The passage from Job is nearer yet – 'They mete with darknes in the day time, and grope at noone day, as in the night' (5:14); it contains both the sight-blindness theme and the topsy-turvy scheme of Lear's last exchange with his Fool:

LEAR We'll go to supper i' th' morning.
FOOL And I'll go to bed at noon. (3.6.86–8)

By the time this exchange takes place, Lear is evidently mad, and the Fool about to disappear from the play. Two mad ones, then, may be expected to keep a disorderly daily schedule – but withal, there may also be a reference to Ecclesiastes 10:16 – 'Woe to thee, O land, when thy King is a childe, and thy princes eat in the morning.' Certainly during the struggle with Goneril, the Fool reminds Lear of his second childhood; and the king then shows the greed and impatience of a very small child. But these disorders are trivial compared to the deeper disorder, in Lear's personality and in the kingdom; the king's folly early in the play is very different from his madness later. The quality of the Fool's fooling changes too. Early on, he attempts to bring Lear face to face with his real plight, and presses the old man cruelly by reminding him of his mistakes in judgment. Goneril and Regan complain of their father as if he were merely the naughty child the Fool calls him – the proper text for this is Ecclesiastes 4:13, 'Better is a poore and wise childe, then an old and foolish King, which wil no more be admonished.' Throughout Proverbs, 'fools' and 'foolishness' are, I think, usually treated in their simplest meaning of 'unwisdom'; the book chastises that kind of folly. But it also advocates folly as a therapeutic device: one text for the Fool's insistent harping on Lear's folly is Proverbs 26:5: 'Answere a foole according to his foolishnes, least he be wise in his owne conceite.' The more irrationally the king behaves, the more realistic seems the Fool's treatment of him – 'Seest thou a man wise in his owne conceite? more hope is of a foole then of him' (Prov. 26:12). In most of Proverbs, folly is treated satirically and morally, as one cause of the world's disorder. In such a world, values come loose from their customary moorings, riding so askew in the world that at times even the possibility of fixed value seems meaningless. We see before us Gloucester's time-serving, his late decision to act for the king; we see Lear's irresponsibility about privilege and, more important, about love; we see Goneril's pursuit of lust and power, and Regan's sly ways with her father and everyone else. Edmund dissimulates almost unconcealed – certainly values must have collapsed in a society in which these great people do such things. From Gloucester's 'late eclipses' speech we may read the playwright's deliberate choice of a pre-Christian setting. The churchgoer, however, could hardly fail to catch the echo of Matthew 10:21:

> And the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the sonne, and the children shall rise against their parents, and shall cause them to die. (Cf. Luke 21:16)

Their life crises do not cause the evil ones to question themselves or their actions, but the 'good' members of society are forced back upon the most basic question in human ethics: 'Is man no more than this? Consider him well.' The moral egalitarianism at which Lear arrives reduces all men to 'Poor naked wretches,' all of them reduced ultimately to 'the thing itself.' Two biblical echoes sound here, one of Job, also reduced to the bottom limit of humanity, the other of the Prodigal Son,[25] like Edgar sunk to the bottom of society, and like Lear, fain

> To hovel [him] with swine and rogues forlorn,
> In short and musty straw ... (4.7.39–40)

But like Job and the Prodigal Son, the prodigal father Lear finds his way back to some realization of worth and truth; Edgar too, comes out of his disguise to lead *his* prodigal father back to a peculiar but poignant happiness.

What the play seems to assert is that all men – all of them, poor naked wretches – may expect misfortune as their portion. In the face of disaster, deserved or undeserved, expected or unexpected, men can only endure. When his stoical suicide-attempt fails by Edgar's kindness, Gloucester adopts his son's stoicism, determining to endure whatever his life will bring him:

> henceforth I'll bear
> Affliction till it do cry out itself
> 'Enough, enough,' and die. (4.6.75–7)

Having realized the almost unendurable truth that

> the worst is not
> So long as we can say 'This is the worst,' (4.1.27–8)

Edgar comes through to 'Bear free and patient thoughts,' until he can say, finally, to his father (and mean it), 'Ripeness is all.'[26] Paraphrasing the great passage in Wisdom 7,

> And when I was borne, I received the commune aire, and fel upon the earth, which is like nature, crying and weping at the first as all other doe.

