SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF THE MACHIAVELLIAN STEREOTYPE

by

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PREFACE

The texts of Shakespeare's plays used in this thesis are, in each case, those of the most recent edition in the Arden series available in the RedpathLibrary. In the case of Titus Andronicus, King Lear, Othello, Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, King John, King Richard II, and The Tempest this is the New Arden edition, under the general editorship of Una Ellis-Fermor. In all other cases references are to the (old) Arden edition, under the general editorship first of W. J. Craig and then of R. H. Case. The New Shakespeare edition, under the general editorship of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and J. Dover Wilson, and the London Shakespeare, edited by John Munro, have also occasionally been consulted. The titles of the journals cited in footnotes and bibliography have been abbreviated according to the practice of PMLA.

Introduction

The villains of Shakespeare are the most vivid and original in English drama, yet they are not entirely products of his imagination. With this sort of character, as with his plots and other characters, Shakespeare worked within viable dramatic traditions which were strong enough to provide a base and an inspiration for his genius, yet not so rigid as to limit it. One of the strongest of these traditions was that of the Machiavel.

The works of Machiavelli were readily available to the Elizabethans. Although the Discourses was not published in English translation until 1636 and The Prince until 1640, at least four different manuscript translations of the Discourses[1] and three of The Prince[2] were made in the Elizabethan period. Further, in London between 1584 and 1588 John Wolfe published all of Machiavelli's works in Italian.[3] Other Italian editions were undoubtedly brought back by travellers, and a French translation had been available since 1553 and a Latin since 1560.

[1] See G.N. Giordano-Orsini, "Machiavelli's 'Discourses': A Manuscript Translation of 1599," TLS, 10 Oct. 1936, p. 820; E.S. Gasquet, "Machiavelli's 'Discourses': A Forgotten English Translation," NQ, CCIII (1958), 144-145.

[2] See John Purves, trans. The Works of William Fowler, Secretary to Queen Anne, Wife of James VI (London, 1940), III, cxxxviii; Irving Ribner, "The Significance of Gentillet's 'Contre-Machiavel,'" MLQ, X (1949), 154.

[3] See Adolph Gerber, "All of the Five Fictitious Italian Editions of Writings of Machiavelli and Three of those of Pietro Aretino Printed by John Wolfe of London (1584-1588)," MLN, XXII (1907), 2-6, 129-135, 201-206.

In The Prince Machiavelli, writing of the methods and conduct of a prince in dealing with his subjects and his friends, asserts: "I break away completely from the principles laid down by my predecessors,"[4] and, indeed, Machiavelli was the first to develop and publish a realistic, relatively systematic theory of political science.[5] Its publication was, as Prof. Meinecke with justifiable drama puts it, "a sword which was plunged into the flank of the body politic of Western humanity, causing it to shriek and rear up" (p. 49).

The cause of the shrieking and rearing was twofold. In part it was the implication, found in his work as a whole as well as in his discussion of religion (Disc. I. 11-12 and II. 2), that there is no God—or at least that His existence and wishes are not to be considered in determining action in this world. It was also, in part, the distinction which Machiavelli drew between public and private morals.

The medieval assumption that there existed a "natural" moral law, recognized by all men alike and binding absolutely, world without end, was still held by almost everyone in Europe in the sixteenth century.[6] This assumption was associated with an equally widespread conception, that of an ordered universe in which each entity acted in its "natural"

[4] The Prince and Other Works including Reform in Florence, Castruccio Castracani, On Fortune, Letters, Ten Discourses on Livy, trans. Allan H. Gilbert (Chicago, 1941), p. 141. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

[5] Friedrich Meinecke, Machiavellism: the Doctrine of Raison d'Etat and Its Place in Modern History, trans. Douglas Scott (New Haven, 1957), pp. 28-29; Herbert Butterfield, The Statecraft of Machiavelli (London, 1940), pp. 20-22. Cf. Federico Chabod, "The Concept of the Renaissance," Machiavelli and the Renaissance, trans. David Moore (London, 1958).

[6] J.W. Allen, A History of Political Throught in the Sixteenth Century, 3rd ed. (London, 1951), p. xiv.

God-given way and in which analogies were found between the prince and God and between the individual within the state and the state within the community of states.[7]

These beliefs made Machiavelli's distinction between public and private morals unthinkable. Yet if a society based on his principles did not make this distinction, it would function at the level of a jungle. It is not surprising, then, that the popular sixteenth-century judgement of his theories was to equate them to the laws of the jungle.

The Elizabethan dramatists seized upon the most sensational aspects of Machiavelli's philosophy and on the distortions of his philosophy developed in such works as Innocent Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel[8] (1576) and Lycester's Commonwealth (1584), pamphlets intended to refute Machiavelli's works. These ideas they combined with other dramatic traditions of villainy: the tradition of the Senecan villain,[9] that of the

[7] See E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London, 1943); Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (New York, 1942), Chapters I and II.

[8] Full title: Discours sur les Moyens de bien gouverner et maintenir en bonne paix un Royaume ou autre Principauté: Divisez en trois Parties: à savoir, du Conseil, de la Religion & Policie que doit tenir au Prince: Contre Nicholas Machiavel, Florentin.

[9] Although Seneca's direct influence has been denied, his influence through sixteenth-century Italian drama is indisputable, for their works became plot-mines for the Elizabethan dramatists. See John W. Cunliffe, "The Influence of Italian on Early English Drama," MP, IV (1906-07), 597-604; Howard Baker, Induction to Tragedy (Baton Rouge, 1939), pp. 106-153; Fredson T. Bowers, Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy: 1587-1642 (Princeton, 1940), pp. 41-61; Mario Praz, The Flaming Heart: Essays on Crashaw, Machiavelli, and Other Studies in the Relations between Italian and English Literature from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot (New York, 1958), pp. 12-14, 109-118; W.A. Armstrong, "The Influence of Seneca and Machiavelli on the Elizabethan Tyrant," RES, XXIV (1948), 19-35; Ribner, "The Significance of Gentillet's 'Contre-Machiavel,'" 156-157.

villain of Greek romance;[10] and that of the native Morality Devil.[11] The product was the Machiavellian Villain, a stereotype which was to become one of the dominating figures of Elizabethan drama.

The product of these influences crystallized primarily in two plays, Kyd's Spanish Tragedy (c. 1586) and Marlowe's Jew of Malta (c. 1589), each of which contains a villain, Lorenzo in the Spanish Tragedy and Barabas in the Jew of Malta, who displays attitudes, habits, and mannerisms which exemplify the Elizabethan conception of Machiavellism. The plays were remarkably successful and these characters especially caught the public's imagination. Imitation by other dramatists inevitably followed and a stereotype was established.

The Machiavellian stereotype has been exhaustively analysed and its characteristics identified.[12] Among those cited, the most fundamental is atheism, not only in the technical sense of one who denies the validity of one or more of the dogmas of the Church, but also in the sense of one who denies the validity of the traditional concepts of order and morality. Others cited are murderousness, egoism, rapacity and avarice, treachery,

[10] Praz, p. 127.

[11] H.T. Price, "The Authorship of Titus Andronicus," JEGP, XLII (1943), 58; Praz, p. 14; Ribner, 156-157.

[12] See Clarence V. Boyer, The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy (London, 1914), pp. 40-59; E.E. Stoll, John Webster: The Periods of His Work as Determined by His Relations to the Drama of His Day (Boston, 1905), pp. 200-205; Bowers, pp. 49-77; Praz, pp. 90-128; Armstrong, 19-35; Napoleone Orsini, "'Policy' or the Language of Elizabethan Machiavellianism," JWCI, IX (1946), 122-134; Muriel C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 115-136.

cruelty, secretiveness, ambition, deviousness, unsentimentality, and hypocrisy. Lorenzo and Barabas show almost all these characteristics.

Besides these traits certain stock behaviour patterns have also been identified: the Machiavel's speeches are laced with references to "policy" and "practice" (Spanish Tragedy: III.ii.101, 106, iv.38, x.9; Jew of Malta: I.ii.273, V.ii.28, 37, 114, 123, v.26);[13] he laughs at and boasts of his wickedness (Jew: II.iii.177-204); he addresses the audience directly in asides and soliloquies (Span: III.ii.100-119, iv.38-49, 60, 78-88; Jew: I.ii.214-224, 334, II.iii.7-31, 40, 43-44, 53-56, etc.), often with puns and other witty remarks (Span: III.ii.93; Jew: I.i.157, 177, II.iii.62, 67, 84, 322, etc.); he utters threats in asides and soliloquies (Span: II.ii.28, 31, 56-57; Jew: II.iii.16-17, 69, 90-92, 96, III.iv. 116, IV.v.32-33); he addresses himself by name (Span: III.iv.79, xiv.51, 73; Jew: I.i.181, ii.192, 218, II.i.5, V.ii.33, 35, etc.); and he is given to reciting cynical maxims (Span: II.i.108-109, III.ii.107, iv.43-44; Jew: I.i.135-136, ii.208, 272-273, 282-283, II.iii.312, etc.).

As well as these verbal patterns certain patterns of action are cited: he tends to murder with poison (Jew: Abigail, an order of nuns, Ithamore, Bellamira, Pilia-Borsa, and a team of carpenters); he has attached to himself a henchman (Span: Balthazar, Pedringano, Serberine; Jew: Ithamore and, in a sense, Abigail) with whom he exchanges endearments (Jew: II.iii.176, 216-219, III.iv.14-17, 39-47, 108, IV.i.50-51)

[13] References are to Frederick S. Boas' edition of The Works of Thomas Kyd (Oxford, 1901) and to A. H. Bullen's edition of The Works of Christopher Marlowe, II (London, 1885). Subsequent references are to these editions.

and engages in hypocritical hoaxes (Span: II.i.35ff; Jew: II.iii.368-382, IV.ii.25-28). Finally he murders the henchman when he has become disaffected or has served his purpose (Span: Pedringano, Serberine; Jew: Ithamore, Abigail).

These, then, are the materials and traditions which Shakespeare inherited. It is clear that when he created Aaron in Titus Andronicus, probably the first of his major Machiavels,[14] he was dealing with a stock character with which he was thoroughly familiar and which was popular with the public.

[14] On the question of whether or not Titus Andronicus antedates Richard III, critical opinion is about evenly divided. The sequence is unimportant to my thesis.

I

In his discussion of Antony and Cleopatra in Poets on Fortune's Hill John Danby remarks, "Octavius is a notable development in the figure which started as a machiavel pure and simple. Shakespeare now betrays no sign of alarm, no hint of revulsion or rejection, almost no trace of emotion in putting him into a story . . . . By the time Shakespeare comes to depict Octavius he has refined away all the accidentals from the portrait—the diabolism, the rhetoric, the elaborate hypocrisy, the perverse glamour: everything but the essential deadliness and inescapability. Octavius marks an advance on Goneril and Regan."[15] This statement implies an evolution in Shakespeare's concept of Machiavellism and in his Machiavellian characters which cannot be satisfactorily supported by reference to the plays. In Antony and Cleopatra, to conform to the characterization given in the sources and to facilitate his dramatic ends, Shakespeare drew Octavius as deadly but without many of the details of the Machiavellian stereotype. Three years later, in Cymbeline, he gave us Iachimo, who is Machiavellian in everything except the essential deadliness and inescapability. For Shakespeare dramatic values rank above the philosophic or the moral. Machiavellism is employed in the plays to serve a number of dramatic purposes; the plays are not vehicles for the author's ideas about Machiavellism.

[15] Poets on Fortune's Hill: Studies in Sidney, Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher (London, 1952), pp. 143-144.

This principle is supported by comparison of the function of the Machiavellian elements in the four plays, Titus Andronicus, Richard III, Othello, and King Lear, which contain major characters who conform to the Machiavellian stereotype.

a

In Titus Andronicus Aaron is such a character. As a misbelieving Moor he falls automatically within the limits of the Elizabethan conception of atheism, but the point is not allowed to rest there. He admits that he believes in no God (V.i. 71-73); like Marlowe's "Machiavelli" who delivers the prologue to The Jew of Malta, he is ready to make use of the superstitions of the religious (V.i. 74-85); and he calls Tamora,

> the empress of my soul,
> Which never hopes more heaven than rests in thee.
> (II.iii.40-41)

Atheism in the more general sense he also displays, for he completely rejects the traditional concepts of morality. This can be best seen, perhaps, in his sexual immorality; promiscuity in the male is not in itself especially significant, but his approval and promotion of the rape of Lavinia by Chiron and Demetrius, both mere boys, suggests complete depravity.

As a murderer Aaron outstrips Lorenzo: he murders his son's nurse, presumably murders the mid-wife who attended the child's birth, and organizes the murder of Bassianus and the execution of Martius and Quintus. His cruelty is emphasized by the pleasure he seems to take in the carnage he brings about, especially in tricking Titus into bartering his hand for his sons' heads. His secretiveness is specifically noted by

Chiron (IV.ii.170-171). His ambition, however, like Lorenzo's and Barabas's, is undeveloped and is fully expressed by his exclamation,

> Away with slavish weeds and servile thoughts!
> I will be bright, and shine in pearl and gold,
> To wait upon this new-made empress.
> To wait, said I? To wanton with this queen. (II.i.18-21)

This passage also reveals his avarice, the impression of which is maintained by his association with gold both in action—he uses gold to bait the trap for Martius and Quintus—and in imagery—"I would not for a million of gold" (II.i.49), "sweet gold" (II.iii.8).

Aaron owes no allegiance to the opposing, non-Machiavellian party and he seldom even appears on stage with them; before the fifth act when he is captured by Lucius and opportunities for duplicity are removed, he speaks only twenty-six lines in the presence of his enemies and eight of these are aside. As a result the hypocrisy and treachery which the Machiavel usually displays in his relations with his enemy are not emphasized.

Aaron's egoism is best seen in a relationship which also reveals an unMachiavellian sentimentality in his character: his love for his son. "My mistress is my mistress; this my self" (IV.ii.107), he cries when Chiron and Demetrius attempt to murder the boy, and he defends him with furious courage. The emphasis given this relationship, which was probably invented by Shakespeare,[16] is in strong contrast to the treatment of the later Machiavels, who are never put in a position in which love for a

[16] Aaron's son does not appear in the story as told in the eighteenth-century chap-book, now in the Folger Library, which is believed to be the source of Titus. See R.M. Sargent, "The Source of Titus Andronicus," SP, XLVI (1949), 167-183; J. C. Maxwell, ed. Titus Andronicus (London, 1953), pp. xxxiv-xxxix.

son could be exhibited. Aaron's intense love for one of his own kind emphasizes his isolation from the European characters, even those of the Queen's party, and gives added significance to his blackness. It both sets a limit to his Machiavellism and suggests its cause. Even the direction of his Machiavellism—against the Romans, the proudest of all races—is given added plausibility.

Aaron also exhibits almost all the stock behaviour patterns enumerated in the introduction. He refers twice to his "policy" (II.i.104, IV.ii.149), boasts of his wickedness (III.i.202-205), addresses the audience directly in asides and soliloquies (II.i.1-25, 90, II.iii. 206-208, III.i.202-205, IV.ii.25-31, 173-181), and utters a threat in an aside (III.i.190-191). His speech is peppered with ironic comments and ribald or sadistic jokes, sometimes in asides (II.i.90, 97-98, III.i.188-189, IV.ii.40, 76, 146-147); even when confronted with certain death he cannot resist a pun (V.i.95-96). Four times he addresses himself by name (II.i.12, 16, III.i.205, IV.ii.54). Though he does not use poison, he murders Martius and Quintus by means as treacherous as any in the canon. Finally, he employs three henchmen, Chiron, Demetrius, and, in a sense, Tamora, whom he dominates. From them he accepts endearments (II.i.132, iii.10-51), and with them he engages in the hoaxes to kill Bassianus, Martius, and Quintus and to rape Lavinia.

This characterization he maintains to the very end. Sentenced to be set breast deep in the earth and starved to death, he answers defiantly,

> Ah, why should wrath be mute, and fury dumb?
> I am no baby, I, that with base prayers
> I should repent the evils I have done. . . .
> If one good deed in all my life I did,
> I do repent it from my very soul. (V.iii.184-190)

These are his last words.

The henchmen, Tamora, Chiron, and Demetrius, are also Machiavels, though less fully delineated. Tamora's religious beliefs are not specifically brought to our attention, but her solicitude for the sexual needs of her sons and her own promiscuity demonstrate her complete "freedom" from conventional attitudes and beliefs. Her original desire to revenge Alarbus seems increasingly, as the play progresses, a mere excuse for her bloodthirstiness. Her love for him cannot be compared to Aaron's love for their black child—whom she would have destroyed like an unwanted kitten. Her murderousness, which must be measured by her intentions, not her accomplishments, is unlimited; while her reception of Aaron's account of the hoax which won Titus's hand,

> She sounded almost at my pleasing tale,
> And for my tidings gave me twenty kisses, (V.i.119-120)

plainly shows a sadistic element in her cruelty. Her deviousness is best seen when she persuades Saturnine not to execute Titus for shooting arrows at him and instead devises a complicated plot to achieve the same end. Her hypocrisy, which is directed against her husband and benefactor, is more strongly emphasized than Aaron's; ambition, too, is a stronger element in her motivation.

Further, she speaks of using "some cunning practice" (V.ii.77), laughs at Aaron's villainy (V.i.119-120), addresses the audience in asides and soliloquies (II.iii.190-191, IV.iv.34-38), utters threats in an aside to Saturnine (I.i.450-455), and addresses herself by name (I.i.428, IV.iv.35, 95). In the final fantastic plot to entrap Titus she uses her sons as hechmen.

Although Aaron implies that Chiron and Demetrius possess a combination of the worst of their mother's qualities and of his own, they never become more than tool-villains. Indeed, they have not the intelligence to be more: "What a thing it is to be an ass!" (IV.ii.25), Aaron remarks aside when they fail to recognize Titus's thinly veiled threats. In murderousness and cruelty, however, they are quite up to standard, while Chiron's suggestion that they rape Lavinia on her husband's body associates them with another Machiavellian ruffian, Esdras of Granada, who actually committed such a crime![17] Their attitude towards "love" (II.i.36, 72, 80, 84), a word which they use casually as a synonym for "lust" and which Demetrius associates with "fits" and "heat" (II.i.134), best illustrates their unsentimentality.

They laugh at their own villainy, jeering at Lavinia after they have raped and mutilated her. Though not delivered directly to the audience in asides, Chiron's crudely ironic jokes, on this occasion and elsewhere (II.iii.128, 148, IV.ii.43), show a greater consciousness of the audience than does most of the dialogue in the play. Demetrius, for his part, bubbles with maxims Machiavellian either in nature or in context (II.i.82-83, 85-86, 86-87, iii.123).

Among Shakespeare's tragedies Titus Andronicus stands isolated in its inferiority. Even its chronological position at the dramatist's first attempt in this genre has seemed to many critics an inadequate

[17] In Nashe's Unfortunate Traveller. See J. C. Maxwell, II.iii.129-130, n.

explanation of its ineptitude, and the authenticity of Shakespeare's authorship has been questioned. Although the trend in recent criticism has been to reassert Shakespeare's responsibility for the play,[18] stressing its promise and its superiority to contemporary works in a similar vein, its inferiority to the rest of Shakespearean tragedy is indisputable.

One of its basic weaknesses is that the steady accumulation and increasing frightfulness of the horrors portrayed make it almost impossible for the audience to maintain suspension of disbelief. This fault is, of course, the direct result of the emphasis given the Machiavellian elements in the play.

