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Shakespeare's Intellectual Villains

presented by
R. Jeremy McNamara

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ABSTRACT

SHAKESPEARE'S INTELLECTUAL VILLAINS

by R. Jeremy McNamara

The Renaissance inherited from the Middle Ages a conception of the universe as orderly, hierarchical, and moral. Recent investigations have shown how specific authors, including Shakespeare, utilized this orthodox world view either for occasional commentary or, more integrally, as the theme of a play or as the philosophy of a major character. But there has been comparatively little attention focussed on the negation of the values posited by this orthodox world view in Shakespearean drama. This present study of Shakespeare's plays reveals that one group of characters, the villains, consistently operates from intellectual principles which negate the standard values of the Elizabethan world view. This means that Shakespeare's villains practice primarily a villainy of ideas. I have chosen the term intellectual villain to describe this group of characters as it indicates the ideological nature of their villainy as well as the fact that the demonstration of their villainy is more often mental than physical action. A second major point of this study is that Shakespeare's dominant conception of villainy differs from that of both his classical predecessors and his contemporary playwrights.

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This study is in three parts. The opening section is a critique of the major theories about Shakespeare's villains beginning with Coleridge and continuing to the present. These theories have viewed Shakespeare's villains either as conventional stage types, such as the Machiavel or Vice, or else as Satanic representations of evil incarnate. These theories have failed to account sufficiently for the intellectual nature of most of Shakespeare's villains or else have not recognized the essential kinship of Shakespeare's villains and the uniqueness of his conception of villainy.

The middle section presents the evidence for the major point of the thesis. Moving chronologically through Shakespeare's plays, I analyze the roles of the villains, concentrating mainly on their motives, their ideas, and their methods of attaining their goals. Though Claudius among the major villains and a few lesser characters do not entirely qualify as intellectual villains, most of Shakespeare's villains follow a pattern of holding to a world view which is egocentric, cynical, realistic, naturalistic, materialistic, atheistic, and, in general, "modern" rather than "medieval," as well as using stratagems, verbal ambiguities, and deceit against the interests or person of a victim whose nature the villain thoroughly understands.

The final section contains a brief survey of villains in Greek and Senecan tragedy as well as a longer

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characterization of the villains depicted by Shakespeare's contemporaries. This section is intended to provide evidence for the second point of the thesis, the uniqueness of intellectual villainy. This uniqueness is borne out by the fact that these villains are passionate rather than intellectual, being motivated chiefly by ambition, revenge, or monetary reward, but with no explicitly-stated world view which denies orthodox values. In addition, the first and third sections provide external referents for judging the validity of the conception of the intellectual villain, such a framework being necessitated by the absence of any explicit theories of villainy in Renaissance critical theory.

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SHAKESPEARE'S INTELLECTUAL VILLAINS

By

R. Jeremy McNamara

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1961

Preface

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Preface

Since the investigations of Hardin Craig into the Elizabethan mind and E. M. W. Tillyard into the Elizabethan world picture, students of Shakespearean drama have generally accepted the concept of a Shakespearean world that is characterized by both secular and cosmic order and guided by a moral, even religious, purpose. Essentially this world view is a heritage of medieval thought, though the Renaissance emphasized the human link in the chain of being more than its divine culmination. In the plays of Shakespeare this world view not only appears as "background," but also constitutes a set of values which are consistently upheld throughout Shakespeare's dramatic career. These values might form the theme of a play or series of plays, as in the tetralogy of history plays climaxed by Henry V; they might create the basic outlook of an Othello or represent the matured wisdom of a Lear; or they might appear fragmentarily, but emphatically, in the words of minor characters who undergo no dramatic development, as in Ulysses' speech on order in Troilus and Cressida. But drama, of course, is fundamentally contrast, and, in Shakespearean drama, this principle extends to the depiction of opposing world views. Despite the wide realization that Shakespearean drama is rooted in the orthodox Elizabethan world view, the commentators have not sufficiently recognized that one group of Shakespeare's characters, the villains, consist-

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ently negates this world view, completely inverting the orthodox views about man, the universe, and morality. This means that the Shakespearean villains practice primarily a villainy of ideas. To be sure, from these ideas stems action, the dramatic representation in time and space of the villains' intellectual principles put into operation against other human characters. But the essential quality of a Shakespearean villain lies in the nature of his ideas; these villains are not merely bad men, but they are drawn into evil deeds because their principles are evil and are in conscious opposition to the good of the Shakespearean universe. This conception of ideological villainy means also that Shakespeare's villains are unique when considered in relation to the villains created by his contemporaries and classical predecessors.

In discussing this unique group of characters, I have chosen the term intellectual villains because it has a double significance. First, the word intellectual reflects the ideological nature of their villainy, the primary characteristic of these villains. Second, the word indicates that in their secondary characteristic of action the villains engage more often in mental rather than purely physical activity. To avoid possible confusion, however, I will use the term intelligent when referring to this second quality alone.

As intellectual villains, the characters whom I will discuss share a common world view which can be described

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as egocentric, cynical, realistic, naturalistic, materialistic, atheistic, and, in general, "modern" rather than "medieval." As intelligent characters, the villains show that they thoroughly understand their victims and can thus manipulate either the strengths or weaknesses of others. Also they are adept at creating stratagems (both carefully planned and extempore), at employing verbal ambiguities, and at utilizing deceit for their own advantage. Reason guides them more often than passion--for many, a yielding to passion invites destruction. Since the intellectual villain appears in all dramatic genres and in roles of widely-varying significance, the end result is a certain pattern of belief and behavior rather than a conventional, definite character type. A character qualifies as an intellectual villain by expressing a particular world view and by working against the person or the interests of the hero. All villains do the latter; the intellectual villain is a separate species in that his ideology as well as his actions is evil. In Shakespearean drama the simple pattern of villain versus hero is occasionally obscured when an intellectual villain happens to be the protagonist of the play, as in Richard III. In such a case the intellectual villain works against the orthodox concepts and the characters who embody or represent them rather than against a "hero."

I would emphasize that throughout this study I am making no claims of insight into Shakespeare's personal

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beliefs, but am rather presenting as a norm those values considered orthodox by the Elizabethans. Shakespeare may well have had strong partisan leanings or simply unconsciously reflected the thought of his day, but drama is a particularly dangerous literary form from which to extract an author's own beliefs. Rather, drawing on the work of Craig, Tillyard, Theodore Spencer, and others, and seeing in the plays certain values consistently upheld, I think I can legitimately formulate a set of orthodox principles which the villains continually violate or negate.

This study consists of three parts. The opening section is a critique of major theories about Shakespeare's villains. Those critics who have discussed Shakespeare's villains specifically or who have necessarily commented on a significant number of them when discussing Shakespearean tragedy, have usually assigned the villains to one or another conventional character type. Whether these writers have ultimately employed the term Senecan tyrant, Machiavel, or Vice, their emphasis has been historical, comparative, objective. Other critics, writing from a more subjective and less historically-oriented point of view, have seen the villains as stand-ins for the Devil or as evil incarnate rather than as human characters or even as stage types. But all these theories have failed in various ways: either they have insufficiently noted the dual intellectual-intelligent

nature of the villains, neglecting to stress the interrelation of ideas with action, or else they have not recognized the kinship of nearly all of Shakespeare's villains and their exclusiveness from the villains of other Renaissance dramatists.

The middle section contains the evidence for my thesis from the plays themselves. The procedure followed is simply description and analysis of the roles of the intellectual villains, their motives, their ideas, their methods of accomplishing their goals. Although Claudius among the major villains is not conceived as an intellectual villain and although some of the lesser villains only partially fulfill the qualifications or show some other deviation in the pattern, discussion of these characters will nevertheless be included to sharpen the positive definition of intellectual villainy by focussing on qualities which are not part of this pattern. It will be seen, however, that the concept of the intellectual villain describes most of the villains whom Shakespeare created.

The final section, a discussion of the villains in the drama of Shakespeare's contemporaries, serves a twofold purpose: it presents my evidence for stating that Shakespeare's conception of villainy is unique and it provides an external referent for the study of the intellectual villains by allowing me to compare Shakespeare's villains with those in other drama in view of the absence

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of Renaissance critical theories of villainy. The first and last sections, then, are intended to provide a framework for judging the validity of the conception of the intellectual villain.

Anyone writing on Shakespeare feels a general obligation to the centuries-old tradition of commentary that can only partially be acknowledged by footnotes or bibliographical lists. Also, writing as a student seeking an academic degree, I feel a particular sense of gratitude for the knowledge and inspiration of my teachers of courses in dramatic literature: the late Professor Philip W. Timberlake of Kenyon College, Professors E. W. Talbert, Robert B. Sharpe, and Dougald MacMillan of the University of North Carolina, and Professors Arnold Williams and Herbert Weisinger of Michigan State University. In addition to the last two named, I wish also to thank Professors George Price and Harry Hoppe of Michigan State University for reading and commenting critically on this dissertation while in progress. I am especially indebted to Professor Weisinger not only for the original suggestion for this study, but also for continued guidance and much-needed encouragement along the way. And finally I want to express a special thanks to my wife for her typing and editorial assistance and for, in many other real ways, making this completed study possible.

Preface

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Chapter I

The Villains and the Critics

The first important statement about the nature of Shakespeare's villains came with Coleridge's phrase, "motiveless malignity." Those literary critics of the Renaissance who discussed contemporary drama concerned themselves with the establishment of genres, the moral value of drama, and, occasionally, the characteristics of the dramatic hero, but they omitted any statement of the requirements or rationale of the dramatic villain.¹ Dryden and other neo-classical critics were even more involved in formal matters, giving almost their entire attention to the unities, decorum, and the strict formulation of genre rules. Eighteenth-century criticism, in addition to the usual formal considerations, broke ground for two new approaches. One, the rise of literary scholarship, was mainly textual in emphasis. The second, initiated by Maurice Morgann, led to essays on characters who could be sentimentalized, a category which automatically eliminated consideration of the villains. But though the Romantic critics continued the eighteenth-century tradition of character analysis, they were, perhaps temperamentally, attracted to the evil as well as the good.²

1 See, for example, the pertinent selections in Allan H. Gilbert, Literary Criticism Plato to Dryden.

2 For a survey of the Satanic figure in Romantic literature see Mario Praz, The Romantic Agony. For the possible Shakespearean influences on this figure see especially pp. 58-60. Praz also stresses the subjective element in defining romantic (p. 13).

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So it is fitting that the greatest Romantic critic of Shakespeare should introduce this present critical sketch of the general theories that have been proposed to explain Shakespeare's villains. Not unexpectedly and quite understandably, these theories will be seen to conform to the major cleavages which have made the history of Shakespearean criticism such an intense, lively segment of literary study.

Coleridge's "motiveless malignity," having dominated nineteenth-century thinking, has been gradually giving way in the twentieth century to a diversity of opinions. I believe, however, that the great influence this phrase once had was due more to its success as a catchword than to its revelation of any firm understanding of Coleridge's meaning. We should recall that Coleridge, in discussing Iago's remark at the end of Act I that he suspects Othello of cuckolding him, writes:

The last speech, Iago's soliloquy, shows the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity--how awful! In itself fiendish; while yet he was allowed to bear the divine image, it is too fiendish for his own steady view. He is a being next to devil, only not quite devil--and this Shakespeare has attempted--executed--without disgust, without scandal!³

This is the whole of Coleridge's comment on the subject. As with so much of his Shakespearean criticism, the remark exists as a note on a particular passage and is not developed beyond that. But Coleridge, even in this fragmentary way, suggests a reservation that his followers

³ Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare, p. 171.

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have lost sight of. Not only does he fail to erect a general theory of villainy upon this insight, he does not even make it the key to Iago's character. Motiveless malignity is merely a phase through which Iago passes in this particular speech. Since it is "too fiendish for his own steady view," presumably Iago himself would reject motiveless malignity as a guiding principle.

Hazlitt, in his discussion of Iago, strove to extricate himself from the influence of Coleridge. Referring to those who feel that Iago's villainy is without motive, Hazlitt affirms that Shakespeare was "as good a philosopher as he was a poet" and knew that the love of power was natural to man. According to Hazlitt, Iago preferred evil "because it falls more readily in with his favorite propensity." Further, Iago "plots the ruin of his friends as an exercise for his ingenuity, and stabs men in the dark to prevent ennui."⁴ So Hazlitt has not really escaped the coils of Coleridge. There is nothing in his remark that is an advance upon motiveless malignity as an analytical concept and certainly nothing so pungently phrased.

Bradley, who in many ways represents the climax of the Coleridgean tradition, agrees that Iago's soliloquies express inconsistent motives and are therefore to be regarded as mere motive-hunting. But Bradley explicitly rejects the concept of motiveless malignity:

⁴ Works, IV, 206-7.

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For love of the evil that advances my interest and hurts a person I dislike, is a very different thing from love of evil simply as evil.⁵

To replace absolute evil as a cornerstone of Iago's character, Bradley offers a multiple motivation which itself slides off into the supernatural: Iago reacts against those who have slighted his sense of superiority; he takes pleasure in excitement and danger; he gets an esthetic pleasure from manipulating the plot; and finally he is "fated" to ruin Othello.⁶

Despite Bradley's disclaimer, some critics have attempted to create a general theory about the nature of Shakespeare's villains stemming from the idea of motiveless malignity. Perhaps the culmination of these attempts is Donald Stauffer's statement that the "image of the almost completely evil man is the first moral idea clear in Shakespeare's mind." The completely evil man is one who needs no specific motive beyond his evil nature to act villainously. That Stauffer is working toward a general theory is clear when he adds, "Shakespeare is consistent throughout his life in his interpretation of pure moral evil."⁷ In a specific case, Stauffer speaks of Iago's "fixed instinct of hate," another circumlocution for motiveless malignity as Coleridge's phrase came to be interpreted.

5 Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 184.

6 Ibid., pp. 180-8.

7 Shakespeare's World of Images: The Development of His Moral Ideas, p. 26.

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Some critics have used Coleridge's phraseology as well as his basic insight in commenting on other villains, usually Aaron. C. V. Boyer feels that Aaron displays "absolutely motiveless malignity."⁸ Virgil Whitaker calls Aaron the "embodiment of motiveless evil,"⁹ but discusses him as an example of the Machiavel. Irving Ribner sees Aaron as "the symbol of evil itself" and the evil in Titus Andronicus as "a motiveless force which operates through deception."¹⁰

An extension of Coleridge is evidenced in such critics as G. Wilson Knight and Robert Speaight, who speak of the devilish or Satanic aspects of Iago. Speaight is careful to say that Iago is not motiveless, but Satanic, but the distinction seems fuzzy when he remarks that "what is at work in him is the spirit of evil, pure and undivided."¹¹ Knight calls Iago "utterly devilish" and compares him to Mephistopheles in displaying cynicism and mockery.¹²

The attitude I have been tracing is certainly the most important romantic concept of Shakespeare's villains. Several considerations make it a romantic point of view. The attitude derives from Coleridge's highly subjective insight, or even intuition. This intuition is part of a discussion of Iago, the villain who most critics believe

⁸ The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Drama, p. 109.

⁹ Shakespeare's Use of Learning, p. 105.

¹⁰ Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 18-9.

¹¹ Nature in Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 88.

¹² The Wheel of Fire, pp. 125-6.

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displays absolute evil and who has most consistently resisted rational explanation, and of Aaron, the villain who is superficially the closest to Iago. Moreover, the parallels drawn to the Devil satisfy the romantic craving for the grandiose and absolute and also illustrate the romantic predilection for evil, particularly absolute evil. These qualities carry with them a built-in limitation on the applicability of motiveless malignity. Lesser Shakespearean villains cannot easily be covered by this theory, the implication being that with Iago Shakespeare created a villain differing in kind from all previous villains (though perhaps dimly foreshadowed in Aaron). Although the phrase has often been used as if it explained everything, quite obviously it cannot become a general theory to account for the nature of Shakespeare's villains. And, of course, if it can be shown that Iago and Aaron are not motiveless, then the phrase had best be withdrawn from general circulation and retired to its place in that featureless fecundity which comprises Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism.¹³

In contrast to the limited applicability of motiveless malignity, the term Machiavel, together with the complex of associations surrounding it, has been used at various times to describe Aaron, Richard III, Falstaff, Iago, Edmund, and many other non-Shakespearean characters. However, the widespread use of the term does not indicate

¹³ See following section for a discussion of the motives of Aaron and Iago.

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any widespread agreement as to the exact nature of the relationship between Machiavelli and the Elizabethan drama. The terminus a quo for this discussion can be definitely set: the publication, in 1897, of Edward Meyer's Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama. The thesis of this study is that the Elizabethan dramatists learned of Machiavelli through Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel, of which an English translation was made in 1577 and published in 1602,¹⁴ so that the Machiavellism of the English drama, though not taken first hand from Machiavelli, at least dealt with the Italian's ideas in their original form, since Gentillet quoted maxims from The Prince in order to refute them. Following Meyer's lead, many scholars eagerly adopted the term Machiavel to explain the villains they found in Elizabethan drama, though even those who used the term often seemed reluctant to indicate just what was meant by it. In other words, for many the term is evidently sufficient unto itself. The following general description of the character Lorenzo, from The Spanish Tragedy, can stand as a general definition of the type:

His fundamental likeness to the Machiavellian comes in his ruthlessness toward all who stand in the way of his plans, in his perfect indifference to the sufferings he causes others, in his mania for secrecy and willingness to employ other men as catspaws, and in the tortuous and deceitful means he uses to attain his ends. Lorenzo is fundamentally cold-blooded and unsentimental, a practical man after Machiavelli's own heart.¹⁵

¹⁴ Mario Praz, The Flaming Heart, p. 93.

¹⁵ Fredson Bowers, Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642, pp. 76-7.

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The extreme statement of the influence of the real Machiavelli on Elizabethan drama occurs in Wyndham Lewis, whose The Lion and the Fox postulates as the master subject of Shakespeare's plays a struggle between chivalry, "celtism," and Christian mysticism on the one hand and the scientific spirit of the Renaissance on the other, what Lewis calls the battle of the lion and the fox, the simpleton and Machiavel, worked out most clearly in the struggle between Othello and Iago.

Further investigation has revealed that the matter of Machiavelli's influence on the drama was not as simple as Meyer believed. It is apparent now that the real Machiavelli was misunderstood by the Elizabethans and, as Irving Ribner has shown, Gentillet was not the chief source of the Elizabethans' knowledge of Machiavelli. Ribner argues that the name Machiavel as a symbol of immorality and evil was simply applied to the result of two traditions already available to such dramatists as Kyd and Marlowe who introduced the "Machiavel" to the English stage. The combination consisted of the Senecan villain-hero with "its plotting, murdering, fraudulent symbol of motiveless malignity" (and we are back with Coleridge) and the devil incarnate from the native morality plays.¹⁶ Mario Praz, who has studied the development of the "Machiavel" in great detail, also feels that Seneca is the logical starting point.

¹⁶ "The Significance of Gentillet's Ante-Machiavel," MLQ, X (1949), 153-7.

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The initiative for the study of Seneca in relation to Elizabethan drama also came in the late nineteenth century with the publication of J. W. Cunliffe's The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy (1893). Cunliffe's thesis readily found devotees; among them was H. B. Charlton, who summarized the importance of Seneca to Elizabethan writers of tragedy:

He provided the most tragic motive, revenge exacted on the closest consanguinity. He provided the most tragic theme, the inevitability of fate's decrees. He provided the most tragic appeal, horror piling itself on horror. He provided the most tragic machinery, ghosts, supernatural forces, and foreboding dreams; the most tragic incidents, murder inflicted in the most cruel and bloodthirsty way. He provided the most tragic characters, superhuman villains dominated with one abnormal consuming passion. He provided the most tragic sentiment, morbid introspective self-pity and self-reliance. He provided the superlative tragic style, whether for the utterance of passion, picture, or sentence.¹⁷

F. L. Lucas, who feels that Seneca is the most important classical author to influence Elizabethan tragedy, confines this influence to the revenge tragedy and denies most of the parallel passages upon which Cunliffe based his thesis, seeing only a general resemblance between Elizabethan and Senecan tragedy.¹⁸

Moving completely to the opposite pole, Howard Baker has pointed out that the various elements of the form of Elizabethan tragedy--five-act structure, chorus, disregard of the unities, observance of the stage decencies,

¹⁷ The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy, p. clxix.

¹⁸ Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy, passim.

messengers, ghosts, revenge motive, rant, sensationalism, and sententious precepts--were not necessarily influenced by Seneca, but could have come from a variety of non-Senecan sources, notably the native English stage tradition. In showing how medieval developments shaped Renaissance drama, Baker comments specifically on the wholly wicked character:

Consequently we must suppose that Shakespeare's complete villains are molded most importantly by the enduring medieval view that the evil of the world could and did manifest itself in wholly evil human beings.¹⁹

Baker's study leads him to the following summary statement about Seneca's influence:

We have very good reasons to believe that Seneca contributed rhetorical patches and practically nothing more; certainly nothing tangible to the form of English tragedy; certainly nothing worth mentioning to its philosophy. Seneca, finally, like Machiavelli, seems to have been dragged by main force into modern criticism because he is a convenient peg on which to hang the disorderly and disintegrating materials which the Sackvilles and the Kyds could not quite straighten out.²⁰

The whole question of Seneca's influence on the villains of Elizabethan drama centers on two Senecan characters, Medea and Atreus. The key to Medea is overtowering passion which leads her wildly to seek revenge. Jason, who says of Medea, "fierce she is and brooking no restraint," still feels she will listen to reason and believe that his

¹⁹ Induction to Tragedy, p. 170.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 198. The whole discussion occupies pp. 130-198 of Baker's book. As far as Senecan horrors are concerned, Baker receives support from T. S. Eliot in "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation," Selected Essays. However, Eliot feels Seneca exerted strong influence in other directions.

second marriage was really for her good. But Medea has no regard for any conventional moral values:

Away with every thought and fear of God and man;
Too lightly falls the rod that pious hands upbear.
Give passion fullest sway;²¹

In the extremity of passion she kills her children to avenge herself against the wrongs of Jason.

The ideas of Atreus are brought out in the following comments he makes to an attendant who utters in return all the conventionally correct notions of kingship:

Herein is greatest good of royal power:
The populace not only must endure
Their master's deeds, but praise them.
.....
When he who rules must wish for right alone
He hardly rules, except on sufferance.
.....
Integrity,
Truth, loyalty, are private virtues; kings
Do as they will.

Atreus, like Medea, longs for the ultimate horror to encompass his revenge. When he serves Thyestes' sons to their father at a banquet, the chorus comments: "The ancient order of the universe/ Has perished!"

These quotations illustrate the intellectual conceptions held by the greatest Senecan villains. Indeed, the list represents almost all of the expressions in Seneca's ten tragedies which would indicate any similarity between Seneca's villains and Shakespeare's intellectual villains. Whatever influence Seneca may have had on other Elizabethan dramatists (and Baker's study makes even this appear doubtful or negligible), I don't believe

²¹ All quotations from Seneca are from The Complete Roman Drama. Frank Justus Miller translated Medea; Ella Isabell Harris, Thyestes.

his name can be conjured up as a sufficient explanation for the typical Shakespearean villain, a proposition which I hope will become clearer in the second section of this study.

Mario Praz has given a cogent account of the development of the Elizabethan villain from Seneca through Machiavelli in a form substantially in agreement with similar studies by C. V. Boyer, Irving Ribner, and Henri Fluchere. Beginning with the stock character of the Senecan tyrant "with his ambitious schemes and unprincipled maxims of government," a figure best represented by Atreus, Praz discovers the Italian Cinthio to be the medium through which Machiavellian elements were grafted onto the familiar Senecan tyrant. Another contribution by Cinthio, the utilization of a mere subject rather than a king as a Senecan-Machiavellian figure, completes the transition to the Elizabethan villain. Having arrived at Elizabethan drama, however, Praz cautions against finding Machiavelli "at the back of every Tudor mind," as Wyndham Lewis, most notably, has done. Particularly, Praz denies that Tamburlaine and other Elizabethan heroes are derived from Machiavelli, finding the influence of Seneca much more important. As positive examples of Machiavellian influence Praz cites Marlowe's Jew of Malta and Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy and, to a lesser extent, Shakespeare's Richard III.²²

²² The Flaming Heart, pp. 109-123.

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The Shakespearean characters most commonly labeled as Machiavels are Aaron, Richard III, Iago, and Edmund. That this label is not itself sufficient to account for even these four characters is shown by the critical commentaries. Boyer considers Aaron a real Machiavellian villain who owes his pleasure in the sufferings of others to the Senecan villain-heroes and who shows "absolutely motiveless malignity."²³ Whitaker says that Aaron shows the standard characteristics of the Machiavel "including the use of religion and honor for his own purposes" and is also "the embodiment of motiveless evil."²⁴ Boyer calls Richard III the perfect Machiavel because he is

fearless, egotistical, haughty, audacious, subtle, witty, intellectual, bold, treacherous, far-sighted, remorseless, atheistical, cynical, and above all gifted with almost superhuman energy of will²⁵

an all-embracing catalogue which not even Machiavelli would uphold in its entirety. Whitaker more cautiously speaks of Shakespeare's "apparent identification of Richard III with the Machiavel of contemporary drama," a figure coming to Shakespeare from a stage tradition originated by Marlowe.²⁶ But even Whitaker believes that "Edmund is a Machiavel in his adherence to Machiavelli's ethics as well as in his dramatic origin."²⁷ Iago is generally felt to be the greatest Machiavel in Shakespeare, but

²³ Boyer, pp. 104-5.

²⁴ Whitaker, p. 105.

²⁵ Boyer, p. 81.

²⁶ Whitaker, pp. 76-7.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 306.

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also something more. Whitaker goes beyond the Machiavel concept by stating that Iago's character is founded on "pride or self-love, the very source of all sin."²⁸ For Boyer, Iago is the Machiavel humanized, even possessed of a glimmer of conscience, so that he is not wholly evil and thus his actions are all the more terrible.²⁹ Praz feels that the Iago of Cinthio is far more Machiavellian than Shakespeare's. The conclusion reached by Praz I will quote as summary of this account of the influence of Machiavelli on Shakespeare:

Needless to say, the character of Iago does not imply any acquaintance with Machiavelli's writings. What Machiavellism is displayed in Shakespeare's dramas seems either to be already present in the historical sources (as in the case of Richard III), or to be derived from the current popular legend.³⁰

What are the results of this investigation into the Senecan-Machiavellian complex? I think quite clearly this account of a scholarly quarrel shows that neither Seneca nor Machiavelli nor even a combination of the two can be invoked to explain the nature of Shakespeare's villains. However, even if the real Machiavelli is disposed of, the stage Machiavel remains. But this, too, is insufficient explanation. The term stage Machiavel is more a device of modern scholars than a meaningful description of what Elizabethan dramatists really had on their minds. Even the critics who have applied the Machiavel label

²⁸ Whitaker, p. 281.

²⁹ Boyer, pp. 115-32.

³⁰ The Flaming Heart, p. 161.

to Shakespeare's villains have usually felt constrained to go beyond the mere term and to add some further description. And if the term does have a certain relevance to the work of Kyd, Marlowe, and some other lesser dramatists, it is my contention that the term cannot be used to describe adequately Shakespeare's villains, that indeed Shakespeare is unique in his conception of the characters, and particularly the dominating ideas, of dramatic villains.

Early in the discussion of the Senecan-Machiavellian complex I noted Irving Ribner's contention that the devil incarnate, or the Vice, of the morality plays helped shape the Elizabethan villain. Just as Boyer's use of "motiveless malignity" looked back to Coleridge, this suggestion looks forward out of the Senecan-Machiavellian idea to a third theory. Many writers other than Ribner have spoken of a connection between the morality Vice and the Elizabethan villain. The equation has become almost a truism and is usually offered without fuller explanation or detailed supporting evidence. However, a recent book, Bernard Spivack's Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, has combined exact, wide-ranging scholarship, clear critical insight, and an extremely forceful and expressive style to give this thesis a thorough treatment as it applies particularly to Shakespeare.

Spivack's main concern, like that of other critics who have developed a theory of villainy, is to explain

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the nature of Iago. With this established he extends the applicability of his theory to three other villains, the Family of Iago. The starting point for Spivack is a statement that a literal interpretation of Iago and his motives is insufficient since the motives are ambiguous and do not conform to the impression Iago gives as a dramatic character. As Spivack sees it, the problem concerned with the motives is three-fold. First of all, there is an equivocation because "his motives and his life in the play are at variance, and his words equivocate his motives because they express his life." The equivocation becomes double because while the sexual motives are at least theoretically intelligible, several others, including the daily beauty passage and Iago's hatred of Othello, do not have intelligible human reference. Spivack rejects the explanation that hatred is Iago's ruling passion since this hatred lacks an objective correlative:

Iago's resentments and his jealousies are, in fact, just such motives as a dramatist might employ to refashion into tragic naturalism a stock figure out of an archaic dramatic convention that had no use for the conventional incitements of human life.

Secondly, there is a discrepancy between what Iago says he feels and what he does in the play, a lack of emotional expression of the wrongs done him. Iago apparently doesn't believe his own accusations since "his opinion of his several victims is a chaos of contradictions." Finally, Iago has a purpose which has nothing to do with vengeance,

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so that the standard motives can be discarded.³¹

Having stated his belief that Iago derives from an earlier dramatic convention, Spivack maintains that any time there is a dislocation between a sharply defined intrigue and obscure or fuzzy motives there is an Iago-like character; he postulates as the Family of Iago the characters Aaron, Richard III, Don John, along with Cassius (in one speech) and Edmund (in some aspects of his dramatization). The other, intelligible villains differ from the Family of Iago in the following ways: the intelligible villains never show any ambiguity obscuring cause and effect, ends and means; they are not isolated from the strains which arise when human desires are frustrated in a moral world; they are never outside the play in their soliloquies, but talk to themselves rather than address the audience; they never say that they are types rather than individuals. The Family of Iago, however, is not involved morally, but rather artistically with their crimes; the actions of these villains remain "an artistic demonstration that is not concerned with practical ends." They talk directly to the audience, announcing their intentions and celebrating their achievements; they are defiant and triumphant at the end; they are all one and the same artist:

an artist in dissimulation, seduction, and intrigue; and his purpose on the stage is to display his talent triumphantly at work against the affections, duties, and pieties which create the order and harmony of humane society.

³¹ Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, pp. 7-23.

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Such an artist is "not essentially a man who is provoked to act villainously, but Villainy disguised by late convention to act like a man"; he is, in short, the Vice of the allegorical morality plays.³²

Having begun with a discussion of Shakespeare's villains and having established a separate class of them, Spivack embarks on the long road back to Shakespeare by finding the origin of the Vice in the *Psychomachia*, tracing the growth of the Vice in the morality play with a careful description of the dramatic and homiletic aspects of the Vice, noting the emergence of a hybrid character as the morality play evolves into secular drama, and then following the development of this hybrid character through pre-Shakespearean drama and thus back to the Family of Iago. In order to evaluate Spivack's thesis it will be necessary to follow him on this long road and to engage in some general discussion of the morality plays and the nature of the Vice.

Many themes and strands from medieval literature and society are woven into the completed texture of the English morality play. Surprisingly, the medieval religious drama is an inconsiderable influence; one scholar feels that the morality plays resulted from a chance combination of allegory with the dramatic method.³³ Allegory was a dominant mode of medieval literature, particularly in

³² Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, pp. 34-58.

³³ J. M. Manly, quoted in Hardin Craig, English Religious Drama, p. 345.

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the treatment of the summons of death, the debate of the body and soul, the parliament in heaven and the battle between the vices and the virtues, the four themes which comprise the content of the English moralities. Spivack considers the last theme, deriving from Prudentius' Psychomachia, of prime importance, especially in the later moralities (after 1500) when there was a loss of eschatological values and a growing concern with the individual and his earthly life.³⁴ The Psychomachia concerns a battle within the soul of man between the Seven Deadly Sins and their opposites, the Seven Cardinal Virtues. This poem supplied to the morality play "a moral definition of life, a psychological method, and an artistic motif."³⁵

Influences more immediate in time to the rise of the morality play (late fourteenth century) include medieval homilies,³⁶ the great importance of death in the late middle ages (illustrated by the Dance of Death in both art and literature), and the various summations of the vices and virtues compiled as guidebooks for the mendicant friars in response to their need for knowledge of human psychology as they heard the confessions of the growing city populations. The only dramatic influence of note was the Paternoster Play, known to have been

³⁴ Spivack, p. 63.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 82.

³⁶ See G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Cambridge, 1933). Robert Withington (in Excursions in English Drama), however, feels that Owst over-emphasizes the importance of sermons to medieval drama.

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performed at York, Lincoln, and Beverley, in which the Lord's Prayer was divided into seven petitions, each presenting a vice and its opposite virtue. The cycle plays appear to have exerted no direct influence; rather, the moralities, reflecting above all an increasing medieval interest in the individual, tended to supplant the cycles and to substitute the life span and fate of one human for the cyclic conception covering the scheme of salvation for all men in the chronological span from Creation to Doomsday.

Although at least one scholar has seen in the overall pattern of the moralities a stage in the development to Elizabethan tragedy,³⁷ my concern here will be with one particular aspect of the moralities, the Vice, and his possible influence on Shakespeare's villains. L. W. Cushman, who has published the most complete compendium of the characteristics of devils and vices in pre-Shakespearean drama, stresses the separation of the Vice from the devil and, in fact, maintains that the devil, the Vice, the clown, the fool, and the villain "are parallel figures of quite independent origin and function."³⁸ The devil is a theological figure coming from the Bible and has as traits revenge toward God for his fall from heaven and hatred toward man as the cherished creation of God.³⁹

³⁷ Willard Farnham, The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy.

³⁸ The Devil and the Vice in the English Dramatic Literature Before Shakespeare, p. vii.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 16, 48.

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Spivack agrees with this distinction, pointing out that the Devil is an historic character, not a personification, and is thus not useful to the moralities; he is, moreover, anthropomorphic and passionate, motivated by the desire to achieve revenge on God by destroying his creatures.⁴⁰ Robert Withington, on the other hand, believes that there is a closer connection between the devil and the Vice than Cushman allows.⁴¹ The plays usually maintain the separation Cushman and Spivack postulate. Mercy's saying that Titivillus in Mankind "syngnyfyes the fend of helle" is about the only specific connection made between a Vice and the devil.⁴² In a few plays both devil and Vice appear; in such cases there is often abuse heaped on the devil by the Vice and they are clearly distinct in function.

Most scholars are agreed the Vice got into morality plays through some sort of association with the Seven Deadly Sins, either as servant⁴³ or summation⁴⁴ or dramatic outgrowth from them.⁴⁵ Before Spivack's study,

⁴⁰ Spivack, pp. 132-3.

⁴¹ Excursions in English Drama, p. 50.

⁴² Cushman calls Titivillus a devil, not a Vice, but Spivack presents a good argument for considering Titivillus a Vice.

⁴³ Withington, p. 42.

⁴⁴ Cushman, p. 63.

⁴⁵ Spivack, p. 135. Spivack directly refutes the summation notion; the Vice, he says, "springs, by a century-long process of doctrinal emphasis and dramatic specialization, from the numerous vices, including the Deadly Sins, who came upon the morality stage out of the diffuse homiletic allegory of medieval Christianity."

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most scholars also agreed in emphasizing the low comicality of the Vice;⁴⁶ the general theory was that the Vice degenerated into a buffoon or a comic sort of villain at best, passing out of English drama in this undistinguished manner. Cushman, to some extent, and Withington, more fully, both uphold this view. Withington, for example, sees connections between the Vice and the Fool of the folk plays, personified devils such as Titivillus in medieval sermons, Herod and Pilate of the cycle plays, the miles gloriosus of Latin comedy, and the ranting Satan of the miracle play Mary Magdalene. He then traces the development of the Vice to the witty page and parasite of later English drama.⁴⁷ Although Withington allows that the buffoonery and rascality of the Vice lead to both the Elizabethan clown and villain, he emphasizes the clownish buffoonery of the Vice which he says Iago has lost, and offers the classic statement of the Vice as comical figure:

The Vice, I think, was never regarded as a fearsome character; his machinations were frustrated by the Virtues in the Morality-play as inevitably as ever Lucifer or Antichrist was overcome by the power of God. It was the assurance of divine victory which broke down the fear of the devils and developed the comic possibilities of their villainy.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Craig, p. 380. Craig, of course, had not seen Spivack's later study, but he does refer to both Cushman and Withington as evidence for his contention.

⁴⁷ Withington, pp. 42-52, 69.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 68-9, 58, 82. More generally, Craig says that there is little evidence that the moralities affected Shakespeare's dramatic work (p. 388).

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Cushman feels that buffoonery is only one-third the role of the Vice. The Vice is also the opponent of whatever good is personified in the play as well as the church, social institutions and customs, and moral ideals, especially temperance, industry, piety. These attacks "appear never to have ulterior aims."⁴⁹ The Vice's third function is to corrupt man:

The Vice appears as the embodiment of worldliness and sensuality, he is free from all restraints and from all bonds of moral ideals. He is concerned only for one thing, that humanity shall give free reign to his inclinations, not however that a soul may by this means be ruined, but that man may be led to enjoy an existence of freedom and pleasure, the vicious ideal of happiness being in every sense the reverse of the spiritual.⁵⁰

In the morality play, according to Cushman, the pattern of action is the Vice coming between mankind and the good, not a struggle of forces of good and evil for the possession of mankind (the Psychomachia). The future development of the Vice on the Elizabethan stage Cushman sees in the following characters: Ithamore (not Barabas) in The Jew of Malta; Mephistopheles in Dr. Faustus; Aaron; Iago; Edmund; Richard III; Don John in Much Ado About Nothing; Antonio in The Tempest. He does, however, add this qualification: "But until the Shakespearian villains have been satisfactorily investigated and classified, it seems idle to say whether these types are historically connected with the Vice or not."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Cushman, p. 77.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 91.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 71-2, 75.

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Spivack eschews this uncertainty. To him there is a direct line from the Vice of the earliest moralities to the villains of some of Shakespeare's plays. Spivack's description of the Vice as "the allegorical aggressor, the homiletic preacher, and the humorist of the moralities"⁵² indicates the triple paths followed by this line of influence. Whereas the third of these functions dominates the thinking of other scholars, Spivack treats it as the least important and least enduring. Indeed, the comedy of the moralities, while it shows that the popular taste called for some leavening of moral seriousness, is really integrally involved with the homiletic purpose of these plays:

This whole body of mirth is purveyed by vice in a context where there is no such thing as innocent merriment, where levity, even in a form so apparently harmless as music, is the positive sign of virtue's absence.⁵³

The ultimate development of the comic aspects of the Vice in Elizabethan drama is Falstaff.

