I have seen better faces in my time
Than stands on any shoulder that I see
Before me at this instant; (2.2.94–5)

though when characterized by Cornwall as a compulsive plain-speaker, or railer, he easily shifts his style. Suddenly he says,

Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,
Under th'allowance of your great aspect,
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire
On flick'ring Phoebus' front ..., (2.2.106–9)

to Cornwall's astonishment, going 'out of [his] dialect.'

For the implications of this rhetorial flexibility, among other things, Kent is stocked. His Senecan rhetoric is of an order more complicated than simply the selection of style to match conditions. His language works often doubly, not only because he is, after all, in disguise for the better part of the play, but also because he speaks to the common-sense humanity of his auditors, within and without the play.[19] His shifting styles draw attention to the hypocrisies he perceives in those around him; his own stoicism, in his person as Kent and his person as Caius, comes through in his stern acceptance of his duty and its responsibilities. He speaks roughly to his master in the first scene and stoically about being stocked; his last speech, with its strange ambiguities, brings his stoical role to its proper close.

Stocked, Kent says, 'A good man's fortune may grow out at heels' (2.2.157). The feet-heels-soles-kibes images cluster to conjoin with the stocks, perhaps to echo Job 13:27: 'Thou puttest my fete also in the stockes, and lokest narrowly unto all my paths, and makest the printe thereof in the heeles of my fete.' The stoicism of Job has often been remarked, and Job's patience has been coupled with Lear's endurance. The *Lear* echoes pick up the biblical literature of endurance to marry it to the Senecan rhetoric of emotional truth. Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, the Psalms, Ecclesiasticus, the Book of Wisdom, all have their echoes in the play, deepening the pagan moral precepts by references to the extraordinary biblical record of experience in pain sturdily borne. Very early the echoes from Job begin, as Lear says to Cordelia:

Better thou
Hadst not been born than not t' have pleased me better. (1.1.233–4)

Job 3:3 runs: 'Let the daye perish, wherein I was borne, and the night when it was said, There is a manchilde conceived.' The man-worm comparison, so powerful in Job, occurs in *Lear* as well: much later, when Gloucester reiterates his belief in a fatality he is at last learning to endure, he likens the figure of his disguised son to a worm:

I' th' last night's storm I such a fellow saw,
Which made me think a man a worm. (4.1.32–3)

So spoke Bildad the Shuhite (Job 25:6): 'Howe muche more man, a worme, even the sonne of man, which is but a worme?' And so spoke Job himself: 'I shal say to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worme, Thou art my mother and my sister' (Job 17:14). Most beautifully, and most appropriately to Edgar's condition, so also the Psalmist in the Prayer Book version: 'But as for me, I am a worme, and no man: a very scorne of men, and the outcast of the people' (Ps. 22:6).

Lear's great speech on clothing (3.4.103–12) begins with the worm, this time the silkworm from which 'gorgeous' ladies dress themselves, and echoes the scriptural phrase used in many contexts throughout the Bible: 'What is man, that thou shuldest be mindeful of him! Or the sonne of man that thou wuldest consider him!' (Heb. 2:6). Lear's 'Is man no more than this? Consider him well' is a purely earthbound question: there is no reference here to deity, not even to 'th' Gods' endorsed by Gloucester's simplistic fatalism. Lear considers the nature of man abstracted, a naked and unarmed man powerless against the forces arrayed (to his astonishment) against him, forces natural, political, and personal: so too Job and the Psalmist considered man, out of the depths of their own misery and the disgrace and dejection of Israel (Job 7:17; Ps. 8:4). Finally, it is 'the thing itself,' man alone and stripped, that must be existentially examined, man without 'lendings,' without conventional social and moral protections and disguises.[20] Comparing the considerations of naked man made by Lear to those made by Job and the Psalmist, however, we can see the contrast plainly – for Lear, there were no comforts of suprarational faith in divinity on which Job and the Psalmist could rely.[21]