A second basic weakness is the insufficiency of the protagonist, Titus, as hero. Whatever allowance is made for the old Roman's rigidity, pride, and reverence for authority and discipline, the fact remains that if we take the play to be in some sense an imitation of real life, which is the initial assumption to be made in tragedy, Titus's callous murder of Mutius, his son, so isolates our sympathies that any attempt to identify ourselves with him becomes impossible. His crime cannot be taken, as King Lear's rejection of Cordelia is to be taken, as the symbolic indication of a comprehensive fault in Lear's character, for the scene, unlike the first scene in King Lear, is not set off from the rest of the play as a prologue-like recapitulation of events long past.[19]

[18] But cf. Dover Wilson's introduction to the New Shakespeare edition (Cambridge, 1948).

[19] For a contrary view, see H. T. Price, JEGP, XLII, 74-75.

Furthermore the flaws in Titus's character which are presented in this opening scene are not, for the most part, directly related, as Lear's are in King Lear, to his later downfall. Like Lear, Titus is shown to be cruel, inflexible, irascible, intemperate, domineering, and unable to discriminate between good and evil; but most of these qualities are displayed in his treatment of Mutius and his other children, a relationship which is irrelevant to the later development of the plot. Only his cruelty towards Alarbus and his error of judgement in choosing Saturninus instead of Bassianus as emperor contribute to his subsequent misfortunes.

The Machiavellian elements in the play contribute to this weakness as well. The Machiavellian cast given to Tamora's character makes her hatred of Titus seem unmotivated, the mere repulsion of bad from good, so that the already feeble connection between Titus's weaknesses and his fate is all but destroyed.

The main effect of Aaron's Machiavellian behaviour is to drive Titus into semi-madness and pseudo-Machiavellism. The latter development begins when Titus, having sworn revenge with Marcus and Young Lucius, rejects a direct attack in favour of a complicated and devious plot, the details of which are never fully presented. Later he sends Chiron and Demetrius ominous gifts, a stratagem which is useless and so smacks of Machiavellism; Aaron, as a professional Machiavel, admires this device and remarks that Tamora would applaud the conceit (IV.ii.29-30). Later still we are told that Titus keeps to his study in order to "ruminate strange plots of dire revenge" (V.ii.6), but these, too, are never performed, for Tamora beats him to the plot and falls easily into his clutches.

During these machinations he sends the clown to his death, and in the process of a revenge more horrible than anything devised by the Machiavels he murders Chiron, Demetrius, and Tamora. In all he murders or contrives the murder of six people, which is the highest score made in the play. He also uses the characteristically Machiavellian word "practice" (III.ii.45), utters threats in an aside clearly addressed to the audience (V.ii.142-144), and employs a henchman, Young Lucius, who himself utters threats in asides (IV.ii.6, 8-9, 17).

This sort of breakdown under the tormenting of a Machiavel was to be used with great dramatic effect by Shakespeare in Othello and King Lear, but its use here is not fruitful. The presentation of Titus's weaknesses in the opening scene precludes the type of development employed in Othello, in which the nobility of the protagonist is stressed initially and the action is concerned with his degeneration under the attack of the Machiavel. Nor do we find here the type of development employed in King Lear, in which an initially defective protagonist is purged through the Machiavel's action. Under the goading of Aaron, Titus raves about justice rather as Lear does, but it is justice for himself alone with which he is concerned; Lear's beggar and simple thief could not be further from his mind. In another scene which looks forward to Lear he momentarily shows sympathy for the parents of a fly killed by Marcus, but he later callously sends the Poor Tom of the play, the Clown, on a mission which is sure to get him into trouble and does, in fact, cause him to be hanged. When he stabs his daughter, Lavinia, in the final scene, he seems much the same man he was when he cut down his son, Mutius, in the first.

To find a close comparison to the use of the tormenting Machiavel in Titus, one must look back to The Spanish Tragedy, not forward to the

great tragedies. Hieronymo is also driven by a Machiavel, in this case Lorenzo, into a state of semi-madness. Partially recovered, he exaggerates his condition to quiet the suspicions and relax the caution of his tormentors, and in the process he becomes a pseudo-Machiavel. Finally, he takes terrible revenge. Hieronymo's murder of Don Cyprian in the final scene is an extension of his revenge from the guilty to the innocent; Titus's murders (except for that of Lavinia, which is entirely without malice) are confined to the guilty. Apart from this distinction the comparison is exact.

Although the main effects of the emphasis given the Machiavellian elements in Titus Andronicus are detrimental, the emphasis has one good effect, the vivification of Aaron. As even Dover Wilson, perhaps the most censorious of recent critics, admits, Aaron is "at once astonishingly real and spiritually unique . . . . Shakespeare's master-stroke in Titus."[20] Something about this character seems to have stirred Shakespeare's imagination as he worked on the play, and much of its finest verse is expressed through him. Professor Wilson (p. lxi) praises especially his rejection of Tamora's amorous advances:

> What signifies my deadly-standing eye,
> My silence and my cloudy melancholy,
> My fleece of wooly hair that now uncurls
> Even as an adder when she doth unroll
> To do some fatal execution?
> No, madam, these are no venereal signs. (II.iii.32-37)

[20] Dover Wilson, ed. Titus Andronicus, p. lxiv.

Another critic, E.M.W. Tillyard, singles out his cry of defiance when Chiron and Demetrius threaten his child, which begins

> Stay, murtherous villains! will you kill your brother?
> Now, by the burning tapers of the sky
> That shone so brightly when this boy was got,
> He dies upon my scimitar's sharp point
> That touches this my first-born son and heir. (IV.ii.88-92)[21]

Also testifying to Shakespeare's interest in Aaron is the size and importance of his role, which in the presumed source was that of a minor henchman subservient to both the Queen and her sons. In the chap-book Aaron instigates nothing except the mutilation of Lavinia, and he makes this contribution only when the brothers ask him what to do after the rape. His primacy as a generator of plots and as a villain, like his redeeming love for his son, were created by Shakespeare.

This growth in function and conception does not fully harmonize with the play's design: Aaron has become as heroic as Titus and the warmest character in the play, showing more feeling for his child than either Titus or Tamora do for theirs. As a result, the inadequacies of Titus as hero became more damaging than they otherwise would be. Yet Aaron is the play's chief source of interest, suggesting a talent for the creation of character which looks forward both to Iago and to Falstaff.

Underlying this analysis has been the assumption that the play was to be presented in the traditional tragic style which aims at a broad verisimilitude if not at literal realism. This assumption has been challenged by a number of critics on various grounds.

[21] Shakespeare's History Plays (London, 1948), pp. 138-139. Tillyard quotes IV.ii. 88-105.

What seems to me to be the most fruitful alternative is a style of presentation which is detached, rather artificial, and suggestive of symbolic meaning. Miss Bradbrook, an advocate of this style, calls the play a Senecan exercise: "The horrors are all classical and quite unfelt, so that the violent tragedy is contradicted by the decorous imagery . . . . The tone is cool and cultured in its effect."[22] Tillyard agrees, noting the play's academicism and comparing it to The Comedy of Errors;[23] and Maxwell, too, gives qualified support to this interpretation (pp. xl-xli).

In a later work Miss Bradbrook finds in the characters an emblematic quality. She defines the effect of the play as "that of a living picture rather than of life itself" and asserts: "Throughout the play the murders, rapes, mutilations and other atrocities remain mere moral heraldry, with no more sense of physical embodiment than if all the characters had been given such names. This is ensured by the formal quality of the writing, which is learned, rhetorical, full of conceits."[24]

That the formal quality of the writing and the decorous imagery could ensure that the atrocities depicted on stage would remain mere moral heraldry is a thesis that I do not find immediately convincing. When Aaron cuts off Titus's hand or when Lavinia catches in a basin held between the stumps of her arms the blood spurting from the throats of Chiron and Demetrius, acts presumably unaccompanied by dialogue, the scene is likely to seem only too realistic. Judgement on such an issue, however,

[22] Elizabethan Tragedy, pp. 98-99.

[23] Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 137.

[24] Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry (London, 1951), pp. 105-108.

cannot be based entirely on a reading of the text. The Stratford (Ont.) production of Two Gentlemen of Verona solved, to my satisfaction, at least, a similar though admittedly less drastic problem by adopting a style as cool and decorous as that suggested by Miss Bradbrook.

In Two Gentlemen of Verona the hero, Valentine, finds his best friend, Proteus, attempting to rape Silvia, Valentine's lover. Earlier Proteus had excused a series of treacherous acts towards his friend on the grounds that he, too, was violently in love with this girl. The rape has made clear the real nature of Proteus's feelings and he is revealed as a vicious and lecherous scoundrel. Yet after receiving a perfunctory apology, Valentine forgives him and even offers him Silvia as his bride. All this is likely to destroy the sympathy of the reader; but when treated on stage in such a style as that advocated by Miss Bradbrook for Titus Andronicus, these events were undisturbing and even seemly.

I have called this interpretation fruitful despite the difficulties involved since, if such a tone could be maintained, many advantages would accrue. Titus's insufficiency as hero would be at least partially overcome. As one tableau succeeded another the audience would recognise in the murder of Mutius the symbolic depiction of Titus's inflexible insistence on absolute obedience. His other offences would be transmuted in the same way. The Machiavellism of Aaron, Tamora, and her sons would also appear in a different light. Instead of seeming merely unrealistic, their weak motivation would assume symbolic significance and their relation to the medieval Vice and their function as Scourges of God would be emphasized.

Another level of meaning which would be brought closer to the surface is that described by Tillyard as "the high political theme, that of the wounds of civil war and their cure." Tillyard points out that the play is rich in political doctrine: "Titus Andronicus begins with a dispute about the succession: Saturninus, the elder son of the late king, claiming the throne by primogeniture; Bassianus, the younger, on the plea of merit, to be backed by a free election." This theme, he continues, recurs at the end of the play: "Rome has been in an uproar; Lucius Andronicus, Titus's son, having fled for safety to the Goths, returns with an army . . . and survives, the sole possible successor to the throne."[25]

If we compare Titus with Richard III, in which a Machiavel gains the throne, turns England into a police state, and is finally supplanted by a just ruler, it becomes apparent that the theme which Tillyard finds in parts of Titus runs throughout the whole. In the rule of Saturninus, who is merely a puppet in the hands of Tamora, we have Shakespeare's first depiction of a state under the rule of a Machiavel. The various horrifying acts of the Machiavellian characters—the mutilation of the honourable old gentlemen, the murder of the young man, the rape of the virgin—all these become symbolic of the violations and desecrations served upon the people and state by the Machiavellian ruler. The explicit references to public events at the beginning and end of the play, then, are connected symbolically by the private acts of the Machiavels. Seen in these terms, their Machiavellism is not exaggerated.

[25] Shakespeare's History Plays, pp. 139-140.

A minor example of Shakespeare's symbolic use of private events in Titus can be found in the curious parallel, noted by Tillyard,[26] with I Henry VI. Titus, a disinterested and utterly brave warrior, pays homage to Saturninus, the newly created emperor, and lays his conquests at his feet; this scene is followed by the private brawl in which Bassianus seizes Lavinia and Mutius is slain. In I Henry VI Talbot, equally disinterested and brave, pays homage to the newly crowned Henry VI, laying his conquests before him just as Titus does; and this scene is followed by a brawl over political issues between the partisans of York and Lancaster. The same pattern can be seen in the fact that both warrior heroes are opposed by female foreigners: Tamora, whose Machiavellism is expressed, despite her public position, entirely on the personal level, and Joan, whose Machiavellian tendencies show themselves mainly in military and political stratagems.

Another interpretation of the tone and intention of the play has been offered. Starting with the perception which led Miss Bradbrook down a very different path, "the lack of feeling with which the play is written," and citing "a series of anticlimaxes such as few poets have ever perpetrated," Mark Van Doren proposes that "as a desperate resort we might dally with the proposition that 'Titus Andronicus' was a conscious parody of the tragedy of blood considered as a current form."[27]

This suggestion has been elaborated by Dover Wilson, who would limit Shakespeare's contribution to the play to a revision of parts of an

[26] Shakespeare's History Plays, pp. 140-141.

[27] Shakespeare (New York, 1939), pp. 38-43.

original script by George Peele.[28] The young dramatist, he theorizes (pp. 1-lxv), drawn to the job because of the big money involved, was contemptuous of "this particularly poor specimen of the old school" and wrote with tongue in cheek. Though he did not expect the groundlings and "most of those in the more expensive parts of the theatre" to recognize it, Shakespeare rewrote Peele's monotonous rant as burlesque and melodramatic travesty. He did, however, fall in love with his characters and wrote a number of fine scenes—that in which Lavinia pleads with her ravishers (II.iii.118 ff), the "fly" scene (III.ii), that in which Tamora plays Revenge (V.ii), and many of the scenes dominated by Aaron.

Although these speculations concerning Shakespeare's attitude toward the play seem to be highly improbable, there is, of course, no doubt that the play could be presented as burlesque. And although Prof. Wilson does not cite any of the Machiavels' lines in his argument, it is evident that these characters are especially suitable to such a presentation. Take, for example, Demetrius's boast,

> I would we had a thousand Roman dames
> At such a bay, by turn to serve our lust

and Chiron's rejoinder, "A charitable wish and full of love" (IV.ii.41-43); or Aaron's opening lines:

> Now climbeth Tamora Olympus' top,
> Safe out of fortune's shot, and sits aloft,
> Secure of thunder's crack or lightning flash,
> Advanc'd above pale envy's threat'ning reach.
> As when the golden sun salutes the morn,
> And, having gilt the ocean with his beams,
> Gallops the zodiac in his glistering coach,
> And overlooks the highest-peering hills;
> So Tamora. (II.i.1-9)

[28] Concerning the possibility of Peele's responsibility for the basic design of the play, cf. J. C. Maxwell, pp. xxx-xxxiv.

Burlesque here is only too close to the surface, however the play is presented. All Machiavels by their very nature must be drawn close to the borderline between tragedy and melodrama, but the melodramatic tone and awkwardness of Titus Andronicus as a whole push Aaron and the others especially close to the border.

To interpret the play as pure parody or burlesque would mean ascribing different values and functions to the Machiavellian elements than those I have suggested. As the greatest buffoons in the play, however, their importance would certainly be maintained.

b

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, displays in Richard III most of the characteristics of the Machiavellian stereotype. Indeed, almost all are displayed in the first scene. Egoism, treachery, and ambition, qualities which underlie his behaviour throughout the play, are revealed in the opening soliloquy, when he informs us of his plan to set his brothers "in deadly hate the one against the other" (I.i.35). Also revealed in this speech are his unsentimentality, a quality which later allows him to have his mother publicly branded an adulteress, and his deviousness, seen later in his boasting of "deep intent" (I.i.149), in his machinations concerning the burial of King Henry, and in his resolve to marry Lady Anne but "not keep her long" (I.ii.230). Later in the scene his boast that he will murder his brother George (I.i.117-120; 149-150) reveals his cruelty and murderousness, qualities which are confirmed when he murders his brother, the two princes, and his wife and executes Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, Hastings, and Buckingham, in all but the last case without the slightest moral or legal justification. Finally, his

treatment of his brother in this scene reveals his hypocrisy, perhaps the outstanding characteristic of his behaviour during his rise to power.

He also displays most of the stock behaviour patterns associated with the stereotype. He jokes about his own wickedness (I.iii.318-319, II.ii.109-111), addresses the audience directly in asides and soliloquies, almost always in a humorous tone (I.i.1-41, 145-162, ii.228-264, iii.318-319, 324-339, II.ii.109-111, etc.), utters threats in asides and soliloquies (I.i.28 ff, 117-120, 149-150, III.i.79, 94, v.106-109), and employs henchmen. Besides Buckingham, with whom he exchanges endearments (II.ii.151-154), there are Catesby, Ratcliffe, Lovel, Tyrrel and the two murderers of Clarence. With Buckingham and Catesby he participates in hypocritical hoaxes, and, although not for the stock reasons, he murders Buckingham.

In one important respect, however, Richard does not conform to the stereotype: he is no atheist, not even in the sense of one who denies the validity of the traditional concepts of order and morality.[29] He acts against God and nature, but he is aware of the wickedness of his acts. In the opening soliloquy he declares that he is determined to prove a villain, describes himself as "subtle, false, and treacherous" in contrast to Edward, who is "true and just," and commands his thoughts to dive down to his soul. After having wooed Lady Anne, he exults,

> Having God, her conscience, and these bars against me,
> And I no friends to back my suit withal
> But the plain devil and dissembling looks—
> And yet, to win her; (I.ii.235-238)

[29] Edward Dowden takes the opposite view. Cf. Shakespere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art, new ed. (New York, 1918), p. 168.

and in a soliloquy given before sending his agents to murder Clarence he states,

> I do the wrong, and first begin to brawl:
> The secret mischiefs that I set abroach
> I lay unto the grievous charge of others. . . .
> Now they believe it, and withal whet me
> To be reveng'd on Rivers, Vaughan, Grey:
> But then I sigh, and, with a piece of scripture,
> Tell them that God bids us do good for evil;
> And thus I clothe my naked villainy
> With odd old ends stolen forth of Holy Writ,
> And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.
> (I.iii.324-338)

The religious imagery of the latter part of this quotation is characteristic both of Richard's speech and of the play as a whole. The abundance of religious imagery in the play—there are more references to God than in any other play in the canon—reflects the emphasis given to moral values. Richard's dialogue is typical: words like "God", "soul", "blessings", "angels", "divine", "Heaven", "Holy Paul", "Jesu" frequently remind us of the conventional religious faith against which Richard is acting out his part. He uses them hypocritically, of course, but there is little indication that he denies the validity of these concepts. Only his reference to "odd old ends" of Holy Writ, quoted above, contains any suggestion of religious cynicism.

Richard judges others, as well as himself, by conventional moral standards. He speaks approvingly in soliloquy of the virtue of Prince Edward,

> A sweeter and lovelier gentleman,
> Fram'd in the prodigality of nature,
> Young, valiant, wise, and, no doubt, right royal,
> The spacious world cannot again afford; (I.ii.243-246)

and when Queen Elizabeth yields to his persuasions and agrees to help him in his courtship of her daughter, he contemptuously dismisses her

as a "relenting fool, and shallow-changing woman" (IV.iv.434). Since Elizabeth has nothing to lose materially and is justified in thinking that in this new course of action lies at least the possibility of improving her position, she may be considered a fool only if it is recognized that she has paid morally for her dubious advantage. That Richard couples the moral condemnation, "shallow-changing", with "relenting fool" indicates that he sees her action in this light.

He feels, it must be admitted, a strong sense of comradeship for his evil accomplice, Buckingham, but this is founded on his awareness of their similarity of spirit; his warmth of feeling does not imply a denial of the wrongness of their position. Buckingham, too, Richard seems to feel, is in so far in blood that sin will pluck on sin. It is the violation of this feeling of kinship when Buckingham balks at the murder of the princes which causes Richard to reject him so angrily.

Only two attacks on the conventional code, one made by Buckingham, one by Richard, are to be found in the play.

> You are too senseless-obstinate, my lord,
> Too ceremonious and traditional.
> Weigh it but with the grossness of this age,
> You break not sanctuary in seizing him, (III.i.44-47)

Buckingham says to Cardinal Bouchier, concerning the Duke of York's right to sanctuary. This argument, however, is clearly intended to intimidate the Cardinal and to provide the first of a number of pretexts which will allow him to give way with a minimal loss of face; it is not presented as a disinterested statement of philosophy and does not necessarily represent Buckingham's true feelings.