For there is no King that had anie other beginning of birth.
All men then have one entrance unto life, and a like going out,
(Wisdom 7: 3, 5–6)

the mad Lear tells the blinded Gloucester the extent of his new learning:

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:
Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air
We wawl and cry ...
When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools. (4.6.180–2, 184–5)

Connected with this passage too, is Ecclesiastes 5:14: 'As he came forthe of his mothers belly, he shal returne naked to go as he came, and shal beare away nothing of his labour, *which he hathe caused to passe by his hand*' (my italics).

In the very ecstasy of madness, Lear found some reason, both to accept his plight and his responsibility for that plight, and to accept the harsh justice of men's lives. Edgar's speech to his father makes Lear's wisdom manageable in aphorism, and carries some of the weight of the 39th Psalm, the one used in the burial service: 'O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence, and be no more seen.' Quite simply, Edgar states the stoical formulation to which Lear had come independently:

Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither:
Ripeness is all. (5.2.9–11)

All men must ultimately go to their long home, and cannot alter the date of their going thither. Gloucester lives to die upon the revelation of reconciliation, while Lear, secured by his madness, lives to experience Edgar's terrifying truth, that there is always something worse than what at any given moment seems 'the worst.' He lives, then, to die upon the half-realized recognition that his selfless daughter has been gratuitously slain. Birth and death coincide: as Gloucester was careless in begetting Edmund, Edmund was careless in Cordelia's dispatching. 'Coming hither' is always involved in 'going hence.' As we see them in this play, goings hence are as ambiguous, as undignified, as unfair, as chancy as it is possible for them to be.

For nether doeth man knowe his time, but as the fishes, which are taken in an evil net, and as the birdes that are caught in the snare: so are the children of men snared in the evil time when it falleth upon them suddenly. (Eccles. 9:12)

Those who try to die in their own time – Lear and Gloucester – are taken suddenly, at crucial moments between joy and grief; those who take others' lives – Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Edmund – are caught in their own snares. The old die with the dignity of having borne most; such a death is, in the play's system of rewards, an honourable one. Their deaths become them, because they have learnt such hard endurance in their lives.

Throughout this play, the notion of a transcendent deity is not invoked. There is none of the overt reference, even by conventional accident, to God and His Son, such as is found in *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*. When 'the gods' are invoked, they are questioned and even jeered at; nor are stars admitted as a supernatural force. Again and again, the audience is brought to realize the extremity of 'the thing itself,' or, to realize that man is totally unaccommodated, can count on nothing, has no governance over his own fate. All he can do is be patient, endure, try to ripen: the most he can do for others is to realize that in their plight his own is involved. 'Ripeness' is self-realization, realization of responsibility for one's self and for others – the realization as well that such realization carries absolutely no guarantee of happiness. As Kent's life shows, or Cordelia's, the proper exercise of responsibility is just that – and no more than that. In this play, all that is certain is that irresponsibility breeds destruction. As Edgar says to Edmund, in the tones of Deuteronomy, Wisdom 11:13, and Wisdom 12:23, of their father's responsibility in his, and their, fate,

The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to plague us;
The dark and vicious place where thee he got
Cost him his eyes. (5.3.170–3)[27]

But, we note, 'The dark and vicious place' was not the direct cause of disaster to Gloucester and his family alone; it could also be said to have cost Cordelia *her* life – and she was entirely unconnected with Gloucester's pleasant vices. Edgar speaks in the *sententiae* of justice with an echo, perhaps, of Matthew 5:28–29 and 6:23, and though we can say, with him, that Gloucester's fate is related to his vice, we cannot apply such generalization absolutely, either to Gloucester or to the other characters woven with Gloucester into the web of the play's disasters. Ruin overtakes the good as inexorably as it does the wicked: Cordelia's tongue-tied truthfulness and Kent's sturdy honesty are by no stretch of the imagination just causes for their suffering. Indeed, Cordelia is most nearly the morality figure in the play,[28] as she literally turns into the charity of which she speaks:

No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love ... (4.4.27–8)

Her godliness was unmistakably proclaimed a line or so earlier:

O dear father!
It is thy business that I go about ... (4.4.23–4)