From Job comes the suggestion that the storm scene in *Lear* owes something to scriptural hyperbole. Certainly in the play, 'th' Gods' keep a dreadful pudder o'er men's heads: natural catastrophe is reckoned as quite beyond human control, and the puniness of man's strength set against tempests can be measured in Lear himself, trying to outshout the storm. The scene is, as Mack has suggested,[22] an extraordinarily daring antipastoral – nature reflects man's inward state, as it habitually does in pastoral settings, but the state it reflects is not peaceful, creatural, contented, but violent, broken, and break-

ing. This storm overmasters the singular strengths of particular men; through its power over great and weak, great men discover their weakness. It is apocalyptic indeed: this storm is so great that indeed 'the Kings of the earth, and the great men, and the riche men, and the chief captaines, and the mightie men, and everie bondman, and everie fre man, hid themselves in dennes, and among the rockes of the mountaines' (Rev. 6:15 and cf. Luke 21:25–26). With this storm, as in the great tempest of the Apocalypse, comes the judgment too, invoked by Lear and later acted out in the arraignment scene. In that spiritual judgment in which he and his curious benchfellows take part, judgment is forced on the king and his ministers, a final moral statement in which they too have their share of the sentence they give.[23]

The storm indicates the correspondence between a disturbed natural world and a disturbed social world – the night is mad, as Lear is mad. Human will is 'like' that storm, but cannot stand against the storm's force. With his customary mastery of the ambiguities of human experience, Shakespeare works through the storm scene to present the simultaneous weakness of unaccommodated man and his indomitable self-assertion against impossible odds. Further, in spite of the sharp and severe reduction of man to himself alone, unaccommodated for anything, it is from the storm that Lear emerges at last to some understanding of himself and of the society of which he should have been head. As in the Book of Job, where the great storm was the medium of God's pedagogy as well as the symbol of His incomprehensible power, the storm in *Lear* teaches the protagonist what it is to be human. Lear's storm is so wild that

> the cub-drawn bear would couch,
> The lion and the belly-pinched wolf
> Keep their fur dry, (3.1.12–14)

just as, in Job's storm, 'the beasts go into the denne, and remaine in their places' (Job 37:8). Job and his God speak in dialogue, God rebuking his most notable servant for *hubris*:

> Canst thou lift up thy voyce to the cloudes, that the abundance of water may cover thee?
>
> Canst thou send the lightnings that they may walke, and say unto thee, Loe, here we are?
>
> Who can nomber cloudes by wisdome? or who can cause to cease the bottels of heaven,
>
> When the earth groweth into hardnes, and the clottes are fast together? (Job 38: 34–5, 37–8)

Almost as if in answer to those questions, Lear attempts exactly this prideful, impossible task:

> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
> You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world! (3.2.1–7)

His bravado is grand, as he seems to direct and lead the storm that helps drive him beyond himself, to greater pain and greater understanding; although the storm seems somehow to have instilled in him an awareness of other people and of social bond, at the very moment in which he challenges the wild weather Lear is totally isolated. He is 'comrade with the wolf and owl' (2.4.212) indeed – as Job was 'brother to dragons, and a companion to owls' (Job 30:29, Authorized Version; Geneva: 'companion to ostriches'). What Job's disposition was like before his afflictions took him, we are not told; but Lear had evidently shown some signs of irascibility before the play began. So much the more remarkable, then, that Lear acquires a kind of patience: to such a man, as he, accustomed to authority and wilful in its exercise, patience is the most difficult of virtues. 'I can be patient,' he says (2.4.232). 'You Heavens, give me that patience, patience I need' (2.4.273). Like Kent and Gloucester, he must tame his fierce spirit to endurance, even in the 'open night' 'too rough / For nature to endure' (3.4.2–3). He can say, in the end, to the storm, 'Pour on; I will endure' (3.4.18). The lessons of stoicism fuse with the scriptural lesson of Job to deepen the accomplishment of the old madman on the heath.

The apocalyptic chiaroscuro of thunder and lightning in the storm scene is the most dramatic of the play's many alternations between light and dark, between sight and blindness. The contrast of sight and blindness runs from the factual brutality of Gloucester's blinding[24] to the figurative language expressing Lear's spiritual darkness, raising echoes from scriptural phrasing, too, where the doctrines of insight are classically expressed in the language of vision. Gloucester's 'I stumbled when I saw' recalls 'The seeing see not,' of Matthew 13:13, as well as the verse from Isaiah (59:10):

> We grope for the wall like the blinde, and we grope as if one without eyes: we stomble at noone day as in the twilight: we are in solitaire places, as dead men.