Shakespeare's 'Rational' Villains in Relation to Right Reason.

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SHAKESPEARE'S 'RATIONAL' VILLAINS IN RELATION TO RIGHT REASON

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
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Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

The Department of English

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. DISTRUST OF REASON</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE HUMANISTIC SPIRIT</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. EMERGENCE OF THE VILLAIN OF REASON</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE HISTORIES</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE TRAGEDIES</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. THE COMEDIES</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
O miserable me! how I indeed started
when he seized me, saying: 'Perhaps
you did not think me a logician!'
(Inferno, Canto XXVII)
ABSTRACT

Shakespeare's villains derive their rationalistic traits from the Vice of medieval English drama as well as from the stage Machiavel. Although a number of critical studies have touched upon the rationalism of Shakespeare's villains, none have dealt adequately with the question of whether the presence of rational villainy in the plays argues an underlying distrust of reason on the part of the dramatist. As early as the Middle Ages, man had begun to doubt the efficacy of reason in leading him to higher knowledge. Distrust of reason continued into the Renaissance under the auspices of the Protestant Reformation. Skeptics such as Montaigne were making their voices heard while The Prince stood as dramatic proof that reason did not necessarily lead to goodness and virtue. Shakespeare's rational villains must be viewed not only in the light of man's growing distrust of reason but also in the context of what Renaissance thinkers termed right reason. Briefly, right reason recognizes an ordered universe created by a rational Supreme Being, and it regards reason and virtue as indivisible. In denying right reason Shakespeare's rational villains reflect
the beliefs of continental humanists. Since the doctrine of right reason was central to orthodox English humanism, Shakespeare's villains of reason must therefore represent the rebellious intellectual minority. They serve, finally, as a criticism of the Age.

An examination of the histories, tragedies, and comedies, reveals Shakespeare's belief that rational social order has correspondences in a rationally ordered cosmos. In these plays, the rational villain functions as an agent of political and moral chaos. The epic sweep of Shakespeare's histories denies extensive character development to nearly all of the villains save Richard III, but their rationalistic tendencies are nonetheless in evidence, preparing the way for the tragedies and the playwright's great dramatic achievements in stage villainy. Although penitent villains appear in the histories, this type of villain receives a far more interesting development in the comedies. In these later works rational villainy produces regenerative moral effects not only upon the victims but frequently upon the villains themselves. By giving perspectives of right reason to his dramatic works, Shakespeare evinces the humanistic attitude. Moreover, the playwright seems to be moving from conceptions that are predominantly Aristotelian
to those that are largely Platonic. As a result, evil loses its force while the Christian themes of mercy and forgiveness occupy the ascendant.
INTRODUCTION

A number of critics have alluded to the fact that Shakespeare's villains tend to be mentally rather than emotionally oriented; but the most positive expression of this attitude—at least the statement with fewest qualifications—has come from Cleanth Brooks, who attributes to Robert Penn Warren the "penetrating observation that all of Shakespeare's villains are rationalists."¹ Few would deny the importance of emotion and will in coloring the motives or defining the actions of Shakespeare's villains: Iago, for instance, appears to be driven by an intense, irrational hatred; Lady Macbeth, by a strong, uninhibited will. Yet, rationality emerges as perhaps the most conspicuous trait of villain personalities who inhabit the world of Shakespearean drama. In contrast, Marlowe's Tamburlaine operates upon a non-rational level, arguments of "expediency" being hardly applicable to the excesses generated by the villain's rampant will. Although Mario Praz disagrees with Brandl's interpretation of Tamburlaine as Machiavellian,² scholarly differences of opinion


suggest that rationality need not play a major part in the modus operandi of the Machiavellian villain. In applying the term machiavel loosely, one might simply wish to designate a character whose ambitions cause him to desire political power at any cost and whose actions demonstrate that he will allow nothing to separate him from the goals he has set for himself. Although it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between villains of will and villains of reason, it should become evident that a machiavel such as Macbeth will require rather close scrutiny, lest we assume too prematurely that all of Shakespeare's villains are, in fact, rationalists.

To what extent does Shakespeare's depiction of villain intellect become relevant to Renaissance beliefs concerning the nature and function of reason? Martin Lings' somewhat emphatic description of Iago and Edmund as "out and out Humanists"\(^3\) helps to underscore the difficulty of answering such a question. Lings defines humanism as the "rationalistic denial of all that is superhuman and supernatural";\(^4\) then, as further support of his contention that Iago and Edmund are humanists, the critic cites Iago's praise of reason ("But we have


\(^4\) Ibid.
reason to cool our raging motions..."--Othello I.iii) and Edmund's praise of nature ("Thou, Nature, art my goddess..."--King Lear I.ii). The words reason and nature strike a familiar chord which no doubt sounds "humanistic" to some (and "neo-classical" to others); still, Shakespeare readers are likely to see a touch of irony in the semantic gap which dissociates Iago and Edmund from Renaissance humanists who had used classical definitions of Reason and Nature as a basis for highly developed ethical systems. Christian humanism had, in fact, drawn rather freely from reservoirs of Platonism, Stoicism, and Scholasticism. Shakespeare's depiction of Iago and Edmund as machiavels must naturally place them within the framework of continental humanism. But English humanists, particularly those who espoused the doctrines of Rationalism, regarded this type of thinking as a perversion of their own ideas.

Whereas common usage allows a degree of interchangeability in the meanings of rationalism and skepticism, a more deliberate use of these terms recognizes two opposing views of reason. Rationalism holds that it is within the human potential to know God and the universe through reason; moreover, it incorporates a system of ethics which makes an identification between knowledge

\[5\text{Cited by Lings, ibid.}\]
and virtue. (The rationalism of Descartes was later to eclipse that of his Platonic predecessors.) Skepticism, which is generally linked to humanism on the continent and to such writers as Montaigne and Pascal, teaches that conclusions reached through the reason are invalid because they are subjective and therefore relative. Renaissance skepticism invites comparison with certain aspects of the Protestant Reformation, the latter having evolved a distrust of reason from several prominently held theological assumptions—namely, that human reasoning had been corrupted by the Fall, that Divine Will was in itself justification for all of God's action, and that God's will defied rational apprehension. Calvinists thus viewed reason as both fallible and beside the point.

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6 Robert Hoopes, Right Reason in the English Renaissance (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 105-118. See also, Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York: Scribner, 1950), pp. 98-105, 334. Hoopes focuses upon the humanism of the English Renaissance and thus he rightly regards anti-rationalism as a cross-current which does not belong to the realm of English humanism. For instance, he classifies the Protestant Reformation as an anti-rationalistic and therefore anti-humanistic trend. Haydn, on the other hand, characterizes the rebels against established values as romanticists while depicting Christian humanists as classicists. The romanticists gave impetus to what Haydn refers to as the "Counter-Renaissance, since it originated as a protest against the basic principles of the classical renaissance, as well as against those of medieval Scholasticism." Haydn finds three distinct intellectual trends in existence between the late fourteenth and early seventeenth centuries—classical renaissance, counter-renaissance, and scientific reformation.
When used in a familiar sense, rationalism is associated with use of logical or rhetorical proofs, love for expediency, contempt for emotional responses, and disbelief in the supernatural. Like philosophical skepticism and fideism, rationalism belongs to the counter-renaissance; but unlike skeptic or fideist, the rationalist puts his faith in reason and places self-interest above all else. The Prince remains one of the most well-known rationalistic documents despite its author's belief in chance or fortune.

Machiavelli's influence upon the English drama is relevant to the problem of rational villainy insofar as stage machiavels owe a measure of their rationality to the archetype. Here, however, we are not so much concerned with what the Italian writer actually said as we are with what the English attributed to him. Both Mario Praz and Clarence Boyer have focused attention upon the Elizabethan machiavel, with Boyer noting among other English innovations the stage machiavel's fondness for poison.7 Distinctions between the original Italian source and the mythos later surrounding it may perhaps suggest that Elizabethan playwrights were less inspired by the prince's

7Clarence V. Boyer, The Villain As Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1914), pp. 31-9. See also, Edward Meyer, Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama (New York, n.d., orig. pub. Weimar, 1897). Praz has pointed out that in several instances Meyer has designated as "machiavellian" certain elements that actually belong to Senecan drama.
rationalism than by his egocentrism. Boyer, in fact, views stage machiavellianism as being fundamentally a conflict between will and conscience. And yet if the machiavel's self-directed energies have lent forcefulness to his personality, it is his manner of thinking, either stated or implied, which enables him to project this personality with such striking clarity. Stage machiavellianism need not involve elaboration of the villain's mental processes, however. Disposing of accomplices, for example, may in itself symbolize the logic of expediency while expository methods—outlining plans, weighing alternatives, etc.—also often become emblematic of a rational mental operation. (Since symbolic rationality invites the danger of overinterpretation, one should not inadvisedly assume a degree of rationality that may not be altogether indicative of the villain himself.) Besides borrowing from Machiavelli, the villain owes a debt to the Vice of medieval drama. The Vice's ties with rationality had been tenuous but important in lending moral significance to his role, whereas his dramatic significance depended primarily upon the comic purposes that he served. During the process of stage

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evolution the job of persuasion which higher vices had charged to the Vice took on the colors of rhetoric, while the role of hypocrite acquired greater sophistication in rendering duplicity.

Although a number of critical studies have touched upon the rationality of Shakespeare's villains, none have dealt adequately with the questions that arise from the playwright's portrayal of villains as rationalists. Understandably, such treatment is not especially within the province of works which have as their emphasis the villain's Machiavellian behavior, his debt to the Vice, his psychological make-up, or his dramatic function. Yet, the rationality of Shakespeare's villains may serve as a unifying element or provide another way of looking at the histories, tragedies, and comedies. Tangential reading within this area is Terence Hawkes' *Shakespeare and the Reason* in which Hawkes examines reason and intuition, relates them to the themes of appearance and reality, and concludes that in the worldview of the plays neither is acceptable.

The present study is perhaps more concerned with stating problems than with giving solutions; but it is to

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be hoped that an examination of the villain-rationalists of Shakespeare's histories, tragedies, and comedies will help to shed added light on the plays and open the way for further discussion. Although Shakespeare's villains are treated in relation to what Renaissance thinkers called "right reason," one need not assume from the very beginning that rational villainy is a contradiction in terms. Despite the prominence of Reason throughout the Renaissance, it had begun to decline even as early as the Middle Ages. To examine Shakespeare's villains in light of right reason would therefore prove to be of little value unless one can also demonstrate that the doctrine is implicitly stated within the dramas. While anti-rationalistic trends did not belong to the mainstream of English thought, these were nevertheless strong enough to have perhaps exerted influence upon Shakespeare's thinking.

A theory of right reason figures significantly into virtually every philosophical system of Shakespeare's day. And yet, "right reason" may suggest one thing to the Platonist and quite another to the Aristotelian. Shakespeare would naturally have been susceptible to a variety of interpretations of this doctrine. Briefly, right reason is that doctrine which deems Reason to be the fount of human knowledge and which, in seeking truth, aims toward spiritual perfection. Whenever this norm does not
appear to belong in the worldview of a particular drama or is not sufficiently in evidence, it must be decided whether the villain's rationality has invested the play with an underlying distrust of reason. Skepticism is not the only alternative to right reason, however. Notwithstanding his profundity, Shakespeare was a poet and playwright who on occasion might be expected to display more sympathy toward the romantic temperament than toward the rational mind. Shakespeare's genius enabled him to weave the contrarieties of his Age into a single artistic pattern, yet we have no reason to suppose that he had resolved such conflicts within himself or that he had fashioned all of his plays from a consistent view of life.
I. DISTRUST OF REASON

If one argues that the quality of rationalism inherited from the medieval Vice as well as from other sources is simply indigenous to the villain character-type and that the dramatist has little recourse other than to work within the tradition, then the villain of reason becomes little more than a peculiarity of Elizabethan drama, a set piece of historical curiosity. But when considered in relation to the backdrop of ideas which helped to shape the plays in the mind of the artist, the rational villain assumes a role of no small consequence. Discordant influences which bisected the Renaissance tended to have an undermining effect upon the prevailing attitude that man's reason would lead to higher knowledge. Although such trends did not reflect the beliefs of English humanists, their influences were nonetheless strongly felt. In breaking with the medieval past, Copernicus, Calvin, and Montaigne had left marks of dissension and doubt in areas of traditional cosmology, theology, and philosophy while The Prince had rendered dramatic proof that use of reason did not necessarily lead to right action. Machiavelli typified the humanism of self-assertion and individuality. It was sometimes referred to as "atheistic," and it stood apart from the type of humanism which had its roots in classical philosophy. Still, continental humanists of the
Machiavellian school could easily have turned to classical antiquity, especially to the writings of the Epicureans, as justification for the materialism and skepticism that pervaded their thinking; for even with its rigorous ethic, Epicureanism offers an essentially worldly approach to life. In Book III of De Rerum Natura, for instance, the poet Lucretius announces to his readers that the soul is mortal, defining its composition through application of an atomist theory. The irreverence of Lucian, particularly in Dialogues of the Gods, might also have captured the imaginations of those who had rejected Plato and Aristotle. But despite classical precedents and popularity within circles such as the School of Night, this type of humanism is more descriptive of an attitude than of systematic philosophy and classicism.

Christian humanism, however, required more stringent philosophical commitments from its followers; and its progeny included offshoots such as neo-Platonism and neo-Stoicism. The Rationalism of Renaissance neo-Platonists stands in marked contrast to anti-rational trends which had begun to manifest themselves seriously during the time of William of Ockham, the brilliant fourteenth-century thinker whose ideas had sparked such great controversy, leading him first into disfavor and later into prison.

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In a way, Ockham's views evinced an extreme or lop-sided Platonism. But whereas reason and intuition functioned harmoniously within Platonism, which equated the intuitive processes with the exercising of higher reason, Ockham viewed reason and intuition (ratio inferior and ratio superior) as two entirely different modes of apprehending knowledge. Somewhat analogously, reason (ratio) was to be deftly detached from right reason (recta ratio) by Machiavelli and later by Bacon.

Ockham believed that words interfered with apprehension and that statements should be stripped of all but the most basic language; and he denied the existence of universals except as a semantic convenience. More importantly, at least insofar as this study is concerned, he denied intermediary cognition and embraced a type of subjectivism which accepted only primary experiences as apprehensions of truth. These experiences were known as "direct intuitions." In the Ordinatio, Ockham asserted that "we can know nothing abstractly in itself by purely natural means without first knowing it intuitively." Meyrick Carre, in assessing Ockham's work, has directed attention to the philosopher's effect on the learning of his day:

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In the schools of Paris and Oxford it now began to be openly asserted that Christian dogmas could not be supported by reasonable proof; natural reason could show them at the best to be probable inferences. At the worst, when philosophic argument led to the opposite conclusion, the believer was invited to embrace by faith what his reason rejected. Masters became ready...to defend theories contrary to theological doctrine. These opinions were often put forward under the guise of dialectical exercises.  

Ockham had visibly shaken the foundations of medieval philosophy and theology; and as Carre observes, "the dialectics of the following centuries revolved round the problems which he had raised." Ockham's incipient fideism, by which he divorced truth from rational investigation, later found realization in the teachings of Martin Luther, his avowed disciple.

During the Renaissance reason was even more soundly attacked on its theological side. Following the example of Luther, John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) wrought radical changes in attitudes concerning God and man. Humanists had conceived of a rational God who created a rationally ordered universe that man could come to know through the use of reason, and in matters of Scripture they placed emphasis upon the Redemption as well as upon the teachings of the New Testament. But Calvin recaptured the severity of Old Testament convictions and attitudes by

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4 Ibid., p.104.
emphasizing the Fall and by fastening the attention of his followers upon the supremacy of God's will:

The will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness, so that everything which he wills must be held to be righteous by the mere fact of his willing it. Therefore, when it is asked why the Lord did so we must answer, Because he pleased.5 (Inst. III.xxiii)

The bleak temperament that depicted an essentially erratic God likewise painted a dark portrait of man, for Calvin viewed man's reason as being both ineffectual and vestigious:

For although there is still some residue of intelligence and judgment as well as will, we cannot call a mind sound and entire which is both weak and immersed in darkness.... Therefore, since reason, by which man discerns between good and evil, and by which he understands and judges, is a natural gift, it could not be entirely destroyed; but being partly weakened and partly corrupted, a shapeless ruin is all that remains....6 (Inst. II.ii)

Like Scholastics before them, Christian humanists were striving to preserve harmony between philosophy and theology; but Protestant reformers relegated these disciplines to separate spheres by disinheriting philosophy. Thus, they could more easily carry religion before the common people into places of public preaching. Their avowed purpose was to return to the simplicity of early Christianity, and they advocated reliance upon Scripture


6Ibid., I, 233.
and abolition of church-instituted rituals. Although articulate, learned men had espoused the fideist cause, and had stressed the importance of education, the position itself was clearly anti-intellectual in its theological implications; thus it held wide appeal for Europe's common people. Playing a large role in economic and political history, the Reformation naturally affected numerous areas of human interest. And its influences have extended even into the twentieth century. Here, however, we are interested only in the consistency with which the Reformation rejected reason: It denigrated the human reasoning faculty by reminding man that he was eternally victim of the Fall; it insisted that the supremacy of God's will precluded rational inquiry; and it held that faith was not based upon reason but was instead dependent upon God's grace.

How responsive was Shakespeare to the growing distrust of reason? That the question will ever be answered satisfactorily is doubtful. The vision of the playwright seems too broad to have settled into complacency and too sound to have been altered appreciably by knowing of the Reformation or by having read Montaigne, whose skepticism and cynicism remind one at times of Calvinistic attitudes:

Presumption is our natural and original disease.
The most wretched and frail of all creatures is man, and withal the proudest.7

Although Shakespeare probably read Florio's translation of Montaigne in its entirety or a large portion of it in 1603-4, it is only certain that he knew "Of the Caniballes." (See The Tempest II.i.147ff.) Earlier critics have cited parallel passages in order to show Montaigne's influence upon Shakespeare, but Alice Harmon has demonstrated that ideas and similitudes common to both writers also appear in Seneca, Cicero, and Plutarch as well as in Elyot, Lind, Baldwin, Cawdrey, and others. These classical and contemporary parallels involve comparisons, as in the likening of an idle mind to an unweeded garden, and also reflections upon general subjects such as death, ambition, etc.

Obviously, Shakespeare's familiarity with one essay does not prove that he knew them all or that the thinking of Montaigne had influenced him in any way; yet speculative

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10 Alice Harmon, "How Great Was Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne?" PMLA, 57(1942), 988-1008.
comparisons frequently link the character of Hamlet with *Apologie de Raimond Sebond* in which Montaigne denies both the efficacy of reason and the existence of absolute values:

So, seeing that all things are subject to pass from one change to another, reason...finds itself deceived, not being able to apprehend anything that is subsistent and permanent... 11

Hamlet's ironic portrayals of past values and of his inability to accept them reveal both disillusionment and cynicism, attitudes which constantly weave in and out of Montaigne. The hero expresses his opinion quite clearly in an encounter with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, although the two young men are unaware of what their former friend is actually saying. After he has secured Guildenstern's admission that he and Rosencrantz have been sent for by the king and queen, Hamlet agrees to answer the questions of his schoolfellows. But Hamlet guards his explanation by casting it into a philosophical view which masks not only his sanity but also the real nature of his personal calamities, while at the same time faithfully representing his disturbed psychic condition:

...What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?... (*Hamlet* II.ii.315-20)

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Hamlet is a satirist whose well-honed intelligence allows him to deal ironically on the personal level as with Polonius or to carry his irony into the far reaches of metaphysical satire as with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

In drawing distinctions between the collectivity of the Middle Ages and the individuality of the Renaissance, Professor Horkheimer views Shakespeare's *Hamlet* through the lens of social psychology--the hero's fear of death serving as an illustration of individuality, whereby absolute value is accorded to the life of the singular man rather than to the life of the collective man. The sociologist invites his readers to think of Hamlet as the first modern individual and as a "good disciple of Montaigne." Horkheimer's comparisons between Hamlet and Montaigne are especially interesting because they are derived neither from parallel passages nor philosophies so much as from the author's perception of a convergent point on the continuum of man's evolving consciousness of himself. But whether or not Hamlet is a Montaignian individual is finally not so important as whether or

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or not Hamlet renders Montaigne's philosophy. For if the play is an expression of philosophical skepticism, then Shakespeare's rational villains might perhaps be viewed as either leading to this position or as indicative of it. The failure of Hamlet's intellectuality to save him does not itself argue for a distrust of reason within the play. From the outset the audience is made aware of extenuating circumstances which cloud the hero's vision. Still, Hamlet's metaphysical uncertainties have explicitly raised the question of man's nobility and of his place on the scale of being—if such a scale exists. These doubts, however, belong only to Hamlet; the audience may sympathize with the hero without necessarily adopting his point of view. T.S. Eliot evidently gave thought to the possibility of linking Hamlet with Montaigne; for at the conclusion of the essay "Hamlet and His Problems," the poet expresses the desirability of knowing "whether, and when" the playwright had read Apologie de Raimond Sebond.13

To argue that Shakespeare's villains are rationalists is in no way to suggest that the rationalists of the plays must be villains. Moreover, the dramas include

characters who, although they strongly resemble rationalists in one or several ways, cannot properly be termed "rationalists." We may, in particular, isolate two such types who carry a strain of rationalism: the satirist and the intellectual. The satirist perceives the world as fraud and rejects it. He appears to stand apart from the society he criticizes; yet, he himself is often satirized in the process, especially when his level of perception has somehow become attuned to a cynical or melancholy outlook that brooks extremity. Apemantus, who has less cause than Timon for his cynicism, becomes such a character, as does the melancholy moralist Jacques. The satirist's diatribes tend to identify the character with reason because they suggest mental complexity or the presence of a double vision that sees incongruities within seemingly natural comparisons. Both Iago and Edmund are satirists, for instance. But the tendency to satirize does not in itself argue for a character's rationalistic approach to life, though it may in fact contribute to it. More especially, he should be dissociated from rationalism when his temperament suggests that Elizabethan conceptions of the four elements or of the humours are at work.

Intelligence is another mark of the rational villain. But again, a character may be an intellectual without embracing a rationalistic way of life. Brutus,
for example, appears to be an admirable individual who is both intelligent and introspective. And yet, W.R. Bowden disagrees with those who describe Brutus as an intellectual. Bowden directs attention to Plutarch’s version of the story in which the letters from the citizens are real and contrasts it to Shakespeare’s depiction of forgery, thereby reaching the somewhat dubious conclusion that since the dramatist deviated from his source in showing that Brutus had been tricked or duped, his motives for doing so must somehow implicate the intelligence of Brutus. Bowden likewise believes that Shakespeare draws Brutus’ Stoicism with a censorious pen. But despite the critic’s uncertainty about Brutus’ intelligence and despite his dissatisfaction with the Stoic’s relationship to Portia (who is also a Stoic), Bowden decides that Brutus is after all noble and that Antony’s tribute must be accepted as valid. Actually, Brutus’ granting Antony permission to speak does not display stupidity, as Bowden argues, but rather evinces an intellect which does not descend to the level of Cassius’ Machiavellian instincts. Both Brutus and Hamlet display an intellectuality that cannot handle the situations confronting it, but Hamlet’s plans

to feign insanity and to "catch the conscience of the king" bespeak a rationalism not altogether apparent in Brutus. Nonetheless, Hamlet's brooding melancholy and Brutus' easy faith in men raise the question of how far we may describe these characters as "rationalists."