Far more significant are the dramatic and homiletic functions. Though these two are closely interwoven, they can be distinguished for the purpose of analysis. The homiletic function of the Vice is the "formal proclamation of his name and its moral significance" to the audience. In doing this the Vice usually gives his moral pedigree--" a bill of particulars elucidating the meaning of the name and providing illustrative details for

⁵² Spivack, p. 135.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 121.

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the moral quality it signifies." Essentially, the Vice acts as liaison between the audience and the play; he puts himself on display and directly addresses the audience, telling them what he is going to do and assessing the moral meaning of the action.⁵⁴

The whole action of the Vice Spivack calls a dramatized metaphor. The aim of the Vice is "the moral and spiritual ruin of his victim in order that he may demonstrate thereby the destructive force and characteristic effect of the evil he personifies." In a two-fold stratagem of seduction, the Vice first divorces the hero from virtuous personifications and then unites himself to the hero as servant, friend, or teacher. His methods are complex, including virtuous or equivocal pseudonyms; physical disguise; tears which feign affection for the victim and laughter which announces his triumph to the audience, with rapid alternation from one mood to the other; deceitful appearance as an honest man; and verbal deceits such as asides or the equivocation of telling the victim the truth and then claiming a slip of the tongue.⁵⁵ Since man is always won back to virtue in the moralities, the Vice often hangs or receives some other form of punishment. However,

the allegorical immunity of the Vice to any real curtailment of his universal and timeless existence inevitably subdues the effect of his capture

⁵⁴ Spivack, pp. 178, 182, 186.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 152, 152-168.

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and condemnation into a kind of dark-grained farce.⁵⁶

Spivack calls the Vice a hybrid in a double sense: he is "an amoral, elemental force of nature overlaid with traits of humanity" and "a composite of farce and high moral seriousness."⁵⁷ This hybrid figure leads to both the comic and the villain of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

Underlying this description of the functions of the Vice is a chronological development. There is, in Spivack's scheme, first of all the emergence of the Vice. Both dramatic and doctrinal considerations account for the leadership of one Vice over all the other vices which were not only possible but many times actually present in the plays. Dramatically, the need arose for one intriguer to cope with the increasingly individualized hero; doctrinally, the election of one supreme Vice is the result of the common medieval belief in a radix malorum, usually Pride.⁵⁸ Even though The Castle of Perseverance has a full complement of the Seven Deadly Sins categorized under the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and a full-scope action which includes all four themes of the morality plays, Spivack makes out a good case for Covetousness being considered the Vice of the play. He points out that Covetousness has a scaffold to himself, dominates the action by seducing mankind when the other vices have failed, and

⁵⁶ Spivack, p. 196.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 202.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 141-2.

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is called the root of sorrow and sin by Generosity.⁵⁹ In the same way, Titivillus dominates the action of Man-kind, succeeding by guile when the frontal attacks of the lesser vices fail. In Nature, Pride, rather than Sensuality, actually turns man from Reason; he appears disguised as Worship and is equivocally described by Sensuality as "radix viciorum--root of all virtue." I think Spivack is not as successful in finding Worldly Goods the dominant Vice in Everyman, as Everyman appears to have been seduced from God's law by belief in his own prowess and strength as much as by riches, though there are speeches which indicate that Everyman loved his goods best and Goods does explain his nature: "My condycyon is mannes soule to kyll." At any rate, the general process seems clear enough, even in the early moralities. Most later moralities actually designate the Vice in the lists of players or in stage directions.

In the sixteenth century, the morality play begins to change largely as a result of the secular interests of the Renaissance. Mankind is replaced by particular characters, new themes such as romantic love and juvenile delinquency occur, and there is a movement toward the tragic ending. Occasionally such concreteness obscures the Psychomachia motif. Nice Wanton (1547-53) is explicitly concerned with telling parents to be strict with their children to keep them from growing up wrong. There is

⁵⁹ Spivack, p. 143.

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a Vice, Iniquity, who helps the two idle children in their dissipation, but he does not originally urge them to evil actions and displays few of the characteristics which trademark the Vice's performance. Even though there is a good brother who attempts to give the evil pair worthy counsel, there is no struggle for their souls and no act of seduction. However, Lusty Juventus, from the same period and with the same theme of juvenile delinquency, maintains the Psychomachia pattern more clearly: first Lusty Juventus gets advice from good counselors, then is seduced from the good by Hypocrisy whom Satan has called in and is finally won back over by his good counselors.

The final phase of this chronological pattern, dating roughly from the third decade of the sixteenth century but concentrated in the first twenty years of Elizabeth I's reign, is the development of what Spivack calls the hybrid play, a fusion of abstract and concrete dramatic methods, and of the metaphorical and the literal.⁶⁰ The Vice in these hybrid plays⁶¹ remains because of the homiletic tradition and because he ceases to be metaphorical.⁶²

⁶⁰ Spivack, pp. 253-4.

⁶¹ These plays are John the Evangelist (1520-57); Godly Queen Hester (1525-9); King Darius (1559-65); King John (1530-6); Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene (c. 1550); Virtuous and Godly Susanna (1568-9); Patient and Meek Grissell (1561-5); The Cruel Debtor (c. 1565); Apus and Virginia (1559-67); Horestes (1567); Cambises (1558-69); Common Conditions (1576); Tom Tyler and His Wife (1550-80). The dates are taken from Spivack's "Bibliography of Morality Plays."

⁶² Spivack, p. 278.

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The homiletic transparency of the role "resists the naturalistic transformation and keeps the moral record straight through a formula of self-exposure of which the key word, since it is no longer able to be Avarice, Hypocrisy, or any other personified quality, is now literalized into villainy."⁶³ The transitional stage represented by the hybrid plays is essential to Spivack's thesis. But it is in just these plays that the comic nature of the Vice comes more and more to the fore and the moral seriousness of the role fades. His relationship to the plot is often tenuous; he often seems to have survived more because of his comic possibilities than because of the homiletic tradition. In Apus and Virginia, to be sure, the allegorical pattern of the Psychomachia is still apparent even though the Vice represents not a Deadly Sin but the lesser fault of Haphazard. His actions are no longer directed against a representative of mankind or even against a concrete hero; rather he aids a character who can be rightly called a villain. The play first presents Virginia as the center of a happy, loving, and chaste family. Then Haphazard enters alone, proclaiming that he can disguise himself and work other deceits against the happiness of man. In the third scene when Judge Apus discloses his love for Virginia, Haphazard offers to him a stratagem for seducing Virginia. At this point the Psychomachia occurs, but for the soul of the villain. Conscience and Judgment try to prevent Apus from carrying out the seduction, but

⁶³ Spivack, p. 303.

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Haphazard rebuffs them, arguing that their counsel should not be considered by men. The denouement is entirely in the hands of Virginia rather than good personifications. When she chooses death instead of dishonor, all the evil-doers, including Haphazard, are punished.

Other of the hybrid plays show a more considerable degeneration from the pure morality form. Desire, the Vice of Tom Tyler and His Wife has gotten Tom a wife who turns out to be Strife, a shrew, but he does nothing else in the play and hardly appears to be a Vice at all except as instigator of the action. Rather than being allegorical the play is simply the battle of the sexes on a very low level of comedy. Cambises, a lamentable tragedy mixed full of pleasant mirth, offers a Vice, Ambidexter, mainly to tie the diverse moods together and to serve as presenter and commentator for the action. In the serious plot the valiant King Cambises degenerates through drink into a cruel tyrant. After many evidences of his cruelty (which incidentally give the players the chance to show off some excellent stage tricks), Cambises dies accidentally, commenting that his death is a just reward for his misdeeds. Ambidexter, whose nature is to play with both hands, first enters comically accoutered as a soldier in parody of the war preparations of the previous scene. The burden of his speech is largely vain-boasting of his prowess in war, though he does mention his name and its significance. He promises the ruin of Sisamnes, left behind as judge

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by Cambises, and then turns to low comedy with three ruffians, Huf, Ruf, and Snuf. Throughout the play he alternates between the comic and the serious action. At one point he insinuates to Cambises that his brother Smirdis plans murder and usurpation and, pleased with himself, utters the Vice's traditional line: "Dooth not this geere cotten?" However, Ambidexter is not the instigator of all the serious action; Cambises' cruelty has naturalistic causes. Moreover, the predominant effect of the Vice's role is comic.

The same is true of Ill Report in The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna. In this play the Vice is called in by his "dad" Satan to corrupt Susanna. Ill Report accepts the challenge; in a long soliloquy he gives his moral pedigree and shows how Satan has failed by cataloguing the sins and temptations Susanna has resisted. Determining to utilize a sexual approach, Ill Report wins Voluptas and Sensuality to his cause. In the process he tries to pass himself off as Will Report. However, True Report and a loyal servant protect Susanna and nearly hang the Vice, who is carried off by a Satan promising him great tortures for his failure. It is interesting that Ill Report's equivocating disguise is not an opposite and good moral quality, but rather a shifting into an actual Christian name. Similarly, he tries to blunt True Report's effectiveness by calling him Hugh Report. The Vice in this play is a well-developed character who both presents

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a morally serious action and takes part in it, but his speeches are full of nonsense and his actions are often farcical so that again the total effect is one of comedy.

Spivack, who minimizes the comic aspects of these plays, traces the hybrid image out of hybrid plays into farce (such plays as Gammer Gurton's Needle and Ralph Roister-Doister) and serious drama. In the latter group Spivack says the Vice figure is assimilated to someone of importance and evil nature already in the plot, his villainy is a demonstration of his nature, his motives lack vitality because the character is really amoral and his performance is homiletic showmanship, and his intimacy with the audience survives.⁶⁴ Spivack sees this hybrid figure in Barabas in The Jew of Malta, Clois Hoffman in The Tragedy of Hoffman, Eleazar in Lust's Dominion, and Piero in Antonio's Revenge, among others. In the final section of this study, I will deal specifically with Spivack's comments on these characters as in the next section I will consider his specific comments on the Family of Iago. For at this point we have returned to Shakespeare's villains and there remains for the present an appraisal of Spivack's thesis.

Spivack is most successful in his discussion of the morality plays. He has focussed on the main theme, the Psychomachia, and has followed this pattern through its various changes. He has described with often startling

⁶⁴ Spivack, pp. 338-9.

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insight the role of the Vice and has offered a valuable corrective to theories viewing the Vice as only comic by maintaining that the Vice has a great deal of moral seriousness in later plays which have degenerated from the pure morality pattern and atmosphere, though here I believe he has pushed his thesis too far by neglecting what is often the dominant image created by the Vice in a particular play. Certainly his study of the Vice, which places a description of that role into a framework of the developing and changing morality convention, is far more valuable than Cushman's earlier study, which is little more than a cataloguing of the various qualities of the Vice. Moreover, Spivack has provided the scholarly background of the possible connections between later dramatic figures and the Vice which many critics had previously assumed in their discussions of villains and clowns. That there was a strong dramatic convention carrying over from the moralities and hybrid plays into the greater dramatic flowering of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England cannot be disputed. That the Family of Iago and the other villains mentioned by Spivack show in their characterization and dramatic action certain specific traits and qualities consistently utilized in the various Vices he has proved beyond doubt. That this convention is a sufficient explanation of the nature of Shakespeare's villains, however, has not been shown. Indeed, Spivack makes no such general claim, though he does deem

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that he can account for several of the major villains who are key figures in any general theory. Part of my reservation concerning Spivack's argument is simply that I believe that more of the villains in Shakespearean drama are more closely allied than he allows for. Another part, which will be made explicit in the next section, includes disagreement on specific points of interpretation in regard to individual villains. However, my main approach will not be the refutation of Spivack's argument. My thesis is complementary to his, not diametrically opposed to it. My concern with the ideas of the villains leads into the naturalistic dimension of the villains' roles; his concern with the remnants of an obsolescent convention leads him away from the growing naturalism of Shakespeare's dramaturgy.⁶⁵

In its simplest terms, Spivack's theory has added a native dramatic convention to Coleridge's motiveless malignity to explain certain Shakespearean villains. The intervening theory, the Seneca-Machiavel complex, is a convention created not so much by the dramatists as by modern scholars out of the classical literary tradition and a common counter of Renaissance thought. The next general theory to be considered is one which studies the validity of various conventions applied to Shakespeare's villains. The importance of this approach lies not so much in its offering new insights as in its appearance in a

⁶⁵ A tendency also discussed by Spivack, pp. 451-3.

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recent book, Charles Norton Coe's Shakespeare's Villains.

In reaction to the romantic criticism of the Coleridge-Bradley line of the nineteenth century, a line which stressed subjective interpretations and elevated character analysis to a supreme pedestal, certain scholar-critics of the twentieth century, notably E. E. Stoll and Levin Schücking, sought to get at the historical, objective truth about Shakespeare's creations. Their credo aimed to undermine both subjectivism and bardolatry:

an historical understanding of Shakespeare is to be reached only by taking him much more literally than we have been wont to do, his art as more naive, his methods as frequently far more primitive.⁶⁶

The research of these scholars led to the discovery of a number of conventions, and in Schücking's case to the formulation of certain principles which pertain to Shakespeare's dramas in general and his handling of villains in particular.

Despite a new approach in his major study Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays, Schücking is still working the old vein of character study. In cataloguing and discussing what puzzles him about some of Shakespeare's characters, Schücking is quick to formulate general laws which often have a bearing on the activities of the villains. First of all, Schücking is bothered by the villains' habit of self-explanation. He decides that the villains who openly discuss their own villainy cannot

⁶⁶ Levin L. Schücking, Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays, pp. 26-7.

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on this account be cynics and are by no means examples of realistic characterization, but rather report their intentions so the audience will not be confused on moral issues. This procedure is one of the primitive stage traditions Schücking finds in Shakespearean drama.⁶⁷

Presumably he has reference to the morality plays in which characters, both good and bad, often explain their names and allegorical significance to the audience on first appearance.

Schücking sees further problems in the statements made by villains about others. He considers Edmund's praising of Edgar as a noble brother inconsistent with Edmund's thoroughly villainous nature. As explanation Schücking offers the suggestion that the speech in question occurs early in the play as part of the exposition and is necessary again to keep the audience straight on the good and bad characters.⁶⁸ Schücking is apparently blind to any irony in the drama and insensitive to double meanings. Edmund hates Edgar because he is noble and because Edgar stands in line of succession to the nobility. Furthermore the adjective "noble" is coupled with the phrase "foolish honesty"; Schücking overlooks the fact that the Shakespearean villain bases his deceitful actions on a thorough understanding of the nature of his victims. Edmund's praise, far from being an inconsistency, is rather an integral part of his character and villainous technique.

⁶⁷ Schücking, pp. 36-8.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 61-2.

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Schücking sees a similar inconsistency in Iago's calling Othello noble, upright, and true. With two examples of the same problem he is ready to state a general law:

We clearly see that the villains in Shakespeare are not allowed to appear as honest characters even in their own eyes, and that the noble characters must be noble even in the eyes of their wicked enemies.⁶⁹

Such a dramatic practice is one more instance for Schücking that the pendulum of Shakespeare's art swings from "a highly advanced realism" to an "almost childish primitiveness."⁷⁰ However, the formulation of this principle seems particularly unnecessary, as does that of its corollary:

the first mention in the drama of things which are important for the action or the characterization of the central figure must never be allowed in the interest of the characterization of secondary figures to distort the representation of the facts.⁷¹

Even such a tortured law as this has its exceptions, as Schücking himself admits in the case of Lady Macbeth's evaluation of Macbeth. But even more important to the destruction of this legalistic approach to literary study is the neglect by its practitioners of any complexity or ambiguity. In short, Iago's statements, more than being mere exposition for the audience, are an essential

⁶⁹ Schücking, pp. 65-6.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 66.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 71.

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Inevitably Schücking confronts Iago's motives. From the other plays Schücking has derived the principle that any explanation of motives by a character in a monologue is correct. But Iago is an exception to this rule, even a mistake; there is apparent in him a discrepancy between Shakespeare's "instinctive processes of creation" and his "conscious intention," because Iago does not give the real reasons for his actions and his numerous motives cancel one another out.⁷³ In this case Schücking does not offer a convention as solution; rather he takes the far more dangerous and subjective course of determining what was going on in Shakespeare's mind. In general Schücking's laws stand condemned by his own exceptions. The positive results of what could be a worthwhile approach to Shakespeare turn out to be meager, particularly in increasing our understanding of the villains.

Contemporaneously with Schücking, E. E. Stoll applied the same general method. His conclusions concerning the

⁷² Samuel Bethell, Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition takes a similar attitude (p. 88): "Professor Schücking regards the self-knowledge of Iago and Edmund as purely conventional, but I should qualify this assumption. Both are of the Machiavel type, characters illustrating the new Renaissance cynicism, and it is therefore consistent to regard them as cynically self-aware. . . . Each of them recognizes not only his own villainy, but the virtues of those he is plotting against; yet I cannot consider this as a conventional recognition, since the virtues are recognized only to be despised."

⁷³ Schücking, pp. 210-13.

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villains are most conveniently assembled in the chapter "The Criminals" in his Shakespeare Studies. Primarily, Stoll is bothered because Shakespeare's villains are not real in reference to fact and life. Whereas modern literary villains exhibit their humanity by being complex mixtures of good and evil, Shakespearean villains are the antithesis of human since they are completely evil. Even though he warns against the fallacy of thinking literature should be like life, Stoll maintains that real criminals act decently and morally except for their crimes and proceeds to judge dramatic villains by this standard. In order to account for these monolithic, consistently evil characters, Stoll utilizes all the conventions mentioned so far.

The main convention which Stoll sees operating in Shakespeare's villains is the stock figure of the Machiavel, deriving from a misconception of Machiavelli and from such Senecan figures as Atreus. Shakespearean Machiavels include Aaron, Richard III, and Iago, whom Stoll considers the greatest Elizabethan Machiavel and the culmination of a tradition beginning with Marlowe's Barabas.⁷⁴ According to Stoll, the Elizabethan dramatists blackened the villains they found in their sources and created for the stage diabolical figures, possessed of the violence of the lion and the craft of the fox, who boasted of their own prowess and their atheism, who exalted their own wills

⁷⁴ Shakespeare Studies, p. 382.

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above all other men, who rioted in lust, dissimulation, blasphemy, murder.⁷⁵ Native stage tradition also plays its part in Stoll's account. Asserting that atheism in the Renaissance meant "not scepticism but enmity with God," Stoll observes that the devils did the mischief in medieval plays and the villains in Elizabethan.⁷⁶ Thus he ties the Shakespearean villain to the morality Vice on the grounds that both work against God's purposes. Referring to Bradley's acute observation that it is evil which in Shakespeare's plays brings about a convulsion in the order of things, Stoll maintains that quite naturally the evil came to be embodied in a single person, doctrinally because the age believed in demoniacal possession and total depravity, dramatically because the dramatist wanted to present struggle, intrigue, and external action.⁷⁷

Like Schücking, Stoll detects a primitive stage convention at work in the direct exposition of a character's own qualities to the audience:

No Elizabethan dramatist . . . quite realized, or showed he realized, that a character is not one who tells his story but acts it, and speaks, not for audience or dramatist, but only for himself.⁷⁸

Stoll, however, does argue that the frankness and self-consciousness of the villains are not merely a technique to Shakespeare because much of the plain-speaking is unnecessary (e.g. Iago); the villain who speaks ill of

⁷⁵ Shakespeare Studies, pp. 337, 343.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 341.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 341-2.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 364.

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himself need not speak so truly and justly of the good; Shakespeare had a moral bias which applies to wicked characters as well as those of mingled nature; and the same technique is used, as in the boasting of great characters, in situations not concerned with moral purpose.⁷⁹ Stoll takes these factors to mean that the concept of point of view, the difference between the author and his characters, was alien to Shakespeare's dramatic method, particularly when matters of morals or conscience were at stake or the villain was being presented.⁸⁰ Stoll does not see, however, that this direct self-explanation is not merely a technique because it is an integral part of the characterization of the villains, advancing our notions of what they are like as well as giving their ideas and their plans for coming action. Both Stoll and Schücking seem to feel that if they find traces of primitive, unrealistic stage conventions in Shakespeare's plays, Shakespeare thereby stands condemned. Despite their avowed historical and comparative method, they proceed to judge Elizabethan dramatists in the light of Ibsenian and Shavian realism.

Among the expounders of the general theories presented in this chapter, Stoll turns out to be the most eclectic critic. He admits the presence in the make-up of Shakespeare's villains of a variety of conventions and influences, each of which has been asserted to be the only

⁷⁹ Shakespeare Studies, pp. 369-73.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 376.

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explanation by a critic or group of critics. This eclecticism in itself is not bad; it is actually valuable if only to call attention to the complexity of the problem. But Stoll ruins some careful scholarship and some accurate descriptions of the nature of Elizabethan villains by an over-all point of view which is untenable at worst, meaningless at best. The chapter heading and the continued use of the word criminal are symptomatic. Villain is the stage name for an evildoer; criminal, the term used in real life--in police stations, in courts, and newspaper accounts of crimes. This confusion in Stoll's mind is further apparent in some of the comparisons he makes. He points out that Iago, like Leopold and Loeb, takes a somewhat esthetic interest in evil, but this is overshadowed by his hellishness, his love of evil for its own sake.⁸¹ While Iago, along with Leopold and Loeb, might make an interesting case study for the criminal psychologist, it is not necessary to be a criminal psychologist to understand Iago. The modern notions of heredity and environment that Stoll speaks of as controlling factors in man's life are out of place in studying a stage creation which has no heredity or environment outside of the play, particularly one created by a dramatist unaware of these ideas. Stoll sees quite clearly that Shakespearean villains are very wicked and have diabolic traits, but

⁸¹ Shakespeare Studies, p. 358. Incidentally, this statement reverses Spivack's emphasis. Spivack would maintain that Iago's esthetic interest in demonstrating his villainy is the dominant trait.

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instead of making this observation the key to their strength, he makes it the basis of his condemnation of Shakespeare for not copying nature and not drawing people as they really are. The discriminating reader or spectator or critic has never asked of the dramatist that he simply mirror nature in full fidelity, but only that the artist, dealing with recognizable elements of human experience, shape them into a meaningful and emotionally-satisfying form. Iago, then, can be an extremely exciting stage villain no matter whether he conforms to behavioral patterns of twentieth-century criminals or not.

The most recent approach to an evaluation of Shakespeare's villains through a study of stage conventions is Charles Norton Coe's Shakespeare's Villains. This short book (some seventy pages) does manage to consider eleven villains,⁸² a number greater than any other single study. However, even this numerical achievement does not indicate that Coe has the final word. Indeed, the limited scope of his endeavor shows the need for further and more penetrating studies.

Coe has found that twentieth-century historical research has turned up seven conventions which govern the activities of Shakespeare's villains. Even though some

⁸² These villains are grouped as follows: Aaron and Iago; Richard III, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth; Angelo and Shylock; Regan, Goneril, Edmund, Claudius. This listing emphasizes the fact that not only is there disagreement about the nature of the villains and their interrelationships, there is no clear agreement as to just who the villains are.

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of these conventions have been mentioned earlier, I will summarize Coe's entire list to indicate the complete range:

1. the Elizabethan audience accepted villains as types, so that insufficient individual motivation was not a problem to them;
2. sometimes, as in the case of Shylock, the Elizabethan audience regarded villains as stock comic characters, whereas modern critics have gone astray by giving sympathy to a Shylock;
3. the Elizabethan audience had different notions of evil than we do;
4. the villains conventionally boasted of their villainy and even praised the heroes;
5. the disguises of a villain were always convincing to other stage characters;
6. the slander of a villain was always believed (in the particular case of Iago, Coe feels this convention is insufficient; there are other reasons for his success);
7. the Elizabethan audience overlooked the absurdity of certain incidents, such as Lear's dividing his kingdom, and merely accepted them as part of the story.⁸³

Coe's intention is to see how these conventions apply to Shakespeare's villains in order to determine whether earlier critical opinions about the lifelike quality of Shakespeare's characters should be modified. In order to do this, he tests the various characters according to their effect on an audience, not a reader, to see if they meet the following standards of "lifelike": the characters should have motivation (reasons of their own for behaving as they do); the characters

⁸³ Coe, pp. 5-7.

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should have background, a mind and a memory; the characters should have variety and complexity in their presentation.⁸⁴

Working from this base, Coe finds among Shakespeare's villains a scale ranging from Aaron at the bottom to Claudius and Iago at the top. Aaron is colorless and unvariable and is bad simply because the plot requires a villain. Coe considers Aaron a prime exhibit in refuting those critics who say Shakespeare always drew lifelike characters.⁸⁵ Claudius and Iago, on the other hand, are very convincing villains. Iago deserves praise for his intellect (the plot seems to originate in his mind) and his many-sidedness (he is a complex character and "a real man turned villain for a purpose"). Claudius is effective because much of his past is disclosed, thus giving the illusion that he is a real man, and because his problem of not being able to repent or receive pardon for the murder as he still possesses the rewards of the murder is real and understandably human.⁸⁶

The summary judgment attained by Coe from his study is that "in the most effective plays a proper balance should be maintained between character and action."⁸⁷ Equally disappointing as exciting insight are the conclusions Coe states: the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics were too enthusiastic and uncritical in saying that Shakespeare had great powers of characteri-

⁸⁴ Coe, pp. 7-8.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 11-14.

⁸⁶ Ibid., (Iago) pp. 15-23; (Claudius) pp. 61-6.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

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zation; the villains usually have a clear motive stated early in the play; the appeal to conventions is usually too pat an explanation of Shakespeare's characters.⁸⁸

The historical scholars, with their discovery of various stage conventions, helped to redress a serious imbalance of subjective character study, but they have not demonstrated that character study is an invalid method. Certainly no one would want to discard completely the results of historical scholarship, but as a separate and only tool it has, I think, been far less productive of real insight into the nature of Shakespeare's villains than character study, particularly when the latter is in the hands of a Coleridge or a Bradley. Quite obviously a combination of the two is needed; the ideal Shakespearean commentator would possess clear critical insight along with solid historical learning and perspective. The method or approach which offers the greatest opportunity for such a synthesis is the ideological. The ideas of the characters not only offer an important clue to the understanding of the character himself but also present the maximum possibility for placing a character or group of characters or even the dramatist himself in a firm and often partisan relationship to currents of thought, to a definite historical milieu. Such is the approach, as well as the underlying assumption, of the following study. If, as I believe, a definite pattern in the ideology of

⁸⁸ Coe, p. 67.

Shakespeare's villains can be established, then our understanding of these villains will be enlarged. However, I would emphasize that it is the sense of this pattern and the scope of this study which are new and in any way original. The approach and many of the specific evaluations of characters have already been anticipated. I would therefore like to conclude this chapter by surveying some of the major contributions to the ideological study of Shakespeare's villains.

Despite the fact that the ideological approach has been utilized most productively only within the past thirty years, its genesis lies in the fertile, but scattered and unfulfilled remarks of Coleridge. Coleridge not only is responsible for the influential current of motiveless malignity which actually prompted all the other approaches mentioned previously and finally ran out in the arid wastes of convention study, but he also suggests both the intelligent and the intellectual aspects of Shakespeare's villains. In one of his conversations reported by J. P. Collier, Coleridge commented:

It was in characters of complete moral depravity, but of first-rate wit and talents, that Shakespeare delighted.⁸⁹

In Table Talk Coleridge suggested the nature of the ideas of the villains by remarking

the use which Shakespeare always makes of his bold villains as vehicles for expressing opinions and conjectures of a nature too hazardous

⁸⁹ Coleridge, p. 246.

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Bradley also comes close to formulating a definition of the intellectual villain when he says that Iago best illustrates the two aspects of evil which seem to have impressed Shakespeare most. These qualities are an insufficiency of fellow-feeling which makes an almost absolute egoism possible and the compatibility of exceptional powers of will and intellect with evil.⁹¹ Though Coleridge rarely developed the wealth of ideas so casually announced in conversation and Bradley did not concern himself with a specific theory of villainy, the soundness of their insights has been demonstrated, and often fully documented, both by critics seeking to derive Shakespeare's ideas from the plays and by scholars who have immersed themselves in Renaissance thought.

Before presenting the findings of scholars who have assessed Shakespeare's ideas against the external referent of Renaissance thought, I would like to summarize briefly the theories of several critics who pursue the ideological method by attempting to discover Shakespeare's own ideas from recurrent images, patterns, themes, and other structural devices in the plays themselves. This group, though widely divergent in approach and intent, is unified by a downgrading of historical information in favor of the artistic self-sufficiency of poetic drama and by a concern

⁹⁰ Coleridge, p. 177.

⁹¹ Bradley, pp. 188-92.

for the ideas and values of the poetic creator rather than the created characters, sometimes postulating elaborate rationales for this last-named distinction. Since these critics are not primarily interested in describing villains or villainy, I will mention their position as it specifically relates to Iago, as well as indicate their general approach and conclusions, in order to make their views particularly relevant to this study.

Although he is probably the supreme anti-ideological and anti-historical Shakespearean critic,⁹² G. Wilson Knight is the logical starting point not only as the prototype for the following critics but also by virtue of presenting in his own work the most complete exposition of Shakespearean drama on an internal basis, with results which, however, often appear similar to those obtained by the historical scholars. Indeed, all the critics to be covered differ more in method and emphasis than in results from the scholars who have gone outside the plays first and then brought historical learning to bear on the drama. Knight's interpretative method attempts to reconstruct the atmosphere and vision of each play by rejecting the concept of character and ethical considerations for what he calls personification, atmospheric suggestion, and poetic symbolism.⁹³ Instead of dealing with characters, Knight's interpretation conceives of symbolic personifications representing either values or anti-values

⁹² See especially the first essays in The Wheel of Fire and The Imperial Theme.

⁹³ The Wheel of Fire, pp. 1-12.

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of the Shakespearean universe. For our present purpose, one of the more important recurring symbolic personifications is the cynic (Edmund, Iago, Lucio, Apemantus, Thersites) who works against the value of spiritual love, and is, in effect, a Devil coming between the hero (Mankind) and the hero's loved one (the Divine Principle).⁹⁴ This triple pattern is best found in Othello; Iago, "the spirit of denial, wholly negative," pits his cynical intellect against "lovable humanity transfigured by qualities of heroism and grace."⁹⁵ Instead of ethics, Knight finds in Shakespeare a metaphysic consisting of Good, which is spiritual love, immediate and intuitive; Hate, which is an awareness of unspiritualized actuality and a consequent abhorrence of finite forms separated from infinite spirit; and Evil, which reflects the nothingness of naked spirit unfitted to any external symbols.⁹⁶ In the Shakespearean universe, imaginatively apprehended, are values--intuitional, emotional, and spiritual rather than material. The main values, love and war, are attacked or negated by hate, evil, and death. Symbolic imagery clusters reinforce the metaphysical movement of the plays: aurally, music accompanies the values and tempests accompany the negations; visually, light attends the values and dark attends the negations. Finally, the tragic intuition of Shakespearean drama unifies and harmonizes the dualism of good and evil,

⁹⁴ The Wheel of Fire, pp. 277-80.

⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 123-7.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 290-1.

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life and death.⁹⁷ Even though Knight's whole point of view is radically opposed to the procedure of this and similar studies, the results are much the same and the methods complementary. With his insistence on the poetic atmosphere of the plays, Knight has enriched Shakespearean commentary; working at a different, and probably deeper, level, he has nevertheless found operating in Shakespeare the same general forces that I have, though he pursues their symbolic implications whereas I stop with a description of the naturalistic manifestations of these forces or ideas or values.

A second critic in this group follows Knight in determining Shakespeare's values from the plays, but also owes allegiance to Bradley by concentrating on character and moral responsibility. Arthur Sewell, in Character and Society in Shakespeare, sees the concept of order, embodied in character, as the primary Shakespearean value:

The generation of images, the fusion in language of imaginative energies into living personality, is a concrete representation, a mimesis, of a human soul in the very process of striving for identity, for ordered vision, in the prolonged encounter between Chaos and Reason, seeking to fashion Chaos into order.⁹⁸

Character and order, which is the positive goal of Shakespeare's moral vision, are inseparable; in Sewell's terms, "character is moral vision getting to know itself."⁹⁹ In Othello, which Sewell considers an enactment of the

⁹⁷ The Imperial Theme, pp. 1-31.

⁹⁸ Sewell, p. 88.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 60.

Fall of Man, this means that Iago brings Othello down from a world of spirit to the society of Venice, a kingdom wholly concerned with material means rather than spiritual ends.¹⁰⁰ However imbued with Christian sentiment and phraseology, Shakespeare's moral vision is not ultimately Christian but secular; tragedy originates because of Renaissance anarchism rather than the Christian idea of imperfection.¹⁰¹

Brents Stirling is even closer to Knight's technique when he finds theme, based on the ideas, attitudes, and values, either expressed or implied, which color the events of poetic drama, to be the unifying element in Shakespearean tragedy.¹⁰² Although he has some interest in character and a psychological and moral approach underlies his study, Stirling shows his kinship with Knight's assumptions: "Interpretation which views character as a function of poetic drama implies a rejection of naturalism or the externals of realism."¹⁰³ To Stirling, as to Knight, the individual character is often symbolic. In Othello the dominant theme of reputation is manifested in two ways: the first is a normal regard for esteem and honor seen in Cassio and the early Othello; the second is an inverted, egotistic defense of good name when honor or esteem is threatened, a practice utilized by Iago which eventually causes him to deceive even himself. In

¹⁰⁰ Sewell, pp. 93-7.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 120.

¹⁰² Unity in Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 83.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 196.

his soliloquies Iago moves from mere suspicion to belief in the misdeeds of Desdemona and Emilia; to Stirling this is motiveless malignity to the extent that Iago has no objective reasons for his belief. Othello's downfall comes in the temptation scene when he takes over Iago's view of reputation and murders Desdemona under its influence, but his last speech frees him from Iago's inversion of the reputation ideal.¹⁰⁴

Harold S. Wilson and John Vyvyan arrive at conclusions similar to those reached by Knight, but their methods and assumptions are different from his. Wilson discusses and classifies ten tragedies according to their internal philosophy and then arranges them into an external pattern of thesis, antithesis, synthesis. He finds two kinds of order operating within the tragedies: the order of faith with Christian assumptions which controls Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, and Macbeth; the order of nature with no references to Christian thought which controls Julius Caesar, Coriolanus, Troilus and Cressida, Timon of Athens, Antony and Cleopatra, and King Lear. The synthesis, or solution of the tragic problems posed in the other plays, occurs in terms of war and love in Antony and Cleopatra and in terms of family relationships in King Lear. These plays show that "human love is the greatest good of human life, that without it life is barren, or trivial, or evil."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy, pp. 111-35.

¹⁰⁵ On the Design of Shakespearian Tragedy, p. 210.

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Even though the synthesis is achieved without direct reference to Christian thought, Wilson concludes that human love is a Christian value, that Christianity is taken for granted by Shakespeare and must not be overlooked by the critic. In this Christian scheme, Iago is malign by nature, a symbol of the negativeness of evil, whereas Othello sins, but wins pity by admitting his wrong.¹⁰⁶ Vyvyan discovers from the plays Shakespeare's personal ethic, founded on the principle of self-knowledge and truth to one's self, a basic value not only of Christianity but also of Buddhism and other major religions. Thus Iago's "I am not what I am" marks him clearly as a villain. Like Knight, Vyvyan attaches symbolic value to certain recurring Shakespearean characters; the young girls stand for Love, the old counselors stand for Fidelity, and such villains as Iago stand for the fault in the hero's soul. Vyvyan relates these symbolic characters to the archetypes of Jungian psychology: Anima, Wise Old Man, Shadow.¹⁰⁷

The final "internalist" critic is John Lawlor, who describes the particular nature of Shakespearean tragedy as the co-existence of opposites: appearance and reality, man as agent and patient, accident and design, the natural and supernatural, truth of imagination and the idea of justice. The good which Lawlor finds expressed in the tragedies is the natural bond, freely entered into, while the evil is anything which destroys this bond or separates

¹⁰⁶ On the Design of Shakespearian Tragedy, p. 61.

¹⁰⁷ The Shakespearian Ethic, pp. 98, 146, 162.

man from it. Although all the villains possess recognizable human nature and no one is evil by a divine thrusting on, the natural and supernatural do exist side by side. This means that Iago has the natural cause of his mentioned motives as well as a supernatural diabolic hatred to turn him against Othello. Falling back on the term Machiavel to describe Iago, Lawlor says that the evil of the Machiavel "must be the implacable enemy of all that is ordered, submissive and cooperating."¹⁰⁸ More generally, he finds that the evil in Shakespeare is characterized by dreadful simplicity, plots its own destruction, has cunning and energy, but is marked by a fatal immaturity.¹⁰⁹

All of these critics, concerned with the suggestive element of poetic drama, with symbols and other non-naturalistic features of the plays, have evolved, in their own terms, some statement of order and harmony and value as the good in Shakespeare and have found evil to be a denial or negation of this good. Their intuitive conclusions have been supplemented by a group of historical scholars who have placed Shakespearean drama in a context of Renaissance thought and have made explicit in naturalistic terms what values Shakespearean characters upheld or attacked. An early pleader for an interpretation of Elizabethan literature based on historical knowledge was Hardin Craig, whose The Enchanted Glass not only sounded the call for a great synthesis of Renaissance background

¹⁰⁸ The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare, p. 100.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 181.

material but also, in the manner of Francis Bacon, whose words were utilized for chapter headings, proceeded to lay the ground rules and to summarize much Elizabethan knowledge about cosmology, the nature of man, rhetoric, and other areas of learning especially pertinent to literature. This approach was furthered by E. M. W. Tillyard in The Elizabethan World Picture, a concise account of the concept of cosmic order held by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Almost simultaneously with the appearance of Tillyard's book, Theodore Spencer, in America, formulated similar principles of order against which he then projected Shakespeare's statements about the nature of man.