Richard's attack, on the other hand, cannot be explained on the grounds of expediency. His exhortation of his men at Bosworth Field,

> Conscience is but 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.iii.310-312)

may be intended to whip up the enthusiasm of his men, but it surely will not have this effect. It seems probable that the lines should be interpreted as being spoken primarily for his own benefit, as a final attempt to shake the feelings of guilt which the visit of the ghosts has brought to the surface. Richard is too shrewd to make such a statement when fully self-possessed. His preoccupation with himself has led him, for the first time, to misjudge the pawns whom he has formerly maneuvered so deftly. The ineptness of what he says is a measure of his own internal conflict.

Two other characters only, Buckingham and Catesby, exhibit Machiavellian characteristics. Catesby's character is not developed, but Buckingham attains some stature as a villain. His Machiavellism first appears in the hypocrisy of his oath sworn before the dying King Edward, and after Edward's death he participates fully in Richard's plots. It is he who, after suggesting that the Prince of Wales be brought from Ludlow to London "with some little train," privately admonishes Richard, "For God's sake, let not us two stay home," and reminds him of the plot

> we late talk'd of,
> To part the queen's proud kindred from the prince.
> (II.ii.149-150)

Richard's response,

> My other self, my counsel's consistory,
> My oracle, my prophet! —My dear cousin,
> I, as a child, will go by thy direction,

raises his lieutenant's rank as a Machiavel almost to the level of his own.

Later Buckingham plays a leading role in bullying the Lord Cardinal into allowing the abduction of young York from sanctuary. He participates in the murder of Hastings, having gloated over his fate in a typically Machiavellian aside (III.ii.122), and is the chief actor in Richard's hoax devised to gain the consent of the citizens of London to his succession. When Richard proposes to murder the Princes, however, the depth of Buckingham's villainy is sounded. Immediately he loses his role as a predator and, with it, his Machiavellian colouring. We see no more of him before he is captured and led repentant to the block.

Richard of Gloucester, the only Machiavel in the plays of Shakespeare to act as protagonist, dominates his play as do few other protagonists in the canon. In his character and career the play's interest lies almost exclusively.

The subject and tone is established in the opening soliloquy, which blocks out the outlines of his Machiavellism and suggests its cause. In contrast to Tamora and her sons, he is not motivated by revenge or hatred for a particular antagonist; he does not even rationalize his emotions in these terms. He uses the antagonism between his party and the Queen's when it suits his purpose, but when the maneuvering is over he treats the members of both groups with impartial cruelty.

Ambition is the superficial motive for his behaviour, but we are led to see the sources of its unusual strength: his sense of inferiority and his resentment that he has been

> Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,
> Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
> Into this breathing world, scarce half made up. (I.i.19-21)

From this, it is implied, grew his need to dominate and control, to assert through acts of outrageous villainy his superiority to and contempt for others. Richard is a revenge hero of a special sort, one whose hatred is generalized and whose revenge is directed at all mankind. He belongs to an out-group of the deformed, and in the world of the play he shares it with no one. Aaron, who is also isolated, has, at least, his black child; Richard has not even the reasonable expectation that a child born to him would share the characteristics which isolate him. Later in the play he will feel that he has found in Buckingham one whose deformity of soul has isolated him, too, from the society of the normal, but, when put to the test, his companion chooses to return to the others.

Aaron's basically similar psychological condition is implied in his attitude towards his son, but it is never expressed explicitly in the play. In Richard III Richard is himself aware of the causes of his behaviour, and his expression of them is an important factor in creating the tone of the first phase of the play and in controlling the audience's reaction towards him.

During this phase of the play, Richard's rise to power, the tone is relatively light and Richard is frequently amusing.[30] We are asked to identify ourselves to a degree with him as he plots against and then overcomes the various obstacles in his path. We can do this—and the tone can be maintained—only because his analysis has given us an understanding which allows us to feel some sympathy for him.

[30] Dover Wilson, in the New Shakespeare edition of Richard III (Cambridge, 1954), p. xv, remarks that the charm and gaiety given Richard are Shakespeare's greatest variations from the immediate sources of the play, the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed.

Another factor contributing to the tone of the play and our attitude towards the protagonist is the special relationship between actor and audience created through Richard's soliloquies. The practice of speaking directly to the audience in asides and soliloquies has been listed above among the characteristics of the Machiavellian stereotype, and instances of its use by Aaron have been noted. In this play, however, the practice has special significance. Aaron's asides and soliloquies, although they may be addressed directly to the audience, do not demand this kind of treatment. Little would be lost if Aaron's lines were delivered with no special consciousness of the audience; but such a delivery of Richard's lines would seriously weaken the play. His opening soliloquy, for example, would seem hopelessly awkward and unconvincing if it were not delivered so that the audience was made aware that the actor was conscious of its existence and was speaking to it. The bravado of lines like

> And if Kind Edward be as true and just,
> As I am subtle, false, and treacherous (I.i.36-37)

requires such a relationship. A queasiness of conscience can be sensed which an admission of guilt may somehow ease. Perhaps, having called himself a villain, it is easier for him to act like one. The admission establishes a model which can be followed with a degree of passivity, without the need to face the moral crisis presented by each act of evil. The fact that the audience addressed is real rather than imaginary makes the admission more difficult and therefore increases its effectiveness as a conscience-muffling mechanism.

The two other soliloquies in this scene are also addressed directly to the audience. When Richard says, to us as well as to the retreating figure of his brother Clarence,

> I do love thee so,
> That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven,
> If heaven will take the present at our hands,
> (I.i.118-120)

we are being asked to share in his little joke. If, by our laughter or even our smiles, we accept the invitation, we become, to a degree, accomplices in his plots and are led to identify ourselves more closely with him. The second soliloquy seems to make the same demands:

> I'll in, to urge his hatred more to Clarence,
> With lies well steel'd with weighty arguments;
> And if I fail not in my deep intent,
> Clarence hath not another day to live;
> Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy,
> And leave the world for me to bustle in!
> (I.i.147-152)

Once this relationship between actor and audience has been established through the soliloquies, which cover 117 lines in the first three scenes, all subsequent dialogue acquires a new dimension. When Richard exclaims rhetorically,

> Because I cannot flatter and look fair,
> Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog,
> Duck with French nods and apish courtesy,
> I must be held a rancorous enemy.
> Cannot a plain man live and think no harm,
> But thus his simple truth must be abus'd
> With silken, sly, insinuating jacks? (I.iii.47-53)

he is attempting to throw dust in the eyes of his prospective victims and to forestall any accusations which they might make against him to the King, but he is also consciously performing before the audience. This awareness of the audience emphasizes the irony of his protestations and their audacity and jauntiness. We are forced to pay tribute to the wit that can simultaneously hoodwink his dupes and amuse us.

When he disclaims pretensions to the crown, "I had rather be a pedlar" (I.iii.149), or forgives himself for bringing about the imprisonment of Clarence, "God pardon them that are the cause thereof" (I.iii.315),

the same consciousness emphasizes the irony of the lines. Here, as in the soliloquies, his roguish vivacity lightens the play's tone to a greater degree than it otherwise would because the special intimacy between Richard and the audience leads the latter to feel itself to be more deeply involved in his statements.

Even Clarence's murder, although the audience can have no sympathy with it, does not destroy this relationship, for Richard is still the underdog. His studied hypocrisy in the next scene still demands our amusement and complicity:

> I do not know that Englishman alive,
> With whom my soul is any jot at odds,
> More than the infant that is born to-night:
> I thank my God for my humility. (II.i.69-72)

With the death of Edward and Richard's assumption of power as Lord Protector, however, all sympathy for him dies. The risks which his plans have entailed and his lack of power as a younger brother to the king, together with his deformity and his feeling of isolation, have made him during the first part of the play a partially sympathetic figure and have allowed the audience to identify itself with him. Now that his ends can be accomplished by force instead of by guile—he has Rivers and Grey imprisoned and executed without any concern for appearances—he becomes wholly repugnant; and the play enters its second phase, the consolidation of power won. His advance towards the throne continues, but the play's tone has changed. We are asked now to view with increasing horror the progress of a monster.

In such an atmosphere Richard's ironic confidences have little place and he is given few soliloquies or asides. Excluding the final soliloquy, which is clearly introspective and shows no consciousness of the audience, there are only twenty-four lines of this kind in the

latter portion of the play, and the tone of most of these has changed. Only once (IV.iii.36-43) is the old humorousness revived and the invitation to share the flavour of his hypocrisy again extended. More typical is the humourless menace of the first soliloquy in this part of the play:

> Now will I go to take some privy order
> To draw the brats of Clarence out of sight,
> And to give order, that no manner person
> Have any time recourse unto the princes.
> (III.v.106-109)

This new tone is developed and maintained partly by depicting or referring to crimes like the murders of Hastings and the princes and partly, and most strikingly, by depicting the subverting of ordinary citizens of normal moral strength and virtue under the extraordinary pressures of the tyranny.[31] A somewhat similar subversion is depicted in the first phase of the play when Richard woos Lady Anne beside the coffin of her father-in-law. He seems to hypnotize his victim with a mixture of conventional flattery and frankly sexual overtures. The overtures stir her and the flattery soothes her conscience; she is attracted and repelled—and his repulsiveness masochistically increases his attractiveness. His achievement, a masterpiece of Machiavellian villainy, is effected by guile, not by force, and it retains an element of gaiety which harmonizes with the tone of that phase of the play.

In contrast, the will of the Lord Cardinal crumbles under the threat of the physical force which lies behind Buckingham's grim joke,

> Oft have I heard of sanctuary men,
> But sanctuary children ne'er till now. (III.i.55-56)

[31] Dover Wilson notes, pp. xx-xxiii, that in his treatment of the citizens Shakespeare again varies from Holinshed.

The Cardinal is frightened, not fooled, into compliance. The power of the tyranny to destroy integrity is also depicted when Derby, the Bishop of Ely, the other councillors, and, later, the Lord Mayor are forced to swallow the palpably false accusations against Hastings. The first group is allowed to accept them silently, but the Lord Mayor is forced to play an active role in this sinister drama. Not until he has admitted, "And your good graces both have well proceeded" (III.v.48), and promised to

> acquaint our duteous citizens
> With all your just proceedings in this case,
> (III.v.65-66)

is he allowed to scuttle from the stage.

The same chilling effect is achieved when Buckingham shepherds the reluctant but docile city council through its part in another equally sinister and more elaborate drama in which Richard is requested to assume the throne. Here again, though he can never manage more than a single line at a time, the mayor plays the part required of him (III. vii.81, 95, 201, 237). The Scrivener's words,

> Who is so gross,
> That cannot see this palpable device?
> Yet who so bold, but says he sees it not?
> (III.vi.10-12)

spoken in reference to the execution of Hastings, applies equally well to all these incidents. In them lies the real horror of the rule of the Machiavel. It is only after the power which made them possible has begun to erode that we are allowed to see even glimpses of humanity in Richard; and it is because their shadow is still over us that we receive the death of Richard and the accession of the new regime with such intense relief.

Shakespeare's primary intention in this play has been simply to dramatize Richard's story, thus completing the sequence of plays begun

with I Henry VI and depicting the conclusion of the grand design found by the chroniclers in the history of the houses of York and Lancaster. Richard's Machiavellism, both that carried over from the sources and that little added by Shakespeare, is clearly intended to entertain the audience by allowing it, to use Charles Lamb's phrase, "to contemplate a bloody and vicious character with delight" as well as with horror.[32] This use of the stereotype is quite different from those found in Titus Andronicus and in the later plays, Othello and King Lear.

c

Iago, in Othello, conforms more closely than Richard III to the more fundamental aspects of the Machiavellian stereotype. He is fully as murderous as Richard, for he attempts the murder of every other major character in the play—at the risk of seeming facetious one might say every major character, since his main course of action is certainly suicidal. He is an atheist; although no statement is made about his formal religious beliefs, he denies, both in action and speech, the validity of the traditional concepts of order and morality. In justifying the Roderigo his employment under Othello he derides the honest and loyal servant of the traditional ideal and commends those who,

> trimm'd in forms, and visages of duty,
> Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves.
> (I.i.50-51)

[32] Quoted by J. Dover Wilson, ed., Richard III (Cambridge, 1954), p. xxxviii.

For him, as it has not been for Richard and more clearly than it has been for Aaron, the moral scale has been inverted: what is considered by society to be wrong is really right; what is considered to be right is merely foolish. He describes Othello as being "of a constant, noble, loving nature" (II.i.284), but he would never associate wisdom with such "virtues", as Richard does in his characterization of Prince Edward. Indeed, it is because Othello has these qualities that Iago feels confident of being able to make him "egregiously an ass." He has made much the same point earlier, in soliloquy:

> The Moor a free and open nature too,
> That thinks men honest that but seems to be so:
> And will as tenderly be led by the nose...
> As asses are. (I.iii.397-400)[33]

A. C. Bradley has argued that Iago "certainly cannot be taken to exemplify the popular Elizabethan idea of a disciple of Machiavelli" since "there is no sign that he is in theory an atheist or even an unbeliever in the received religion."[34] He later admits, however, that Iago has "a definite creed": "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" (p. 219). This is to make a distinction which the audience is unlikely to make;[35] in the absence of contrary evidence such a creed will be taken to imply unbelief in the received religion. Furthermore

[33] The more familiar Folio reading makes the point more clearly.

[34] Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, 2nd ed. (London, 1905), pp. 210-211.

[35] The most recent critic to argue that to the Elizabethan audience Iago would seem an atheist is Laurence Lerner, "The Machiavel and the Moor," EIC, IX (1959), 342-343.

Iago does make a statement which suggests atheism: in the course of his panegyric concerning Machiavellian servants, he describes them as being fellows of "some soul" and continues, "And such a one do I profess myself" (I.i.55). The religious associations of "profess", supported by the contiguous word, "soul", make the line seem almost a formal declaration of faith.

Iago displays also most of the other character traits associated with the stereotype. His egoism is close to absolute; his every act is self-centred, and in his coldness he gives the impression of never having experienced a feeling of kinship or sympathy for another being. It is surely significatn that Shakespeare, having invented a son for Aaron in Titus Andronicus, should in Othello expunge the daughter given Iago in the source tale, the seventh story of the third decade of the Hecatommithi by Giraldi Cinthio.[36] It is equally significant that, although he has many dupes, he has no confidant like Richard's Buckingham. Although he is not set apart by a physical difference, he is nevertheless more completely isolated than Aaron or Richard—or, indeed, any other character in the canon.

He is also treacherous and cruel, qualities so obvious as to require no documentation. A trait more difficult to evaluate is his ambition. It does not have the force or magnitude of Richard's, for it is qualified by other competing motives and it is directed, explicitly at least, no higher than Othello's lieutenancy. Yet Iago is the kind of

[36] The New Arden editor states unequivocally that this tale is the main source (p. xv). On this point, however, general agreement has not been achieved.

man who concentrates on the step immediately before him; and his resentment at being denied the lieutenancy and his ambition to win it are likely to be accepted by the audience as the most important of the reasons he gives for his hatred of Othello. It has been objected that we cannot tell whether his complaint to Roderigo about Cassio's appointment over him is genuine or whether it is designed merely to satisfy his dupe[37] and that this motive cannot explain this main attack on Othello (which begins in III.iii), since he has already been effectively promoted lieutenant.[38] But his statement to Roderigo is given authority by its position at the beginning of the play (I.i.8-33), where it will be accepted by an audience that has no reason to doubt nor means to judge its veracity; and the second objection seems to be contradicted by Emilia's statement to Cassio that Othello

> protests he loves you,
> And needs no other suitor but his likings
> To take the safest occasion by the front,
> To bring you in again. (III.i.48-51)

Nothing happens in the intervening eleven lines which might change Othello's attitude, so that when the third scene begins Iago's place is still far from secure. His ambition, then, remains a viable motive up to and throughout his main attack, which extends into the last scene.

He is avaricious to a degree: he swindles Roderigo, but in doing so gives the impression that it is the sport itself, rather than the prospect of acquiring money, which gives him the more pleasure.

[37] Lerner, 341-342. See also Bradley, pp. 211-213.

[38] Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare (Princeton, 1947), II, 23-24.

His unsentimentality can best be seen in his attitude to women, especially to Desdemona, towards whom most of the other characters—and the audience—have attitudes which are romantic if not sentimental. When Roderigo extravagantly complains of losing her, he scoffs, "Ere I would say I would drown myself, for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon" (I.iii.314-316); and to the same dupe's expostulation that she is "full of most blest condition," he answers, "Blest fig's end! the wine she drinks is made of grapes" (II.i.247-250).

Perhaps the most fully developed of his Machiavellian traits is his hypocrisy. To each character he presents a different face. We see him first with Roderigo, eloquent, cynical, and boasting of his Machiavellism:

> I follow him to serve my turn upon him . . . .
> I am not what I am. (I.i.42-65)

Supplemented by a strong obscene streak, this is the character which he consistently presents to his dupe. It is probably close to the "real" Iago, for the face that he presents to the audience in soliloquy is essentially the same.

Next, in Scene Two, he becomes for Othello the bluff soldier, direct and taciturn. His

> Nay, but he prated,
> And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms
> Against your honour,
> That with the little Godliness I have,
> I did full hard forbear him (I.ii.6-10)

reminds one of Kent in King Lear. Later, after the brawl between Cassio and Montano he assumes other admirable traits, an unwillingness to speak ill of an associate and an equally strong unwillingness to lie. Under Othello's prompting he can simulate the moralist who must speak out.

In the second scene we also see briefly, in the four-line interval during which Othello is off-stage, the face he presents to Cassio:

> Faith, he to-night hath boarded a land carrack:
> If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever,
> (I.ii.50-51)

he says in a worldly manner which is just crude enough to make Cassio feel uncomfortable. It is a face which borrows something from that shown Roderigo and something from that shown Othello, one which is nicely calculated to make Cassio amenable to his manipulation. After Desdemona and Othello retire to bed, he strikes the same note in order to soften up Cassio before offering him a drink: "Our general cast us thus early for the love of his Desdemona, who let us not therefore blame: he hath not yet made wanton the night with her; and she is sport for Jove." When Cassio admits rather primly, "She is a most exquisite lady," he answers roguishly, "And I'll warrant her full of game." Each reluctant admission meets a fresh innuendo:

Cassio. Indeed she is a most fresh and delicate creature.
Iago. What an eye she has! methinks it sounds a parley of provocation.
Cassio. An inviting eye, and yet methinks right modest.
Iago. And when she speaks, 'tis an alarm to love.
Cassio. It is indeed perfection.
Iago. Well, happiness to their sheets! Come, lieutenant,
I have a stoup of wine (II.iii.14-27)[39]

He has said nothing really obscene, nothing that would allow Cassio to relieve his feelings through anger or self-righteous scorn, but it has been enough to make him feel prim and to ensure that he will be unable to refuse a drink "with the boys."

[39] In line 26 I have followed F rather than Ridley's combination of F and Q.

To Desdemona Iago is the polished and witty courtier, one who conceals a fundamentally sound nature under a cynical exterior. He is a person to be relied upon: when worried about Othello's fate at sea she turns to him for distraction and, later, when more deeply disturbed, for reassurance and advice.

He seems less attractive to his wife. His obscene taunts, when alone (III.iii.305-306) and when in the company of others reveal a contempt as strong as that which he feels for Roderigo:

> Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
> As of her tongue she has bestow'd on me,
> You'ld have enough. (II.i.100-102)

Emilia's theft of Desdemona's handkerchief seems, in this context, the act of one willing to do almost anything to buy respite from hostility.