Less problematical in point of view of their rational-ity are Cicero and Octavius, both of whom clearly demonstrate that theirs is a rationalistic approach to life. But unfortunately these same characters increase the difficulty of assessing the playwright's attitude toward reason. In tracing Renaissance atheism to classical sources, George Buckley notes the popularity of Ciceronian oratory and ethic but hastens to point out that Christian humanists must have looked askance at De natura deorum and De divinatione. The latter dialogue has as its participants Cicero and his brother Quintus, who believes in divinations. Quintus, in supporting his argument, provides a catalogue of examples, including the portentous warnings of Caesar's death. Cicero, however, proves to be both scoffer and skeptic: "Upon my word, no old woman is credulous enough now to believe such stuff!"—(De divinatione XV). Moreover, many


of Cicero's arguments are specifically aimed against the Stoics. During the Renaissance, neo-Stoics such as Justus Lipsius were to strive hard for a reconciliation between fate and free will, foreknowledge and predestination, and Cicero's application of pagan reasoning anticipates the problems that Christian humanists later had to recognize:

Surely nothing is so at variance with reason and stability as chance. Hence it seems to me that it is not in the power even of God himself to know what event is going to happen accidentally and by chance. For if He knows, then the event is certain to happen; but if it is certain to happen, chance does not exist. (De div. VII)

In *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare has emphasized this facet of the orator's personality. Fearful that the night is filled with omens, Casca says to Cicero:

> When these prodigies do so conjointly meet, let not men say 'These are their reasons, they are natural.'

*(Julius Caesar I.iii.28-30)*

Cicero's rational reply contrasts sharply with Casca's nearly hysterical account of unusual events:

> Indeed, it is a strange-disposed time But men may construe things after their fashion, Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.

*(Julius Caesar I.iii.33-5)*

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Cicero agrees that people ought not to be out in such nasty weather but refuses to commit himself any further than that. The audience must accept the portentous nature of the night just as it must accept the words of the soothsayer—without qualification; thus, Cicero's appraisal of, or reaction to, the situation is incorrect, even if by omission.

Pinpointing the relationship between rationalism and moral worth proves to be something of a problem if we consider a character such as Octavius. In the commentary which Brooks, Warren, and Purser append to Antony and Cleopatra, the editors attempt to reconcile the difficulties of Octavius' rationalism:

Octavius is all cool efficiency...He is probably on the side of conventional virtue, but he is coldly and ruthlessly efficient....

...Shakespeare does not deny, even by implication, that Octavius was superior to Antony as a potential organizer and ruler. But if humanity is to have any meaning other than ruthless efficiency, then some of the qualities of Antony are of intrinsic value....18

Thus, while we cannot categorize Octavius as a villain, we nonetheless consider him an unpalatable individual, and primarily because of Octavius' rationalistic approach to life. Irving Ribner has likewise recognized the problem of identification that the audience must make:

Octavius and Octavia together stand for a cold, rational morality which the audience may intellectually approve, but which emotionally it must reject as lacking the warmth and vitality of the immoral and foolish Antony and Cleopatra.19

Shakespeare's rationalists include the likeable Cicero and the sympathetically-drawn Horatio, both of whom display skeptical attitudes toward the supernatural, in addition to characters such as Octavius and Edmund. But if the rationalists have been portrayed as erroneous, disagreeable, and even villainous, and if the playwright has linked these elements to the rationality of his characters, is it then logical to assume that Shakespeare himself was anti-rationalist or that a distrust of reason underlies the worldview of the dramas? In order to answer the question properly we should first have to consider right reason, with all of its ramifications, so that we might more easily make the necessary distinctions between Christian or classical humanism and the paradoxical humanism of Shakespeare's villains. And in order to understand fully the "rationality" of these same individuals, we must be willing to trace the development of the villain of reason. These problems are taken up in the next two chapters, after which follows an examination of the villains appearing in Shakespeare's histories, tragedies, and comedies.

II. THE HUMANISTIC SPIRIT

By the end of the Middle Ages man's re-discovery of classical values had begun to coincide with his own self-discovery in a way that gave rise to the attitude known as humanism. During this period, scholars came to recognize that one of the great achievements of Greco-Roman civilization had been the ability of its writers to give form and expression to universal moral principles. Admiration for classical philosophy led them to accept many of its teachings and to become enamored of an ancient precept which seemed to epitomize, particularly well, the ideals of Renaissance humanism. "Right reason," as it was known by classical and Renaissance thinkers alike, thus affords a valuable perspective through which one may view English literature of the period. In referring to Milton and the Cambridge Platonists, for instance, Basil Willey uses the term humanism to mean "a belief in the natural dignity and virtue of man, provided that by due discipline the passions are subjected to Right Reason."¹ Hardin Craig's description of the various philosophical systems that were then in existence likewise suggests the importance of this doctrine in the development

of Renaissance thought:

On one principle, however, practically all were agreed: the road to truth was ratiocination, not the free use of reason, but reason restricted to the discovery or rediscovery of a universe whose form and purpose were already known and whose laws were the legacies of a wiser past or the fiat of an unimpeachable God.²

Although Shakespeare makes frequent use of the word reason, suiting it to a variety of possible interpretations, the playwright does not refer explicitly to "right reason" in any of the dramas. Yet, Prospero's forgiveness of his enemies—in lines which depict him as rejecting extremities of passion, evaluating alternatives, and finally embracing New Testament principles—evinces the humanistic attitude. In the following passage, "nobler reason" appears in a context that re-inforces both the rational and ethical connotations of the phrase:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick, Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury Do I take part. The rarer action is In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent, The sole drift of my purpose doth extend Not a frown further. (The Tempest V.i.25-30)

I do not wish to argue that Prospero is Shakespeare but only that the playwright was more than unconsciously aware of the beliefs that were associated with right reason.

We have already observed that whenever there has been a breach between ratio inferior and ratio superior

or between ratio and recta ratio, reason tends either to lose moral significance or to fall into complete disgrace. The rise of science in the seventeenth century aided in achieving the former effect. Although Sir Thomas Browne displays both love for science and deep religious faith, through facile interminglings that somehow seem attuned to the good doctor's prose baroque, Sir Francis Bacon maintains the dichotomous secular attitude. As a fragment, reason regains in Baconism the respectability it lost at the hands of Machiavelli. But its position is nevertheless secondary to that of empirical observation; for while Bacon pays all the amenities to ethics, he obviously prefers to separate moral philosophy from the scientific philosophy which he envisions as an ideal:

The corruption of philosophy by the mixing of it up with superstition and theology is of a much wider extent, and is most injurious to it, both as a whole and in parts. (Nov. Org. I.65)3

By admonishing his readers to "render unto faith the things that are faith's" (Nov. Org. I.65), Bacon hopes ultimately to appropriate reason and philosophy to the needs of science; and it is especially when he wishes to liberate reason from areas of the supernatural that Bacon "piously" awards faith the higher position—"For after

the articles and principles of religion are placed and exempted from examination of reason..." (Adv. Learn. II).

The humanism of Bacon like that of Machiavelli or even Montaigne may be designated as "paradoxical" rather than "orthodox" simply on the basis of its failure to incorporate the principles of right reason into its rationale. Such distinction not only takes into account the temper of Renaissance England but also affords greater ease in our problem of relating villainy and humanism whenever these appear together on the Elizabethan stage. An examination of Shakespeare's villains in relation to right reason therefore sets an agent of paradoxical humanism against the backdrop of Christian humanism, which placed emphasis upon the harmonious nature of Christian and classical ideals and which used such compatibilities to posit the existence of universal moral principles.

Unlike Medieval scholastics, Renaissance thinkers recognized the importance of the material world and attempted to cope with the problem of day-to-day living by applying systematic thought to daily conduct. The utilitarian strain within humanism may have owed something to religious sources, such as the exemplary lives of saints, but attitudes toward private virtue equally fell within the sphere of classical influence, as did

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Ibid., I, 240.
attitudes toward public virtue. The Socratic dialogues, Aristotle's care in defining relationships between virtue and the active life (N. Ethics, I), Cicero's civic-mindedness, or Renaissance studies in classical rhetoric—all possess a singularity that speaks of man's awakening sensitivity to physical environment and of his desire to operate within it successfully, and morally. Italian feelings for self-identity, exemplified in Florentine displays of civic pride, gave impetus to the civic idealism which held sway throughout the Renaissance. Ironically, it is Brutus' overwhelming sense of civic duty which underlies his vulnerability, making him susceptible to the overtures of the conspirators. And conversely, it is Richard II's difficulty in acknowledging the responsibilities of his office, which contributes to his downfall.

If classical and continental influences aided in giving perspective to man's public life, England's awakening nationalism added yet another dimension to his role. It is evident from the history plays alone that Shakespeare was not only sensitive to the rising spirit of nationalism in England but was equally aware of the complexities that lay within the realm of civic morals. Much earlier, Plato had tested the validity of public morality by casting into dramatic form a good man's conflict with the state. Resolution of the ethical difficulty, however, occurs long before one reaches the
final pages of The Crito; it is self-contained in the Platonic way of thought, which utilizes extenuating circumstances (the more extreme the better) merely for purposes of underscoring the absoluteness of values accorded. Thus, Socrates refuses help from well-intentioned friends who have planned his escape from prison; moreover, he discredits the reasoning whereby they have reached the conclusion that innocence pre-empts civil authority, or that Socrates' escape would be morally justified. Plato heightens the drama of the situation by personifying the laws so that Socrates' unwillingness to desert or abandon them produces an emotional impact that reinforces the central argument of The Crito—obedience to lawful authority is placed above the individual welfare of the innocent man. Whether public or private, the "active life" meant coming to terms with the world around by translating virtue into action. This impulse toward concretization of the abstract can be found not only in England's conduct books of the period but in its philosophical treatises as well, especially those of Renaissance neo-Stoics who besides testifying to the wisdom of the ancients were characteristically given to outlining for their reading audiences a way of life based upon Stoicism and Christianity.

The basic moral outlook of Stoicism, in many ways compatible with the English temperament, gained audiences
in areas exclusive of formal stoic philosophy. Cicero, who openly attacked certain of the precepts of classical stoicism, had been sensitive to its influences; these were manifested throughout his writings by way of a sober ethical outlook that held great appeal for English readers. An aura of stoic morality likewise hovered about the vestiges of scholasticism that yet remained within the Church of England. At the same time, the English stage was carrying the voice of Seneca to popular audiences. Berner's and North's translations of Guevara, North's translation of Plutarch, the continued popularity of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Latin studies in the grammar schools, works by contemporary philosophers—many tributaries of Stoicism flowed into the mainstream of Renaissance thought. Any or all of these could have filtered into the consciousness of Shakespeare, who displayed at least moderate interest in Stoicism by the kinds of dramatic choices he sometimes made in adapting sources: *Julius Caesar*, for instance, can almost be said to treat philosophy as such, in that the Stoicism of Brutus and Portia becomes an intrinsic part of the characters' actions and words. In *Hamlet* the playwright has established a rather interesting contrast between the hero and Horatio, insofar as Hamlet's contemplation of suicide is colored by fear of death (III.i.76-88) while Horatio's casual readiness to dispense with his own life is ascribed to his being "more an antique Roman than a
Dane" (V.ii.352). The conspicuous presence of Fate in a number of the dramas is further suggestive of stoic influence, though Shakespeare's Fate is neither so brooding nor omnipresent as Seneca's and the Jacobean's.

Christian neo-Stoicism conforms to patterns of orthodoxy both in reconciling its deterministic view of the universe to the concept of free will and by insisting upon the importance of right reason. This doctrine, found in the writings of Greek philosophers as well as in the works of Seneca and Cicero, was understood similarly (though not always identically) by those who espoused it. DuVair's *The Moral Philosophtie of the Stoicks*, published in English translation shortly before the end of the sixteenth century, advances a theory of Nature's beneficence and of man's unlimited potential, provided that he act in accordance with right reason:

> Well then, the good & happiness of man consisteth in the right vse of reason, and what is that but a constant disposition of will, to followe that which is honest and conuenient.5

Justus Lipsius' *Tyvo Bookes Of Constancie*, translated into English by Sir John Stradling and published in 1594, contains a similar discussion of right reason:

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Belief in right reason is naturally predicated upon several important assumptions about the nature of God, man, and the universe. But since these are built into a dialectic that derives corollary support from classical logic—logos providing a means by which the philosopher might arrive at truth and the rhetorician might persuade men to it—we ought perhaps to begin a discussion of right reason by turning our attention for the moment to the areas of logic and rhetoric, particularly in light of the fact that mode of expression, as well as thought and action, has helped to characterize Edmund, Richard III, and others as "rational."

Rosemond Tuve has pointed out that Renaissance poetics shared with logic and rhetoric a controlling didactic purpose, the logical function of images being to assist the poet in reaching truth:

...The laws of logic were the laws of thought, and the poet must know and use them; he will not otherwise be able to approach truth or direct the mind of man toward it. This last appears to me to be the basic Renaissance understanding of the didactic function of poetry.7

6 Of Constancie, p. 81.

The "laws of thought" that Aristotle had bequeathed to the Renaissance revealed their author's belief that men were desirous of finding truth and of being good individuals. Thus his laws included the provision that true premises will yield only true conclusions and that true conclusions will have only true premises; so if false premises have true conclusions (as is sometimes the case), the phenomenon must be regarded as alogical, the truth of the conclusions owning to something other than the premises (Prior Analytics II.iii);  

Aristotle also insisted that both end and means must be good (N. Ethics V:9), a dictum that diametrically opposes Machiavellian morality. As truth was the logician's aim, so was it the rhetorician's; for early thinkers had recognized the power of persuasive speech and the necessity of turning it to good use. Cicero's orator, it will be remembered, not only spoke well but was also a good man, while Plato's objections to Sophistry likewise argued the necessity of ethos. As servants of morality, logic and rhetoric were viewed as means but never as ends in themselves. (Petrarch's disenchantment with dialectic apparently stemmed from the poet's belief that methodology had

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betrayed many men, especially those who valued it too greatly.)

Elizabethan England displayed an avid interest in logic and rhetoric. Numerous texts appeared in print; and the grammar schools, reflecting contemporary enthusiasm for these subjects, sought to inculcate such training into their students. T.W. Baldwin's extensive study of the grammar schools of the period has demonstrated that Shakespeare's early educational training more than likely gave him the language tools necessary for his art. The playwright's knowledge of Aristotelian logic could easily have come from grammar school texts that he either studied as a boy or read later; but what is more important, he held such knowledge by the time he wrote the plays and was able to utilize it in creating his characters' patterns of speech. Refusing to accept as valid the argument of Williams and Bates—that a monarch shares the blame whenever guilty men die in his service—Henry V resorts to the use of analogy and syllogism, arriving finally at a conclusion which disproves

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12 Ibid., II, 62.
the claims made against him:

...if they die unprovided, no more is the King guilty of their damnation than he was before guilty of those impieties for which they are now visited. (Henry V. IV.i.181-4)

Henry's arguments are of course valid, and his soliloquy (IV.i.247ff)—an ironic appraisal of the citizen's point of view and to some extent, acceptance of it—does not in any way invalidate the earlier argument but rather helps to portray the king as being sensitive to those responsibilities which have been laid upon his shoulders. Thus while it is Shakespeare's villains who most often wear the language of logic, creating for themselves an image of rationality, one notices that logic is also used by basically virtuous types such as Henry V.

Professor Baldwin's perceptive reading of Shakespeare's clowns as parodying prescriptive classical rhetoric tempts one to imagine the playwright's schoolboy recitations as surely betraying the genius of their young author and to wonder, as well, if these included exercises in false logic (an area in which Iago may be

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13 Harold C. Goddard views Williams' argument as "unanswerable," while he labels Henry's as "twisted and false" (The Meaning of Shakespeare, 1951). Goddard's reading of the king's speech as "squirming sophistry" seems eccentric. Although Henry is not unaware of the part a king plays in men's lives, he refuses to assume responsibility for their souls. The monarch's point is well taken.

14 Baldwin, II, 90-1.
particularly adept). Defining terms, deliberating alternatives, establishing causal relationships, making use of syllogisms and enthymemes—these are a few of the signposts indicating, at least theoretically, the presence of logical thought development. Since devices relating to argument and debate additionally serve the more general purposes of exposition, the problem of villain rationality may at times seem complicated by simple dramatic necessity. For this reason, it would be well to suspend discussion of the villain's rhetorical patterns until we have examined his debt to the medieval Vice, or the historical circumstances which linked him to the art of persuasion. This subject is treated in the following section. For the present, it will suffice to note that Greco-Roman writers had joined logic and rhetoric to ethics in a way that perpetuated a system of thought based upon a theory of right reason.

Among followers of the Orphic tradition there is perhaps even stronger insistence upon a coalescent view of knowledge and virtue. The Orphic product usually emerges via the doors of dialectic, a mode of thought coincident with its author's fundamental belief that reason is the source of his knowledge. Thus the Socratic method is sometimes to cast an aura of logic before the veil of mysticism that surrounds Platonic doctrine, particularly that of Reminiscence. If the soul once
knew the good, beautiful, and true argues Socrates in the *Phaedo*, then man must seek to recollect the *a priori* knowledge contained within the soul; and if that knowledge is knowledge of the Good, then reason must align itself with virtue or it will not be able to recognize what it has not been conditioned to understand. Plotinus argues similarly, the *Enneads* abounding in mystical revelations akin to Plato's "Myth of Er." Aristotle, in recognizing the validity of the intuitive processes, likewise attributes to reason the mind's alogical perceptions of higher knowledge:

If then (a) it be granted that scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, theoretical wisdom and intuitive reason are the intellectual states whereby we possess truth and are never deceived as regards the contingent and even the invariable, and if (b) none of the first three grasps the first principles, this can only be the work of intuitive reason.15

It is interesting to note that early thinkers identified both the syllogistic and intuitive processes with reason, a phenomenon that accounts in large measure for the inherent strain of mysticism within rational philosophy.

In tracing the indebtedness of Cambridge Platonists to men of the Italian Renaissance (Ficino and Mirandola especially), who had greatly admired Plato and Plotinus, Professor Cassirer has helped to explain further why the

15 John Warrington, ed. and trans., p. 125.
Rationalism of the English group must be placed in the tradition which recognizes the intuition, or alogical means of obtaining higher knowledge, as "supra-rational" but never "anti-rational." Suggesting a similar attitude on the part of Shakespeare, "The Phoenix and the Turtle" proposes allegorically a type of truth which, undecipherable to the ordinary intelligence, makes heavenly sense to the higher reason. Confounded by the paradoxical union of two birds of different species, Reason yields to the transcendent understanding whereby "love hath reason, reason none." It then pays its respect to the dead pair of lovers by composing a threnos in praise of Beauty and Truth, the qualities represented by the two birds. The paradoxical method adopted by Reason in the threnos is itself a fitting tribute, not only to the phoenix and the turtledove but also to that intellection which, in grasping such mysteries, exceeds the reach of common reason.

Renaissance understanding of right reason owed something to the influence of various schools, or systems, which viewed the moral universe from different perspectives and which in so doing accorded the term special connotative values. Aristotle, for instance, believed right reason to be a rational faculty that led man to embrace

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the mean (Virtue) and to avoid the extreme (Vice). Throughout the **Nicomachean Ethics** he stresses the need for balance and harmony within the individual, characterizing the great-souled or reasonable man as one who operates within the framework of temperance. Although "right reason" always refers, in essence, to that which is both rational and moral, the Aristotelian interpretation possesses a degree of individuality. This view of reason, quite familiar to the Renaissance, more than likely served as the inspiration for Menenius and Kent; for the restraint of these characters offers a dramatic contrast to the excessiveness of those whom they admire and wish to help. Whereas Coriolanus scorns the citizens as a matter of general principle, Menenius has succeeded in establishing some rapport with them. Lear's overreaction to the reply of Cordelia separates him from reason, as does the extremity of Coriolanus' words and actions, but the king's admonition to Kent suggests the latter's link with the mean, or reasoned temperance: "Come not between the dragon and his wrath" (I.i.124). If Aristotelian virtue (temperance) seemed terrestrial in comparison to the Platonic virtues (Beauty and Truth), it was no less admired by Renaissance humanists. Moreover, Aristotelian conceptions had found support within other areas of philosophy. Stoic attitudes toward pleasure and pain tended to reinforce Aristotelian thought not only by focusing attention on man but also by stressing the importance
of daily conduct. In both Stoicism and Aristotelianism, therefore, right reason becomes something of an ethical guideline by which man seeks to act in accordance with a prescribed mean.

Classical belief in the perfectibility of man helped to foster Renaissance idealization of him. The Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) expresses this attitude very well in Fabula de homine, which describes the gods' delight in seeing the reflection of their own image, and their hope of having man dine at their eternal banquet. Mirandola's "Oration on the Dignity of Man" further illustrates the Renaissance view. Mirandola begins the piece by recalling the words of Abdala the Saracen, "There is nothing to be seen more wonderful than man," as well as those of Hermes Trismegistus, "A great miracle, Asclepius, is man."17

From their classical forebears Christian humanists had acquired besides faith in man, faith in Nature.18 Insofar as Nature belonged to the World of Matter, it was regarded as an outward manifestation of order and


18 Hoopes, pp. 120ff. Hoopes names as the first Christian humanist Lactantius (ca. 300), who cited as Cicero's definition of natural law--"right reason in agreement with Nature."
harmony in the universe; more importantly, it was thought
to have real existence in the World of Ideas and as such
to hold moral implications for man. "To follow Nature"
meant to live in accordance with the eternal principles
or Order and Degree. Shakespeare's most famous treatment
of this idea is found in Ulysses' speech (Troilus and
Cressida I.iii.75-137) from which the following passage
is taken:

...Oh, when degree is shaked,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick! How could communities,
Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenitive of age, crowns, scepters, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark, what discord follows! (I.iii.101-10)

As an address to the leader of the Greek forces ("Great
Agamemnon," 1.124), the argumentum ad hominem perhaps
gives more indication of the hero's cleverness than of
his sincerity, after the tradition of classical opinion.
Although the entire speech seems to be a tour de force
on the part of Shakespeare, it is no less a faithful
rendition of the Elizabethan attitude.

The Renaissance "chain of being" expresses metaphorically a belief in universally-ordered existence on a
physical-spiritual plane. But it does not contradict the
idea of human perfectibility in according man a middle
position thereon. The place itself was thought to be
metamorphically attuned to man's moral possibilities. Belief in a supreme Logos, though incompatible with Calvinism, also forms the basis for Christian humanism to the extent that an ordered cosmos suggested to classical and Renaissance minds alike, divine Rationality. A brief excerpt from Ficino's *Epistolariae* helps to illustrate the humanistic line of reasoning on the matter:

In this common order of the whole, all things, no matter how diverse, are brought back to unity according to a single determined harmony and rational plan. Therefore, we conclude that all things are led by one certain orderer who is most full of reason.19

The implications of Renaissance cosmology will to a certain degree entail the problem of relating Elizabethan interest in astrology20 to Shakespeare's dramas. Villain rationalists, finding astrology inimical to their self-assertive instincts, openly express skepticism toward it; however, such attitudes are not to be equated with the concept of Free Will. In a way, astrology serves as a mythic projection of the Renaissance belief that an orderly creation betokened not only a Rational God but one whose interest in man was personal. Rejecting it


20 For fuller discussion of this subject, see Hardin Craig, *The Enchanted Glass*, pp. 30-43. (Craig observes that the English had more faith in astrology than in astrologers.)
meant either denying Elizabethan cosmology or defying universal principles; moreover, it was an act that audiences of the period most probably associated with atheism. In treating the supernatural, for instance, Sir Thomas Browne offers the following opinion:

...how so many learned heads should so farre forget their Metaphysicks, and destroy the Ladder and scale of creatures, as to question the existence of Spirits; for my part, I have ever believed, and doe now know, that there are Witches; they that doubt of these, doe not onely deny them, but Spirits; and are obliquely and upon consequence a sort, not of Infidels, but Atheists.21

Likewise, the doctor links human events to those of Nature:

The Jewes that can beleewe the supernaturall solstice of the Sunne in the days of Joshua, have yet the impudence to deny the Eclipse, which even Pagans confessed at his death....22

But neither is he unaware of the dangers of overinterpretation. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, Browne writes in the Pseudodoxia Epidemica:

To behold a Rainbow in the night, is no prodigy unto a Philosopher. Then Eclipses of Sun or Moon, nothing is more natural. Yet, with what superstition they have been beheld since the Tragedy of Nicia and his Army, many examples declare. (Book I, Ch.XI)

Classical and especially stoic conceptions of Nature manifest fatalistic strains that Christian humanists had difficulty in reconciling to the doctrine of Free Will.

