AN ANALYSIS AND COMPARISON OF THE VILLAINY IN SHAKESPEAREAN AND NON-SHAKESPEAREAN ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

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Introduction

Although we recognize Shakespeare as far the greatest of the Elizabethan dramatists, he is by no means a solitary genius.[1] During the period known as Elizabethan (1558-1642) hundreds of plays were produced on the stages of London; Shakespeare wrote only a few more than thirty of them. Perhaps no one dramatist wrote as many plays of uniform excellence as did Shakespeare, but many of them did write great plays. Enough great plays were written, at any rate, to make the literature of Elizabethan drama ". . .the most universal and imaginative, the most spontaneous and heterogeneous. . . in dramatic form which has yet come from the hand of man."[2]

The student of English literature should be familiar with some of the drama of the Elizabethan period other than Shakespeare's, and he should have some basis for judgment of the relative merits of the other dramatists and Shakespeare. It is the purpose of this thesis to give the student one basis for comparison between Shakespeare and a representative few of his contemporaries. Because I wish to compare Shakespeare with as many of his contemporaries as possible in a paper of this length, it is necessary to confine the comparison to one element of one type of play. I have therefore chosen one of the most interesting of the types of plays written during that great period. It is the tragedy of villainy. I have chosen

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1 Felix E. Schelling, Elizabethan Drama, I, xxiii, xxiv.

2 Ibid., p. xxxi.

the villainy itself as the element to be analyzed for the comparison.

My thesis consists of two chapters. The first chapter is an analysis of the villainy in the plays studied. The second chapter is the comparison of the villainy in the non-Shakespearean and Shakespearean plays.

In Chapter I, I have analyzed the villainy in each play, giving particular attention to three things. First is the motivation of the villainy. To motivate is to incite to action; the motivation of the villainy is whatever incites the villain to the action he takes. Second is a characterization of the villain. Since these first two elements are essentially inseparable, I have made no attempt to draw a rigid line of distinction between them. Third is a description of certain persistent characteristics of the villainy.

Chapter II compares the motivation and the characteristics of the villainy in the non-Shakespearean plays with the same elements of the Shakespearean plays, and draws conclusions from the comparison. The first part of the chapter is concerned only with the motivation and the characterization of the villains. The second part of the chapter compares the extent to which the conventional characteristics of the villainy appear in the two groups of plays. The rest of the chapter contains the conclusions drawn from the comparisons and from the study as a whole.

The plays which I have chosen for study are: <u>The Spanish Tragedy</u> by Thomas Kyd, The Jew of Malta by Christopher

Marlowe, The Revenger's Tragedy by Cyril Tourneur, Catiline by Ben Jonson, The Duchess of Malfi by John Webster, The Changeling by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, and by Shakespeare, Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice, Othello, and King Lear. I have chosen most of these plays for their importance as tragedies of villainy; but Shakespeare's comedy, The Merchant of Venice, I chose for the valuable comparison which it affords with The Jew of Malta. Although the first of these plays was written about 1586 and the last about 1623, I have made no attempt to trace the development of the drama over this period; such an analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis. The obvious omisstion of Richard III as an example of a Shakespearean play of villainy is explained by the fact that, like the earlier Titus Andronicus, it is hardly Shakespearean in its villainy. Shakespeare re-wrote an older Richard III about 1593, and although the play comes after he had had some experience as a dramatist, the villainy is distinctly Marlovian in that the villain is himself a caricature rather than a human character.[3]

The discussion in Chapter I of the non-Shakespearean plays are longer and more detailed than are those of the four plays by Shakespeare. It is in the discussions of the non-Shakespearean plays that the characteristics of the villainy in Elizabethan drama are first described; and since these plays may not be familiar to the student, I have given a

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3 Schelling, op. cit., I, 274.

summary of each play. No review of Shakespeare's plots is given, since they are familiar to the average student.

Chapter I

The Spanish Tragedy by Thomas Kyd is the first play to be discussed because it is the first great popular tragedy of villainy in English dramatic literature.[4] It was written about 1586;[5] after it came many tragedies of villainy. But when Kyd wrote The Spanish Tragedy, the field of romantic tragedy in English drama was still completely open; there was no precedent for such a play in English, although Kyd must have been familiar with the tragedies of blood by the Latin playwright Seneca.[6]

The story of the play is this: Bel-imperia, the only daughter of Don Ciprian, was once the secret lover of Andrea, but after his death in battle she gives her affections to Horatio, Andrea's best friend. Her father and the king choose a more noble gentleman for her, however; he is Balthazar, son of the viceroy of the recently conquered Portuguese and himself a captive in Spain. But Bel-imperia secretly gives herself to Horatio. At the moment of an attempted consummation of their love, they are found by Balthazar and Lorenzo, Bel-imperia's villainous brother; with the help of their equally villainous servants, Balthazar and Lorenzo kill Horatio and take Bel-imperia back to the castle of her father, where she is kept prisoner. The body of Horatio is discovered by his

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4 Schelling, op. cit., I, 210-211.

5 Ibid., p. 210.

6 Ibid., p. 213.

father, old Hieronimo, who grows distracted. Both Bel-imperia and Hieronimo plan to avenge Horatio's murder, and when Bel-imperia informs Hieronimo concerning the identities of the villains, they formulate their vengeance. They plan to present a play preceding her wedding to Balthazar, the characters of the play to be themselves, Balthazar, and Lorenzo. The play is a tragedy in which all the characters are killed. The catastrophe becomes an actuality as a result of the plot by Bel-imperia and Hieronimo, who also die as their characters in the play die.

The play concerns four main characters: Bel-imperia, Hieronimo, Balthazar, and Lorenzo. The murders of Bel-imperia and Hieronimo are motivated by an honorable desire for revenge; they are not villains. Balthazar is dominated by Lorenzo, weakly following him throughout the play. Lorenzo is the villain, and it is with him and the motivation of his villainy that we are concerned.

Lorenzo is the son of Don Ciprian and the brother of Bel-imperia. He, like Horatio, is at first supposedly an honorable and valiant Spanish warrior. But in contention with Horatio over the question of the defeat and capture of Balthazar, Lorenzo partly reveals his real character: Horatio had defeated Balthazar, but Lorenzo took it upon himself to assist in the capture, and when the two young warriors bring the captive before their king, Lorenzo tries to claim the victory as solely his own. Horatio, although below Lorenzo in station since Lorenzo is the nephew of the king, does

not allow him to claim the capture as his, and when the king leaves the settlement of the question to Balthazar, the prince wisely confesses himself the captive of the two, admitting that it was Horatio who forced his capture by arms and Lorenzo who courteously obtained his verbal surrender. Thus, early in the play, there is a hint of the future enmity of Lorenzo for Horatio.

Horatio does nothing to Lorenzo deserving enmity; he dutifully agrees to the judgment of the prince concerning his capture. Lorenzo immediately takes charge of the captive, as it is his right to do by virtue of his rank; he even makes him his constant companion and confidant, encouraging him in his suit for the hand of Bel-imperia.