The only other character with whom he has extensive dealings is Montano. To him he is sententious and rather formal, like Montano himself:

> You see this fellow that is gone before,
> He is a soldier fit to stand by Caesar,
> And give direction: and do but see his vice,
> 'Tis to his virtue a just equinox,
> The one as long as th' other; 'tis pity of him,
> I fear the trust Othello put him in,
> On some odd time of his infirmity,
> Will shake this island. (II.iii.114-121)

Iago's hypocrisy is also emphasized by the way in which he uses first one side, then the other, of an argument, as it suits his purpose. For example, when, in the course of his temptation of Othello, he declaims,

> Good name in man and woman's dear, my lord;
> Is the immediate jewel of our souls:
> Who steals my purse, steals trash, (III.iii.159-161)

one is reminded of his repeated admonition to Roderigo, "Put money

in thy purse" (I.iii.340, 344, etc.), and his statement to Cassio, "Reputation is an idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit, and lost without deserving. You have lost no reputation at all, unless you repute yourself such a loser" (II.iii.260-263). More subtle is his ironic complaint to Othello,

> O monstrous world, take note, take note, O world,
> To be direct and honest, is not safe. (III.iii.383-384)

Here, pleased that he can reveal his true feelings while giving Othello exactly the opposite impression, he echoes his earlier remarks to Roderigo on the subject:

> You shall mark
> Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,
> That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
> Wears out his time much like his master's ass,
> For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd.
> (I.i.44-48)

Iago also dismisses Othello's suspension of Cassio as "policy" (II.iii.266) and boasts of his villainy, both to Roderigo and to the audience. The majority of his soliloquies and asides, particularly I.iii.381-402, II.i.281-307, II.iii.327-353, II.iii.372-378, and IV.i.93-103, seem to require for their most effective presentation direct address to the audience, so that a relationship with the audience rather like that established in Richard III between Richard and the audience is developed. Iago is not the protagonist, as Richard is, and it is not essential that we identify ourselves with him. His soliloquies, which are without the gaiety, if not without the zest, of Richard's, do not invite us to take his part.[40] Nevertheless, although they are not as

[40] We may temporarily take his part in some of the earlier scenes, particularly in the first scene and that in which he gulls Cassio, but it seems perverse to maintain, as Lerner does, that in the play as a whole "we are more willing to identify ourselves with Iago than with anyone else" (346).

strong as those in Richard III, there are established special lines of communication between Iago and the audience which give an extra dimension to what he says to the other characters. When he answers Cassio's extravagant lament over his lost reputation with "As I am an honest man, I thought you had receiv'd some bodily wound, there is more offence in that than in reputation" (II.iii.258-260), or when he complains, "O monstrous world, take note, take note, O world," the audience is conscious that he is aware of them and expects them to appreciate the irony of his remarks.

His jokes to the audience are usually delivered in this way, not in soliloquy or aside as Richard's so often are, though he once in soliloquy comments humorously on Cassio's inability to hold his liquor:

> If I can fasten but one cup upon him,
> With that which he hath drunk to-night already,
> He'll be as full of quarrel and offence
> As my young mistress' dog. (II.iii.44-47)

He also utters threats in asides and soliloquies (II.i.167-177, 199-201, iii.341-353, III.iii.326-329), and he concludes one review of his plans with a maxim tinged with Machiavellism: "Dull not device by coldness and delay" (II.iii.378). Though he does not literally poison Othello, he himself describes the suspicions he has planted in him as poison (III.iii.330-331). He employs dupes, with whom he perpetrates hypocritical hoaxes, and whom he attempts, often successfully, to murder. These dupes, who fill the role of henchmen, are, however, never fully aware of the implications of the acts into which he has maneuvered them. None has the stature of a Buckingham or a Tamora who, clearly committed to evil, would savour with him their shared villainy.

The dupe who most nearly approaches the level of a full-fledged henchman is, of course, Roderigo, who participates deliberately in a number of Iago's plots. He never fully understands, however, the total design of which his particular acts are a part. Emilia, too, in stealing Desdemona's handkerchief and later lying about it, acts deliberately as a henchman,[41] but she is even less aware of the significance of her acts. Cassio, Bianca, Desdemona, and Othello also acts as his dupes, but none is aware that he is carrying out Iago's plans.

The inclusion of Bianca among those who function like henchmen for Iago is perhaps more difficult to substantiate than that of the others. By returning Desdemona's handkerchief to Cassio while Othello looks on, she confirms Iago's story about Desdemona's giving it to Cassio, so that Iago is spared the awkward task of proving his assertion without giving Othello the opportunity to speak to his supposed betrayer; and she persuades Cassio to have supper with her on the night of the murder attempt, thereby making him, when he leaves late in the evening, an easy target for Roderigo and Iago. Yet apparently she has done these things without any direction from Iago.

Cassio's role as henchman—he obligingly fulfills the part devised for him by Iago in the plot against himself and throws himself enthusiastically into his role in the plot against Othello—is emphasized by the similarity in the way in which Iago's manipulation of him and of

[41] The change from Cinthio's version of the story is again significant. In the prose tale Iago himself steals the handkerchief; Shakespeare emphasizes the ability of his character to manipulate others so that they do his work for him. He is not portrayed as being himself an effective man of action. See Harley Granville-Barker, II, 5-6.

Roderigo is presented. Act One ends in a scene in which Iago takes up the despondent Roderigo, who has threatened to incontinently drown himself (I.iii.305), and cajoles that silly gentleman back into good spirits and hope of achieving his goal, the seduction of Desdemona. Iago is so successful that he is able to lead his dupe into greater folly: "I'll sell all my land" (I.iii.380),[42] Roderigo promises as he leaves. This is followed by a soliloquy in which Iago derides his dupe and exults in his villainy:

> Thus do I ever make my fool my purse:
> For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane,
> If I would time expend with such a snipe,
> But for my sport and profit. (I.iii.381-384)

The pattern, this time involving Iago and Cassio, is repeated at the close of Act Two: Cassio, though he does not threaten suicide, expresses his despair almost as extravagantly, insisting that he has lost the immortal part of himself (II.iii.255). Iago cajoles him with equal success, so that before Cassio leaves he promises, "Betimes in the morning will I beseech the virtuous Desdemona, to undertake for me" (II.iii.320-322), a pledge less foolish than Roderigo's, but just as disastrous. This scene, too, is followed by an exulting soliloquy by Iago:

> 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.iii.327-330)

The only difference in this pattern, and it is an insignificant one, is that Iago's second soliloquy is interrupted by a brief interchange with Roderigo.

[42] Another Folio reading omitted by Ridley.

Even Desdemona and Othello are led to assume roles analogous to that of the henchman. Desdemona's role is closely associated with Cassio's. By her persistent intercessions on his behalf and by her refusal to discuss the handkerchief which Othello believes she has given to him, she unknowingly weaves an essential part of the net which will enmesh them all. Othello's role as an involuntary henchman is just as important. He furthers the assassination or attempted assassination of Iago's three main enemies, Cassio, Desdemona, and himself: in the first case he encourages and gives a degree of legality to his master's act; in the other two he carries out the murders himself.

The foregoing analysis has dealt with Iago as a human being. He is, of course, primarily this, but as the play unfolds he becomes for the audience something more, a symbol of evil. This is partly the result of uncertainty about his motivation. His resentment at Cassio's appointment as lieutenant remains a viable motive throughout the play, but it can hardly explain the extremity of his actions. The other rational reason he advances, that Othello and Cassio have cuckolded him, is made suspect from the first by his boast to the audience,

> I know not if't be true...
> Yet I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
> Will do, as if for surety. (I.iii.386-388)

Iago is boasting to the audience here and he is enjoying himself. He is a suspicious man, but not a passionately jealous one; his suspicions of Emilia are not mentioned again. One is forced to fall back on Coleridge's suggestion that his explanations are mere motive hunting. His casual remark concerning Cassio, however,

> He has a daily beauty in his life,
> That makes me ugly, (V.i.19-20)

seems to bring us closer to the truth. As Granville-Barker points out, this motive applies equally well to his hatred of Othello (II, 8). Indeed, in comparison to the blackness of Iago's soul, all others must seem bright.

This perception would suggest that Iago harboured a generalized malignity of the sort which we have found in Richard III, an idea which directly contradicts Bradley's conception of his character. Although Bradley admits that Iago feels a compulsion to prove himself superior to others which he satisfies my manipulating them like puppets and causing them to contort themselves in agony at the motion of his finger (p. 229), he denies that Iago possesses "a general positive ill-will" since "when Iago has no dislike or hostility to a person he does not show pleasure in the suffering of that person: he shows at most the absence of pain" (p. 220). Yet Iago is savagely vindictive in his treatment of all but the most minor characters in the play. The stabbing of his wife could perhaps be dismissed as the unthinking act of an angry man, but the same cannot be maintained of his attempt to incriminate Bianca in Cassio's attempted murder. He is in complete control of both the situation and his emotions when he announces,

> Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash
> To bear a part in this. (V.i.85-86)

It is an act of calculated, gratuitous cruelty.

In support of his thesis Bradley points to Desdemona, whose distress after her humiliation by Othello in the "brothel" scene, he maintains, Iago shows not the least sign of enjoying.[43] Iago's means

[43] P. 220. Bradley hesitantly suggests that Iago's words indicate that he feels a certain discomfort or even a faint touch of shame or remorse. This interpretation has not been widely accepted.

of expressing his pleasure, however, are limited at this time, for he is obliged to pretend to be sympathetic. While an aside or a soliloquy could have been provided, this would have given an emphasis to Iago which Shakespeare apparently wished to avoid at this point in the play. In the early scenes he has invariably had something to say when his dupes, properly gulled, have departed, leaving him alone on the stage. After the second act, however, his asides and soliloquies have been progressively reduced in number. This change becomes especially noticeable at the end of this scene when, after Desdemona and Emilia have left the stage, Iago converses with Roderigo. They have had such conversations four times before, and each time Iago has dismissed his dupe and addressed the audience in soliloquy. Here he and Roderigo leave the stage together.

We are not justified, therefore, in assuming that Iago was not intended to feel pleasure over Desdemona's distress simply because it is not expressed in the text. The most economical and, at this point in the play, most appropriate means of expressing such an emotion is through the actions of the actor. It is in this way that Granville-Barker must have envisaged the scene when he described Desdemona's humiliation before Iago as an unlooked-for pleasure which he savors complacently (II, 65).

Bradley cites no other examples in support of his statement, perhaps because there is no other major character for whom Iago does not show dislike and hostility. Surely then it may be concluded that a general positive ill-will is a basic element in his character. Yet no explanation of this condition is suggested. Iago is isolated by no

physical anomaly as Aaron and Richard are, but by an invisible and therefore sinister one. Because his motivation is incomprehensible, he seems diabolic.

A second cause of the development of Iago as a symbol of evil is his uncanny luck. He is, admittedly, remarkably skillful in manipulating his dupes, and we owe a grudging admiration to the dexterity with which he effects his boast to

> turn her virtue into pitch,
> And out of her own goodness make the net
> That shall enmesh 'em all. (II.iii.351-353)

He is a master of the art of implication, showing the ultimate refinement of the technique used by Gaveston, the Machiavel in Marlowe's Edward II: when the Queen, in answer to Edward's abusive "Fawn not on me, French strumpet," replies, "On whom but on my husband should I fawn?" Gaveston interjects,

> On Mortimer! with whom, ungentle queen—
> I say no more—judge you the rest, my lord.
> (I.iv.145-148)

To hint and then to refuse to explain or substantiate is the device Iago employs most often in the temptation scene. Warning Othello not to strain his speech

> To grosser issues, nor to larger reach,
> Than to suspicion, (III.iii.223-224)

and to have patience (III.iii.459), he twists even the truth to his

own ends.[44] Yet his manipulative skill can by no means account for all his success.

I have already remarked on his luck in having Bianca return the handkerchief to Cassio just when she does. That Cassio should assault the former governor of Cyprus, Montano, and that Desdemona should react to Othello's questions concerning the handkerchief in just the way she does are only two of the many other fortunate occurences which contribute to his success.[45] Iago has said to Roderigo, "Thou knowest we work by wit, and not by witchcraft" (II.iii.362), but as things continue to fall Iago's way the impression grows that his words in this case are no more to be believed than they are elsewhere. Only through witchcraft, we feel, could all this have been made possible.

His diabolism is also suggested in the play's imagery. He identifies himself with the forces of evil, swearing to Roderigo, "If sanctimony, and a frail vow . . . . be not to hard for my wits, and

[44] Iago only once before the catastrophe shows weakness in his manipulative technique. After he has driven Othello to complete incoherence and even unconsciousness (IV.i.35-43), reduced him to peeping and eavesdropping, and presented "ocular proof" of Desdemona's guilt, he apparently feels that he can now force Othello to accept direct criticism of Desdemona. However, his reference to "the foolish woman your wife" (IV.i.171-172) produces Othello's "A fine woman, a fair woman, a sweet woman" and each admonition, "Nay, you must forget," "Nay, that's not your way," "She's the worse for all this," "Ay, too gentle," increases Othello's opposition and nostalgia. Finally, with Othello's plaintive "But yet the pity of it, Iago: O Iago, the pity of it, Iago," Iago realizes that Othello is slipping from him and he reverts to his former technique: "If you be so fond over her iniquity, give her patent to offend, for if it touches not you, it comes near nobody." Othello responds immediately: "I will chop her into messes... Cuckold me!" Having regained his hold, Iago returns to a direct attack: "O, 'tis foul in her" (IV.i.197). This time he is successful.

[45] See A. C. Bradley, pp. 181-182.

all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her" (I.iii.355-359), and in soliloquy he admits of his plan,

> Hell and night
> Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.
> (I.iii.401-402)

In a later soliloquy he swears by the "Divinity of hell" and boasts,

> When devils will their blackest sins put on,
> They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
> As I do now. (II.iii.342-344)

This association is reinforced in the last act by the curses of his now-enlightened dupes. He is described as "damned" (V.i.62, ii.244, 293, 317), "cursed" (V.ii.277), and "hellish" (V.ii.369), and Othello explicitly suggests that he is a manifestation of the devil:

> I look down towards his feet, but that's a fable,
> If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee.
> (V.ii.287-288)

His defiant retort after Othello's attack, "I bleed, sir, but not kill'd," seems a boastful confirmation of Othello's suspicions.

His diabolism is suggested more subtly in other ways. His practical order to Roderigo,

> Call up her father,
> Rouse him, make after him,

evolves into a curse, first with "Poison his delight," and then more strongly with

> though he in a fertile climate dwell,
> Plague him with flies. (I.i.67-71)

The metaphorical meaning of these lines is not vivid enough to erase the image of the sorcercer's evil charm, an image which will be forcibly recalled when Iago chants over the insensible Othello,

> Work on,
> My medicine, work. (IV.i.44-45)

Finally, Iago's diabolism is emphasized at the end of the play by his silence.

> Demand me nothing, what you know, you know,
> From this time forth I never will speak word,
> (V.ii.304-305)

he says, and during the rest of the play he remains mute. With the loss of this faculty he seems less human and his difference from normal men is given tangible form. In Titus Andronicus Aaron threatens to speak no more (V.i.53-58), and Lucius, annoyed by his constant railing, later orders his men to stop his mouth and let him speak no more (V.i.151), but nevertheless he remains fully articulate to the very end. With Iago the impression is given that, whatever shrieks his torturers force from him, he will indeed speak no word more. And this impression both springs from and contributes to the impression of his diabolism.

Like Richard III, Othello is divided into two phases. In the first Iago holds the centre of the stage, while in the second Othello does. The change involves, of course, only a shift in emphasis: the question in the mind of the audience, "Will Iago dupe Othello?", becomes "Will Othello be duped by Iago?"

During the first two acts we see relatively little of Othello. The high opinion of him which we acquire comes in a large measure from what others, the Duke, Montano, and even Iago, say of him. He is forcefully presented in Act I, Scene ii, where, in the first crisis that he faces, he handles Brabantio's "Down with him, thief!" with the slightly contemptuous irony of the professional soldier for the amateur:

> Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust 'em;
> Good signior, you shall more command with years
> Than with your weapons. (I.ii.59-61)

His words are simple, dignified, and forceful; the irregularity of the metre and the strong caesuras suggest, especially in juxtaposition with the regular, end-stopped lines of Brabantio's rather hysterical reply, his self-assurance and lack of anxiety. We see more of him in the next scene and learn something of his earlier life. He behaves well and his story is colourful; our impressions are confirmed and our interest maintained.

Nevertheless the dominant personality during this part of the play is Iago. He is on stage more than Othello, and we become more intimately acquainted with him. In the first act, through one long soliloquy and his confessions to Roderigo, which serve much the same purpose, he is revealed as unconventional, dangerous, and apparently a Machiavel. In the second, in which he delivers 79 lines in soliloquies and asides, most of them addressed to the audience, his Machiavellism is confirmed and the special intimacy with the audience, remarked on above, is established. We are caught up in an attempt to analyse his character and fathom his motives and we watch attentively as the plot against Othello coalesces before our eyes. The planning and effecting of the stratagem to undermine Cassio very nearly achieves the status of a sub-plot, one in which Othello plays only a minor role. Although we are not as amused by Iago as we are by Richard at a comparable stage of Richard III and do not identify ourselves with him to the same extent, he is the character whom we find most interesting during this phase of the play. One of the things which the play is doing here is simply to present the Machiavel for our horror and delight.

A minor function given Iago during this phase is to present social criticism. When he justifies to Roderigo his employment under

Othello, he derides the duteous and knee-crooking servant because he

> Wears out his time much like his master's ass,
> For naught but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd.
> (I.i.47-48)

Society's laws and mores, it is suggested, do not adequately control the sins of the wealthy and respectable. The same criticism is implied in his assessment of reputation: "An idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit, and lost without deserving" (II.iii.260-262). One is reminded of Machiavelli's own assertion that "there is such a difference between the way men live and the way they ought to live, that anybody who abandons what is for what ought to be will learn something that will ruin rather than preserve him, because anyone who determines to act in all circumstances the part of a good man must come to ruin among so many who are not good."[46]

Social criticism of a different sort can be found in the attack on the theory of humours contained in his rebuttal of Roderigo's assertion that it is his "virtue" to behave foolishly in his relations with women. Iago's protest, "'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus," is the cry of emancipated man striking out against superstition—one which will be amplified in King Lear. And considering the ridiculousness of the complaint which evoked it, the contemporary audience must surely have agreed.

[46] The Prince, p. 141.

Yet despite the justice of these criticisms, their enumeration in this way gives them an emphasis which is not their in the context of the play. In the last case cited, the reaction of the audience, contemporary or modern, is likely to be merely to laugh at Roderigo. In the second case, we are too deeply absorbed in the ironies of this mixture of truth and falsehood, delivered by one who has husbanded his own reputation with such care, to consider its philosophical implications. In the first, our acknowledgement that his charge is true in some cases is stifled by our denial of its validity in all cases, a reaction which must have been stronger in the contemporary audience, whose concern with the allegiance owed by every member of society to those whom the Lord has placed above them was greater than our own. The main significance of this element in Iago, then, is that it adumbrates its use in Edmund in King Lear.