But all this virtue, all this courage, generosity, innocence, and charity, cannot save Cordelia: she is involved, like all the rest, in the inexplicable vicissitudes of human life and lot, insisted on throughout the length of the play. For that is the point of *King Lear*, surely: that, as the Psalmist proclaims, man is inexorably and inextricably bound in with other men, brought to trial whether or not he deserves it. Man has no choice but to endure his life with such strengths as he can muster, and in his endurance lies his value as a man. Each man makes his choice between moral dignity and moral dishonour: those who choose dignity (Kent, the Fool, Cordelia, Cornwall's servant, Albany, Edgar) relinquish safety and advantage to become more admirable than those who seek their own without regard to others' needs. And that is all one can say. The rewards of the good are simply their comfortless virtues.

Because in its mode life itself is depicted as so inexplicable, so unrelated to distributive or retributive justice, paradoxy is singularly appropriate to this play. Life is neither simple nor single; a man cannot live, no matter how he may try, to himself alone. He is bound to others whom he may love or hate, like or dislike, regard or disregard, by all sorts of recognized or unrecognized ties and bonds. In this play, there are many other bonds besides the feudal ties and ties of social hierarchy celebrated by Richard Hooker and others. When these other ties break, as even Gloucester notes, men come to learn how profoundly important conventional connections are in human society and survival, even though the ameliorations of such connections may be temporarily lost. Service turned false is utterly destructive; family connections make it all too easy to cause personal ruin to others. In this play, individuals bear, not just their own pain, but the burden of others' misdeeds and pains as well. Punishments may be undue and unreasonable; death may be unfair; life may be disproportionately cruel, but *King Lear* does not preach the vulgar lesson of moral absurdity. For everything that happens, there is some cause, that cause fundamental to the personality and the fate of the sufferer.

Human personality and moral life are rarely simple. Moral situations are qualified because of their complexity; even in literature they resist interpretation. It is easy to say that moral measurements cannot be taken in a world upside-down or askew – but since the world is always that, to say such a thing denies the possibility of moral judgment altogether. Shakespeare was, evidently, not one to entertain that view, easy though it is; there are always difficult, as well as extremely simple, moral lessons to be read from his plays. From *King Lear* we learn that to be true to one's self can be as dangerous as to be untrue: nonetheless, that to be untrue is certainly fatal. From *King Lear* we learn that men must do what little they can in a world in which human nature – one's own character, other people's characters – is as variable and as inexplicable as natural vicissitude. In the uncertain world into which he must come, no rules warrant a man's security, though some guidelines for behaviour may be hazarded. In the scene on the heath, ambiguities give way to direct moral precept. Quoting the devil quoting Scripture, Edgar-Tom paraphrases the moral commandments upon which all Christians are raised from childhood:

Take heed o' the foul fiend. Obey thy parents; keep thy word's justice; swear not; commit not with man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud array. (3.4.80–3)

The last injunction may be a Pauline paraphrase, and certainly relates to the clothing theme running through the play, but it is irrelevant to the other injunctions Tom utters. Those are, as we see, the second and moral part of the Decalogue, what the Calvinists called 'the second table,' the moral and ethical commandments laid upon scrupulous men. In short, these are the simplest, most basic rules of human conduct offered to western civilization. Shakespeare does not offer us conventional morality as a cure for the trials of experience: we are brought back to accept conventional morality's simplistic rules only after recognizing the inadequacy of their simplicity to the confusions and ambivalences of social life. 'Take heed o' th' foul fiend': to avoid the devil, within or without one's self, common commandments must be accepted, since not to do so is to play into the devil's hands. So the devil, as a mimic madman says, frightens man into good morality – and then, how can such morality be 'good' when it springs from such a source?

Since such morality is limited, it may be said at least that it is appropriate to the limitations of being human. Certainly it is no talisman against the interrelated troubles of human living – all that can be said for it is that it is a great deal better than no morality whatsoever. In the play, adultery is made to seem an extraordinarily dark sin, with consequences far beyond its natural veniality.