Occasionally, Spencer strikes themes which are valid generally for the villains, as in this discussion of Richard III:

Order and society are nothing to him; he is the first of those Shakespearean villains who refuse to see the interconnections between the various spheres of Nature's activity. . . . "I am myself alone"; Iago and Edmund would have said the same.¹¹⁰

Or he helps to clarify the nature of a specific villain. The Iago of scholarship, says Spencer, has been formalistic, an equivalent to the Vice, and a manipulator of the action; a typical Machiavellian who enjoys evil for its own sake; or a neo-Senecan villain-hero out to justify himself against circumstances which oppress him. Spencer feels rather that Iago is the Renaissance ideal gone bad; specifically, Iago is made up of "the concept of the difference between outer show and inner fact"; "the

¹¹⁰ Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, p. 72.

concept of the evil man as "individualist"; "the concept of the evil man as the incomplete man, the man who does not contain all the psychological levels that should make up a human being."¹¹¹

King Lear has been especially fruitful for students of Shakespeare's ideas. In a short article R. C. Bald linked Edmund's ideology to Renaissance free thought. Bald describes Edmund's evil as reasoned and calculated and says his creed is anarchy.¹¹² Further Bald connects Edmund's rejection of astrology to similar ideas in Cassius and Iago. Since only freethinkers rejected astrology, Bald concludes that these characters are subversives who threatened the order of Renaissance society.¹¹³

In the year following Bald's article, John F. Danby published a book-length exposition of the doctrine of nature in King Lear. Danby sees in Edmund the New Man of the Renaissance: opportunistic, emancipated, energetic, clearheaded. Edmund's nature is scientific; he knows that men can manipulate the laws of nature.

It is significant that in the figure of Edmund the sense of separation from nature and superiority to it goes with a sense of the individual's separation from the community and a feeling of superiority to his fellows.¹¹⁴

Though Danby believes that the Edmund-figure does not appear again in Shakespearean drama, he does find several

¹¹¹ Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, pp. 131-5.

¹¹² "Edmund and Renaissance Free Thought," J. Q. Adams Memorial Studies, p. 347.

¹¹³ Ibid., pp. 347-9.

¹¹⁴ Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, pp. 38, 34-7, 48-9.

figures who are ancestors of Edmund: Richard III, the Bastard in King John, Falstaff. Strangely, Danby neglects to include Iago in this category, calling him rather a complete villain who could not be put to any good use "even in the second-best world of the political."¹¹⁵

Robert Speaight also sees Edmund as the New Man, finding him akin to Iago and Antony, Henry V and Falstaff, the Bastard Falconbridge and Richard III. The world in which these men operate

is the free-for-all society, the jungle of unrestricted competition, the swaggering, rampant capitalism of the New Age. Here is adventure instead of custom, contract instead of status, man instead of God.¹¹⁶

Speaight includes in his definition as many heroes as villains; thus the world view he describes is not necessarily utilized for evil ends. I believe, however, that adherents to this ideological pattern were consistently utilized in Shakespearean drama as evil characters. I would not overlook the possibility that the protagonist can perform evil deeds (Richard III and Macbeth are obvious examples), but I feel Speaight's pattern of relationships could bear sharper definition. In short, the differences between Iago and Antony are greater than the similarities, requiring the two to be kept in separate categories.

William Rosen has also generalized from a discussion

¹¹⁵ Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, pp. 164, 58-94.

¹¹⁶ Speaight, p. 95.

of the villains in Lear to a wide view of the new society:

The representatives of the new society look at the world in the same way. They advance their fortunes by scrutinizing men and events to gain mastery over them. They have a rational account of everything; they live in the realm of fact where only the things that are seen have worth because these can be pragmatically evaluated.¹¹⁷

As can be seen, there is fairly general agreement as to the significance of the ideas in King Lear and Othello and a general feeling on the part of scholars that these plays and possibly a few others represent Shakespeare's response to some new, anti-traditional currents of thought. However, in the scholars noted, there has not been any attempt to analyze all of Shakespeare's plays or all his villainous characters in the light of these ideas.

Hiram Haydn has viewed the problem from another angle. In The Counter Renaissance he has provided a wide-scope background of ideas against which to place the thoughts and activities of Shakespeare's villains. While the account of specific villains is necessarily limited in a study concerned with a broad range of humanistic, scientific, philosophical, and religious ideas, Haydn does give serious consideration to Edmund and Iago. Edmund is essentially individualistic, materialistic, naturalistic, deterministic. Generalizing from this portrait, Haydn notes that many other Elizabethan adherents to naturalism were apt to be villains who held in contempt the traditional humanistic values of law, justice, right reason, virtue--all things

¹¹⁷ Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy, p. 22.

which were man-made and not established in the nature of things.¹¹⁸ Iago is held to be a Counter Renaissance figure by Haydn because he is a thoroughgoing pragmatic Machiavellian, he is a devotee of the science of the particular, and he has a "downward" view of human nature, scorning all idealistic emotions. Haydn concludes that most of Shakespeare's characters who express these and similar Counter Renaissance ideas are villains.¹¹⁹

Finally, the ideological approach has centered on Shakespeare's villains as opponents of Christianity and Christian humanism. Specifically, Herbert Weisinger has stated that Iago's glorification of his own will is the antithesis of Christian belief. He unites Iago to Falstaff as villains whose villainy consists in their ideas.¹²⁰ Paul N. Siegel, in discussing the relationships of Shakespearean tragedy to the Elizabethan compromise, makes a more general application. He comments that Shakespeare's villains employ reason but pervert it to their individual desires; moreover, their individualism threatens the natural order. Indeed they "blow themselves up in the explosion they themselves cause by their disregard of the law of nature." Ultimately these villains "embody values destructive to the ideal of Christian humanism."¹²¹

New concepts of nature, of man, of religion, of

¹¹⁸ Haydn, pp. 640-9.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 656.

¹²⁰ "Iago's Iago," U. of Kansas City Review, XX (1954), 85.

¹²¹ Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise, pp. 86, 87.

society, and even, possibly, what we take to be the Renaissance itself--all these are part of the ideological background of Shakespeare's villains. It remains now to examine the whole body of Shakespeare's plays to show what use the villains make of these ideas and to describe the Shakespearean pattern of villainy, a pattern that is consistent both in ideology and mode of demonstration for most of the characters who can be classed as villains.

Chapter II

The Early Intellectual Villains

Because of Shakespeare's growing dramatic artistry, the appearance of villains in all types of plays, and the fact that some later villains look pale and anemic in contrast to full-blown early examples, there is no single organizational principle which will adequately allow for all the complex elements in the development of the intellectual villain. Of the possible organizational principles which suggest themselves, the chronological approach seems to offer the most positive qualities: it is customary to think in terms of Shakespeare's chronological development; the chronology of the plays can serve as a constant against which to evaluate the other factors of development; the treatment of the villains does follow certain broad configurations based on chronology.

Henry VI

Although the action of Henry VI is extremely complex and the characters numerous, the struggle between Gloucester and Winchester in the first and second parts of the trilogy stands out as an important plot element and also provides a suitable starting point for the discussion of the intellectual villain. Winchester is clearly a villain and is opposed to a man of honesty, integrity, and undoubted patriotic fervor. Moreover, Winchester appears in an early, if not the first, Shakespearean play which is clearly

inferior to later plays in poetic and dramatic technique. More importantly, Winchester is a primitive intellectual villain; he possesses the typical qualities, but in a rudimentary way.

The quarrel between Gloucester and Winchester is really a struggle between secular and religious leaders for control of the state: Gloucester accuses Bishop (later Cardinal) Winchester of being too worldly to be an effective churchman; Winchester's attempts to supplant Gloucester as Protector tacitly admit Gloucester's charges while bringing the issue to a climax. In I, 3, Winchester takes armed control of the Tower of London, forcing a fight with Gloucester's men. Gloucester, in making specific his accusations, calls the Cardinal a "manifest conspirator" who plotted to kill Henry V. Further, he declares, Winchester licenses the brothels of London and thus gives "whores indulgences to sin." When their fight is halted by the Mayor of London, the two antagonists continue their verbal warfare before him. Gloucester says succinctly that Winchester regards neither God nor King. Winchester replies at more length:

Here's Gloucester, a foe to citizens,
One that still motions war and never peace,
O'ercharging your free purses with large fines,
That seeks to overthrow religion
Because he is Protector of the realm,
And would have armour here out of the Tower
To crown himself and suppress the Prince. (I, 3, 62-8)

Not only does Winchester show himself to be an intellectual villain by utilizing his knowledge of people (he is here arousing the citizens of London by threatening them with

war, heavy taxes, and the downfall of religion), he also attributes his own program to his opponent, a device most successfully used by Edmund. These charges so outrage Gloucester that he can answer only with blows. Again the two forces are parted and required to make peace, though there are threats on the part of Winchester, causing the Mayor to remark: "This cardinal's more haughty than the devil."

The quarrel reaches the presence of the King in III, 1, when Gloucester reads a formal list of charges against Winchester:

Thou art a most pernicious usurer,
 Froward by nature, enemy to peace;
 Lascivious, wanton, more than well beseems
 A man of thy profession and degree;
 And for thy treachery, what's more manifest?

 Besides, I fear me, if thy thoughts were sifted,
 The King, thy sovereign, is not quite exempt
 From envious malice of thy swelling heart.
 (III, 1, 17-26)

Even though Gloucester's whole point is that Winchester does not act as a Cardinal should, Winchester takes refuge in his ecclesiastical calling and, in turn, accuses Gloucester of pride and ambition. Once more the quarrel breaks out into actual fighting, once more the parties are constrained to a truce. Gloucester swears to uphold the peace, but Winchester remarks aside that he intends not to honor his pledge.

The opening scene of the second part of Henry VI shows the Protector and the Cardinal fighting again. This time

the various nobles begin to take sides, a foreshadowing of the full-scale fighting of the War of the Roses. Even Gloucester's wife has become involved in the universal desire for power. Her forays into conjuring prove not only her undoing but eventually her husband's as well. When Winchester takes advantage of this weakness to arrest Eleanor, Gloucester is forced to reject her for the good of the country. Gloucester himself is then arrested on charges of treason, and the King is powerless to help him. Gloucester clearly sees the plight of an England coming under Winchester's control:

Virtue is chok'd with foul ambition,
And charity chas'd hence by rancour's hand.
Foul subornation is predominant,
And equity exil'd your Highness' land. (III, 1, 143-6)

The principles of morality and order which are necessary to the proper running of a Christian state are being ground into the dust by the methods of the proud, ambitious Winchester. Mounting the final step which will place him at his goal, control of the throne of England, Winchester plots with York, Suffolk, and Queen Margaret to have Gloucester killed in prison.

But Winchester does not reap the rewards of his villainy. In a fit of torment over his guilt in Gloucester's death he dies, a babbling, broken man. He does not die in a state of grace; his end is as irreligious as his life had been. Shakespeare fittingly and ironically makes Winchester's death terrible in terms of the religion

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The obvious evil in Winchester's character is the contrast between his spiritual profession and his secular interests and ambition. By opposing the morality of the church as well as the safety and best interests of the social organism, the state of England, Winchester sets the ideological tone of the intellectual villain. His manner of proceeding also forecasts that of the other villains in this study.

Titus Andronicus

To the "Senecan" horrors, unspeakable cruelties, vengeance, and fierce passions of his earliest tragedy Shakespeare adds a poetic atmosphere of terror and crime, partly by repeated allusions to classical horror stories and villains and partly by conscious attention to the details of the setting. In II, 3, Tamora describes a forest scene in lovely, romantic terms as a backdrop to her lovemaking to Aaron. Less than one hundred lines later she calls the same place a barren, deserted vale, completely reversing her earlier description because evil places should form the backdrop for evil deeds, and because in her second speech Tamora is setting the scene for the murder of Bassianus and the rape and mutilation of Lavinia. The net result of the poetry and the dramatic action is the bloodiest and, to many, the most distasteful of all

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Shakespearean plays, but to a student of Shakespeare's villains Titus Andronicus offers a fertile field of investigation including the first opportunity to analyze a villain in tragedy.

Out of the welter of plot and counterplot, revenge and counterrevenge, four characters emerge as villains in terms of their actions against the heroes, the Andronici. Two of these villains are unimportant. Chiron and Demetrius, Tamora's surviving sons, are motivated in general by the killing of their brother and their defeat by the Romans under Titus, in particular by lust for Lavinia. They are in the play to kill Bassianus and to rape Lavinia and then to be served up in a pie to their mother. Dense, easily led, they add nothing to any theory of villainy, but simply follow their baser passions and do as they are told by Aaron or Tamora.

Tamora is more complex than her sons. Spivack finds her a more intelligible villain than Aaron:

She is a bad character whom revenge sets in motion; and she does not need to protest her villainy, she acts it. Her actions, moreover, are organic to the plot, not a stylized performance based on premises outside it.¹

Certainly Spivack is right about Tamora's motive, but I feel the rest of his statement distorts both the play and Tamora's part in it.

Tamora's friends and enemies unite in calling her a Semiramis, a figure who combined regal power with a

¹ Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, p. 380.

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tendency to cruelty and unnatural lust. Throughout the play Tamora alternates between cruelty and lust. Her lust most clearly separates her villainy from Aaron's. In Aaron's classical language Venus governs Tamora's desires, but Saturn governs his. When she is not lusting after Aaron, Tamora is plotting revenge. In much of the plotting Tamora is led by Aaron, though she does occasionally plot by herself and she dissembles naturally. Her apparently noble and forgiving speech to Titus in Act I is contradicted immediately by an aside to Saturninus in which she reveals her deceit and her intention to destroy the Andronici. In this speech she also gives some politic advice to Saturninus:

My lord, be rul'd by me, be won at last;
 Dissemble all your griefs and discontents.
 You are but newly planted in your throne;
 Lest, then, the people, and patricians too,
 Upon a just survey take Titus' part,
 And so supplant you for ingratitude,
 Which Rome reputes to be a heinous sin,
 Yield at entreats. (I, 1, 442-9)

These remarks show that Tamora has an outlook on life which links her to the intellectual villains, but she is too much dominated by lust, pride, and vengeance for her to act consistently with such intellectual principles.

Tamora creates only one plot in the play; the rest of the time she carries out Aaron's instructions. In IV, 4, Tamora and Saturninus hear that Lucius is leading the Goths to attack Rome. Tamora comes to the aid of her frightened husband by announcing that she will entreat Titus to call off Lucius. She is sure that her charms

and her devices will end the threat. But when Tamora visits Titus she goes as Revenge with her two sons as Rape and Murder. After some seventy lines of humoring the mad Titus she announces that she will arrange a banquet and will find "some cunning practice out of hand" to end the threat of the Goths. Her plot has not been worked out in any great detail. Moreover, she is outwitted by Titus and leaves her sons with him. So Tamora is not an effective villain nor are her plans organic to the plot. She is out of the action for a long stretch in the middle of the play and spends much of her time protesting her villainy, or at least announcing villainous intentions, rather than acting her villainy as Spivack claims. Tamora's speech to her sons dragging Lavinia off to rape sums up her character and indicates nearly her whole range of emotions:

Farewell, my sons; see that you make her sure.
 Ne'er let my heart know merry cheer indeed
 Till all the Andronici be made away.
 Now will I hence to seek my lovely Moor,
 And let my spleenful sons this trull deflow'r.
(II, 3, 187-91)

Tamora readily acquiesces in the rape and murder Aaron has arranged; she is cruel and pitiless; but she is far more interested in her love affair with Aaron than in implementing her revenge. Tamora seems to be an early sketch for Goneril and Regan. Like them she is a monstrous woman, and like them she does not really belong in the inner circle of Shakespeare's intellectual villains.

The villain who comes to dominate the action is Aaron the Moor, Tamora's lover. Most critics have condemned him for lack of motivation. Boyer has said that Aaron shows "absolutely motiveless malignity"; Whitaker calls him "the embodiment of motiveless evil"; Coe feels that Aaron has no motivation, but is bad simply because the plot requires a villain. Spivack changes the pattern somewhat by saying that Aaron utters conventional motives but does not act upon them. Spivack then goes on to discuss Aaron as one of the Family of Iago, one of the villains directly descended from the Vice of the morality plays.² By lack of motive I suppose these critics mean that no one has done anything specifically to Aaron to cause him to strike back, and they have simply attributed his villainy to an evil nature or mere dramatic expediency. I believe, however, that Aaron acts from recognizable motives, and even though he is colorless and flat as a character, he is the first fully-developed intellectual villain.

Throughout the long first scene Aaron is a silent witness to the seesawing events. He has been brought to Rome as a member of Tamora's defeated army of Goths and he appears always in her retinue. In his first speech, a soliloquy which opens Act II, Aaron describes Tamora's new stature as Empress of Rome. Moreover, Aaron identifies

2. The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Drama, p. 109; Shakespeare's Use of Learning, p. 105; Shakespeare's Villains, p. 12; and Spivack, pp. 380-6.

himself as Tamora's lover; so he has a particular rather than a general attachment to her. One aspect of the soliloquy is Aaron's girding his will to emulate Tamora's success:

Then, Aaron, arm thy heart and fit thy thoughts
To mount aloft with thy imperial mistress.
(II, 1, 12-13)

Aaron's motives, then, stem partly from a desire to get ahead, and partly from his seeking vengeance for the killing of Tamora's sons. To get ahead Aaron must overcome several obstacles: he is a Moor, he has an ostensibly lowly position in a defeated army ("Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts!"), and his paramour is now married to the Emperor of Rome. Aaron later tells Chiron and Demetrius that "'Tis policy and stratagem must do/ That you affect" and it is just such a program that he embarks on to gain his two objectives: to wanton with Tamora and to avenge her with the Andronici.

Before turning to a discussion of how Aaron achieves these goals, I would like to return to Spivack's account of Aaron. According to Spivack most of the Family of Iago work against love and marriage, but Aaron specializes in "enmity and internecine strife."³ Further, Aaron's villainy works against the harmony of Act I. By the end of Act I, Titus Andronicus has grudgingly allowed the burial of a son he himself has killed; Bassianus and Saturninus are at odds over both the emperorship and the possession

³ Spivack, pp. 46-7, 382.

of Lavinia; and Tamora's mollifying words which bring about the harmony are declared deceitful in her own long aside. So the situation is far from harmonious. The only harmony Aaron could disturb is that in the family of the Andronici and even there Titus is enraged at one son and his son-in-law and at odds with his son Lucius and brother Marcus. If anything, Aaron's actions bring the Andronici together so that Titus, Lucius, and Marcus eventually present a united front against their enemies.

Aaron is adept in both long-range plotting and quick thinking when a new situation arises. He arranges the death of Bassianus so that the blame will fall on two of Titus' sons, Martius and Quintus. To do this Aaron has buried gold, secured Tamora's aid, given Chiron and Demetrius instructions for the disposal of Bassianus, and forged a letter to add to the circumstantial evidence against Martius and Quintus. In Act IV when word is brought that Tamora has been delivered of a black child, Tamora's sons turn against Aaron. He quickly wins them over, kills the nurse and plans to kill the other woman who knew of the birth, and arranges for a white child to take the place of the one he has fathered.

Until the end of Act III Aaron is unsuspected of any villainy. Playing on his favorable reputation he arranges a false ransom by which one of the Andronici is to give up a hand in return for Martius and Quintus. Titus actually calls Aaron "good" and "gentle" in a diluted

version of the "honest Iago" theme. The irony is underlined by Aaron's asides during the scene. In one of them he says:

O, how this villainy
Doth fat me with the very thoughts of it!
Let fools do good, and fair men call for grace,
Aaron will have his soul black like his face.
(III, 1, 203-6)

Spivack, Coe, and the others find the taking of Titus' hand to be one more blind act of evil, but Aaron is committed to vengeance against the Andronici and here he is merely compounding the sorrow Titus, Marcus, and Lucius will feel at the death of Martius and Quintus as well as providing the audience with another spectacular and horrible stage device. Further Aaron says he takes pleasure in the thought of evil; this is important in an intellectual villain. Aaron also mentions motives in this speech: if fools do good, by implication, the "wise" or "thinking" man will do evil; and a black man can get ahead by being a villain. Moreover here, as in his first speech, Aaron is steeling his will to do evil. He is not evil by nature or the devil incarnate; rather he must see his goals and then force himself into evil channels to attain them. The critical point of view concerning Aaron which I have been combating arises because Aaron is so consistent and so shallow. Nearly every line he speaks directly concerns his plotting or is self-appraisal. Such flatness in Aaron no doubt makes him seem to be simply evil personified, but actually he must overcome strong external obstacles and

he does share with the later villains the conscious use of his will to attain what he wants from life. Moreover, Aaron shares in some aspects the philosophical outlook of the later, more artistically depicted villains. He is, for example, extremely sceptical about the value or efficacy of religion. To Chiron and Demetrius he says: "Pray to the devils; the gods have given us over." Later, wishing Lucius to swear an oath, he taunts him with the remark, "for that I know/ An idiot holds his bauble for a god," indicating agnostic, even atheistic, tendencies.

Besides a deceitful appearance as a good man, there is another similarity which shows that Aaron is a kind of embryonic Iago. When Aaron flees with his child, he is captured by the Goths under Lucius. Aaron is sentenced to die, but threatens silence if the child is harmed. He plays on Lucius' curiosity by promising talk of

murders, rapes, and massacres,
 Acts of black night, abominable deeds,
 Complots of mischief, treason, villainies,
 Ruthful to hear, yet piteously perform'd.
 (V, 1, 63-6)

if the child lives, and gets Lucius' promise to that effect, though Aaron could certainly not deliver all he promises from the part he has played. So, once again he is showing his intellectual supremacy by knowing his adversary and outwitting him on the basis of that knowledge. Earlier he had known that the concept of honor held by Titus would make him eager to chop off his hand to save his sons, even leading the noble and honorable Titus into deceit

to foil the other honorable Andronici who were eager to sacrifice their own hands.

After Aaron has confessed the crimes he has committed within the play, he is asked if he is sorry. His answer is not only a villain's credo but also a faint attempt to give Aaron some life outside the play:

Ay, that I had not done a thousand more.
 Even now I curse the day--and yet, I think,
 Few come within the compass of my curse--
 Wherein I did not some notorious ill,
 As kill a man, or else devise his death,
 Ravish a maid, or plot the way to do it,
 Accuse some innocent and forswear myself,
 Set deadly enmity between two friends,
 Make poor men's cattle break their necks,

 [Tut], I have done a thousand dreadful things
 As willingly as one would kill a fly,
 And nothing grieves me heartily indeed
 But that I cannot do ten thousand more. (V, 1, 124-44)

Aaron probably exceeds his own villainy in this speech which is as much a part of the atmosphere of the play as it is of Aaron's characterization, but it is such a creed which has given the critics cited the evidence for their arguments. I would point out, however, that Aaron takes pleasure in the devices as well as the actions of villainy. If the purely intellectual villain should proceed only by plots, then to the extent that Aaron kills, ravishes, and breaks necks, he is not a complete intellectual villain. He is simply an early version of what later comes to be a distinct pattern of characterization. In the quoted lines he is exaggerating his own villainy (and there is more exaggeration in the lines left out) because he has been

caught and is about to die. He knows the terrible shock his words have on his auditors. Therefore this speech is not the best one on which to base a theory of Aaron's character or his villainy, attractively as it may seem to solve the problem.

There is one distinct chink in Aaron's armor of intellectuality and will--his passionate love for his baby son. Just as the passions of the hero Titus lead him into the rash killing of his own son, rash anger against Bassianus, rash vengeance against Tamora, and eventual death, so does the one humanizing passion of Aaron lead him into rash action and eventual capture. Insofar as villainy is concerned, Aaron's love for his son is a blot and the chief cause of his failure. But in the long speech I have quoted and in his final words Aaron returns to his principles and is unrepentant in the face of torture and a terrifying death. The pattern of Aaron's career--reason and will directed toward doing evil, a breakdown of these principles because of passion, and then a return to the earlier principles--is actually the pattern followed by most of Shakespeare's villains, so that in this as well as his other characteristics, Aaron is the earliest full-scale example of Shakespeare's intellectual villains.

Richard III

In the character of Richard III we have the first Shakespearean villain who is also the protagonist of his play. The critics have been nearly unanimous in calling

Richard a Machiavel. One of the more complete catalogues of a stage Machiavel is offered by Boyer in his description of Richard as

fearless, egotistical, haughty, audacious, subtle, witty, intellectual, bold, treacherous, far-sighted, remorseless, atheistical, cynical, and above all gifted with almost superhuman energy of will.⁴

Stoll compares Richard with Iago and Aaron on the basis of Machiavellianism, but points out that while the Machiavel usually shows no remorse, Richard does, "though it is crudely and ambiguously represented."⁵ Whitaker adds a special feature to Richard's Machiavellianism, his frequent use of Biblical allusions which "make him seem possessed of all the learning of the virtuous but able to turn that learning to his own purposes."⁶ Whitaker notes that the Machiavel was supposed to use religion for his own ends. Probing even more deeply into the concept of the Machiavel, John F. Danby says of Richard: "As Machiavel he analyses the reality behind the pretensions of social man."⁷

The only major critical deviation is voiced by Spivack, who claims Richard III for the Family of Iago. Richard is descended from the Vice because he uses verbal equivocation and frequent tears, he states clearly his moral pedigree, and he works against the values of love and peace in human relationships. The play is simply a demonstration of his villainy. In summary Spivack writes:

4. Boyer, p. 81.

5. Shakespeare Studies, pp. 345-54.

6. Whitaker, p. 62.

7. Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, p. 63.

The dominant trait in his descent [Richard from Vice] appears in the unnaturalistic dimension of the role, in the repetitious and gratuitous deceit surviving out of the old Christian metaphor, in the homiletic method of the timeless personification.⁸

Again, while acknowledging the validity of the quoted insights and recognizing in Richard some qualities of both the stage Machiavel and the Vice, I feel that Richard can more fruitfully be understood as an intellectual villain.

Richard figures prominently in two plays; Henry VI Part 3 begins the development of his character along the lines followed in Richard III. Indeed, Richard's plans to become king are discussed several times in the earlier play, but this goal is not mentioned specifically until Act III of Richard III; apparently Shakespeare assumes some knowledge of the earlier play on the part of the audience.

In Henry VI Richard is both a bold warrior and a subtle, shrewd plotter. Richard shows his subtlety in his first appearance by convincing his father not to honor an earlier oath to allow Henry VI to remain as king:

An oath is of no moment, being not took
Before a true and lawful magistrate
That hath authority over him that swears. (I, 2, 22-4)

Since the Yorks feel they have the only legitimate claim to the throne, they do not feel themselves bound to uphold an oath sworn while a Lancaster is king. Though younger than his brother Edward, Richard often takes the

⁸ Spivack, pp. 393-403.

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lead in family councils, and is definitely fiercer and more vindictive than the pleasure-loving Edward.

Once the House of York has been victorious and Edward has been crowned, Richard shows that he is after the crown for himself. In a long soliloquy in III, 2, Richard curses Edward and all who stand in his way to the crown. But he knows that he must do more than curse and dream. He needs a course of action and he sets forth this course in a way which both shows acute self-perception and also informs the audience of his character:

Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,
And cry "content" to that which grieves my heart,
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions.
I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;
I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,
And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.
I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down.
(III, 2, 182-95)

This speech has been taken as an outline of Richard's qualifications as a Machiavel by Whitaker⁹ and as Richard's moral pedigree in showing his kinship with the Vice by Spivack.¹⁰ No doubt Shakespeare borrowed from both these stage traditions in developing the dramatic presentation of Richard (and certainly the formal, balanced rhetoric of the speech suggests that it has conventional elements),

⁹ Whitaker, p. 77.

¹⁰ Spivack, p. 395.

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but the villainy of Richard as expressed here and in a later speech really lies in the nature of his ideas. A man who can negate all his emotions and deceive the world about his own feelings and actions is a potentially dangerous man. The actuality of this danger is made apparent when Richard explains his motives after killing Henry VI in the Tower:

I, that have neither pity, love, nor fear
 Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste
 And seek their ruin that usurp'd our right?
 Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
 Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it.
 I have no brother, I am like no brother;
 I am myself alone. (V, 2, 68-83)

Theodore Spencer has shown how this attitude is of danger to society:

Even more striking is Shakespeare's characterization of an evil figure, the villain of the trilogy, Richard of Gloucester. For what distinguishes him is the fact that he is set apart from the rest of mankind, first by his malformed body, which is the outward sign of a malformed soul, and second by his thoroughgoing individualism. Order and society are nothing to him; he is the first of those Shakespearean villains who refuse to be a part of the order of nature and who refuse to see the interconnections between the various spheres of Nature's activity. He is, to use the old mistaken etymology of the word, ab-hominable; cut off from the rest of mankind. . . . "I am myself alone"; Iago and Edmund would have said the same.¹¹

Having stated his moral principles, Richard goes on with the practical business of enumerating those who stand in

¹¹ Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, p. 72.

his way and marking them for death. There is constant interplay between the intellectual and intelligent sides of Richard, between the man whose thoughts are dangerous to society and the schemer who can plot how to work his way against society. When necessary, Richard along with the other villains can take a hand in the actual physical performance of evil deeds.

Richard, then, in this early play is presented as an ambitious man, bitter at the world because of his deformities, clearly aware of his own nature and of the obstacles that lie before his ambition as well as the means of surmounting them--in short, Richard is here presented as he is to be developed in the more famous Richard III.

Just as in the earlier play, Richard in Richard III soliloquizes about his own nature and his plans to advance himself. Such soliloquies as the long opening speech of Richard III have been objected to as unnatural by many critics, but it is necessary for an intellectual villain to communicate his ideas to the audience. Or to put it another way, such soliloquies offer evidence that the villains are to be considered as intellectual. Stoll has commented that no Elizabethan dramatist "quite realized, or showed he realized, that a character is not one who tells his story, but acts it, and speaks, not for audience or dramatist, but only for himself."¹² But ideas can be more clearly and forcefully enumerated in direct exposition

¹² Stoll, p. 364.

than they can be in action even at the risk of introducing an "unnatural" convention into the drama.

Part of Richard's opening speech merely summarizes the situation and brings the audience up to date: the York faction has been successful, Edward is king, peace has replaced war, romance has now become the main interest at court. But then Richard turns to himself:

since I cannot prove a lover
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots I have laid, inductions dangerous (I, 1, 28-32)

Here is a man who knows he is out of harmony with the world around him. He knows that he cannot be happy with his world as he has analyzed it and to this knowledge he adds a strong will plus the ability to arrange situations which will yield results more in keeping with his own viewpoint. These plots first of all are directed against Richard's brother, Clarence, and will succeed if King Edward is as true and just as Richard is "subtle, treacherous, and false." The intellectual villain needs to know his victims as well as himself. For him knowledge is power; he easily manipulates men whose natures are open to him.

With the intellectual groundwork laid, the rest of the first scene shows Richard's intelligence at work on a practical situation. Richard's first plot, the implication of Clarence as the king's enemy, has been successful; Clarence is being led off to prison. Richard at first feigns ignorance of Clarence's disgrace and sympathy

for him; one can afford to be sympathetic with his already defeated victims. Casting the blame on the queen and her faction, Richard goes on to describe the king as being run by women, the queen and his mistress, Jane Shore. When Clarence's guard breaks in to end the conference between Richard and Clarence, Richard gives an innocent account of what had been said and jests with the guard to allay any suspicion. He promises to help Clarence with the king, but in ambiguous terms: "I will deliver you, or else lie for you." His intent is clarified when he dismisses poor, simple Clarence to his death. Hearing that the king is sick, Richard knows he must hasten to the palace to have Clarence killed. In a characteristic phrase Richard says he will urge Edward's hatred of Clarence with "lies well steel'd with weighty arguments." This scene clearly illustrates some of the verbal tricks--lies, ambiguities, partial truths--which Richard employs to further his plots.

Fresh from his gulling of Clarence, Richard goes on to an even greater triumph over a more formidable opponent in the wooing of Lady Anne. As Richard himself points out, she has God, her conscience, the bleeding corpse of Henry VI, and the remembrance of her own husband also killed by Richard to make her loathe him. Anne realizes that none of these factors would affect Richard when she says he knows "nor law of God nor man." To aid him Richard

has only "the plain devil and dissembling looks," yet he succeeds in winning Anne. An analysis of the scene shows, though, that he has a strong intellect and will, as well as a keen understanding of Anne, working for him. Anne, like the other women in the play, often replies to Richard by calling him devil or monster, but these names (which seem to have influenced criticism of the play) really obscure the extraordinary degree to which Richard has developed certain recognizable human traits.

As the wooing scene opens, Lady Anne laments over the corpse of Henry VI and curses his killer. Richard forces his way into her sorrow with drawn sword and imperious voice. Anne curses him at length, but Richard merely calls her sweet saint and lets her vent her wrath. Flattering Anne all the while, Richard first tries a direct lie, saying he didn't kill her husband; but since Anne knows better, he has to abandon this approach. Turning to the comforts of religion, he says that the dead are better off in heaven. Moving swiftly and boldly he tells Anne that he would like to lie with her in her chamber. Then, slowing down and gathering the forces of logical proof about him, he tells her that her beauty caused him to kill her husband and King Henry. In a long speech Richard shows that despite his earlier protestations, he can be a lover and he woos Anne in traditional love language, reaching an emotional climax by offering her his sword and his breast open to her revenge. But Anne cannot kill him, so Richard presses

his advantage by giving Anne a ring and arranging to meet her later. He pledges himself to bury the king, and Anne, feeling he is truly repentant, acquiesces. Her capitulation puts Richard in such a good humor that for a moment he is pleased with his own looks and makes plans to dress fashionably since he is to be a lover. Coe argues that Shakespeare "exceeds the limits of probability"¹³ in this scene, but Richard has successfully completed a nearly impossible task by being a true intellectual villain. On the one hand he has disregarded all promptings of religion and conscience; on the other he has shown a strong will and a precise understanding of Anne's character.

So far Richard has acted on individuals. In I, 3, he manipulates a whole group of people. The queen and several nobles are lamenting the king's illness. Richard enters, taking the offensive immediately, but in a defensive tone: "They do me wrong and I will not endure it." He goes on to say that he is not a courtier or a flatterer, but a plain-speaking, honest fellow. The queen and her followers are inimical to Richard or at least form a faction that he must contend with. Although he has need of the queen, Richard makes slighting reference to the fact that her relatives have recently been created nobility. He even abuses the queen's person and accuses her of meddling in politics, so the two are quickly at odds. Then the old queen Margaret enters, pouring out vituperation on

¹³ Coe, p. 27.

Richard as the murderer of her husband and her son. Richard hurls names and charges back at her for a time; finally she utters a long, harsh curse and departs the scene. Richard then shifts his position to say, "She hath had too much wrong, and I repent/ My part thereof that I have done to her." When Richard adds the tormentors of Clarence to his list of the forgiven, Rivers illustrates the effectiveness of Richard's remarks by saying, "A virtuous and a Christian-like conclusion,/ To pray for them that hath done scathe to us." Richard's public reply is "So do I ever, being well advised," but his private, cynical comment is "For had I curs'd now, I had curs'd myself." Rivers' remark shows that he has been taken in by Richard's shifts in position and that Richard is a master of controlling people by telling them whatever the situation requires. This tactic is seen again, with the added device of religion used deceptively, when Richard appears between two bishops to mollify the citizens of London and to win their support for his kingship. Richard explains this device in a soliloquy:

I do the wrong and first begin to brawl.
 The secret mischiefs that I set abroad
 I lay unto the grievous charge of others.

 And thus I clothe my naked villainy
 With odd old ends stol'n forth of holy writ,
 And seem a saint when most I play the devil.
(I, 3, 324-38)

In Richard's world a villain can succeed if he outwardly conforms to the accepted beliefs and norms of behavior.

To Richard, continually mocking these beliefs, such success brings hilarious rejoicing. The intellectual villain really scores twice: first when his plots are effective and second when a credulous world praises him for apparently believing as it does.

The murderers whom Richard hires to kill Clarence have the same moral standards as Richard. One murderer feels his conscience bothering him about the deed, but when reminded of the reward says that his conscience is now in the Duke of Gloucester's purse. He even delivers a little speech which declares that conscience is dangerous and works against the best interests of man. But only the other murderer remains steadfast in these convictions; the first succumbs to Clarence's sermonizing, and though he joins in the murder, he immediately compares himself to Pontius Pilate and repents. Shakespeare's development of the cynical world view of the murderers and their eventually contrasting reactions to murder serves both to emphasize the concept of the intellectual villain and also to show how this concept can be used as a kind of dramatic shorthand to give a valid rationale to minor characters.

Richard, in Act III, moves toward the crown, using the devices already discussed. At court he is all for peace and harmony, but at the same time casts suspicion on the queen's faction for the murder of Clarence. Sometimes he tells the truth about himself under the cover of general remarks, as when he tells the young prince that the world

is full of deceit and a man cannot be judged by his outward appearance. His fellow conspirator Buckingham describes their morality when he says:

The benefit thereof is always granted
To those whose dealings have deserved the place
And those who have the wit to claim the place.
(III, 1, 48-50)

Once king, Richard can no longer trust the "deep-resolving, witty" Buckingham who sees men and events much as he does. There is room for only one man of such perception and such moral atrophy. So Buckingham is executed.

There remains only one further development in the portrait of Richard. On the eve of the Battle of Bosworth Field, the ghosts of Richard's victims visit him and bid him despair and die. Richard's immediate reaction is to cry, "Have mercy, Jesu!"--the only visitation upon him of "coward conscience." The speech which follows shows the social and spiritual sides of Richard struggling inwardly.¹⁴ He fears that if he dies no soul shall pity him. He cannot even pity himself. This episode shows that Richard is not a devil or a supernatural representation of evil. He is all too human and he can be afraid as well as recognize the enormity of his crimes. But this view adds to his greatness as an intellectual villain. To gain the throne he has held fear and conscience in abeyance, using his intelligence to work the devices discussed above. The fact that emotion and conscience can touch him now merely

¹⁴ Danby, pp. 66-7.

points up the human limitations of Richard and makes him a credible human character.

But Richard is not left quaking on his knees. Once he is in armor, the warrior's prowess displayed in Henry VI returns to him and he feels in command of the situation. He can now rebuke conscience:

For conscience is a word that cowards use,
Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe.
Our strong arms be our conscience, swords our law!
(V, 3, 309-11)

And he goes down fighting heroically.

Shakespeare calls the play a tragedy and Richard is more than a villain; he is the protagonist and it is his downfall which constitutes the tragedy. However, his assumptions and procedures are patterns for later villains. His ability to shift with the temper of a group and to make them follow his lead marks the most important dramaturgic advance of Richard over Aaron. Like Aaron, though, he falls off slightly from total villainy. And again like Aaron, it is a human failing, a yielding to emotion, rather than a surrendering of intellectual principle which brings about the deviation. Shakespeare's intellectual villains are hardy and extremely consistent. They know what they want and how to achieve what they want. They understand others as well as themselves. Only their feelings and passions occasionally betray them, though it is against feelings and passions that many of their campaigns are conducted.