22 Ibid.
Renaissance neo-Stoics, however, came to grips with the problem by making distinctions between foreknowledge and predestination and by insisting upon the beneficence of the Being who had ordered all things. Lipsius, in keeping with the manner of neo-Stoicism, describes destiny as "AN ETERNAL DEGREE OF GODS PROVIDENCE"; but he admonishes:

And let not any man cauill with mee about the name, because I say there is not in Latine another proper word to expresse that thing, but FATVM.23

Providence, according to Lipsius, is a faculty or power of an omniscient God who governs all things. Even Browne observes: "That fatall necessitie of the Stoickes, is nothing but the immutable Law of his will."24 In Lipsius' praise of obedience, illustrated by his analogy, one finds traces of stoic acceptance:

We may laugh at him who hauing tyed his boat to a rock: afterwards halleth the rope as though the rocke shoulde come to him, when himselfe goeth neerer to it: But our foolishnesse is farre greater, who being fast bounde to the rocke of Gods eternall providence, by our hailing and pulling would haue the same to obey vs, and not we it.25

It is evident that a reading of Shakespeare's plays should take into account the attitude of Christian humanists on the matter of Providence. Holloway, for instance, seeing

23Lipsius, p. 117.

24Browne, p. 20.

25Lipsius, p. 105.
Hamlet in relation to England's humanistic background makes the following comment: "Randomness simply does not exist. All that exists is the operation sometimes abrupt and direct, sometimes devious and slow, of Divine Justice."\(^{26}\)

Holloway also notes that the Elizabethan tendency to relate natural phenomena (such as earthquakes and eclipses) to augury is not without Biblical precedent.\(^{27}\)

As a result of its Renaissance baptism, the classical conception of Fate became an aspect of Providence. But Christian humanists of the period still had to contend with another problem— the Fall of Man— which not only contradicted the optimism of the ancients but also proposed the corruption of human reason. Christian Platonists of the period came to terms with the problem, however, by placing emphasis upon the Redemption and by focusing attention upon man's potential for spiritual perfection. Despite their Puritan affinities, the Cambridge Platonists liked neither the idea of predestination nor that of man's degeneracy. As humanists, they inclined toward the classical God of Reason instead of the Calvinist God of Will. It was largely through the


\(^{27}\) Holloway cites Luke 21:25-6, as well as Rev. 16:18, and gives a discussion of Elizabethan eschatology.
efforts of neo-Platonists and neo-Stoics, therefore, that
the cherished doctrines of classical philosophy became
reconciled to those of Christian theology. Moreover,
right reason during the Renaissance remained faithful
to both.

In examining the villain of reason we shall need to
bear in mind that his faith in the Self and his expres­
sions of skepticism toward the supernatural, or incipient
philosophy of scientific materialism, clearly characterize
him as belonging to continental humanism. In addition,
it will be necessary to recall that the beliefs of
English humanists, in matters that many people today
would dismiss as superstition, operate within the frame­
work of right reason either by indicating reverence for
the supernatural (and despite Ciceronian precedent for
doubt) or by acknowledging an ordered universe. The
document of right reason suggests, too, that early
Rationalists may have been able to visualize the
consequences of unbridled reason, or reason gone awry.
For the expulsion of "rational" villainy from orthodox
humanism is both complete and final. An antithesis of
the best-known traditions in Western philosophy, the
villain of reason becomes more than an artistic phenom­
enon of the Renaissance stage. To view him solely as
either a Machiavellian or an Elizabethan character-type
is to miss not only the implications he carried for his
times but also those he holds for our own.
III. EMERGENCE OF THE VILLAIN OF REASON

Because the English stage villain epitomizes the "new" man, recently liberated from the Middle Ages, he serves in a sense as spokesman for the Renaissance. The villain's amplified individualism repudiates the communal past while his self-assertive instincts betoken a form of moral solipsism, lying rooted within the human will. It is in this respect that the Elizabethan villain finally emerges as something of a caricature-criticism of the times. Envisioning the moral consequences of a fully emancipated self, English playwrights projected onto the stage a figure bedecked in trappings of the Renaissance. But, as we have already observed, the medieval mind continued to preside over European thinking in the sixteenth century. Within England's new ecclesiastical superstructure, headed by the crown, the Christian subjects of Queen Elizabeth I received the spiritual legacies of the medieval church. English audiences could not totally reject the past; nor did they seem especially anxious to do so. This attitude is reflected, moreover, in works by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Dramatists of the period applauded the Renaissance, yet they displayed a remarkable ability to evaluate the Age during which they lived. The English stage villain stands as testimony to their recognition of its limitations.
While attitudes of the Elizabethan villain signify a break with the past, the role itself shows signs of having been visibly affected by dramatic art of the Middle Ages, particularly by the Vice of English moralities and interludes. Not unlike the villain, the Vice possesses notable rationalistic tendencies to which various critics have alluded. Farnham, for instance, observes that the following occurs in *Incoth Is As Good As a Feast*:

But he [Worldly Man] is soon assailed by Covetousness, the peculiarly insinuating leader of a band of Vices, and he is soon conquered. Particularly is he impressed by the specious argument that if he had more wealth he could better give alms according to his Christian duty.¹

A more explicit treatment of the Vice's use of logic is given by Professor Roy J. Pearcy in the paper entitled, "Devil and Vice as Sophists in the Early English Drama."² Pearcy's valuable study, which focuses upon medieval backgrounds in logic and rhetoric, presents careful illustrations of the devil's perverted dialectic and the Vice's spurious rationality.

If the very nature of the Vice's allegorical task of winning man way from virtue identifies him with the art of persuasion, and especially with sophistry and false

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² I am indebted to Professor Pearcy for being so kind as to provide me with a copy of his paper, delivered before the South Central Modern Language Association (Fall, 1969).
logic, other methods of deception and fraud also link the Vice to rationalism—tricks, schemes, and scenes of conspiracy among vices being conventional ways of dramatizing the role as being one of appearances. Since these and similar instances of duplicity imply that a species of mental gymnastics has taken place, or is taking place, in the mind of the practitioner, the human reasoning is thereby implicated. In his rationality, the medieval Vice prefigures the Renaissance villain. The Vice, however, is ordinarily a comic figure whereas Shakespeare's villains (who are not entirely without humor) function in a manner more indicative of their potential for causing tragic situations.

As though on a stage, vices and villains tend to create for themselves parts to play before unsuspecting persons who serve as imaginary audiences and who, if deceived, have helped to make the imaginary performance a success.3 Medieval and Renaissance playwrights alike

3 Cf. Richard Austin Donovan, Shakespeare and the Game of Evil; A Study of Role-Playing Villains (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc., 1968). Though a number of Shakespeare's characters are conscious role-players, among them the role-playing king, Donovan stresses this facet of villain behavior as being the chief means by which we perceive the villain's creativity. It is this creativity, argues Donovan, that distinguishes the villain from the common criminal. In his study of Shakespeare's villains, Donovan treats Richard III, Claudius, Macbeth, Shylock, Angelo, Edmund, and Iago.
followed the practice of allowing the real audience to have information that had been withheld from the imaginary one. Since the role of the Vice and that of the villain ordinarily focus audience attention upon problems in appearance and reality, the audience—if it is to understand the dramatic proceedings—must be granted a point of vantage from which to view the inner workings of deceit and treachery. The Vice's comic function aids in clarifying for audiences the spurious nature of his rationalism whereas the villain's indebtedness to Machiavellian thought only increases the difficulty of defining the limits of his rationality. Before examining several plays in which the Vice appears, I should first like to consider the chief characteristics of rational villainy.

The villain of reason may be defined as an individual who uses deceit and treachery in order to gratify either a conscious or an unconscious wish for personal aggrandizement. As rationalist he exhibits strong premeditative instincts masked by hypocrisy—an attribute which has frequently been linked to the human reason, particularly by Restoration and eighteenth-century satirists. In dealing with other characters, the rational villain sometimes allows personal ambition to rise to the surface; but envy and pride, the passions governing it, more often remain below, rankling in his heart until they burst upon the world he inhabits with all of the
destructiveness that such feelings can generate. Thus at times the rational villain may seem "full of passionate intensity." And yet, the rational villain has no capacity for love—an inability that contributes to the image of rationality, if only by placing the villain outside the realm of a strong human emotion. Roger Burbridge has described the villain's main handicap as being "the thing on which he prides himself the most: his repression of feeling," for "this is what denies him a tragic experience and limits his journey to the constricting path of evil."⁴ (The inability of Lear's daughters, Goneril and Regan, to love their father may indicate that their "love" for Edmund is to be regarded either as a rather curious phenomenon or as a delusion on the part of the sisters.) As though his victim were merely an obstacle to be removed or an object to be disposed of, the rational villain often refrains from indulging in personalities; still, his exaggerated view of self-worth may easily infect him, as it does Iago, with a diseased sense of injured pride. In such instances, the victim unknowingly participates in a life or death ego-struggle that is being waged within the villain's imagination.

Rational villainy in its English historical setting

reveals significant development and growth of artistic awareness in confronting audiences with the eternal problem of appearance and reality. Since it was traditional for art of the Middle Ages to view the human condition in terms of religious morality, medieval drama must necessarily begin with the proposition that the only reality is the next life and that anything which diverts man's attention from it must fall into the category of appearances. Notwithstanding the villain's inclination toward Machiavellianism, his hypocrisy and verbal dependence upon elements of logic and persuasion are a natural development from the medieval Vice. By inviting others to participate in the pleasure that he represents or by disguising himself as good instead of evil, the allegorical Vice attempts to deceive his victim (man) into accepting false reality (the World).

As Willard Farnham indicates, the medieval lack of concern for this life was not especially conducive to tragedy:

It /medieval otherworldliness/ sought to realize Heaven without realizing earth, and its approach to the misfortunes of mortality was the opposite of poetic. For the business of the poet is to realize life here and now...; it is the special business of the tragic poet to realize the meaning of suffering in terms given by earthly life.5

5 Farnham, p. 64.
But when dramatists started to turn their attention toward the Passion, continues Farnham's argument, art and religion began to reconcile themselves to one another. Interestingly enough, the absorption of Corpus Christi plays into the mainstream of medieval drama roughly coincided with the entrance of villainy onto the English stage. As he traces the early liturgical plays through to the later moralities, Hardin Craig pauses to consider the circumstances under which playwrights must have regarded the human potential for villainy:

Another feature of these more highly developed, yet still liturgical, plays is the appearance of the first antagonistic role, that of Pilate, the first villain in the religious drama. He appears with soldiers whom he sets to guard the tomb in order to prevent the disciples from removing Christ's body.... This episode of Pilate and the Setting of the Watch was widely disseminated...and showed from the first in the speeches of Pilate a suggestion of secularity in the use of a sort of classical metre instead of the ordinary accentual kind.

The depiction of villains as individuals rather than as abstractions would have been a natural step for native playwrights to take. The moralities, which existed side by side with Elizabethan tragedy, were already

6 Ibid., pp. 64-6.

beginning to show a degree of self-consciousness not present in the earlier dramas, for many of these carried the names of their authors. It was especially in portraying the seeds of villainy, however, that native playwrights tended toward individualization and secularization. In this respect, Dr. Percy's commentary upon Hickscorner, included by Hazlitt in the Preface, seems worthy of note:

...the piece is of a comic caste and contains a humorous display of some of the vices of the age. Indeed, the author has generally been so little attentive to the allegory, that we need only substitute other names to his personages, and we have real characters and living manners.8

The Vices who appear in Hickscorner—Freewill, Imagination, and Hickscorner—delight in bragging about their mischievous deeds; and their allusions to Newgate, by suggesting criminality in addition to immorality, provide just such an instance of the human element to which Dr. Percy refers.

As the Vices of Hickscorner are fighting among themselves, Pity enters and attempts to put an end to the quarrel. The presence of a common foe prompts the Vice's immediate reconciliation, followed by Imagination's instigation of a plot against Pity:

8

I will go to him, and pick a quarrel,  
And make him a thief, and say he did steal  
Of mine forty pound in a bag.9

The three make false accusations against Pity and cast him into irons. Perseverance and Contemplation later set their companion free and, with relatively little difficulty, succeed in convincing Freewill to amend his ways. Imagination offers greater resistance to the Virtues' efforts, but fear of death eventually proves stronger than skepticism; thus Imagination forsakes his life of sin also. In *Hickscomer*, as in other medieval plays, the action revolves mainly around the Vices, although it is the Virtues who preside over the outcome.

R.L. Pearcy has drawn attention to one of the chief arguments used in the Vice's attempts to corrupt innocence—namely, that a young man should taste the joys of the world because his youth affords him plenty of time in which to repent. Pearcy then notes the type of plot structure occasioned by this theme:

Such a development allows the dramatist to begin and end with scenes of moral exhortation, to include a racy picture of the dissolute life in the middle, and to have two transition scenes where the Vices, triumphant in the first encounter, and the virtues, triumphant in the second, confront one another and exercise their respective rhetorical and dialectical skills.10

9Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, I, 170.
10Pearcy, p. 4.
While the Virtues prove to be less interesting, from a dramatic standpoint, than their more lifelike adversaries, the presence of Virtues at least encourages one to believe that good will prevail and that justice will triumph. In the comic interlude *Jack Juggler* (ca. 1553), whose cast of characters does not include Virtues, such assurance is found lacking.

Despite the dramatist's acknowledged indebtedness to Plautus in the Prologue, actual borrowing is slight. *Jack Juggler* is of special interest here because the play provides one of the purest treatments of the Vice's characteristic duplicity. Generalizing Plautus' basic machinery into a plot hinging upon confused identities, the English playwright uses the Vice for purposes of illustrating the ineptness of man's reason whenever he is confronted by duplicity. *Jack Juggler*, the Vice in the play, reveals himself almost at once to be a schemer:

> But I shall set little by my wit
> If I do not Jenkin this night requite
> Ere I sleep, Jenkin shall be met
> And I trust to come partly out of his debt....

Whereas the Vice ordinarily requires no motive beyond that of his own innate affinity for evil, Juggler's actions apparently stem from personal feelings of animosity toward

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11 Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, II, 114.
Jenkin Careaway, a ne'er-do-well page in the service of his master Bongrace. Juggler's scheme, to make Jenkin think that he is not himself but another man, serves the dual purpose of getting the page into trouble with his master (certain to bring a beating) and of causing him the mental anguish of being without an identity. To prevent Careaway from carrying out Bongrace's orders, Juggler disguises himself as the page, accuses Jenkin of being an impostor, and bars him from his master's door. By the end of the play Careaway, harassed by both his master and his irate mistress, has been reduced to a state of mental confusion. Juggler has read his victim well, and the outcome fulfills the predictions given in the Vice's opening speech:

For except he hath better luck than he had
He woll come hither stark staring mad.
When he shall come, I woll handle my captive so,
That he shall not well wot whither to go.
His mistress, I know, she woll him blame
And his master also will do the same....

12 Cf. Burbridge's definition of villainy as "the wilful destruction of man's identity" (p. 57). Quite naturally, the critic's insight calls for a less literal application than the one given here. In treating the destructive powers of the villain, Burbridge emphasizes the process of dehumanization which occurs.

13 Hazlitt's Dodsley, II, 115.
Like Haphazard, the Vice in *Appius and Virginia* (ca. 1563), Juggler is a punster, quick to recognize the verbal possibilities of a word—in this instance Jenkin's surname:

Jack Juggler: How now, art thou Careaway or not?  
Careaway: By the Lord, I doubt, but sayest thou nay to that?  
Jack Juggler: Yea, marry, I tell thee, Care-away is my name.14

Juggler's ability to verbalize is typical of the Vice as depicted by early English dramatists. Inclination, who appears in *The Trial of Treasure* (1567), provides us with a similar example, even though his glibness fails to fool the Virtues, who penetrate the deception. Inclination has tried to evade Just and Sapience by resorting to the use of foreign language:

Inc. Non point parle français, non, par ma foy.  
Sap. To deceive us now himself he doth prepare.15

Here, and elsewhere, the Vice's garbled learning may be taken as evidence of his spurious rationality. Still, the Vice's verbal patterns help to portray him as being mentally inclined.

Asides and aliases—by no means limited to vices, villains, or otherwise unworthy personages—lend added


15 Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, III, 277.
weight to the seeming rationality of the Vice by placing him in a position of awareness while others in the play remain unaware. This effect of rationality is perhaps best described as being "psychological"; for besides serving as a vehicle for comic commentary, the Aside may also function as a means of providing audiences with necessary exposition of the Vice's plans or schemes. Roger Burbridge has observed that in the mouths of Shakespeare's villains, particularly Richard III, the Aside may serve as a means of persuasion. In such instances, the villain attempts to draw the audience into his satiric view of the world, hoping to make other characters in the play seem ludicrous and contemptible. While the Vice's penchant for aliases aids in defining his duplicitous nature, the motives of Shakespearean characters offer a greater range of moral intent. Individuals appearing in Shakespeare's comedies, for instance, sometimes resort to use of an alias or a disguise in order to forward honorable aims. Their actions may be prompted by love (Julia, in Two Gent. of Verona) or dictated by practical necessity (Rosalind, in As You Like It). In Measure for Measure, the Duke of Vienna dons a disguise with the hope of gaining easier

16 Burbridge, pp. 59-61.
access to truth. Conversely, when the medieval Vice assumes an alias he does so in order to insinuate himself into the good graces of his intended victim, fearing that his real name will bring immediate reprisal or instant rejection.

One of the most successful scenes in *Respublica* (ca. 1554) centers upon the comic attempts of the Vices to find suitable aliases for themselves in order that they might seduce the state (*Respublica*) into granting them positions of authority. The play outlines the evil effects of the Vices' governmental policies and of *Respublica*'s inability to penetrate their guises. Avarice, the chief Vice, has presented himself to her as Policy, while his three cohorts--Insolence, Oppression, and Adulation--have assumed the names of Authority, Reformation, and Honesty, respectively. Although *Respublica* is basically a good individual, she chooses to believe her advisers rather than People, who for five years has been silenced. The pleas of People are ineffectual and it takes the intercession of four ladies--Misericordia, Veritas, Justicia, and Pax--before the Vices

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17 This use of an assumed identity is termed the "spy in disguise" by Victor Freeburg, who notes that it is utilized "not only to observe but to shape events as well." Victor O. Freeburg, *Disguise Plots in Elizabethan Drama* (1925; rpt. New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 7.
are exposed. Adulation is given the chance to repent, but the goddess Nemesis deals more harshly with the others.

Interestingly enough, it is the Virtues' a priori knowledge which seems to grant them special immunity from the Vice's fraudulent tactics. In this respect, they differ considerably from the humans in the plays, whose undermined goodness often stems from an inability to confront duplicity by means of the lower reason. The Virtues' perceptions suggest instead that the best defenses of goodness reside in the higher reason. Since the ability of the mind to detect foul play depends to a large extent upon its being given correct information with which proper conclusions can be reached, it is the business of the Vice to see that such information is withheld or that the facts are misrepresented. Although man's distrust of reason had begun during the Middle Ages, audiences of the day did not doubt the efficacy of man's reason in helping to establish a pattern of virtuous living. Reason, in fact, appears in numerous plays of the period. As a representative of goodness, Reason sometimes acts as guardian of the mind, while at other times serving as guardian of the soul.18

The Vice's bag of tricks includes a device which calls to mind the tactics employed by Edmund and Cassius—use of the forged letter. Iago's theft of Desdemona's hankerchief likewise echoes the stage behavior of the medieval Vice. While Vices may congregate in bands, they are seldom loyal to one another once they are exposed. They brawl or fight among themselves, sometimes allowing the sins which govern them to undermine their common purpose. Medwall's *Nature*, a late morality, offers a prime illustration of this type of behavior on the part of Vices. As Pride arrives near the scene of battle, Envy catches sight of his extravagant array and promptly tells his cohort that the battle is over and that their master has lost. Quite naturally, Pride slinks away in shame. Envy's act of disloyalty reflects not only the involuntary nature of the Vice's evil but also his commitment to the expression of self. Throughout the play man's lower elements struggle to gain supremacy over his reason, and it is Sensuality's dissatisfaction with the subordinate role allotted to him which sets the tone of the play's action. Nor does *Nature* provide an isolated instance of such self-assertive instincts on the part of the Vice. In *Hickscomer Freewill* manifests a similar attitude when he exclaims to Perseverance: "Avaunt, caitiff, dost thou thou me!"¹⁹

¹⁹Hazlitt's *Dodsley*, I, 180.
If the Vice seems sensitive to implications of his inferiority, he is not altogether unlike the rational villain, whose ego blinds him to the worth of other human beings—that is, to the extent that he willfully sets about to cause their downfall. Iago, for instance, is cognizant of both Othello's and Cassio's good qualities but refuses to be swayed from his course of self-projection. Weston Babcock maintains that Iago's bitterness stems from feelings of social inferiority and supports this contention (using Furness' Variorum Edition) by pointing out the "thou"-"you" distinctions within the play. At first Roderigo refers to Iago as "thou" (used for persons of lesser station) while Iago addresses him as "you." After Iago gains feelings of superiority over Desdemona's would-be suitor, however, he addresses Roderigo as "thou" and continues to do so throughout the play. Babcock further notes that whereas Iago is referred to by use of "thy" and "thine" fifty-five times in the play, Cassio is referred to as "thee" only once. As further substantiation of his point, Babcock argues that the word honest as applied to Iago was understood by Elizabethans to be a term of condescension.\(^{20}\) Iago's motives do, in fact,

\(^{20}\)Weston Babcock, "Iago—An Extraordinary Honest Man," Shakespeare Quarterly, 16(Autumn 1965), 297-301. Earlier uses of the word honest in the play may function in the manner that Babcock suggests, but Shakespeare endows the term with increasing irony so that when Othello uses it in the last act the meaning of "condescension" must be rejected. Iago is also referred to as "honest" because of his bluntness probably.
rest within the Adlerian-Jungian framework of rational villainy, and it is the presence of these same motives which finally dissociate Iago from his medieval counterpart, the Vice. An allegorical interpretation of Iago as the Vice that cannot act otherwise would seriously distort the playwright's vision of the world in which he lived. Even though in the last act, Othello implies that Iago is not really a person but the devil incarnate, we have Iago's own word for his use of free will. This statement as well as his early admission that he is not what he appears to be are two of the few statements made by Iago that can be taken at face value. Nor will an allegorical interpretation of Edmund yield a satisfactory reading of King Lear, though in point of fact Goneril, Regan, and Oswald do operate in much the same way as a band of vices. Lear's daughters become representative of the "wicked stepsisters" archetype in an almost fairytale characterization, while their "love" for Edmund suggests an involuntary attraction of evil to evil--comparable in a sense to the extraordinary scene of recognition between the Prospector and the President in Giraudoux's Madwoman of Chaillot.