In the later part of the play, that is, from the "temptation scene" (III.iii) onwards, our interest turns from Iago to Othello. This is partly because the special intimacy which has been developed between Iago and the audience is not maintained. In the third act he delivers only thirteen lines in asides and soliloquies; in the fourth, only eleven; in the fifth, two. We watch with fascination still the evolution of Iago's plot, his skill in planting suspicion in Othello's mind, and his ingenuity in adapting his plans to new possibilities as they arise, but we watch from a greater distance. Primarily, however, our interest shifts because of increasing interest in Othello. Our interest in Iago, like our interest in Richard, is on the level of the suspense tale. From this base grows an interest in Othello as a tragic character which makes the play far greater than Richard III. Our attention, focusing with

progressively greater concentration on Othello, is given less and less to Iago.

His primary function in this phase of the play is to act as an irritant to Othello. Rather as Aaron erodes the character of Titus Andronicus, Iago functions as an instrument to reduce Othello from nobility to the state of mind in which he involuntarily plays in language and act the role of the typical villainous henchman to the Machiavel. In this role, as I have mentioned above, he becomes involved in three murders and attempted murders. He becomes excessively egoistic, treacherous, and cruel. He boasts of his wickedness,

> I will be found most cunning in my patience;
> But—dost thou hear?—most bloody, (IV.i.90-91)

addresses the audience in an aside (III.iv.30), addresses himself by name (III.iii.363), proposes to poison his wife (IV.i.200), and offers Iago admiring compliments: hearing what he takes to be Cassio's death cries, he exults,

> O brave Iago, honest and just . . .
> Thou teachest me. (V.i.31-33)[47]

Finally, their plot discovered, Othello, too, is denounced as a devil (V.ii.132, 134). Iago has been even more successful than Aaron.

In terms of the tragic drama unfolding in the later part of the play, Iago is merely an instrument; the important thing is that Othello is being stripped of his humanity, no matter how. Yet it is in this subordinate role that the Machiavellian villain of the Elizabethan stage realizes his greatest achievement.

[47] See also IV.i.74, 205, 208.

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Among the Machiavels in King Lear Edmund, bastard son to the Duke of Gloucester, is the first whose nature manifests itself to the audience. In his first soliloquy, that opening the second scene, he declares himself a rebel against the conventional conception of society. He proclaims his allegience to "Nature", but it is a nature totally unrelated to the conventional conception of divine being or ideal pattern to which Lear frequently refers. His "goddess" opposes the "plague of custom" or "curiosity of nations" which recognizes the rights of legitimacy and primogeniture and overlooks the superiority of bastards who

> in the lusty stealth of nature take
> More composition and fierce quality
> Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
> Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops,
> Got 'tween asleep and wake. (I.ii.11-15)

In her service the bastard may claim his brother's land. As John F. Danby puts it, "No medieval devil ever bounced on to the stage with a more scandalous self-announcement."[48]

Implied in this soliloquy are most of the character traits associated with the Machiavellian stereotype: egoism, avarice, treacherousness, ambition, unsentimentality, and hypocrisy. Many of the characteristic modes of behaviour also appear: he addresses himself directly to the audience, concluding with what may well be an obscene pun;[49] he threatens his brother Edgar; he twice addresses himself by name; and he speaks mysteriously of an "invention" which

[48] Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A Study of King Lear (London, 1949), p. 32.

[49] See Robert B. Heilman, This Great Stage: Image and Structure in King Lear (Baton Rouge, 1948), p. 314.

proves to be a typically Machiavellian hoax. The most damning aspect of the soliloquy, however, is its suggestion of atheism. His declaration,

> Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
> My services are bound, (I.ii.1-2)

is a statement of the same order as Iago's identification of himself with the deceitful servants who line their coats at the expense of their masters:

> those fellows have some soul,
> And such a one do I profess myself. (Othello: I.i.54-55)

It is a declaration of disbelief in the traditional moral code professed by all Christians.[50] The tone, however, is gay and carefree. Robert Heilman overlooks this quality, I believe, when he comments that "whereas Edmunds [sic] appears, on the one hand, to be disinterestedly seeking a ratio, an intellectually tenable position, with regard to certain facts of experience, it is clear that what he is actually doing, on the other hand, is seeking justification for an emotionally determined course of action" (p. 237). Edmund is rationalizing, but he is not entirely serious. He presents his argument to the audience, not to convince—he does not himself really believe what he says—but to amuse and shock. The Machiavel is impudently boasting of his wickedness, and the audience is being invited to join a conspiracy.

As the play unfolds, Edmund's behaviour confirms the impression given in the first soliloquy, and almost all the other details of the stereotype are revealed. Although not involved in physical violence until his duel with Edgar in the final act, he proves himself cruel and

[50] William A. Armstrong, "'King Lear' and Sidney's 'Arcadia,'" TLS, Oct. 14, 1949, p. 665, suggests that Edmund's speech shows the influence of the "epicurean atheism" of Cecropia in Sidney's Arcadia. As Kenneth Muir points out (I.ii.1, n.), however, these ideas were not uncommon.

murderous. He speaks in soliloquy of his "practices" and falsely ascribes to his brother the use of "policy" and "practice" (I.ii.47, 189, II.i.73); he utters maxims with Machiavellian implications (I.ii.191, III.iii.27, V.iii.31-33); and he employs a henchman to murder Lear and Cordelia. His relationship with the henchman is not developed, but the evil camaraderie usually found in this relationship is found instead in his relationship with Goneril. This relationship is most fully portrayed on their journey from Gloucester's castle to Albany's palace; having apparently planned the murder of her husband, they joke lustily about their prospective sexual union:

Goneril. ere long you are like to hear . . .
A mistress's command . . . . this kiss, if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.
Conceive, and fare thee well.

Edmund.
Yours in the ranks of death. (IV.ii.19-25)

They have fully admitted their amorality, which has become a bond between them, and they feel superior because of it.

The echo of Iago found in the first soliloquy is also amplified in the subsequent scenes. Of Gloucester and Edgar, Edmund exclaims in soliloquy:

A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy! (I.ii.186-189)

Such coupling of credulity with nobility, harmlessness with innocence, and foolishness with honesty shows an inversion of the moral scale identical to that found in Iago. Also Edmund's technique in gulling his father is very like that used by Iago against Othello. Just as Iago consolidated his position with the admonition,

> I am to pray you, not to strain my speech
> To grosser issues, nor to larger reach,
> Than to suspicion, (Othello: III.iii.222-224)

so Edmund, having infuriated Gloucester with his accusations, sanctimoniously adds, "If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you shall run a certain course" (I.ii.80-84). The ironic nature of this statement is emphasized when Gloucester exclaims, "He cannot be such a monster—" and Edmund interjects, "Nor is not, sure." Since Gloucester, ignoring the interruption, continues, "—to his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth!" (I.ii.97-100), before turning to him with instructions, Edmund is given ample opportunity to make the implications of his remarks clear to the audience through mime. The practice of joking ironically to the audience in front of his unsuspecting dupe is also one employed by Iago. Finally, Edmund's imputation that when he threatened to reveal Edgar's plot Edgar replied,

> Thou unpossessing bastard! dost thou think,
> If I would stand against thee, would the reposal
> Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
> Make thy words faith'd? (II.i.67-70)

evokes Iago's

> He hath [spoken], my lord, but be you well assur'd,
> No more than he'll unswear. (Othello: IV.i.30-31)

Despite these similarities, however, Edmund is less resolute than Iago, and in the final scene his Machiavellism breaks down. In agreeing to fight an unknown challenger, he waives an opportunity to postpone, perhaps to avoid, a dangerous battle. He himself admits that "in wisdom" he should refuse to fight until he learns his adversary's identity and continues,

> What safe and nicely I might well delay
> By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
> (V.iii.144-145)

Goneril makes the same point: after he has been wounded she says spitefully,

> This is practice, Gloucester:
> By th' law of war thou wast not bound to answer
> An unknown opposite; thou art not vanquish'd,
> But cozen'd and beguil'd. (V.iii.151-154)

This "latent capacity to respond to traditional values," as Heilman puts it (p. 244), expresses itself more fully when, turning from "reason" to "honour", Edmund proclaims,

> But what art thou
> That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
> I do forgive thee. (V.iii.164-166)

He then agrees with Edgar that "the Gods are just" and cries, "The wheel has come full circle" (V.iii.170-174). Sick in fortune, the surfeit of his own behaviour, Edmund is taking refuge in as excellent a foppery as that which he earlier criticized in his father. Finally—"despite of mine own nature" (V.iii.244), he says—he confesses that he has ordered the murder of Lear and Cordelia. This act marks the complete deterioration of his Machiavellism. His death, an ignominious end that is the antithesis of Aaron's and Iago's, follows immediately.

The Machiavellism of Goneril and Regan reveals itself more slowly than Edmund's. The hypocritical nature of their protestations to Lear in the opening scene becomes apparent when we hear their coldly cynical analysis of the day's events (I.i.283-308), yet they can hardly be blamed for falling in with their father's caprice. Even their determination to "do something and i' th' heat" (I.i.308) can be justified as being merely prudent. Goneril's later decision to "breed from hence occasions" (I.iii.25) warrants the same excuse, for their predictions

have proved correct. Although we may assume that Goneril was making her case as strong as possible when she complains to Oswald,

> By day and night, he wrongs me; every hour
> He flashes into one gross crime or other,
> That sets us all at odds: I'll not endure it:
> His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
> On every trifle, (I.iii.4-8)

there is no evidence that she is lying. As Granville-Barker remarks, at this point "a jury of men and women of common sense might well give their verdict against Lear" (1, 301-302). Yet when one considers, in terms of the Elizabethan cosmology, the rights of and the respect due to a king and father and the relish with which these pelican daughters carry out their designs, the later manifestation of their Machiavellism is not unexpected.

Between the two sisters there is little to choose. Goneril's Machiavellism is more fully elaborated, but Regan's ironic protestation to Lear,

> I am made of that self metal as my sister,
> And prize me at her worth, (I.i.69-70)

proves essentially true. Like Edmund, they represent a non-theological view of life. Their assumption that their treatment of their father (I refer here to that in the second act) is reasonable and blameless testifies to their atheism. A. C. Bradley has noted that Goneril is the only major character in the play who makes no reference to the gods (p. 300, n. 1), but this point has little significance. Regan's answer to Lear's tirade against Goneril, "O the blest Gods" (II.iv.170), which is her sole use of the word, is surely delivered derisively, while Edmund's only reference to the gods (I.ii.22) is made, as I have noted, in an obscene joke.

Goneril is the deadlier of the two—she poisons her sister and is directly involved in the murder of Cordelia and the plot to murder

her husband, Albany, while Regan can claim only the stabbing of a servant and a role in the plot to murder Gloucester—but, as Bradley points out, it is greater decisiveness, not less compunction, that makes her so (p. 299). On the other hand, Regan gives the impression of being the crueler of the two. It is Goneril who initially cries, "Pluck out his eyes" (III.vii.5), but this is overshadowed by Regan's ferocity when Gloucester is actually brought to the stake: when Cornwall orders him to be bound, she adds, "Hard, hard" (III.vii.32), and when he gouges out an eye, "th' other too" (III.vii.70). This urge to give the screw an extra turn, which is readily associated with personalities that have difficulty in translating desire into action, is also displayed when Kent is put in the stocks: when Cornwall orders him to be set there till noon, she interjects, "Till noon! till night, my Lord; and all night too" (II.ii.135).

Both sisters are egoistic, treacherous, ambitious, unsentimental, and hypocritical. If their initial wealth precludes the emphasis given to Edmund's avariciousness, their sex emphasizes the wickedness of their lust. Goneril uses the words "politic" and "practice" (I.iv.333, V.iii.151) and addresses the audience directly in asides (IV.ii.83-87, V.i.18-19, 37, iii.97), once, at a time when she is in great danger, joking of her own wickedness (V.iii.97). She employs her steward, Oswald, as a henchman, and both to her and to Regan, Edmund, although only technically a subject, acts as a henchman. Although Edmund tells us that he has sworn his love to Regan, an intimate relationship between the two is not portrayed. They have only one private conversation (V.i.5-17) and that is spent quarreling about Edmund's relations with Goneril. His reply to her entreaty to avoid familiarity with Goneril,

> Fear me not.
> She and the Duke her husband! (V.i.16-17)

suggests that he has not fully revealed himself to her—although the line could well be expressed derisively. Between Edmund and Goneril, however, as I have noted above, the camaraderie of Machiavels united in their isolation is fully developed.

There is no deterioration in the Machiavellism of the sisters. Regan dies off-stage before their cause collapses, but Goneril, like Edmund, is forced to stand the course. Where Edmund grovels, she remains defiant; her last words, "Ask me not what I know" (V.iii.160),[51] link her with Aaron and Iago.

Among the minor characters the Duke of Cornwall and Goneril's steward, Oswald, show elements of Machiavellism. Cornwall's character is not fully developed; at the time of Gloucester's arrest and inquisition, however, he shows himself to be fully as cruel as Regan, and other Machiavellian characteristics are implied in his association with his wife and sister-in-law and in his approval of their behaviour. Concerning Oswald, Bradley quotes Dr. Johnson, who calls him "a mere factor of wickedness," and asserts that he is the most contemptible character in the play (p. 298). And certainly this pretentious coward, who is prepared to kill the helpless Gloucester without compunction, is contemptible. Yet Edgar's characterization of him as

> a serviceable villain;
> As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
> As badness would desire, (IV.vi.254-256)

[51] So Q. See the footnote to this line in the New Arden edition.

(which echoes Iago's scornful description of the loyal servant, the "duteous and knee-crooking knave") makes clear his fundamentally unemancipated condition.

In discussing the function of the play's Machiavellian elements it is adventageous to deal separately with the main plot, concerning Lear and his daughters, and the sub-plot, concerning Gloucester and his sons. The primary function of Goneril and Regan is to act as a stimulus to Lear by tormenting him. Their rise to power is completed in the first scene; and it is effected, not through their own efforts, but through the irresponsibility and misplaced generosity of their father, so that even in this scene it is he who holds the centre of the stage. The main significance of their limited reasonableness in the early scenes is that it emphasizes his foolishness. Their emerging villainy is, of course, of interest, but again our primary concern is with Lear. Essentially they are forces in his environment and are replaced, when he wanders onto the heath, by natural forces, thunder, wind, and rain.

This function, as I have noted, is also the primary function of the Machiavels in Kyd's Spanish Tragedy, in Titus Andronicus, and in Othello. The similarities between King Lear and Titus Andronicus are particularly striking.[52] The Edgar-Goneril-Albany triangle resembles the Aaron-Tamora-Saturnine one. The male Machiavel is, in each case, an outsider and is ostensibly subordinate to the female, yet

[52] Various similarities between these plays have been noted by H. T. Price ("The Authorship of Titus Andronicus") and by the editors of the New Arden editions of Titus and Lear in their introductions.

through his vigour and articulateness he assumes, for the audience, the dominant role. The female Machiavel is, in each case, a queen and is not isolated from regular society in any obvious way. She does not display as fully as her paramour the details of the Machiavellian stereotype, but her lust, which is particularly shocking because she is a woman, emphasizes her freedom from conventional values and ultimately contributes to her downfall.

Further, the Machiavels in both plays torment the hero, who is powerless because of his own refusal or abdication of the throne. As a result of the Machiavel's tormenting, the hero goes mad,[53] and this madness is expressed, in each case, in remarkably similar ways. Lear gives himself to the elements because they are kinder than children (III.ii.1-24), and Titus pleads with stones because they are more merciful than tribunes (Titus: III.i.1-48). Lear raves about archery (IV.vi.87-88) and fancies he has written an imaginary challenge (IV.vi.140), and Titus has arrows with petitions to the gods attached shot into the sky (Titus: IV.iii.1-75).[54] Lear's words, "I know thee well enough; they name is Gloucester" (IV.vi.179), evoke Titus's, "I am not mad; I know thee well enough" (Titus: V.ii.21). These details, it is to be noted, form the same sequence in each play.

The similarities between the plays, however, serve only to emphasize their differences. For Titus (and Hieronimo and Othello) the goading of the Machiavels results not only in madness but in pseudo-

[53] An innovation in Lear. Lear does not go mad in any of the known sources.

[54] Kenneth Muir (King Lear, p. xlii) is incorrect in stating that the petition given to the clown (Titus: IV.iii.105) is imaginary.

Machiavellism. In King Lear the opponents and victims of the Machiavels are morally strengthened, not weakened; even Cornwall's servant is moved to heroism. With this compare, say, the Lord Mayor in Richard III.

I have noted in my discussion of Titus Andronicus that both Titus and Lear initially show similar defects of character; they are proud, irascible, inflexible, and cruel, and they demand unquestioning obedience of their subordinates: Lear banishes a disobedient daughter and Titus kills a disobedient son. But whereas the stimulus of the Machiavel's goading does not significantly change Titus, Lear is purged of his faults. His initial lack of sympathy and narrow sense of justice widen first into self-pity and concern for a more flexible justice for himself:

> O! reason not the need; our basest beggars
> Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
> . . . . . .
> You see me here, you Gods, a poor old man,
> As full of grief as age; wretched in both!
> (II.iv.266-275)

This, in turn, develops into compassion for

> Poor naked wretches . . .
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm
> (III.iv.28-29)

and a sense of justice so broad that it merges with charity:

> Take physic, Pomp;
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
> And show the Heavens more just. (III.iv.33-36)[55]

He develops also a degree of patience, and his early pride changes to humility, so that he may say without self-pity,

[55] See also III.ii.68-73, IV.vi.110-134, 153-174.

Pray, do not mock me:
I am a very foolish fond old man. (IV.vii.59-60)

This pattern, the purgation of the defective hero through the tormenting of the Machiavel, is peculiar to King Lear.

The Gloucester-Edgar-Edmund relationship forms a sub-plot which parallels and reinforces the main one. Edmund's primary function as Machiavel is to work on Gloucester as Goneril and Regan work on Lear, so that Gloucester, too, develops compassion, humility, and a sense of justice and charity (IV.i.44-45, 46-47, 64-71). Within this parallel, however, the values of Edmund's Machiavellism vary from the pattern established in the main plot. Unlike that of the sisters', Edmund's rise to power is prolonged throughout the play. After reaching an apparent climax when Cornwall makes him Earl of Gloucester (III.v.17-18), it is reintroduced on his next appearance when he and Goneril hint at the possibility of murdering Albany and subsequently marrying. It is not until his duel with Edgar is lost that his ambitions are conclusively terminated.

Moreover Edmund, in a position of power, does not goad his father as Goneril and Regan do Lear—in fact, his work done, he never sees his father again. Gloucester's ordeal is at the hands of others, is primarily physical, and is, in its most intense form, quickly over; the shock of the realization of his betrayal by Edmund and of his own betrayal of Edgar is anticlimactic after the horror of his mutilation. Our interest in the sub-plot, then, in comparison to the main plot, lies more in the Machiavel and less in his victim.