In comedy the villains rarely have the broad opportunity of an Aaron or Richard to practice whatever evil their brains conceive. The plot requirements doom their efforts to frustration; the over-all atmosphere of the play often makes them alien figures or at least subordinate to the lovers and clowns. However, two villainous characters from early Shakespearean comedies, Shylock and Don John, though widely differing in importance to their plots, utilize enough of the ideology and the technique of the intellectual villain to warrant serious consideration in this study.

The Merchant of Venice

Although E. E. Stoll has presented an extremely convincing case for an interpretation of Shylock as a villain,¹⁵ he concludes that Shylock is a comic villain, a butt, and pays little attention to Shylock's ideas or intellectual attitudes. Donald Stauffer suggests the nature of these ideas when he says that Shylock is "Shakespeare's first seriously complete presentation of a somewhat justifiable personal passion unreconciled to the social order."¹⁶ The justifiable personal passion would be Shylock's ample and definite motivation against Antonio. A Shylock unreconciled to the social order is a Shylock akin in intellectual principles to Aaron, Richard III, and Iago. This kinship

¹⁵ Shakespeare Studies, Ch. VI.

¹⁶ Shakespeare's World of Images: The Development of His Moral Ideas, p. 106.

centers chiefly around Shylock's realistic view of life and the rational basis for his conduct.

In the play Shylock is presented at first as a careful man of business, one who weighs the financial position of Antonio carefully before consenting to the loan. He is realist enough to be aware of the dangers Antonio's argosies are subject to, but prefers to base his decision on the merchant's good reputation. Further, Shylock explains how he and his people have gotten ahead by their wits by citing the example of Jacob. Antonio, in the first of several explicit contrasts with Shylock, remarks that the Jacob story shows only the blessing of Heaven. The good people in Shakespeare often rely on good fortune, providence, or Heaven to care for them; the evil consistently rely on themselves and their own abilities. So Shylock attempts to succeed by using his wits, studying the situation and taking a realistic view. Even his apparent lapse in granting the loan is part of a larger design, or even plot, to get at Antonio. On the other hand Antonio seems more content to let providence guide him, to send out all his wealth and hope that it will return safely.

Shylock has two strong motives for his hatred of Antonio. Antonio is a Christian who rails against the Jews and hates their "sacred nation." Hazlitt romantically declares that Shylock is "the depository of the vengeance

of his race."¹⁷ But the second motive, money, seems even more to the point. Antonio's main complaint against the Jews is that they take interest on loans; moreover, he himself lends money without interest, thus harming Shylock's business. Antonio makes no attempt to hide his feelings for Shylock. Upon hearing the Jacob story, Antonio says:

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!
(I, 3, 99-103)

When Shylock rehearses the indignities he has received from Antonio, Antonio retorts that he will continue to curse and spit. Shylock's answer is to put on an appearance of kindness and forgiveness and to suggest "in a merry sport" that there be no interest on the loan, but only the payment of the pound of flesh if the entire loan is forfeit. The irony of Antonio's applying to the hated Shylock for a loan is compounded by Shylock's deceptive refusal to seek interest, a major source of contention between him and Antonio.

Carrying on the deceit and repeating his offer of love and friendship, Shylock reproaches the Christians for being suspicious (he says their own hard dealings make them suspect others). If these speeches of Shylock were meant sincerely, he would not be a villain. But he has

¹⁷ Works, IV, 320.

already expressed his hatred for Antonio and called down curses on his tribe if he forgive the Christian merchant, so Shylock is here laying the possible groundwork for the legal killing of Antonio. As a realist Shylock knows the dangers (land-rats, water-rats, water-thieves, land-thieves, winds, waters, rocks) ahead for the badly over-extended Antonio's argosies. Thus, while he cannot force Antonio's ruin and does not actively work toward it, he can plan on the basis of a possible course of action. His villainy at this point is entirely mental rather than physical. Bassanio evidently sees the same possibilities as Shylock and warns his friend: "I like not fair terms and a villain's mind." (I, 3, 180)

The unfavorable picture of Shylock is augmented by Launcelot, the comic servant, who is famished in Shylock's service and considers the Jew to be the very devil incarnate. Even Shylock's daughter Jessica says, "Our house is hell," and determines to leave. Shylock has a chance at rebuttal with Launcelot, but since he accuses him of gormandizing, it would seem that Launcelot is closer to the truth of the matter. Shylock again gives himself away when he says that he will go to Bassanio's feast "in hate, to feed upon/ The prodigal Christian." (II, 5, 14-15)

In the first scene of Act III Shylock appears in several moods. He is distraught about his daughter's flight and her taking some of his treasure. He warns Antonio's Christian friends with the line "let him look to his bond"

when he hears of Antonio's losses and is jubilant with his Jewish friend Tubal over the same news. In the midst of these alternating moods he makes his great speech on the humanity of the Jews, his most eloquent plea for pity and understanding. But his summation is:

And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we resemble you in that. . . . If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction. (III, 1, 68-76)

As Stoll has pointed out,¹⁸ Shylock's plea for sympathy is turned into a rationale for revenge. At the very point in the play the romantics find their most congenial evidence, Shylock is really at his most villainous. Continuing in his role as villain, Shylock makes plans to bring Antonio to justice if the bond is forfeit. It is clear that Shylock wants to kill Antonio, to remove a dangerous business rival from the scene in order to have a free hand for himself.

In the trial scene Shylock appears to be anything but an intellectual villain, but I think the thesis can be maintained. Shylock is characterized as "A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch/ Uncapable of pity, void and empty/ From any dram of mercy." (IV, 1, 4-6) But this speech is an attempt on the part of a character in the play to explain evil. Shylock has already pleaded eloquently for his own humanity. His reasons for wanting the pound of

¹⁸ Shakespeare Studies, p. 268.

flesh are rational and consistent with his own interest. He himself tells the court that it is his humor, but he has already explained why he wants Antonio dead. Seeking to give the court further reasons, he mentions "a lodg'd hate and a certain loathing" for Antonio. Even this does not satisfy Bassanio, and Antonio lays the malice to Shylock's hard, Jewish heart. But again, the motives are clear; the basis for action is simply a rational plot to get rid of a business and religious rival--the perfect murder as it were. When the judgment goes against Shylock, he deteriorates from a demand for thrice the bond through a willingness to accept his money to a whimpering, "Shall I not have barely my principal?" That is, once he cannot execute his revenge on Antonio he is again the man of business, seeking to recoup a loss. His intellectual principles remain intact.

Shylock is left with little at the end of the scene: he must give up much of his wealth, he must become a Christian, he must leave his money to his daughter and Lorenzo. It is no wonder that he is not well as he leaves the courtroom. Hazlitt says at this point "we pity him, and think him hardly dealt with by his judges."¹⁹ This view has not died out. Coe feels we should pity Shylock because he is the underdog.²⁰ But Shylock is first and foremost a villain. To be sure he is a villain in comedy (not the

¹⁹ Hazlitt, 320.

²⁰ Coe, p. 48.

same as Stoll's comic villain). As such he does not have complete control of the plot and his downfall stems from a theatrical trick. But he is presented as a serious character and his outlook, his actions, and his whole nature unite him with the intellectual villains. He has plotted a course, knowing full well its consequences and he has even attempted to force the issue he wanted. Like other villains he has not accomplished his goal, and like the intellectual villains he has remained true to the set of rules and morals which guided him throughout the play.

Much Ado About Nothing

The casual reader or viewer of Much Ado About Nothing is more likely to remember the wit combats between Benedick and Beatrice or the humorous constables than the villain. Don John has a very small part in the play and his mood of discontent is swallowed up by the comic atmosphere. However, Don John is drawn along the lines of the other intellectual villains, though he resembles them more in his manner of proceeding than in explicit intellectual assumptions.

Spivack admits Don John as the weakest member of the Family of Iago. Although he considers Don John somber, wooden, and trivial as a character, Spivack feels that he is a more plausible villain than his brothers and is only slightly linked to the homiletic tradition, this heritage surviving mainly in the language he uses.²¹ The difference

²¹ Spivack, pp. 408-12.

between Spivack's approach and mine can be gauged by the fact that I consider Don John one of the weakest of the intellectual villains. Since I believe that Don John's villainy is largely a matter of demonstration, I would admit that Spivack's theory comes nearer to explaining him than any other villain. However, Don John has clear rather than fuzzy motives; so I cannot accept Spivack's view of him. Also the fact that he subordinates his will to his evil thoughts and quite consciously sets out to work his will on others makes him more an intellectual villain than a Vice figure.

Don John is introduced and characterized as a villain in I, 3. Even though he is talking with his confidante Conrade, Don John is really in this scene continuing the conventional opening soliloquy in which the villain makes explicit his evil intentions. Don John, while self-conscious about his own villainy, lacks the usual accompanying trait, deceit. "I cannot hide what I am," he says, and goes on to reject Conrade's politic advice that he flatter his way into grace. At the moment Don John is extremely discontented. He has recently rebelled in some way against his brother's authority, has been overcome, and though pardoned is still under some sort of confinement or loss of liberty. This situation has aroused a general antipathy in Don John and since he confesses himself a "plain-dealing villain" he needs only an objective to turn the potential into the actual.

The objective is provided when Borachio enters with news of an impending marriage. "Will it serve any model to build mischief on?" asks Don John. As it turns out, the marriage will suit his purposes very well since Claudio is to marry Hero. Don John has not only recently alienated his brother, but he is also a bastard and thus has been very much alarmed at his brother's fondness for Claudio since he himself can easily be overlooked in the line of succession, particularly if the court favorite is of noble birth. So besides his general evil frame of mind, Don John has a particular motive to act against Claudio's happiness and good fortune: "That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow. If I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way." (I, 3, 68-70)

A masked ball gives Don John his first opportunity to put his evil intentions into practice. Making no attempt to hide his own identity, but purposefully mistaking Claudio for Benedick, Don John plants the seeds of suspicion in Claudio's mind by suggesting that Don Pedro, who is to woo Hero for Claudio, really loves her for himself. In this scene Don John shows the intelligent actions of an intellectual villain.

But apparently Don John has reached the limit of inventiveness, for he must accept from Borachio a plot to hurt Claudio. Borachio is aware of the necessity for deceit to bring a plot off. He says he will act "Not honestly, my lord; but so covertly that no dishonesty shall

appear." (II, 2, 9-10) Don John embraces the plot wholeheartedly and condones the deceit he would not admit in his own character. He acts out his part by accusing Hero of disloyalty to Claudio and Don Pedro and by arranging for ocular proof. The plot works well for Don John, but his confederate Borachio explains the plot to Conrade, an explanation overheard by the members of Dogberry's watch. The comic subplot is linked to the main plot and the villainy is subordinated to the humorous attempts to root it out.

When Claudio repudiates Hero at church, a search begins to discover who has slandered Hero. What Benedick knows intuitively:

The practice of it lives in John the Bastard,
Whose spirits toil in frame of villainies.
(IV, 1, 190-1)

Dogberry arrives at painstakingly, though accidentally. In the fifth act, through Dogberry's efforts, Don John's villainy comes clearly to light. Don Pedro, who shares Benedick's exaggerated view of Don John's abilities, reports of him: "He is compos'd and fram'd of treachery. And fled is he upon this villainy." (V, 1, 257-8) This is the last mention of John until the very end of the play. He drops out of view while the plot is unraveled and the couples are paired off. In the last ~~two~~ speeches of the play it is noted that he has been captured and will be punished. By this time Don John has been forgotten and his name is rather forcibly injected into the merriment

to tie up a loose end.

Appropriately enough for a comedy, Don John's plot is defeated by the comic characters. He doesn't seem to be taken very seriously in the play, and, as I have suggested, can be easily overlooked. But his character and, particularly, his method of operation link him with Shakespeare's intellectual villains.

Chapter III

An End and a Beginning

The previous chapter described the intellectual villains who appeared in early tragedies, comedies, and history plays. Though these plays can be considered apprentice work, and mark a groping for the Shakespearean style, the pattern of the intellectual villain was fully developed in Aaron and Richard III and apparent to a lesser degree in the others discussed. The development of the intellectual villain is not necessarily a growth or change in the pattern of villainy; rather, Shakespeare's increasing artistic mastery enriches the characters of the villains, so that they begin to utilize the pattern in a more complex fashion. This chapter presents, as a culmination of the early villains and a preview of the later, Cassius, who is a major villain appearing in a major tragedy, and Falstaff, who unites in his ample figure the double development from comedy and history play.

Julius Caesar

In Julius Caesar four men, led by varying degrees of ambition, vie for supremacy in the Roman Republic. Two of the four, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, form one faction; the other two, Brutus and Cassius, form the main opposition to Caesar and Antony. It is possible, then, that there are two villains in the play; for whichever pair is made out to be the hero group there is an important pair of characters working against this interest.

Few people would deny that Cassius is a villain, though discussion of him in this role has been limited, even tentative and incidental, as in the following quotation from Stoll:

Brutus is, though undoubtedly a patriot, not distinctly presented as such; and is led by Cassius, whose role in this early stage of the tragedy verges upon that of a villain, into conduct from which, like Lear, Othello, Hamlet, and Macbeth, he is averse.¹

Critics have made of Brutus both a villain and a hero, as Stoll here implies by his comparisons. If clear-cut distinctions must be made, I would consider Brutus a villain along with Cassius since both of them work against the interests (and indeed the life) of the nominal hero of the play. I would recognize, however, some ambiguity in the role played by Brutus as the nominal hero Caesar is killed in Act III. Since neither Mark Antony nor the ghost of Caesar adequately maintains the hero's dramatic interest in the rest of the play, Brutus fills this vacuum even though he has killed the hero. The nobility of Brutus' character and his intellectual struggles enhance his attractiveness for a hero's role. The major villain is Cassius, who differs from Brutus in his intellectual assumptions and the conscious use of his intelligence. I will attempt to develop this important distinction between Brutus and Cassius in considering Cassius as one of Shakespeare's intellectual villains.

¹ Art and Artifice in Shakespeare, p. 144.

The second scene of Act I sets all the important characters in motion. We learn that Caesar is extremely ambitious to become ruler of Rome, that he has great skill in manipulating the crowd, that he is superstitious but also personally fearless and apt to disregard such advice as that given by the soothsayer. Antony is presented as a playboy, seemingly without ambition at this time.

Most of the scene is given over to characterization of Brutus and Cassius. Brutus is troubled, at war with himself. He is a thinker, even a brooder; he wrestles with his problems silently, neither seeking nor apparently taking help or advice from others. In sum, he is a difficult man to lead or convert or seduce. But to win Brutus over to his own viewpoint is precisely the task Cassius has set for himself. He first offers himself as Brutus' true friend, then becomes Brutus' reflector to enable Brutus to discover things about himself he doesn't yet know.

When the crowd shouts for Caesar, Brutus betrays his feelings and gives Cassius an opening. Brutus says that he will listen to anything which concerns the general good and which is honorable. All throughout the play Brutus is concerned with the general good and with honor. So in speaking to Brutus, Cassius chooses honor as his theme. To him honor is not living "In awe of such a thing as myself." He then belittles Caesar's strength and courage and goes on to utter what is his characteristic position

throughout the play:

Men at some time are masters of their fates;
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
(I, 2, 139-41)

Cassius knows what he will do to remedy this situation, but he needs the help of Brutus. So he starts to work on Brutus' vanity and his sense of honor. Brutus answers that he has thought of the problem posed by Caesar and has reached this conclusion:

Brutus had rather be a villager
Than to repute himself a son of Rome
Under these hard conditions as this time
Is like to lay on us. (I, 2, 172-5)

To which Cassius sarcastically replies: "I am glad that my weak words/ Have struck but thus much show of fire from Brutus." They are interrupted at this point by the re-entrance of Caesar, who once again commands the center of attention.

Most of Caesar's remarks characterize Cassius. The famous

Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look,
He thinks too much; such men are dangerous.
(I, 2, 194-5)

is followed by a fuller catalogue:

He reads much,
He is a great observer; and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men. (I, 2, 201-3)

Further, Cassius takes no pleasure in plays and music, nor even in smiling at the ordinary affairs of life. Also he is ambitious, too ambitious to live under a Caesar. Though Caesar points out at length that he doesn't fear

Cassius, but rather Cassius is the type of man one should fear, he unwittingly illustrates Cassius' view of him by remarking on his deaf ear. Caesar actually describes Cassius as an intellectual villain: a realist, a schemer, a thinker who quickly gets to the heart of the matter and who can contrive and probably put into action plots to further his own ends. Caesar does not fear Brutus, who is a purer intellectual, one who meditates on general concepts and one for whom thought is often an end result.

After Caesar leaves the stage, Brutus and Cassius hear of Caesar's performance before the crowds and his attack of epilepsy. The latter gives Cassius a chance to return to his theme: "you and I/ And honest Casca, we have the falling sickness." (I, 2, 257-8) But the only resolution with Brutus at the moment is an arrangement for another meeting. Cassius then ends the long scene by announcing his intention to work on Brutus:

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see,
Thy honourable metal may be wrought
From that it is dispos'd; therefore it is meet
That noble minds keep ever with their likes;
For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?
Caesar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus.
If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
He should not humour me. (I, 2, 312-9)

According to Spivack these words of Cassius "dissolve the dramatic imitation of a limited human personality caught up in action and passion, replacing it by a detached and illimitable homiletic voice."² To the slight extent of this speech Cassius, in Spivack's view, has affinities

² Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, p. 413.

with the Vice. More to the point, I think, is Cassius' very clear understanding of Brutus, Caesar, and himself and his willingness to act on this understanding, qualities which are the hallmarks of intellectual villains. In continuing this speech Cassius decides to exploit Brutus' vulnerability, namely his love of honor and concern for general opinion, by counterfeiting letters from Roman citizens warning Brutus of Caesar's ambition.

At the end of this scene we see Caesar's massive ambition in operation as he seeks to rule Rome. Cassius' equally great ambition is poised to stop what he says will be arbitrary and dictatorial rule. Brutus, ambitious that Rome be great and that he be accounted one of Rome's honorable men, is vaguely aware that Caesar poses a threat to his hopes but still requires definite molding from Cassius. Antony has not yet begun to function as a public figure.

In the next scene, amidst thunder, lightning, and fearful portents, Cassius appears, emphasizing and heightening the conception of him as an intellectual villain. Cassius braves the storm unbraced and presents himself to the lightning unprotected. Casca gives the orthodox opinion that men should fear and tremble when the gods are angry, but Cassius feels men can make of things what they will. For him the storm signifies a Caesar grown fearful and prodigious, but still, in Cassius' view, a Caesar who is "A man no mightier than thyself or me/ In personal action." (I, 3, 76-7) Cassius will commit suicide if

Caesar becomes a tyrant, but he prefers to act on the assumption that Caesar is strong only because the Romans are weak. A show of strength will save Rome from Caesar; thus the conspiracy to kill Caesar is born and develops.

Just as Cassius has been presented as typically braving the storm and meeting dangers head on, so is Brutus seen typically in his garden late at night, meditating, revolving the problem within himself. Evidently the storm is over; certainly Brutus would not be at good advantage against the storm background. Brutus, too, has decided that Caesar must be killed, for the general reason of his ambition, not for any personal vices or defects. Brutus admits that Caesar is more often guided by reason than by passion, so he must condemn Caesar in an abstract, future instance:

what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities.
(II, 1, 30-1)

So Caesar is to be killed in his shell, before he hatches out into an evil duckling. But such decisions do not set Brutus off into subsequent action as they would Cassius. His mind is still at war:

Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.
The Genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council; and the state of man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection. (II, 1, 63-9)

But the gap to action must be bridged; the conspirators arrive to plot the details. Brutus shows he has learned

one lesson: conspiracy should hide its true face in smiles and affability. However, in Brutus' mouth the remark is less a mark of worldly wisdom than it is a mark of the disgust at the means he must use. Brutus' more typical ideas appear when he describes the proper motives for the conspirators. Eschewing oath-taking, he suggests rather "the face of men/ The sufferance of our souls, the time's abuse," all general, honorable, abstract ideas. He further suggests some intellectual distinctions which would be hard to put into practice and harder still to defend. For example, Brutus proposes:

Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.
(II, 1, 173-4)

Brutus, in exercising the leadership over the conspiracy which Cassius seems willing to abandon, makes the first of a series of errors in judgment which prove fatal to the cause of the conspirators. Not having Cassius' shrewd ability to size up men, Brutus refuses to engage Cicero in the conspiracy. His oratorical ability would have been a valuable counterbalance to Antony's. More importantly Brutus says to leave Antony alive. At this point Cassius does object, but in vain.

Brutus continues making mistakes in his handling of Antony after Caesar is killed. Cassius fears that Antony will move the people, but Brutus, guided by faith in his own ability to convey the conspirators' position to the crowd, allows him to speak. Brutus, in his speech, stresses

honor, his own love for Rome, and Caesar's ambition. His noble generalities hold up only until Antony mockingly destroys the honor of the conspirators and baits the crowd with Caesar's will, a more tangible and particular weapon than Brutus' talk about love, honor, and ambition. The conspiracy is foiled by Antony's speech and civil war breaks out.

Brutus and Cassius head one army, but they are often at odds. Brutus still attempts to uphold his abstractions and generalities ("Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?"), but such abstractions are even harder to follow on a battlefield than they were in a conspiracy. Cassius pleads his experience as a soldier; his plans of strategy are always better than those devised by Brutus; but he is continually overruled. At one point Brutus shows how much events have unnerved him by an uncharacteristic outbreak of anger and invective at Cassius, but he continues to be the noble, honorable Brutus:

There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats,
For I am arm'd so strong in honesty
That they pass me as the idle wind,
Which I respect not. (IV, 3, 66-9)

Their quarrel is patched up after overtures by Cassius and the two generals turn to battle plans.

Just before the battle of Philippi Cassius shows some change in philosophical position. He begins to put some faith in omens and auguries, although it is only a partial faith and he is still firmly resolved to meet what is in

store for him. This small lack of consistency is often apparent in Shakespeare's intellectual villains before they meet their end. Richard III suffers the pangs of conscience, Edmund does some good despite his own nature. The device is in the nature of the exception that proves the rule rather than any glimmering of a fundamental change for the villains. Certainly Cassius remains true to his principles and commits suicide, though irony robs his death of dignity when good news arrives just after he dies.

Brutus also takes the Stoic way out of defeat and is properly eulogized by Antony as the noblest Roman of them all. Antony points out that the other conspirators acted in envy of Caesar, whereas Brutus acted for the common good. This appraisal echoes the conspirators' views of themselves and is an apt summary of the difference between Cassius and Brutus. Cassius is the main villain because he works against both Caesar and Brutus. The Brutus of the play would not have killed Caesar except through the urgings of Cassius, who knew how to appeal to him. Cassius is the more effective conspirator; he is the more fitted for devising and carrying out plots, for foreseeing the consequences of action, for taking his destiny in his own hands. These qualities make him an intellectual villain.

Henry IV

The mere suggestion that Falstaff is any kind of a villain goes counter to a long critical tradition stemming

from Maurice Morgann. Morgann, along with William Hazlitt, A. C. Bradley, J. B. Priestly, and many others, considers Falstaff one of the greatest comic characters ever created and considers him a comic figure only. Despite the popularity and frequent restatement of this viewpoint, though, there have been attackers of the Morgann thesis. Therefore, I would like to present a summary of this critical dispute before turning to my own presentation of Falstaff as an intellectual villain.

Morgann thinks of Falstaff as a real and historic rather than dramatic being and he announces at the outset of his essay that he wants to clear Falstaff from the charge of being a coward. Then, distinguishing between the understanding and emotions, Morgann goes on to say that we feel rather than understand Falstaff. On this basis we can like Falstaff even though he does dishonorable things; we are enchanted by Falstaff's wit, humor, and vigor of mind. Falstaff's character is made up of incongruities which raise laughter: he has noble connections but consorts with thieves and whores; he is brave but often appears to be a coward; he practices frauds on Justice Shallow and others but is really warm-hearted and generous and has a good reputation. In the realm of thought Falstaff is a military freethinker. He can see through honor and not be tyrannized by its implications. Morgann sentimentalizes and romanticizes the character of Falstaff by refusing to condemn him for any of his immoral actions,

rather allowing all of Falstaff's crimes to be swallowed up in his wit and dissolved away in laughter.³

Hazlitt follows this tendency by saying that Falstaff "is represented as a liar, a braggart, a coward, a glutton, etc. and yet we are not offended but delighted with him."⁴ According to Hazlitt, we do not condemn Falstaff from the point of view of morality because of his wit.

Bradley places himself squarely in the Morgann tradition but goes beyond the earlier writer in discussing Falstaff's intellectual rationale. Bradley states that "the bliss of freedom gained in humour is the essence of Falstaff" and elaborates: "he is the enemy of everything that would interfere with his ease, and therefore of anything serious, and especially of everything respectable and moral." Falstaff simply does not recognize such abstractions as honor, patriotism, duty; they are absurd to him. However, he expresses his views on these commonly-held ideals "not with the sourness of a cynic, but with the gaiety of a boy."⁵

Bradley suggests that there are limitations on Falstaff's freedom. For one thing, even though Falstaff ridicules noble rank and courage, he doesn't entirely rid himself of respect for them. Secondly his freedom has such consequences as bodily pain and such conditions as the necessity for money. It is in order to get money for the

³ I have consulted the abridged version of Morgann's essay in Shakespeare Criticism 1628-1840 (World's Classics).

⁴ Works, IV, 279.

⁵ "The Rejection of Falstaff," Oxford Lectures on Poetry, pp. 262-3.

necessities of life that Falstaff turns to evil deeds, but Bradley feels we should only note the comic aspects of Falstaff's actions. Again, wit has overshadowed immorality in the eyes of a critic.⁶

J. B. Priestly follows Morgann and Bradley explicitly in declaring that incongruity and freedom are the keys to Falstaff's character. He also adds several touches to the conception of Falstaff as the supreme comic character. The scenes in which Falstaff appears are comic relief to the harsh and heavy scenes of warfare and state matters. Falstaff is not only not to be blamed for misdeeds, he actually stands for something good: "He is the embodiment of masculine comradeship, ease, and merriment. . . . He is the supreme example of the clubbable man." Having stated these particular notions, Priestly returns to the general thesis of the Morgann school. Falstaff has escaped from our moral and social order, he says, and has become a master of life.⁷

E. E. Stoll's chapter on Falstaff in his Shakespeare Studies serves both to attack the Morgann-Bradley position and to offer a compromise between the extremes of considering Falstaff as either a comic or a villainous character. Stoll shows that Falstaff is really a coward, Morgann and Bradley notwithstanding, pointing out among other things

⁶ "The Rejection of Falstaff," Oxford Lectures on Poetry, pp. 269-70.

⁷ "Falstaff and His Circle," The English Comic Characters, pp. 88-100.

Hal's view of Falstaff and the fact that Morgann refuses to accept properly the evidence of the Gadshill episode. Then, attacking Morgann's idea that Falstaff is a military freethinker and Bradley's that Falstaff is a moral nihilist and a Pyrrhonist, Stoll asserts that Falstaff merely dodges and shirks honor rather than negating all moral values. Falstaff uses his wit to cover his shame and Stoll points out at great length other stage cowards who used the same tactic. Falstaff's philosophy, according to Stoll, is "for profit and a purpose, which is the negation of philosophy." Stoll does agree with Bradley in saying that Falstaff lacks cynicism; to him Falstaff is "as simple and uncynical as the dramatist and his times." In general Stoll explains Falstaff in terms of stage conventions: he is a coward, a miles gloriosus (though he retains dignity), and a double-dealer.⁸

A third group of critics has seen Falstaff in blacker terms than either the Morgann line or Stoll, but like Stoll sees Falstaff as a conventional stage figure, the Vice of the morality drama. Dover Wilson calls Henry IV Shakespeare's "great morality play" in which "the salvation of England itself is at stake." In Wilson's view the hero Hal must choose between Vanity and Government which includes Chivalry (the matter of Part 1) and Justice (the matter of Part 2). In this scheme Falstaff is Riot, the Vice, the Buffoon, the Jester, and also a Miles Gloriosus;

⁸ Stoll, pp. 403-72.

Hal is the Prodigal and his conversion is necessary to the state.⁹ In discussing Morgann's term military free-thinker Wilson says he prefers the term military cynic to describe Falstaff's beliefs whereas Hal is "the soul of true honour, caring nothing for renown, for the outward show of honour in the eyes of men, so long as he has proved himself worthy of its inner substance in his own."¹⁰

Hiram Haydn reaches the same conclusions about the subject of honor, but views this in Aristotelian terms so that Hal is the proper balance, the golden mean of honor, Hotspur the excess and Falstaff the defect. Falstaff "epitomizes the 'downward' materialistic emphasis of the naturalistic deprecators of the romantic temper."¹¹

Wilson observes that in Part 2 Hal is kept off the stage a great deal in order to preserve respect for his character and that Shakespeare adopts a procedure very close to that of the morality drama: "he brings embodiments of the two conflicting principles upon the stage, makes them engage in conversation together, so that we can judge for ourselves, and then shows us the Prince choosing between them."¹² Wilson considers the rejection of Falstaff just and both morally and dramatically proper and effective. Since Hal does provide a pension for Falstaff, justice is done. Shakespeare has achieved a balance "between the bliss

9 The Fortunes of Falstaff, pp. 17-23.

10 Ibid., pp. 71-2.

11 The Counter Renaissance, pp. 600-5.

12 Wilson, p. 75.

of freedom and the claims of the common weal."¹³

Bernard Spivack, who argues that several of the villains of Shakespearean drama are descended from the Vices of the morality drama, also believes that the Vice led to such a comic character as Falstaff:

It is hard for us, if not impossible, to regard Falstaff as a villain in any sense, Shakespeare having marvelously exploited his affinity with the comic aspects of the Vice. But Falstaff's high comedy is still sufficiently close to its origins in the double nature of his allegorical forbears to prevent him from being a comic figure merely. In him the direct accent of the Vice's wit is not quite free from the faint echo of the Vice's evil.¹⁴

Like Wilson, Spivack finds the structure of the Henry IV plays organized around the morality theme of the young prodigal and the personalized vice, the final result being allegory overlaid with history. But Falstaff, according to Spivack, is "neither morally unified nor self-consistent." He is much too rounded and specific a character to be simply a personification of evil. Thus Henry IV is not a pure morality play, but simply has elements of the homiletic allegory.¹⁵

At the opposite pole from the Morgann conception are a few critics who have considered Falstaff a villainous character with no allegorical overtones. Morgann's contemporary Samuel Johnson was the first. Johnson feels that even though Falstaff has the power to make us laugh

¹³ Wilson, pp. 120-8.

¹⁴ Spivack, p. 204.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 87-91.

he has nothing in him that can make us esteem him. Johnson goes through the familiar catalogue of Falstaff's qualities: he is a thief, a glutton, a coward, a fraud, a boaster, a bully. Further he is at once "obsequious and malignant, [and] satirizes in their absence those on whom he lives by flattering. He is familiar with the prince only as an agent of vice." Even with this view, though, Johnson feels Falstaff redeems himself by his ability to raise laughter, but he concludes with a statement of the moral of the play: "no man is more dangerous than he that with a will to corrupt, hath the power to please." Johnson, then, draws a different conclusion from the significance of Falstaff though he has viewed him on essentially the same terms as Morgann.¹⁶

Coleridge shows his agreement with Johnson by concluding his own discussion of Falstaff with the following: "It was in characters of complete moral depravity, but of first-rate wit and talents, that Shakespeare delighted." This statement could also serve as a definition for an intellectual villain. Coleridge shows Falstaff's proper milieu even more explicitly when he remarks that both Falstaff and Richard III prized the intellectual above the moral character.¹⁷

Finally, to close this summary of critical positions and to lead into my own presentation of Falstaff as an

¹⁶ Johnson on Shakespeare, ed. Walter Raleigh, pp. 123-5.

¹⁷ Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare, ed. Terence Hawkes, pp. 243-4, 246.

intellectual villain, I would refer to Herbert Weisinger's statement that both Iago and Falstaff suffer from the repudiation of values and both had the same ideological and dramatic position, "the villain whose villainy is his ideas."¹⁸ This is the position that I will elaborate in the following pages. While I agree with much of Stoll's realistic deprecation of Bradley's view, I find Bradley more congenial in his evaluation of Falstaff's ideas than Stoll. Though agreeing with Wilson that Falstaff is cynical, I consider Falstaff a naturalistic character rather than a personification of vice. Thus, though my views will doubtless reflect in part many of those already considered, I feel that the total picture will be different from any other single view.

In general, I consider Falstaff an intellectual villain because his philosophical outlook is similar to that of the other villains created by Shakespeare and also because his actions are directed against the best interests of the hero.

One of the recurring themes in Falstaff's discourse is the war between conscience and his evil or mischievous instincts. The usual resolution of this struggle illustrates one of Falstaff's key intellectual principles: a hard-headed appraisal of what the world is really like and a willingness to live life on its own terms. What

¹⁸ "Iago's Iago," University of Kansas City Review, XX (1954), 85-6.

obscures this iron rod of character and intellectual honesty running through Falstaff is his charm, composed largely of a superficial layer of self-deception and cowardly withdrawal from the serious affairs of life.

In their first appearance in the play Falstaff begins to talk about the evil reputations he and the prince suffer. Falstaff, and here is the superficial self-deception, blames Hal for his evil plight:

Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal; God forgive thee for it! Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing; and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked.
(I, 2, 102-6)

He promises to repent and says that if he does not he is a villain. Then Hal suggests stealing a purse and Falstaff is eager to join him, for "'tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation." The quickness of the turnabout, the apparently evasive last word are humorous and make Falstaff a delightful character. But there is more. Falstaff shows he understands himself and the world. It is an evil life and Falstaff is a villain in the eyes of the world. Hal has led him on by upholding Falstaff's unyoked humor, by giving him ampler opportunity and a royal audience and companion. But Falstaff knows he cannot truly repent. His instincts, his very character lead him irrevocably into accepting Hal's offer, for indeed "purse-taking" is Falstaff's vocation. A little later Falstaff explains more explicitly just what his vocation means to him. Hal has backed down from the escapade and Falstaff berates him:

There's neither honesty, manhood, nor good fellowship in thee, nor thou comest of the blood royal, if thou dar'st not stand for ten shillings.

(I, 2, 155-8)

It is Falstaff's conception of what is honest here that makes his ideas about the world dangerous and villainous. His heresy extends even to the nature of kingship, though Falstaff could be boldly pointing out in particular how Henry IV got the crown.

Another speech later in the play shows Falstaff operating from a similar realistic philosophic basis, though this time he plays verbal tricks with religious terminology:

Thou know'st in the state of innocency Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villainy? Thou seest I have more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty.

(III, 3, 185-9)

Falstaff here takes the abstract theological conception of original sin as sufficient justification for his misdeeds, surely a violent wrenching of the intent of the doctrine.

This same pattern is also followed in the great scene after the robbery (II, 4). Falstaff enters, sounding off boisterously with his insight into the world: "There's nothing but roguery to be found in villainous man." There are only three good men in England and he himself is one of them. Falstaff then continues with his outburst by calling Hal a coward and equating cowardice with villainy. He further builds up his own imaginative view of the world by picturing the robbery as a great heroic fight against

overwhelming odds. When this is shown to be false, Falstaff does not collapse, but coolly says that he knew Hal had attacked him all along and his instincts would not let him turn against the true prince. In the pattern I have been discussing, this is a typical Falstaffian compromise. In order to protect his own over-extended position he has rationalized. He has seized the only straw that can save him from complete exposure and humiliation. Hal sees through the device clearly enough, but Falstaff has found a way to live with himself that skirts both his cowardly instincts and the sharp reproaches of his conscience. Incidentally, the act of rationalization in this episode shows how Falstaff differs from the villains of the Aaron-Iago-Edmund type. They use their wits to devise plots to entrap their victims. Falstaff uses his wits to extricate himself from embarrassing or even dangerous situations.

As scene four progresses, Falstaff and Hal put on a little play. First Falstaff as the king recommends the company of Falstaff to Hal: "I see virtue in his looks." This is part of the superficial self-deception which makes Falstaff appear to be only a humorous character. But, as I am trying to show, Falstaff also views himself and the world realistically and always acts on the basis of his realistic rather than his imaginative knowledge.

Part of the composite picture of Falstaff as a villain is Hal's view. Hal is never fooled about Falstaff,

and when he plays the king to Falstaff's Hal, he emphasizes Falstaff's evil qualities:

There is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of
an old fat man. . . . Why dost thou converse with
. . . that reverend vice, that grey iniquity, that
father ruffian, than vanity in years? Wherein
is he good . . . wherein crafty, but in villainy?
Wherein villainous, but in all things? Wherein
worthy, but in nothing? (II, 4, 492-505)

When Falstaff asks who is meant, Hal responds: "That villainous abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff, that old white-bearded Satan."

An even profounder moment of truth occurs when Hal believes Falstaff killed in the Battle of Shrewsbury:

I could have better spar'd a better man.
O, I should have a heavy miss of thee
If I were much in love with vanity! (V, 4, 104-6)

From Hal's first soliloquy to his rejection of Falstaff his view of his companion is consistent.

Falstaff's reply to Hal's indictment in the playlet scene again shows his ability to come to grips with the real world after his own imaginative and deceptive picture of himself has been rejected. First Falstaff points out that "If to be old and merry be a sin, then many an old host that I know is damned." The way of the world is not to be priggishly virtuous, but to enjoy the cakes and ale of experience. Then Falstaff advances another step and equates himself with this view of life: "Banish plump Jack and banish all the world." With this line Falstaff has won the argument as far as beauty and charm are concerned, but he is leaving himself vulnerable to considerations of strict virtue and moral idealism. Moreover, the

Hal who banishes Falstaff has a great deal of the world left: honor, temporal power, and the opportunity to use this power to achieve great good. Only the world as Falstaff sees it is lost: sensual pleasure, advancement through deception rather than merit, all manner of immorality. Being old and merry is not a sin, but Falstaff has evaded the more serious charges Hal has laid against him. The superficial self-deception has here even colored Falstaff's usually keen perception of the realities of life. Even Falstaff knows that all is not cakes and ale.