The Vice's use of aliases as well as his dependence upon tricks, schemes, and outright lies, manifests a type of rationalism which early playwrights clearly defined as being spurious. The comic stage behavior of
the Vice, for instance, served as one means of enabling audiences to dismiss his claims to reason. As we have already observed, the Vice either deliberately or inadvertently identifies himself with false learning when he adopts the pretext of speaking in a foreign tongue. Mischief's Latin—"Corn serveth breadibus, chaff horsibus, straw firibusque"\(^{21}\) (Mankind, ca. 1475)—provides us with one of many such illustrations. The Virtues' superior rhetorical abilities constituted another signpost by which audiences could read the rationalism of the Vice. And since the medieval mind viewed evil as being irrational, the Vice's allegorical equation with sin would from the first have prevented audiences from being taken in by any sort of sleazy rationality. Conversely, the English stage villain is neither allegorical nor essentially comic; and his strongest opponents are merely men, not Virtues. Machiavellian influences, or perhaps Renaissance influences in general, endowed the rational villain with a more sophisticated rhetoric than that of the Vice; but he differs from his predecessor not so much in the degree of his rationality as in the more subtle qualifications of it on the part of Elizabethan playwrights.

The cold logic of Machiavelli's *The Prince* re-surfaces in the stage villain's rationalistic approach to life. But whereas Machiavelli himself acknowledges the existence of Fortune (Ch. XXV), the villain ordinarily evinces skepticism, preferring to invest all of his faith in his own abilities. Cassius' advice to Brutus typifies this expression of faith in the self—"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars/But in ourselves, that we are underlings." As a logician, the Machiavel adheres first and foremost to the basic assumption governing his reasoning: namely, that the end justifies the means. Elizabethan dramatists sometimes assigned him a revenge motive, but the Machiavel is actually better characterized by personal ambition, a motive more in keeping with the Italian writer's political beliefs and ideas. Artistic depictions of rational villainy reflect the Renaissance's interest in Machiavellian thought, and it was largely through Italian influences that the *modus operandi* of the rational villain became clearly defined. In the plays of Shakespeare, for example, the villain of reason is an individual of great intellectual and psychological depth.

Neither the Vice nor the Machiavel provides us with an explanation of the power achieved by Shakespeare in the creation of his villains; but each contributes to our understanding of the way in which reason became so vital a part of the villain's stage image. Devoting his energies to expressions of self-interest, the villain
antithesizes the virtue of Christian love; and it is his pride in being a thinking rather than a feeling individual which underscores his moral turpitude. Particularly in the history plays of Shakespeare do we come to recognize the full force and scope of the human ego in prompting the rational villain's actions. Given an English political setting, the villain's Machiavellian rationale fails to bring order to the state. In Shakespeare's history plays, the villain of reason functions as an agent of chaos.
IV. THE HISTORIES

The ten chronicle plays of Shakespeare comprise a body of literature that covers, intermittently, the period of English history extending from the reign of King John to include that of Henry VIII. As a group, they chronicle England's failures and successes as it struggled to achieve national unity and to free itself of French and Roman influences. Hemminge and Condell, Shakespeare's friends and his first editors, arranged the histories according to the dates of the kings represented in the titles rather than according to their actual dates of composition. In the 1623 folio edition King John appears first, followed by Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, the three parts of Henry VI, Richard III, and Henry VIII. Since attempts to distinguish between the terms history and chronicle as these apply to Shakespeare's plays ultimately prove futile, I shall follow Irving Ribner in using the terms interchangeably. Nor is there reason to accord tragedy a stricter meaning since the present chapter treats the chronicles as a historical continuity and examines the villains in their relationship to it. This is not to deny the possibility of viewing Richard III as a tragedy, Julius Caesar as a history, or Macbeth as a chronicle of Scottish history; it is, however, to say that here and in the following chapters, grouping of the plays into comedies, histories, or tragedies is
based not so much upon formal definitions of these terms as upon the places assigned to the plays in the first folio.

Although Shakespeare's histories contain chronological inaccuracies, character improvisations, and such similar artistic liberties, audiences of the day thought the plays to be faithful renditions of English history as they knew it (barring such exceptions as Henry Brooke, whose feelings of personal injury led Shakespeare to change the name of Oldcastle to Falstaff). From first to last, the plays are true to Elizabethan conceptions of historical events and personages leading to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth I and culminating in the splendid era of her reign. With an abundance of scenes that are largely episodic as well as patriotic, the plays produce much the same effect as a national epic. Additional epic flourishes prevail in the characters' quite understandable genealogical concerns. Then too, there are the prophecies of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, reminding us of what has passed and what will come. The sanctity of oaths and pledges is never doubted, for we easily perceive the evil consequences of Henry VI's refusal to keep his pledge to marry Armagnac's daughter and of Henry IV's failure to prevent the death of Richard II. As whole armies clash, Shakespeare like the poet Homer draws our attention away from the general clamor and focuses it upon two combatants such as York and Clifford, who exchange compliments prior to exchanging blows. Studied
as a unit the plays testify to the assurance given by E.M.W. Tillyard that "the superiority of the epic over every other literary form was axiomatic in the Renaissance in spite of Aristotle's opinion."\(^1\)

As dramas without heroes, the history plays yield a satisfactory reading when interpreted in the manner suggested by Irving Ribner—namely, that England is the morality hero who errs, suffers, is pitied by God, and finally redeemed.\(^2\) The influence of medieval tradition is further suggested by characters such as Falstaff and Richard III, who possess vestiges of the stage Vice, as well as by the abstract figure Rumour, who introduces the second part of *Henry IV*. A situation of kingship that involves good and evil counselors likewise indicates the presence of morality influences.\(^3\) To his discredit, Henry VI fails to heed the advice of Duke Humphrey his good counsel while it is to the credit of Prince Hal that he finally chooses the Lord Chief Justice rather than Falstaff to advise him. A good king, like a morality hero, is sometimes misled by those around him, but it is


his responsibility to listen to the promptings of Virtue and turn his attentions away from Vice. Fusion of classical and medieval influences is likewise apparent in Renaissance attitudes toward order and degree. The Renaissance could well understand why the chorus in Agamemnon abhorred the killing of kings or why the gods themselves exacted retribution for King Laius' death in Oedipus Rex. The sanctity of kingship was taught in Homilies of the English Church at a time when regular church attendance was compulsory and willful disobedience viewed as the gravest of political and moral evils. Thus Faulconbridge reminds Salisbury that only God has the right to sit in judgment of a king, not the king's nobles nor any of his other subjects. Shakespeare expresses the same view in the speech of Carlisle—"What subject can give sentence on his king?"—and indeed throughout the whole of Richard II.

The histories of Shakespeare are explicit in treating the themes of sin and retribution and owe much to the chroniclers who had exhibited in their works a tendency to moralize history. The Tudors, moreover, had successfully perpetuated the idea that the history of England from Richard II to Henry VIII revealed the working out of Divine Providence and that the eventual union of the houses of York and Lancaster through royal marriage
represented "the providential and happy ending of an organ­ic piece of history." But even if "heaven hath a hand" in the events of the plays, Shakespeare is too good a dramatist to allow his characters to become helpless pawns in a fatalistic world. Rather, he accounts for happenings through portrayals of his characters' strengths and weaknesses. Within the plays are found the psycholog­ical causes underlying the actions of great men and of weak men called to perform great tasks.

Shakespeare's chronicles do not represent total historical continuity for King John and Henry VIII are isolated from the others which, together, comprise two tetralogies. Shakespeare began the series with the three parts of Henry VI followed by Richard III. Next, he seems to have written either Richard II or King John. But whether or not Richard II was written before or after King John, it bears an undisputed relationship to the rest of the plays in the second tetralogy. This tetralogy, then, consists of Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, and Henry V. The last of the chronicle plays Henry VIII was written by Shakespeare and someone else, probably John Fletcher, and though it apparently stages well

4 Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 29.
Henry VIII has remained a black sheep among critics, no doubt because of its dual authorship.  

Professor Tillyard has attempted to account for the order of the plays by suggesting a possibility that Shakespeare may have written early versions of the plays in the second tetralogy, recasting and revising them later. To Tillyard the plays indicate a single artistic conception, and so the critic recognizes another possible explanation for their order of composition:  

Perhaps, like others, he thought that vice was easier to picture than virtue, hell than paradise, and that it would be safer to spend his present energies on pictures of chaos and a great villain, leaving the more difficult picture of princely perfection to his maturity.  

Tillyard's argument is of course tenable and offers the most plausible explanation for Richard III's appearance in the middle of the plays instead of at the end, where one might expect to find him both chronologically and artistically--artistically because he represents a great character achievement on the part of Shakespeare. The playwright's plan to unify the chronicles, however, could


6 Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 150.  

7 Ibid., p. 149.
as easily have occurred after the fact as before. Recognition of the possibilities afforded by a once-established framework might have been prompted by aesthetic considerations such as those that must have occurred to William Faulkner or Honore de Balzac. A limited project could evolve naturally into a panoramic view that surrounds the finished opus with an epic aura and that capitalizes upon an audience’s interest in characters and themes already popularized.

Because each of the histories belongs to a whole greater than itself, a villain character may seem more complicated than if his appearance were limited to a single play. This factor, however, constitutes the least of our worries. Of much greater concern are the political motives which figure strongly into the morality or immorality of characters’ actions. Outside of Richard III there are no villains in the histories to equal the great villains of the tragedies; and caught as these are in the web of English political history, they serve their dramatic function as incipient or embryonic villains. Their importance lies not so much in their revelations about Shakespeare’s maturing artistic powers as in their revelations about his view of complex public morality. As the motives and methods of rational villainy blend with the political backdrop of the plays, one finds it increasingly difficult to distinguish partisan politics from the egocentric forces that propel the rational villain toward
his goals. Hotspur's uncle, Worcester, is just such a figure, and there are others. Greater attention to character development, if Shakespeare had so chosen, would have alleviated some of these difficulties; but it could not have better described the blending of personal and political aims to the point at which villainy becomes obscured by chauvinism. Pandulph, the cynical and worldly papal legate in King John, instigates a French attack upon England by appealing to Lewis' baser motives. In every way but one Pandulph bears all of the traces of rational villainy, and the exception is his dogged loyalty to Rome--with which Elizabethan audiences would not have sympathized in any case. Pandulph would have been, and so he must remain, a villainous cleric using villainous methods to further a bad cause. But the question, actually, is whether the rational villain can be committed to any cause at all and represent the type of villain in whom we are interested. The monk who rids his church of an enemy by poisoning both the king and himself (KJ. V.v.28-30) belongs to an entirely different category of villainy. Yet, Shakespeare conceived of situations in which man's subtler secret wishes for self-aggrandizement attach themselves to outside causes, feeding the ego with chauvinistic impulses. Herein lies the problem of rational villainy as it occurs in the histories.

As a group, the histories follow the tradition of
Christian humanism. This moral historical perspective is found in Shakespeare's sources as well as in popularly held opinions of his day. Briefly, it denounces factious rebellion as an affront to heaven's decree of order and harmony; it views the king as God's representative on earth corresponding to the sun in the heavens; and it asserts a system of retribution whereby both individuals and the state are held liable for wrongs committed. The Providential factor literally presides over the history plays, and perhaps at this point it might help to remind the reader that in the minds of Elizabethans the Christian concepts of free will and divine Providence did not contradict one another. Henry IV and his son Henry V, for instance, by being worthy persons and good kings are able to postpone the retribution that heaven will inevitably exact as payment for the slaying of Richard II, its minister on earth. It should not seem at all strange that Christian humanist ideology pervaded the works of Renaissance chroniclers, for it was found in many other places besides.

Exemplifying the moral historical approach to English history were Polydore Vergil's Historia Angliae, which portrayed Henry V as the ideal of kingly virtue, and Edward Halle's The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York, which denounced rebellion and emphasized the Providential aspect of England's political past. Though A Mirror for Magistrates is more
literary than historical, it covers the same period of history as Shakespeare's plays. The work expresses its authors' opinions on government and politics through a series of monologues delivered by historical figures such as Jack Cade, who also makes an appearance in 2Henry VI. Other widely known works included Lord Berner's translation of Froissart and Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, the work that served as the principal source for Shakespeare's second tetralogy. Moral philosophy and Tudor politics do not dominate Renaissance historiography in every case, but both fairly well represent English thinking in areas of history and government. Permeating the histories of Shakespeare, in fact, are several major Renaissance conceptions that hold moral-political implications. Since these not only contribute to the worldview of the plays but also help to shape audience attitudes toward Shakespeare's political villains, I should like to review them briefly before proceeding any further. The rights of kingly title and possession, the role of Providence in history, and the doctrines of order and degree provide an index which guides our judgment of Shakespeare's historical figures.

Though it was published long after Shakespeare had written his plays, Browne's The Case of Allegiance to a King in Possession (1690) puts into clearcut argumentative terms the moral questions that must have confronted
audiences each time they witnessed performances of the histories. Browne's piece attacks the belief that a subject's allegiance is due only to the de facto king, for it claims that the king's right to the allegiance of his subjects is antecedent not subsequent to possession. While Browne grants that subjects should lawfully submit to acts of government for their own safety and for the good of the state, he insists that the loyalties of subjects

are due to the lawful King only, by the law of Nature: and therefore no Human Law, can take the whole Allegiance of the Subjects, or the indispensable parts of it, away from him and transfer them to the Usurper.⁸

Browne laments the large number of usurpations attending the history of English kings and the numbers of "traitors" who stood in behalf of their rightful king. In Richard II Shakespeare raises something of the same question by allowing the Bishop of Carlisle to express such high-minded sentiments that had he been executed along with the Abbot of Winchester and other followers of Richard, we should probably have viewed him as either a patriot or a political martyr--despite his conspiracy against the de facto king. York's loyalty to Henry and Aumerle's

⁸Thomas Browne, fellow of St. John's College, The Case of Allegiance to a King in Possession (London: Printed in 1690), p. 40. In this and subsequent citations from the text, I have omitted italics and used the modernized s.
penitence help to win our sympathies away from the conspirators, but we do not really give them over to Henry IV until he mercifully commends Carlisle to a monastery instead of to the gallows. With Henry IV's promise of atonement for the unfortunate death of Richard II, we yield up our sympathies entirely to the de facto king. Clearly then, treason and villainy do not necessarily mean the same thing, though it is sometimes so implied in the histories.

The Case of Allegiance to a King in Possession presents an absolutist ethical position that is especially clear in censuring Lord Bacon's praise of a statute, as being pious and just, which exempted subjects from charges of treason when the king compelled them to bear arms against a lawful heir:

The Cunning and State Policy of it [the statute] does easily appear, but it is not so easie to discover any piety or Justice in a Law that makes evil good and good evil.9

Yet, Shakespeare's history plays tend to favor the de facto king (except of course Richard III). This is not to say that Shakespeare's feelings were exceedingly different from Browne's; it is to say, however, that the playwright directs our sympathies more toward the

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9 The Case of Allegiance, p. 47.
practical necessities of civil order and national unity. Prince Hal's stalwart defense of the rights of possession as he attempts to allay his father's fears about the crown is perhaps the best argument found in the plays:

My gracious liege
You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me
Then plain and right must my possession be....
(2Hen. VI IV.v.222-3)

Still, the statement is an oversimplification which banishes from its premises any recognition of prior titular claims—claims that Hal himself will later revive in making a bid for the French throne. If the argument is indeed the best he can make, then the prince would obviously do well to "busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels." Shakespeare's commoners view the problem of lawful kingship in a manner akin to callousness. "For we were subjects but while you were King," remark the keepers who arrest Henry VI; and in King John the citizens of Angiers promise their loyalties to the one who "proves the King" by winning the war. The cheap behavior of the keepers and the citizens suggests that Shakespeare may have had little regard for the rights of possession but that he sympathized nevertheless with the subject's dilemma.

Secondly, we should consider the place that Providence occupies in the histories. Briefly, Providence involves a series of crimes followed by penance and forgiveness or by retribution. If the latter, payment
is exacted from either the offender or his heirs, often at a high rate of interest. By refusing to stop the plot against Humphrey, York becomes accomplice to the crime and thereby seals not only his own fate but also his son's and England's. The death of the good duke, England's Protector, demands both private and public retribution, the latter occurring in the reign of Richard III. (Retribution is private when it involves individuals or families and public when it implicates an entire nation.) Margaret of Anjou's revengeful speech in Richard III provides a veritable catalogue of privately paid accounts:

Thy Edward he is dead that stabbed my Edward;  
Thy other Edward dead, to quit my Edward.  
Young York he is but boot, because both they  
Match not the high perfection of my loss.  
Thy Clarence he is dead that killed my Edward;  
And the beholders of this tragic play,  
The adulterate Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey,  
Untimely smothered in their dusky graves. (IV.iv.63-70)

On the other hand, Richard II proposes a theory of public retribution:

Yet know my master, God Omnipotent,  
Is mustering in His clouds on our behalf  
Armies of pestilence; and they shall strike  
Your children yet unborn and unbegot,  
That lift your vassal hands against my head  
And threat the glory of my precious crown. (III.iii.85-90)

Renaissance conceptions of Divine Providence included the idea that bad kings as well as good were sent from God, that the bad kings served as a Providential means for scourging the people of their sins, and that the good kings were signs of God's forgiveness. The belief that God
selected certain people as His instruments is expressed in Henry VI's words to Warwick:

And chiefly therefore I thank God and thee.
He was the author, thou the instrument.

(Hen. VI IV.vi.17-8)

Although such divergent personalities as Henry of Richmond and Richard III serve equally to carry out the decrees of divine Will, neither character surrenders his own will in the process; and whatever validity such distinctions hold for modern times, Christian humanism recognized free will and divine Providence. The foreknowledge of God did not mean the same thing as predestination, nor was any man trapped in a web of divine intent. If a theory of Providence pervades the histories, it does not absolve Shakespeare's characters of moral responsibilities. Equally clear, moreover, are the limits of kingly command. A subject does not have to obey when the king orders him to perform an immoral action. By sparing Arthur's life, for instance, Hubert disobeys King John; and when the king comments that Hubert's physical demeanor would seem to make him capable of almost any terrible crime, Hubert replies:

And you have slandered nature in my form,
Which, howsoever rude exteriorly,
Is yet the cover of a fairer mind
Than to be butcher of an innocent child.

(KJ IV.ii.256-9)

Shakespeare's historical figures belong to a world in which people and events seem specifically chosen. Some
are unwilling sacrificial victims whose reward, it is assumed, will come in another life. Others are rebels sent to punish the state for crimes requiring public retribution. Professor Tillyard has summarized the Providential aspect of the histories accordingly:

What were the sins God sought to punish? There had been a number, but the pre-eminent one was the murder of Richard II, the shedding of the blood of God's deputy on earth. Henry IV had been punished by an uneasy reign but had not fully expiated the crime; Henry V, for his piety, had been allowed a brilliant reign. But the curse was there; and first England suffers through Henry V's early death and secondly she is tried by the witchcraft of Joan.10

Since the doctrine of order and degree has already been treated in the section on humanism (Ch.2), we need only consider its special application to Shakespeare's chronicles. Indeed, the doctrine holds a more significant place in the histories than in either the tragedies or comedies. Order and harmony within the kingdom were to minds of the Renaissance more than just an obvious political good; they were the heavenly decrees of the divine Orderer Himself. Thus, those who aligned themselves with rebellion and insurrection belonged either to the time before creation or with Cain after the Fall. The plays, moreover, affirm the Renaissance doctrine of cosmic and natural correspondences. Throughout the plays the king is metaphorically represented by the sun, especially in Richard II, and

10 Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 165.
there are numerous references to the correspondences of planetary motions with natural events as well. A rationally ordered universe had its correspondence in an ordered state, free of misrule and rebellion. To represent the way that a state should function, Shakespeare chose metaphors of "time," "gardening," and "music." Well, then, might Richard II lament:

Ha, ha! Keep time. How sour sweet music is
When time is broke and no proportion kept!
So is it in the music of men's lives.
And here have I the daintiness of ear
To check time broke in a disordered string,
But for the concord of my state and time
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke. (V.v.42-8)

If the histories identify order with political and moral good, they represent the opposite condition as being both politically and morally evil. The Cade episodes in 2Henry VI, for example, parody the disorder then rampant in the kingdom. Cade is an embodiment of the unreason that prevails. He condemns Lord Say for having erected a grammar school and for having fostered the use of printing; and he finally orders Say's execution on grounds that the latter has pleaded too well for his life. The outburst of Northumberland, though uttered in strained circumstances, proclaims those principles of disorder which in the plays of Shakespeare are represented by the leaders of rebellion:

Let Heaven kiss earth! Now let not Nature's hand
Keep the wild flood confined! Let order die!
(2Hen. IV I.1.153-4)

On the somewhat lighter side is Falstaffian disorder. Hal's assessment of Falstaff early in 1Henry IV helps
to prepare us for the prince's later rejection of his companion:

What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day? Unless hours were cups of sack, and minutes capons, and clocks the tongues of bawds, and dials the signs of leaping houses.... I see no reason why thou shouldst be so superfluous to demand the time of the day. (I.i.6-13)

Because "time" is used in the history plays to signify order, Falstaff's question is indeed superfluous. At the end of 2Henry IV the new king renounces his former friend but grants him a pension that will eliminate any necessity for crime. Thus Henry chooses order (symbolized by the Lord Chief Justice) over disorder (symbolized by Falstaff). Our deep-felt sympathy for Falstaff at the end of the play provides an effective means by which the absolute value of Henry's final choice can be measured.

Shakespeare's political figures include the rebels and conspirators who in their own way helped to make English history. Whether or not they merit a badge of villainy depends largely upon their motives as well as their actions. Unfortunately, the breadth of subject matter in the plays denies some of them a just hearing. To what extent have they practiced deceit and treachery? Are their motives high-minded or petty and self-seeking? In the foregoing paragraphs I have attempted to indicate several perspectives for viewing Shakespeare's historical villains. One other item remains, and that is repentance. Contrite villains appear in the histories, but these are
few when compared to those in the comedies. A penitent
villain, such as Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII*, is one
who leaves the play a better man than when he entered it;
but since his conversion usually occurs at the end or
after he has been found out, he nevertheless functions as
the play's villain.

The first tetralogy contains only several small-sized
portraits of rational villainy in addition to the well-
drawn figure of Richard III. Serving as the main villain
in *1Henry VI* is Joan of Arc, who brings about the fall
of the heroic Talbot and causes great losses to England.
But Joan develops in the play as a villain of the non-
rational type. Relying upon witchcraft rather than self,
she emerges as a figure of great physical prowess and
energetic will. Her bumbling, contradictory arguments
while facing execution lack the touch of the true rational-
ist who, even if illogical, argues in sophistry's subtler
tongue. Two additional strains of villainy in *1Henry VI*--
Suffolk's and Winchester's--help to prepare the way for the
murder of Duke Humphrey in *2Henry VI*. Suffolk's words at
the end of the first part suggest that his ambitions and
schemes may inspire further character development in the
second part:

Margaret shall now be Queen and rule the King;
But I will rule both her, the King, and realm.
(*1Hen. VI* V.v.107-8)

But Suffolk never really blooms as a rational villain for
his personal involvement with Margaret, Shakespeare's own
addition to history, weakens the force of his rationalism and corroborates an earlier scene in which the earl, upon beholding Margaret for the first time, is suddenly and passionately attracted to her (V.iii). Suffolk's plans do materialize, but mainly because of the jealousies and hatreds of Gloucester's enemies and not because of his own cunning. Through the efforts of Warwick and the populace, Suffolk is banished following the murder of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, and a patriotic sea captain later captures and executes him.