When Bel-imperia gives her love to Horatio, Lorenzo is given the starting-point for the villainy that results in the murder of Horatio. Horatio's success with Bel-imperia is Lorenzo's reason for killing him, although it cannot be considered a logical or legitimate motive for such villainy. It is true that Balthazar first voices a desire to "revenge" himself on Horatio, but he at first considers no villainy, his purpose being, as he says, to "...lose (his) life or win (his) love."[7] He is simply weak and follows Lorenzo, whose villainy is quite unnatural, for it involves the torture of his own sister as well as murder. Moreover, although Lorenzo is at the beginning of the play heir presumptive to the throne of Spain, it seems to make no difference to him that

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7 II, i, 133.

he will lose it if Balthazar marries his sister.

The motivation of the villainy in The Spanish Tragedy is essentially that of an abnormality in the character of the villain. But it is a weakness in degree and not in kind; that is, Lorenzo is not essentially a strong character with a single weakness; he is essentially a weak character in every respect. Lorenzo's character lacks at least two things essential to the normal man. He lacks an ability to reason normally, for if he had that ability, he would not deliberately suffer the loss of the crown. He also lacks normal repugnance at the commission of crime. He had no real reason for hating Horatio; the real motive for all his villainy is the abnormality of his own character resulting in his desire to hurt Horatio and to bend Bel-imperia to his own will.

Although character is distinctly secondary to plot in The Spanish Tragedy, the motivation of the villainy depends almost wholly upon the character of the villain. The character of Lorenzo shows a certain development throughout the first part of the play. In Act I he is portrayed as a courteous knight whom Balthazar immediately likes, when Balthazar says,

> He Lorenzo spake me fair, this other Horatio gave me strokes:
> He promised life, this other threaten'd death;
> He won my love...[8]

But even in this first scene, there is a hint of unfairness in the attitude of Lorenzo; he is claiming for his own an honor

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8 I, ii, 162-164.

that is not his, even if he does graciously observe the verdict of the king. Nothing else in Act I furthers the development of his character; he remains a courteous gentleman, waiting on his captive prince, helping him in his courtship of Bel-imperia as an ordinarily ambitious brother of the time might have done.

In the first scene of Act II Lorenzo assumes the leadership in Balthazar's courtship of his sister; he it is who thinks of all the possible reasons for Bel-imperia's disdain of the prince, and he it is who proposes the removal of any human obstacle who might be in the prince's way to her hand. His true character then comes out completely for the first time when he forces Pedringano to divulge the identity of Bel-imperia's lover. When, a little later, Lorenzo and Balthazar confirm Pedringano's report, it is Lorenzo who vows to send Horatio's "...soul into eternal night!"[9] Then in the last scene of Act II Lorenzo leads Balthazar, Serberine, and Pedringano in the murder of Horatio and the abduction of Bel-imperia, climaxing very swiftly a villainy that had very little time for development.

The character of Lorenzo shows no great further development throughout the rest of the play; what further development there is, is the result of his effort to hide his guilt. All of his villainous acts after the original murder are results of this effort.

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9 II, ii, 55.

Since The Spanish Tragedy was the first of the plays of tragic villainy, the characteristics of its villainy are important because of their influence on later plays of the same type. It must be remembered that the plays of Elizabethan England were written to entertain Elizabethan Englishmen. If a play was popular, it is safe to assume that it gave the audiences what they wanted to hear and see. The Spanish Tragedy was a very popular play, even perennially so.[10] For that reason the majority of the villainy plays to follow it contained essentially the same characteristics of villainy in varying degrees.

The cardinal characteristics of the villainy in The Spanish Tragedy are violence and intrigue. The play is in four acts, but in reality it is a succession of twenty-four scenes. Eleven of these scenes are rife with violent action ranging from murder and lunacy to wholesale slaughter. The scenes not given to violent action are, with the exception of those portraying the distraction of Hieronimo, given to intrigue on the part of the principal characters.

Another important characteristic of the villainy in The Spanish Tragedy is lust, a characteristic ever-recurring. The lust of Balthazar for Bel-imperia is itself not a thing of violence, but it is certainly a prelude to violence. It is significant that Lorenzo does not even have lust as a motivating force in his character. But in the plays following

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10 Schelling, op. cit., I, 211.

Kyd's, what was at first something of the dramatic background of the play becomes an essential characteristic of even the motivation of the villainy. In the later plays lust assumes an importance not only as a motivating force but also as an essential part of the violence itself.

The fourth characteristic of the villainy in The Spanish Tragedy is an exaggeration to a degree which today would be laughable but which was undoubtedly an important part of the Elizabethan Englishman's enjoyment of the play. The stabbing and hanging of Horatio typifies an extravagance that was to pervade the drama of villainy. There is no relief from the completeness of the villainy of Lorenzo; he possesses no pity, no remorse--he is completely and extravagantly the villain, having no real counter-part in life. As the villainy is unrelieved, so is the vengeance of those wronged; as a result, none of the principal characters are left alive at the end of the play.

Christopher Marlowe's play The Jew of Malta provides us with our next example of a non-Shakespearean play of villainy. It first appeared about three years after The Spanish Tragedy, some time shortly "after 1588."[11] The Jew of Malta, like Kyd's play, was very popular. When Marlowe wrote it, he had various examples of the tragedy of villainy as precedents besides The Spanish Tragedy, although probably none of them

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11 Schelling, op. cit., I, 232.

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were as good.

The story of the play is this: Barabas, the richest Jew in Malta, refuses to pay a levied tax of half his estate for a tribute that the Maltese state owes the Turks; as a result of his refusal, his entire estate is forfeit and his home is converted into a nunnery, although he manages to hide several bags of gold and jewels in his old home before it is seized. In order to rescue the wealth which he has hidden, he has his daughter, Abigail, pretend a desire to become a Christian and a nun; she becomes a novice, rescues Barabas' hidden wealth, and then forsakes her intended nunhood. Next Barabas concocts a plot, with the unsuspecting aid of Abigail, to kill both Mathias, whom she loves, and Lodowick, who lusts for her; they kill each other in a duel. When Abigail learns of this, she again becomes a novice nun, this time in truth. But Barabas, with the aid of his Turkish slave, Ithamore, poisons all the nuns in the nunnery, thereby murdering not only his own daughter but all the rest of the nuns as well. The remainder of the play is a succession of murders and "politic" plots by Barabas. He murders two friars, one of whom knows the secret of his murder of Lodowick and Mathias. Then he not only murders Ithamore and Bellamira, Ithamore's courtezan lover, but he also betrays the city to the Turks. After he is made governor of Malta by the leaders of the conquering Turks, he plans to deliver them into a cauldron beneath which

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12 Schelling, op. cit., I, 232.

is a roaring fire, but Ferneze, the old governor of Malta, contrives his downfall, plunging him into the cauldron he had prepared for the Turks. Ferneze then makes peace with the Turks, ending the play.

The motivation of the villainy of Barabas in The Jew of Malta, although it is somewhat complex, is not difficult to determine. Barabas seems at first to be the Jew eternally persecuted by the Christian, tormented beyond endurance by the seizure of his wealth; but the absolute selfishness apparent from his earliest asides does not allow even the modern reader very much sympathy for him; and since any Jew was a monster to the Elizabethan Englishman, the audience undoubtedly had no sympathy at all for Barabas. His speech to Ithamore[13] revealing his delight in deeds of evil may or may not have been intended by the Jew to be the truth; but by the beginning of Act III, Barabas is unreservedly the villain. Even if he seemed to possess any of the normal feelings of humanity at the beginning of the play, he is by this time completely the monster.