The little play is ended by the arrival of the sheriff. Hal tells Falstaff to hide since those who will face the sheriff should wear a true face and a good conscience. Falstaff's comment: "Both which I have had, but their date is out" leads into his next major intellectual principle--complete cynicism about the world and particularly contemporary society. Falstaff's worldly wisdom gained from his realistic view of life ends up as cynicism. This is particularly evident in his military career.

Falstaff's first action as captain is to impress a company of soldiers. As he says, he has "misus'd the King's press damnably," taking money from those who could buy off and signing up the leavings. The resultant group looks as if Falstaff had "unloaded all the gibbets and pressed the dead bodies." The men are scarecrows, walk with a prison gait, and are poorly dressed. But, of course, says Falstaff, the latter deficiency can be remedied; there's

linen enough on every hedge.

But what is the sum total of this mass of corrupted and wasted humanity? When Hal calls them pitiful rascals, Falstaff replies:

Tut, tut; good enough to toss; food for powder,
food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as
better. Tush, man, mortal men, mortal men.

(IV, 2, 71-3)

Falstaff here displays a realistic view of war. Men are killed in war; death makes all men equals. A ragamuffin private and a splendid general may both die in the heat of battle. Moreover, all men are mortal; the proudest and the humblest equally will die. This is the ultimate realism. In addition, Falstaff cynically views his disreputable company as so many bodies to be fed to the enemy's firepower. When he does consider them as human beings, the accent is on mortal in the phrase "mortal men," and the meaning is men with the quality of dying in them.

Falstaff clearly would not have them die for honor or any glorious military catchword which infuses the very being of a Hotspur or can arouse Hal to valorous action when necessary. Honor, says Falstaff, is merely a word. Honor cannot help a man who is wounded or dead. The dead may have honor; thus a live man wants nothing to do with it. Honor is a mere scutcheon; Falstaff will have none of it. Later Falstaff sees the dead Walter Blunt: "There's honour for you!" Falstaff says he does not like the grinning honor of a dead man. "Give me life, which if I can save, so; if not, honour comes unlook'd for,

and there's an end." (V, 3, 63-5) In battle Falstaff plays dead to escape Hotspur, then excuses his conduct:

To die is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man; but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. The better part of valour is discretion; in the which better part I have saved my life. (V, 4, 116-22)

In this sequence on honor Falstaff's realistic view is tinged occasionally with cynicism, particularly in the line about the dead Walter Blunt. Falstaff goes on to stab the already dead Hotspur and claim credit for the kill, a further mockery of military honor. His villainous action and his cynical realism here exist side by side; in this way Falstaff is an intellectual villain. The knowledge he gains from his realistic appraisal of the world he uses to further his own ends. Honor and valor are mere words and are relative terms. Since nothing confutes Falstaff but eyes and nobody sees him, then he will attempt to force his vision of the world on others. But Hal never yields to Falstaff's view; so Falstaff is reduced to promises of repentance, on condition his virtue will be rewarded.

So far I have discussed only Part 1 of the play. In Part 2 Falstaff is more bitter and less humorous, much more the intellectual villain than the comic virtuoso. His familiar intellectual assumptions are shown in I, 2. In self-appraisal he realizes that he is not only witty, but the cause of wit in other men; for example, he is the butt of practical jokes such as Hal's sending the small

page boy to precede the monstrous Falstaff. Knowing the way of the world, Falstaff can even tell with assurance that his tailor is being cuckolded when the man himself suspects nothing.

Falstaff's views come out most clearly in the interview with the chief justice. In one of the few comic spots of the play Falstaff pretends to be deaf and berates the chief justice's servant as a beggar. Even here there is a realistic and cynical undertone. There are wars on; there is no need for beggary. A man can fight on either side--there is no lack of opportunity for employment. In answer to a charge by the chief justice Falstaff says, "The young prince hath misled me" and "God send the companion a better prince." At this time the prince is apparently a wastrel and Falstaff knows this only too well. There is great irony in Falstaff's saying that the prince has misled him, but Falstaff is completely unaware of it. He is simply trying his familiar tactic of imposing his self-deceptive and imaginative viewpoint on the chief justice. More explicitly Falstaff spits out his cynical view of the times:

Virtue is of so little regard in these costermongers' times that true Valour is turned bear-herd; Pregnancy is made a tapster, and his quick wit wasted in giving reckonings; all the other gifts appertinent to man, as the malice of this age shapes them, are not worth a gooseberry.

(I, 2, 190-6)

and

A man can no more separate age and covetousness than 'a can part young limbs and lechery; but the

gout galls the one, and the pox pinches the other,
and so both the degrees prevent my curses.
(I, 2, 256-60)

and

A good wit will make use of anything. I will turn
diseases to commodity. (I, 2, 276-8)

In the rest of Part 2 Falstaff repeats various strategies he had used in Part 1. In II, 1, he, as the chief justice points out, wrenches "The true case the false way." He succeeds in borrowing money from the Hostess, who sought at the beginning of the scene to imprison him. He cannot fool the chief justice, but such people as the Hostess exist to be victimized. He can impose his imaginative view of the world on them and does not need to compromise with the realities of life that he also sees. But Falstaff does show, along with his quickness of wit, the necessity of compromise in II, 4, the tavern scene which balances the other great tavern scene in Part 1. Falstaff belabors Prince Hal to Doll Tearsheet in Hal's hearing. When Falstaff learns that he has been tricked, he comes up with this explanation:

I disprais'd him before the wicked, that the wicked
might not fall in love with him; in which doing,
I have done the part of a careful friend and a true
subject, and thy father is to give me thanks for
it. (II, 4, 346-50)

Hal, as usual, will not let Falstaff get away easily and forces him to declare that all those at the tavern are wicked. This is, of course, true, since the gathering includes whores and thieves. Once again Falstaff's realism and his discretion arrive at the same conclusion. Falstaff

continues his realistic appraisal of his companions when Hal calls Doll Tearsheet "gentlewoman." Falstaff comments: "His grace says that which his flesh rebels against." Hal, for the sake of a jest, is far readier to take a romantic, rosy view of life, but Falstaff always hews to the realistic, honest view when he finds he cannot get ahead any other way.

Most of the rest of Part 2 concerns the gulling of Justice Shallow. Nothing is added to the theory of Falstaff's world view, and the humor is not up to the rest of Falstaff's appearances. However, Falstaff does see through the cold-blooded and treacherous John of Lancaster. Typically, Falstaff makes his analysis of Lancaster's character in a speech extolling sherris-sack. We learn just how it is that Prince Hal is more valiant and a better man than his brother; sherris-sack has warmed his blood.

When Hal becomes King Henry V, Falstaff rushes to London and preferment, but is rejected by his old friend. It has been clear all along that Hal has never succumbed to Falstaff or his view of life. An easy humor had tolerated the man he now calls "the tutor and feeder of my riots." Falstaff holds to a pathetic hope that he will be reinstated in private (after all, is this not the way of Falstaff's world?), but he is actually arrested.

Morgann is so taken with Falstaff that he accepts Falstaff's view of himself and feels he will bounce back

after the end of the play.¹⁹ Bradley shifts the burden onto Hal's shoulders; he is a man of policy like his father Henry IV and has no real affection for anyone.²⁰ Despite these romantic, sentimental views, Falstaff's rejection is just and inevitable. His world view, compounded of expediency, self-deception, cynical denial of ideals with honesty included only when all else fails, is dangerous to the social order and morality as Iago's, Edmund's, Richard's world views are dangerous. Moreover, he has been the bad influence on the young prince; he has led him into an evil environment and association with vile companions. But Hal has been superior to this temptation all along, so that while Falstaff has acted like a villain, there is not the dramatic conflict in his attempted seduction of the prince that there is in Iago's or Edmund's plots and machinations. Falstaff works on Hal mostly by precept and example; his plots are reserved for those beneath him in social status and inferior in understanding. He plots only against those whom he knows he can outwit. Against Hal the tactic is paradoxically both more subtle and more brazen.

The Percys, exemplified by Hotspur, represent the official, external villainy of the two plays. Against them Hal uses military action; he outshines Hotspur as a soldier. But Falstaff is a villain because of his ideas, especially certain moral concepts, which do not attack

¹⁹ Morgann, p. 179.

²⁰ Bradley, p. 354.

in the form of military rebellion, but come rather in the guise of wit and friendliness. If accepted, they would undermine the whole philosophic structure prized by Hal, the ideal representative of the English state. So Hal must banish Falstaff as irrevocably as he has killed that other threat to the state, Hotspur.

Chapter IV

Some Deviations in the Pattern

With Cassius and Falstaff, the pattern of the intellectual villain is firmly established in significant plays. But Falstaff is essentially end-stopped; no avenue for further development opens up from him. Cassius, however, reminds us that the real home of the intellectual villain is in tragedy. He points the way to the artistic fruition of the type in Iago and Edmund. Before this goal is reached, though, we must follow Shakespeare in a digression of deviation from the over-all pattern of the intellectual villain. The plays written between Julius Caesar (1599) and Othello (1604)--All's Well That Ends Well, Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure, Hamlet--all contain figures who are like the intellectual villains in certain respects, but unlike in others, so that the kinship is distant. Strictly speaking, these figures are not intellectual villains; but, as they appear to be experimental models with recognizable features of the finished product, they deserve mention in this study. These four plays are among the most difficult in Shakespeare to classify. One symptom, or perhaps even a cause, of this uncertainty is the ambiguous and indistinct role of the characters who should be villains.

All's Well That Ends Well

Parolles in All's Well That Ends Well is called a

liar, a fool, and a coward before he appears on the stage; throughout the play he lives up to this description. Indeed, a subplot develops for the sole purpose of gulling Parolles. However, there is another side to Parolles which brings him into contact with the pattern of the intellectual villain. For Parolles knows what is the rational and politic thing to do and he is always ready to advise others along these lines. His first appearance, a discussion of virginity with Helena, brings forth these statements: "It is not politic in the commonwealth of nature to preserve virginity" and "'tis against the rule of nature." (I, 1, 137-8, 147) Of course, this scene is intended to be a wit combat on an indelicate subject; but the stand taken by Parolles is realistic and rational and completely natural--there is no reference to any external moral standards. The keen, politic eye of Parolles also sees what is to be done to succeed at court. He cautions his master Bertram:

Use a more spacious ceremony to the noble lords;
you have restrain'd yourself within the list of
too cold an adieu. . . . and though the devil lead
the measure, such are to be followed. (II, 1, 51-8)

The last comment certainly indicates the villain's willingness to disregard moral restraints.

Since Parolles does not act on his own advice, does not use his own world view to advance himself or plot another's downfall, he cannot be considered a real intellectual villain. His function in the play is to be the

fool; at the end Lafeu tells him: "wait on me home, I'll make sport with thee." (V, 3, 323) Parolles does play one significant role in the play, however; he is the scapegoat for Bertram. Somehow Bertram's caddish actions must be overcome and he turned into a husband suitable for Helena. As early as III, 2, the Countess is blaming Parolles, "a very tainted fellow, and full of wickedness" for the defection of Bertram. The truth is that Parolles merely seconded Bertram's suggestion that he go to the Tuscan wars and leave Helena. But the conception of Parolles as scapegoat is too convenient to be dropped on grounds of falsity. Just before the final reconciliation, Lafeu tells the Countess that Bertram was misled by Parolles. Bertram emerges as lily-white; Parolles reverts to his role as fool. When he is intellectual, Parolles is not a villain; when he is a villain, he is not intellectual. He is bad only because all the other characters have agreed that his weaknesses make him an ideal scapegoat.

Troilus and Cressida

Another use for the intellectual villain-like figure is illustrated by Thersites, who functions as a cynical commentator on the action of Troilus and Cressida. Thersites is never involved in the action except as the recipient of blows, but he is very perceptive concerning the actions and motives of others. He sees clearly how the shrewd Ulysses works on the brave but unintelligent heroes,

Ajax and Achilles; he knows that the "false-hearted" Diomede is not to be trusted; and he is the first to comprehend the degeneration of Cressida. Thersites not only punctures the inflated egos of the Greek warriors, he also sees the unheroic, unromantic reality behind the whole war: "All the argument is a cuckold and a whore; . . . war and lechery confound all" (II, 3, 78-82) and "Lechery, lechery; still wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion. A burning devil take them!" (V, 2, 196-7) One explanation of Thersites' significance is given by G. Wilson Knight, who sees as one main strand of the play an opposition between intellect (tending toward cynicism) and intuition (in association with romantic love). Thersites, as cynicism incarnate, "sees folly everywhere, and finds no wisdom in mankind's activity . . . he is blind to man's nobility." On the other hand, Troilus champions humanity against cynicism.¹ Knight's comments are perceptive; he places the play in a valid conceptual framework. But I think he does not go far enough in stressing Thersites' function. By stating that Thersites is blind to any goodness in man's nature, Knight implies that this goodness is upheld as a major theme of the play. I think, however, that Thersites' cynicism is a valid and complete reaction to the world of the play. Thersites sets the scene for the final battle-action by hoping Troilus will defeat Diomede and by commenting on the failure of Ulysses' policy

¹ The Wheel of Fire, pp. 52, 63, 77.

to work: both Ajax and Achilles are now proudly sitting unarmed and idle. The action degenerates to the nadir of Achilles' cowardly murder of Hector. Hector's comment to the one in sumptuous armor he has killed, "Most putrified core, so fair without," symbolizes the failure of the romantic ideal and gives credence to Thersites' cynical views. This cynicism seems to be the final statement of the play; all that is left for Troilus and the Trojans is to lament Hector and promise revenge. I see nothing of hope or humanity or nobility in the end of the play. Our cynical commentator has saved his skin in battle, leaving the field with curses ringing in his ears. Perhaps the "honesty" of admitting cowardice is the only significant action left in a world in which honor, valor, love, intellect, and policy have all been thoroughly degraded.

Measure for Measure

Measure for Measure divides the role of the intellectual villain among three characters: Pompey is a realist who acts on his knowledge of the world; Lucio is a cynical commentator; and Angelo is the main villain by virtue of his actions. To compound the confusion, the world view of Angelo is orthodox in the extreme. He precisely and emphatically upholds the moral law the intellectual villains disregard. Even though power corrupts Angelo to act contrarily to these standards, he never loses his faith or belief in the standards.

Knight says the theme of Measure for Measure is "the moral nature of man in relation to the crudity of man's justice, especially in the matter of sexual vice."² Each of the three "villains" illustrates one aspect of man's concern with justice in sexual morality. Pompey, the bawd, who recognizes clearly that man has sexual desires, makes his living by catering to them. Pompey also knows that the law cannot prosecute all those people who commit a sin against strict sexual morality, although he himself is sentenced to prison. The fact that Pompey is among so many friends in jail indicates the human, if illegal, nature of his profession and his outlook.

Lucio, in his exchanges with the Duke, comments cynically on man's sexual mores and behavior, not with the gravity of a Thersites but rather with the gossipy, bantering tone of a society columnist. Lucio remains uncommitted to the action of the plot; he even refuses bail for Pompey. But he never refuses to talk on the theme that sexual crimes are not serious; he delights in pointing out that a real man like the Duke would never invoke the death penalty for fornication. Lucio stands for the old leniency of the Duke, the morality in Vienna before the play opens. Since the whole campaign of the Duke is to tighten the lax standards, Lucio is severely rebuked and threatened with death at the play's end.

Angelo does not determine his course of action on

2 The Wheel of Fire, p. 80.

the basis of a realistic or cynical world view. Rather he is tempted by a saintly person at the height of his own sanctity. Once he succumbs to the very dangerous temptation that Isabella's virtue offers him, Angelo is swept away by passion. He recognizes man's true nature ("Blood, thou art blood") and calls on Isabella to play her part as a woman. Having embarked on his course, Angelo does show some of the shrewd intelligence of the intellectual villains in pointing out to Isabella that she will not be believed if she tries to publicize Angelo's proposition to her. Later, after the supposed assignation with Isabella, he comments that reason will keep her from complaining against him. However, Angelo is also very much worried about his actions, particularly the killing of Claudio whose revenge he feared. Unlike the intellectual villain, Angelo feels that once man has sinned nothing goes right. This attitude leads to his complete repentance in the final scene.

One possible explanation for the diffusion of the intellectual villain pattern in this play is Shakespeare's well-known principle of plenty and variety in the treatment of a given theme. Thus no one character possesses all the component parts of the pattern. Moreover, the end is not tragic, as it is not in any of these three plays. Just as in his last plays, Shakespeare saves a potentially tragic situation with a happy ending. In a world of harmony won without struggle there is simply no room for a fully

developed intellectual villain.

Hamlet

As the fourth play to experiment with the concept of the intellectual villain has little harmony in its conclusion, still another rationale is needed. Hamlet differs from the other three plays in being a major tragedy with a single major villain working against the hero. But Claudius cannot be considered an intellectual villain.

Most of the critics who have discussed Claudius have pointed out inconsistencies in his character. Not only is Claudius felt to be different from other Shakespearean villains, but he is seen to have two distinct, even incompatible, sides. Schücking notes that the character we would expect for Claudius, that of a voluptuary, a sneak, and a scoundrel, is not borne out in the presentation of Claudius in the play. Rather Schücking describes Claudius as a "clear-sighted, intelligent, dignified, and tactful prince" who is a tender husband, a sympathetic friend to Ophelia, and a heroic king. This man, says Schücking, would not break down during the play scene.³ Bradley also stresses the good qualities of Claudius, but does not allow him to be a tragic figure since he had a small nature and mean appearance. According to Bradley, Claudius

was no villain of force, who thought of winning
his brother's crown by a bold and open stroke,
but a cut-purse who stole the diadem from a shelf

3 Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays, pp. 172-6.

and put it in his pocket.⁴

Danby points out that Claudius is not a Machiavel because he is not a harsh, obdurate villain, but rather is uxorious and penitent about a crime that has sickened him. But Danby feels that Claudius is forced into the Machiavel's role by Hamlet.⁵ Finally, there is the view of Coe, who stresses the dramatic effectiveness of having Claudius start out as a good character who is gradually discovered to be bad and whose remorse grows naturally out of events in the play.⁶ The role of Claudius actually offers another variation on the pattern of intellectual villainy. In this instance two characters combine to make up the whole. Claudius is an intellectual villain in the secondary sense that he uses his intelligence, first of all to win the crown and then to plot against a possible rival, Hamlet. But Claudius is not a unified character; his ideas and his actions are not one as they are in Aaron or Iago or Edmund. Claudius' world view is orthodox; much of the tension in his character is due to the conflict between what he has done and what his conscience tells him about his actions. The unorthodox or "villainous" ideas in the play are expressed by Hamlet. Particularly in the early part of the play Hamlet's world view is dangerous to the standard, accepted way. Hamlet is not a villain, though. He is not just an egotistical cynic, piercing appearance

4 Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 139.

5 Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, p. 149.

6 Shakespeare's Villains, pp. 61-4.

to behold a reality upon which he can base actions leading to his own advancement. Rather he sees rottenness in the world and is both repelled by it and chastened by the thought of purging the world.

In the play Claudius is first seen as the dignified king, creditably handling the affairs of state. He disposes of three pieces of business in the opening scene, all concerning the Hamlet-figures: Fortinbras, Laertes, and Hamlet. Fortinbras, attempting to avenge his father's death by bold military action, is dealt with easily through diplomatic channels, with Claudius clearly showing that age and experience are more valuable than merely youthful determination. Next Claudius turns to Laertes, protesting again and again his eagerness to please. This overzealousness may reflect Claudius' sense of insecurity on the throne, but since he does not appear insecure anywhere else, it may simply measure his respect for Polonius. Laertes at this time poses no threat to the throne of Denmark; so his petition to return to school in France is quickly granted. Finally Claudius takes note of his "cousin and son" Hamlet, who in appearance and deportment is melancholy with grief for his father's death. Or so Claudius chooses to interpret Hamlet's words and actions. In consolation Claudius presents to Hamlet a rational picture of death and grief. Death, he says, is in the nature of things and one should not overdo protestations of grief at the loss of a loved one, even a father. This is unmanly

and shows

a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschool'd. (I, 2, 95-7)

At this stage of the play no one can really suspect Claudius of hypocrisy; he is merely a royal figure, uttering an orthodox consolation to a bereaved subject. Claudius ends his speech by asking Hamlet to overcome his grief and to stay in court as the "chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son." Hamlet's mother also begs him not to go back to school and Hamlet replies: "I shall in all my best obey you, madam." The king accepts this as a gracious reply and prepares to drink and carouse in celebration. Despite the surface amenities, though, there is already apparent an undercurrent of antagonism between Hamlet and Claudius in this early scene. Hamlet shows his feelings in asides and in directing his compliance to his mother, not to both the king and queen. Claudius, who willingly lets Laertes leave the court, wants Hamlet to remain where he can be watched, though he says this in the language of diplomacy. It is to this diplomatic manner of Claudius that Hamlet refers when, after hearing the revelations of the ghost, he says, "one may smile, and smile, and be a villain!" Hamlet's charge of duplicity is borne out by the ghost and subsequent actions and revelations, so that his instinctive distrust of Claudius in the first scene proves correct. Hamlet goes on to call Claudius a satyr in his soliloquy which tells how "weary, stale, flat, and un-

profitable" the world is to him. It must be remembered that the vituperation of Claudius always comes from Hamlet; at this point no one else sees any wrong in Claudius.

Hamlet poses more than a verbal threat to Claudius; his apparent lunacy becomes for Claudius a particular problem to be solved. Adopting a method proposed by Polonius ("By indirections find directions out") and used by Hamlet (the play within the play), Claudius employs two of Hamlet's fellow students to spy out the causes of Hamlet's madness. Claudius, also willing to test Polonius' hypothesis that unrequited love is behind Hamlet's actions, arranges to overhear Hamlet and Ophelia. Claudius has two motives for his actions. One is genuine personal concern to see that his wife's son is cured of a strange mental state. The second motive, personal fear, must still be inferred at this stage; the only evidence against Claudius is the ghost's accusation and even Hamlet is unsure of this.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are unsuccessful in their attempt to get at Hamlet's mystery. During their interview Hamlet explicitly states a world view completely opposite to the orthodox Christian, humanistic conception:

I have of late--but wherefore I know not--lost
all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercise; and
indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition
that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me
a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy,
the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firma-
ment this majestical roof fretted with golden
fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than
a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.
What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason!
How infinite in faculty, in form and moving! How
express and admirable in action! How like an angel

in apprehension! How like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me,--no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so. (II, 2, 306-22)

In setting up the second device, the eavesdropping on Hamlet and Ophelia, Polonius remarks "that with devotion's visage/ And pious action we do [sugar] o'er/ The devil himself." Claudius reacts in an aside:

How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O heavy burden! (III, 1, 50-4)

This is the first indication of guilt on the part of Claudius, the first corroboration of the ghost's accusation. Claudius is a tormented man; he is bothered by remorse to a far greater degree than any other Shakespearean villain. Hamlet ended Act II by stating that his play would catch the conscience of the king. This remark by Claudius foreshadows success for Hamlet's venture.

Claudius is convinced by Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia that love has not caused his madness. Indeed, Claudius feels that Hamlet isn't mad at all, but rather that something in Hamlet's soul causes him to brood and may lead to dangerous action. So Claudius quickly determines to send Hamlet to England. However, Polonius persists in his own thesis, convincing Claudius to wait until Gertrude has had a chance to talk to Hamlet. Claudius' remark, "Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go," shows that he accepts the standard view of Hamlet's conduct in order

not to seem too eager to send him away. Though Claudius has committed one murder to get the throne, at the moment this murder is undiscovered; Claudius does not wish to jeopardize his position by rushing into another, hastily conceived murder. He can afford to allow his plans to mature, but unfortunately for Claudius, Hamlet is preparing to force the issue that very evening.

At the performance of "The Mouse-Trap" Claudius exchanges a few enigmatical words with Hamlet, then settles back to enjoy the play, leaving Hamlet in his overexcited state to comment on the play and to involve the others in its action. During one of these commentaries, Claudius asks about the plot of the play: "Is there no offence in't?" Partly this remark shows that Claudius did not watch the dumb show closely, partly that Claudius evidently can conceive of no play without villainy, a reflection of his own guilt. Hamlet fastens on this in his comments to Claudius: "'Tis a knavish piece of work, but what o' that? Your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not."

Lucianus, the villain of "The Mouse-Trap" is somewhat of an intellectual villain: he has evil thoughts and the perfect opportunity to do evil in order to further his own ends. He can attempt to put his own corrupted version of reality into effect, but as the Player King points out:

Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown.

After the poisoning takes place on stage, the king rises, calls for light, and leaves in some confusion. Hamlet's device has worked and he is giddy with joy. Guildenstern breaks into this mood to report that Claudius is angry and upset, but when he next appears (III, 3), Claudius is the king again, handling a threat to the safety of his kingdom by sending Hamlet off to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and a commission for Hamlet's death. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern acquiesce because a king should be protected on both religious and political grounds.

Alone, Claudius confesses: "O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven." Claudius wants to pray, but cannot because of his guilt and because he still possesses the rewards obtained through his murder of the elder Hamlet. Claudius also suggests the limits of villainous action:

In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above:
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature. (III, 3, 57-62)

The end justifies the means and crime pays only on earth. One cannot have a Christian conscience and be an intellectual villain. Claudius tries a reconciliation in this speech, but his failure marks the failure of all such attempts. His prayer session ends in frustration, though ironically Hamlet has spared Claudius because he is at prayer. Hamlet feared a future life when he contemplated suicide; Claudius fears specifically future retribution

for his sins on earth. He is much more in the Christian framework than is Hamlet. This speech is a turning point for Claudius; in the rest of the play he is more completely the villain and quicker to create plots, though sometimes he is forced to snatch at whatever remedy presents itself.

When Claudius hears that Hamlet has killed Polonius, he fears that he himself will be blamed for not sending Hamlet away sooner. Since he is talking to Hamlet's mother, he says he acted solely out of love for Hamlet. But now that Hamlet has committed murder, says Claudius, even Gertrude must see how dangerous he is. Later Claudius sounds the same chord in talking to several members of the court. Claudius points out that he cannot punish Hamlet since the people love him. Claudius clearly shows he knows how to deal with his audience. To Hamlet's mother he pleads his love for Hamlet; to the courtiers he raises the spectre of popular uprising. The conclusion in both cases is the same: Hamlet must be sent away, but it must seem to be the result of deliberate action in order not to arouse the populace. Even so, the decisive step must be taken because

Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are reliev'd
Or not at all. (IV, 3, 9-11)

At the end of the scene Claudius reveals that Hamlet is to be killed in England. This is the desperate remedy. Conscience no longer is to be consulted, for only Hamlet's death can cure the "hectic" in Claudius' blood.

Even with Hamlet gone problems mount up for Claudius. The people are unhappy at Polonius' death; Ophelia has gone insane; and Laertes is returning, shortly to lead a rebellion against Claudius. Claudius handles the threat of Laertes bravely and resolutely. He does not fear the younger man who rushes on him in anger for

There's such divinity doth hedge a king
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will. (IV, 5, 123-5)

Claudius wins over Laertes and upon hearing of Hamlet's return to Denmark, quickly plots with Laertes to kill Hamlet in a duel with a poisoned rapier. He even plans to poison some wine in case the first method of killing Hamlet is ineffectual.

Having set his course, Claudius follows it to the end. Even when his villainy has been discovered and Hamlet has wounded him, the Claudius who spoke of the divinity around a king takes refuge in his position: "O, yet defend me friends; I am but hurt." But Hamlet forces him to drink the poisoned cup and thus effects the revenge he had been seeking. Even Laertes remarks that Claudius is justly served. Claudius dies, then, having seen his queen die before him. He has brought about Hamlet's death, but only at the cost of his own life. For Hamlet the rest is silence, but Claudius faces a judgment that will see his nature for what it truly was, the judgment he had foreseen when he failed to find forgiveness for his crimes.

Claudius differs from the other villains in this study in that remorse plays a major part in his character, whereas it affects other villains in only a minor way and never subdues any of them. Claudius is an intelligent villain, but not an intellectual one. He shares too thoroughly the orthodox world view for him to continue long and single-mindedly in his course of villainy. His actions, rather than his ideas, primarily constitute his villainy.

Chapter V

The Perfection of the Pattern

Just as the major tragedies constitute the apex of Shakespeare's artistic achievement, so do they climax the development of the intellectual villain. In Iago and Edmund Shakespeare has perfected, artistically and ideologically, the pattern so simply begun in Winchester. Bradley has said, "Evil has nowhere been portrayed with such mastery as in the character of Iago,"¹ and indeed the laureateship of villainy must go to Iago. But Edmund is a fit companion to share Iago's eminence. Equally controlled by villainous ideas, Edmund is wittier than Iago, more charming and attractive as a person. The two characters together provide not only the perfection but also an epitome of Shakespeare's concept of the intellectual villain.

Othello

Iago's supremacy has made him the focal point for any theory of villainy. Since I have covered the leading theories in Chapter I, any detailed summary of critical opinions here would be superfluous. There is, however, in the problem of Iago's motives an opportunity to reconstruct the critical framework for my discussion of Iago from a different, but extremely important, point of view.

In general, three positions have been maintained

¹ Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 169.



concerning Iago's motives. Coleridge's phrase, "the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity," has marked one extreme in this debate and has usually been the jumping-off point for other critics. The views which stand at the opposite pole from Coleridge center around the concept of revenge. Bradley has put this case most convincingly: "For love of the evil that advances my interest and hurts a person I dislike is a very different thing from love of evil simply as evil." Bradley also notes that Iago reacts with hatred and hostility to those things which disturb his sense of superiority.² More fancifully, Wyndham Lewis sees Iago operating from sex-revenge and race-revenge, wreaking "the vengeance of the small nature on the great nature."³ Developing this last concept extensively, Lewis, in a series of images, sees Iago as David with the sling, the Charlie Chaplin figure, and the ideal little man, whereas Othello is "the ideal human galleon, twenty stories high, with his head in the clouds, that the little man can vanquish."⁴ So great is Lewis' emphasis on the littleness of Iago that he must be taken as the rare exception to the view expressed in the first quotation from Bradley. Since Bradley's time, critics have stressed views which are midway between the motiveful-motiveless dichotomy. Generally such opinions incline slightly toward Coleridge by saying that Iago's motives as mentioned in the play are insufficient to

2 Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 184, 179.

3 The Lion and the Fox, p. 197.

4 Ibid., p. 189.

account for his villainy, but slip back toward center by holding that the question of motivation is not the key to Iago. For example, Spivack mentions that Iago equivocates about his motives, that there is a discrepancy between what Iago says he feels and what he does in the play, and that he has a purpose which has nothing to do with vengeance; therefore, Iago is "not essentially a man who is provoked to act villainously, but Villainy disguised by late convention to act like a man." Iago is, in short, the Vice of the allegorical morality plays.⁵ Stoll, who says of Iago that "Having motives, then, he acts as if he had them not," considers Iago a stage Machiavel who has a charter to do evil.⁶ Theodore Spencer exemplifies the middle-of-the-road approach with no external referent:

He gives one explanation after another for his hatred of Othello, partly to make his behavior superficially plausible, and partly to assure himself that it is justified.⁷

As can be seen from the above, the question of motives leads naturally into the over-all viewpoints concerning Iago. Critics other than Spivack have seen the morality scheme at work in Othello, but while some feel that Iago is a Vice figure, others make him a devil in human form or a demi-devil.⁸ Critics other than Stoll have seen

⁵ Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, pp. 7-21, 55.

⁶ Shakespeare Studies, p. 387.

⁷ Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, p. 133.

⁸ G. Wilson Knight, Principles of Shakespearian Production, p. 151; Virgil Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning, p. 280.

Iago as a Machiavel; but Bradley rejects this view since Iago is not an atheist;⁹ Whitaker concludes that Iago is more than a stage Machiavel since his character is founded on pride, or self-love, the source of all sin;¹⁰ Spivack denounces the Machiavellian label as "too general to carry us very far into the moral meaning of his role."¹¹

Quibbling over labels will certainly not take one far in his attempt to understand Iago. Many critics have long recognized that a more fruitful approach is to analyze Iago's ideas. Bradley says that Iago's creed "is that absolute egoism is the only rational and proper attitude, and that conscience or honour or any kind of regard for others is an absurdity."¹² Theodore Spencer sees Iago as thoroughly rational, devoid of passion, unscrupulously individualistic--the Renaissance ideal gone bad.¹³ Herbert Weisinger views Iago as "a man whose most abiding principle is the rejection of principle," and he makes explicit what this rejection consists of:

Iago's substitution of his own will, unaided by any other source, for the Christian concept of love and charity, founded on faith, is the very antithesis of Christian belief.¹⁴

Since all these views stress the negation of orthodox Renaissance ideals, we are obviously in the realm of the intellectual villain. What follows will be a close

⁹ Bradley, p. 172.

¹⁰ Whitaker, pp. 280-1.

¹¹ Spivack, p. 425.

¹² Bradley, p. 178.

¹³ Spencer, pp. 132, 135.

¹⁴ "Iago's Iago," University of Kansas City Review, XX (1954), 85.

description and analysis of Iago's character and actions to determine in what ways he is specifically to be considered an intellectual villain.

Iago is first presented as a discontented soldier who has been passed over for promotion. Not unusually, this has created in him a hatred for the man who controlled the promotion, Othello. Toward Cassio, who has become the lieutenant in his place, Iago feels at first only contempt, but his later plots against Cassio are motivated naturally by this initial blow to his pride. The essential quality which is developed in Iago's opening speeches is an overwhelming egoism. Iago tells Roderigo that he will continue as Othello's ancient, but only for his own purposes, not to serve Othello selflessly: "In following him, I follow but myself." In Othello Iago has encountered an egoism as strong as his own; this is only the first of a surprising number of parallels between the two. According to Iago the position as lieutenant should have been his, but Othello, "loving his own pride and purposes," chose instead Cassio. Othello's egoism is grounded in experience; he has successfully commanded men and has learned that his judgment and the results of his own deliberate action have worked. Iago's egoism is based primarily on his sense of his own worth, an entirely subjective feeling that his thoughts, his will, his existence are important, and even more important than those of anyone else.

A significant aspect of Iago's egoism is the use he makes of the distinction between appearance and reality:

For when my outward action doth demonstrate
 The native act and figure of my heart
 In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
 But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
 For daws to peck at. I am not what I am.
 (I, 1, 61-5)¹⁵

Fundamentally, of course, this means that there is deceit in Iago's make-up, and we can expect him not only to act always for his own good but also to appear to the other characters as sincere, upright, honest. More generally, though, the ability to cut through layers of appearance to get at reality is a distinguishing trait of the intellectual villain and makes him in part an admirable figure as well as setting him off from the hero who usually accepts the world at face value. The intellectual villain goes wrong when he attempts to readjust reality to fit his own needs; when, in other words, he superimposes his will on the world.

The first sixty-five lines of the play contain an introductory dialogue between Iago and Roderigo. Since Roderigo simply plays straight man to Iago and since he hears Iago's "I am not what I am" and continues to be duped by Iago, Shakespeare is here obviously continuing the tradition of the villain's opening self-analytic soliloquy with the slight dramatic advance of the addition of a confidant. At the same time, Roderigo is being characterized as a man who supplies Iago with money and as a man easily duped, even led by the nose as asses are.

¹⁵ John Vyvyan notes that the last line negates Shakespeare's standard of integrity and marks Iago for a villain (The Shakespearian Ethic, p. 98).

However, Roderigo makes one interesting contribution to the dialogue. Having heard Iago pour out his scorn of Cassio and his hatred of Othello, Roderigo remarks: "By heaven, I would rather have been his hangman." The obvious meaning is that Iago should kill Othello in simple revenge for the wrong Iago has suffered. But Iago replies, "Why, there's no remedy"; his design would not be served by killing Othello but rather by discomfiting and degrading him, by toppling Othello from his lofty pinnacle and making him suffer the same humiliation Iago has suffered.

To implement this desire, Iago devises his first plot: to inform Brabantio of the marriage between Othello and Desdemona. Knowing Othello's importance to the state, Iago does not intend this maneuver to completely overthrow Othello, but to cause him trouble and lessen the joys of his wedding night. In rousing Brabantio Iago displays more of his own character. He speaks of the marriage in vulgar terms and delights in picturing the intimate, physical details of sexual love. Indeed, love is only sex to Iago; there is nothing noble or spiritual involved. Iago is here getting at what he feels is the reality lurking under much sentimental appearance, but it is not a concept of reality generally shared by mankind. Actually, the nobler aspects of love displayed by both Desdemona and Othello really defeat Iago by proving that his world view is deficient. Also, in this scene, Iago shows his contempt for Brabantio, not because of any personal hatred

or because he motivelessly hates in general; rather Brabantio is a senator, a man of wealth and power, and Iago is very conscious of his own lowly position, particularly since he has been passed over for promotion.

Having alerted Brabantio, Iago moves into the second phase of his plot. Going to warn the Moor, he also gives Brabantio exact directions to find Othello. Iago now slips into his mask as a devoted follower of Othello. Indeed, Iago stands in physical fear of the Moor; he acts "for necessity of present life." That is, he fears that Othello will respond to Brabantio's anger by fighting and he wants to be sure he is on the right side. So there is no real surprise, but a great deal of irony, to be found in Iago's opening speech in scene two as he reports to Othello: "I lack iniquity sometimes to do me service." Secure in his relations with Othello, Iago can even tell the truth about himself by saying "with the little godliness I have" it was hard to keep from killing Brabantio. Iago, however, has miscalculated Othello's nobility and dignity. When Brabantio arrives with an armed guard, Othello quickly halts a potential fight: "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them." This same dignified eloquence enables Othello to carry the council scene and to receive official support for his marriage to Desdemona. Othello has really carried round one as well; Iago's first plot has been ineffectual in harming Othello.