The Bishop of Winchester is drawn with greater certainty than either Suffolk or Joan of Arc. Winchester is ambitious:

But long I will not be Jack out of office.
The King from Eltham I intend to steal
And sit at chiefest stern of public weal.

(1Hen. VI i.i.175-7)

He envies the duke and, ironically enough, despises the duchess for her pride. Recognizing Winchester's motives for what they are, Gloucester openly defies the bishop. Comments made by the Mayor and Exeter, as well as by the bishop himself, verify the duke's assessment of Winchester's character and justify Humphrey's criticism of the prelate. By means of bribes, he rises to the position of cardinal.

The Bishop of Winchester, now Cardinal Beaufort, uses an aside to express the motives and intentions that will join him to the action of the next play:
Now Winchester will not submit, I trow,
Or be inferior to the proudest peer.
Humphrey of Gloucester, thou shalt well perceive
That neither in birth or for authority
The Bishop will be overborne by thee.
I'll either make thee stoop and bend thy knee,
Or sack this country with a mutiny. (V.i.56-62)

Winchester's egotism carries him to the limits of personal revenge, and he finally dies of a guilty conscience. In a number of ways he foreshadows Cardinal Wolsey, another of Shakespeare's rational villains. Unlike those who aspire to be kings, Shakespeare's ambitious churchmen aim for the papacy so that they may rule sovereigns.

The second part of Henry VI revolves mainly around Gloucester's tragic downfall and the subsequent rise in York's political fortunes. Dominating much of the action in the second and third parts of Henry VI is Margaret of Anjou, a cruel villainess who gloats in the destruction of Gloucester and later York. In describing the theme of "feminine supremacy" in Henry VI, David Bevington categorizes Margaret with Joan of Arc and the Countess of Auvergne, pointing out that Margaret only seems to possess more femininity in the first play because she uses it consciously to her own advantage and not naturally as one might otherwise suppose. To Bevington, the Amazonian theme of the play relates to the broader one of disorder and discord.\(^\text{11}\) Bevington's interpretation of Margaret in

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Henry VI thus helps to explain the seemingly radical change in her character in the second and third parts of the Henry the Sixth plays. Like Winchester and Wolsey, Margaret possesses an easily offended ego and the will to revenge the real or imagined offense by means of deceit and treachery. Unfortunately for the Duchess of Gloucester, Margaret lacks neither the means nor the will to outright villainy. The duchess is herself guilty of pride and ambition; but meeting with reproofs from her husband, the duchess contents herself with petty displays of her wealth and position in court, thereby arousing the envious wrath of Margaret and Winchester. Thus Hume, a hired villain motivated by the gold of Beaufort and Suffolk, leads the duchess into a trap whereby charges of witchcraft may be brought against her. Not long after the duchess' disgrace, her husband is murdered while awaiting trial on the false charges made against him.

Without the weakness of Henry VI, the tragedy of the duke could not have occurred. (Henry VIII, for example, perceives the jealous enmity in his court and literally dares his Council to convict Cranmer, whom he believes to be innocent.) Then too, York has also refused to act in Humphrey's behalf. Unlike Henry, York is aware of the conspiracy and permits it because he realizes that the conspirators will ultimately destroy themselves along with Humphrey. Henry VI and York together represent a type of negative evil, though the king is basically virtuous and
York basically noble. The positive evil of Margaret, Cardinal Beaufort, Suffolk, and Buckingham, opens the way for another conspiracy—this time against the crown. As Salisbury and Warwick become increasingly disgusted with the reign of Henry and Margaret, they begin to question the past and to consider the titular claims of York. A sense of duty to the kingdom motivates both men, who swear allegiance to York; and thus the second part of Henry VI ends with the flight of Henry and Margaret and with the victory of York's forces.

The presence of warring factions in Henry VI might cause the crimes of Margaret and Clifford to seem like those of political necessity if Shakespeare had not shown otherwise. Through the presence of the tutor (I.iii), Shakespeare treats Clifford's slaying of Rutland, York's young son, as being an immoral act. Margaret's cruelty toward York in the last scene of the first act likewise violates all the standards of private morality. Although Clifford remains undeveloped, Margaret is fully portrayed as a villain. Like Joan of Arc, however, she is a villain of will rather than one of reason. The manner in which Shakespeare has depicted the two villainesses suggests the playwright's interest in non-rational villainy. By outwardly giving in to feelings of emotion and passion, the character-villain separates himself from the rationalistic method. As the artistic powers of Shakespeare began
to mature, however, the playwright showed a decided
dramatic preference for the rational villain.

Besides Margaret and Clifford, Shakespeare introduces
another villain into the third part of Henry VI—York's
son Richard. Though Richard does not become a full-fledged
villain until Richard III, the playwright has carefully
established all the traits which later characterize him
as a rational villain. As long as York is alive, and short­
ly thereafter, Richard tends to act nobly in battle and
in the filial affections he holds for his father. But as
early as Act One of 3Henry VI, we witness something of
the turn that his mind will take. Edward has advised his
father to break his oath to Henry on the grounds that a
kingdom is worth more than an oath, but York remains
unconvinced until Richard's offer to "prove" that the
oath should be broken:

An oath is of no moment, being not took
Before a true and lawful magistrate
That hath authority over him that swears.
Henry had none, but did usurp the place.
Then, seeing 'twas he that made you to depose,
Your oath, my lord, is vain and frivolous. (I.ii.22-7)

By hedging upon a legalism, Richard substitutes a theory
of mental reservation in the place of honorable intent.
Urged by Richard's sophistry and no doubt by his own
inclinations, York relents.

After York's death his sons with the aid of Warwick
succeed in putting Edward on the throne. But Edward's
lechery as well as his dishonorable treatment of Warwick
causes the latter to quit the sons of York and transfer his allegiance back to Henry. Meanwhile, Richard's true character is beginning to reveal itself more clearly. In Act III, Gloucester soliloquizes:

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 can add colors to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down.
(III.ii.182-195)

Thus, Richard of Gloucester promises to cover his thoughts and actions with the cloak of appearances, a decision which foreshadows Edmund and Iago, Shakespeare's later triumphs in rational villainy. Like Edmund and Iago, Richard also possesses a warped sense of having been cheated by the world. Iago blames Othello for his lack of promotion, but Edmund and Richard view their conditions in terms of nature's peevishness. Edmund takes Nature for his guide while Richard uses Nature to justify his villainy. It is to be noted, moreover, that both Richard and Edmund have twisted the humanist view of Nature to their own conceits. In the soliloquy just cited, Richard also takes the opportunity to blame Nature for his own diseased psychology:

Why, love forswore me in my mother's womb
And, for I should not deal in her soft laws,
She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe
To shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub,
To make an envious mountain on my back,
Where sits deformity to mock my body,
To shape my legs of an unequal size,
To disproportion me in every part,
Like to a chaos, or an unlicked bear whelp
That carries no impression like the dam.

(III.ii.153-62)

After York's victory, Richard rushes to the tower and stabs Henry VI, for whom our sympathies have increased a great deal. The words of the victim ("Oh, God forgive my sins and pardon thee!") offer a sharp contrast to those of his executioner ("Down, down to Hell, and say I sent thee thither..."). Before exiting with Henry's body, Richard makes a seemingly logical statement though like a great many of his enthymemes it carries a false conclusion:

Then, since the Heavens have shaped my body so,
Let Hell make crooked my mind to answer it. (V.vi.78-9)

Richard follows the foregoing piece of logic with an expression of his attitude toward love:

I have no brother, I am like no brother;
And this word 'love,' which greybeards call divine,
Be resident in men like one another,
And not in me. I am myself alone.
Clarence, beware.... (V.vi.80-4)

In the third of the Henry VI plays, then, Richard reveals all of the traits necessary to the rational villain. His inability to love merely underscores the twisted logic of his rationalism while his damaged ego propels a forceful, energetic will.

The last play of the first tetralogy, Richard III, describes the terror of Richard's reign after he becomes king. Technically speaking, Richard is rightful king both by title and possession and if Shakespeare could not devise
the means of making Richard's downfall seem politically right, the playwright outdid himself in showing it to be morally so. Through the sheer emotional impact of the ghost scene near the end of the play (V.iii), Shakespeare causes his audience to envision a type of moral order that transcends the human understanding. In Plato's Crito, it will be remembered, Socrates refuses to forsake the laws of his city. But Socrates is urged by his friends whereas Henry of Richmond, we are led to believe, has been commissioned by the Lord Himself.

Three generations had established precedent for Lancastrian rule, but this rulership did not achieve heavenly sanction until Richard III made his titular claims to the throne. When fighting broke out between Yorkist and Lancastrian forces Henry VI's nephew, the promising young Earl of Richmond, fled to France. While awaiting outcome of the war young Henry Tudor prepared to claim the crown through his rights as the Lancastrian heir. Thus as Richard eliminates each of his rivals at home, Henry is growing stronger abroad. And by the time that he is ready to make his re-entry into England, the country's discontented nobles will eagerly flock to his side.

Richard III opens with a soliloquy delivered by Richard, Duke of Gloucester. The purpose of the speech is to confirm immediately the character we have witnessed in 3Henry VI and to provide Richard III with some of the
materials necessary to its functioning as a well-made play. Again, Richard refers to his physical appearance. In his mind he has been "cheated of feature" and the culprit is of course "nature." Richard's later success with the foolish Lady Anne refutes the premise of one of his enthymemes--"And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover"--as well as the informal conclusion to it: "I am determined to prove a villain" (I.i.30). The premise, itself a conclusion derived from Richard's contemplation of his form, might seem reasonable enough were it not for Richard's later rendering of its disproof. By lamenting his banishment from love's kingdom, both in 3Henry VI and Richard III, Richard hopes to gain the audience's sympathy. But his self-pitying argument is at best a rationalization used to compensate for, or to cover up, his inability to care for anyone but himself. Devoid of such feelings within himself, Richard nonetheless pretends to love his brother Clarence and sends murderers instead of the help that Clarence eagerly awaits. The crime seems even more heinous in light of earlier events, for Clarence's desertion of Warwick seems to have been predicated upon a last-minute decision that "blood is thicker than water."

Richard resembles the Vice of medieval drama. He delights in concluding a murderous resolution on the note of humorous blasphemy: "Simple, plain Clarence! I do
love thee so/That I will shortly send thy soul to heaven" (I.i.118-9). Though at times Richard takes his rationalism seriously, at other times he enjoys applying the rule of comic logic—as, for instance, to his marriage intentions:

For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter.  
What though I killed her husband and her father?  
The readiest way to make the wench amends  
Is to become her husband and her father— (I.i.153-6)

Richard's sardonic humor invites comparisons with that of Edmund and Iago, but it is to be noted that Richard's humor diminishes and that his rationality deteriorates near the end of the play. This change is dramatically correct, for Richard's sense of humor and the zest he displays while pursuing victims evoke the sort of admiration that could otherwise inhibit an audience's satisfaction in his death. Again, as he had in 3Henry VI, Richard creates for himself a role of appearances:

And thus I clothe my naked villainy  
With old odd ends stolen out of Holy Writ,  
And seem a saint when most I play the devil.  
(I.iii.336-9)

Richard views with contempt the "gulls" he has won to his side and coolly plans the deaths of those he has not. Aiding him in his schemes is Buckingham. Together, they use Catesby to spy on Hastings whom they hope to enlist in their plot. But Hastings nobly upholds the rightful heir, never dreaming that Richard (now Protector) will order his death. When Buckingham later balks at the prospect of killing the two princes in the Tower, Richard
turns fiercely against his former cohort, first by breaking his promise to reward him and then by capturing and executing Buckingham.

To win support for himself Richard even resorts to vilifying his own mother. He has instructed Buckingham thus:

Tell them, when that my mother went with child
Of that unsatiate Edward, noble York,
My princely father, then had wars in France;
And, by just computation of the time,
Found that the issue was not his begot....

(III.v.86-90)

While Richard's conclusion to the speech perhaps indicates a softening attitude, it more than likely offers but another instance of his hypocritical piety or stems from a genuine fear of contradiction from his mother: "But touch this sparingly, as 'twere far off/Because you know, my lord, my mother lives." In Richard's confrontation with his mother (IV.iv), we detect noticeable signs of his weakening. Bravado replaces his former confidence. Furthermore, we learn that Richard's mother apparently never could bear the sight of him and that Richard has borne this real or imagined memory of his childhood with bitterness. When the duchess asks Richard if his company ever gave her a comfortable hour, he replies:

Faith, none but Humphrey Hour, that called your Grace
To breakfast once forth of my company. (IV.iv.175-6)

Richard's mother, his wife Queen Anne, and the former Queen Elizabeth are all unhappy women who recognize
Richard's evil and suffer because of it. Unlike the Amazonian women in 1Henry VI, these women appear to be helpless. Elizabeth differs from the former Lady Anne in one respect, however. She refuses to believe Richard's lies or to compromise her virtue by allowing him to marry her daughter, whom Henry of Richmond also seeks to wed. The scene between Richard and Elizabeth is a difficult one, for she leads Richard to believe that she has reconsidered, and so he afterwards contemptuously refers to her as a "shallow changing woman." The scene is perhaps less clear than Mr. Reese has indicated:

She promises to inform him later of her decision: the phrase that unmistakably means 'no' to any pedlar that still has his wits about him.\(^2\)

Professor Tillyard, on the other hand, responds in the following manner to the question of whether or not Elizabeth consciously deceived Richard:

This is so contrary to the simple, almost negative character of Elizabeth and so heavily ironical at Richard's expense that I cannot believe it.\(^3\)

Actually, Reese's interpretation seems more satisfactory than Tillyard's because Shakespeare left no doubt as to

\(^2\) M.M. Reese, p. 220.

\(^3\) Shakespeare's History Plays, p. 214.
either her uncompromising virtue or her wit in 3Henry VI. But that is to go outside of the play. By forcing Richard to change the nature of his oaths several times, Elizabeth seems to have placed him on the defensive. From the beginning we realize that she fears for her daughter's life and that she probably dares not oppose Richard with an emphatic "no" to his request. Elizabeth's words—"Write to me very shortly/And you shall understand from me her mind"—nevertheless remain ambiguous and constitute the play's main weakness. In the absence of Shakespeare's directions for the delivery of her last few lines, we can only surmise that Shakespeare intended the scene to contrast rather than parallel the one between Richard and Lady Anne.

The disintegration of Richard's character, only hinted at in Act IV, manifests itself more clearly in Act V. The last act begins with the execution of Buckingham who in moralizing his fate reminds the audience of the workings of divine Justice. The action then quickly shifts to the battlefield, and we learn that the English nobles have united in a common cause to purge the kingdom of Richard's evil. In this way they offer a sharp contrast to the lords in 1Henry VI, whose squabbling leads to the death of Talbot and causes the loss of English territories.
As Richard begins to lose confidence, his character changes accordingly. Richard's fears, it seems, are more justified than they would have been in some earlier portion of the play. Likewise, his encounters with the duchess and later Queen Elizabeth in Act IV have no doubt contributed to his feelings of uncertainty, even though Richard may labor under the mistaken notion that Elizabeth will give her daughter in marriage to him. As his fears mount, Richard even plays the eavesdropper in order to learn if his followers will stay loyal to him. In the address to his troops, however, Richard displays his former strength.

Shakespeare makes it clear that God is on Henry's side. The Earl of Richmond sleeps well, and his dreams are propitious. Moreover, he has received communion and has expressly placed his trust in God. Richard, on the other hand, has spent a restless night. The orations that the two men deliver to their soldiers offer a marked contrast that confirms the differences in their characters. Urging his men that their cause is just, Henry advises the troops that God and the saints are on his side. In contrast to the abstractness of Henry's arguments, Richard appeals to his troops on a more concrete basis. He advises his nobles that "Conscience is but a word that cowards use/Devised at first to keep the strong in awe," or in other words,
that might is right. Thus, he speaks to the men reminding them that they are fighting to keep their lands and to save their wives and daughters from being ravished by enemy soldiers. Though Richard has little to say about God, he does later call upon St. George for courage, asking to be inspired with the "spleen of fiery dragons" (a satanic image) in the remarks that follow the address proper.

Richard's oration to his army (V.iii.314-41) is his last important speech. In it, he appeals to patriotism and to feelings of English prejudice against the French. Though it is an emotional piece, it shows a cunning appraisal of men and the interests closest to them. When Shakespeare constructed the orations of Henry of Richmond and Richard III, he carefully considered their content. Henry's is God-centered while Richard's is man-centered. One appeals to man's interest in the welfare of his soul while the other appeals to man's interest in the welfare of his earthly possessions. If Henry's speech reflects the principles of right reason, then Richard's exemplifies the dead-end materialism to which reason by itself leads. By including the oration of Henry, Shakespeare offers a means by which the rationalism of Richard may be measured. Through Shakespeare's symbolic depiction of Margaret as Fury, prophesying blood revenge for
Richard's crimes, the play assumes a phantasmagorical bloodiness. The playwright's picture of the three disconsolate women wronged by Richard's murders, his inclusion of the ghosts of Richard's victims who appear to torment him the night before battle, and finally his portrayal of Henry as God's emissary, prepare the audience to utter a sigh of relief when Henry of Richmond announces that "the bloody dog is dead."

**King John**, though it stands apart from the plays of the two tetralogies, expresses many of the same ideas and explores virtually the same themes as the other plays; yet its characters and events are confined to a single play. The king, himself something of a villain, orders the death of young Arthur, rightful heir to the crown. John's plans miscarry when Hubert backs out of the murder; but John later regrets having given the order and truly repents for it. His words to Hubert (IV.ii.231-48) clearly indicate, it seems to me, that his change of heart has arisen from his conscience more so than from his fears that the English nobles will desert him. News of his mother's death may have contributed to the king's "conversion." The play contains two other noteworthy characters besides John, that are related to villainy. One of these is Pandulph, the papal legate whom John opposes. Like others of Shakespeare's high Roman clerics, Pandulph is a subtle
reasoner who destroys the French and English peace at Angiers and causes the French to attack England by appealing to Lewis' ambitions. His appraisals of English disunity and his shrewd assessment of John (III.iv.131-40) bespeak the rationalist. Though John was a bad king, the English would have viewed his opposition to Rome with admiration, as indicated in an earlier play of the same period. Pandulph's villainy thus partially depends upon his link with Rome. Yet, his pride and egotism are readily apparent. Admitting to John that he stirred up the trouble with France, Pandulph boastfully promises to stop it. But the prelate has overestimated his powers, for Lewis will not back down, and it remains for Faulconbridge to save England from a messy situation.

Though a hero rather than a villain, the bastard Faulconbridge possesses traits that foreshadow Edmund, Shakespeare's great villain to come. Both are illegitimate, the difference being that Faulconbridge does not permit his social condition to turn inward and feed upon his soul. Faulconbridge's cynical humor links him to several of Shakespeare's villains who affect superiority in a world whose foibles they perceive. By studying the opportunism of the Age, Faulconbridge hopes to gain practical experience so that he can deal effectively with the machiavels that he is sure to encounter:
Which, though I will not practice to deceive,  
Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn,  
For it shall strew the footsteps of my rising.  
(I.i. 214-16)

When Angiers declares neutrality and refuses to admit  
either the French or the English, Faulconbridge suggests  
that both armies declare a truce and march upon the  
town. Delighted with his own sardonic turn of mind,  
Faulconbridge may intend the comment as a general  
criticism of the age or he may have in mind Machiavelli's  
contempt for neutrality. The author of The Prince  
advises that it is better to be either a true friend or  
a bitter enemy, but not a neutral.

By the time that Faulconbridge reaches the end of  
his soliloquy on Commodity (II.i.561-598), he seems  
headed directly toward a course of villainy. This  
speech, more than anything else, links Faulconbridge to  
villains such as Richard III and Edmund. But if we ex­  
pect him to turn villain, the bastard disappoints us by  
aquitting himself nobly throughout the rest of the play.  
Always the practical man, Faulconbridge refuses to blame  
John for Arthur's death without sufficient evidence,  
whereas the English lords hastily jump to conclusions  
and then desert John. Fortunately, Faulconbridge does  
not depend upon Pandulph alone to end the French  
threat. He raises an army and has it waiting, just  
in case; meanwhile, the lords who had gone over to the
French side seem both surprised and ashamed to see John so well-prepared for battle and eagerly return to his side after learning from Melun of French treachery. Faulconbridge has obviously learned his lessons well. Fortunately for England, he has proved a "sweet poison for the age's tooth."

The second tetralogy, though more satisfactory than the first in its broader treatment of English life and manners, contains little to interest us in the way of rational villainy. We witness the actions of traitors, rebels, and conspirators, but learn little of the thought processes that have led to these actions. From the characters' political convictions, however, we may infer more than Shakespeare really needs to make explicit. Thus the playwright includes the conspirators who plot against Henry IV in Richard II, but he tells us little about them, except in the cases of Aumerle and Carlisle, both of whom escape punishment through the mercy of the king. Worcester, who appears in 1Henry IV, is rationalistic as well as proud. His association with the rebels, moreover, apparently stems from bitter resentment at the king's failure to cater to his feelings of self-importance. Worcester's refusal to deliver the king's message to Hotspur shows his deceitful nature, but Worcester's reasoning—namely, that the rebels will
always be hated and suspected after having once acted against the king—seems sensible enough; that is, if we may judge by the behavior of Prince John and Westmoreland toward the leaders of rebellion in 2Henry IV.

In the second part of Henry IV, the Archbishop of York replaces Worcester. Realizing that people would rather fight in the name of a religious cause than participate in an out and out rebellion, the Archbishop uses the murder of Richard II in order to win supporters. The selfish, unpatriotic Archbishop cares little about the foreign threats to England's welfare except insofar as they keep the king and his army too busy to deal effectively with rebellion at home. Thus Shakespeare shows the churchman to be an enemy to order. Mowbray echoes Worcester in his objections to a peaceful settlement, but the rational arguments of the Archbishop and Hastings convince him to the contrary. The prelate desires peace, provided of course that his articles of redress are accepted; and he feels that the king will buckle under the pressures of a readied rebel force and grant the terms he desires. After Prince John promises redress of the grievances and agrees to peace, the rebel leaders dismiss their army. Westmoreland and Prince John, their army still standing, now arrest Mowbray, Hastings, and York on charges of treason and order their execution. The manner in which Prince John hedges on a point of
semantics amounts to little more than one's crossing his fingers while telling a lie. The Archbishop's treason and villainy are thus modified to an extent by his willingness to arbitrate in the face of Mowbray's objections and to another extent by the scurvy doings of Lancaster and Westmoreland in handling the grievances.

In the second act of Henry V, the chorus names three conspirators who have accepted money from France to kill the king—Richard the Earl of Cambridge, Lord Scroop of Masham, and Sir Thomas Grey, knight of Northumberland. Henry finds out about the plot, however, and sentences the conspirators to death. The king's impassioned expression of disillusionment over the villainy of Scroop is in character and appropriate, notes Robert L. Kelly, for "Lord Scroop was no mere traitor, but a trusted friend of long acquaintance."^14 Kelly has further noted that the Scroops who appear in the tetralogy, including Stephen and William in Richard II and the Archbishop of York in 1&2Henry IV, have consistently aligned themselves with the party of discord and that "collectively, they represent the worst kind of enemy to civil harmony."^15 The conspirators accept


^15Ibid., pp. 72-3.
their sentences in a noble manner, admitting the baseness of their actions and asking pardon for their souls. Audiences of Shakespeare's day held little affection for the agents of civil disharmony; these were indeed political villains who upset the laws of order and harmony in the state and who selfishly capitalized on foreign threats instead of lending aid to their country during its time of need. Yet, Shakespeare allows several of his rebels to escape this harsh judgment. Hotspur in Henry IV and Bolingbroke in Richard II are two such individuals, although Bolingbroke does not come away completely unscathed.