At the beginning of the play, Ferneze, the governor of Malta, instigates the seizure of all of Barabas' wealth. Then the governor's son, Lodowick, tries dishonorably to obtain his daughter. These two things give Barabas motives for the vengeance that results in the immediate murder of Lodowick and the later betrayal of the city. But since his

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13 II, iii, 180-207.

daughter loves Mathias, and since Mathias has done him no harm, Barabas is not justified in murdering him; the motivation for this murder springs not only from Barabas' wish to keep his daughter from marrying a Christian but from selfishness and an inherent evil in his character which impels him to be as evilly clever as he possibly can, forcing him to take advantage of the rather obvious possibility of a double murder where only one would have satisfied the requirements of vengeance. Later when Barabas loses all control of himself as a human being, there is no room left for doubt that he is anything but a complete villain.

The villainy itself in The Jew of Malta is in the tradition of The Spanish Tragedy; it is basically violent murder, accompanied by lust, intrigue, and extravagance. But Marlowe carries the exaggeration to a point beyond which it would seem impossible to go; Barabas is not satisfied with murder singly or in pairs; he must indulge in wholesale murder. Instead of being satisfied with the results of his villainy in delivering Malta into the hands of the Turks, he must immediately plan another act of villainy whereby he can deliver the Turks into the hands of the original governor. Probably if that plot had been successful, he would in turn have re-betrayed the old governor, leaving only himself alive.

The villainy in Marlowe's play possesses every characteristic of the villainy in The Spanish Tragedy, but it is significant that each characteristic in the later play is carried a few degrees of exaggeration beyond the corresponding

one in Kyd's play. Besides the fact already mentioned that the villainy itself is of a more exaggerated and monstrous nature, there is the increased complication in the intrigue of Barabas. Lust as a characteristic of the villainy in The Jew of Malta is in reality no more important than it is in The Spanish Tragedy, for Barabas himself is not lustful. But where there is only the one example in the earlier play, Marlowe's play contains both the lust of Bellamira and Ithamore, and that of Lodowick for Abigail. The most important characteristic of the villainy in The Jew of Malta, however, is the exaggeration amounting to caricature of the villain himself.

The Revenger's Tragedy, supposed by modern critics to have been written by Cyril Tourneur, first appeared at some time before 1607.[14] Every characteristic of the tragedy of villainy found in The Spanish Tragedy appears again and in its ultimate form in Tourneur's play; the development of the play of tragic villainy reaches a peak in The Revenger's Tragedy.

The plot of the play is divided into two parts. It is a plot first of various villainies and second of vengeances for each of them. The play is so complicated in its many plots that it is practical here to review only the more important ones: An old duke murders a young woman before the play begins; the duke's son and heir attempts to seduce the

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14 Schelling, op. cit., I, 566.

sister of Vendice, the "revenger"; and besides these two villainies there are: the rape of a chaste matron by the duchess' youngest son; the lascivious affair of the duke's bastard son with the duchess; and the numerous plots of each of the duke's and the duchess' sons to succeed him as duke.

The motivation of the villainies in The Revenger's Tragedy is plain. The play is didactic--whether or not consciously so only the author could say; every piece of villainy has an obvious motive and an obviously just punishment.

The murder of Gloriana by the duke before the beginning of the play is motivated by the duke's anger as a result of his frustrated lust. The attempted villainy of Lussurioso upon Vendice's sister is also motivated by lust. The motivation of the minor villainies is as clear: lust is the motive for the rape of the wife of old Antonio; lust is only partly the motive for the duchess' affair with Spurio, for not only is she revenging herself upon the duke for his treatment of her son, but Spurio is himself avenging his bastardy; ambition is the motive for the plots of the duke's and the duchess' children. In this play even the vengeance of the wronged is considered villainy and is punished as such.

The characteristic extravagance of the villainy in the other plays is carried to complete abandon in The Revenger's Tragedy. So depraved are the villains themselves that their acts are committed completely without anything resembling conscience. They are totally without thought of possible retribution or consequence either in this life or in any

possible later one; they hide their acts only in proportion to their power or lack of it. Each villain is himself a perfect monster possessing no redeeming particle of good in his character, and since the villainy is completely abandoned, the retribution is completely bloody, neither villains nor avengers escaping death. An example of the extravagance of the retribution is Vendice's ingenious murder of the old duke. He lures him to a supposed tryst with a simple country maid and there tricks him into kissing the poisoned mouth of his murdered lover's skull.

It is in this play that the villainy, as well as its motivation, becomes almost completely identified with lust. The ambition of the sons, incidental to the main plot, is the only other motive for villainy of any importance in the play. Even the intrigue, although it seems to reach a certain melodramatic perfection in the elaborate vengeance of Vendice, is subordinated to lust; and although violence is evident throughout the play, it too is dwarfed in importance by the complete abandon of the villains' lust.

Ben Jonson's Catiline was first played in 1611;[15] it came some twenty-two years after the first appearances of The Spanish Tragedy, and by the time it was written, such plays had long been popular. The success of Catiline upon its first few performances was only moderate, but it later took its

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15 Schelling, op. cit., II, 32.

place in popularity with the other great tragedies of villainy.[16] The title of the play is the name of its chief character, who was the most notorious of ancient Rome's criminals, although at the time the action of the play begins, the exact nature of his crimes had not yet become generally known. In the opening scene he is being exhorted by the ghost of Sylla, a great Roman criminal of an earlier day, to even greater villainy than any he has ever before committed--the betrayal and the ruin of Rome.

Catiline's plot is this. He plans to overthrow the senate and the powers of Rome with the help of several conspirators, whom he recruits from the ranks of the malcontents of the city; he proposes to divide all Rome and its wealth among the conspirators, promising them whatever they may desire. But he privately promises himself and his wife, Aurelia, to dispose of them once they are no longer useful.

At first it is Catiline's plan to be elected consul with one of his conspirators, Antonius, and then to betray Rome with the power thus given to him. But Cicero is elected with the weak Antonius instead, preventing the planned betrayal from within. Catiline immediately begins to plan to betray the city with the help of the Allobroges, a war-like but simple Italian tribe recently subdued by the Romans. In this, too, he is thwarted, being betrayed to Cicero by Curius, one of his own conspirators. Catiline then leaves Rome, raises

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16 Schelling, op. cit., II, 32.

an army, attacks the forces of the city, and in the battle that occurs is defeated and killed. At the same time, the conspirators who were left in the city are apprehended by Cicero and the senate and are executed.

It seems to me that Catiline presents an example of villainy motivated almost entirely by the villain's love of evil, for although Catiline gives revenge as his motive, one cannot help thinking that the real reason lies in his character. The ghost of Sylla in his prefatory exhortation mentions many unnatural crimes committed by Catiline previous to the opening of the play; his avowed motive for revenge on the city of Rome is merely that he was once defeated in an election for commander of the Roman forces in the Pontick wars, a defeat in which there was no malice, providing no sufficient reason for his wishing to revenge himself on his people.

The only villainy that Catiline commits is committed before the play ever begins, for the villainy he plots in the play itself is never consummated. But it is with this intended villainy and its motivation that this study is concerned. The real reason for this intended treason lies in the fact that Catiline had already committed such monstrous crimes that all there was left for him to do was to betray his country. Treason was then to have been the final bloody consummation of the workings of a mind inherently evil and already steeped in crime. Catiline himself is a picture of the villain unrelieved by any pretensions to humanity.