This interest is stimulated in much the same way that our interest in Richard III was stimulated. His duplicity is given much more scope than that of the sisters, and he effects his villainous

ambitions through an elaborate hoax which keeps us in suspense and allows us to admire his virtuosity. He is physically attractive, overflows with animal vigour, and has all and more of the charm which Richard shows in the earlier part of Richard III. Although scholarly opinion is sharply divided about the Elizabethan audience's reaction to Gloucester's rationalizations,[56] the tone of Edmund's criticism of them, "This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars" (I.ii.124-127), suggests that his criticism would be found amusing. So too would his exposition on the superiority of the illegitimate and his gay ejaculation,

> I grow, I prosper;
> Now, gods, stand up for bastards! (I.ii.21-22)

These speeches, like his other soliloquies and asides which are addressed directly to the audience, create the special intimacy between player and audience which has characterized the relationships between the earlier Machiavels, especially Richard III, and their audiences. The effect here, too, is to reinforce and amplify Edmund's charm and vitality. The audience's interest in the sub-plot, then, tends

[56] Granville-Barker states that Gloucester's "pother" about eclipses reveal him as the sort of man "who might at any moment be taken in by any sort of tale" (I,313), but Theodore Spencer states that "all the right thinking people in Shakespeare's audience would have agreed with [Gloucester] " (Shakespeare and the Nature of Man, p. 147). Tillyard, quoting Raleigh's History of the World, argues persuasively that the orthodox view was that the stars had influence, but not ineluctable influence (The Elizabethan World Picture, pp. 48-55). Danby argues equally persuasively that many views were current and that "belief or disbelief in astrology was not in the sixteenth century definitive of orthodoxy" (pp. 37-38). Cf. also Heilman, p. 237; Muir, King Lear, lvi. Evidence in the play itself is inconclusive; compare Edgar, I.ii.149, and Kent, IV.iii.33-34.

to be at the level of the suspense tale, as it does in the earlier part of Othello.

In Act IV when the Machiavels are closely united by their lust and the fates of Lear and Gloucester become dependent upon Cordelia's expedition, the main plot and sub-plot are fused. It is to be noted that our special interest in Edmund survives this fusion and that, as a result of their affairs with him, interest in Goneril and Regan quite independent of their main function is developed.

The Machiavellian elements in the play have other functions. The play makes a statement, though highly qualified, about the rule of the Machiavel. The maltreatment of Lear and Gloucester, like the maltreatment of Titus and his party in Titus Andronicus, symbolizes the cruelty and injustice imposed by the Machiavellian ruler on the state as a whole and results, as it does in both Titus Andronicus and Richard III, in the disaffection of a substantial part of the citizenry (illustrated most clearly in Lear by the rebellion of Cornwall's servant), thus making the regime vulnerable to attack by opposing forces organized in a neighbouring state. Since the invasion is not successful and the Machiavels are purged without the overthrow of the government, however, the theme is not as clear as it is in the earlier plays.[57]

The issue is further complicated by the division of the state between two heirs. Their rivalry, which culminates in the murder of Regan, is hinted at as early as II.i.11-12. This suggests that their "reason" is unable to control their greed and ambition, just as it is

[57] The theme has been strengthened, however, by the death of Goneril and Regan, a punishment which they escape in all the recognized sources.

later unable to control their jealousy and lust,[58] thus making them unfit for political leadership. The Elizabethan audience, however, nurtured on Gorboduc, would probably consider this conflict to be almost inevitable, regardless of their Machiavellism.

The play also makes a statement about the causes of Machiavellism. Edward's opening soliloquy, like Richard III's, both announces his Machiavellism and suggests its cause. Gloucester has earlier stated that his legitimate son, Edgar, is no dearer in his account than Edmund is, but in the next breath he says that Edmund "hath been out nine years, and away he shall again" (I.i.32-33). In this soliloquy Edmund reveals his jealousy for this brother who lives at home and is his father's heir. It is clear that without more tangible proof his father's assurances of love, which Edmund here ironically repeats, do not satisfy him. The point is made again in the last act: as the bodies of the sisters are carried on stage, he says,

> Yet Edmund was belov'd:
> The one the other poison'd for my sake,
> And after slew herself. (V.iii.239-241)

Granville-Barker suggests that, since Shakespeare in King Lear has no need of the transcendent villainy of an Iago, "he lessens and vulgarizes his man by giving him one of those excuses for foul play against the world which a knave likes to find as a point of departure" (I,316). Yet viewed in comparison to Aaron and Richard as well as Iago, Edmund's bastardy seems more than an excuse for villainy. Like the physical abnormalities of Aaron and Richard, it has isolated him from normal society. He is an outsider, although one who desperately wants affection

[58] Cf. Goneril's aside: "I had rather lose the battle than that sister / Should loosen him and me" (V.i.18-19).

and a position of prestige within society.

There is, however, one important difference in the way the isolating characteristic is treated in King Lear. It was implied that Aaron's colour and, more clearly, Richard's hump were the causes of their Machiavellism, but no criticism of society's attitudes accompanied the implication. The question of the inevitability and naturalness of prejudice against negroes and cripples was not explored. Edmund's disquisition, on the other hand, suggests at least the possibility of some fault in society's attitude to illegitimacy. It is perhaps difficult to evaluate the force of such criticism for the Elizabethan audience,[59] but that it was made at all is significant.

This criticism carries on the social criticism given to Iago in Othello. In King Lear, however, Edmund's complaints constitute only one aspect of the criticism directed at many aspects of society, particularly its economic and judicial systems. Most of this criticism is enunciated through the more acceptable figure of King Lear, who in his madness has become, like Edmund, an outsider and shares with him the detachment necessary for criticism of the in-group.

In King Lear, then, the conflict between the Machiavel and the "honourable" man is expressed in its most fundamental terms. Atheism, the most important aspect of the Machiavellian stereotype, is given its ultimate elaboration, and its consequences are most searchingly explored. It is significant that Shakespeare has fitted out his new men with the other characteristics of the Machiavellian stereotype, for in doing so he supplies both an explanation and condemnation of them.

[59] Danby, p. 32, states that "the sentiments of Edmund's speech [I.ii.1-22] must have been fairly widespread in Shakespeare's society."

II

The various uses to which Shakespeare put his Machiavellian characters cannot all be found in the four plays discussed in Part I. Other uses can be found in plays which contain Machiavels who play a minor role in the plot and in plays which contain major characters who, though not full-fledged Machiavels, are nevertheless Machiavellian in some respects. One such use, to control the sympathies of the audience, is to be found in Julius Caesar and in Antony and Cleopatra.

In Julius Caesar the attitude of the audience towards the opposing political groups is balanced in such a way that wholehearted support is never extended to either side; no strong identification with any of the heroic characters, Julius Caesar, Brutus, or Antony, is allowed to cloud our understanding of the ethical and political problems analysed in the play. In the first part of the play, that is, up to the assassination of Caesar and the emergence of Antony as a major force, the emphasis given the nobility of Brutus, the idealistic elements in the motivation of the conspirators as a whole, the flaws in Caesar's character, and the impropriety of his ambitions elicit our sympathy for the conspiratorial group. These factors are balanced, on the other hand, by the inherent immorality of conspiracy and assassination, the occasional presentation of sympathetic aspects of Caesar's character, and, especially, the Machiavellism of some of Brutus's associates.

This Machiavellian element is first suggested when, in the second scene, Cassius manipulates Brutus in order to win his support for the conspiracy. He leads Brutus to admit that he is disturbed about Caesar's ambitions and then incites him with a judicious mixture of flattery and criticism. The sinister nature of this performance is

emphasized immediately thereafter by Caesar's perspicacious criticism of Cassius, particularly the comment,

> He is a great observer, and he looks
> Quite through the deeds of men. (I.ii.199-200)

In the soliloquy closing the scene, Cassius confirms his Machiavellism: he states that he will work on Brutus to make him act in a way somehow dishonourable and admits that he himself does not have a noble mind. Encouraging himself with a Machiavellian maxim, "For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?" he admits his insincerity:

> Caesar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus.
> If I were Brutus now, and he were Cassius,
> He should not humour me. (I.ii.310-312)[60]

Then, in lines which seem to be addressed directly to the audience, he describes the hoax he intends to perpetrate upon Brutus—in the event he employs Cinna as a henchman to carry it out—and utters a threat against Caesar.

In the following scene our sympathy with many of the arguments he advances to win Casca to the cause is qualified by our awareness of his deliberate manipulation of his subject. Like Iago, he is capable of varying his techniques to fit his dupe's weaknesses, and with Casca he is much cruder than he was with Brutus. He boasts shamelessly of his

[60] Michael Macmillan, editor of the (old) Arden edition of Julius Caesar, ignoring the context, suggests that the final "He" refers to Caesar, not Brutus, since, if the contrary were accepted, "we should have to regard Cassius . . . as cynically contemplating the perversion of the noble disposition of Brutus, and as recognizing his own ignobility . . . . [Cassius] is not a villain conscious of his villainy like Richard III . . . and Iago" (I.ii.319, n.). He cites Dr. Johnson in confirmation, but attributes the contrary view to Warburton, Craik, Aldis Wright, and Verity. Ernest Schanzer, in "The Problem of Julius Caesar," SQ, VI (1955), 297-308, and the New Arden editor, T. S. Dorsch, also support the latter view.

own courage, contemptuously rebukes Casca for being spiritless, and pretends, with obvious insincerity, that he doubts even his loyalty:

> But, O grief,
> Where hast thou led me? I, perhaps, speak this
> Before a willing bondman. (I.iii.111-113)

In the second act the suggestions of Machiavellism are distributed more widely among the conspirators. Brutus himself reflects on the evil inherent in conspiracy against the established government (II.i.77-85) and later evokes a well-known Machiavellian stratagem when he advises,

> And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,
> Stir up their servants to an act of rage,
> And after seem to chide 'em. (II.i.175-177)[61]

Decius Brutus plays the Machiavel as he describes to his fellow conspirators how he will manipulate Caesar (II.i.207-209), and Trebonius utters an aside[62] which is perhaps the most typically Machiavellian in the play:

> Caesar, I will [be near you] : [Aside.] and so near will I be,
> That your best friends shall wish I had been further.
> (II.ii.124-125)

In the third act, the climax approaching, the ostentatious pride of Caesar is balanced by the Machiavellian flattery of Metellus,

> Most high, most mighty, and most puissant Caesar,
> Metellus Cimber throws before thy seat
> An humble heart [kneeling], (III.i. 33-35)

so that when the assassination occurs the audience's attitude towards

[61] M. Macmillan, II.i.177, n, compares King John's chiding of Hubert for the supposed murder of Arthur, Bolingbroke's banishment of Sir Pierce of Exton, and in history, Elizabeth's exhibition of grief and indignation after the death of Mary, Queen of Scots.

[62] If it is an aside. Cf. Macmillan, II.ii.125, n.

it is highly ambivalent.

If Brutus has failed to fill satisfactorily the role of protagonist up to this point in the play, it has been because Cassius has been the instigator of most of the action while Brutus has been relatively passive and because Caesar has seemed as heroic as Brutus. In the second half of the play Brutus's position remains essentially unchanged. Antony takes over from Cassius, who becomes relatively passive, the role of the instigator of action, and since his shrewdness, courage, and position as successful underdog fully qualify him, he replaces Caesar as potential protagonist and competitor with Brutus for our sympathy. The balance is again maintained, however, partly, at least, through a shift in the emphasis placed on the Machiavellism of the opposing parties.

We see little more of the Machiavellism of the conspirators. In contrast to Brutus, who deals only in lofty generalities, Cassius attempts to reassure Antony of their good-will by offering him a share in the political patronage. Later it is implied that Cassius is less scrupulous than Brutus in his methods of raising funds. Apart from these two instances, however, he behaves during the rest of the play in exemplary fashion.[63] The other conspirators drop completely from the play.

In Antony, on the other hand, Machiavellian characteristics of considerable proportions are developed. We have seen little of him in

[63] T. S. Dorsch (pp. xlvi-xlvii), commenting on the fact that Cassius "becomes more likeable in the latter part of the play," offers two explanations: that "the death of the object of his hatred has liberated more generous instincts in him," and that Shakespeare "as if recognizing that no man is wholly bad, and that Cassius may, like Brutus, have acted from mistaken rather than evil motives . . . somewhat softens and ennobles his character." This misses the point entirely.

the first part of the play and the only suggestion that this development might occur has been Cassius's judgement that he is a "shrewd contriver" who might prove dangerous if allowed to survive Caesar (II.i.155-160). Indeed, Antony's earlier estimate of Cassius,

> Fear him not, Caesar, he's not dangerous.
> He is a noble Roman, and well given, (I.ii.193-194)

has suggested that Antony's role is to be that of the honourable man who is unable to penetrate the mask of the opposing Machiavel.

Now, in his funeral oration, an ability to manipulate the emotions and wills of others which is as great as Cassius's is revealed. Just as Cassius's deviousness was contrasted with Brutus's naivety and directness in the earlier part of the play, Antony's tour de force contrasts sharply with Brutus's appeal to the intellect and the highest motives of the crowd. He plays on their emotions, waving before them emotion-laden clichés like "friendship," "faith," and "justice" (III.ii.87), and appeals to their greed by referring to Caesar's will and the ransoms which in the past have been gained through him. Michael Macmillan (p. xlii) has compared Antony's manipulation of the mob in this speech to Iago's manipulation of Othello: both incite their pawns with their implicit or explicit charges against the conspirators, in one case, and Desdemona, in the other. They then further enrage them by urging them to have patience (Julius Caesar: III.ii.142; Othello: III.iii.248-249, 459) and by suggesting that there may be some justification of the behaviour which led to the charge (Julius Caesar: III.ii.215-217; Othello: III.iii.222-224). Both also conceal their cleverness and cunning under the garb of blunt honesty (Julius Caesar: III.ii.219-221; Othello: II.iii, III.iii, etc.). As I have pointed out in the first part of this paper,

Edmund employs much the same technique against Gloucester.

Despite these similarities Antony's speech is not Machiavellian in tone, for he is still the courageous underdog fighting for a cause in which he sincerely believes. After watching the reaction of the mob, however, he delivers a sinister soliloquy which shows at least some awareness of the audience:

> Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,
> Take thou what course thou wilt! (III.ii.262-263)

When the immediate course it takes is to tear to pieces the entirely innocent poet, Cinna, his act appears in a new light. And after this scene we are abruptly faced, in the first line of the next, with Antony's "These many then shall die; their names are prick'd" (IV.i.1). In the lethal bargaining that follows, spite, pride, and expediency, not justice, seem the determining agents.

That it was Shakespeare's intention to blacken the character of Antony in this scene is made obvious by his addition of two details not found in his sources. First, having agreed to the execution of a nephew invented by Shakespeare, Antony orders Lepidus to fetch Caesar's will in order to determine how to "cut off some charge in legacies" (IV.i.9)—the legacies of Caesar to which Antony referred so effectively in his oration. Second, Lepidus having left the stage, he suggests to Octavius Caesar that they treat Lepidus as an ass whom they will allow to bear one third of the honours "to ease ourselves of divers sland'rous loads" and then, having brought their treasure where they will, take down his load and turn him off (IV.i.19-27). To Octavius's objection that Lepidus is a tried and valiant soldier, Antony answers,

So is my horse, Octavius. . . .
Do not talk of him
But as a property. (IV.i.29-40)

We see no more of Antony in the fourth act, and in the fifth he displays no Machiavellian characteristics. Enough has been done, however, despite his honourable behaviour in this act, to tinge him ineradicably with Machiavellism. This factor, together with the much bigger part given Brutus in the last two acts, maintains the dramatic balance to the play's end.

In Antony and Cleopatra Shakespeare faced a problem quite the opposite to that of Julius Caesar. Where before he had been writing a play without a hero in which Antony threatens to become one, here his design requires that Antony be a hero although his errors of judgement and lack of success make him less likely heroic material. The problem is to build him up to heroic magnitude, to make the audience feel that what happens to him is of unusual importance.

The solution is effected through a variety of means, one of which is a redistribution of the Machiavellian traits displayed in Julius Caesar. Of the Machiavellism of Antony we see little. In Act III, Scene v, the scene in which we are informed of the execution of Lepidus, Shakespeare takes pains to include the fact that he was killed by Antony's lieutenant, while absolving Antony himself of all responsibility. This is accomplished without directly contradicting the historical source, whether it is North's Plutarch (described by Dover Wilson, the New Shakespeare editor, as the sole source for this play[64]), which states

[64] Antony and Cleopatra (Cambridge, 1950), p. xiii.

flatly that Lepidus was killed by Antony's commandment,[65] or whether it is, as M. W. MacCallum suggests, the 1578 translation of Appian's Civil Wars, which leaves it an open question whether or not Antony was responsible for his lieutenant's act.[66]

In the play, we are told that Antony has become indignant on hearing of Lepidus's death and is threatening to execute his lieutenant. This reaction can be interpreted as sincere or as a Machiavellian device designed to divert suspicion from himself—if Shakespeare had North's account in mind, he must have thought of Antony's reaction in the latter way. The audience, however, is unlikely to make the second interpretation. The incident is not portrayed but is described by Eros in a brief conversation which gives us a good deal of other information; we are told that Caesar and Lepidus have made war upon Pompey, that Ceasar, having made use of Lepidus in this war, has deposed and imprisoned him, and that Antony

> cries, "Fool Lepidus!"
> And threats the throat of that his officer
> That murder'd Pompey. (III.v.17-19)

That the first of these items of information is repeated here after being given in the last scene is an indication not only of Shakespeare's sophisticated realism but of his desire to emphasize Caesar's duplicity and his antagonism to Pompey. After being reminded of his duplicity towards Pompey and informed of his duplicity towards Lepidus, we are

[65] III.v.18-19, n. The account is Simon Goulard's, which was included in the 1603 edition of North. See M. W. MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background (London, 1910), p. 648.

[66] See MacCallum, pp. 648-649; Shakespeare's Appian: A Selection from the Tudor Translation of Appian's Civil Wars, ed. Ernest Schanzer (Liverpool, 1956), pp. 95-96.

likely to assume that "his officer" means "Caesar's officer." And those who do interpret the line correctly are given little time to question Antony's sincerity; before all this information can be absorbed, the scene is over and we are back in Rome.[67] Much, of course, depends upon the manner in which the actor playing Eros delivers the lines. If delivered, as I believe they should be, without a hint of cynicism or sarcasm, the audience will be carried along. It would seem possible, then, that Shakespeare deliberately and with amusement made his hero act in a Machiavellian way (or at least act in a way which is open to this interpretation) in order that he might give us a "true" account of Lepidus's death and yet avoid making Antony seem Machiavellian.

Shakespeare, of course, had no intention of drawing Antony as a paragon, and in his dealings with Octavia he is shown to be hypocritical and treacherous. His behaviour is so foolish and purposeless, however, that he does not seem Machiavellian. Only once, in the scene in which Ventidius refuses to follow up his advantage after defeating the Parthians, is a Machiavellian streak in Antony's character clearly suggested. This is contained entirely in one speech by Ventidius:

> O Silius, Silius,
> I have done enough. A lower place, note well,
> May make too great an act. For learn this, Silius;
> Better to leave undone, than by our deed
> Acquire too high a fame, when him we serve's away.
> Caesar and Antony have ever won
> More in their officer than person: Sossius,
> One of my place in Syria, his lieutenant,
> For quick accumulation of renown,

[67] Striking evidence of the effectiveness of Shakespeare's camouflage is to be found in M. Macmillan's omission of this incident from his discussion of this device in connection with Brutus's speech in Julius Caesar, "And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,/Stir up their servants to an act of rage, / And after seem to chide 'em." Cf. above, note 61.

> Which he achiev'd by the minute, lost his favour . . . .
> I could do more to do Antonius good,
> But 'twould offend him. And in his offence
> Should my performance perish. (III.i.11-27)

Here Shakespeare has expanded North's statement, "Howbeit Ventidius durst not undertake to follow them [the Parthians] any farther, fearing lest he should have gotten Antonius' displeasure by it,"[68] and invented the corroborative detail concerning his lieutenant, Sossius. It is significant, however, that Shakespeare has associated with this criticism of Antony another statement by North: that Caesar and Antony were always more fortunate when they made war by their lieutenants than by themselves (46). In this way Caesar is tarred with the same brush as Antony, and the audience's estimate of the relative merits of the two remains unchanged. Further, the impression is given, as it is to some degree in all the scenes in Rome, that political affairs are a dirty business, so that Antony is perhaps better off romancing in Egypt.

