

• Foils in King Lear •

Goneril & Regan

- sisters of Cordelia and wives to Duke of Albany and Cornwall, daughters of King Lear.
- flatter their father with false professions of love to win his praise and earn their sister's rule and a harsh word from Lear.
- Betrayal of Lear (deny shelter from storm; argue the size of their father's train) raises them to power in Britain.
- may be personified as "evil" in their greedy ambition for power and struggle for the love of Edmund — one which eventually turns in on itself, destroying both through their jealousy and competitive characters.
- Although two elder daughters of Lear, fed inferior to the virtuous Cordelia who is favored by Lear for her kindness, which they themselves do not possess. Thus, they devise the plan to prey upon their father's sensitive ego and Cordelia's pride but genuine affection for one another by pitting them against one another — gaining the opportunity to gain the throne.
- Machiavellian beliefs — must seize the throne if given the chance.
- prey upon Lear's blindness to overtake power

Edmund

- "Bastard", illegitimate son of the Duke of Gloucester younger brother to Edgar.
- Feels as if he must compete for his father's affections with Edgar and thus must turn to flattery and eventually deceit for his feeling of neglect.
- A schemer and Machiavellian character comparable to the manipulative schemers Regan and Goneril, Edmund is willing to do anything to achieve his goals to elevate his status from that of "illegitimate" and second to his loved brother who will inherit all titles and lands upon the death of his father, Gloucester. Thus Edmund also devises a plan incriminating his brother of disloyalty, creating a letter supposedly written by Edgar planning the death of Gloucester, causing the self-exile of Edgar who flees for safety.
- although partial to astrology in his ramblings, Edmund depends not on divine aid but his own initiative.
- causes (indirectly) the blinding of Gloucester