Aside from the enormity of the intended villainy, the

characteristics of the villainy must be judged from the list of the crimes he had committed before the play begins, as they are catalogued in general terms by the ghost of Sylla: "...incests, murders, rapes,...parricide, slaughters...of senators."[17] The atmosphere of melodramatic horror created by Sylla's description of these crimes is later intensified by the conspirators' pledging their faith in human blood, augmented by thundering and darkening of the skies. Considering Catiline's villainy from both the nature of the villainy committed before the play and the nature of the intended villainy, we must conclude that Catiline is a complete villain and his villainy completely abandoned.

Intrigue is an essential characteristic of the villainy in the play, for it is upon the failure of Catiline's intrigue and upon the success of that of Curius that the ultimate failure of Catiline's plan depends. Lust as a characteristic of the villainy is evident only in the crimes committed before the play begins.

Sometime before December, 1614[18] there appeared The Duchess of Malfi by John Webster. It must have ranked high in popularity with the Elizabethan audience, since it so effectively presents various details of horror on the stage. Today the play is read for its poetic beauty and for appreciation

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17 I, i, 30, 32, 38, 39.

18 Schelling, op. cit., I, 589-590.

of the character of the tortured duchess; but it is with the villainy and the villains of the play that this paper is concerned.

When the play begins, the Duchess of Malfi (no other name is given her) who has been recently widowed is still young, beautiful, and desirable. Her brothers, Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria, and the Cardinal, tell her that she is not to marry again, regardless of the worth of her suitors or of her love for any of them. But she secretly marries Antonio, her steward and manager of her estates. They keep the marriage secret for a period of a few years, but Bosola discovers that she is married and informs the brothers as he is paid to do, although he does not know who her husband is. When Ferdinand discovers that Antonio is his sister's husband, the duchess and Antonio attempt to escape; Antonio escapes with their oldest son, but the duchess is apprehended and imprisoned in her own palace. There she is subjected to mental torture by her brother Ferdinand and his minion, Bosola. Finally she, her two youngest children, and her personal maid are strangled at the command of Ferdinand and the Cardinal. Bosola, stricken both with remorse and with the injustice of the brothers, attempts to avenge the duchess; he kills both the Cardinal and Ferdinand, but he also kills Antonio accidentally; he is himself mortally wounded in the fight with the brothers.

The motivation of the villainy in <u>The Duchess of Malfi</u> presents by far the most interesting problem yet come upon in

this study. Likewise the three villains are far more intriguing characters than any of the villains so far studied. There is Ferdinand, the twin of the duchess, himself the Duke of Calabria. He is the more actively villainous of the brothers, torturing his sister until he loses his own mind, either from remorse or from the strain that the enormity of his crimes had inflicted on his mind. Superficially, Ferdinand's motive for his treatment of the duchess is revenge--revenge for her disobedience of the command to remain un-married and for her marrying one whom the brothers consider ignoble. But Ferdinand himself reveals the real motive for his villainy shortly after he sees his murdered sister, when he says,

> For let me but examine well the cause:
> What was the meanness of her match to me?
> Only I must confess I had a hope,
> Had she continu'd widow, to have gain'd
> An infinite mass of treasure by her death:
> And that was the main cause...[19]

So Ferdinand's external motive for torturing and murdering his sister is a balked desire for more riches than he already possesses and a wish for vengeance upon her.

The villainy of the elder brother, the Cardinal, is somewhat more vaguely motivated. One motive for his villainy is the same as Ferdinand's, for they have the same desire to benefit by the duchess' death; but there is something more essentially evil in his character than appears in Ferdinand's. Actually, the Cardinal is the activator of the villainy,

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19 IV, ii, 279-284.

although it is Ferdinand who carries it out and thus seems the greater villain; in a sense, Ferdinand is the creature of the Cardinal, just as Bosola is the creature of Ferdinand. Proof of this is the Cardinal's aside when he is pretending to Bosola that he knows nothing of the duchess' death:

> This fellow must not know
> By any means I had intelligence
> In our duchess' death; for, though I counsell'd it,
> The full of all th' engagement seem'd to grow
> From Ferdinand.[20]

The Cardinal does not consider his own motives, and when he dies, he expresses neither repentance for his crimes nor sorrow at his own death. Nor does he confess; he dies without expression of any sort. The Cardinal is more nearly the complete villain of the other plays than is his brother; he has a superficial motive, but in his own evil character he does not even bother to consider it, thus making his villainy the more monstrous and unnatural. To the end he remains a mystifying and sinister character.

The motivation of Bosola's villainy upon first glance seems easy to determine. At the beginning of the play he is represented as something of a soldier of fortuen seeking reward for years of service to the Cardinal; it is reputed that he has committed murder for the Cardinal upon occasion. The Cardinal, however, rewards him reluctantly and insufficiently, it seems to Bosola, by having him appointed provisor of the horse in the duchess' household, suborning him at the same

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20 V, ii, 103-107.

time to spy upon her. Bosola is at first, then, a professionally villainous creature; the superficial motive for his villainy is that he is hired to do it. But there is more to Bosola than the character of a mere hireling in crime.

He is a philosopher in crime; he stands aloof both from himself and from his victims, analyzes his own and their actions and reactions throughout the progress of his villainy, and philosophizes concerning the ultimate futility of life. He looks upon himself as the victim of circumstances which have forced him into crime from accident or necessity; he does not see himself as motivated by any desire to commit deeds of evil. In view of the sincerity of his reformation after the murder of the duchess, a sincerity proved by his attempt to right the wrongs he had done, it seems to me that we should accept his analysis of himself as explanation of the reason for his villainy. He is a villain partly as a result of his philosophy of life, a belief that living is ultimately futile, and partly as a result of the effect of circumstances upon him.

In this play we have a villainy as monstrous as the murder of Abigail in The Jew of Malta, more involved than either that in The Spanish Tragedy or that in The Jew of Malta, and carried to degrees of exaggeration beyond the mere physical horror found in the other plays to a fine psychological horror.

Violence and intrigue are present in The Duchess of Malfi. The violence is no less important than in the earlier

plays, but the intrigue is not as essential to the interest in the action of the play as it is in the earlier ones. It is significant that even such an essentially fine play as The Duchess of Malfi possesses these characteristics in about the same form and degree as they are found in other plays of the type.

More should be said about the two deviations from the standard in the characteristics of the villainy in the play, for the deviation is of some significance. There is no lust in the main plot of the play, the relations between the duchess and Antonio being amorous but not illicit; the only real lust in the entire play is in the affair of the Cardinal with Julia, which is entirely incidental to the main plot. The extravagance of the villainy in the play is evinced by a psychological cruelty not found in any play yet studied. Examples of this kind of horror are Ferdinand's treatment of the duchess during her imprisonment, his torture of her with what she believes to be the bodies of her husband and child, with madmen, and Bosola's torture at the scene of her murder.