The last of the histories, Henry VIII, includes another of Shakespeare's clerical villains. Like Beaufort and Pandulph, Cardinal Wolsey is a rationalist who no doubt received a great deal of training in theological disputation. Queen Katharine realizes that he is a subtle logician and refuses to appear in court because of it: "I am a simple woman, much too weak/To oppose your cunning" (II.iv.106-7). Wolsey's involvement in the early stages of the divorce trial suggests a legalistic type of mind, of just the sort that Henry VIII admired in the men about him. Though the king entrusts the affairs of his state to the Cardinal, the playwrights portray Henry as being a rather strong individual himself.
Upon learning of the taxation levied by Wolsey, for which there existed no precedent, the king orders it removed. Undaunted, Wolsey simply instructs his subordinates to tell the people that he, Wolsey, has interceded in their behalf. Possessed by an overwhelming sense of pride, Wolsey has little qualms about destroying anyone who offends his ego or competes with him for the king's affection. He successfully plots the death of Buckingham, and he indirectly causes the insanity of Dr. Pace. Grafting money from the state in order to bribe his way to the papacy, Wolsey entertains his friends in a grand manner. Shakespeare conveys to the audience a sense of Wolsey's large-scale character, showing the Cardinal to be generous toward friends and villainous toward enemies.

In drawing his great rational villains, Shakespeare included psychological insights that could possibly help to explain an ego gone beserk—i.e., Richard's physical deformity, Edmund's illegitimacy, and Iago's lack of advancement. While Wolsey is not one of Shakespeare's great rational villains, in the histories he is second only to Richard III. Wolsey's superior attitude and shows of contempt toward the lords around him might easily have been his prideful way of compensating for the fact that his father was a butcher. That Shakespeare
has inserted this information in order to make a psychological comment about Wolsey seems clear when we consider the backhanded compliment that Norfolk gives him:

There's in him stuff that puts him to these ends;  
For, being not propped by ancestry, whose grace  
Chalks successors their way, nor called upon  
For high feats done to the crown, neither allied  
To eminent assistants, but, spiderlike,  
Out of his self-drawing web he gives us note  
The force of his own merit makes his way--  
A gift that Heaven gives for him, which buys  
A place next to the King. (I.i.58-66)

Wolsey's downfall occurs when the king learns of the great wealth that the Cardinal has amassed and discovers that Wolsey has written to the Pope asking him to stay the divorce proceedings of Henry and Katharine because he has noticed the king's interest in Anne Bullen. What Wolsey does not realize is that the king and Anne have been secretly married for quite some time.

Wolsey's downfall proves to be his spiritual triumph. By his own admission, he could only find himself when everything had been taken away. What Griffith says to Katharine about Wolsey near the end of the fourth act serves as the play's choric comment:

His overthrow heaped happiness upon him;  
For then, and not till then, he felt himself,  
And found the blessedness of being little,  
And, to add greater honors to his age  
Than man could give him, he died fearing God.  
(ii.64-8)

While the syllogisms and enthymemes of Shakespeare's villains seem easy enough to disprove, the playwright
displays little interest in their falseness. Instead, he implies that facile logicians like Richard and Wolsey can probably prove anything they wish. Unless firmly grounded in morality, the logic of Shakespeare's characters tends to serve as a vehicle for humor. In the hands of his villains it is an instrument to be feared rather than admired. Throughout the histories Shakespeare has depicted his rational villains in such a way as to arouse distrust rather than confidence in their mental abilities. The playwright achieves this end in a number of ways but mainly by showing that villains such as Richard and Wolsey possess some type of flawed psychology which colors the thinking process and renders it invalid. In the tragedies, Shakespeare uses with even greater success this method of portraying his rational villains.
V. THE TRAGEDIES

Shakespeare's earliest surviving tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, contains a number of weaknesses—the main one being its content of scenes so grotesque as to seem almost ridiculous. Yet the play, a Roman tragedy patterned after Seneca's *Thyestes*, reveals its author's skillful command of rhetoric and in this way foreshadows *Julius Caesar*, a Roman tragedy of greater maturity. Significantly, Shakespeare's depiction of Titus likewise foreshadows his later triumph in drawing Lear. Titus looms as a great hero whom the people desire for their ruler; but because of his age the general declines their offer and unwisely throws his support to Saturninus, an ingrate who bitterly resents the fact that the people favor Titus. As soon as Saturninus gains control, he takes every opportunity to heap suffering and humiliation upon the general's head. At the beginning of the play, Titus is a victorious Roman general of boundless pride and savage instincts, who casually orders the death of the Gothic queen's eldest son to revenge the deaths of his own sons killed in battle. After Tamora becomes Saturninus' empress, Titus and his family are made to suffer indignities of such magnitude that the grief-stricken Titus becomes mentally distracted. In his distraction, however,
signs of Titus' humanity begin to appear as he becomes sensitive to the meaning of suffering. He rails at his brother for killing a fly and later stabs his daughter Lavinia in an act of merciful intent.

The bloodiness of the play is unfortunate and Saturninus' choice of Tamora, an aging woman with grown sons, instead of Lavinia seems strange. The success of Kyd's Spanish Tragedy led Shakespeare to compose Titus Andronicus and to give painstaking attention to details that would satisfy any audience's appetite for horror. The play shows Shakespeare to be a dramatist ever responsive to the tastes of his audience, and the sooner one can forgive the gory plot and a few inconsistencies in character, the more readily he can admire the better dramatic portraits contained in Titus. One of these is Aaron the Moor, a dedicated villain-atheist who at the end of the play repents only for the good he has ever done. Aaron and Tamora are both rational villains, but Shakespeare draws Aaron with an artist's finer touch. Aaron appears onstage in the first act but does not speak; however, his presence arouses the audience's interest.

1 The planet Saturn is thought by some to govern age (and also wisdom) and to cause those under its influences to be attracted to old and ancient things. Aaron the Moor later identifies himself with this same planet, though in terms of its associations with morbidity and death.
The soliloquy with which Aaron opens Act II at once reveals his negative qualities. Whereas Aaron greatly admires Tamora, his wanton relationship with her apparently serves his pride as much as, or perhaps more than, his lust:

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)

As he hears Tamora's brutish sons quarreling over who should get Lavinia, the newly wed wife of Bassianus, Aaron interrupts their argument and cautions them to be more discreet. Chiron claims that he "loves" Lavinia but agrees to Aaron's suggestion that both brothers have her. Advising the use of "policy" and "stratagem," Aaron plots the rape of Lavinia so that Chiron and Demetrius may each satisfy his lust. Tamora's sons are extremely dense and animalistic but their intentions do not seem quite so base until Aaron's arrival on the scene. By mutilating Lavinia instead of murdering her, they unconsciously re-enact the hewing of their sacrificed brother. To the ordinary rational villain, lust and love are one and the same; thus Aaron and Iago share this common attitude. By planting a bag of gold under a tree and forging a letter so that the sons of Titus will be blamed for the murder of Bassianus, Aaron echoes the behavior of the medieval vice—reliance
upon trickery and fraud. Aaron and Tamora have even been
clever enough to have Titus find the letter in the forest.
In Act III, a change occurs in Titus. He weeps for his
condemned sons and begs for their lives, later sending
his severed hand as ransom. The man who refused to
hear Tamora's plea for her son's life now laments that
"tribunes with their tongues doom men to death."

Marcus, the brother of Titus, and Titus' son Lucius
represent rational order. "But yet let reason govern
thy lament," Marcus cautions Titus. Marcus' reluctance
to make a hasty judgment concerning the meaning of
Lavinia's tears likewise shows the sanity of his rational-
ism. Hearing her brothers accused of murdering her hus-
band could have caused her to weep either because of their
innocence or because of their guilt. When Saturninus
and Tamora return the sons' heads and Titus' severed
hand, Marcus no longer seeks to help Titus control his
griefs. He does, however, object to Titus' bitterly
ironic suggestion that Lavinia commit suicide if she can
find the means to do so. Lucius, too, represents order
in a morally chaotic world. Following his banishment,
Lucius raises an army to help him free the state from the
malignant misrule of Saturninus and Tamora. Whereas
Tamora and Titus pleaded in vain for their sons' lives,
the worst person in the play wins the life of his child
from death's decree--Lucius shows mercy by sparing the
life of Aaron's son and in this way differs from those of similar positions of authority in the play.

Aaron's success in plotting a course of villainy depends upon his rational abilities. His intelligence is also shown when he correctly perceives Titus' intent in sending weapons and a verse from Horace to Tamora's stupid sons:

\[\text{Aside}\] Now, what a thing it is to be an ass! Here's no sound jest. The old man hath found their guilt, And sends them weapons wrapped about with lines That wound, beyond their feeling, to the quick. But were our witty Empress well afoot, She would applaud Andronicus' conceit. (IV.ii.25-30)

Tamora at this time is in the last hours of pregnancy and as soon as she gives birth to the blackamoor child, she sends word to Aaron to kill it. When her sons try to murder the child, Aaron snatches it from the nurse's arms declaring: "He dies upon my scimitar's sharp point/ That touches this my first-born son and heir!" Aaron's fatherly instincts contradict the idea that his evil is involuntary but they do not violate the nature of his villainy. Instead, this behavior reveals Aaron's egotism in a stronger light than has yet been shown in the play. Proudly he tells the sons of Tamora, "Coal-black is better than another hue" and "My mistress is my mistress--this myself."

When Chiron and Demetrius realize that they cannot brave Aaron's fury, they ask his advice and Aaron good-
naturally complies with their desire to have their mother's adulterous union hushed up. Aaron's first thought is typical of Machiavellian rationalism—dispose of all witnesses and/or accomplices to whatever crime has been committed. Thus Aaron refers to the murder of the nurse as a deed of "policy." Next, he engineers a plan for a baby switch with a countryman who has begotten a fair child; but as he is attempting to deliver the baby to its destination, a Goth soldier intercepts him and turns Aaron and the child over to Lucius, now returning to his country at the head of an army. The Goths whom he leads dislike Tamora and want revenge. Seeing her child makes them even more determined to get even with their former queen. When Lucius orders that both Aaron and the child shall hang, Aaron begs for the life of his son, agreeing to tell all if only the child shall live.

Aaron's atheism is typical of the skepticism that usually characterizes the rational villain. Still he recognizes that Lucius' reverence binds him to an oath in a way that can never bind the atheist. Thus when Lucius asks, "Who should I swear by? Thou believest no god," Aaron replies:

What if I do not? As, indeed, I do not. Yet, for I know thou art religious, And hast a thing within thee called conscience,
With twenty popish tricks and ceremonies
Which I have seen thee careful to observe,
Therefore I urge thy oath. (V.i.73-8)

Though Titus has humiliated the Senate by circulating petitions to the gods, Shakespeare implies that his son may be one of the early Christians or at least a potential monotheist. Aaron accuses Lucius of "popish" behavior, and the latter gives his promise to spare the child—"Even by my god I swear to thee I will." Aaron, on the other hand, serves very nearly as a parody of the principles of continental humanism. Because he elevates the individual man above his fellow men as well as above his Maker, Aaron's thoughts and actions must all begin and end in expressions of self-interest. Like Richard III, Aaron is a paradoxical humanist whose discovery of self has exaggerated his character to the point of inhumanity. He delights in rationalism, but his swollen ego makes it quite impossible for him to accept the type of reason to which classical humanists adhered.

When Lucius asks Aaron if he is sorry for the heinous deeds he committed, the Moor replies in an incredible outburst of pride:

Aye, that I had not done a thousand more.
Even now I curse the day—and yet, I think,
Few come within the compass of my curse—
Wherein I did not some notorious ill:
As kill a man, or plot the way to do it:
Accuse some innocent, and forswear myself;
Set deadly enmity between two friends;
Make poor men's cattle break their necks;
Set fire on barns and haystacks in the night,
And bid the owners quench them with their tears.
Oft have I dugged up dead men from their graves
And set them upright at their dear friends' doors,
Even when their sorrows almost were forgot;
And on their skins, as on the bark of trees,
Have with my knife carved in Roman letters,
"Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead."
Tut, I have done a thousand dreadful things
As willingly as one would kill a fly,
And nothing grieves me heartily indeed,
But that I cannot do ten thousand more. (V.i.124-44)

When Lucius decrees that Aaron shall starve to death,
the Moor remains steadfastly unrepentant:

I am no baby, I, that with base prayers
I should repent the evils I have done. (V.iii.185-6)

Aaron's villainy is of such an extent as to suggest
unreality, and some of the actions to which he refers
(V.i.135-44) seem as if they might have been done during
his years of adolescence. Aaron's impassioned defense of
his child (IV.ii.87-105, 116-27) reveals the paradoxical
tendency to equate his Moorishness with both slavery and
superiority. Intelligent and fiercely proud, Aaron
clearly demonstrates that he will not suffer an indignity
without in some way revenging it. Titus and his family
have provided the most recent outlet for Aaron's
expression of resentment, but his entire life has served
as a monument to his wounded ego and warped intelligence.

In Romeo and Juliet as well as in Antony and
Cleopatra villainy is represented by hostility of
environment. Tragedy lies in the impossibility of
lovers' enjoying their love while living in a world they
must inhabit. For this reason, I have omitted these
two dramas from discussion along with *Troilus and
Cressida*, a play that burlesques the idea of romantic
love. I have likewise excluded *Timon of Athens*, a
parable treating three attitudes toward society:
Apemantus' is ungrounded in experience and therefore
unjustified; Timon's is justified but his reaction
excessive; Alcibiades' is justified and his reaction
sensible.

The tragic hero of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*
(1599) is Brutus, a noble Roman with strong republican
ideals. Julius Caesar, who serves as a symbol for
rational order, disappears from the play near the
beginning of the third act although his ghost later
visits Brutus shortly before the battle of Philippi.
The action of the play, moreover, revolves around
Caesar's assassination, treating the causes of the
conspiracy as well as the events following his fall.
The villain of the play at the outset seems to be
Cassius, and Shakespeare's depiction of the envious
Roman is highly complex. After Cassius has successfully
disposed of Caesar, he apparently becomes infected by
Brutus' nobility as, in fact, do all who remain in
Brutus' company. By means of several superbly executed
parallels, Shakespeare links the personality of Cassius
to that of Marc Antony thereby reserving all of our admiration for Brutus, his tragic hero. Even so, the play literally abounds with individuals who utter noble sentiments and perform noble acts. As followers of classical humanism they express ideas and ideals with which audiences can either identify or sympathize. For instance, Brutus qualifies his attitude toward suicide—he believes in suicide not to avoid danger but to avoid dishonor. By all normal standards, Julius Caesar contains an extraordinary number of suicides, but Shakespeare treats them in a way that causes us to respect his characters' beliefs whether or not we agree with them.

As Act I of Julius Caesar begins, we learn of the tribunes' admiration for Pompey, the Roman general whom they had sent to encounter Caesar, and of their sorrow over his defeat. Thus the play opens on a note of discord, and the tribunes we first meet are soon arrested and silenced for pulling scarfs off Caesar's images. Cassius resembles the unfortunate tribunes in also wishing Caesar dead, but Cassius' motives spring

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2 I am indebted to Professor William John Olive for this observation as well as for my entire approach to the character of Marc Antony.
from personal feelings of envy and hatred rather than from any political sentiments he might possess. To assassinate Caesar and to do so with impunity—these are Cassius' aims. Though Cassius knows others who will gladly join his conspiracy, he realizes that the citizens will never permit the murder of Caesar to go unpunished—that is, unless he can enlist the aid of Marcus Brutus, a man greatly admired and respected by the people. Brutus is noble, however, and so Cassius must discover a means of seducing him to the cause of the conspirators.

Untutored in the ways of the world and uncorrupted by its practices, Brutus is an idealistic intellectual whose republicanmism stems from his own political reflections as well as from his family tradition. One of his ancestors had helped to expel the last of the Tarquins from Rome. Portia's stoicism (she has voluntarily wounded herself in the thigh to signify her wifely devotion to Brutus) and political family background match her husband's. Her father was Cato, a man of noble sentiments, who committed suicide rather than live under Caesar's dictatorship. At first unwilling to reveal his secret to Portia, Brutus later tells her about the conspiracy, if we may judge from his promise—"Portia, go in a while,/And by and by by thy bosom shall partake/The secrets of my heart"—
and from Portia's later realization of how difficult it is for a woman to keep counsel (II.iv.6-10). Together, Brutus and Portia represent a couple that is politically aware and virtuous. By alluding to the family backgrounds of both, Shakespeare offers a plausible explanation for Brutus' fear of Caesar's power and prejudgment of the Roman dictator's intentions. Brutus himself admits:

...and to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections swayed
More than his reason. (II.i. 19-21)

Brutus does not quarrel with what Caesar is but with what he might become (II.i.28-31). Though Caesar is identified with rational order and stability, Shakespeare leaves open the possibility of Brutus' having been right. At the senate Caesar boasts that he never wavers, but the audience has just witnessed his see-saw decision to attend the meeting. And when Caesar first refuses to appear he speaks of the senators as though they are servants to whom he owes no excuse. In no uncertain terms, Shakespeare condemns the assassination as an act of political disorder. Caesar has not done anything to deserve it, and Shakespeare lets the matter drop there.

A discussion of Cassius should probably begin with Caesar's brilliant assessment:
Would he were fatter! But I fear him not.
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much,
He is a great observer, and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men. He loves no plays
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music.

... Such men as he be never at heart's ease
While they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous.

(I.ii.198-210)
As Caesar suggests, Cassius is an egotist who once
saved Caesar from drowning and now bitterly resents
the honors that his former companion has achieved.
Too, Cassius is "a great observer," and Shakespeare
permits us to view him in action in scenes two and three
of the first act as he skillfully reads Brutus' virtue
and later Casca's cowardice. Interestingly, Marc Antony
echoes Cassius' shrewd assessment of these same in-
dividuals while practicing deceit and hypocrisy upon
them shortly after Caesar's fall. As Cassius attempts
to sound out Brutus' feelings toward Caesar, he de-
livers two conversational speeches that are especially
noteworthy. In the first of these (I.ii.90-131), Cassius
refers to Caesar's fits of physical weakness (epilepsy),
ostensibly for the purpose of showing that the mighty
Caesar is but mortal and unworthy to be treated as an
immortal. But the tenor of Cassius' argument changes
after he tells of having once saved Caesar's life,
revealing Cassius' deep-felt belief that he is superior to Rome's mighty ruler. Erroneously, Cassius derives his conclusion from physical comparisons only, and so it is a wonder that he does not also expostulate upon Caesar's faulty hearing. Because this speech so clearly reveals the true nature of Cassius' complaint ("and this man/Is now become a god, and Cassius is/A wretched creature"), it should not seem surprising that his next (I.ii.135-161) appeals directly to any similar feelings in Brutus--"Why should that name be sounded more than yours?" But the speech misses its mark, for Brutus would rather be a "villager" just so long as he remains free. After Brutus leaves, Cassius muses:

Well, Brutus, thou art noble. Yet I see
Thy honorable mettle may be wrought
From that it is disposed. (I.ii.311-13)

Though Cassius has not yet elicited Brutus' positive support, he has learned enough to insure his later obtaining it. Like Edmund and Aaron, Cassius is a rational villian who resorts to the use of forgery. By sending Brutus letters that supposedly have come from concerned citizens, Cassius hopes to appeal to Brutus' strong sense of civic duty.

In the third scene of the first act, Cassius directs his attention to Casca. Though he later deserts the teachings of Epicurus (V.i.77-79), Cassius is neverthe-
less a skeptic who like Edmund, takes pains to play upon the credulity of others—in this instance, Casca's. Realizing Casca's fear of what the night's omens might presage, Cassius feigns a similar belief in portents and then deliberately misconstrues their purpose (I.iii. 62-78). Unknowingly, Casca has provided Cassius with the correct psychological appeal—the desire to think of himself as brave. Thus Cassius emphasizes the dangerousness of their plan and the honor to be achieved through its daring accomplishment. As Marc Antony later takes the hand of each of the conspirators he says "and, my valiant Casca, yours," endowing the word valiant with the same ironic connotations he gives to the word honorable in his funeral oration. Antony states his real feelings about Casca when he meets Brutus and Cassius at Philippi—"Whilst damned Casca, like a cur, behind/Struck Caesar on the neck" (V.i.43-4). Antony reads Brutus and Casca as shrewdly as Cassius has done, and so the ending to his critical remark—"O you flatterers!"—might just as easily be applied to himself. Antony's apparent willingness to betray Lepidus (IV.i.12-14), should Octavius countenance such a deed, likewise makes the question of his character seem dubious. Actually, Cassius and Antony are both practical men with a streak of Machiavellianism running through their veins. Thus
they understand one another.

As the conspiracy gets under way, Cassius wisely suggests that Marc Antony be killed along with Caesar. But Cassius has mistakenly turned his leadership over to Brutus who argues that they are not butchers. (Cf. the mass executions ordered by the new regime, among them Cicero's death.) Cassius warns Brutus not to let Antony speak, but again Brutus refuses to listen and Antony turns the people against the conspirators. Antony has approached Brutus through the latter's virtue, in much the same way as Cassius has done—and every bit as deviously—but Antony has aligned himself with the forces of political order; and nowhere does he demonstrate the pettiness and enviousness shown by Cassius in the first two acts of the play.

After the conspirators have been driven out of Rome, a change seems to occur within Cassius. Though Brutus is unable to procure money to pay his armies, Cassius uses whatever means is available; and next to the ineptness of Brutus the "itching palm" of Cassius is not made to seem so terrible after all. Against his better judgment Cassius consistently defers to the wishes of Brutus, his deference apparently stemming from genuine feelings of love and devotion. Cassius advises that they remain where they are and allow the
armies of Antony and Octavius to come to them. It is a good plan, one that Antony himself believes they will use. But Brutus unwisely refuses to listen, and so they march to Philippi. When they arrive, Brutus signals his army too early, placing Cassius at a disadvantage. Brutus' mistakes arise out of his lack of experience, and Cassius' patience in these circumstances can be viewed only as commendable. Of the suicides that occur in the play, however, Cassius' is the least sympathetically drawn. Though he partially forsakes his Epicureanism, the melancholy mood of its philosophical doctrines sits heavily upon his brow. Being unable to tell whether Titinius has been welcomed by friends or captured by enemies, Cassius wrongly assumes the worst and commits a pointless suicide. Primarily because of this, Cassius' suicide arouses little sympathy from the audience. But Pindarus' desire to remain Cassius' servant rather than to be freed by his death and Titinius' subsequent act of suicide must surely remind the audience of Cassius' better qualities. The final note, however, is one of censure as Antony contrasts Brutus' nobility to the envious motives of the other conspirators. Thus we remember Cassius not as the devoted friend of Brutus and Titinius but as the rational villain who appears in the first half of Julius Caesar.
Claudius, the villain in *Hamlet*, departs from rational villainy by holding seemingly genuine affections toward Gertrude his wife and also by expressing strong belief in God. The methods of Claudius, however, are those of the rational villain. Likewise, he exhibits pride and ambition, traits common to all rational villains. With the murder of the elder Hamlet already out of the way when the play begins, Claudius plots the death of the younger Hamlet his step-son and nephew. The latter's pretense of insanity has awakened rather than allayed the king's fear of discovery and so Claudius schemes to rid himself of the Queen's son, first by means of secret orders sent to England and later by seducing Laertes to his cause. Through the murder of his brother, Claudius has re-enacted the sin of Cain; and consciousness of the "primal eldest curse" upon his crime makes Claudius unlike any of Shakespeare's other major villains. The nature of the king's crime as well as his linking it to the Biblical story of Cain and Abel suggests the presence of an ego that became damaged at some earlier time in life, whereby the childhood phases of sibling rivalry continued into adulthood and led, finally, to the murder of the brother who was envied.