Gloucester's is 'an old lecher's heart'; he is a 'walking fire,' in the Fool's unconscious characterization (3.4.115–17); Lear's preoccupation with sexuality emerges in his cursing of his elder daughters and in his concern with the objects of 'justice' in 'The great image of Authority' speech and in the 'every inch a king' speech, where though he releases adulterers from the punishments described in Leviticus, he shows his own horror of the sexual act by using the imagery of hell to describe it. Certainly, in this play sexuality is 'dark,' as in so many of Shakespeare's late plays – 'The dark and vicious place where thee he got'; 'Beneath is all the fiend's: there's hell, there's darkness, / There is the sulphurous pit' (4.6.129–30). Misunderstood sexuality corrupts most of the major personal relationships within the play; Gloucester's blinding is one of the punishments for adultery described in the homilies, and has the literary merit, as punishment, of linking the sexual theme to the blindness theme. Dark calls to dark; deeds done in darkness bring other kinds of darkness in their train. Certainly adultery was one obvious disruption of the correct social organization, but that the consequences of so natural, even so innocent, a sin should be made to reach as far as they do in this play reminds us of the extreme simplicity of human understanding. Adultery particularly stresses how in ordinary life deeds are done, almost unconsciously, which henceforward change and force human relationship.

With all this gloom, the play asserts something else about any man's behaviour, even at its most calculated and rational: that it is mad, that it drives other men mad as well, puts them beside themselves with rage and violence, or beyond themselves to revelations of truth. The paradoxy works classically within this particular cluster of ideas, since the wise fool and the possessed poet, from Socrates on, have been regarded as men particularly privileged in insight. The play, like its protagonist, displays 'Reason in madness' – for all its stress on grotesquerie, violence, and irrationality, the play displays many forms of reason beneath and through its disordered surface. First, as analyses of the play's language show, there is an extraordinary rationality underlying the disorder of the mad speeches of Lear and Edgar. Lear's press-money speech follows a natural set of associations; the organization of 'every inch a king' and 'Reason not the need' follows the most rigid Ciceronian structural, if not syntactical, demands.[29] Second, the accuracy of madmen real and feigned in assessing psychological truth is made clear over and over again. The Fool understands the reality of the Lear family. Lear discovers his own fault and remembers to rethink the 'most small fault' that had seemed to him so ugly in Cordelia. Edgar's naturalistic associative reference to Pillicock and Pillicock hill, evidently called up by Lear's phrase, 'pelican daughters,' reiterates the fundamental sexual problem in his family and, by extension, in the world. Further, the madness of calculation is displayed again and again – the measurements Lear established for 'love,' the economical reordering of Lear's retinue by his daughters, the retributive language used during the blinding of Gloucester, all demonstrate that, to the calculator, other people's lives are far less significant than the calculator's private desires or ambitions, whatever they might be. Calculation for one's self involves, in this play anyway, prodigal carelessness of other people's rights and needs – such exercise of reason is, if not moral insanity, at least moral imbecility.

Though the play condemns the folly proscribed in Proverbs, it praises the folly prescribed by Paul (1 Cor. 1). Folly does not bring rewards on earth, but it can, somehow, bring spiritual comfort. The Fool, Cordelia, and Kent are all foolish in the world's ways; Lear becomes a self-proclaimed fool and an outcast in the kingdom he has ruled.

> There is no health in my flesh, because of thy displeasure; neither is there any rest in my bones, by reason of my sin ...
>
> My wounds stink and are corrupt: through my foolishness.
>
> (Ps. 38: 3, 5)

Lear's hand, like all human bodies, smells of mortality. Recognition of his folly and corruption permits the king to pass through mere folly and corruption, mere selfishness and mere madness, into a condition with claims upon greatness. The play is about the inevitable qualifications of the ideal which follow from having to live. Growing old is by itself a major hazard. Job's comforters speak in the retributive language of the world, 'calculating' Job's punishment according to his (to them) 'necessary' unrighteousness. Against them and in the face of a God who treats His best servant as wanton boys treat flies, Job's affirmation of his own integrity somehow overrides the wantonness of divine fate and the worldliness of his persecutors. Even if God had *not* rewarded Job at the book's end, Job's courage and faith would have proved exemplary, in particular his resistance to his false friends, who offer him a comfort harsher even than the physical pains he had to bear. Much as in the Book of Job, in spite of the horrors of *King Lear*, life itself emerges as a value in spite of its pain – as a value, really, because of its pain. Lear speaks in the *vox humana* of the Psalmist, of Solomon, of the Preacher, to proclaim that lives are given dignity by the sufferings

endured in them. All men come to the same end: what distinguishes them is how they come to it:

> All things come alike to all: and the same condition is to the juste and to the wicked, to the good and to the pure, and to the polluted, and to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good; so is the sinner ...
>
> There is evil among all that is done under the sunne, that there is one condition to all, and also the heart of the sonnes of men is full of evil, and madnes is in their hearts whiles they live, and after that, they go to the dead.
>
> Surely whosoever is joyned to all the living, there is hope: for it is better to be a living dog, than to be a dead lyon.
>
> For the living knowe that they shal dye, but the dead knowe nothing at all; nether have they anie more a rewarde: for their remembrance is forgotten. (Eccles. 9:2–5)

The literary problem, like the moral problem, is to present so stark a view of human life – in which men and women meet their bitter fates by reason of their irresponsibility and in spite of their efforts at responsibility; in which disaster may be, and often is, total – that there seems no hope for humanity, and, at the same time, to make such a life seem worth the living of it, to make it seem better, somehow, to be a living dog than a dead lion. *King Lear* forces the question to extremes, beyond hope, so that Lear's death, for instance, comes as a relief from the continued horror of having to live. Somehow or other, the shining values of Cordelia's truth and charity, Kent's fidelity, Lear's self-discovery, must be seen to stand out against the cruelty of experienced disaster and evil. The deep undercurrent of scriptural language running through the play, its reference largely to the stoical books of the Old Testament, provides some holdfast upon the idea, at least, of moral order, to remind us, through all the shifting of fortune and point of view, that moral order is an ideal that society cannot afford to let go. The play does not refer us to transcendent morality at all – rather, it produces a rockbed morality, fundamental if comfortless and unyielding, a minimum prescription for social survival. The use of biblical echo to suggest a morality past ordinary hopes, allows us to work through the complicated paradoxes of the play to accept the essential, inevitable, unalterable limitations of human life. The injustice of experience forces – once more, by paradox – a reassertion of the values of life, with all its limitations, even in the teeth of adverse experience. Justice, on which the characters harp, particularly Lear and Edgar (the dispossessed ruler and the future king), is understood finally as another form of calculation, the idiom of Job's comforters, too simple and materialistic a moral notion to serve as a clue in situations so extreme as those of this play. Justice 'reasons' need and punishment – and, as Lear and the play finally uncover, these things cannot be reasoned. Just as the words of Job's comforters, secure in their innocent belief in justice and in effects-from-causes, thin out into platitude and meaninglessness, so do the notions of justice and calculation evaporate as standards for the play, to leave us as Job was left, with no more than the conviction that life, if it is to have meaning at all, must observe the moral choices of men doomed to coming hither and to going hence:

> Man that is borne of woman, is of short continuance, and ful of trouble.
>
> He shooteth forthe as a flowre, and is cut downe: he vanisheth also as a shadow, and continueth not. (Job 14:1–2)

In the face of the harshness of living and of dying in a universe indiscriminate in its effects, the holdfast is simple enough. Edgar is right: 'Obey thy parents; keep thy word's justice; swear not; commit not with man's sworn spouse.' The morality is simple not because life is uncomplicated, but because it is not; because only a morality forged to maximum economy upon the anvil of cruel experience – the experience of Job, of captive Israel, of the Preacher, of Lear – is appropriate to the incalculable hazards between birth and death. In the plainness of these moral precepts lies their power, which insists upon self-direction in awareness of the inevitable disproportions of pain, pain justly borne for sins and foolishness, pain arbitrarily laid on, by no fair measure. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; inevitably, he must learn the suffering from his own and from others' misdoing, must bear the consequences not only of his own faults, but of others' faults as well. From the language of paradox, beloved of the rigorous stoics, fused with that resonant language celebrating human endurance, the proud magnificence of oppressed Israel, *Lear* draws much of its strength. The two languages teach the same hard lesson, that by endurance men test and make their own values. Ripeness is all: the only thing to be achieved is to reach the limit of human achievement. The playwright could, had he wished, simply have paraphrased stoical axioms on this theme from Seneca to Cicero, or from modern stoical writers, as Chapman, for example, did. His choice of a scriptural reference forces on his audience and his readers the charged memory of human pain, the weight of experience that had to be borne before human beings could voice the consciousness of their pain