The Machiavellian propensity thus bestowed upon Octavius Caesar, later reinforced by Antony's charge that at Philippi Caesar alone

> Dealt on lieutenantry, and no practice had
> In the brave squares of war, (III.xi.39-40)

is only one of many Machiavellian traits which are revealed in him in this play. The innocent youth of Julius Caesar who refrains from joining Antony and Lepidus in their proscriptions and then protests against Antony's treachery towards Lepidus has been remolded into a colder, more effective, more sinister Cassius. He has, as John Danby suggests, the essential deadliness of the Machiavel without the super-

[68] Plutarch's Lives: Englished by Sir Thomas North, ed. W. H. D. Rouse (London, 1899), IX, 45.

ficial trappings. He has his own concept of honour, best defined by his attribution of dishonour to Antony because of his political irresponsibility and his failure to act manfully to achieve military goals (I.iv.55-76), and to this concept he adheres. This concept has, however, little in common with Enobarbus's "honesty" (or Lear's concept of honour), and it is brought into direct contrast with Antony's concept of honour when Caesar refuses Antony's challenge to personal combat with

> let the old ruffian know,
> I have many other ways to die; meantime
> Laugh at his challenge. (IV.i.4-6)

Antony's honour, which is very like Hotspur's, does not go uncriticized, but by the play's end, remembering Caesar's treachery towards Pompey, Lepidus, and Cleopatra,[69] the audience is likely to find Antony's rather childish chivalry more attractive than Caesar's remorseless submission of every other value to success.

The contrast between the concepts of honour of Caesar and Antony is emphasized by the moral struggles of Pompey and Enobarbus. Pompey is, of course, depicted as weak and foolish; Menas's aside, "Thy father, Pompey, would ne'er have made this treaty" (II.vi.82-83); his later statement, "Pompey doth this day laugh away his fortune" (II.vi.102); and Pompey's own complaint,

> O Antony,
> You have my father's house. But what, we are friends?
> (II.vii.126-127)[70]

[69] It is significant that Shakespeare omits from the play any reference to Pompey's prior attack on Caesar or to Caesar's remarkable bravery in subduing Lepidus, both described by North.

[70] This humiliating capitulation seems to have been suggested to Shakespeare by a statement in North (p. 42) quite the opposite in its implications: "That [his galley] (said he) is my father's house they have left me. He spake it to taunt Antonius, because he had his father's house, that was Pompey the Great."

are proof enough of this. I believe, however, that in the decision which is to determine the future course of his life, when on his galley he forbids Menas to betray and murder Antony and Caesar,

> Ah, this thou shouldst have done,
> And not have spoke on't! In me 'tis villainy,
> In thee, 't had been good service. Thou must know,
> 'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour;
> Mine honour, it, (II.vii.73-77)

he is showing unusual self-understanding and a virtue which contrasts sharply with Caesar's expediency.[71]

The moral struggle of Enobarbus makes the same contrast. In forsaking Antony for Caesar, Enobarbus chooses reason (in a broader and more moral sense of the word than that given it by Edmund, Goneril, and Regan)over aconventional, even foolish, loyalty; not simply expediency over honour (see III.x.35-37, xiii.41-46, 62-65, 195-201). Nevertheless his repudiation of this decision by his death by heart-break, surely a moral kind of suicide, brings this cynical man down on the side of Antony's romantic values. In retrospect, both Enobarbus and Pompey are seen to have rejected success as a dominating value and to have chosen, like Antony, honour and death.

A further Machiavellian quality in Caesar is his insincerity. Many of the declarations and agreements which he made with apparent sincerity are shown by his subsequent acts to be false, and he twice speaks with obvious hypocrisy: first, in his elaborate and impassioned eulogy of Antony, which he breaks off with "But I will tell you at some meeter season" (V.i.49), and second, in his frankly treacherous negotiations with Cleopatra in Act V. Usually employed single-mindedly in the service of expediency and success, his hypocrisy in the latter

[71] For a different view, cf. Granville-Barker, I, 368.

case is apparently motivated only by a desire to humiliate and gloat over his victim and therefore suggests cruelty of a Machiavellian order. Another Machiavellian act not clearly motivated by expediency occurs when he excuses the imprisonment of Lepidus to Antony in this way: "I have told him, Lepidus was grown too cruel" (III.vi.32). Although taken almost unchanged from North (77), this charge is so manifestly beyond the potentialities of the Lepidus portrayed in the play that it becomes a cynical and insulting admission of tyranny.

By drawing Caesar, who achieves in the play all his important objectives, as a man with Machiavellian elements in his character, Shakespeare has made a statement about the relationship between Machiavellism (in the most general sense) and success. This is one of the main themes of the play and is dealt with not only through the character and career of Caesar but also through those of Antony, Enobarbus, and Pompey. By the play's end the theme has broadened to include an assessment of the very nature and value of "success" and "failure". This is the most interesting and philosophically significant aspect of Shakespeare's use of Machiavellism in this play. It must not, however, be allowed to obscure the fact that the basic function of the Machiavellian elements is to control the audience's attitudes towards the two contending heroes. The basic dramatic effect of the de-emphasis of Antony's Machiavellian traits and the emphasis of Caesar's is to raise the audience's opinion of Antony and to lower its opinion of Caesar, thus contributing to the maintenance of Antony as the play's hero.

III

Another use to which the Machiavellian stereotype is put in the plays is to provide humour. This can be perhaps most clearly seen in The Winter's Tale, in which Autolycus, a comic rogue, reveals many Machiavellian characteristics. He laughs and boasts of his wickedness, declaring that he was born under Mercury, God of Thieves, and that his revenue is "the silly cheat" (IV.iii.25-28), and he addresses the audience directly in soliloquies and asides (IV.iii.117-122, iv.594-617, 636, 639-640, etc.), usually in a cynical, engaging and witty manner. Rather like Iago and Edmund, he mocks conventional moral standards—"Ha, ha! What a fool honesty is! and Trust, her sworn brother, a very simple gentleman!" (IV.iv.594-595)—and ironically warns his victims against the mistakes into which he himself is leading them (IV.iv.254-255).

Despite all this, however, his function in the plot (admittedly a rather tenuous function—in the source, Robert Greene's Pandosto or the Triumph of Time, an almost identical plot is executed without such a character) is that of the trusty servant. He reappoints himself servant to Prince Florizel, whom he refers to as "my master" (IV.iv.707, 831, V.ii.151), and devotes himself to his interest with the most awkward of explanations: "If I thought it were a piece of honesty to acquaint the king withal, I would not do't: I hold it the more knavery to conceal it; and therein am I constant to my profession" (IV.iv.677-680); "Though I am not naturally honest, I am so sometimes by chance" (IV.iv.709-710).

The Machiavellian aspects of his behaviour, which run counter to his function in the plot, serve different ends: first, by cozening the

peasants with so much enthusiasm and declaring his villainy with so much gaiety and impudence, he amuses the audience, thus contributing to the contrast in tone between the earlier scenes in Sicilia, in which he does not appear, and the Bohemian scenes, in which he does; second, by presenting what usually seems terrible in a ridiculous light, he enables the members of the audience to resolve in laughter their tensions and conflicts concerning Machiavellism, both as it is presented in this character and others like him on the stage and, in a broader sense of the term, as they face it in their own every-day lives.

Parolles, in All's Well that Ends Well, who is something of a Machiavel although conforming more fully to the miles gloriosus stereotype, has very similar functions. He, too, has little effect on the plot and is included mainly to provide humour and emotional relief. Since his unheroic vices never seem likely to lead to serious harm, the audience can relax and watch his machinations with amusement.

The principle that the Machiavel will seem funny to the audience if they sense that his evil schemes will prove ineffective can be illustrated in Much Ado about Nothing. Here the Machiavel, Don John, conforms to the stereotype more fully than Autolycus or Parolles. He is, or pretends to be, murderous and is certainly egoistic, treacherous, cruel, unsentimental, and hypocritical. His "practice" is referred to by Benedick (IV.i.185), and he boasts of his villainy (I.iii.11-34) and implies he would like to poison the whole company (I.iii.66-67); later both Borachio and Claudio refer to his slander as poison (II.ii.20, V.i.239). He employs Borachio as a henchman and participates with him in a hypocritical hoax. Like all Machiavels, he feels isolated from normal society and, although it is not emphasized as a cause of

his isolation, he is, like Edmund, a bastard. In other ways he reminds one of Iago: his comment when he is told of Don Pedro's plan to woo Hero for Claudio, "Come, come, let us thither: this may prove food to my displeasure. That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow" (I.iii.59-61), recalls the motive-hunting of Iago; later, after asserting to Claudio that Hero is promiscuous and that he can prove his charge that very night, he adds, "If you love her then, to-morrow wed her" (III.ii.101-102), which is a technique that Iago was to employ to greater effect.

Don John, nevertheless, is not to be taken seriously. When he announces to his companions, "Though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied but I am a plain-dealing villain" (I.iii.27-29), he seems only petulant and adolescent, and his melodramatic threat, "Would the cook were o' my mind" (I.iii.66-67), contrasts markedly with the rather petty attempts at revenge which he actually undertakes. As a result, his maliciousness and exaggerated threats evoke contempt and amusement rather than fear; he is funny not only when he is witty but when he is trying to appear dangerously wicked. He does not cause, and is not expected to cause, permanent harm, and one feels sure that the brave punishments which Benedick at the end of the play promises to devise for him will mortify his spirit as much as his body. Like Parolles, he will live; death is a punishment reserved for more terrible villains.

IV

To provide amusement and resolve emotional conflict are not the only functionsof Don John; as Coleridge has pointed out, he is the mainspring of the plot.[72] His machinations create a conflict in the courtship of Hero and Claudio paralleling that in the courtship of Beatrice and Benedick which grows naturally out of their personalities. This use of the Machiavel, as a source of conflict, can be seen in isolation in As You Like It.

Oliver, eldest son of Sir Roland de Boys, shows himself in the early scenes to be murderous, egoistic, avaricious, treacherous, cruel, and unsentimental. He threatens his brother, Orlando, in soliloquies, some of which seem to be addressed directly to the audience (I.i.80-83, 89-90, 154-164), and he ascribes to his brother qualities which the audience will recognize as belonging to himself: Orlando, he tells Charles, the wrestler, will "practice against thee by poison, entrap thee by some treacherous device, and never leave thee till he hath ta'en thy life by some indirect means or other" (I.i.141-144). He plans to burn his brother in his lodging, a stratagem which Adam, a loyal servant, refers to as "his practices" (II.iii.19-26). Further, like Iago, he admits that he feels a deadly hatred for his victim which he recognizes as being caused by jealousy but which he does not fully understand: "I hope I shall see an end of him; for my soul, yet I know not why, hates nothing more than he . . . . [He is] so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprised" (I.i. 155-161).

[72] See Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, ed. Much Ado about Nothing (Cambridge, 1923), p. xvii.

Like Iago, too, he gulls a virtuous and disinterested person, in this case Charles, into taking the part of a tool-villain and attempting to maim or murder his master's victim.

Oliver's treatment of his brother finds a parallel in the play in Duke Frederick's treachery towards his own brother, the rightful Duke. Duke Frederick, the "humorous Duke," is not presented specifically as a Machiavel, but his usurpation of his elder brother's place suggests Machiavellian elements in his character.

The function of the villainy of both Duke Frederick and Oliver is clearly to create conflict; having dispossessed the major virtuous characters from their rightful places and effected their withdrawal into Arden by this means, Shakespeare rather arbitrarily reforms his villains. Frederick does not appear again and we are told in the final scene that he has been converted by an "old religious man". Oliver's role, when he turns up in the forest, is a sympathetic one.

V

In the histories the Machiavellian elements, although selected and shaped to conform to the dramatic requirements of the plays, usually follow closely the chronicles of Holinshed, Hall , Grafton, and perhaps others, for in a history play fidelity to the historical source is in itself an end. In the Henry VI trilogy[73] this fidelity is found in the treatment of the rebellious lords, Richard, Duke of York, Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, the Duke of Suffolk, the Duke of Somerset, and the Duke of Buckingham, all of whom, tempted by the possibility of obtaining power over the throne and, in York's case, even the title of king, spurn the traditional moral code and behave in a Machiavellian manner.

Of them Winchester conforms most closely to the Machiavellian stereotype. Among the Machiavellian traits which he either shows himself to have or is accused of having by honourable or impartial characters, whose testimony is likely to be accepted by the audience, are impiety (i.e. atheism) (Part I:I.i.41-43, iii.35), murderousness (I:I.iii.34, III.i.22-23), pride (i.e. egoism) (I:1.iii.85, V.i.56-57), avarice (I:III.i.17), treacherousness (I:III.i.21, II:I.ii.94), ambition (I:I.i.176-177, III.i.24-26), and hypocrisy (II:III.i.277). He praises a plan to murder his nephew, Duke Humphrey, as "worthy policy" (II:III.i.235), addresses villainous asides directly to the audience (I:III.i.141),[74] utters threats in asides (I:I.i.175-177, V.i.56-62),

[73] On the sources of these plays, see J. Dover Wilson, ed. I Henry VI (Cambridge, 1952), pp. xxxii-xxxvi.

[74] Pope's amendment to this line can hardly be challenged.

and employs as a henchman a treacherous and avaricious priest, Sir John Hume, an ecclesiastical Ithamore who boasts of his villainy in soliloquy (II:I.ii.87-107), addresses himself by name (II:I.ii.72, 87, 88, 105), and utters Machiavellian maxims (II:I.ii.92, 100). When his usefulness is over, Winchester has this fellow arrested and hanged. When he dies himself, "blaspheming God, and cursing men on earth" (II:III.ii.372), he reveals in his ravings that he had earlier fatally poisoned Duke Humphrey (II:III.iii.8-18).

This portrait, black though it is, is squarely based on the chronicles. Emphasis has been given to his villainy—some crimes which are recorded in the chronicles as charges against him by others are depicted as fact in the play, and at his death intransigence and despair are substituted for repentance and a request for prayers[75] but the man's basic character and role are clearly those presented in the chronicles. The Machiavellian aspects of the characters of the other lords and of Queen Margaret are based just as firmly on the chronicles.

This is also generally true of Shakespeare's treatment of the French. Their deceitfulness is emphasized (five references are made to their policy and practice—I:II.i.25, III.ii.2, 20, iii.12, V.iv.159) and the Duke of Alençon is referred to as "that notorious Machiavel!" (I:V.iv.74),[76] but Shakespeare has in the main kept close to his sources. Joan of Arc, in whom most of the Machiavellian elements in the French

[75] See Shakespere's Holinshed: The Chronicle and the Historical Plays Compared, ed. W. G. Boswell-Stone (London, 1896), pp. 269-270.

[76] There is undoubtedly a confusion here between the contemporary duke and the Alençon, later Henry III, who was involved in the St. Bartholomew's Massacre.

party are concentrated, is, like the others, made more deceitful than she is in the chronicles and is depicted as being stupidly hypocritical about her origin (I:V.iv.2-33) and cynically unpatriotic: after delivering a patriotic harangue to Burgundy, she exclaims in an aside, "Done like a Frenchman: turn, and turn again!" (I:III.iii.85). The other evil qualities depicted in her, however, are found in the sources; the scene in which she raises devils is a dramatization of the charge actually made against her—and of which she was found guilty. Her claim, after her conviction, that she is pregnant is also from Holinshed.[77]

Only in Richard of Gloucester do we find the creation of an extensive Machiavellism not based on the chronicles. Until King Henry is captured and Edward is established apparently securely on the throne, Richard's role is that of the chivalrous knight and loyal son: after the battle near Sandal Castle he asserts with apparent sincerity,

> I cannot joy until I be resolv'd
> Where our right valiant father is become,
> (III:II.i.9-10)

and, at Towton, his courage and determination when his brothers and Warwick have lost heart inspires them to renewed effort and eventual victory. The only suggestion in this part of the play of his future development as a Machiavel is his equivocation when he contests his brother's blunt recommendation that their father, York, break his vows and take the crown by force. He exclaims piously, "No; God forbid your grace should be forsworn," and then proceeds to argue that they can seize the crown because his oath to King Henry was not valid (III:1.ii.18-34).

Immediately after the arrival of the news of Henry's capture, however, he reveals himself as a full-fledged Machiavel.

[77] Shakespere's Holinshed, p. 239.

> Would he [Edward] were wasted, marrow, bones, and all,
> That from his loins no hopeful branch may spring,
> To cross me from the golden time I look for!
> (III:III.ii.125-127)

he announces in soliloquy, and proceeds to deck himself in the robes of the stereotype:

> 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 further off, I'll pluck it down.
> (III:III.ii.182-195)

He continues to utter threats and boast of his villainy in asides and soliloquies during the rest of the play (III:IV.i.83, 124-126, V.vi.61-93, vii.21-25, 33-34). Besides committing the supreme crime of killing the king, he devises a Machiavellian stratagem to get rid of his brother, Clarence (III:V.vi.84-88). He also addresses himself by name (III:III.ii.146) and during the first part of the play displays the cynical wit which is to characterize his villainy in Richard III.

According to the chronicles Richard began to play an active role in the affairs of state only at the battle of Tewkesbury, which occurs in the play in V.iv. Indeed, during much of the action described in the play he was living with the Duke of Burgundy in Utrecht. His expanded role is in accord with the function of all the English (and to a lesser degree the French) Machiavels in the trilogy, which is to portray some of the evil consequences of weak rule, rule which encourages, at home and abroad, the evil potentialities of man. This postulation might suggest

that the play is a vehicle for political doctrine, and, in a sense, it is—as all the history plays are. The doctrine, however, was not Shakespeare's, but the chroniclers. The emphasis given in the plays to the Machiavellian elements in certain characters makes no change in the "statement" made by the chroniclers about weak kings and the development of Machiavels, but it does sharpen the play and make it more effective dramatically. Indeed the obvious function of Shakespeare's biggest change, the expansion of the role of Gloucester, is purely a dramatic one: to serve as an introduction to Richard III.[78]

In terms of the treatment of the Machiavellian elements, The Life and Death of King John is very like the Henry VI plays. Here, too, most of the characters with Machiavellian aspects, King John, Queen Eleanor, and the Dauphin, have roles similar to those in the source-play, the Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England;[79] one, however, Philip the Bastard, has a role very much larger than that in the source.

[78] Whether this function was intended by Shakespeare, who was finishing his awkward trilogy with his mind already on Richard III, or whether it reflects merely the kindling of an interest which was later to be fulfilled in a play about this character need not be considered in this paper. In either case Shakespeare was thinking as a dramatist, not as a philosopher.

