

MORE ADO ABOUT “NOTHING” IN *KING LEAR*

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ABSTRACT:

The present paper explores the philosophical and structural importance of “nothing” in *King Lear*. Stripped of crown, country, kin and majesty, and eventually deprived of human aspect and reason, Lear learns to “make use of nothing.” Lear’s *kenosis* leads to *anagnorisis*, namely to the acceptance of his folly, and to the discovery that man is “no more than this.” The numerous occurrences of “nothing” are analysed from several perspectives, including textual criticism. After the examination of First Quarto (Q1) and First Folio (F1) variants in relevant passages, the author suggests that F1 is not Shakespeare’s revision of Q1; indeed, both versions present corrupt readings of the original.

KEYWORDS: nothing; *kenosis*; variants; Quarto; Folio; Shakespeare; *King Lear*.