Another of the later non-Shakespearean plays of villainy is The Changeling; it was first acted in 1623.[21] It is the result of the collaboration of Thomas Middleton and William Rowley; Middleton provided the main plot, the part of the play with which this study is concerned, and Rowley provided

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21 Schelling, op. cit., I, 599.

the under-plot, from which the play gets its name.[22]

The main plot of the play consists of De Flore's villainy in murdering Alonzo at the request of Beatrice-Joanna, who is supposed to marry the murdered man. Beatrice has Alonzo killed so that she can marry Alsemero; but before she can marry him, De Flores claims her as his reward for the murder. Then in order to preserve her honor in the sight of her husband, she is forced to employ De Flores to murder her waiting-woman. She and De Flores are discovered in their adultery; they confess their villainy, De Flores killing Beatrice and himself to end the play.

The motivation of the villainy of De Flores is simply that he cherishes a lustful love for Beatrice, who becomes attainable when she employs him to murder Alonzo. Until Beatrice gives him the chance to force her to acquiesce to his desire, he must content himself with residing in the court, as near her as he can be. The motivation of Beatrice's villainy is almost the same as De Flores', but she is at the beginning of the play not the depraved character that he is. She loves Alsemero, but she is pledged to marry Alonzo; in order to marry the man she loves instead, she is willing to plan and order his murder. It is significant that Beatrice is so innocent when she first contemplates her crime that she does not realize the price she is to pay De Flores for his commission of the murder; the realization that he is not to

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22 Schelling op. cit., I, 599.

be bought except at the price of her virginity is a shock to her, but when she sees that she is as guilty of the crime as he and that she cannot force him to leave her, she submits to him.

Again lust is the chief element of the villainy; but in The Changeling it is tempered somewhat, for neither De Flores nor Beatrice are the abandoned creatures of The Revenger's Tragedy. Almost of equal importance as a characteristic of the villainy is the melodramatic intrigue of the play, illustrated by Beatrice's trick to make her husband think her a maiden, as well as by Alsemero's alchemical test of her virginity. Except for the murder of Alonzo and the deaths of the final scene, violence upon the stage is missing. The chief interest in the play is the study of the degeneration of Beatrice from her contact with De Flores after her original employment of him.

As in some of the plays already studied, the major villainy in Hamlet is committed before the play begins. The reason for this is that, besides being a play of villainy, Hamlet is a play of revenge. It is the villainy, however, that is concerned in this study.

The prime villainy of Hamlet is the pre-play murder of King Hamlet by his brother, Claudius. The later villainy takes the form of Claudius' two attempts on young Hamlet's life in order to preserve the secrecy of his guilt and his throne.

It is not necessary to look long for the motivation of Claudius' villainy. His first act, the murder of Hamlet's father, is motivated primarily by his desire for power, by his wish to succeed his brother as king of Denmark; it is motivated only secondarily, if at all, by his lustful love for his brother's wife, Queen Gertrude. He probably married her chiefly because it was the custom for the new husband of the last king's wife to ascend the throne in Teutonic lands. Ambition is the chief motive for his original villainy.

Claudius' villainy throughout the rest of the play is motivated by his desire to keep Hamlet, the only one suspicious of him, both from detecting the murder and from wresting his newly-acquired crown from him. His final villainy, that of the plot with Laertes to kill Hamlet unfairly in a duel or to dispose of him with poison afterwards, has the added motive of Laertes' demands. Although what he planned was dishonorable, Laertes' motive was the legitimate one of revenge for a murdered father, the same motive that Hamlet had for his intended murder of Claudius.

Violence as a characteristic of the villainy is apparent in the original murder, in Hamlet's accidental murder of Polonius, and in the final scene in which every principal character excepting Horatio is killed; it is significant that except for the last scene none of the violence actually occurs on the stage in the sight of the audience. Intrigue is evident in the original murder, a very clever and "politic" murder, in Claudius' dissembling all knowledge of it, in his plot

to be rid of Hamlet at the hands of the English, and in the final plot with Laertes. Claudius is a villain, but his repentance[23] makes him essentially human, something that most of the other villains have not been found to be.

Melodramatic extravagance in Hamlet occurs only in two instances, in Shakespeare's concession to custom, the final bloody scene, and in his inclusion of the ghost, although he makes use of the ghost as a factor in Hamlet's indecision rather than as the customary device of horror.

The villainy in The Merchant of Venice is entirely in the mind of the villain; Shylock does not actually cut out the heart of Antonio. Still, he is the villain and the intended murder of Antonio is the villainy in the play. What is Shylock's motive for this villainy?

Shylock is a rich Jew, and usury is the means by which he has become rich. Antonio is also rich, but his riches have been gained by trading. Many times before the play begins have Shylock and Antonio come upon each other in their business, since they both frequent the Rialto, that district in Venice wherein all business, whether of merchandising or of usury, was conducted. Antonio, throughout the course of these meetings, has reviled Shylock for his practice of usury, and, what was worse to the Jew, he has even competed with him upon several occasions by lending money interest-free.

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23 III, iii, 72.

That Antonio has railed upon him for his practices and that he has loaned money without interest in unfair competition with Shylock are the Jew's motives for wishing to collect his fine. These two motives are important above the conventional one of the Jew's natural hatred for a Christian. Upon meeting Antonio to arrange the details of the bond, Shylock reveals these things as his motives when he says in an aside,

> I hate him for he is a Christian:
> But more for that in low simplicity
> He lends out money gratis and brings down
> The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
> If I can catch him once upon the hip,
> I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
> He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,
> Even there where merchants most do congregate,
> On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,
> Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe
> If I forgive him![24]

The primary characteristics of the villainy are two. The first and most obvious is the intrigue of the plan. Shylock pretends friendship for Antonio and Bassanio, but he is at the same time planning to cut out the heart of his enemy. The other characteristic of the villainy is one that has not yet appeared in any of the plays studied; it is that of chance. Shylock is gambling with himself; he either loses everything but the principal of the loan, or he gets his fiendish revenge. He is basing his gamble upon the fact that Antonio has been having ill fortune in his trading; his ships are supposed to be foundering, and he is consequently failing

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24 I, iii, 45-53.

to realize his investments. Shylock is gambling that Antonio is facing immediate financial failure, and if this proves true, he will be in a position to consummate his revenge without any evil consequences to himself. The circumstances of the planned murder satisfy the requirements of the day for horror; the horror never becomes visible, but it is effective in imagination.

Intrigue as a characteristic of the villainy in this play is not subtle; its basis upon chance has left little to the mind of the villain. Although Shylock pretends kindness and levity as his reasons for not requiring the usual interest, his intended victims at no time take him seriously, and Shylock himself hardly bothers to dissemble his intentions after the bond is signed. Violence as a characteristic of the villainy in The Merchant of Venice is absent, although it too is included in the prospective payment of the forfeited bond. The villainy of Shylock's intentions does possess a certain extravagance; the melodramatic exaggeration evident in the intended murder is the play's one concession to that characteristic of villainy so evident in the non-Shakespearean plays studied. Lust is entirely absent from The Merchant of Venice.

Again Shakespeare makes his villain a human being rather than a caricature. He does this deliberately, it seems to me, when he has Shylock say,

> Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison

us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?[25]

The villainy of the play Othello consists of the deliberate attempt of one man to cause another to believe in the unchastity of his innocent wife, and because of this belief, to harm her and himself. Although Iago may not have realized that Othello would murder Desdemona, he knew enough about his victim to realize the possibility of his going mad.