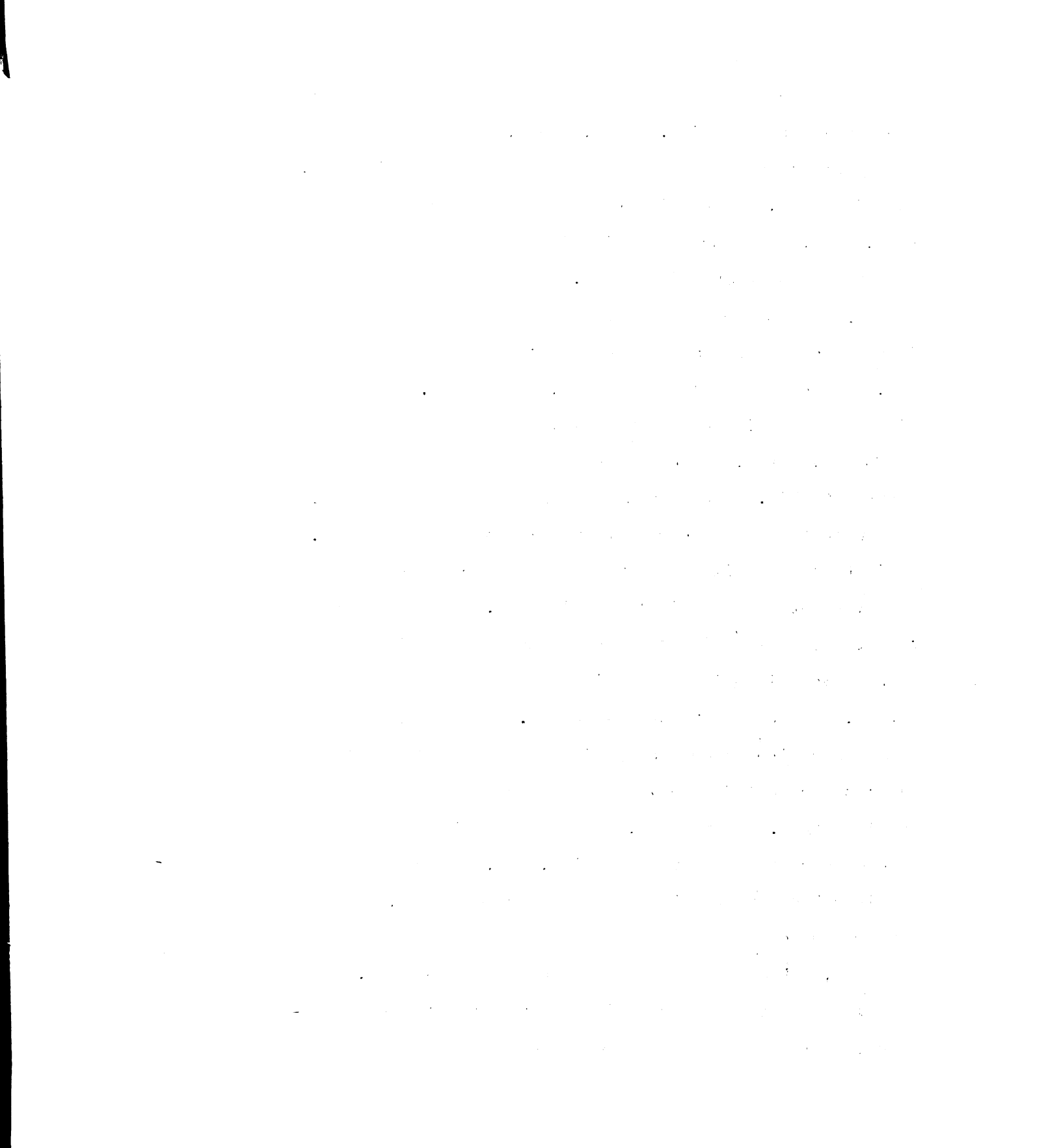
More of Iago's philosophy is aired after the council

scene. Rebuking Roderigo's despondent love-sickness over Desdemona, Iago supplants romantic notions about love with the ego, will, reason. Love is "merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will." Iago also negates externally imposed moral systems: "Virtue! a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners. . . . the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills." (I, 3, 322-9) Man can do anything he wills himself to do and fortunately has reason to act as a counterbalance to the passions. This last notion is good Renaissance doctrine. But Iago goes beyond the idea of reason controlling the passions to become the complete rationalist, rigorously excluding from his world anything ideal or abstract such as honor or love or virtue. Each man carves out his own way from day to day and the prize goes to the man who understands this and acts to get what he wants. Iago's realism easily becomes cynicism. Looking at the world "realistically," he finds that it reflects his own preconceptions, his own lack of principles and idealism. Thus Desdemona will soon grow tired of Othello; "she must change for youth." Even more to the point is Iago's reiterated and emphasized, "Put money in thy purse." Most particularly this means that Roderigo should prepare himself for Desdemona's love, since, like all other women, she can be bought. Secondly, the phrase means that Iago will therefore be aided as he needs Roderigo's money. In the most general sense, Iago

is also saying that the way to succeed is by being rich; money will buy anything. Love, honor, morality are all empty terms; money can bend them to the possessor's will. This is sound, practical advice if one shares Iago's world view, but the harshest cynicism in a society upholding Christian and humanistic ideals.

Iago keeps Roderigo on the string by enlisting him in a common revenge against Othello: "If thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport." Then Iago dismisses Roderigo contemptuously: "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse," even apologizing for the time he has spent with him. Once again Iago says he hates the Moor. He now mentions his fear that Othello has cuckolded him. It is to this soliloquy that Coleridge applies the phrase "motive-hunting of motiveless malignity." I would agree that the sexual motive here mentioned for the first time is not the mainspring of Iago's actions or cause of his hatred, but it is not motive-hunting. The reason for Iago's hatred has already been established and is sufficient to Iago; the sexual jealousy is merely one more aspect of Iago's hatred. Ironically, Iago easily falls prey to the same disease that destroys Othello, but, whereas Othello requires "ocular proof" and then kills Desdemona, Iago works from mere suspicion to a revenge which falls short of death, yet works a greater torment on the victim.

In the rest of this soliloquy Iago reviews the situation (his first plot has failed) and plans another course



of action. This time there is to be "double knavery"; Iago wants to get Cassio's place as well as work mischief against Othello. So Iago will accuse Desdemona and Cassio of a love affair, a plan that will bring about the desired end because Iago knows his man:

The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are. (I, 2, 405-8)

Othello makes the mistake, fatal in Iago's world, of confusing appearance with reality. This is perhaps the major difference between the two.

In discussing the nature of women with Desdemona (II, 1), Iago takes a cynical, yet real and honest, look at women from a man's point of view. Again he negates the noble and ideal aspects of love. At the same time, Iago also gets some evidence for his plot to link Desdemona and Cassio. Although Iago doesn't believe in love, he is quick to see signs of lust. He is also quick to win Roderigo over to his view, for in dealing with fools, one can make them believe anything. Iago realistically notes that the wine Desdemona drinks is made from grapes; she is a woman, not a blessed being. But the intellectual villain pushes beyond realism and rationalism to cynicism; because she is a woman, says Iago, Desdemona will turn from Othello to Cassio. Iago, who can so clearly pierce appearance to apprehend reality, occasionally lets his cynicism obscure his view as when he characterizes Cassio approaching

Desdemona:

no further conscionable than in putting on the mere form of civil and humane seeming, for the better compassing of his salt and most hidden loose affection? (II, 1, 241-4)

Having prevailed upon Roderigo to take part in a plot against Cassio, Iago again soliloquizes about motives. Iago has convinced himself that Cassio loves Desdemona, and feels it is credible that Desdemona could love Cassio. However, the main focus continues to be on Othello. Iago fears that Othello has cuckolded him; he will either even with him wife for wife or else make Othello so jealous that judgment will succumb to passion. This is the first mention of the specific goal which Iago has in mind for Othello, some sort of mental torture brought on by jealousy. Since Iago is also a victim of sexual jealousy (he has now enlarged his personal group of villains to include Cassio), it would appear that his reaction has been to seek refuge in a negation of all that is good and honorable and honest. With Othello's reaction to sexual jealousy, Iago seems not to be concerned; his miscalculation is to prove fatal in the play. The beauty of Iago's present position is borne out when he realizes that he can drive Othello to madness but also receive promotion from Othello by his accusations against Cassio.

Iago's plot against Cassio succeeds because, knowing his man well, Iago is able to get Cassio drunk. A lie convinces Montano that what he sees is Cassio's habitual

state so that, after the carefully planned incident between Cassio and Roderigo, Iago can condemn Cassio in Othello's eyes with the truth, even though Iago tries to minimize Cassio's guilt.

Cassio, having lost his rank, bemoans the loss of his reputation. Iago, sounding like Falstaff, consoles Cassio with a realistic view of reputation. Loss of reputation is not a bodily wound and thus not a serious hurt: "Reputation is an idle and most false imposition; oft got without merit, and lost without deserving." (II, 3, 268-9) The last part of this statement is certainly true, but once again Iago shows his failure to understand abstract or ideal values. On a lesser, more practical level, Iago also has a reasonable approach when he tells Cassio not to blame wine for his misfortune: "Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature, if it be well us'd." (II, 3, 313-4) Completely in control of the situation, Iago can give Cassio good advice--sue through Desdemona to change Othello--and have this procedure aid his accusations against Cassio and Desdemona. The pleasure of this thought and a grateful "good-night, honest Iago" from Cassio (the irony is here compounded since Iago is honest at this point) bring Iago to a rare peak of exultation:

And what's he then that says I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give and honest,
Probal to thinking and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? (II, 3, 342-5)

Knowing Desdemona's character, Iago is sure she will take up Cassio's cause. But Iago reverts to his principles when he states that Desdemona can lead Othello to anything because of her sexual hold on him. So when Iago asks again, "How then am I a villain," the answer is a good deal blacker. Like devils, Iago will appear good to work evil. He is not a devil, but uses diabolic methodology. Part of this methodology is to utilize the virtues as well as the vices of the victims against them. Speaking of Desdemona's place in his plot, Iago says:

And by how much she strives to do him good,
 She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
 So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
 And out of her own goodness make the net
 That shall enmesh them all. (II, 3, 364-8)

Two things are of interest here. Iago turns the values of others upside down, just as his own values have been reversed or negated. Also his plot will now enmesh them all. This has been taken to mean that Iago is a devil who hates all mankind or that Iago is the actual cause of Desdemona's death, but I do not think either alternative must necessarily be followed. The "all" refers to only three people: Othello, Desdemona, Cassio. The only addition here is Desdemona, and since Iago is going to use her to help work his will on the other two he is simply acknowledging that she will be irrevocably drawn into the affair. Her goodness will not shield her, particularly in Iago's world.

Roderigo now breaks in, impatient that he is not

succeeding with Desdemona. Iago replies that he works by wit and not witchcraft, and wit takes time. This remark not only characterizes the intelligent side of the intellectual villain, but should also be sufficient rebuke to those critics who think Iago is a devil who can destroy a soul easily. Iago works at being a villain and we see him grow in ability to handle plots, in quickness to create plots, and in flexibility to enlarge his goals.

The great temptation scene (III, 3) is the most effective demonstration of the working of an intellectual villain in Shakespeare. Othello enters loving Desdemona, but by the end of the scene is ready to kill her, all because of Iago's words and actions. First of all, Iago plants the seeds of doubt in Othello's mind by remarking on Cassio's leave-taking of Desdemona. Iago's next step is to echo Othello's words about Cassio in a way that implies he doubts Cassio's honesty. Othello, taking the bait, feels there is something more serious and more hideous in Iago's mind. Thirdly, Iago lies to Othello and repudiates his own conceptions of life: he says that he loves Othello and that men should be what they seem. Iago can carry his rejection of principle even to rejecting his own principles if need be. In the next phase Iago partly lies, partly tells the truth. When he says, "it is my nature's plague/ To spy into abuses, and loft my jealousy/ Shapes faults that are not" (III, 3, 146-8), he is being truthful. But when he calls reputation "the immediate

jewel" of man's soul, adding that he who steals my purse steals trash but he who robs me of my good name steals something very dear, he "lies" or at least repudiates his earlier realistic position on reputation as expressed to Cassio. Fifthly, he tells Othello to beware of jealousy, the green-eyed monster; this is not only turning the knife in the wound, but is good advice, though neither Othello nor Iago takes it. When Othello demands proof of these insinuations, Iago has his cue to go on. He turns next to realistic, but cynical, conjectures about Desdemona, who, since she fooled her father, could as easily fool Othello. Utilizing a new tactic, Iago starts to leave, but returns to utter an afterthought: he tells Othello to put Cassio off and observe how Desdemona acts. Again this is good advice if one wishes to test Desdemona's fidelity. Othello's remark:

This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities, with a learn'd spirit,
Of human dealings. (III, 3, 258-60)

again shows double-edged irony, as Iago is both honest and dishonest, or more correctly is honest in order to be dishonest.

Iago does leave Othello for a few moments only to be aided immeasurably by the good luck of the handkerchief. Like Edmund, Iago is opportunistic and quickly finds a use for the handkerchief. He also notes that "the Moor already changes with my poison."

When Iago and Othello once again hold the stage

together, Othello is well on the road Iago wishes to lead him. Othello's occupation is gone and he even speaks of ocular proof, although he does threaten Iago if he is lying. Iago responds to the threat with a lecture:

O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world,
 To be direct and honest is not safe.
 I thank you for this profit; and from hence
 I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offence.
 (III, 3, 377-80)

Iago is ironical here since he has already passed this position early in the play. Returning to the demand for ocular proof, Iago draws Othello on with his customary gross sexual images; then, forced on "by foolish honesty and love" (again Iago tells the truth: honesty is foolish to him), he lies about Cassio's dream and the handkerchief. Othello, completely overcome by sexual jealousy and given over to thoughts of love, now seduces Iago, who becomes Othello's lieutenant and the instrument of Othello's revenge on Cassio. But Iago suggests that Desdemona be left alive. This could be a cunning device to increase Othello's jealousy and torment, but it could be meant literally. Iago has succeeded in his original design and there is no reason for him to wish Desdemona dead. But he has not reckoned with Othello's towering passion and his desire to find "some swift means of death/ For the fair devil." Iago is now Othello's own for ever. This echoes ironically his opening statements that in following Othello he follows only himself, but again the phrase is literally true since Iago has reached his goals and

would probably serve Othello faithfully as he had in the past.

At this point Othello begins to dominate the action; it is his revenge that is now put into effect. Iago does not, of course, drop out of the action of the play; indeed, he arranges one more plot (IV, 1) to drive his barbs even deeper into Othello. Even though Iago begins to lose control of the action in the final two acts, his hatred of Othello still compels him to torment his victim. He leads Othello on with sexual images until Othello falls into a trance. Over the prostrate body Iago gloats:

Work on,
My medicine, work! Thus credulous fools are caught;
And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,
All guiltless, meet reproach. (IV, 1, 45-8)

This speech and this staging are mentioned by Spivack as evidence for his linking Iago to the Vice. But Shakespeare could borrow the effective theatrical business of the Vice exulting over the prostrate hero without modeling his villain entirely on the Vice. The speech, while it may reflect simply a general desire to do evil, is also a cynical generalization made by an intellectual villain who has triumphed over his particular nemesis.

Iago arranges for Othello to overhear him questioning Cassio about Bianca, whom Othello takes to be Desdemona. Again Othello swears to kill Desdemona, but interposes his threats with remembrances of his love and of the grace and beauty of Desdemona. Iago now reverses himself and

urges the death of Desdemona. When Othello cries out in anguish: "But yet the pity of it, Iago! O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!" Iago, who has no pity, remarks:

If you are so fond over her iniquity, give her
patent to offend; for it if touch not you, it comes
near nobody. (IV, 1, 208-10)

Iago even suggests a poetically just means of death for Desdemona: strangle her in the bed she has contaminated.

In IV, 2, Iago must deny his own existence. Emilia easily sees the source of the trouble between Othello and Desdemona; some rogue has slandered Desdemona in order to get some office. Iago hastily remarks: "Fie, there is no such man; it is impossible." This is a flat and iterated negation; no convincing reasons are given. Continuing her theory, Emilia says:

Some such squire he was
That turn'd your wit the seamy side without,
And made you to suspect me with the Moor.
(IV, 2, 145-7)

One can create from these lines, as Herbert Weisinger has done, an Iago's Iago and thus postulate the reasons for Iago's world view. At the very least, Emilia's comment reinforces the parallel between Othello and Iago. Othello is a play in which two men react to sexual jealousy. The hero reacts villainously, though "honorably," by killing his suspected wife; the villain becomes an intellectual villain who rejects all the principles of the society around him for an egoism which leads him to a wholesale destruction of the values of truth, love, sanity, honor, and virtue.

Iago persuades his dupe Roderigo to kill Cassio, feeling that whichever one dies he will gain. Roderigo has associated with Iago so long that some of Iago's outlook has affected him:

I have no great devotion to the deed,
And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons.
'Tis but a man gone. (V, 1, 8-10)

As a sign that Iago's luck has changed, Cassio, who possesses some concrete information which can condemn Iago, remains alive.

But it turns out that Emilia is the real threat to Iago's safety. When she first links him to Desdemona's murder, he tries to bully her into submission. When this tactic fails, he kills her. Ironically, Iago's downfall comes because he was an intellectual villain, because he lacked the sense of honor to kill Emilia immediately upon suspicion of infidelity as Othello had killed Desdemona.

Iago escapes momentarily after the death of Emilia, but is returned a prisoner. Othello attempts to kill him, but fails, leaving the impression that Iago is a devil. To Othello's question, "Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?" Iago replies: "Demand me nothing; what you know, you know./ From this time forth I never will speak word." (V, 2, 303-4) Iago's egoism is rampant here. He has gambled all and has failed, but he will not emphasize his failure by making a detailed confession of his activities. It should be noted that he has talked a little off stage. (V, 2, 296) However, the dominant impression given by

Iago in the last moments of the play is unrepentant contempt.

Iago is the measure of the other intellectual villains in many ways. He creates more plots, adapts more flexibly to changing conditions, expresses more explicitly and completely the villain's world view. He differs from the other villains not only in scope, but in the fact that he never deviates from his principles. Aaron, too, was alive and unrepentant at the end of Titus Andronicus, but Aaron's downfall came when he ceased to be an intellectual villain; Iago's downfall comes because he continues to be an intellectual villain.

King Lear

King Lear offers a number and variety of evil characters unmatched in Shakespeare except for the early Titus Andronicus. The types of villains in the two plays can be roughly paralleled. Oswald and Cornwall, like Chiron and Demetrius, merely act out evil parts under the direction or influence of more important characters and do not contribute to any theory of villainy. Goneril and Regan, like Tamora, are Semiramis figures, combining ambition, cruelty, regal power, and sexual lust. Edmund, like Aaron, operates from an explicitly stated world view which is that of the intellectual villain.

Two distinct critical views have developed concerning Goneril and Regan. One view, shared by Coleridge, Bradley,

Theodore Spencer, and others, has made these two unnatural, even monstrous and inhuman, creatures. Bradley suggests that there is a certain freshness in the conception of Goneril since she has no predecessor,¹⁶ but I think the two sisters were foreshadowed, however faintly, in Tamora. Spencer suggests this line of development when he observes that the lust of Goneril and Regan is "the clearest indication of their degeneration."¹⁷ The other view sees Goneril and Regan as credible human characters and normal, even respectable, people.¹⁸ They share the sin of filial ingratitude with Edmund, and William Rosen contends that the three also share a similar philosophical outlook:

Their world view is one in which nature is not fundamentally good, and evil is not a mere aberration, the result of misguided reason. . . . Rather, the desire for power and sexual pleasure--natural emotional drives--are the dominant urges of those who represent the new world.¹⁹

This statement is truer of Edmund than of Goneril and Regan. Lear's daughters, offering only their father's foolish and rash acts of disowning Cordelia and banishing Kent as motives, proceed to build on this flimsy structure terrible careers of cruelty. The actions which they undertake to fulfill their desires are cruel and harsh to such a degree that they cannot be said to be following "natural emotional drives." They lack what in the true intellectual

¹⁶ Bradley, p. 198.

¹⁷ Spencer, p. 144.

¹⁸ John Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, p. 42.

¹⁹ Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy, p. 21.

villain is actually a mitigating feature, a reasoned and consciously followed world view which leads inexorably to and "justifies" villainous deeds. Only once is there even a hint of such a viewpoint. In Act V Albany confronts Goneril with the letter in which she has pledged her love to Edmund and has called on him to kill her husband. Albany remarks: "I perceive you know it." Goneril replies: "Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine." (V, 8, 157-9)

Goneril could be implying that her actions cannot be questioned since she is outside the existing moral framework and has repudiated the values that Albany (a spokesman for the orthodox position throughout the play) represents. However, the only application of this remark is Goneril's suicide. It would appear, then, that her remarks should be interpreted only as regarding the immediate, particular context: Goneril will not allow Albany to sit in judgment on her, but rather, being found out, will be her own judge and executioner, not allowing the man she loathes that satisfaction. Goneril and Regan do not attain the dignity of the true intellectual villains; rather they act from evil natures with a minimum of rational explanation for their behavior. I would compromise between the two critical viewpoints mentioned above and say that while Goneril and Regan are human rather than monstrous characters, they do not share Edmund's world view.

Critics have been fairly consistent in describing Edmund in terms analogous to my concept of the intellectual

villain. Coleridge considers Edmund a man of strength, charm, good looks, powerful intellect, and energetic will who is motivated both by his illegitimacy and his status as second son in an era of primogeniture into evil actions to make his way in the world.²⁰ Bradley repeats this general description, like Coleridge comparing Edmund to Iago except for a lack of motive hunting, and adds this comment about Edmund and Nature:

He is the product of Nature--of a natural appetite asserting itself against the social order; and he has no recognized place within this order. So he devotes himself to Nature, whose law is that of the stronger, and who does not recognize those moral obligations which exist only by convention--by "custom" or "the curiosity of nations."²¹

Spencer points out that Edmund's view of man, like Iago's, is "a clear indication of villainy."²² This critical tradition comes into even clearer focus in the works of Hiram Haydn and John Danby. Haydn, in discussing naturalism in relation to what he calls the Counter Renaissance, says that many of the Elizabethan literary protagonists of naturalism were apt to be villains with individualistic and materialistic views which condemn the traditional humanistic values of justice, law, right reason, and virtue because these values are man-made and are not in the nature of things. By way of positive program these villains share

The determination to get ahead, to preserve them-

²⁰ Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare, ed. Terence Hawkes, p. 179.

²¹ Bradley, pp. 239-41.

²² Spencer, p. 147.

selves and forward their own ambitions, to recognize only the 'law of their own natures' and follow their own inclinations.²³

Danby's Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature expounds Edmund's philosophical outlook, pointing out his dramatic predecessors in this position. Danby discusses Edmund as the New Man of the Renaissance, a man who has assimilated the new scientific currents of thought and who realizes that since man's mind is both free of nature and superior to it, man can manipulate the laws of nature.

It is significant that in the figure of Edmund the sense of separation from nature and superiority to it goes along with a sense of the individual's separation from the community and a feeling of superiority to his fellows.

Reason is no longer a normative drive but a calculator of the means to satisfy the appetites with which we were born.²⁴

These critical evaluations not only describe Edmund in terms similar to those I will use but also help to justify my claim that the intellectual villain has rejected his medieval heritage in favor of a modern view of man and the universe.

In keeping with the parallel with Aaron, Edmund is on stage but virtually silent during the long opening scene, and then opens the next scene with a soliloquy which not only presents his intellectual principles and the groundwork for his villainy but also sets the tone of his character. From the brief exposition which opens the play we

²³ The Counter Renaissance, p. 641.

²⁴ Danby, pp. 34-8.

know the following facts about Edmund: he is a bastard and younger son who has been kept away from court by Gloucester. Edmund has, then, some potentiality for villainy; his soliloquy which opens I, 2, makes this an actuality:

Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? (I, 2, 1-6)

Here is a villain's testament, as well as his motives. Edmund's status and previous treatment have built up a resentment within him, leading him to reject the laws and customs of his social order. In reaction he turns to Nature, partly because he is a "natural" son, partly because only the laws of Nature will allow him the scope and freedom of action he needs to realize his ambitions. In the world of human law and custom the eldest son inherits titles and lands. This concept Edmund repudiates in favor of natural law which rewards the strong, the clever, the active--qualities naturally inherent in a man. Finding in himself intelligence and good looks, Edmund also displays humor, manifested particularly in a semi-contemptuous comparison between the gusto accompanying the creation of a bastard and the tasteless, almost mechanical duty of conceiving a legitimate child. Next Edmund indicates the specific goal in mind and the means he will use to achieve it:

Well, then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land

. if this letter speed
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
 Shall /top/ th' legitimate. (I, 2, 15-21)

The soliloquy ends with a strong indication of the egoism necessary for the intellectual villain to force the world to accept his own individual values: "I grow; I prosper." And the final line, "Now, gods, stand up for bastards!" confirms the humorous tone in an attitude compounded of egoism, mockery, and self-conscious shattering of sacred ideals.

Having the credulous Gloucester to deal with, Edmund easily disposes his father to believe that Edgar is a villain, ready to kill for an early inheritance. A transparent example of Edmund's technique is his ascription to Edgar of opinions which are similar to those in the forged letter he has given Gloucester to read. Gloucester, of course, rises neatly to the bait. Like Iago, Edmund gives good advice when it furthers his own ends. When Gloucester becomes enraged at the thought of Edgar's villainy, Edmund counsels patience and the need for further proof. Edmund then proceeds to arrange this proof.

Before he can direct Edgar's role, Edmund must listen to his father's explanation of Edgar's supposed defection:

These late eclipses of the sun and moon portend
 no good to us. Though the wisdom of nature can
 reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself
 scourg'd by the sequent effects. Love cools,
 friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities,
 mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces,
 treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and
 father. This villain of mine comes under the

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prediction; there's son against father: the King falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time; machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders, follow us disquietly to our graves.
(I, 2, 112-23)

Gloucester believes thoroughly in astrology: not only do heavenly activities influence what happens in life, but actual occurrences are viewed chiefly as illustrations of astrological predictions.

Edmund, who believes in a determinism of a different sort, wittily dismisses his father's folly:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,--often the surfeits of our own behavior,--we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars, as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star! . . . Fut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. (I, 2, 128-45)

R. C. Bald comments that in the Renaissance only free-thinkers rejected astrology altogether and such individualism as Edmund shows in this speech is subversive.²⁵

Moreover, Edmund illustrates the self-determinism of the intellectual villain; he wills himself to act and can make of himself what he will, but also he takes full responsibility for his own actions.

Turning now to his noble brother, Edmund utilizes Edgar's "foolish honesty" just as he had played upon

²⁵ "Edmund and Renaissance Free Thought," J. Q. Adams Memorial Studies, pp. 347-9.

Gloucester's credulous, curious nature. When he reports to his brother that Gloucester is angry with him, Edgar, with a clear conscience, is sure that some villain has done him wrong. Edmund readily agrees; unlike Iago he does not have to deny his own existence. To further his plot Edmund gives Edgar bad advice by telling him to go armed, though he does his best to make the advice seem good. Edgar cannot be duped. He must be gotten at through his strength, a sense of honesty, which Edmund must prevent. Ironically, in perverting truth, Edmund can still be truthful: "I am no honest man if there be any good meaning toward you." Edgar's foolish trust in Edmund's honesty is one aspect of the irony; Edmund's truthful conclusion is the other. Exultant over his success with father and brother, Edmund ends the scene with an epitome of his philosophy:

Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.

(I, 2, 199-200)

In addition to undertaking a formal, involved plot, the intellectual villain must also show himself to be flexible and opportunistic. When, in the midst of his action against Edgar, Edmund hears of the arrival of the Duke of Cornwall, he comments: "This weaves itself perforce into my business." He then coolly concludes his plot against Edgar, advising him to flee and wounding himself ("I have seen drunkards/ Do more than this in sport") to further blacken Edgar's name. This device, plus some additional

fabrications of Edgar's words, enables Edmund to succeed in becoming Gloucester's heir.

At this point Edmund has attained his original goal. But Cornwall's recognition of Edmund's trust and ability opens a new career for him. Edmund begins to grow in villainy. Seizing the earliest opportunity to show his new allegiance, Edmund plans to tell Cornwall of Gloucester's favoring Lear. His new goal is to supplant his father as Duke of Gloucester: "the younger rises when the old doth fall." Cornwall seems to understand Edmund instinctively, though the Duke makes no explicit statement of his world view and plays a small part in the action. This understanding is most evident in III, 5, though there is some sparring around for form's sake:

Corn. I will have my revenge ere I depart this house.

Edm. How, my lord, I may be censured that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

Corn. I now perceive, it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death; but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reproveable badness in himself.

Edm. How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just! This is the letter which he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France. O heavens! that this treason were not, or not I the detector!

Corn. Go with me to the Duchess.

Edm. If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

Corn. True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

Edm. [Aside.] If I find him comforting the King, it will stuff his suspicion more fully.--I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

Corn. I will lay trust upon thee; and thou shalt find a [dearer] father in my love. (III, 5, 1-26)

By Act V Edmund is Earl of Gloucester and both Regan and Goneril love him. Since the sisters are now at odds, Edmund further shows his politic nature by shifting as necessary while each makes advances to him. At the end of V, 1, he summarizes his position: he has sworn love to both sisters and, wondering which one to take, decides to favor the one who acts decisively in killing Albany. Having already decided that Albany, the only character representing the orthodox point of view who is not forced into disguise or flight, is an enemy, Edmund rather rashly allows the means of Albany's death to be a test of devotion to himself. Killing Albany would not have completely saved Edmund since Edgar is still free to act and is now aware of Edmund's treachery, but the failure to do so indicates a fatal streak of overconfidence in Edmund.

When Edmund's army is victorious, he carries out his plan to have Lear and Cordelia killed in prison. His instructions to the captain picked for the job reflect his own principles:

Know thou this, that men
Are as the time is; to be tender-minded
Does not become a sword. (V, 3, 30-2)

On the threshold of becoming King of England, Edmund shows some nobility of character in fighting his "fair and warlike," but anonymous, challenger. But his hopes are crushed when Edgar defeats him in single combat. Dying, Edmund, like Iago, at first refuses to divulge information to his captors: "Ask me not what I know." But he does

give them some satisfaction by pleading guilty as charged; that is, he confesses his treachery against Edgar and Gloucester. In defeat Edmund does not rail against fortune but adopts a stoic attitude of acceptance: "The wheel is come full circle; I am here."

Edmund even undergoes a change of heart before the end of the play. His attempt to reprieve Lear and Cordelia is foreshadowed when he is affected by Edgar's recounting of Gloucester's death. Partly Edmund's change is mere dramatic necessity; only he knows that Lear and Cordelia are to be killed. But the change is not an uncharacteristic touch. Other intellectual villains have passed through a momentary rejection of their evil principles. Edmund has now accepted his fate. His course of deceit and ruthlessness took him far, but now he has lost. He is not a monster; he has no reason to see people die needlessly. Evil activities are not the keystone of Edmund's character in the sense that he acts from a completely evil nature as Goneril and Regan do. Rather he is a man who views the world realistically, who places himself outside the traditional moral system, and who utilizes his intellect to achieve the goals which his individual will has set. Edmund can mock himself as well as others; thus, defeated, he can mock his own lack of principles in order to do some good.

Chapter VI

The Decline of the Pattern

Perhaps any villains to appear after Iago and Edmund would seem dull, but even without the specific comparison it is obvious that in the plays after King Lear there is a blurring of the pattern of the intellectual villain. Thus the last plays, the late tragedies and the romances, mark a definite decline of the intellectual villain and establish a definite phase in his development. The reasons for the decline differ for almost every play. However, Shakespeare seems not to have changed his mind about what constitutes villainy. When the intellectual villain appears in these last plays, he holds all the familiar concepts about the world, but the importance of his role has diminished. What this fact might say about any change in Shakespeare's philosophy is, I feel, outside the scope of this paper, tantalizing question that it is.

Macbeth

The decline in the pattern begins with a play that has no dilution of evil. Indeed, Macbeth has been called "The Apocalypse of Evil"¹ and both major characters clamor for consideration as villains. However much Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are alike, though, they must ultimately be considered as separate characters, with only Lady Macbeth partaking of the pattern of intellectual villainy and that

¹ G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, p. 174.

only partially.

As a dramatic character Macbeth most readily calls to mind Richard III. Coe makes this comparison explicit in his study, showing that Macbeth is a greater, more noble character, who, unlike Richard, shows remorse.² Irving Ribner sees a pattern in Richard III similar to that in Macbeth: both plays present the rise and fall of a figure of evil "who has challenged the moral fabric of society deliberately and knowingly because it is his very nature to do so."³ If Macbeth's intellectual principles are as similar to Richard's as this quotation might suggest, then Macbeth would also be an intellectual villain. I think, however, Macbeth's challenge to society is more in his actions than in his ideas. In this respect he is more similar to Claudius than to Richard III.

Throughout the play Macbeth is tormented by the deed of murder--tormented by its conception, its performance, its consequences. Conscience, concern for human values, and respect for the laws of society plague him continually. Though a plot summary might suggest that in action Macbeth follows a direct course from crime to crime, this straightforward development is belied by the fears, doubts, and hallucinations which make Macbeth's mental course twisted and agonized. Ambition alone, as Macbeth himself realizes, forces him to murder Duncan. Ambition of itself is not a destructive idea. Even though Macbeth's ambition urges

² Shakespeare's Villains, p. 34.

³ Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy, pp. 22-3.

shows the intelligent side of the intellectual villain; she is ready with plots to kill Duncan and blame others. She is so successful that by the end of the scene Macbeth is talking like her: "False face must hide what the false heart doth know." This new strength of purpose supports Macbeth through the murder and one speech after it: "I have done the deed." From this point Macbeth degenerates by succumbing to his conscience. Lady Macbeth must re-enter the death room to plant the evidence against the grooms. In immediate reaction to the murder she feels that a little water will clear Macbeth and herself from the deed, but Macbeth wishes that he could pray, that he could sleep, that Duncan were still alive.

In all this action, except for a momentary failing ("Had he not resembled/ My father as he slept, I had done't."), Lady Macbeth is an intellectual villain. But she becomes less and less important to the action. At the end she is a woman driven mad by the knowledge of her own evil she carries within her. If her failure to kill Duncan and her fainting at the discovery of the murder are, as I think, foreshadowings of her eventual collapse, then she is not to be considered completely as an intellectual villain for long in the play. She begins as an intellectual villain, but quickly departs from the pattern. Macbeth, though he grows in villainy, committing even more monstrous crimes as the play progresses, increases also in revulsion from his deeds, and is never an intellectual villain.

Timon of Athens

Timon of Athens contains a great number of characters who act as the intellectual villains do. The point of the play is not so much a demonstration of villainy as it is the devastating results of such wholesale depravity on one man. We have, in effect, an inversion of the pattern. The grace which Apemantus utters cynically illustrates the intellectual principles of most of the characters in the play:

Immortal gods, I crave no pelf;
I pray for no man but myself.
Grant I may never prove so fond
To trust man on his oath or bond;

Or my friends, if I should need 'em. (I, 2, 63-70)

In Timon of Athens, however, such principles do not lead to villainous action; hence the distinction between Apemantus and his fellows and the intellectual villain. The rejection of Timon by his supposed friends is extremely ungrateful and leads Timon to curse mankind completely, but this is not the self-seeking villainy practiced by an Iago or Edmund. The real villain of the play is gold:

This yellow slave
Will knit and break religions, bless th' accus'd,
Make the hoar leprosy ador'd, place thieves
And give them title, knee, and approbation
With senators on the bench. (IV, 3, 33-7)

Of course, man's yielding to the power of money makes him corrupt, but it is the general cause rather than specific acts of villainy that is condemned in Timon of Athens. This play shows how nightmarish the world would become

if many people followed the principles of the intellectual villain.

Antony and Cleopatra

In Antony and Cleopatra and Coriolanus, villainy plays a minor role partly because, as Willard Farnham has suggested,⁴ the heroes themselves are more seriously flawed than earlier tragic heroes and more of the evil impulses are within. Only Enobarbus can qualify as a villain in Antony and Cleopatra and his villainy is minor and private. A realist who clearly sees the danger Cleopatra poses for Antony, Enobarbus finally acts on his knowledge:

When valour preys on reason,
It eats the sword it fights with. I will seek
Some way to leave him. (III, 13, 199-201)

When he learns of this defection, Antony, recognizing the essential honesty of Enobarbus, sends his fortune after him. Even before he learns of Antony's generosity, Enobarbus is repentant:

I have done ill;
Of which I do accuse myself so sorely
That I will joy no more. (IV, 6, 17-9)

Hearing of Antony's goodness toward him, Enobarbus dies, calling out Antony's name with his last breath. In the structure of the play the incident is too minor for Enobarbus to be considered a major villain and his repentance is too quick and too complete for him to be an intellectual villain. But, for a moment, principles similar to those held by the intellectual villains cause Enobarbus to act

⁴ Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier, passim.

villainously in deserting the hero. What complicates the ideological picture is the fact that Enobarbus' judgment of the situation is correct; he has been a reliable commentator throughout the play. Had Antony heeded his advice, there would have been no tragedy.

Coriolanus

Coriolanus is so sufficiently his own worst enemy that it is somewhat surprising to see some external figures also working against his interests. Actually two groups seek the downfall of Coriolanus: Aufidius and the Volscians, who simply use craft and treachery, and the Roman tribunes, who operate as intellectual villains. The tribunes have a clear motive: they know their power will be lessened if Coriolanus becomes consul. They utilize the time-honored means: knowing Coriolanus' nature, they need only give his contempt of the commons clear and constant publicity. They carry their rabble-rousing to the point of raising mutiny. Even though this direct action falters, they are successful in turning the minds of the people against Coriolanus. Seeing their enemy banished, they resolve to be humbler, but instead become proud in their exercise of power and wrong in their judgments, as in IV, 6, when they refuse to believe that Coriolanus is returning to Rome at the head of a Volscian army. The leadership of the tribunes is ineffectual, and the people turn against them before Rome is finally saved by the mother of Coriolanus. Though

in their actions and in the principles behind those actions the tribunes are intellectual villains, their part in the play is obscured and diluted because they merely reinforce externally an attack on the hero more ruinously carried on by himself internally.

The final plays, with their themes of regeneration and reconciliation, continue the process of blurring the pattern of intellectual villainy. The evil in these plays is relatively too unimportant and too readily overcome for its adherents to gain much prominence. But those characters who are villains in the romances are, for the most part, intellectual villains. They differ only in degree, not kind, from their predecessors.

Pericles

Although she is a sympathetic character in her early appearances, Dionyza becomes a villain in Act IV of Pericles. In I, 4, she is shown to be a sensible woman with a reasonable view of the world. When her husband Cleon pathetically asks if they should discuss the griefs of others in an attempt to forget their own, Dionyza replies:

That were to blow at fire in hope to quench it;
For who digs hills because they do aspire
Throws down one mountain to cast up a higher.
O my distressed lord, even such our griefs are.
(I, 4, 4-7)

These great griefs have arisen because the city of Tarsus, which Cleon and Dionyza rule, is suffering from famine. Pericles, in the midst of his travels, arrives with food to become the savior of the city. Later he leaves his

daughter Marina in Tarsus (III, 3), and the grateful Cleon and Dionyza promise to love her and care for her as their own child.