Claudius has no illusions about the effect of his prayers ("Words without thoughts never to Heaven go"), for he realizes that in order to receive forgiveness he
must confess his crime of murder and return the stolen goods he still possesses—namely, his title and his queen. The position in which Claudius places his priorities ("My crown, mine own ambition, and my Queen") and the restraint he exercises in allowing Gertrude to ignore his warning and drink from the poisoned cup place heavy emphasis upon Claudius' pride and ambition. Even before he has seen the play that Hamlet causes to be performed, Claudius decides to send his nephew to England. Would it have mattered greatly to Claudius if love for Ophelia had proved the cause of Hamlet's distraction? Perhaps not. Hamlet's mother loves him and so do the Danish people—Claudius gives good reasons for delegating the death of Hamlet to the authority of others. By the nature of their practicality, these same reasons tend to obscure the fact that they could easily have rekindled the envy in Claudius. Because of their love for Hamlet the people are as "distracted" as the prince, at least to Claudius' way of thinking:

Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment but their eyes.
(IV.iii.3-5)

The above passage may be interpreted in several ways, and I am suggesting here that it holds one meaning for those attending Claudius and an entirely different one for the king. Resolved that England shall perform the
deed for him, Claudius soliloquizes:

...Do it, England,
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

(IV.iii.67-70)

When the plans of Claudius miscarry, he turns to Laertes and by playing upon the young man's emotions compounds the crimes he has already committed.

After speaking with the ghost of his father, Hamlet has learned that "one may smile, and smile, and be a villain." The hypocrisy of Claudius is typical of rational villainy as practiced by characters such as Richard III and Iago. Taking advantage of Laertes' distress over the arrangements of his father's funeral, Claudius advises the young man to choose an unbated sword when he engages Hamlet in a proposed fencing match. Laertes states his intention of using a sword dipped in poison and Claudius, true to the manner of the rationalist, insures that the project will have a "back or second" in the event that anything goes wrong with the first plan--Claudius will therefore have a poisoned drink ready and waiting for Hamlet. News of Ophelia's untimely death concludes the interview with Laertes, and the king confides to Gertrude: "How much I had to do to calm his rage!" Claudius' hypocrisy and pride, the way in which he uses Laertes, and the manner in which he plots the death of Hamlet characterize
his villainy as rational. In a sense Claudius' lack of skepticism makes him more lamentable than the average stage villain, for Claudius knowingly sends his soul to hell.

The responsibility of Hamlet for the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern presents the play's greatest difficulty; at the very least, it mildly raises the question of whether or not Hamlet should also be viewed as a villain. Actually, T.S. Eliot's complaint that Hamlet's insanity is less than real and "more than feigned" provides the key to the play's greatness and perhaps to the needless deaths of Hamlet's former schoolmates as well. A.C. Bradley refers to Hamlet's mental state as being one of "profound melancholy." By Hamlet's own admission he suffers from "excitements" of his "reason" and his "blood." Likewise, he prefaces the story of his undoing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with the following remark:

Being thus benetted round with villainies--
Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play--I sat me down,
Devised a new commission, wrote it fair.  
(V.ii.29-32)

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But Horatio's mild reproof—"So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't"—triggers Hamlet's defensiveness and evokes from him a response that differs markedly from his former Freudian manifestations of grief and doubt:

> Why, man, they did make love to this employment. They are not near my conscience, their defeat Does by their own insinuation grow. 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes Between the pass and fell incensed points Of mighty opposites. (V.ii.57-62)

To the last portion of Hamlet's Adlerian outburst Horatio can only reply, "Why, what a King is this!" Hamlet does sincerely regret his behavior toward Laertes (V.ii.75-9) although, ironically enough, he accuses the latter of having displayed excessive grief.

Of the play's three young avengers—Fortinbras, Laertes, and Hamlet—only Fortinbras in unconditionally identified with honor. Hamlet has failed to heed the advice of the ghost ("Taint not thy mind") while Laertes has plotted with Claudius. Though Hamlet criticizes the undemocratic practices of war, he nonetheless deems Fortinbras' struggle over the rights to a little piece of Polish ground as being a case involving honor. And before Hamlet dies he says,

> But I do prophesy the election lights On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice. (V.ii.366-7)

In Hamlet both Fortinbras and Horatio serve as symbols
of order. Though rebellious at first, Fortinbras nevertheless obeys his uncle's command to discontinue his acts of military hostility against Denmark. This show of restraint and his evaluation of Hamlet at the end of the play suggest a rather promising individual. Horatio is at first a skeptic, but his confrontation with the ghost probably helps to convince him of the wisdom of Hamlet's words—"There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio,/Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Shakespeare implies that Horatio, though not a follower of Christian humanism, has committed himself to the doctrines of classical stoicism and not to the Machiavellian rationalism of the age. Hamlet himself wishes to believe in a rationally ordered universe, but the premature marriage of his mother has had disillusioning effects, leaving Hamlet uncertain as to whether man's reason causes him to be any different from the beasts after all. At the end of the play Horatio, following the request of Hamlet, tells the story of what has brought about the four dead onstage as well as four other deaths besides, and he conveys Hamlet's words of support to Fortinbras who, we assume, restores order to the realm. Still, when Horatio attempts to explain the "deaths put on by cunning and forced cause," that is, the fates of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he will probably encounter some difficulty
Shakespeare's most interesting villain is found in Othello. Iago, in fact, dominates the first three acts of the play while acts four and especially five belong to Othello, the tragic hero. Though Iago's part is actually a little larger than Othello's, Shakespeare gives his hero such stature that one can easily overlook this fact. Yet, the play revolves around Iago, a villain who studies his victims carefully and then uses their weaknesses and even their virtues to destroy them. Ironically, at some time or other during the drama each of Iago's victims—Roderigo, Cassio, Othello, and Desdemona—turns to him for advice. Iago's self-appointed role as guidance counselor enables him to achieve feelings of mastery with which to feed his egotism. But despite his astute observations about others in the play, Iago remains virtually ignorant of the motives that have awakened his maliciousness. Iago is proud of his intelligence and soldiering—too proud to accept the fact that others are better than he. Iago despises the virtue of Cassio and Desdemona for basically the same reason; it is something that he cannot understand, much less possess himself.

Iago's real motives are revealed shortly after the play begins and as G.B. Harrison has observed:
"Shakespeare's audiences were well trained. No modern dramatist would dare to give such essential information in the first thirty-five lines."\(^5\) In the opening scene of *Othello*, Iago reveals that he has tried to pressure Othello into naming him as his Lieutenant by having several important people of the city speak for him and that the position has instead gone to Cassio, a man of much book learning but with little practical skill in warfare (I.i.8-33). Failing to see the inconsistency of his argument, Iago complains that

> Preferment goes by letter and affection,  
> And not by old gradation, where each second  
> Stood heir to the first. (I.i.36-8)

Iago's version of what has happened is extremely significant, for nowhere in the play is there evidence that supports his claims. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare shows Cassio to be a gentleman of learning whose worth is recognized not only by Othello but also by the Venetian leaders who specifically request that Cassio be left to govern Cyprus while Othello returns home. Iago's ungentlemanly lack of courtesy, on the other hand, serves as the type of contrast which suggests that he could never fill the social responsibilities of a

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\(^5\) G.B. Harrison, ed., p. 1058.
high post. Iago's clever vulgarity could make him a favorite among soldierly comrades, but also a social embarrassment in the parlor. By adding to this the fact that Iago's formal education has been less than Cassio's, we can easily understand why no one besides Iago and the three persons who interceded for him feels that Iago deserves the post. Othello's years of soldiering have made him self-conscious—"Rude am I in my speech" (I.iii.81)—and unnecessarily apologetic, as we may judge from this and later speeches. Othello realizes that civilian society operates under a set of conditions differing from those of military life. Moreover, his careful willingness to make the necessary adjustments suggests that Othello places great value upon a man who can successfully operate in both worlds. Despite Iago's pretense of sophistication, and this regarding the extra-marital practices of Venetian ladies, the Moor's ancient shows up miserably alongside the courteous Cassio. At first, Iago hates Cassio for having received the lieutenantship, but when he later comes to recognize Cassio's nobility of spirit Iago must at the same time confront his own inferiority. At this point, he can no longer complain that Cassio has unjustly received the lieutenantship or that Cassio has slept with Emilia, Iago's wife:
... If Cassio do remain
He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly...." (V.i.18-20)

Thus, Iago decides that Cassio must die.

Iago's egotism serves as the basis for his rationalism and reflects the views of continental humanism. Though Iago gives lip service to currently-held opinions about Order, Reason, and Nature, his understanding of these humanistic ideas is easily seen to be defective. Iago's rationalism takes the form of self-reliance—"'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus" (I.iii.322-3)—and self-interest. He in fact defines humanity in terms of the self, admonishing the suicidal Roderigo:

...I have looked upon the world for four times seven years, and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury I never found man that knew how to love himself. 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.312-18)

Whenever Iago refers to the love of Othello and Desdemona, he speaks of it in physical terms. Because their love represents higher reason, Iago cannot conceive of it in any way other than in the lewd remarks he makes to Brabantio, Roderigo, and even Cassio. Othello's comment, "And when I love thee not/Chaos is come again" (III.iii.91-2), verifies what the audience has already learned in Act One—namely, that the love of Othello and Desdemona represents a meeting of souls and that such a spiritual attraction transcends all physical barriers
in much the same way as the love between the phoenix and turtledove in the poem attributed to Shakespeare. Whereas Iago displays the rational method by creating a role of appearances as well as by planning and scheming to hurt others, it is the egocentric basis of his rationalist philosophy that Shakespeare lays open to criticism. "Where does glorification of the self lead?" the playwright seems to be asking. His answer to the question is found in figures such as Richard III and Iago.

In the opening scene of the play Iago tells Roderigo that he hates Othello but pretends to love him. Iago's words—"I am not what I am"—thus identify him with hypocrisy as well as with a role of appearances while Iago's studied use of deceit also reveals him to be mentally oriented. In the soliloquy at the end of Act One, Iago reveals his plan to make Othello suspicious of Cassio's being too familiar with Desdemona and he attempts to rationalize this malice by questioning Othello's relationship to Emilia. It is an accusation that Iago himself does not really believe, for in the same speech he refers to Othello's "free and open nature"; nonetheless, Iago wants to believe this of Othello and later seems to have succeeded in convincing himself of its truth. The beginning of the soliloquy reveals that Iago has used Roderigo for "sport and profit" and that he feels vastly superior to him:
Thus do I ever make my fool my purse,
For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
If I would time expend with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit.(iii.389-92)

This reference to Roderigo, though delivered just after the latter's exit, bears special significance to the speech as a whole—Iago likewise hopes to lead Othello "by the nose." By using the Moor as he has used Roderigo, Iago can gratify his feelings of superiority and revenge his insulted ego for the indignity it received when Othello chose Cassio for his second in command.

In Act II of Othello the action shifts to Cyprus where after some delay all of the major characters arrive safely. Threats from the Turkish fleet have diminished due to violent weather at sea, and the action of the play now focuses completely upon the theme of Iago's villainy. Shakespeare, in fact, devotes the first and third scenes of this Act to the development of his villain. In a parley with Emilia and Desdemona, Iago reveals his cynical attitude toward women, and perhaps it is not stretching the point too far to suggest that Iago's manifestations of male chauvinism, in this scene and elsewhere, reinforce his feelings of self-importance and, therefore, figure significantly into a reading of his character. As Iago becomes confident of his power to manipulate those individuals who seek his advice, he begins to use language
that betrays his visions of superiority. He has already reached the point at which he can say to Roderigo, "But, sir, be you ruled by me"; later, he will tell Othello, "Would you would bear your fortune like a man!" In his soliloquy (II.i.295-321), Iago divulges the secret of his own lust for Desdemona (ii.300-302), a detail fashioned from the playwright's source, and he rationalizes his enmity toward Cassio in the same way that he has rationalized his hatred of Othello--"For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too" (1.316).

In the third scene the audience learns that Cassio cannot hold his liquor. Cassio realizes his weakness and tries to avoid drinking any more than he has already consumed. But the observant Iago seizes his opportunity and before long Cassio is drunk. Little does Iago realize how appropriate are the words to his second drinking song:

He was a wight of high renown,
   And thou art but of low degree.
'Tis pride that pulls the country down.
Then take thine auld cloak about thee.
   (II.iii.96-99)

And little does Cassio realize how costly will be his indiscretion. Iago begins by making untrue, snide remarks to Montano about Cassio's drinking. As psychological realists, Iago and Edmund are both adept at the practice of seemingly praising a person while actually damning him. Thus Iago speaks of Cassio in the following manner:
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 the other. ’Tis pity of him.
I fear the trust Othello puts him in
On some odd time of his infirmity
Will shake this island. (II.iii.126-133)

Iago gets Roderigo to start a fight with the drunken
Cassio and to raise a riot in the uneasy town. The result
of all this is that Cassio loses his commission. When
Othello arrives Iago affects reticence to speak about
what has happened. Again, this action shows him to be
a psychological realist, or careful reader of the be­
havior of men. Iago's pretense of "protecting" Cassio
merely intensifies Othello's belief that his second
lieutenant is responsible for the disturbance that has
occurred. In his disgrace, Cassio turns to Iago for
help.

The ambivalence in Iago's character shows him to
deviate from Nature, and his attempt to convince
Roderigo that Desdemona loves Cassio discloses Iago's
garbled understanding of this Renaissance concept:

When the blood is made dull with the act of
sport, there should be, again to inflame it and to
give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in
favor, sympathy in years, manners, and beauties,
all which the Moor is defective in. Now, for want
of these required conveniences, her delicate
tenderness will find itself abused; begin to
heave the gorge, disrelish and abhor the Moor.
Very nature will instruct her in it and compel
her to some second choice.

(II.i.229-238)
At various times in the play, Iago makes facile reference to nature, reason, order and degree; but he distorts each of these views to suit his own purpose. Discrepancies in appearance and reality, moreover, tend to undermine Iago's philosophic utterances as do the numerous contradictions in his speech. For instance, he describes reputation as "an idle and most false imposition" but later presents an eloquent case for maintaining one's reputation. Most significant perhaps is Shakespeare's use of dramatic irony to build upon the term honest as applied to Iago. Cassio, Desdemona, and Othello all praise Iago's honesty. Realizing from the beginning that Iago is anything but honest, the audience can only see irony in the other characters' thinking him to be so. In the last act, Shakespeare uses the device of repetition to bring the irony almost to fever pitch. Othello, attempting to justify the murder of Desdemona, credits Iago with being the source of his suspicions. Thus he says to Emilia: "My friend, thy husband--honest, honest Iago" (V.ii.154).

Iago's perverted rationalism soon begins to corrupt the mind of Othello, as we witness in Act III. Again, he uses the psychological device of feigned reticence to vocalize his real feelings and again
Othello takes the bait, starting to suspect Cassio with his wife. As if echoing the warning of Brabantio (I.iii.293-4), Iago resorts to the inductive method of reasoning. Since he has already acknowledged Desdemona's goodness and virtue (II.iii.366-8), Iago uses an argument that he himself knows to be false:

She did deceive her father, marrying you,
And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks,
She loved them most. (III.iii.206-8)

Desdemona did in fact deceive her father, and the poor girl pays heavily for this offense. To reinforce his arguments Iago likewise appeals to Nature. But this time he alters his words to suit Othello instead of Roderigo:

Not to affect many proposed matches
Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
Whereunto we see in all things nature tends—
Foh! One may smell in such a will most rank,
Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural. (III.iii.229-33)

Perhaps Iago's arguments sound too plausible--whatever the reason, Shakespeare has in fact established a Rationalistic background for the play, one that is based upon ideas found in the doctrines of Christian humanism. More will be said of this in a comparative study of Iago and Edmund following discussion of King Lear, for striking similarity in the two villains makes such a consideration indeed worthwhile.

As the seeds of jealousy begin to ripen and grow
within Othello, the Moor becomes vehement—

Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore...
Or by the worth of man's eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my waked wrath! (III.iii.359-63)

Now, Iago must prove and not simply insinuate that Desdemona is unfaithful! More importantly, this gives Iago the opportunity to rationalize his evil into a situation of self-protection, from the anger of Othello and from Cassio's certain defense of his honor should either man learn of Iago's deceit—"There stand I in much peril." Iago's planting the handkerchief in Cassio's quarters recalls Aaron's trick of planting the bag of gold under a nearby tree for Saturninus to find. Emilia conceals from Desdemona the fact that she has given the handkerchief to Iago even though the situation seems to warrant her telling Desdemona about it—Othello's consternation over his wife's inability to produce the former gift. But Emilia is right after all, for Othello forgets about the handkerchief and even fails to notice it in Cassio's hand when he gives it to Bianca to copy—that is, Othello forgets until Iago reminds him by making a big thing of the episode.

Wishing to humiliate Othello, Iago claims that Cassio has "blabbed" about the favors Desdemona has supposedly given him. The purpose of Act IV, in fact, is to show the humiliation and degradation of Othello at the hands of Iago. This treatment of Othello serves
to gratify the egotism of Iago and clarify further the nature of his rational villainy. Thus Iago makes Othello believe that Cassio scorns Desdemona because she is not good enough for him. This story contradicts Iago's account of Cassio's "dreams" about Desdemona, but Othello does not notice—he has already sunk to the inferior level envisioned by Iago in Act I. Othello's epileptic attack causes Iago to feel vastly superior to the Moor, and he begins to patronize Othello:

...Marry patience,
Or shall I say you are all in all in apleen,
And nothing of a man. (IV.i.88-90)

Iago's persistent reference to Othello's manhood (Cf. IV.i.63) may signify his own sexual inadequacies, or his contempt for the alleged sexual prowess of Moors. But even if Iago's motives seem Freudian, Shakespeare's hint of sexual inadequacy merely helps to define with certainty the real basis for Iago's villainy—-involvement with his ego.

In the first scene of Act V, Iago delivers a soliloquy in which he reasons out that both Roderigo and Cassio must die. By weighing alternatives and causes, Iago displays the rational method in his line of thought:

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...Live Roderigo,
He calls me to a restitution large
Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from him
As gifts to Desdemona.
It must not be. If Cassio do remain,
He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly, and besides, the Moor
May unfold me to him. There stand I in much peril.
No, he must die. (V.i.14-22)

The cowardice Iago displays in his manner of wounding
Cassio as well as in his attempt to lay the blame on
Bianca, an innocent woman, suggests that Iago may not
have been a valiant soldier on the field. He may, in
fact, have already overachieved since there is nothing
to indicate anything particularly outstanding in his
military capabilities. It is the mistaken belief that
Iago has faithfully served him by killing Cassio, which
finally spurs the Moor on in his resolve to murder
Desdemona. Shakespeare brilliantly allows the audience
to feel satisfaction that Iago will be punished for
what he has done to Othello and Desdemona; but without
the murders of Roderigo and Emilia, this punishment
might seem excessive rather than just. The horror of
Iago is that he successfully gets Othello to destroy
himself.

Unlike Iago, Othello does not credit the self with
being able to determine its own fate. Othello acknowl-
edges a rationally ordered universe by expressing the
idea that eclipses should follow his murder of
Desdemona (V.ii.98-101). Later learning of the monstrous
error he has committed, Othello asks, "Who can control his fate?" And yet, Othello accepts responsibility for his actions, as does Oedipus, except that the Moor does not work out his redemption as Oedipus finally does. Othello's recognition of higher supernatural powers differs from Iago's recognition of only the self. Iago's rationalism is thus man-centered, and it leads him to the same fatal evil as that of Richard III. Othello, on the other hand, commits a heinous crime of passion which contradicts the nature of his Christian beliefs and attitudes.

In *King Lear* Shakespeare utilizes a subplot that echoes, thematically and dramatically, the story of Lear and his three daughters. Paralleling the main plot is the action that revolves around Gloucester and his two sons, Edgar and villainous Edmund. Both sons serve to link the stories together while the noble Kent functions as the symbol of rational order in the play. Edgar and Albany represent innocence, or goodness without knowledge, but gain in stature and significance as they come to recognize and understand the meaning of evil. Shakespeare identifies Kent with temperance, an Aristotelian virtue: Lear warns, "Come not between the dragon and his wrath," and he later upbraids Kent for daring "To come between our sentence and our power."
But Kent stands firmly on the grounds of his moral principles:

Revoke thy doom
Or whilst I can vent clamor from my throat
I'll tell thee thou dost evil. (I.i.167-9)

When Lear swears by Apollo, Kent interrupts him: "Thou swear'st thy gods in vain." This retort not only refers to the king's inability to keep Kent from expressing his feelings but also suggests the gods' displeasure over Lear's actions, while the audience probably intuits a connection between Lear's oath and God's commandment: Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain (Exodus, 20:7). Kent believes in the higher supernatural powers and lives in accordance with his belief, but the sight of so much suffering eventually causes him to wonder if the gods might be indifferent to man. At this point in the play, however, Edgar becomes the one to argue their benevolent intent.

Although Shakespeare provides the play with a non-Christian framework, the poet explores the themes of "sin," "repentance," and "forgiveness," in an attitude of Christian humanism. The villains who appear in King Lear are Edmund, Goneril, Regan, Cornwall, and Oswald; but discussion focuses upon Edmund the main villain.

In the opening scene of King Lear we learn that Gloucester, once ashamed of acknowledging Edmund his illegitimate offspring (I.i.10-1), now proudly proclaims
his fatherhood of Edmund and his impartial love for both sons. In the second scene, we discover that Edmund does not share Gloucester's feelings of love. Echoing the merry villainy of Richard III, Edmund begins the scene with a soliloquy that discloses his treacherous intent:

Thou, Nature, art my goddess, to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? Wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? With baseness? Bastardy? Base, base?
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops
Got'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to the legitimate—fine word, 'legitimate'!
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper
Now, gods, stand up for bastards! (I.i.1-22)

In thus taking Nature for his goddess, Edmund becomes a figure of anti-humanism. His views as expressed do not represent the concept of Nature known to humanists of the period; rather, they suggest an incipient theory of Darwinism. Like villains such as Cassius and Aaron, Edmund uses the device of forgery. When Gloucester sees Edmund supposedly trying to "hide" the contents of the letter, he naturally asks what the paper is; and Edmund replies, "Nothing, my lord." Gloucester's
subsequent discourse upon the word *nothing* parallels Lear's remark to Cordelia, "Nothing will come of nothing" (I.i.92); needless to say, Edmund's pretenses of defending his brother Edgar produce the effect desired—reducing suspicion of himself and intensifying Gloucester's suspicion of Edgar. The letter, addressed to Edmund from Edgar, proposes that the brothers conspire against their aged father so as to reap the benefits of his wealth at once, since the title, lands, and property cannot revert to Edgar until Gloucester's death. If he aids his brother, Edmund is to receive half of everything. Like Iago, Edmund is an adept at using human psychology as illustrated by the way in which he manipulates his father. He pretends to believe that Edgar is "trying" him and tells Gloucester that he may eavesdrop upon their conversation in order to have proof of Edgar's innocence. Instead, Edmund convinces his brother that Gloucester is violently angry and that he should keep out of their father's sight; thus by frustrating his father's hopes of having concrete proof of his son's innocence, Edmund creates a psychological proof of Edgar's guilt in the mind of Gloucester.