The characteristics of such villainy are not as easy to analyze as are those of the plays earlier studied. The villainy of Iago has both violence and intrigue, but it is the intrigue that assumes the most importance. Lust in the villainy of Iago is lacking, although Cassio's relations with Bianca are made use of in his plot. The extravagance of the villainy lies in the mental superiority of the villain and in the results of his plot, the murder of the innocent Desdemona and the suicide of Othello. Iago's superiority is in his matchless ability to seize upon the happening of the moment and turn it to his advantage; he is a supreme opportunist. This exaggeration is one not appearing in any of the other plays.

The motivation of the villainy of Iago has long been a problem; but this paper is concerned only with the solution of that problem that seems most logical to the writer; there is neither reasons nor space for the inclusion of a review of

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25 III, i, 55 ff.

all that has been thought and written on the subject.

The two best keys to the solution of the motivation of Iago's villainy seem to be these: what Iago is represented as being at the beginning of the play, and what he says in soliloquy concerning the motivation of his villainy.

Iago was a professional soldier; he had served Othello long, although according to his own reckoning he was only twenty-eight years old at the time of the action of the play. Iago was also an Italian; it is easy to overlook the importance of this today, but in Shakespeare's time the Italian villain as a character on the stage had been almost standardized as something of a monster, an intriguing, lustful, and generally degenerate sort of character--as witness the Italian villains in The Revenger's Tragedy.

As a soldier Iago had a motive for revenge upon Othello in that Cassio had been promoted above him when he, Iago, knew no reason for it. Whether or not Othello had a reason for believing Cassio to be the better soldier and the man for the lieutenantcy is beside the point, although it is to Iago's credit that Othello never expresses a reason for his preferment of Cassio. The point is that Iago knew no reason for it; he had reason to believe that he was the better soldier. Whether or not this motive is anything more than a convenient excuse for Iago to start trouble, his hate of Othello is in his own eyes justified and motivated by Othello's treatment of him. The lengths to which he goes to avenge himself are due to something other than the motive of revenge; the strength

and ingenuity of his plot go beyond the average intrigue in the typical play of the time.

In one of his soliloquies Iago adds another motive for his revenge,

> For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
> Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof
> Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards;
> And nothing can or shall content my soul
> Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife;
> Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
> At least into a jealousy so strong
> That judgment cannot cure.[26]

This added motivation on the part of Iago is significant not only for its addition to his motives, but also for the fact that it indicates a certain weakness in the character of Iago. He is so naturally evil himself that he cannot refrain from suspecting everyone, even his wife, of evil.

Perhaps it is to his Italianate nature, as it was pictured by the Elizabethan Englishman, to which goes the credit for the depth and complexity of his villainy; at least it is to his own evil character, whether Italianate or not, that the evil of his villainy may be attributed. If we may be satisfied with Iago's frustrated desire for deserved military promotion as the initial motive for his villainy, we must consider the quality of his mind as, if not a motive itself, at least the reason for the cold-blooded and efficient cruelty with which he carries out his plot; the depth of his villainy is as dependent upon the quality of his mind as is the

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26 II, i, 304-311.

success of his villainy dependent upon the superiority of his intellect.

King Lear provides us with two of the finest examples of villainy that the literature of Elizabethan drama can show. Primary, of course, is the villainy of the two daughters, Goneril and Regan; secondary, but only a little less villainous, is that of Edmund.

The villainy of the daughters consists of unnatural, inhuman treatment of their father after he has given them everything. He asks kind treatment in his old age, the allowance of one hundred knights to serve him, the privilege of living with his daughters alternately six months at a time, and all the honor due a king as well as a father, although he means to let his sons-in-law be the actual rulers.

Lear gives Goneril the first chance to prove her love. Instead she begins to prove her villainy by treating her father discourteously, by ignoring his wishes, and by refusing to see him. Upon Lear's wonder and wrath at this, she continues her mistreatment of him and his men until he leaves for Regan's castle. Regan and Cornwall go to Gloucester's castle upon being informed that Lear is approaching. When Lear, following Regan, arrives at Gloucester's, he is turned out into the storm. He escapes their immediate designs on his life, but both he and Cordelia are captured by Albany's forces after the battle. The villainy of the sisters after the battle is in their connivance with Edmund to kill the old king

and Cordelia. Following this, Goneril poisons Regan, whom she believes about to marry Edmund, for whom she herself lusts. She kills herself shortly after the death of her sister.

Although there is no real reason for the villainy of the sisters outside their own wickedness, the superficial external motive might be greed. Beyond this motive lies the inherent evil of their characters, for not only is their villainy the unnatural villainy of torturing their nearest of king, but they have everything--royalty, riches, power, and love--before they begin their villainous deeds.

The villainy of Edmund is parallel to that of the sisters; he tortures his father and brother. But the motivation of all his villainy is plain; he was a bastard son of the earl, ambitious and lusting for the power of the legitimate heir to the earldom. The simplicity of the motivation of his villainy is supplemented by his warped character, his attitude of resentment and rebellion toward the world. His villainy is extenuated in its motivation as well as in its monstrosity by the fact that he was a bastard and therefore did not consider himself completely his father's child. Although Gloucester may have loved his bastard son as much as he did Edgar, as he said, he was unthinkingly jocose about his son's bastardy, a fact that undoubtedly had a bad effect on Edmund's character.

Minor villains in the play are Cornwall and Oswald. Cornwall's villainy consisted of his treatment of Gloucester

upon discovering the earl's "treachery"; he was motivated by anger at what he considered treason. Oswald's villainy was petty, except for his attempt to murder the blind Gloucester; he was motivated by his desire for advancement.

Violence appears in the villainy of King Lear as it had since the days of The Spanish Tragedy, but in Shakespeare's play the violence assumes an unholy horror, in the hanging of Cordelia and in the blinding of Gloucester upon the stage, for example. Intrigue also appears in the play, but it is secondary because it is not essential to the horror created. King Lear has its quota of lust, but lust, too, is secondary to the perfect monstrosity of the sisters' villainy.

Chapter II

I shall begin the comparison of the motivation and characterization of the villains in the two groups of plays with a comparison of Hamlet and The Spanish Tragedy. Because of their similarity, these two plays are admirably suited to a direct comparison. In Hamlet a son suffers as the result of the murder of his father and of his own efforts at vengeance, while in The Spanish Tragedy a father suffers as the result of the murder of his only son and of his efforts to avenge the murder; in both plays principal characters simulate madness. It is even very likely that Shakespeare wrote his play to rival the popularity of a revival of the older play, probably in the year 1601.[27]

The motivation of the villainy in The Spanish Tragedy was found to be essentially that of the incompleteness of the character of the villain, Lorenzo, who does not seem to be completely alive and human. The villainy of Lorenzo springs from the fact that he lacks the ability to reason normally and to react normally to the contemplation of certain crimes; he is an inhuman character, a monster with so little reason for his villainy that neither he nor his actions seem lifelike.

The motivation of Claudius in Hamlet is quite different; the murder of Hamlet's father is motivated by his desire for the throne of Denmark; his attempts to kill young Hamlet are

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27 Schelling, op. cit., I, 216-217.

motivated by his wish to keep his crown. The motive for Claudius' villainy is ambition; Claudius is a living character, subject to one of the weaknesses that plague human beings, and he acts accordingly. He is even so human that he repents for the crimes he has committed. The reason for his villainy is plain, and although his villainy is certainly not justifiable, it is understandable.