Marina grows into a gracious young lady at Tarsus, but, as Gower comments in his prologue to Act IV, she surpasses her companion Philoten in all skills, thus raising envy in the breast of Philoten's mother, Dionyza. So envious is Dionyza that she plans to murder Marina, hiring one Leonine for the job. It is Dionyza's comments to Leonine which qualify her as an intellectual villain. In order to accomplish her own purposes she subverts all standards of gratitude, justice, and morality. Under the influence of jealousy she turns her heretofore admirable reason to evil ends. She engages Leonine's aid by offering him the motivation of reward, telling him that the blow he will strike will be very profitable. Having secured his consent, she then tells him what ideas should guide him; he should let neither conscience nor pity deter him, but be "A soldier to his purpose." Dionyza arranges the time and place for the murder, but before Leonine can kill Marina she is carried off by pirates. Leonine reports to Dionyza, however, that he has carried out his mission. Since he is a witness to her villainy, Dionyza rewards him with death by poisoning.

To cover up the supposed murder Dionyza concocts a story to tell Pericles and is ready to go on as if nothing had happened, since she realizes that the murder cannot

be undone. However, she meets some verbal opposition to her plans from Cleon. Their positions are adequately expressed in these two speeches:

Cle. Thou art like the harpy,
Which, to betray, dost, with thine angel's face,
Seize with thine eagle's talons.
Dion. You are like one that superstitiously
Do swear to th' gods that winter kills the flies;
But yet I know you'll do as I advise. (IV, 3, 46-51)

And Cleon does follow orders. Eventually Pericles returns, visits the tomb with its elaborate epitaph praising Marina "In glittering golden characters." On this scene Gower comments:

No visor does become black villainy
So well as soft and tender flattery. (IV, 4, 44-5)

Cleon and Dionyza appear no more in the play, but it is interesting to note that in the explanations and discoveries of Act V, Cleon is the one held responsible for attempting to kill Marina (V, 1, 172-7; V, 1, 217-8; V, 3, 7-9). Possibly Cleon's submission to his wife's authority is enough to make him guilty, or possibly the confusion simply arises from the suspected multiple authorship of the play. In concluding the play Gower completes the story of Cleon and Dionyza. Their own people burn them to death in the palace when their evil deed is made known.

The gods for murder seemed so content
To punish them; although not done, but meant.
(V, 3, 99-100)

So Cleon and Dionyza are linked together in punishment, though the instigation of the murder attempt is entirely

Dionyza's. Her ideas and her manner of proceeding make her an intellectual villain, though a lesser one.

Cymbeline

In the main plot of Cymbeline there are three villains (Cloten, the queen, and Iachimo) working against the interests of the hero and heroine, Posthumus and Imogen. Of the three, Cloten, the queen's son, is described as a fool; his actions bear out the validity of this description. His knavery is heavy-handed; he is ugly and stupid. In the development of Shakespeare's villains, he seems to be a precursor of Caliban and not similar to the villains under discussion in this study. His only apparent connection with the rationale of the intellectual villain is a fleeting observation upon the effect of gold on men: "What can it not do and undo?" (II, 3, 70-81)

Cloten's mother, the queen, is more typical of the intellectual villain. She is described as a "crafty devil," a woman who "bears all down with her brain, who is hourly coining plots." One of the unusual features in her presentation is the number of people who see through her and know her for what she is. Early in the play, before much characterization through action has been accomplished, the queen does an apparent kindness to Imogen, who remarks:

O
Dissembling courtesy! How fine this tyrant
Can tickle where she wounds! (I, 1, 83-5)

Later a doctor to whom she has applied for poisons gives

the queen instead a sleep-inducing drug:

I do know her spirit
And will not trust one of her malice with
A drug of such damn'd nature. (I, 5, 34-6)

Posthumus' servant Pisanio, left behind, as a pledge with Imogen, apparently succumbs to the queen's wishes, but when alone remarks that he will remain true to his master rather than do her bidding. However, the queen realizes this essential loyalty in Pisanio and tries to make use of her knowledge in involving him unsuspectingly in a plot to poison Imogen. I think that the reason for this easy recognition of the queen's character is that villainy does not have absolute sway in the later plays; it does not work unmolested until its consequences are fatal, as in the tragedies.

The queen early gives an indication of her method of operation. Telling Posthumus and Imogen to enjoy their last moments together in isolation, she instead sends the king in to surprise them. She even boasts of her control over the king:

I never do him wrong
But he does buy my injuries, to be friends;
Pays dear for my offenses. (I, 1, 104-6)

When the queen's plots have caused Imogen to leave the court, she makes clear the motive for her actions against Imogen. She is the second wife of the king; her son Cloten is not the king's son. With Imogen out of the way, the queen hopes to persuade the king to name Cloten the heir apparent.

As the action grows more complicated, the queen drops from view. In Act V her death is reported by the doctor; she died horribly, as she had lived. Moreover, she confessed that she had been living a lie. She had not loved the king, only his position; she had planned to poison Imogen and would have poisoned the king to clear Cloten's way to the throne. Hearing this report, the king comments that she was not as she had seemed, but he was evidently the only one who was fooled by her.

The third villain, Iachimo, is a crafty Italian. He is, moreover, a realist who feels that Posthumus' praise of Imogen's virtue is romantic nonsense. So he makes the wager with Posthumus and then sets out to England to seduce Imogen. He will make the world conform to his own picture of it. In the British court he first appears as a ladies' man. Arranging a meeting with Imogen, he tells her that Posthumus is happy in his exile, even mocking lovers and true love. With a subtle mixture of flattery and lies he insinuates that Posthumus has forgotten the lovely Imogen and is solacing himself with other women in Italy. So he suggests that she revenge herself and offers himself as partner to her revenge. When this offer meets with an absolute rebuff, Iachimo says that he was merely trying Imogen's virtue and that, of course, Posthumus is really true to her. This rekindles Imogen's confidence in him so much that he can arrange to store a trunk in her room overnight. Iachimo has quickly devised an alternate plan

when his direct approach failed. In her room at night, he first goes into poetic rapture at Imogen's beauty, but stops himself and carefully notes details of the room and her person to lend credibility to his story to Posthumus. In this scene the rational man overcomes the passionate man in Iachimo, but there is a glimmer of the good end in store for him in his appreciation of Imogen's beauty.

Iachimo reports back to Posthumus, but before recounting his story says he will not swear an oath, for his wealth of detailed information makes that unnecessary. Thus he does not perjure himself in any legal or religious sense, but rather commits the crime against absolute morality of telling a half-truth. Not only half-truths, but absolute lies to give verisimilitude, are used by Iachimo. For example, in giving the bracelet to Posthumus, he describes how Imogen took it off her arm: "Her pretty action did outsell her gift,/ And yet enrich'd it too." Actually, Iachimo had taken the bracelet from the sleeping Imogen. Iachimo does swear by Jupiter that this statement is true, but his oath is not meant to be binding. Having won the bet, Iachimo is satisfied. He does not want to see any harm come to Posthumus because of his anger over Imogen's infidelity. Later, in England, he is unable to fight because of the heaviness and guilt within him. He confesses in time to save Posthumus and Imogen, partly because such confession is necessary to the plot, partly because remorse is a major item in his characterization. He is forgiven

in the general reconciliation.

Iachimo is only a partial intellectual villain, like Claudius, because of his method of procedure. Remorse is so heavily emphasized in his later characterization that he does not remain true to the intellectual principles which had guided his early action and led him into villainy.

The Winter's Tale

Autolycus, a minor villain who appears briefly and late in The Winter's Tale, has motives and a philosophy which gain him a place in this study. Autolycus is a rogue, a thief, and a cheat. He lives by cozening the country people, using his superior knowledge and the sophistication bred of experience in his confidence-man approach. Although he glories in his ability to fleece the unwary and innocent, Autolycus is honest enough with himself to admit that he is a coward. Extremely afraid of temporal and corporal punishment, Autolycus, however, has no thought for any future life. He is, rather, an adherent of a naturalistic philosophy, giving no allegiance to any power beyond himself.

Honesty and trust among men are to him foolish generalities. This attitude is further borne out in his realistic way of observing those around him. With Camillo in IV, 4, he appears to be a dull country bumpkin, but he is actually watching and listening closely. Later he exchanges garments with Florizel as requested, but he is

aware of the significance of what he is doing:

I understand the business, I hear it. To have an open ear, a quick eye, and a nimble hand, is necessary for a cut-purse; a good nose in necessary also, to smell out work for the other senses. I see this is the time that the unjust man doth thrive. (IV, 4, 683-8)

Having stated his general qualifications, Autolycus decides more particularly that it is the greater knavery to withhold the information he has of Florizel's activities rather than divulge it immediately and thus remain even more constant to his chosen profession.

Autolycus has many irons in the fire. Immediately after the above remarks, the clown and shepherd enter, presenting a fresh opportunity for Autolycus. As he says, every gathering of men "yields a careful man work." Later he remarks that he could not be honest if he wanted to, since life puts so many chances to be villainous in his way.

In the working out of the plot, Autolycus does good against his will to the clown and shepherd. He passes out of the play begging forgiveness and promising to amend his life. A delightful rogue, Autolycus brings a realistic touch of evil to the pastoral world of Act IV. His view of the world, though barely sketched in, as well as his cynical humor and occasional self-honesty, makes him a lesser Falstaff among Shakespeare's intellectual villains.

The Tempest

Caliban is the best example in Shakespeare of the

completely evil being who can perceive no glimmer of anything good or decent. Caliban is entirely of the devil's camp; his nature marks the complete antithesis of the intellectual villain. Even though Caliban is the major villain of The Tempest, I pass him by since my whole concern is with human villains who consciously choose evil and rationally plot their evil deeds, contemptuous of any punishment they may receive and scorning the values they trample underfoot. Of this brand of villain there are two examples in The Tempest, Sebastian and Antonio.

In the great confusion of the opening storm scene, these two do nothing but hurl invectives at the crew. When the ship splits and is apparently going down, Antonio, remaining true to his class and position, does show some consciousness of honor: "Let's all sink wi' th' King." But Sebastian exhibits the egoistical side of the intellectual villain: "Let's take leave of him."

In the second scene we learn that part of Antonio's villainous game has already been played. While Prospero dedicated himself to study and neglected worldly concerns, his brother Antonio plotted with the King of Naples to usurp Prospero's dukedom.

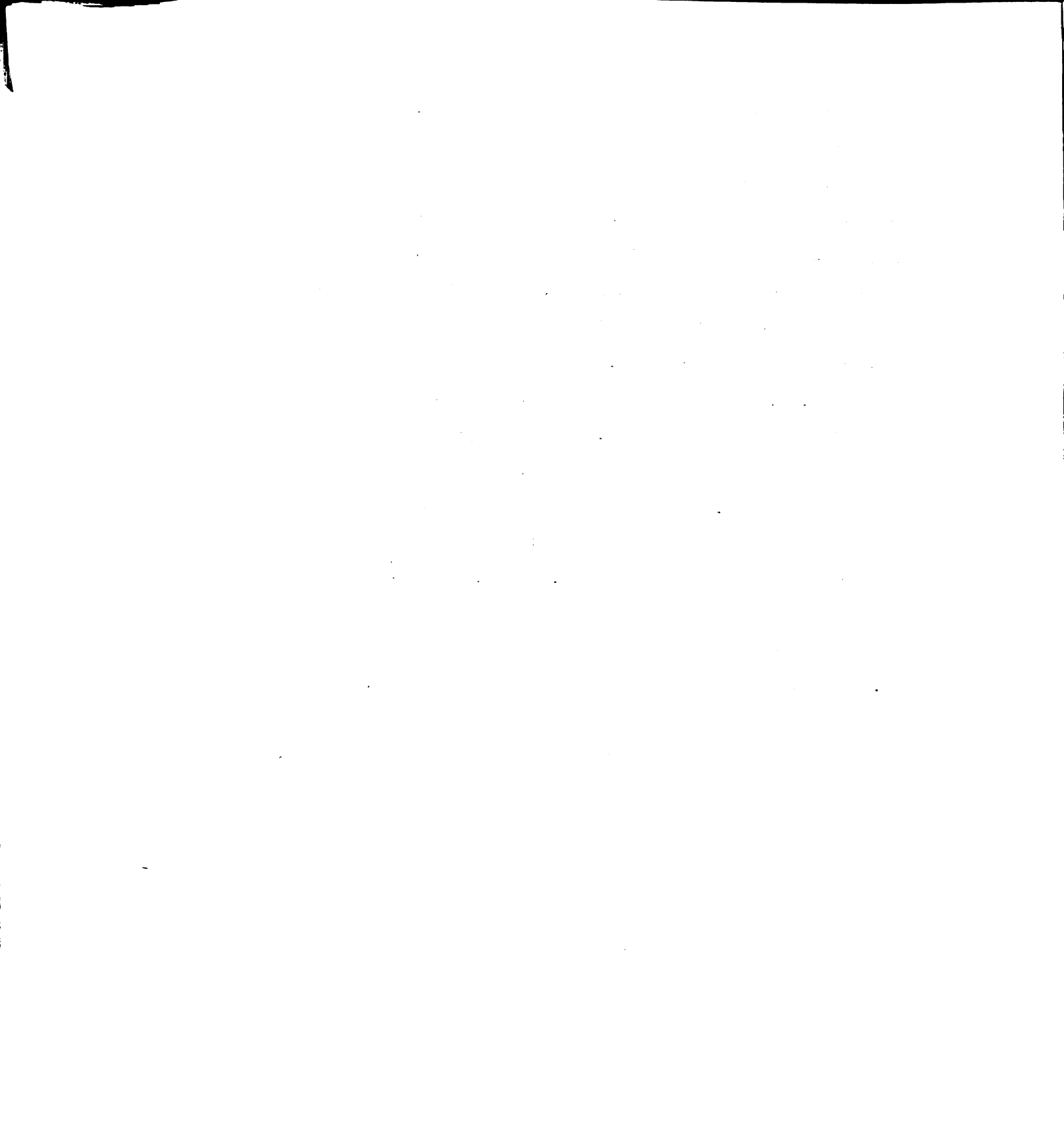
Sebastian and Antonio are seen in action in II, 1. First they gull and bait the good, but rather stupid, Gonzalo. Turning to more serious affairs, they plot to kill Alonzo so that Sebastian can become King of Naples. Antonio, who takes the initiative here, is evidently an expert in

getting rid of brothers who hold high positions. He rationalizes such actions by a method reminiscent of Richard III and other usurpers: a coldly realistic view of the situation and a completely amoral attitude toward conscience--"I feel not/ This deity in my bosom." The plot is expanded to include Gonzalo, a potential witness, but Ariel interrupts their activities so that fruition of the plot must be postponed.

In III, 3, Ariel accuses Antonio, Alonzo, and Sebastian of usurping Prospero's dukedom. Even though Alonzo is the potential victim of the other two, he must be considered one of them. Gonzalo comments of them:

All three of them are desperate: their great guilt,
Like poison given to work a great time after,
Now gives to bite the spirits. (III, 3, 104-6)

The plot against Alonzo never succeeds and Sebastian and Antonio are forgiven by Prospero at the end of the play. Although they are minor elements in the play, the general philosophy which guides Sebastian and Antonio is that which guides Shakespeare's major intellectual villains.



Chapter VII

The Villains of Shakespeare's Contemporaries

In the absence of Renaissance critical theories of villainy, it is necessary to turn to the practices of Shakespeare's contemporary dramatists to determine the degree of possible uniqueness of the intellectual villain. While we no longer see Shakespeare as a god-like eminence completely dwarfing his interesting, but essentially pygmy-like fellows, we do not have to rebound to the other extreme of seeing in Shakespeare only another Elizabethan dramatist who handled the same materials, worked with the same conventions and under the same conditions, and achieved only what thirty other practical men of the theatre achieved, with perhaps a bit more luck or a better command of the language to account for his attaining the foremost ranking. Certain similarities between Shakespeare and his contemporary dramatists are undoubtedly apparent in the plays and are important, but, as might be expected in such an individualistic era of literary production, significant differences of poetic and dramatic technique are also manifested in the drama of the period.¹ One major difference is in the handling of the villains; this chapter will trace several of the outstanding concepts of villainy utilized by Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists to show

¹ This difference has been characterized as "Shakespeare's simultaneous detachment from his contemporaries and comprehension of them." Una Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama, p. 248.

how they differ from intellectual villainy. Before considering the Renaissance drama, though, I will characterize briefly the heritage of villainy these dramatists received from classical drama to see what possible influence toward intellectual villainy these plays offer. The conception of villainy in medieval drama has already been extensively discussed.

Greek tragedy rarely presents a character who could be called a villain as the Renaissance came to understand and use the term. The dominant image received from Greek tragedy is of a strong-willed hero motivated by pride or passion, rather than consciously evil ideas, to acts which are evil in that they upset the order of the universe or attempt to counteract the decrees of Fate or Necessity.² The chorus, which usually upholds orthodox ideas, continually cautions the hero to self-knowledge and wisdom; generally this wisdom is learning to bow to Necessity, to subordinate one's pride to the controlling power of the universe.

H. D. F. Kitto says that Aeschylean tragedy occurs when man is so "infatuate" as to set at defiance the fundamental moral principles, so that the hero "acts not from evil motives but from moral blindness."³ This infatuation

² A similar explanation is given by Henry Wells, Elizabethan and Jacobean Playwrights, p. 17: "The uncertainty of fate overshadowing mankind lies at the heart of the Greek drama, while the English play becomes principally a study in a particular vice."

³ Greek Tragedy, pp. 105, 111.

can issue in the rebellious pride of a Prometheus or the vengeance of an Orestes. Prometheus may seem to be a rebel against constituted authority, but he is actually opposing the tyrannous force of Zeus. The real power of the Greek universe, Necessity, controls both Zeus and Prometheus. So Prometheus is not issuing any ultimate challenge, but is rather a promise that eventually intelligence, instead of brute force, will be man's chief attribute. In the Orestia none of the characters are clearly good or evil; the long series of murders and judgments is motivated entirely by vengeance, the original crime having taken place before the story of the Orestia begins. At Orestes' trial, the Furies, who prosecute him, uphold the sanctity of the law:

The man who does right, free-willed, without constraint
shall not lose happiness
nor be wiped out with his generation.
But the transgressor, I tell you, the bold man
who brings in confusion of goods unrightly won,
at long last and perforce, when ship toils
under tempest must strike his sail
in the wreck of his rigging.⁴

When Orestes is freed, the Furies lament that the old law has been overthrown, but they are placated by being installed as household gods of Athens. The judgment shows that Orestes is "right" in avenging his father, even by killing his mother; his ideas are thus not inimical to the established order.

Creon, in Sophocles' Antigone, appears in Antigone's

⁴ Aeschylus, The Eumenides, tr. Richmond Lattimore, 11. 550-7.

view to be a villain who puts man-made law above the law of the gods. But Creon takes an orthodox view of social order. His treatment of Polynices was occasioned because Polynices warred against his own country; Creon clearly sees the evil in anarchy and the good in discipline and order. Eventually Creon accedes to Antigone's wishes, but his change comes too late. Since his pride and willfulness have led to the death of his son and his wife, the tragedy is as much his as Antigone's. He attains wisdom, but only at a terrible cost.

Medea, the greatest female evildoer in classical drama, is entirely motivated by passion. Kitto comments that the point of Euripides' play is that passion is stronger than reason.⁵ In the play the chorus is aware of a certain ambiguity and difficulty in Medea's position:

I both wish to help you and support the normal
Ways of mankind, and tell you not to do this thing.⁶

Medea is clearly an intelligent villain; she deceives others and contrives ways to punish Jason and his new wife. But she is not an intellectual villain; entirely controlled by passion, she is, in Jason's words,

A monster, not a woman, having a nature
Wilder than that of Scylla in the Tuscan sea.⁷

She oversteps the bounds of normal human nature, but she is led to her crimes by a passionate nature seeking personal vengeance rather than by a clearly conceived world

⁵ Kitto, p. 193.

⁶ Euripides, The Medea, tr. Rex Warner, ll. 812-3.

⁷ Ibid., ll. 1342-3.

view opposed to orthodox ideas.

But the Renaissance dramatists were more aware of Seneca's reworkings of the classical legends than they were of the versions written by the Greek tragedians. In Seneca, even more than in Greek tragedy, the evildoers are motivated by passion or are driven by an adverse Fortune. Momentarily maddened through the hateful vengeance of Juno, Hercules kills his wife and children. "Mad for sovereignty,"⁸ the sons of Oedipus wage a fierce war. When Phaedra is guided by consuming lust to sin, the chorus comments:

Blind fortune rules the affairs of men
Dispensing with unthinking hand
Her gifts, oft favoring the worst.
And so the violent oppress
The innocent;⁹

Medea, wildly seeking revenge against Jason, cries, "Give passion fullest sway,"¹⁰ before murdering her children.

The Senecan character who the scholars feel most profoundly impressed Renaissance drama was Atreus. Like Euripides' Medea, Atreus is a careful plotter and dissembler; moreover, in contrast to the chorus' stoic ideal of a king, he displays some tyrannous ideas:

Integrity,
Truth, loyalty, are private virtues; kings

⁸ In the words of Oedipus in The Phoenician Women, tr. Ella Isabell Harris, The Complete Roman Drama, II, 565.

⁹ Seneca, Phaedra, tr. Frank Justus Miller, Ibid., 656-7.

¹⁰ Seneca, Medea, tr. Frank Justus Miller, Ibid., 613.

Do as they will.¹¹

Such views make it easy to see why Atreus came to be considered a prototype of the "Machiavellian" villain; his atrocious actions grafted the element of specific evil deeds onto the tyrannous-ruler type so that he appears to be a plausible model for many Elizabethan villains. But like the other classical evildoers, Atreus is led to his crimes by vengeance and Fortune. He is caught up in the enmities and hatreds of his family line; specifically, he accuses Thyestes of adultery and fraud in obtaining the golden fleece, so that Thyestes, in his view, is not a legitimate king. When he announces his plan to have Thyestes eat his own children, Atreus says that he is goaded by a great, inexplicable passion. For a moment, grasping the crown he has sought, Atreus does feel himself above the gods; but his actions have been motivated much more by vengeance than by a desire for power and its freedom from constraints. The theme of vengeance closes out the play and projects itself into the future as Thyestes calls on the gods to avenge him against Atreus. Atreus is a colossal dramatic villain because of his enormous passion and his gigantic appetite for perpetrating crimes and horrors, but not because his ideas are evil. He is in the grip of that very Fortune the true intellectual villains defy with their whole being. If Atreus is seen as an epitome of the classical heritage of villainy, then the

¹¹ Seneca, Thyestes, tr. Ella Isabell Harris, Ibid., 759.

earlier drama offers no figure leading directly to Shakespeare's intellectual villains.

In discussing the villains of Shakespeare's contemporaries, critics have adopted, at one time or another, all the theories and terms which were considered in the first chapter. In my own discussion of these villains, however, I will not use these terms, as my intention is to show that the bulk of the villains appearing on the stage when Shakespeare was a practicing playwright, or still a very major and immediate influence, were not intellectual villains. In demonstrating this negative point, I will forego the easy solution of adducing the first chapter as sufficient evidence and will instead describe the several types of villains that I see appearing in the plays, concentrating in each case on the essential points of difference between these villains and the intellectual villains. As in the discussions of Shakespeare's villains, however, I will present some of the typical critical comments to frame my own remarks.

The significant lines of development for the non-Shakespearean villains were initiated by Marlowe and Kyd. Marlowe is responsible for popularizing the ambitious villain, often the protagonist of his play, whose goal is the sweet fruition of an earthly crown. Kyd paves the way for the villain who acts, either willingly or reluctantly, because of a wrong that has been committed; his motive is either vengeance or a sense of honor or even a feeling

that his own happiness is being blocked by another person. From both Kyd and Marlowe comes the third type, the subordinate villain, who is either simply malign or else commits evil for monetary reward but with no personal interest in his victims.

Marlowe's mighty protagonist Tamburlaine differs from his classical predecessors in his overwhelming ambition which reflects the soaring exuberance of at least one phase of the Renaissance mind and in his feeling that he is the absolute master of his own fate. He is described in the play as

A Scythian Shepherd, so imbellished
With Nature's pride, and richest furniture,
His looks do menace heaven and dare the Gods.
(ll. 350-2)

And he says of himself:

I hold the Fates bound fast in yron chaines,
And with my hand turne Fortunes wheel about.
(ll. 369-70)

The difference is usually accounted for by Marlowe's absorption in the system of Machiavelli. Miss Ellis-Fermor sees Marlowe as chiefly responsible for the stage Machiavel which held the stage for more than twenty years. Whereas Kyd and other dramatists saw in the Machiavel only a theatrical figure capable of limitless villainy, Marlowe studied the real system of Machiavelli, exploring a materialistic and satanic interpretation of life.¹² The system which Machiavelli offered was based upon

¹² The Jacobean Drama, p. 11.

the assumption of weakness, ingratitude and ill-will as essential elements of human character and society, upon the acceptance of religion only as a means of making a people docile to their governors, upon the open admission of cruelty, parsimony and betrayal of faith as necessary (if regrettable) instruments.¹³

George Buckley, who has described Machiavelli as a major source of atheism in Western Europe, says that Marlowe, particularly, derived his atheism from Machiavelli as evidenced by direct references, the general tone of his plays, and the conception of characters who subordinate religion to their own desires.¹⁴ Henry Wells believes that Tamburlaine unites both the religious and political strands of Machiavelli's teachings. Tamburlaine is a symbol of Anti-Christ who embodies all the ethical principles denounced by Christianity, as well as a Machiavel in political morals whose typical mood is boastful defiance.¹⁵

Returning to the other dramatists, who did not know Machiavelli first hand, or else distorted his real intent, Miss Ellis-Fermor says they made of the stage Machiavel a diabolic character, forwarding a policy of self-seeking and cynical aggression, who nevertheless "contained the elements of his own destruction" and who "always operated in a world in which there was 'no place to mount' to any significant height." Shakespeare, after examining this figure in Richard III, rejected it as psychologically con-

13 The Jacobean Drama, p. 12.

14 Atheism in the English Renaissance, pp. 31, 130.

15 Elizabethan and Jacobean Playwrights, pp. 80-1.

tradictory and thus escaped the dominant influence of the Machiavel.¹⁶

There are several factors in Tamburlaine which keep the hero from being simply a dramatic embodiment of Machiavelli's teachings or an intellectual villain. Tamburlaine is the scourge and wrath of God in the sense that he carries on a kind of crusade to free the Christian captives of the Mohammedan king, Bajazeth. At least superficially, then, Tamburlaine upholds Christianity. More importantly, Tamburlaine does not sin against the society of the play. His leading opponent, Bajazeth, is equally proud and cruel; he promises great tortures for Tamburlaine and his followers if he should win, even suggesting the idea of human captives drawing a chariot which Tamburlaine later puts into practice. Rather than smashing inherent notions of decency and humane conduct, Tamburlaine commits only the crime of aspiring to the heights when he was basely born. Marlowe does not condemn him for this within the play; Tamburlaine wins all his battles, dying a natural death at the end of Part 2. The trait which he bequeaths to subsequent drama is soaring ambition, involving more of a threat to social conventions than a wholesale ideological attack against the fundamental principles which make society and civilization possible. In short, a society of Tamburlaines, though staggering to contemplate, is possible; a society of Iagos is inconceivable, even a contradiction

¹⁶ Ellis-Fermor, pp. 13-5.

in terms.

Marlowe also created the second great ambitious villain on the Elizabethan stage, Barabas, the Jew of Malta. Barabas is not concerned with an earthly crown, but rather wants to enclose "Infinite riches in a little roome."

C. V. Boyer offers the traditional portrait of Barabas as a Machiavel: he dissembles, shows religious hypocrisy, is a treacherous egotist, acts under the control of the devil, and dies cursing. To Boyer, the figure of Barabas rather than Tamburlaine sets the pattern for the future development of this character, a hero who

commences his tragic career out of hatred and revenge, pursues his plot by guile, but oversteps all bounds of justice and reason in the cruelty of his deeds, and is finally taken in his own toils and destroyed.¹⁷

But Bernard Spivack sees in Barabas the hybrid image of a Vice figure in a non-morality play. Especially after his meeting with Ithimore, who supplements his Vice characteristics, Barabas puts his villainy on demonstration and shows the moral pedigree, the tricks of weeping and laughter, and the deceitful stratagems which mark the Vice.¹⁸

Both these views have merit and can be supported from the play. Machiavelli appears as Prologue, announcing that Barabas has acquired his wealth through Machiavellian means. Barabas himself uses the Machiavellian tag word,

¹⁷ The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Drama, p. 52.

¹⁸ Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, pp. 348-51.

policy, particularly in describing how he became Governor of Malta and how he intends to pursue that office. The elements which Spivack analyzes are present in the make-up of Barabas, but they do not necessarily make him a Vice figure. For Barabas can be considered naturalistically as a man driven by two great passions: ambition to amass wealth, which is primary, and hatred of Christians, which often operates as a supplementary and only slightly lesser motive. Barabas is introduced gloating over his riches in a scene that sets the tone for the rest of the play. He quickly strikes the second theme of his character, contempt of all Christians, pointing out very clearly that his ambition is for wealth and not power: the Christians can be kings as long as the Jews, and particularly Barabas, can be rich. As a normal concomitant to these main motives, Barabas is an extreme egotist. When Malta is threatened with invasion, he emphasizes that his only concern is for himself: "Ego mihimet sum semper proximus." At another point he brags that he was framed of a finer mold than other men. Most of his characteristics are summed up in his instructions to Ithimore:

First be thou voyd of these affections,
Compassion, love, vaine hope, and hartlesse feare,
Be mov'd at nothing, see thou pittie none,
But to thy selfe smile when the Christians moane."
(ll. 934-7)

The negation of compassion and love by an all-consuming egotism does give Barabas some kinship with the intellectual villain and his general character makes a comparison

with Shylock inevitable. Both Jews are depicted as misers who hate Christians. But Barabas' railing against Christians as faithless schemers is so pervasive in the play and so often motiveless in a given situation as to suggest that it reflects Marlowe's rather than Barabas' attack on Christianity. Shylock, on the other hand, generally has specific wrongs from Antonio or other Christians to motivate his enmity. Moreover, Shylock views the world realistically and plans on the basis of his knowledge, whereas Barabas, though very adept at devising stratagems, almost haphazardly races through a series of plots aimed at satisfying one or both of his great passions. Marlowe begins with the passion and the character evolves from this, bursting forth in many directions. By contrast, Shakespeare's intellectual villains seem more ordered; extremely rational, they appear to exercise control over the plot and with the expression of their distinctive world view they consistently suggest that evil is much more than simply criminal activity.

The line of the ambitious villain runs through three plays of the early 1590's which require only a brief notice. In The Massacre at Paris, the ruthless, scheming Duke of Guise contrives the slaughter of French Protestants, not primarily out of religious conviction but as a step in a program of obtaining the French crown for himself. His soliloquies do not advance villainous ideas, but simply express his degree of resolution. His whole being is

devoted to the fulfillment of his ambition; he will either succeed or die. When his plans fail and death is inevitable, Guise scorns flight and succumbs with the haughty brazenness of a man who has staked all and lost. Muly Mahamet of The Battle of Alcazar varies the pattern somewhat by seeking to regain a crown he had originally usurped but subsequently lost. His son suggests that Muly can recover his power by valor or policy. Though he is valorous enough, Muly is devoid not only of villainous ideas, but of all ideas. He is reduced to raging against his exile and nerving himself for another battle. Defeated, he can only curse his enemies. The passion of love touches the villain Sacripant of Orlando Furioso, but he views the possession of Angelica merely as a stepping-stone to his more important goal, the crown. Sacripant's all-consuming ambition and its accompanying egotism are characterized in the following speech:

Honor,--me thinkes the title is too base:
 Mightie, glorious, and excellent,--
 I, these, my glorious Genius, sound within my mouth;
 These please the eare, and with a sweet applause,
 Makes me in tearmes coequall with the Gods.¹⁹

Although he is momentarily overcome by conscience when Orlando defeats him and he confesses to wronging Angelica in Orlando's eyes, the great egotism and the great disappointment of unfulfilled ambition return in Sacripant's final words:

Heaven, earth, men, beasts, and every living thing,

¹⁹ The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene, ed. J. Churton Collins, I, ll. 254-8.

but she returns the passion and they are certainly not the only pair of adulterous lovers at the French court. Moreover, Bussy is the victim, not the instigator of the plots of the play. As Henry Wells has pointed out, the distinctions between Elizabethan villains and heroes are not always clear.²¹ The important thing is that Bussy is goaded by ambition into actions which are sins against absolute morality if not against the standards of his immediate society. When Fortune turns against him, Bussy still has the prop of his Stoic beliefs and dies nobly, with great dignity and fortitude. Monsieur, the king's brother, who first enlists Bussy's aid in his own struggle for the crown and then turns against a Bussy favored by the king, is an ambitious villain more clearly given to evil actions. As Bussy charges, Monsieur's "political head is the cursed fount/ Of all the violence, rapine, cruelty,/ Tyrannie, and atheisme flowing through the realme." (III, 2, 495-7) So, whether he personifies the theme of ambition in a protagonist or a villain, Chapman, in Bussy D'Ambois, continues the dramatic portrayal of the character out to make or mend his fortune.

Jonson's Sejanus is a character, who in Boas' description, is "wholly compact of evil."²² This evil is entirely directed to maintaining and furthering Sejanus' position of equal power and eminence with the emperor Tiberius. His readiness to use any means is brought

²¹ Wells, p. 18.

²² An Introduction to Stuart Drama, p. 77.

out in the following exchange with Tiberius, after Sejanus has suggested murder as a possible course of action:

Tib: That nature, bloud, and lawes of kinde forbid.

Sej: Doe policie, and state forbid it?

.

Tib: Are rites

Of faith, love, piety, to be trod down?

Forgotten? and made vaine? Sej: All for a crowne.

The prince, who shames a tyrannes name to bear,

Shall never dare do anything, but feare." (II, 175-9)

Sejanus plans to use Tiberius' fear as an instrument to get rid of his own rivals. For a while the scheme works to perfection. At the beginning of Act V, Sejanus exults at reaching the summit of power. When friends inform him of prodigies and omens which presage ill, Sejanus comments: "What excellent fooles/ Religion makes of men." (II. 69-70) Not the Roman gods but Fortune is his deity; but when Fortune turns her face against him, Sejanus says that men control Fortune. In his rejection of religion, his willingness to use politic means, and his own mastery over fate, Sejanus is very close to Shakespeare's intellectual villains; there is an important difference, however, as Sejanus is foremost a creature of an ambition that shapes and colors all of the world for him. He does not look at the world as a thorough-going rationalist, cynically rejecting those principles and values which those around him hold dear, but rather sets his sights on the imperial throne and then surrenders himself to whatever means are necessary to achieve that end. He is closer to Tamburlaine than to Richard III.

Seemingly pleased with Sejanus' actions, the emperor

Tiberius is actually very much concerned over his growing power and sets a spy to watch Sejanus. This man, Macro, is a worthy match for Sejanus:

He that will thrive in state, he must neglect
The trodden paths, that truth and right respect;
And prove new, wilder wayes: (III, 736-8)

After Tiberius and Macro have brought about the downfall and death of Sejanus, the play is ended with an explicit lesson drawn from the fate of the overly proud, ambitious man:

Let this example moove the insolent man,
Not to grow proud, and carelesse of the gods:
It is an odious wisdom, to blaspheme,
Much more to slighten, or denie their powers.
For, whom the morning saw so great, and high,
Thus low, and little, 'fore the even doth lie.
(V, 898-904)

In Cataline, similar in design and intent to Sejanus, Jonson states, through the words of Cicero, just what the evil effects of ambition are. Cataline's ambition is described as

being both a rebell
Unto the soule, and reason, and enforceth
All lawes, all conscience, treads upon religion,
And offereth violence to nature's selfe.
(III, 249-52)

So Cataline, like Sejanus, overpowered by ambition, moves into actions and realms of thought destructive of the ideals which Jonson would uphold for human beings. Both plays present the degeneration of a man through the corrosive action of great ambition; in the thoroughness of the presentation, Jonson's two tragedies mark the culmination of this often-utilized theme.

Two more ambitious villains deserve some attention. Bernard Spivack considers Proditor in Middleton's The Phoenix a post-Shakespearean Vice figure who is caught up in the *Psychomachia*. In this late stage of development the hybrid figure has moved far in the direction of naturalism by having recognizable motives of ambition or revenge, but still retains the quality of abstract evil, finding the target for his enmity in the virtue of the victim.²³ Proditor is a villain in both the main plot and the subplot. In the latter, Proditor offers to help a boorish captain get rid of his wife, Castiza, by buying the woman, seducing her, and thus giving the captain grounds for divorce. After the sale, Proditor reveals that he really loves, or at least lusts after, Castiza for himself, and rejects any further communication with the captain, who is finally sent away in disgrace by Castiza's son. Castiza, as befits her name, repels the advances of Proditor. In the main plot Proditor's ambition comes to the fore. The aged Duke of Ferrara prepares to hand over his power to his son, Phoenix. Proditor, a courtier, shows his dislike in muttered asides; aloud he suggests that Phoenix should travel to complete his education, obviously so that Proditor can take over in his absence. When Phoenix agrees to the plan of travel and the other nobles commend him for his wisdom, Proditor comments aside: "A little too wise, a little too wise to live long." (I, 1, 69) Proditor,

²³ Spivack, p. 450.

occupied with Castiza, doesn't move against the duke until Act IV and his motive of ambition must be read back into his statements of Act I. Therefore, there is some validity in Spivack's portrayal of him as an embodiment of abstract evil. Spivack's reference to the Psychomachia probably concerns the scene in which Proditor unknowingly hires Phoenix, who has stayed in Ferrara in disguise instead of traveling, to kill the duke, using the interesting argument that Phoenix' posterity will benefit from the wealth he will receive as a reward for the deed. This is an extremely diluted Psychomachia in that Phoenix is never really tempted to do evil, but is aware of his course from the first moment of the play. His design in staying in Ferrara is to keep such nobles as Proditor from usurping the dukedom and to learn first hand of conditions there so that he will be a better ruler when the title passes into his hands legitimately. So rather than consider Proditor as a Vice, I think it is better to view him as part of the line of ambitious villains, particularly because of the intensity of his commitment:

Ay, I'll turn my brain
 Into a thousand uses, tire my inventions,
 Make my blood sick with study, and mine eye
 More hollow than my heart, but I will fashion,
 Nay, I will fashion it. (IV, 1, 15-9)

This is exactly the intense involvement of the ambitious villain with his goal which has characterized the type from Tamburlaine on.