and thus express – literally, 'express' – the extremity of their human achievement. Job and the Psalmist protest before their pain, call their universe to account before they accept and endure it. Like them, Lear arraigns his universe, physical and moral, before he allows himself to open under its rigours and to accept its inevitable power over his life. One measure of human greatness, in all these test-cases, was that these men maintained, discovered, and recovered their humanity in the teeth of their torture: another measure was the capacity to create a vocabulary celebrating humanity in the grip of irremediable suffering.

NOTES

1 See my *Paradoxia Epidemica* (Princeton 1966) chap 15.

2 Gloucester's failure to understand the relations within the order on which he so relied is one indication of his limitation as a character; however, the rigidity of the 'doctrine of order,' so persuasively argued by E.M.W. Tillyard in many of his books, notably *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London 1943) and *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London 1945), and taken for granted in E.W. Talbert *The Problem of Order* (Chapel Hill 1962), is now open to serious question. For a balanced view of the matter, see Julian Markels *The Pillar of the World* (Columbus, Ohio 1968) especially p. 96. I have made some mild comments on the doctrine in 'Literature and History,' in *Relations of Literary Study* ed. James Thorpe (New York 1967) 17–19; and see below, 'Reason and Need,' notes 1 and 2.

3 *'King Lear' in Our Time* (Berkeley 1965) 117. As he does with so many subjects handled in more detail in this book, Mack touches brilliantly upon biblical echo in the play. Some of his references, for instance to Nebuchadnezzar (50–1) and to Paul and Silas (56), are not followed up in this essay.

4 R.W. Chambers *King Lear* (Glasgow 1940); G. Wilson Knight *The Wheel of Fire* (London 1930); Irving Ribner *Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy* (London 1960); Paul N. Siegel *Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise* (New York 1957) and *Shakespeare in His Time and Ours* (South Bend, Ind. 1968) chap 4; also Roy Battenhouse, 'Shakespeare's Moral Vision,' in *Stratford Papers* (1964); 'Shakespearean Tragedy: A Christian Approach,' in *The Tragic Vision and Christian Faith* ed. Nathan A Scott (New York 1957); and *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Christian Premises* (Bloomington, Ind. 1969), reviewed by Harry Levin, *Journal of the History of Ideas* XXXII (1971) 306–10. Roland M. Frye's *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton 1963) is an effort to place Shakespeare's conventional, unintense Christianity in the contexts of orthodoxy and of play-writing. Kenneth Myrick's 'Christian Pessimism in *King Lear*' in *Shakespeare 1564–1964* ed. Edward A. Bloom (Providence, RI 1964) 56–70, locates the play's pessimism squarely within contemporary Christianity. Sylvan Barnet's essay, 'Some Limitations of a Christian Approach to Shakespeare,' reprinted in *Approaches to Shakespeare* ed. Norman Rabkin (New York 1964) 217–29, is a serious commensensical criticism of the Christian reading of Shakespeare.

5 *'King Lear' and the Gods* (San Marino 1966)

6 Richmond Noble *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge and Use of the Book of Common Prayer* (London 1935); Mack *'King Lear' in Our Time* 56–7

7 See Martha Andresen, below.

8 As Ethel Seaton's article, *'Antony and Cleopatra* and the Book of Revelation,' *Review of English Studies* XX (1946) 219–24, demonstrates with extraordinary tact, biblical language is apt to 'echo' rather than be quoted or even paraphrased in Shakespeare's usage; her article seems to me a model for this kind of study.

9 Quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the facsimile of the 1650 Geneva Bible, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison, Wis. 1969); I have in each case checked the *wording* against sixteenth-century editions, but have kept to this post-Shakespearean edition (because I own it) for consistent *spelling*, which varies tremendously from edition to edition.

10 John Holloway, in *The Story of the Night* (Lincoln, Neb. 1961) 85–9, offers some very interesting comments on the relation of the play to the Book of Job.