The essential difference between the motivation of the villainy in The Spanish Tragedy and in Hamlet lies in the characterization of the villains. Lorenzo is not understandable in his villainy, whereas Claudius is easily understandable in his, although he is no less villainous for being understood. In Hamlet the reader does not have to fall back on the unsatisfactory explanation that Claudius is a monster and therefore does not act like a human being. We can never really understand Lorenzo, but we can always understand Claudius and even sympathize with him. Herein lies the essential difference between Shakespeare's and Kyd's motivation of villainy.

The Jew of Malta and The Merchant of Venice provide two more plays admirably suited for direct comparison. Shakespeare's play came some five years after Marlowe's, but parts of The Merchant of Venice so closely parallel the earlier play that it is certain that Shakespeare at least had The Jew of Malta in mind when he wrote his, whether he wrote it in answer to the popularity of Marlowe's play or not.

The villainy in both plays had one important element in

common before the plays were written; it is the Elizabethan conception of the Jew, for according to the popular conception of him at the time, the Jew was something of a monster. This is perhaps the real explanation of the criminal career of Barabas; it is true that he is wronged by the governor of Malta, but even before he has this motive for revenge, he is represented as totally selfish. Before he has gone very far in his villainy, he has become the complete villain, with no motive for his actions except the evil of his own character.

Shylock is an entirely different character, although he too is a Jew and as such is considered a villain before he has done anything to justify the classification. The intended villainy of Shylock is rather completely motivated; it is desire for revenge upon Antonio that impels Shylock to act as he does.

The motivation of Barabas is slight and superficial, and Barabas himself is not human; the motivation of Shylock is definite, and Shylock himself is not only human and easily understandable but is even pitiable. Shakespeare deliberately makes his villain human; Marlowe not only seems to make no effort to make Barabas human but even seems to make him as monstrous as he can. Again the difference in the motivation of the villainy in a non-Shakespearean play and in a play by Shakespeare is a difference in the characterization of the villains, for we can follow Shylock with understanding and sympathy, while Barabas seems completely inhuman.

The motivation of the villainy in the other non-Shakespear-

ean plays seems to show the same general characteristics that the two already discussed have shown. In Catiline we have another complete villain, a character without the essential attributes of humanity. Catiline, like Barabas, enjoys the machinations of his own evilly clever mind; but there is no reasonable external motive for his intended villainy. That he is betraying Rome for revenge, as he says, is not true; the only real motivation for his villainy is his evil character, which he has already revealed by his previous actions. The Duchess of Malfi presents the villainy of three men, two of whom are not motivated as normal human beings would have been. Neither the Cardinal nor Ferdinand, in spite of their professed motive, greed, can be looked upon as anything but monsters, for even greed would balk at the enormity of the crimes committed against a sister. Ferdinand is the more human of the two, for he is normal enough to break under the strain put upon him by his crimes; but the Cardinal remains essentially a caricature of a man. Bosola, the third villain in the play, is probably more human than either of the other two; he is motivated in his villainy by necessity. He is human enough both to resent the unfairness of the brothers and to be stricken with remorse at the extent of his own villainy. The motives in The Revenger's Tragedy are lust, ambition, and a monstrosity of character so exagerrated as to lose all semblance of reality. The villainy of The Changeling is also motivated by lust, both on the part of De Flores and of Beatrice.

The motivation of Iago was found to be a combination of desire for revenge and of a mind delighting in its own clever machinations for evil. Although Iago seems vaguely motivated to the modern reader, Shakespeare did not omit a motive; Iago has a motive as a starting-point for his villainy, whether or not it is any more than his own excuse for beginning his plots.

Although the motivation of the villainy in Othello is much harder to define than that in The Merchant of Venice or Hamlet, it is significant that Iago remains essentially human. He is also understandable, for we may follow him throughout the play, if not with sympathy, at least with some degree of understanding. Iago, although greatly villainous, is not the inhuman character that Catiline or Barabas is; for Shakespeare has rather completely portrayed him as a man lacking any refinement or imagination, but as a man.

The motivation of the villainy in King Lear is less clear than that in the other plays by Shakespeare; that is, two of the villains, Goneril and Regan, are more nearly inhuman than are Claudius, Shylock, Iago, or even Edmund. It is hard to understand the sisters' motives, for before the commission of their crimes they possessed everything desirable. Apparently they are like the monsters of some of the non-Shakespearean plays. Their motive for their quarrel over Edmund is lust; this is more understandable, but its place in the play is of less importance than is their treatment of the old king. Edmund, although inhumanly cruel and unnatural, is

understandably motivated both by his desire for the power of the earldom and by his attitude toward the world as a result of his bastardy. It is significant that King Lear is the first Shakespearean play studied that contains lust as a motive for villainy, although even in this play it is distinctly secondary.

The motivation of the villainy in The Revenger's Tragedy provides a good parallel to that of the villainy in King Lear, for the motives in both plays are ambition, lust, and a monstrosity of character. Lust is distinctly secondary in King Lear, but in Tourneur's play it is the dominating motive. Ambition in the two plays is almost identical, for in the non-Shakespearean play the bastard son of the duke cherishes ambition as the motive for a great part of his villainy, as does Edmund; Spurio, the duke's bastard, even possesses the same warped outlook on life that causes the viciousness of Edmund's villainy, and for the same basic reason. The importance of monstrosity of character as motivation for villainy in the two plays is relatively the same; in both it is the depravity of the villains that is the basis for the villainy. Since it is upon this monstrosity of character that the motivation of the villainy in King Lear rests, the motivation in this play is essentially incomplete.

The conclusions to be drawn are: With the exception of that in King Lear, the villainy in the Shakespearean plays is more fully and reasonably motivated than is that in the

non-Shakespearean plays, and with the exception of Goneril and Regan, Shakespeare's villains as characters are more understandable and human than are the villains of the other writers. In general Shakespeare's villains and their motives are much more nearly true to life and not nearly so fantastic as are those of the other Elizabethan writers.

In Chapter I, we found that the villainy of Elizabethan drama had four persistent characteristics--violence, intrigue, lust, and extravagance. These characteristics appear both in the Shakespearean and the non-Shakespearean plays; but just as there is a difference in the motivation of the villainy in the two groups of plays, there is a difference in the treatment of these characteristics.

In The Spanish Tragedy violence of a very obvious sort is the prime characteristic of the villainy. From the scene of the initial murder, an affair of hanging and stabbing, to the final scene of wholesale slaughter, the play is replete with a violence presented upon the stage in such a tasteless manner that today it would be repulsive. In Hamlet it was necessary for Shakespeare to include violence if his play was to rival the older one with any degree of success. But the violence in Hamlet, although it is present both in prospect and as a sort of atmosphere throughout the entire play, is absent from the stage itself, with the exception of the final scene and of the murder of Polonius, which takes place where the audience can not see the actual killing. Violence as a

characteristic of the villainy in Hamlet is in reality a violence of the mind, for not only is most of the actual violence visible only to the mind, but that which gave the audience the satisfaction that it was accustomed to getting from actual violence was the convliet within the minds of the characters.

The Jew of Malta and The Merchant of Venice present even a greater contrast as far as violence is concerned, for in Shakespeare's play actual violence is entirely lacking, the only concession to custom being in the form of the contemplated villainy. Violence in Marlowe's play, however, is more than merely evident; it is the play itself from the time of the double killing of Lodowick and Mathias to the final scene in which Barabas is plunged into a cauldron and burned to death.

