsev's film, the visualization adds to the Shakespearean play the pessimistic, tragic air that is not easily lifted from the viewers' minds. In that regard, the Fool transforms the film into a commentary on the tragic nature of human existence.

V. Conclusion

A grim descendent of Erasmus's cynical yet jolly Dame Folly, *King Lear's* Fool plays a significant role in the play by Shakespeare as well as in the film by Kozintsev. As the single character who knows about the theatricality of human life, the Fool guides Lear to the same realization by riddles and scathing remarks. While Lear's realization of the world as "a stage of fools" was not further developed by Shakespeare and left readers and audience at a loss, Kozintsev visualizes the most important line of the play by keeping the Fool to act as the wise fool throughout the film. By giving the Fool a significant role throughout the entire film, Kozintsev's *King Lear* creates a deep sense of pathos appropriate for one of the most intense Shakespearean tragedies.

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Abstract

Human existence as parallel to actors playing their roles on stage is an important theme expressed in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Grigori Kozintsev's film adaptation of the same play. Following the tradition of the truth saying fool as depicted by Erasmus in *Praise of Folly*, the Fool in Shakespeare and Kozintsev plays an important role in highlighting to Lear and the audience that the kingly pomp and authority are mere props in the stage of the world. Kozintsev's staging of the Fool, while deviating the most from the play, serves to convey the message of Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Kozintsev's Fool is visible throughout the film, entering the scene with the king and remaining in the scene even after the king dies. The Fool grows closer to King Lear in proximity as the King is stripped of his authority. Moreover, the Fool controls the tune of the film's last scene as he plays music, and enacts the birth into the stage of fools. Such extended presence of the Fool is used by the director to convey the universal message on the nature of human existence explored in Shakespeare.

Keywords: fool, *King Lear*, Shakespeare, Grigori Kozintsev, *King Lear* (1971)

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