11 Sears Jayne, 'Charity in *King Lear*,' in *Shakespeare 400* ed. J. McManaway (New York 1964)

12 For comment on this, see Danby *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* 130–1.

13 For the 'deference society,' see Lawrence Stone *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* (Oxford 1965) 21 and passim; and 'Reason and Need,' below.

14 See Terence Hawkes *Shakespeare and the Reason* (London 1964) chap 6.

15 Sheldon P. Zitner in an unpublished paper, 'Shakespeare's Secret Language'

16 See John Donnelly, 'Incest, Ingratitude, and Insanity: Aspects of the Psychopathology of King Lear,' *Psychoanalytic Review* XL (1953) 149–55.

17 Jonas A. Barish and Marshall Waingrow, 'Service in *King Lear*,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* IX (1958) 347–55

18 Sigurd Burckhardt *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton 1968) 239–40

19 Zitner, 'Shakespeare's Secret Language'

20 See Prov. 28:13: 'He that hideth his sinnes shal not prosper,' as well as the references cited in Fritz Saxl, *'Veritas Filia Temporis,'* in *Essays in Philosophy and History Presented to Ernst Cassirer* ed. Raymond Klibansky (New York 1963); and Charney, above.

21 See John E. Hawkins, *'Lear* and the Psalmist,' *Modern Language Notes* LXI (1946) 88ff.

22 Mack *'King Lear' in Our Time* 63–6

23 Cf. Rev. 11:18–19

24 The standard comment on Gloucester's blinding is by Robert B. Heilman *This Great Stage* (Baton Rouge, La. 1943) chap 2; the interpretation has been challenged by Paul J. Alpers, '*King Lear* and the Theory of the "Sight Pattern",' in *In Defense of Reading* ed. Reuben A. Brower and Richard Poirier (New York 1963) 133–52; see my *Paradoxia*; Bridget Gellert Lyons, above, pp. 28–9; and Nancy R. Lindheim, below, pp. 179–80.

25 See Susan Snyder, '*King Lear* and the Prodigal Son,' *Shakespeare Quarterly* XVII (1966) 361–9.

26 See J.V. Cunningham, 'Ripeness is All,' in *Woe or Wonder* (Denver 1951); and Andresen, below.

27 Cf. Wisdom 3:16: 'But the children of adulterers shal not be partakers of the holy things, and the seede of the wicked bed shal be rooted out'; Wisdom 4:6: 'For al the children that are borne of the wicked bed, shal be witnes of the wickednes against their parents when they be asked.' Perhaps more important is the passage from the homily 'Agaynst Whoredome and Adulterie,' *Certaine Sermons* (London 1595): 'Among the Locrensians, the adulterers have both theire eyes thrust out.' Matthew 6:23 has relevance here; surely the blindness-falling pattern of the Dover cliff scene owes something to Luke 14:39.

28 Cf. Jayne, 'Charity in *King Lear*'

29 Edmund Blunden, 'Shakespeare's Significances,' in *Shakespeare Criticism, 1919–1935* (Oxford 1936) ed. Anne Ridler; and Zitner, 'The Language of *King Lear*,' above, and his 'Shakespeare's Secret Language'

MARTHA ANDRESEN

'ripeness is all': sententiæ and commonplaces in KING LEAR

A CRITICAL COMMONPLACE about *King Lear* is that it is a play full of commonplaces: a recent study has even demonstrated that nearly every utterance in the play has its analogue in favourite Renaissance literary and philosophical sources.[1] In this essay, I am less concerned with identifying these inherited formulations than with considering the thematic and dramatic functions of commonplaces, aphorisms, and sentences in *King Lear*. So closely woven are commonplaces in the fabric of the play that any one of them links with many others in complex patterns of meaning and effect; one example of an aphorism catching up multiple threads is that famous commonplace and crux, 'Ripeness is all.' Obviously, one function of the brief scene in which it occurs is, simply, exposition of the plot. Only two characters speak, and the whole action in the scene is the reporting of an offstage action that in fact determines the outcome of the play.

> [*A Field between the two Camps.*]
> *Alarum within. Enter, with drum and colours,* LEAR, CORDELIA, *and their Forces; and exeunt.*