Other of the non-Shakespearean plays studied present violence as a characteristic of villainy to even greater degrees. The Duchess of Malfi, besides possessing the usual bloody finale, has the strangulation of two women and two children upon the stage. The Revenger's Tragedy contains all sorts of ingenious and violent death from that of murder by kissing a poisoned skull to that of the final scene in which there are two death masques instead of the customary one. The Changeling, which was not acted until 1623, possesses only one scene of violence besides the concluding one, but that is the particularly eery one of the murder of Alonzo. Catiline contains no real violence upon the stage, for as in The Merchant of Venice the violence is entirely in contem-

plation and is never actually committed.

Violence is practically absent from the other two plays by Shakespeare, with one exception. Othello does not exhibit it to the degree in which it appears in the non-Shakespearean plays, the only real violence being that of the final tragic scene. King Lear, although it too is generally lacking in it, does contain the only monstrous piece of violence acted upon the stage in any of Shakespeare's plays studied in this thesis; that one exception occurs when Cornwall blinds Gloucester. The final scene of King Lear is not as completely bloody, perhaps, as is customary, but is no less tragic.

Except in King Lear, violence is not only less evident in the Shakespearean plays, but that which does occur takes place off-stage. Shakespeare was evidently intent upon characterization rather than upon presenting spectacles of horror. His inclusion of violence in the final scene of his plays must be regarded as his concession to a custom too strong to be ignored.

Intrigue is another basic characteristic of the villainy of the plays studied. In The Spanish Tragedy it took the form of rather elementary plots, the only real ingenuity being shown in the scheme of the avengers to kill the villains by means of a masque or play. The play is replete with plots, from Lorenzo's obvious scheme to murder Horatio to his clever riddance of Pedringano and Serberine. But The Spanish Tragedy shows nothing like the complexity of intrigue that even the machinations of Barabas in The Jew of Malta show; it is

with Barabas that the villain first begins to enjoy his own cleverness to the exclusion of almost everything else, the last part of the play being nothing but one plot after another. In The Duchess of Malfi the intrigue is more nearly balanced by a credibility not present in the earlier plays, but it is quite effective nevertheless. Intrigue in The Changeling takes another form; it is exercised not so much by the villains, for their intrigue consists mostly of simple secrecy, but by Alsemero in his melodramatic efforts to detect his wife's infidelity. The Revenger's Tragedy possesses intrigue at its height of ingenuity and complexity; the play has a full dozen intrigues, varying in ingenuity from the plan of Vendice to avenge his lover's murder to the obvious plots of Ambitioso and Supervacuo to thwart each other in their plans for possession of the dukedom.

Intrigue is an essential part of any play of villainy; it was therefore impossible for Shakespeare to omit it, even had he wished to. But although intrigue is an integral part of Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice, Othello, and King Lear, it is quite different from that found in the other plays. In Hamlet the intrigue present is there only as it is necessary to the success of Claudius' plot to gain and retain the crown; there is no exaggeration of it for its sake as melodrama. In The Merchant of Venice there is a superficial cleverness to the plot of Shylock, but it remains only a trick. It is the only plot in the play, whereas the non-Shakespearean plays commonly contained numerous plots. In

King Lear the intrigue is largely confined to Edmund; the plotting of the sisters lacks any real subtlety. It is only in Othello that Shakespeare depicts a villainy with a truly Elizabethan intrigue; but even in the villainy of Iago, Shakespeare remains more nearly true to life than do the other playwrights. Discounting Iago's Italianate nature, he remains essentially human, for he is understandable in what he does.

The essential superiority of Shakespeare's villains as human characters accounts for the lack of exaggeration of the intrigue in his plays. The intrigue of Shakespeare's villains remains credible; it is possible to imagine such characters plotting such villainies in life, but it is impossible to imagine a plot whereby all the inhabitants of a nunnery are poisoned. If Iago's machinations seem to approach more nearly the exaggeration of the intrigue of the non-Shakespearean villains, it is only necessary to remember that Iago was not inhuman, but almost super-human.

Lust is subordinate in The Spanish Tragedy, but even in that early play it is present, being partially responsible for the violence of the villainy. In The Jew of Malta the villain himself is still devoid of lust, but there is a doubling of the amount of it present in the play, the lust of Lodowick for Abigail and that of Bellamira and Ithamore being much more evident than that in the earlier play. In Catiline we have a lustful villain, for before the action of the play Catiline had been motivated by lust to commit many almost

unmentionable crimes. Lust is again completely subordinate in The Duchess of Malfi, being confined to the affair of Julia and the Cardinal. But in The Revenger's Tragedy the villainy as well as the motivation of it becomes largely identified with lust; the original crime was motivated by anger as the result of frustrated lust, and lust is the motive for four other villainous deeds in the play itself. In The Changeling lust is characteristic of the villainy of De Flores and even of that of Beatrice.

In none of the plays by Shakespeare in this study is lust primary either as a characteristc of the villainy or as a motive for it. It is lacking in Hamlet; it is absent from The Merchant of Venice; in Othello it is present only in a minor episode; and in King Lear it is present only in a secondary position, remaining almost negligible in the face of the greater villainy.

Shakespeare did not employ lust to any great extent in the villainy of the four plays studied, whereas the other playwrights of the time always employed it, with varying degrees of prominence, subordinating it in some very few plays and becoming preoccupied with it almost to the exclusion of everything else in others, but using it always to a greater extent than Shakespeare did.

With the single exception of that in King Lear, we find that Shakespeare makes no such use of violence upon the stage itself as do the other playwrights; and with the possible exception of Othello, Shakespeare makes no use of intrigue to

the extent of making it seem unnatural or inhuman. Even Iago's intrigue has with the cooperation of circumstance a certain credibility not found in that of the non-Shakespearean intrigue.

The persistent characteristics of the villainy in Elizabethan drama may be included by the term "extravagant melodrama." There is a certain great exaggeration in all of them that makes it suitable to unify them in this manner. When we summarize the characteristics thus, we find that the exceptions noted in Shakespeare's plays diminish in importance and that on the whole the villainy of Shakespeare's characters retains a credibility not achieved by the other playwrights. Where the villainy of the non-Shakespearean plays is plainly exaggerated and has no claim to be anything but melodrama, Shakespeare's villains and their villainy remain within the bounds of reason and portray life as it might actually be under the extraordinary circumstances presented.

After the analysis and comparison of the motivation and characteristics of the villainy in these non-Shakespearean and Shakespearean plays, the only possible final conclusion is that Shakespeare is greatly superior to the other dramatists of the time as far as these elements of the drama are concerned, and that his superiority lies in his portrayal of credible characters in life-like situations.

We have found that Shakespeare adheres more closely to life than do the other Elizabethan dramatists. It is significant that Shakespeare did this without attempting to deviate from the pattern that his contemporaries developed for the

play of tragic villainy. He made no effort to be original in either the content or the form of his plays; every characteristic of villainy that the others' plays possess, Shakespeare's plays possess. It is the difference in his treatment of them that gives Shakespeare his superiority. When he had subjected the same material the others used to his genius for making his characters and their actions real, the resulting play became something essentially universal and not just a play of the moment.

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