



sin by rejecting his loving son and believing the false one. For this he has to suffer and through his suffering he attains salvation. Like Lear he learns in torment the value of patience. Gloucester's regeneration is climaxed in his death, in the hand of Edgar, as Lear's by his reunion with Cordelia.

Above all, King Lear is now capable of love. At the beginning of the play, he is incapable of disinterested love, for he uses the love of others to minister to his own egotism. His prolonged agony and his utter loss of everything free his heart from the bondage of self-blood. He unlearns hatred and learns love and humility. He loses the world and gains his soul —

"We two alone will sing like birds' the cage
When thou dost ask me blessing I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness"

Lear's sight is now ^{so} purged by scalding tears that it seems at last how power and place and all things in the world are vanity except love. Thus for Lear the world becomes not so much a vale of tears as a vale of soul-making. There is no ground for ~~optimism~~^{pessimism} here. The sufferings of Lear and Gloucester are terrible no doubt. But their sufferings are though not entirely brought about by their own faults. Their sufferings are indeed overproportionate to their errors. They are



more sinned against than sinning. But it is a common phenomenon among humanity. We sow the wind to reap whirlwind. Through the pattern of regeneration and the restoration of order, Shakespeare drives home the message which is essentially Christian affirmation of life and humanity.

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