The final ambitious villain, Sir Giles Overreach,

has been characterized by T. S. Eliot as "the terror of a dozen parishes instead of the conqueror of a world."²⁴ The type, then, plays out in a figure who has the same all-consuming passion but a lesser field of operations. Like Barabas, Overreach wants to amass wealth, but primarily to the end of rising in the social order. He tells his daughter that he has done all for her and advises her:

Learn anything,
And from any creature that may make thee great;
From the devil himself. (III, 2, 120-2)

But she comments that this is devilish doctrine and refuses to marry the lord he has picked out for her. Despite his protestations that he is utilizing extortion, bribery, and other harsh and inhumane methods only to pile up wealth for his daughter, Overreach confesses to his prospective son-in-law that there is also simply an evil streak in him:

'Tis for you,
My lord, and for my daughter, I am marble;
Nay more, if you will have my character
In little, I enjoy more true delight
In my arrival to my wealth these dark
And crooked ways, than you shall e'er take pleasure
In spending what my industry hath compass'd.
(IV, 1, 133-9)

Called a lion and a fox in his proceedings, Overreach's first reaction when he has been outwitted and defeated is to fight. But the violence of his overthrow unsettles his mind and the memory of his evil past destroys his ability to struggle ("Some undone widow sits upon my arm,/ And takes away the use of 't;"). Nerving himself to fight

²⁴ Selected Essays, p. 193.

to the end rather than yield ingloriously, Overreach rushes against his adversaries only to fall, helplessly and hopelessly mad, to the ground. Above his prostrate body, Lovell intones the pious moral:

Here is a precedent to teach wicked men
That when they leave religion, and turn atheists,
Their own abilities leave 'em. (V, 1, 380-2)

Overreach's all-consuming passion for his daughter's advancement and his evil methods make him a typical ambitious villain. The constricted area in which he acts serves to mark a definite stopping point for this discussion of a type which has moved from seeking the sweet fruition of an earthly crown to the sweet fruition of a noble title. In all these villains the distinguishing trait has been complete involvement in securing the goal of ambition, not inherently evil ideas, which has led to villainous action.

The second major group of villains I call self-seeking. They are not ambitious in the sense of trying to attain a position not rightfully theirs but rather are motivated to act against specific characters by vengeance for the death of a friend or relative, by a sense of honor, either personal or familial, or by the pursuance of a passion, such as love, which is being thwarted by someone. As in the case of the ambitious villains, some of the self-seeking villains are protagonists of their plays while others are more properly villains, directing their evil against the protagonist.

Of the possible motives for the self-seeking villain, revenge proved the most popular in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. The Spanish Tragedy offers the model of the type, Hieronimo, with his solemn commitment to revenge, his madness, his impassioned speeches, his stratagems to entrap the murderers, and his own final destruction, once the revenge has been achieved. In addition to the protagonist Hieronimo, The Spanish Tragedy also contains a true villain, Lorenzo, who actually controls the action for more than half of the play and who represents the non-vengeful aspects of the self-seeking villain. The enmity between Lorenzo and Horatio arises when both claim the honor of capturing the Portuguese prince, Balthazar, in a recent war and becomes active when Lorenzo finds his sister Bel-Imperia favoring the suit of Horatio instead of his own candidate Balthazar. To Lorenzo this is sufficient motive for the murder of Horatio and he goes about hiring confederates with this policy:

Where words prevail not, violence prevails;
 But gold doth more than either of them both.
(II, 1, 108-9)

Lorenzo's sinister and double-dealing nature is shown as he carefully and systematically kills off all, except Balthazar, who had knowledge of the crime. When Bel-Imperia complains of his harsh treatment of her, Lorenzo says he has acted only to protect her honor. Though, in justifying Horatio's murder to Bel-Imperia, Lorenzo must fabricate a story to illustrate what he means by honor, honor

is nevertheless the mainspring of his actions. His sister is a princess and thus above the attentions of a mere marshal's son like Horatio; she can only marry a prince, even if he is a former enemy. Subsequent dramatists eagerly adopted the characters of Hieronimo and Lorenzo for their own use. Indeed, The Spanish Tragedy is a veritable storehouse of villainy; as we shall see later, the third type, the subordinate villain, is also well represented in the play.

Clois Hoffman in Chettle's Hoffman follows the lead set by Hieronimo, though Bernard Spivack considers him a Vice because of his use of deceit and dissimulation, particularly Hoffman's long disguise as another character, and his rapid alternation between laughter and weeping. In summary Spivack speaks of

the whole tendency of his role to gambol from the purpose which defines him morally into successive homiletic demonstrations of villainy, attended by the temper and devices that for two centuries were part of such a performance.²⁵

Hoffman has the difficult task of avenging his father's death against several powerful nobles, but from the first is convinced of the justice of his cause and the necessity to act:

Where truth leadeth, what coward would not fight?
 Ill acts move some, but myne's a cause that's right.
(I, 1, 11-12)

Differing from Hieronimo in the vigorous and immediate enactment of vengeance, Hoffman moves from success to

²⁵ Spivack, p. 357.

success, largely because he has disguised himself as his first victim and is able to roam freely the noble household where his intended victims are congregated. Hoffman's only weak spot, one which proves fatal, is lust for his supposed "mother." Interestingly, those intended victims still alive in Act V band together to swear and execute vengeance against Hoffman, using the woman to lure him to his death. The dying Hoffman scorns all suggestions of forgiveness and pardon and even refuses to accept any prayers for his soul. During the play Hoffman's soliloquies concern only his plots to achieve revenge and contain none of the ideas which characterize the intellectual villain. From beginning to end, except for his fatal weakness of lust, Hoffman is entirely given over to the pursuit of vengeance. Just as with the ambitious villains, his involvement is total.

A second self-seeking villain whom Spivack considers a Vice, because of his fixed and inveterate hatred, is Piero of Marston's Antonio's Revenge.²⁶ The more traditional viewpoint is expressed by Miss Ellis-Fermor, who calls Piero a cross between a Machiavel and a Senecan tyrant.²⁷ Both conceptions receive strong support from the text. In the first act of Antonio's Revenge, Piero not only speaks of his great hatred for Andrugio, but also tells how he has dissembled love and friendship in order to lure his victim to his death. Piero not only quotes from Thyestes but also

²⁶ Spivack, p. 360.

²⁷ Ellis-Fermor, p. 16, fn. 5.

has several discourses on a ruler's power in the spirit of both Atreus and Machiavelli.

Piero's development begins in Antonio and Mellida, the dramatic predecessor of Antonio's Revenge. His Venetian navy has defeated the Genoan fleet commanded by Andrugio and his son Antonio. The exultant Piero demands the heads of his enemies as truce pledges because

The intestine malice, and inveterate hate
I alwaies bore to that Andrugio
Glories in triumph ore his misery:28

Later Piero says that he is revenging his family against Andrugio in forbidding Antonio to marry his daughter Mellida. But this play ends in reconciliation: Andrugio is at peace with Piero and plans for the wedding of Antonio and Mellida are made. Marston's intention in this play is not to write a tragedy but to satirize certain vices in society.

In the sequel Marston's intent has changed, requiring some blackening of Piero's character, a process that was begun in the earlier play. Antonio's Revenge opens with a bloody Piero glorying in the murder of Andrugio and another noble whose corpse he has bound to his daughter in an attempt to dishonor her in Antonio's eyes:

I can scarce coope triumphing vengeance up,
From bursting forth in braggart passion. (p. 71)

Piero gives as motive for the murder of Andrugio the fact that both had loved the same woman and Andrugio had won her:

28 The Plays of John Marston, ed. H. Harvey Wood, I, 15.

For which, I burnt in inward sweltring hate,
 And festred rankling malice in my breast,
 Till I might belke revenge upon his eyes: (p. 71)

While this motive cannot be read back to the earlier play, the end result and direction of Piero's feelings, inveterate hatred of Andrugio, are the same in both plays. Piero invites comparison with Hamlet in outlining his future plans: "Poyson the father, butcher the son, & marrie the mother; ha?" (p. 73)

Piero utilizes one of Lorenzo's favorite devices; he gets underlings to carry out his plots, then kills them, boasting of this as his policy:

Why, thus should States-men doe,
 That cleave through knots of craggie pollicies,
 Use men like wedges, one strike out another. (p. 115)

In his only expression of a world view, Piero answers for the killing of the noble whom he bound to his daughter:

There glowe no sparkes of reason in the world;
 All are rak't up in ashie beastliness.

I ha no reason to be reasonable. (p. 81)

In the context of Marston's consistent bitter satire this statement reads more like the credo of the author than the character. In any event the conclusion reached from this cynical observation is not that reached by the intellectual villains who advance from cynicism to a very rational appraisal of the world and their place in it and often to rational plots to better their position.

The play, of course, derives its title from Antonio's revenge; in Act V he finally gets around to his statement of dedication:

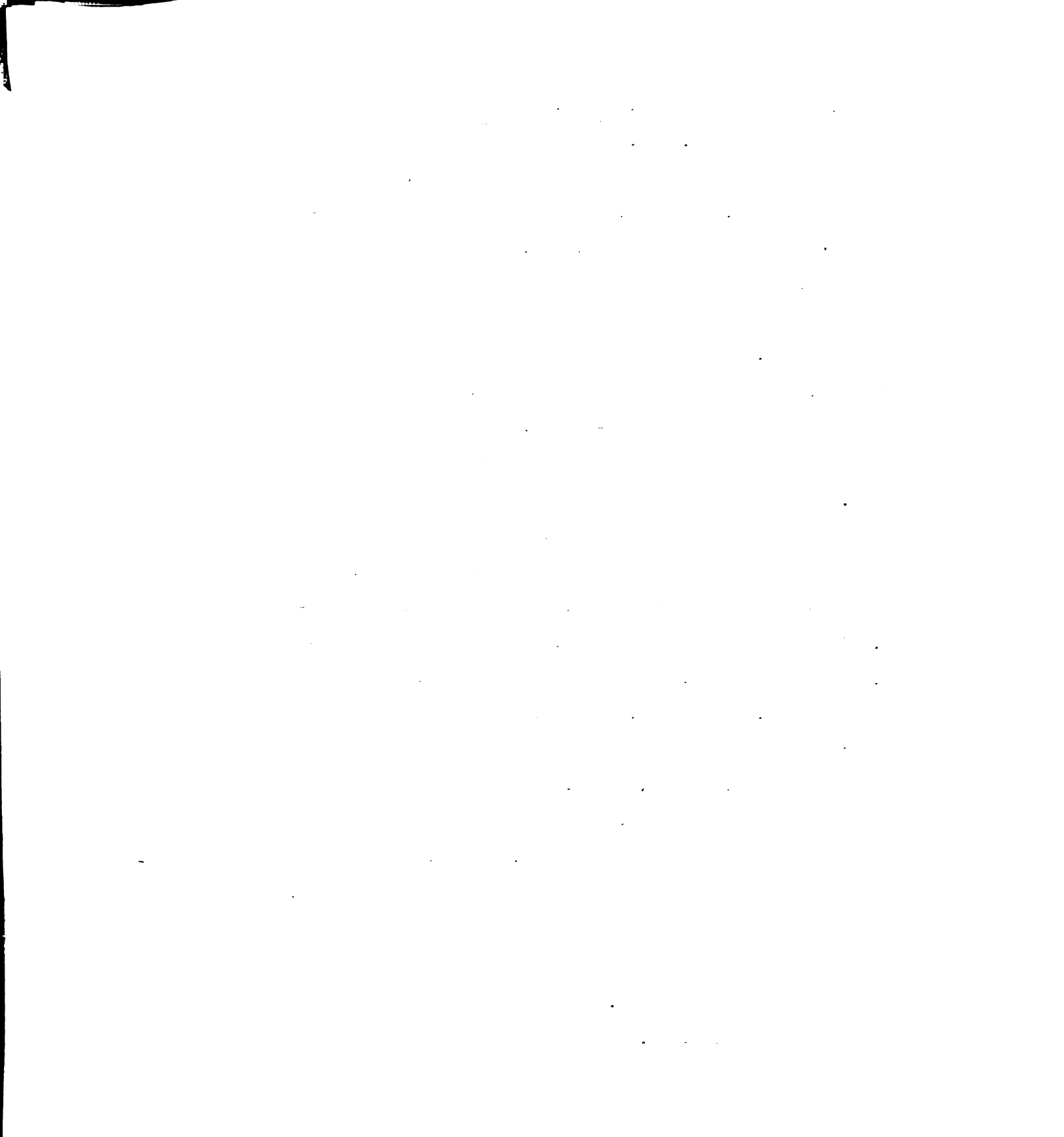
Now, therefore, pittie, piety, remorse,
 Be aliens to our thoughts; grim fier-ey'd rage
 Possess us wholly. (p. 130)

Joining with others wronged by Piero he tortures, then kills, the tyrannous duke. However, the leading villain throughout the two plays has been Piero, and, given his motives and actions, the concept of the self-seeking villain not only explains Piero but is more readily applicable to him than to Antonio. This concept is broad and general enough to contain, rather than deny categorically, the insights of both Spivack and Miss Ellis-Fermor.

The Malcontent also presents two characters bent on revenge. The Malcontent himself wants vengeance on those who have usurped his dukedom, but he is a greater creation and a more interesting character than a mere revenger, as Miss Ellis-Fermor has pointed out, because of his variable-ness, his consciousness of himself, his weariness and disgust, his incisive wit, his hardness of purpose, and his macabre jesting.²⁹ Mendoza, however, emerges as the real villain; like the Malcontent he is prompted to action by a wrong to himself, though, later, ambition causes him to seek the dukedom for himself.

In the court of the usurping duke, Pietro, Mendoza is both a favorite of the duke and the lover of the duchess. But this secure and pleasant life is shattered when the duke suspects him of being the duchess' lover whereas the duchess is replacing him with a rival. These new circumstances

²⁹ Ellis-Fermor, p. 92.



lead Mendoza to revenge against the duke, the duchess, and his rival, Ferneze:

Shall have swift vengeance, nothing so holy,
No band of nature so strong,
No law of friendship so sacred,
But ile profane, burst, violate. (p. 163)

Mendoza even has a general philosophy of sorts which justifies revenge:

and man is (all confesse)
More prone to vengeance then to gratefulnesse. (p. 166)

Mendoza, then, like the other self-seeking villains, makes an extreme commitment to revenge; in its grip he challenges principles of order and decency. He does this, however, only at the height of passion; he does not have a consistent world view which colors all his thoughts and actions. Having achieved his revenge, he would probably become the same self-satisfied courtier he was at the play's beginning.

The ease with which Mendoza gets rid of Ferneze, however, turns him from mere fulfillment of revenge to ambition for the ducal title. This ambition is his undoing as the threat he poses unites Pietro and the Malcontent. When the Malcontent returns to power, Mendoza is reduced to begging for his life, which is mercifully granted him. Mendoza is resolute only when conceiving and carrying out his self-seeking villainy; otherwise, he is in no way a character whose principles are a challenge to the universe.

With Chapman's Clermont D'Ambois of The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois we return to a revenger who is the protagonist of the play. Clermont's attempts to avenge his brother are

complicated and postponed by his Stoic philosophy as well as by his own dodging of the king's plots to kill him. Actually Clermont is not, strictly speaking, a villain; the perfect "Senecall man," he is loathe to kill to repay a killing:

Doe ill for no ill; never private cause
Should take on it the part of publicke lawes.
(III, 2, 118-9)

Most of his speeches are discourses on Stoic philosophy--the necessity of accepting and obeying God's will, the belief in reason as a better guide for men than passions--but he deserves consideration as an interesting variant on the type of the revenger. As he is also a warrior, both Wells and Miss Ellis-Fermor have seen in him a watered-down Tamburlaine with an infusion of Stoic ideas; but since his actions aim at revenge, it seems more suitable to group him with the self-seeking villains, remembering that both elements of this phrase are approximate rather than exact description.

Clermont is even slower to perform the act of vengeance than Hamlet. In Act V the ghost of Bussy appears to whet his purpose, which by now seems more non-existent than blunted. Four acts of waiting have taught the ghost that he must take the Stoic tack if he is to appeal successfully to Clermont; this he does by stressing the justice of revenge, whereupon Clermont forthwith kills Montsurry, his brother's murderer. However, when Clermont hears that his friend Guise has been killed by the king, he is quick to

recognize limits to revenge:

Theres no disputing with the acts of Kings;
 Revenge is impious on their sacred persons.
(V, 5, 151-2)

So Clermont takes the Stoic way out of this dilemma by killing himself. His ideas are far from villainous; rather they remain consistently true to the Stoic ideal which Chapman is exploring in the play.

Though they are contrasted throughout the play, both the Cardinal and Ferdinand in The Duchess of Malfi are examples of the self-seeking villain. Ferdinand, who has in Antonio's words "A most perverse, and turbulent Nature," always acts and reacts with violent passion; his eventual madness is in keeping with his character. Although his statement that he would have been wealthy if the duchess had remained a widow is obviously an attempt to give him some motive late in the play, it does add the element of gain to his more general motive of a sense of honor which includes not only what is proper conduct for his noble sister who should be under his control but also the feeling that she should be killed for marrying beneath her. Ferdinand's immediate pity for the duchess and eventual madness show that love and regard for the decencies of life were stronger in him than even the pull to evil actions. The Cardinal, by contrast, is always controlled and composed. Miss Ellis-Fermor feels that he marks "the only surviving attempt to present dramatically a figure derived directly from Machi-

avelli's Prince."³⁰ The Cardinal has the same general motive of honor as Ferdinand does; they act together in I, 3, in telling the duchess not to remarry. Later, upon hearing from Ferdinand that the duchess is a strumpet, the Cardinal comments:

Shall our blood,
The royal blood of Arragon and Castile,
Be thus attainted? (II, 5, 22-4)

The Cardinal also has his position in the church and his ambition to be pope as more particular motives to keep any family scandal or even hint of lust from damaging his own reputation, careless as he might be furtively about his own morals. Despite the Cardinal's calm, rational, politic approach throughout the play, he succumbs to conscience near the end. He dies with dignity and resignation, willing to atone for the sin he has committed.

Massinger's Duke of Milan inevitably invites comparison with Othello. Wells is one critic who has drawn the obvious parallel between Francisco and Iago, pointing out that Francisco is more plausibly motivated than Iago.³¹ Spivack believes that Francisco, like Iago, is a Vice figure.³² Like Iago, Francisco seduces a man into killing his cherished, and innocent, wife. The motive he expresses for his hatred of the Duke of Milan is revenge:

Revenge first wrought me; murder's his twin brother:

³⁰ Ellis-Fermor, p.16, fn. 6.

³¹ Wells, p. 66.

³² Spivack, p. 450.

One deadly sin, then, help to cure another!³³

And later:

Nay, all I could desire, and make way
To my revenge, which shall disperse itself
On him, on her, and all. (p. 60)

Like Iago also, Francisco utilizes the goodness of the duchess against her. Francisco's specific cause for revenge is not made clear until Act V, thus leading Spivack to his view that Francisco, as a descendant of the Vice, is simply working against love and harmony. However, the suggestion as early as II, 1, that Francisco rose by prostituting his sister to the duke (borne out by his later statement of seeking revenge against the duke for ill treatment of the sister) plus the constant harping on the theme of revenge inclines me to agree with Wells' judgment. Francisco himself bolsters the opinion that he committed his evil acts not because of evil ideas or because he is evil incarnate, but simply because he had a personal motive against the duke:

Give me all attributes
Of all you can imagine, yet I glory
To be the thing I was born. I AM Francisco;
Francisco, that was raised by you, and made
The minion of the time; the same Francisco
That would have whored this trunk, when it had life,
And, after, breathed a jealousy upon thee,
As killing as those damps that belch out plagues
When the foundation of the earth is shaken:
I made thee do a deed Heaven will not pardon,
Which was--to kill an innocent. (p.100)

Since he has kept his word of vengeance, Francisco can

³³ Phillip Massinger, ed. Arthur Symons, *The Mermaid Series*, p. 42.

dare all the tortures promised him at the end of the play and "leave the world with glory," having righted a great wrong.

In sheer heaping up of incident, number of evil and vengeful characters, and poetic atmosphere, The Revenger's Tragedy culminates the portrayal of self-seeking villainy. All the characters who seek revenge are motivated by some sexual sin or crime; as Wells has stated, the world of the play is one of "virtually unmixed evil" in which the "chaste and virtuous Vendice is no less brutal than his wholly depraved enemies."³⁴ Many of the conventional themes and practices of the revenge plays unite in The Revenger's Tragedy: the main revenger disguises himself as a malcontent, satirizing the vices, particularly sexual, of the society around him; there are many plots and stratagems to effect the revenge; and there are many passionate avowals of the solemn commitment to revenge. To all this Tourneur adds unique touches of horror and depravity: corpses are dressed to simulate a live person and then poisoned to serve as instruments of death, and a son, to test his mother, offers her a bribe to prostitute her daughter, only to discover that the mother acquiesces. Miss Ellis-Fermor has called the characters of this play "embodied passions,"³⁵ and as such it is fitting that they climax the development of a type more marked by passions which have evil conse-

³⁴ Wells, p. 34.

³⁵ Ellis-Fermor, p. 164.

quences than by villainous ideas.

Another type of self-seeking villain is presented in The Changeling. Here the motive for murder is not revenge, but the desire to get rid of an unwanted fiancée and thereby make room for marriage to a lover. Critics have usually pointed out a difference in the two main characters who plot and execute the crime. To use Henry Wells' terms, Beatrice-Joanna is "criminal almost by accident" whereas DeFlores is "criminal by nature."³⁶ Similarly, T. S. Eliot sees in the play "the tragedy of the not naturally bad but irresponsible and undeveloped nature, caught in the consequences of its own action."³⁷ Thus, the real tragedy for Beatrice is that she becomes habituated to her sin and that she has won DeFlores instead of the man she killed for.³⁸ The foul and ugly DeFlores is also motivated by great love; so great, indeed, that he endures vituperation merely for a sight of Beatrice, even for the pleasure of hearing her curse him. Both characters are completely dominated by the passion of love and remain consistent at the end of the play. Beatrice, realizing the horror of her actions, acknowledges her defilement and her fate, but, as a basically decent person, asks forgiveness. DeFlores, for whom the love of Beatrice was the crown of life declares:

I thank life for nothing
But that pleasure; it was so sweet to me,
That I have drunk up all, left none behind
For any man to pledge me. (V, 3, 169-72)

³⁶ Wells, p. 41.

³⁷ Eliot, p. 142

³⁸ Ibid., p. 143.

then joyfully kills himself in a kind of love pact.

The issues raised by the self-seeking villains fade out of the drama, not in time but in degree of seriousness and consistency, in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher. The themes of honor and chastity still govern the activities of the characters of such typical plays as Philaster and The Maid's Tragedy, but there are no completely developed villains; rather the characters are always subordinated to the melodramatic changes the dramatists can ring on the plot. Miss Ellis-Fermor characterizes the work of Beaumont and Fletcher as essentially escape into an unreal world in which "the motives have been supplied after the situations and emotional crises have been determined upon."³⁹ This drama need not concern us, then, except to mark the extreme opposite of the intellectual villain.

The third type of villainy commonly found in the drama of Shakespeare's contemporaries is that performed by a subordinate, either a minor character in a subplot or the underling of a major villain in the main plot. These villains are unified as a group by having simply monetary reward as their main motive; they do not have the great drive to power of the ambitious villains or the destructive passion of the self-seeking villains. They actually make a living from villainy, often selling their talents to the highest bidder and even changing sides during the action of a play. More often than not, these subordinate villains have no

³⁹ Ellis-Fermor, p. 207.

personal interest in their victims.

The villain who is subordinate in being a secondary character operating only in a subplot is exemplified in Villuppo of The Spanish Tragedy, who explains his telling the Viceroy of Portugal an untruth about his son's death:

Thus have I with an envious, forged tale
Deceiv'd the king, betray'd mine enemy,
And hope for querdon of my villainy. (I, 3, 93-5)

Villuppo does offer personal hatred as a partial motive, but when his plot is uncovered in III, 1, he says in confessing his misdeed that he acted for reward only and not for the injury of the man he had implicated by his lie.

Ithimore of The Jew of Malta is an early example of the subordinate villain who is the tool of a greater villain. Barabas was delighted to find in the Turk Ithimore a man who shared his own passions:

we are villains both,
Both circumcised, we hate Christians both.
Be true and secret, thou shalt want no gold.
(II. 979-81)

Goaded by Barabas' ever more lavish promises of reward, Ithimore carries out many of his master's plots. Smitten by lust for the courtesan Bellamira, however, Ithimore changes allegiance and becomes a tool for Bellamira and the "bully," Pilia-Borza, to blackmail Barabas. Later, when captured by the authorities, Ithimore readily confesses all of Barabas' villainy before going to his death.

Another Ithimore-like villain is Lorrique of The Tragedy of Hoffman. If ever villain exhibited complete and motiveless malignity, Lorrique does:

I was made of no other stuffe, villainy is my onely patrimony: though I bee an irreligious slave, yet I bear a religious name, though I want courage, yet in talke, I'le put them all downe, though I have nothing in me that is good. (ll. 89-92)

Lorrique also suggests the difference between himself and the villain who has a personal stake in his victims:

Blood I begun in and in blood must end yet this Clois is an honest villaine, ha's conscience in his killing of men: he kills none but his fathers enemies, and there issue, 'tis admirable, 'tis excellent, 'tis well 'tis meritorious, where? in heaven? no, hell. (ll. 659-64)

After helping Hoffman achieve some of his intended revenge, Lorrique yields to the first pressure put on him by Hoffman's enemies, joins their conspiracy to kill Hoffman, but is himself killed by his suspicious master. Spivack, who sees in Barabas and Hoffman the Vice of the morality plays, comments that Ithimore and Lorrique supplement the characteristics of the Vice role, particularly in taking over the comic aspects, thus leaving the main villain with an entirely serious role, and adding to the growing naturalism of the Vice figures.⁴⁰ But both Ithimore and Lorrique can also be seen as self-conscious villains, differing more in kind than degree from their masters. Their eventual change of allegiance gives them some life apart from being mere complements to the characters whose fortunes they originally serve.

Webster raises the subordinate villain to a position of importance, somewhat uncertainly and obscurely in Flameneo of The White Devil, more clearly and firmly in

⁴⁰ Spivack, pp. 349-60.

Bosola of The Duchess of Malfi. Miss Ellis-Fermor, who weighs the Jacobean villains on a scale of Machiavellianism, states that these two contain "flaws by which normal humanity almost inevitably destroys the perfect flowering of the complete politician." In differentiating the two, she calls Flamineo "an imperfect Machiavellian who bungles in practice though he is clear enough in intention" and Bosola a "fitful, complex and inconsistent plotter" who reflects on the concept of policy itself.⁴¹

Flamineo, besides acting as Brachiano's tool, has some personal interest in the plot in that he is pandering his own married sister to the married Brachiano. Flamineo's motive is entirely his own reward; he alerts his brother-in-law to sexual jealousy in the hope of finding another employer, and when Brachiano fails him, he tries to get his sister to pay him for his services. Though he does shift about in his allegiance, Flamineo most consistently operates for Brachiano's interest, particularly in murdering the two unwanted spouses. Coming under suspicion for these murders, Flamineo puts on an antic disposition for protection, and in this guise utters several cynical comments:

O Gold, what a God art thou! and o man, what a devill art thou to be tempted by that cursed Minerall! (III, 3, 19-21)

Religion; oh how it is commedled with policie. The first bloudshed in the world happened about religion. Would I were a Jew. (III, 3, 36-8)

⁴¹ Ellis-Fermor, p. 16, fn. 6; pp. 176-8.

But awareness of his own need to get ahead, as well as the necessary means to accomplish this, controls Flamineo rather than cynicism about the world's ideals: "Knaves do grow great by being great mens apes." (IV, 2, 246) After killing his brother, Flamineo confesses to feelings of compassion and the pangs of conscience. Visited by Brachiano's ghost, he asks: "What religion's best/ For a man to die in?" (V, 4, 122-3) At his death Flamineo becomes his own man: "My life hath done service to other men,/ My death shall serve mine owne turne." (V, 5, 51-2) He dies thinking nothing and remembering nothing, but in no way breaking down. Flamineo is not a fundamentally good man who has served an evil master, but an opportunist who has sought to advance himself through any means and one who accepts resignedly the reverses in his fortunes as well as the successes.

Bosola operates as the tool of the Cardinal and Ferdinand in their campaign to prevent the remarriage of the Duchess of Malfi. Although he is one of drama's slower and blinder spies, Bosola eventually supplies the brothers with the information which leads to the tragic denouement. Outwardly a malcontented railer, his inner reality is clearly perceived by Antonio:

Indeede he railes at those things which he wants,
Would be as leacherous, covetous, or proud,
Bloody, or envious, as any man,
If he had meanes to be so. (I, 1, 26-9)

Bosola proposes to get the means by working for the Cardinal and Ferdinand:

Let good men, for good deeds, covet good fame,
 Since place, and riches oft are bribes of shame--
 Sometime the Divell doth preach. (I, 1, 315-7)

Cautious in his spying methods, Bosola is equally circumspect in his ambitions: "I looke no higher than I can reach: they are the gods, that must ride on winged horses." (II, 1, 91-3) Bosola, then, has no all-consuming pride or ambition leading him to trample on others, but simply hires himself out with the almost bourgeois goal of making a competent living. Growing disgusted with the methods of his employers, Bosola eventually changes sides and plans to help Antonio after the duchess has been killed. Unfortunately Bosola miscarries, killing Antonio accidentally: "We are meerely theStarres tennys-balls (strooke, and bandied/ Which way please them)." (V, 4, 63-4) Surer of his aim, Bosola becomes the instrument of revenge on the Cardinal and Ferdinand, though he is also killed in the struggle. He confesses his part in the play's villainy, saying that he acted "Much 'gainst mine owne good nature." (V, 5, 108) Much more than Flamineo, Bosola is a basically decent man turned by his own bad luck into the instrument of another's evil. Like all the subordinate villains, he commits his evil actions simply for reward and not because he consciously and actively rejects all good principles and values.

Finally, I would like to consider, separately and apart from the types previously discussed, two plays which will provide an epitome of the concepts of villainy utilized

by Shakespeare's contemporaries. For this purpose, I have chosen a decidedly inferior play, Lust's Dominion, a convenient repository for the standard, conventional notions of villainy which appeared to be part of every dramatist's equipment, and The Atheist's Tragedy, a play which in its title and main character presents the most often recurring element of the villain's world view, and, with its villain conceived in terms of evil ideas, the play which comes closest to Shakespeare's conception of villainy.

Lust's Dominion, though poor reading for the study, must have been an exciting stage spectacle. The rapid action and sudden turns of the plot would hold an audience rapt, but leave little time for the development of character, particularly the formulation of principles of conduct. About the villain, however, there can be no doubt. From his opening utterances to his final boast that he will outdo the devils in villainy, Eleazar is every inch the villain. He has both revenge and ambition to motivate his actions, adding victims to his list whenever anyone crosses him. He makes lofty invocations as preludes to his actions:

Now, purple villainy,
 Sit like a robe imperial on my back,
 That under thee I closelier may contrive
 My vengeance; foul deeds hid do sweetly thrive. (I, 2)

Eleazar also calls on Mischief to aid him, in an apparent carry-over from the morality tradition. He utilizes all information and all means to further his interest: "Care not who fall, 'tis real policy." For Eleazar this includes

even prostituting his wife to the lust of the king. He is ingenious in devising cruel torments for those who become his prisoners. He can sway multitudes to follow his will, and also has the strength and shrewdness to get from individuals what he wants, always rewarding confederates with death, imprisonment, or betrayal in the true villainous tradition. He takes his fortune in his own hands, defying the stars. He is, to make the stereotype complete, a Moor, and realizes he has been created a villain:

Ha, ha! I thank thee, provident creation,
That seeing in moulding me thou didst intend
I should prove villain; thanks to thee and nature,
That skillful workman: thanks for my face:
Thanks that I have not wit to blush! (II, 2)

In short, Eleazar is a monster who vividly exemplifies what the mass of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists made from the complex of traditions and conventions influencing the concept of villainy. Spivack discusses Eleazar as a Vice, citing particularly his opening remark that he hates all unity (also, of course, the only villainous idea that Eleazar expresses), his speeches which detail all the places where he can perform villainy, and his laughter. In Spivack's view, Eleazar forsakes "a moral nature for the homiletic dimension of evil personified."⁴² Thus Spivack, concentrating on only one of the traditional strands of influence, achieves a summary judgment similar to mine, though I would include other traditional elements: the Senecan tyrant, the Machiavellian, the Marlovian ambitious villain, the

⁴² Spivack, p. 360.

Elizabethan revenger, the villain as Moor. It has been my contention throughout this study that Shakespeare, though he may use some of these conventional elements in his stage representation of villains, actually has an individual conception of villainy centering on the ideas given to the characters. In the most fully-developed villains there is a complete world view which is inimical to the orthodox Elizabethan world view; in the lesser this world view is sometimes only hinted at but is clear enough in outline to show that only one concept of villainy is at work.

The non-Shakespearean villain who comes closest to this concept of villainy is D'Amville of Tourneur's The Atheist's Tragedy. With its complete emphasis on atheism, the character of D'Amville illustrates for us the one significant element of traditional villainy absent from Eleazar's make-up. D'Amville is an atheist before he is a villain; his opening remarks, and many others throughout the play, lay down his philosophical ideas from which he derives the particular principles that serve as specific motives for action, namely the securing of wealth for himself and his posterity. Miss Ellis-Fermor has commented that the characters of this play are embodied principles or ideas:

[Tourneur] appears to think that the opinions a man holds (atheism, nature worship, conventional piety) can be regarded as the sources from which his actions spring; in fact, that conduct rests directly upon principles and ideas.⁴³

⁴³ Ellis-Fermor, p. 164.

Throughout the play D'Amville expounds atheistic ideas:⁴⁴ he sees man and animals as essentially similar with nothing above man's nature; he attacks the hypocrisy of Christians; he revels in the sensual implications of a natural philosophy; he is a scientific materialist who sees nothing fearful in such natural effects as thunder; he sees no natural bar to incest; he views money as the controlling force of man's destiny and knows that such a view gives him an advantage over men who worship providence. Moreover, he acts from these principles, laying plots and committing murder to further his own interests. In addition, D'Amville carries the intelligent side of the intellectual villain to the peak of the perfect crime:

Ay, mark the plot. Not any circumstance
That stood within the reach of the design
Of persons, dispositions, matter, time or place
But by this brain of mine was made
An instrumental help; yet nothing from
The induction to the accomplishment seemed forced,
Or done o' purpose, but by accident.⁴⁵

In this and other ways, D'Amville, as Miss Ellis-Fermor has pointed out, "makes his every action a demonstration and delivers brief explanatory lectures on the application of his theory even in the heat of action, plotting, or crime."⁴⁶ Here, and in the notion of D'Amville as an

⁴⁴ Though Francis Bacon defines the term (in "Of Atheism") as simply the denial of a Creator, it often, as here in Tourneur's use, connoted much of what today's "communist" does when used as a broad, smear term: holding opinions contrary to the orthodox, or "safe," views in any area, including, for example, sexual morality.

⁴⁵ John Webster and Cyril Tourneur, ed. John Addington Symonds, The Mermaid Series, p. 250.

⁴⁶ Ellis-Fermor, p. 165.

embodied idea, lies the essential difference between him and Shakespeare's intellectual villains. For D'Amville is, in effect, atheism anatomized; we see not only what constitutes the complete atheist, but also what turns him from his course: the consciousness of sin, the failure of nature to sustain the life of his son for whom everything was done, the argument for the existence of God from creation, and the fear of death. The play presents the rise and fall of an atheist; the tragedy lies not only in the atheist's death, but also, in a sense, in his complete turnabout of intellectual principles: "Nature is a fool." The interest, then, is to see what kind of being an atheist is, what he does, and what can change him. The intellectual villain does not undergo this radical change in ideology, but, even more importantly, is not conceived as simply a character embodying certain ideas and acting out the implications of these ideas. Rather he is a character whose world view encompasses such ideas as atheism and who consciously chooses to act on the basis of the information supplied him by his particular insight into the world.

The concept of villainy in Renaissance drama has been treated by modern scholars as simply a matter of conventions and stage traditions, tagging the villains as Machiavels or Vices or else describing them as motiveless monsters of personified evil. In one way or another the villains have been put into as easily recognized stereotypes as the pale, scheming Jesuits of Gothic romance, the

sneering, mustachioed villains of nineteenth-century melodrama, or the lean, hard, black-garbed gunman of today's westerns. An impression often received from scholarly accounts of Renaissance villains is that the dramatist simply reached into a bag labeled "Machiavel" or "Vice" or "monster" and came up with a ready-made character. While this may be essentially true of the lesser, imitative dramatists, such a view does an injustice not only to Shakespeare but to Marlowe, Webster, Tourneur, and others who in their own ways created individualized villains. Concentrating on the naturalistic aspects of the villains and analyzing their motives, their methods, their explicitly stated world views, I have tried to get behind and go beyond the conventional explanations, using, whenever possible, fresh terminology to stress my differences from these views. One does not casually dismiss decades of perceptive Shakespearean criticism, nor does one, because of all the published commentary, achieve a completely new reading of such a major topic as Shakespeare's villains. My statements on some of the issues and characters are therefore necessarily similar to many other statements. But I think there is enough difference, both in emphasis and in occasional radical disagreement, so that the end result of this study is not merely the application of new names to some old and proven concepts. For in casting aside the conventional explanations and comparing Shakespeare's plays with a substantial body of his contemporaries' work,

I have found that Shakespeare consistently, though often with some modifications, created as villains characters who hold a world view contrary to the orthodox Elizabethan opinions, characters who look forward out of the Janus-like Renaissance into the cynical and chaotic modern world rather than backward into the faithful and orderly medieval world.

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