[79] That the Troublesome Raigne is the source of King John is accepted, at least tentatively, by most scholars. See James McManaway, "The Year's Contribution to Shakespearian Study: Textual Studies," ShS, IX (1956), 151; F. B. Williams' review of the New Arden King John, SQ, VI (1955), 339-340; and the introductions by Dover Wilson and G. W. G. Wickham to the New Shakespeare (1936) and London (1958) editions respectively. Two scholars, however, have suggested otherwise: E. A. G. Honigmann, in the introduction to the New Arden edition (1954), argues that King John is the source of the Troublesome Raigne, and E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays, pp. 215-218, postulates a common source-play, now lost. Either of these theories, if confirmed, would invalidate much of my comment on King John; their refutation, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

King John displays more policy than honour in buying off King Philip of France and Cardinal Pandulph, the first with five hard-won continental provinces and the other with submission to that "Italian priest," the Pope; he tacitly admits that he has usurped the throne of his nephew, Arthur (I.i.40-43); and he is accused by Salisbury of "practice" with regard to the boy (IV.iii.63). Further, he employs a henchman, Hubert, whom he orders to murder Arthur and with whom he exchanges endearments (III.ii.29-79). Afterwards, believing Hubert to have carried out his orders, he rebukes and banishes him (IV.ii.203-248).

In the Troublesome Raigne King John's role is basically the same. He is not portrayed as believing his claim to the throne to be illegal, there are no references to his "practice," and there is no exchange of endearments with Hubert, who is induced to agree to murder Arthur by threats, not bribes;[80] otherwise he behaves just as he does in King John. As I have already remarked, this is true also of the Queen and the Dauphin: except for her admission in King John of Arthur's prior right to the throne, Queen Eleanor is also portrayed as she is in the source, and the treacheries of Lewis and the other French lords remain entirely unchanged.

The role of Philip the Bastard, on the other hand, has been considerably expanded. The vitalization of this character, which lifts him above the level of his counterpart in the source and the other characters in King John and makes him the dynamic, though not the structural, centre of the play, seems to be related to Shakespeare's

[80]"The Troublesome Raigne of John King of England," Six Old Plays on which Shakespeare Founded his Measure for Measure. Comedy of Errors. Taming the Shrew. King John. K. Henry IV. and K. Henry V. King Lear., II (London, 1779), 262. Subsequent references will be to this edition.

appreciation of the ethical conflict implied in the Bastard's position in the source-play, for this aspect of his role has been strongly emphasized.

To begin with, Shakespeare has made the Bastard both conscious of the ethical problems which confront him and eloquent about them. After watching King Philip, "God's own soldier," march to the battle-field to ensure that justice is upheld, and then, Arthur's rights forgotten, sign an advantageous treaty with King John, he soliloquizes on the nature of the deity before whom all the world bows down:

> that same purpose-changer, that sly divel,
> That broker, that still breaks the pate of faith,
> That daily break-vow, he that wins of all,
> Of kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maids,
> Who, having no external thing to lose
> But the word "maid", cheats the poor maid of that,
> That smooth-fac'd gentleman, tickling commodity.
> (II.i.567-573)

Then he admits that he too is his devotee:

> And why rail I on this commodity?
> But for because he hath not woo'd me yet:
> Not that I have the power to clutch my hand,
> When his fair angels would salute my palm . . . .
> Since kings break faith upon commodity,
> Gain, be my lord, for I will worship thee!
> (587-598)

He has enunciated the problem which faces the honourable man in a world of rogues in terms similar to those used by Machiavelli himself, and he has chosen to play the Machiavel: when he suggests, as his counterpart does in the Troublesome Raigne, that the English and French armies join forces to bring down Angiers, he adds self-consciously,

> How like you this wild counsel, mighty states?
> Smacks it not something of the policy? (II.i.395-396)

and he later boasts in an aside of his "prudent discipline" which seems likely to give them the advantage over their new allies as well. His adoption of these mannerisms, characteristic of the stereotype, indicates

his awareness of the nature of his choice.

Shakespeare has also modified the plot of the source in order to increase the ethical conflict. In the Troublesome Raigne the Bastard does not face King John after the supposed murder of Arthur until the king has been informed of Hubert's compassion and Arthur's accidental death. Although the king's only explanation to him,

> where's the barons that so suddainely
> Did leave the king upon a false surmise? (p. 284)

is strangely vague, the Bastard knows John is innocent and can so proclaim him when he next meets the lords (p. 293). On the other hand, in King John, he meets the king when everyone except Hubert believes Arthur to have been murdered by John, and he is therefore confronted with the same problem that confronts Salisbury and the other lords: when one's sworn sovereign is a monster, should one revolt? Salisbury, Pembroke, and Bigot desert John in revulsion, unconcerned with their own interest. The Bastard, making what turns out to be the politically sound decision, ignores John's revolting crime and maintains his loyalty. He mentions that Bigot and Salisbury "say" that Arthur has been killed at the king's suggestion (IV.ii.162-166), but he makes no enquiries about the situation and with as few words as possible goes off to bring them back to receive another bribe. When he meets them, his appeal is to their "reason", not to their ethics or emotions (IV.iii.30).

The Bastard's ethical conflict is also increased by his awareness of the illegality of John's claim to the throne. In the Troublesome Raigne, at his meeting with the renegade lords, he can declaim with apparent sincerity,

> Why Salsburie, admit the wrongs are true,
> Yet subjects may not take in hand revenge,
> And rob the heavens of their proper power. (p. 293)

In King John he knows that his patron's claim is false. After the lords have left, he talks privately to Hubert and, carried away by his emotions, admits Arthur's right to the throne:

> How easy dost thou take all England up!
> From forth this morsel of dead royalty,
> The life, the right and truth of all this realm
> Is fled to heaven. (IV.iii.142-145)[81]

Nevertheless he returns to the king to handle "a thousand businesses. . . brief in hand."

The Bastard's conversation with Hubert is of particular interest because of his suddenly moral tone:

> Beyond the infinite and boundless reach
> Of mercy, if thou didst this deed of death,
> Art thou damn'd, Hubert, (IV.iii.117-119)

he insists, and proceeds to castigate him in the blacks and whites of traditional morality (IV.iii.120-134). Thus we see this benevolent Machiavel making a clear distinction between Hubert's private morality and his own personal feelings, on the one hand, and his own public behaviour and the king's public acts, on the other. This is a distinction that must be made in any attempt to justify Machiavellism, but it is not one that is easily maintained. Unfortunately, Shakespeare, following the lines of the plot established in the Troublesome Raigne, does not carry his analysis further; the Bastard is not himself called upon to perform a criminal act in the service of the state and is allowed to survive, justified by the correctness of his political judgements, with his personal integrity relatively untarnished.

[81] Simply on the grounds of intelligibility I have rejected Honigmann's restoration of the reading in F1 in favour of Theobald's emendation, which is followed in the (old) Arden, New Shakespeare, and London editions.

The Bastard's function in King John, in comparison to that in the Troublesome Raigne, remains unchanged. With a few exceptions—in the Troublesome Raigne John rescues Queen Eleanor, in King John the Bastard does—he acts as he does in the source. The change lies in the sharpening of the conflict which he faces and in his greater awareness of this conflict. Had these changes been carried further, Shakespeare's most searching analysis of the nature of Machiavellism might have resulted. As the play stands, the Bastard's role makes only an incomplete statement about Machiavellism. He is, however, a fully realized character who adds immeasurably to the play's interest—and this, surely, was Shakespeare's intention when he made the changes.

John F. Danby, comparing the Machiavellism of Richard III and that of the Bastard, tries to discover "the direction in which Shakespeare is moving."[82] But King John must be compared with the Troublesome Raigne, not Richard III. Shakespeare's problem can then be seen to be, not "how to legitimize the illegitimate," but quite the opposite; the Bastard's Machiavellism has been increased, not reduced.[83]

The treatment of the Machiavellian elements in the other history plays is similar to that in those already discussed. In Richard II

[82] Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, p. 77. See pp. 67-80.

[83] On the same grounds I consider it futile to compare Shakespeare's attitude towards killing the king in Richard III and King John, or to "follow the course of Shakespeare's thought on rebellion in Henry IV and King Lear" (Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, pp. 78-79). This approach is justified only if Shakespeare chose these widely varying subjects specifically to express his view on rebellion, a circumstance which cannot be verified and which seems wildly unlikely. Surely these plays, like King John, were chosen primarily for their dramatic value.

Bolingbroke shows himself to be something of a Machiavel. He is given none of the habits and mannerisms of the stereotype, however, and most of his Machiavellian deeds are based on the recognized sources of the play.[84] The only important exception is his rejection and banishment of his henchman, Sir Piers Exton, who has murdered King Richard at his request. This incident is probably not based directly on any source, but was suggested to Shakespeare by Holinshed's statement, which is the direct source of V.iv, that King Henry hinted that he wanted Richard murdered, but did not directly order it.[85] This embellishment certainly makes him seem more Machiavellian.

Shakespeare also seems to be deliberately emphasizing Bolingbroke's Machiavellism in Richard's speech, which is similar to passages in both The Prince and Leycester's Commonwealth,[86] predicting conflict between Bolingbroke and Northumberland:

> thou shalt think,
> Though he divide the realm and give thee half,
> It is too little, helping him to all;
> He shall think that thou, which knowest the way
> To plant unrightful kings, wilt know again,
> Being ne'er so little urg'd, another way
> To pluck him headlong from the usurped throne
> (V.i.59-65)

It is probable that this conception reached Shakespeare through Samuel Daniel's Civil Wars,[87] but even if he did not know its original source,

[84] Peter Ure, ed. Richard II (London, 1956) pp. xxx-li, gives a comprehensive account of the play's sources.

[85] Shakespere's Holinshed, p. 125. Cf. Ure, V.vi.34, n.

[86] See Praz, The Flaming Heart, p. 126.

[87] See Ure, pp. xlii-xliv; V.i.59-68, n. Ure confuses Worcester and Northumberland.

its Machiavellian flavour would be readily apparent, for the idea is presented in Daniel's poem as a series of politic maxims set off in quotation marks.[88]

This is the limit of Shakespeare's extension of Bolingbroke's Machiavellism. Bolingbroke does not admit that he is a Machiavel, nor does he deny the validity of the conventional moral code; certainly he does not enounce, as Iago and Edmund do, an alternative code. His role is firmly based on the sources; his main function, beyond that of depicting a historical character, is to torment the hero and thus produce in that character the emotional conflict which is the occasion for much of the finest poetry in the play.

In King Henry IV, the most important character to show Machiavellian characteristics is Prince Hal. He is always conscious of the impression he is making and in a politic way regulates his actions accordingly (e.g. II King Henry IV: II.ii.37-59). He justifies his means (which are never really wicked) by his ends (which are always virtuous); he is aware of the techniques of the Machiavel. If Dr. Tillyard's reading of part one, II.iv, and part two, II.ii, is correct, he manipulates his companions like a Machiavel.[89] In a sense, John Danby is correct in calling him a Machiavel of goodness.[90]

For the Elizabethan audience, however, such a term would have seemed self-contradictory. It would not have thought of Hal as a Machiavel, nor was it Shakespeare's intention to present him as one.

[88] The Civil Wars, II. 2-3.

[89] Shakespeare's History Plays, pp. 272-277.

[90] Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, pp. 91, 100.

He was no doubt aware of the moral predicament that Hal, as heir to a stolen crown, was in; but the play, although it is rich enough to comprehend this predicament,[91] never presents it overtly or attempts to resolve it.

Prince Hal is to be taken at face value. Danby describes the policy which Prince Hal enounces in his opening soliloquy (I.ii.194-216) as a maneuver to make reformation a means, rather than an end,[92] and so it can be taken. It can also be interpreted as a rationalization of the dissolute behaviour in which he has engaged because of its inherent attractiveness or because, as Tillyard suggests,[93] it acts as a release from the pressures and moral conflicts of the court. The significance of this speech, however, lies in what it says, rather than in its motivation; in the light of his final triumphant acceptance of responsibility it establishes Hal's position as virtuous hero.

A psychological approach to these plays, one which delves deeply into character and motivation, is not as fruitful as it is in many of the other plays in the canon. Hal's character does not develop; at the beginning of I Henry IV, already capable of taking command, he is waiting only for the time to ripen. The central conflict in the play lies in the discrepancy between his reputation among the other characters and the audience's knowledge of his real worth. The main source of interest, stimulated by the frequent use of dramatic irony, lies in the audience's anticipation of the revelation of his true character and of

[91] See Shakespeare's History Plays, pp. 281-282.

[92] Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, p. 96.

[93] Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 181.

the surprise, discomfiture, relief, and even elation of the other characters. His opening soliloquy, like his treatment of Falstaff throughout the play, is an integral part of this design. If, as Danby suggests, Machiavellism has been submitted in this play to a process of white-washing,[94] it is a by-product of this design.

This is not to suggest that by-products can be ignored in the plays of Shakespeare. It would be a denial of their richness to argue that the plays about Bolingbroke and Hal have nothing to say about Machiavellism as a philosophy and way of life. There are a great many suggestive details which qualify the plays' rather hearty acceptance of the ways of the world. In Henry IV Bolingbroke is presented with sympathy and his expressions of remorse are to be accepted as sincere, but he remains politic enough to advise Prince Hal to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels (II:IV.v.212-214). Although it is based squarely on Holinshed, Prince John's Machiavellian betrayal of the rebels is more suggestive. The parallels between his position and Prince Hal's and between his offer of amnesty and the earlier one by his father, which was not tested, remind us of the ambiguous moral position of the Lancastrian party and of the priority all have given to success.

Then there is Falstaff. A Disorder figure, like Spencer's Mutability and Ape and Fox, a symbol of Appetite, and a composite of many stock comic types, he is also a comic Machiavel.[95] In his

[94] Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, p.91.

[95] The prototype of the role, though not of the character, is Sir John Oldcastle in The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth. On the sources of the character, see E. E. Stoll, "Falstaff," MP, XII (1914), 197-240; J. W. Draper, "Falstaff, 'a Fool and Jester,'" MLQ, VII (1946), 453-462; J. W. Shirley, "Falstaff, an Elizabethan Glutton," PQ, XVII (1938), 251-287.

catechism upon honour (I:V.i.127-141) and his later soliloquy concerning valour and discretion (I:V.iv.111-130), he is contrasted directly with Hotspur, whose obsession with honour is the antithesis of Machiavellism. This contrast, moreover, is related to Prince Hal's conception of honour. For both Falstaff and Hotspur, honour is "this bubble reputation," and in these terms Falstaff's catechism makes sense. It is Prince Hal, fighting to effect ends broader than the gaining of renown, who refutes it.[96]

For the attentive member of the audience, and more especially the attentive reader, all this is suggestive, and he is led to wonder about the dramatist's attitude towards the Machiavellian acts of his characters. Such speculation cannot be answered, however, for these plays, like the other history plays, make no coherent statement about Machiavellism.

[96] See J. Dover Wilson, The Fortunes of Falstaff (Cambridge, 1943), pp. 70-73.

The purpose of this thesis has been to demonstrate that the basic structures of Shakespeare's plays were determined by factors other than the intention of presenting the dramatist's views about Machiavellism; that Shakespeare employed the Machiavellian stereotype and elements of it primarily for dramatic purposes; that these purposes militated against the presentation of a coherent statement about Machiavellism within the framework of any single play; and that, therefore, a pattern of the dramatist's changing attitudes to Machiavellism does not exist in the plays as a whole.

There is, however, one play, The Tempest, which makes a deliberate and coherent statement about the kind of evil which involves Machiavellism. Whatever the sources of this play,[97] Shakespeare seems to have shaped it with more regard for its philosophical import than he did any of his earlier works. The characters have been pared down to their essential elements and the whole play has been cast in an unrealistic style, so that the characters assume, for most critics, at least, symbolic significance. Frank Kermode, in the introduction to the New Arden edition, asserts that "there can be no question that the tragicomic form of the last plays was dictated by the nature of the fables treated, and that these were chosen because they lent themselves to the formulation of poetic propositions concerning the status of human life in relation to nature, and the mercy of a providence which gives new

[97] See G. W. G. Wickham's introduction to the play in The London Shakespeare, ed. John Munro (London, 1948), II, 1396-98.

life when the old is scarred by sin or lost in folly."[98] This is clearly best done in The Tempest. Wilson Knight calls the play "an interpretation of Shakespeare's world" and defends its paucity of metaphor on the grounds that "the play is itself metaphor."[99] Even Tillyard, while denying an elaborate repertory of precise symbols, finds "a certain amount of symbolism" probable.[100]

Symbolized in the play are several forms of evil. Besides the sub-human, instinctive evil of Caliban and the ignoble wickedness of the servants, there is the sophisticated villainy of Antonio and Sebastian, which, although its symbolic meaning is not restricted to Machiavellism, has within it the essence of Machiavellism.[101]

Tillyard calls Antonio one of Shakespeare's major villains.[102] He is fully as murderous as Iago or Edmund: Prospero makes it clear that in the original revolt Antonio spared his life only because it was expedient to do so, and on the island it is Antonio who brings about the attempted murder of Alonso and his party. In both his earlier behaviour and his present actions he is egoistic and cruel. His remarks about conscience,

[98] The Tempest (London, 1954), p. lxi.

[99] The Crown of Life: Essays in Interpretation of Shakespeare's Final Plays, 2nd ed. (London, 1948), pp. 204, 224.

[100] Shakespeare's Last Plays (London, 1951), p. 68.

[101] The Machiavels in the other late plays do not have this symbolic quality, although the plays themselves may be, as Frank Kermode suggests, "poetic propositions" about life. I have already dealt with Autolycus in The Winter's Tale. Iachimo, in Cymbeline, has a double function, similar to that of Don John, in Much Ado, as source of conflict and comic villain.

[102] Last Plays, p. 51.

> Ay, sir; where lies that? if 'twere a kibe,
> 'Twould put me to my slipper; but I feel not
> This deity in my bosom: twenty consciences,
> That stand 'twixt me and Milan, candied be they,
> And melt, ere they molest! (II.i.271-275)

depict directly the unsentimentality and contempt for traditional values which he had before shown in his treachery to his well-meaning brother.

Ambition, too, which was the motive for his earlier villainy, is shown operating in the play, for if Sebastian murders Alonso, Antonio's knowledge of the crime will allow him to reverse the subservient position he has had in his relationship with Alonso. Further, he plots murder with a henchman, Sebastian, and with him engages in prolonged raillery against Gonzalo, which in its cynical camaraderie evokes the relationship of Richard III and Buckingham.

Though as unpleasant as Antonio, Sebastian is less aggressive and less steadfast in his villainy. His attempt, after Prospero's exposure of their treachery, to make himself one of the group by interjecting in the conversation unnecessary remarks and exclamations (V.i.177, 263-265, 278, 285, 299) suggests embarrassment and even a sense of guilt. Antonio, like Aaron and Iago, says nothing, thus giving the impression, despite Prospero's assertion that "they" (presumably Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio) are penitent (V.i.28), that he has remained intransigent.[103]

Antonio's previous Machiavellism is, of course, a necessary part of the explanation of the initial situation in the play, but, as part of the total expression of his nature, it becomes more than this. His

[103] Frank Kermode, The Tempest, p. lxii, supports this view; Wilson Knight, The Crown of Life, p. 241, is less certain.

Machiavellian behaviour in the play is part of its very web and woof, for it is part of Prospero's plan: the re-enactment, forgiveness, and redemption of evil. He represents a condition of man, and his intransigence suggests that it is a condition which is permanent and which virtuous men must learn to live with and attempt to control. One is tempted to state that it also suggests that virtuous men can control the Machiavel and that Machiavellism contains within itself the seeds of its destruction, but, although Shakespeare may well have believed this, its suggestion in The Tempest—and in all the other plays in which Machiavels appear—is clearly a function of the play's dramatic requirements. We are left then with a statement about Machiavellism as simple as it is true; its value lies, not in the statement made, but in the way it is made. And this is true of the other plays as well.

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