Gloucester's belief in astrology symbolizes his faith in a rationally ordered universe. Certain of his belief that the eclipses forebode evil happenings, Gloucester cites as an example the banishment of Kent from Lear's kingdom. Although he misinterprets the meaning of such planetary disturbances as they apply to himself,
Gloucester nonetheless verifies their general meaning by foolishly banishing his good son Edgar from his side. Edmund, on the other hand, is a skeptic who believes his father to be a credulous old fool; moreover, he plays upon this "credulity" by feigning similar belief in earthly and planetary correspondences. But as rationalist and skeptic, Edmund asserts the freedom of man's will:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behavior—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars, as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion.... My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major, so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Tut, I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. (I.ii.128-45)

Edmund's complaint seems easily justified on the basis of modern scientific thought and also because popular astrology in its most corrupted form offers a view of easy fatalism. In the Republic Plato advises parents to conceive their children at a time of benefic planetary influence, and Edmund's astrological references to himself suggest Shakespeare's familiarity with the Platonic attitude toward heavenly motions. Naturally, Edmund's villainy tends to verify the malefic aspects of his planetary configurations. In Shakespeare's day, Edmund's skepticism would have been viewed as a form of
atheism. Thus, his belief in free will is not to be identified with the Christian concept but with a form of paradoxical humanism instead. Edmund's rationalism, like that of Aaron, Iago, and Richard III, hinges upon the assertion of self.

Edmund's ambitions, in addition to his skepticism, reveal the egotistical basis for his rational villainy. First, he ruins his brother. Next, Edmund betrays his father, who intends to remain loyal to the king, and thus becomes the new Earl of Gloucester. The final step, of course, will be the crown. Edmund has advanced himself by means of a forged letter and a stolen letter. As Waldo McNeir observes, "Ironically, a third letter, addressed to him but never delivered, is instrumental in his own downfall."7 The third letter reveals a plot upon the life of Albany, who has become thoroughly disgusted with the practices of his wife Goneril. Deeming her husband a coward, Goneril falls madly in love with Edmund (as does Regan) and sends to him so that they may rid themselves of Albany, whose death will enable them to wed one another. She entrusts the letter to Oswald, and her servant's dying request is that it be delivered to Edmund. But Edgar delivers it to

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7Waldo F. McNeir, "The Role of Edmund in King Lear," SEL: 1500-1900, 8(Spring 1968), 191.
Albany instead, thereby sealing Edmund's doom, for Albany has wisely maintained his authority over the troops gathered in the field.

After Gloucester has lost his eyes because of his faithfulness to the king, Regan discloses that it was Edmund who betrayed him. At this point Gloucester recognizes the error of his hasty judgment and begs forgiveness from the gods. "I stumbled when I saw," he tells the old man who tries to help him. Even though he has retained his faith in the gods, Gloucester sinks to such despair that he wishes to end his life. Disguised as a mad beggar, Edgar performs the same service for his father that the fool does for Lear. Gloucester and Lear commit sin, undergo terrible suffering, and achieve awareness. But it is Edgar and the fool who prepare them to experience forgiveness and reconciliation before dying.

With both Regan and Goneril competing for his affections, Edmund faces a dilemma. And he reasons it thus:

To both these sisters have I sworn my love,
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed
If both remain alive. To take the widow
Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril,
And hardly shall I carry out my side,
Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use
His countenance for the battle, which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
The battle done, and they within our power, 
Shall never see his pardon, for my state 
Stands on me to defend, not to debate. (V.i.55-69)

By choosing Goneril over Regan, Edmund hopes to eliminate 
the threat of Albany's merciful intentions. His dilemma 
is resolved, however, for Goneril poisons Regan and 
commits suicide following disclosure of the intercepted 
letter. After his victory Albany arrests Edmund on 
charges of treason, and Edgar comes forth to charge him 
with crimes against "thy gods, thy brother, and thy 
father." In the trial by combat that ensues, Edmund 
falls--the implication being that divine justice is on 
Edgar's side. Edmund forgives his adversary, not knowing 
at the time that it is his brother, and before he dies 
attempts to save the lives of Cordelia and Lear by 
revealing that he has secretly ordered their deaths. 
His effort proves unsuccessful, for Cordelia is hanged 
and Lear dies of a broken heart.

Often, the term rational when applied to Iago and 
Edmund merely acts as a synonym for logical. To be sure, 
each appears to be the most logical character in his 
respective play. (Goneril and Regan might perhaps vie 
with Edmund for the title of most logical except that 
they fall in "love.") The audience sees both Iago 
and Edmund weighing alternatives before deciding to act. 
Iago's dilemma involving Cassio and Roderigo is not 
unlike Edmund's decision involving Goneril and Regan;
but while Iago must permit neither to live, Edmund is happy to settle for one of the sisters out of the way, namely Regan, so that Goneril would then have to dispose of Albany. Edmund makes the audience aware of his logical mode of thinking through a series of systematic thought processes, the end of which reveals to him the better of the alternatives. Iago's tendency to enumerate ("Two things must be done") also cloaks him in the appearance of logic. In deceiving others into taking false attitudes Iago and Edmund use the pretense of protecting the innocent party. This "protection" is of course damning; but their penetrating insight into human nature marks them as psychological realists and serves to elevate their mentality above that of the other characters. For instance, Iago's pretense of protecting Cassio from Othello's inquiries causes Othello to become even more suspicious of Cassio and to admire Iago for his "loyalty" to a friend. Iago's apparent hesitancy to speak on the subject of Cassio's drunkenness or on the subject of Desdemona and Cassio makes him appear to Othello as sincere and honest. Similarly, Edmund's apparent defense of his brother has the desired effect—the opposite of what he seems to intend.

Moreover, Iago and Edmund are characterized by a kind of sardonic humor which makes them satirical and contemptuous of their society so that they seem to be
above it. Edmund's humor seems flippant, while Iago's cynical attitude toward sex serves to identify him with malcontents such as Hamlet and Flamineo. Three factors, then, combine to characterize Iago and Edmund as thinking men who have divorced reason from emotion: 1) the expedient methods by which they reach their desired ends; 2) the psychological realism which enables them to read the weaknesses of others and to play upon those weaknesses; and, 3) the satirical humor by which they stand apart from society by appearing to be above it. Both, in fact, claim reason for a guide. Iago says,

If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings.... (I.iii.329-34)

Edmund's concept of reason is less elaborate—"Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit" (I.ii.199).

With his first entrance into the play, each character expresses unhappiness over his station in life. The question immediately involved is that of order and degree and is complicated by the fact that Shakespeare leaves the matter both open and shut within each of the tragedies. If society deems Edmund base and if Iago lost his appointment through Cassio's political connections we might perhaps sympathize with each character's plight. To argue that the case of each is destroyed through villainous action is to ignore the question or to rationalize
the problem, however. What Shakespeare implies is that for better or worse, each must accept his station unless the circumstances of beneficent Providence or nobility of character should cause conditions to become altered. The marriage of Othello and Desdemona, for instance, transcends considerations of degree. That we are to accept it as such is evidenced through the Duke's sanction of the marriage: "I think this tale would win my daughter too" (I.iii.171) and "Your son-in-law is far more fair than black" (I.iii.291). It is Iago, discontented with his station in life, who reminds us of the Elizabethan view. His arguments, however, weaken his own case rather than Othello's for the Duke's attitude toward Othello has already served to verify the early suggestion of the Moor's deserving whatever good comes to him. While the audience, like the Duke, approves Othello's transgression of Degree, it cannot approve similar desires on the part of Iago in whose mouth the argument becomes a vile hypocrisy. Such dualities likewise occur in *King Lear*. Edmund's opening speech shows his dissatisfaction with his position. But again, we see a break that transcends the existing order when Cornwall's servant who served him since childhood tries to stop him from putting out Gloucester's eyes. The servant loses his life as a result while Regan exclaims, "A peasant stand up thus!" Again, the action is
sanctioned by higher authority, this time in the way
Albany responds to the story as he hears it from a
messenger (IV.ii.78-80). In each case of the transgres­
sion there is sanction from a higher political authority
whose character in the play is not blemished, and in
each case there is also an implication of divine or
cosmic sanction of the deed.

The skepticism of Iago and Edmund toward the exist­
ing social order parallels their attitudes toward
Elizabethan cosmology. Each character asserts free will
by expressing disbelief in fate, while the attitudes of
believers—Othello and Kent, for instance—display the
idea of fate reconciled to free will. Disregard of the
supernatural tends to place Iago and Edmund in the camp
of atheism, a further deviation from right reason and
from the English humanism present in the worldview of
Shakespeare's plays. And yet, in his pretense of
defending Cassio, Iago affects belief in astrology—
"As if some planet had unwitted men" (II.iii.182).
Edmund also uses a pretext of belief when he lies to his
father about Edgar:

Here stood he in the dark...
Mumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon.
(II.i.41)

That Iago's rationalism exists apart from right reason
is evidenced by his stated intention to corrupt goodness.
Similarly, Edmund describes his brother as noble and
good, "on whose foolish honesty/My practices ride easy!"
Iago's logic also deviates in method from right reason for neither is the end good nor the means "proper."
There may even be a question as to whether Iago follows reason at all. For one thing, Iago's desperate search for a motive becomes a form of rationalizing—a state of mental confusion—as he seeks to convince himself that there is reason behind his ungrounded actions. Edmund at least expects to gain wealth, but Iago does not even expect to profit by his actions. We know that he is stealing jewels from Roderigo, but Shakespeare barely touches upon this motive.

Edmund's reasoning likewise exists apart from virtue and deviates from the methodology of right reason in the end and means of his action. He too rationalizes but to a much lesser extent than does Iago—as when he satisfies himself that the deaths of Goneril and Regan prove that he was loved. But Edmund deserves to be treated more in the light of Nature than Reason, for he calls upon Nature as his guide. Moreover, Shakespeare devotes much of the play to an exploration of the meanings of natural and unnatural. As the playwright builds added meanings into the term honest as applied to Iago, so he imbues the word natural with more and more meaning as it comes to be associated with Edmund. The latter's illegitimacy does not cause his moral corruption, for
Goneril and Regan who are legitimate are equally corrupt, so that within the context of the play Edmund's illegitimacy merely symbolizes his perverse nature. Shakespeare employs dramatic irony by having Gloucester remark that Edmund is a "loyal and natural boy." But the audience knows that Edmund is neither loyal nor natural, for in the context of this scene the interplay of "unnatural" and "natural" causes their meanings to become juxtaposed. Throughout the play Shakespeare develops the parent-child relationship until it finally becomes representative of the law of Nature. For example, Lear foolishly tells Regan: "...thou better know'st/The offices of nature, bond of childhood." But Albany tells Goneril:

That nature which contemns its origin
Cannot be bordered certain in itself;
She that herself will sliver and disbranch
From her material sap perforce must wither
And come to deadly use. (IV.ii.32-36)

When Gloucester remarks to Edmund concerning Lear's daughters, "I like not this unnatural dealing," Edmund replies, "Most savage and unnatural!" As an added irony, the scene ends with Edmund's resolution to tell the Duke of his father's decision to remain loyal to Lear.

Returning to Edmund's lines in which he takes Nature for his goddess, we find that the rest of the play provides an ironic commentary upon these same lines. Likewise, Edmund asserts the freedom of his will, but at the end of the play he seems less certain: "Some good I mean to
do,/Despite of mine own nature" (V.iii.243-4). Edmund's attempt to save Cordelia and Lear may or may not make him less villainous than Iago, but it does serve to refute his own implication that his is a naturally depraved human personality.

Macbeth, the last of Shakespeare's great villains, marks a departure from rational villainy. Whereas Lady Macbeth is a rationalist, and remains so until she loses her mind, Macbeth is essentially non-rational. While displaying many of the qualities of rational villainy, Macbeth exhibits at the same time characteristics that do more than simply qualify his rational villainy—they entirely alter it. The extenuating circumstances of Macbeth's rationalism lie, of course, in his psychic experiences. Though like Claudius he feels genuine affection for his wife and professes faith in the supernatural, it is the hallucinogenic quality of Macbeth's mind which actually characterizes his villainy as non-rational. (This interpretation of Macbeth differs from that of Terrence Hawkes who views Shakespeare's hero as rationalistic.) Professor Hawkes has described the witches as being reasoners to excess, and the weird

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8 *Shakespeare and the Reason*, p. 145.

9 Ibid., pp. 129-30.
sisters are just that—equivocators whose speech abounds in paradoxes. Yet, prophecy is a phenomenon associated with the imagination and Banquo's words, as well as the women's beards, suggest anti-rationalism:

Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner? (I.iii.83-5)

In a sense, the witches represent perversion of higher reason, the intuitive faculty, while the poetic quality of Macbeth's mind could easily invite a similar critical approach. For purposes of clarification, however, I shall use the term rationalism in the way that it applies to Shakespeare's other villains, thereby treating the modus operandi of Macbeth's mind as non-rational rather than supra-rational.

As the character of Richard III changes to that of a man whose rationalism bows before the forces of his imagination, so the mental state of Macbeth begins where that of Richard III ends. Richard's fall from rationalism occurs when, stirred by the enormity of his guilt, he loses confidence in himself and yields to feelings of fear and terror. However, Shakespeare depicts Macbeth as being one who from the beginning possesses the uncanny ability to visualize his greatest hopes and fears and even to project them externally before him. His early weakness is simply that of the partially committed will, but Lady Macbeth provides
the "emotional power" that enables him to translate his thoughts into action.

The first appearance of Lady Macbeth (I.v) carries an impression of forceful emotionlessness. Complaining that her husband is "too full o' the milk of human kindness," she resolves to urge his ambitions with "the valor of my tongue." Lady Macbeth lacks the far-sightedness of her husband and neglects to consider the legal and moral consequences of capital crime. Thus she seeks to shame Macbeth into murdering the king by strenuously questioning his courage. Following her diatribe Macbeth asks, "If we should fail?" And Lady Macbeth responds by advising him of her plan:

We fail!
But screw your courage to the sticking-place
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep--
Whereeto the rather shall his day's hard journey
Soundly invite him--his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince
That memory, the warden of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limbec only. When in swinish sleep
Their drenched natures lie as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
The unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
Of our great quell? (I.vii. 59-72)

It is Lady Macbeth who works out the details of the murder, and the recognition she gives to a role of hypo-

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crisy further complements the manner of her rational villainy—"False face must hide what the false heart doth know" (I.vii.82).

In Act I, sc.vii and Act II, sc.ii, Lady Macbeth displays a personality that is much stronger than Macbeth's; in fact, Shakespeare must have had difficulty constructing the play so that she did not usurp the stage from his hero. Her comment that she could have killed Duncan herself had he not resembled her father betrays her weakness, however, while her advising Macbeth to forget about the crime just committed lest it "make us mad" prepares us for the sleepwalking scene. Whereas the murder has greatly unnerved Macbeth, his wife has the situation well under control, and it is she who must remind him to wash the blood from his hands and return the daggers to their rightful places beside the grooms. Macbeth's failure to hide the evidence of their guilt differs from Lady Macbeth's instant recognition of their need to cover it up. Having little patience with her husband's flights of fancy, she advises him to be rational about the matter:

The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil (II.ii.53-4).

The scene ends with Lady Macbeth's telling her husband to don his nightgown "lest occasion call us/And show us to be watchers."
With discovery of the murder of Duncan comes the necessity for Macbeth to maintain a demeanor that will not reveal his guilt. To help her husband through this difficult period of reactions, conjectures, and explanations following the crime, Lady Macbeth diverts attention by pretending to faint. From this point on, however, her importance diminishes as Macbeth begins to assert himself. Once done, the murderous deed feeds the courage of his will. No longer needing the valorous tongue of his lady, Macbeth plots the murder of Banquo on his own. The manner in which he makes use of the murderers exhibits an instance of Macbeth's rationalism, as do the envious rationalizations that lead him to the conclusion that Banquo and Fleance must die. But the hero's best display of the rational method occurs in the soliloquy that begins the seventh scene of Act I—in which he decides not to murder Duncan! When Macbeth is unable to maintain calm during the presence of Banquo's ghost, the services of Lady Macbeth are again called forth. Perhaps the role demanded too much from the young actor who played the part of Lady Macbeth, perhaps Shakespeare recognized that his character's forceful personality tended to intimidate his hero—whatever the reason, she disappears from the play until Act V, wherein we learn of her illness. No longer the rationalist, Lady Macbeth still retains a powerful hold over the audience.
The Doctor attending her perhaps best explains the root of her almost hypnotic effect upon those watching: "More needs she the divine than the physician" (V.i.82).

The mental attitudes of Macbeth differ markedly from those of Iago who, as rationalist, tells Roderigo—"Thou know' st we work by wit and not by witchcraft." The witches in Macbeth are real since Banquo sees them too and since they give such specific information regarding the birth of Macduff and the uses made of the trees from Birnam Wood; but the witches also serve as emblems of Macbeth's tremendous powers of imagination. The witches' prophecy startles Macbeth at first because it is almost as if they have been reading his mind, and the words of Banquo have little effect upon Macbeth because they reveal what he already subconsciously knows to be true:

And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's In deepest consequence. (I.iii.123-6)

Preferring not to dwell upon the probability of the witches' evil, Macbeth must contend with the dark, unnatural yearnings within his own soul:

[Aside] This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good. ...
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair And make my seated heart knock at my ribs, Against the use of nature? (I.iii.130-7)

The doctor who first introduces the subject of the English king's remarkable faith-healing and prophetic
powers thus serves an important function. Through the comments of Malcolm and the doctor, Shakespeare contrasts two individuals, both of whom are kings and both of whom are visionaries. One, a mystic attuned to the higher laws of Reason and Nature, serves as a symbol of rational order based upon Christian neo-Platonism—an unusual norm to be sure, but the only possible one if the character of Macbeth is considered deeply. The other, also a mystic, fails to dedicate himself to either the powers of good or the powers of evil. This, in fact, is Hecate's complaint about Macbeth:

And, which is worse, all you have done
Hath been but for a wayward son,
Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do,
Loves for his own ends, not for you. (III.v.10-13)

Neither saint nor black magician, Macbeth lacks the discipline to keep his powers from suppressing his reason.

Macbeth possesses a tremendously creative imagination, and he demonstrates the range of his powers in a soliloquy (II.i.33-64) that verifies his lack of rational control:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use. (II.i.33-43)
Well might he have said to the witches, "Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going." The three apparitions in the witches' scene (IV.i)—the armed head, the bloody child, and the crowned child—reveal the hero's conscious fear of Macduff, who did not appear at the banquet, his unconscious plan to revenge himself upon Macduff's children, and his despair over the fact that he has no heirs himself. Macbeth allows himself to be deceived by the words of the apparitions, but their visual meaning is nonetheless clear. Finally, Macbeth torments himself by asking to see that which he has probably already intuited—the royal line of succession stemming from Banquo. The third and fourth apparitions thus reveal the workings of an ego obsessed with the idea of perpetuating itself (Cf. Aaron).

Macbeth's psychic experiences likewise reveal the rebellious throbings of his repressed conscience. After murdering Duncan, Macbeth hears a voice calling "Sleep no more!" throughout all the house, but Lady Macbeth tells him not to think "So brainsickly of things." The ghost of Banquo evokes from Macbeth an outburst that differs considerably from Brutus' cool retort to the ghost of Caesar: "Why, I will see thee at Philippi then." However, Brutus does unnecessarily awaken those in his tent, apparently for purposes of satisfying himself that the ghost was not a figment of his
imagination. In contrast to Brutus, Macbeth behaves almost hysterically when he sees the ghost of Banquo occupying his chair at the banquet table. The ghost does not speak to Macbeth but since Macbeth has already heard voices and seen incorporeal substances, the ghost could easily be another of Macbeth's psychological hallucinations. However, to view all of his psychic experiences as being products of a guilty conscience is, I feel, to miss something very essential about Shakespeare's villain-hero. Macbeth's conscious and unconscious are so closely attuned as to suggest the possibility of unusual poetic-prophetic gifts, if his thoughts had turned in some other direction.

As the villainy of Macbeth offers a contrast to that of Lady Macbeth, so too it differs from that of Aufidius, the rational villain who appears in *Coriolanus*. The hero, Caius Marcius Coriolanus, is an aristocratic military leader who scorns the common people. As a man of extraordinary courage and immense pride, Coriolanus refuses to cater to those whom he considers lowly, despite Rome's republican politics. Coriolanus' attitude thus proves unfortunate and eventually leads to his banishment from Rome—the people hate him for his pride. Menenius, an elderly temperate nobleman, serves as one of the persons representing rational order in the play. He himself
has good rapport with the common people, but he tells Coriolanus' mother:

Before he should thus stoop to the herd, but that The violent fit o' the time craves it as physic For the whole state, I would put mine armor on, Which I can scarcely bear. (III.ii.32-5)

Everything that Coriolanus says about the commoners Shakespeare shows in the play to be true: They are cowardly, self-seeking, and easily swayed. Victims of their own insupportable pride, they resent Coriolanus' ability to let his exploits speak for themselves. Instead, they demand that he humble himself before their voting power. The democratic principles of modern society make it difficult to accept a hero such as Coriolanus; and despite our society's worship of athletic superstars, we generally prefer to think of heroes, especially tragic heroes, as having something more than physical prowess to admire. Whatever the social conditioning that might color our views, Menenius' assessment of Coriolanus holds true in the context of Shakespeare's play:

His nature is too noble for the world. He would not flatter Neptune for his trident, Or Jove for 's power to thunder. His heart's his mouth— What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent, And being angry, does forget that ever He heard the name of death. (III.1.255-60)

Coriolanus' shortcomings enable Aufidius, the envious Volscian leader, to arrange the death of
the Roman hero so that it appears to be a rash action brought on by Coriolanus' contemptuous braggadocio rather than the premeditated murder that it is. Recalling the psychological ploys used by Shakespeare's other rational villains, Aufidius decides to goad Coriolanus into the anger that will trigger his pride, arouse the hostility of commoners who are with him, and give the conspirators their chance to strike him down. Aufidius achieves this end by taunting Coriolanus about the influence of Virgilia his wife and Volumnia his mother in getting him to drop his plan of attacking Rome, his former home. When Aufidius addresses Coriolanus as "thou boy of tears," he hits the right psychological key; for Coriolanus is the product of his strong-willed mother, Volumnia, who in trying to keep her son from becoming a sissy, created a military hero of extraordinary physical capabilities, immense pride, and little charity. Censure of the murder by the lords who praise Coriolanus' qualities and lament his death no doubt contributes to Aufidius' feelings of self-reproach and superficial repentance after having successfully plotted the downfall of the hero. As a villain, Aufidius bears resemblance to Cassius; but Coriolanus is as much a victim of his own tragic flaw as he is a victim of Aufidius' conspiracy against him.

Although Cymbeline appears in the first folio among
the tragedies, it is actually a tragi-comedy whose heroes lack greatness of proportion and whose villains lack power. In the worlds of Shakespearean comedy, tragi-comedy, and dramatic romance, rational villainy functions in a way that differs from its role in tragedy. Thus, in the following chapter I have treated all of these types as comedies, and I have included Cymbeline within this group. The comedies are characterized by happy endings that show clarification of misunderstandings, forgiveness of wrongs, reuniting of loved ones, and other such outcomes to situations that were formerly unsatisfactory. These plays also contain a large number of surprises as well as an inordinate number of coincidences. Good characters and bad alike resort to uses of disguise and deception. In a world of seeming moral relativity, as for example when the king forces an unwilling Bertram to marry Helena (All's Well That Ends Well), the presence of a powerful villain-rationalist would necessitate Shakespeare's establishing a rational norm for the play, similar to those found in the tragedies. Such a rational basis does exist in varying degrees from comedy to comedy, but it is usually less clearly developed than in the tragedies. Either thwarted completely or only partially successful, rational villainy nonetheless has a special place in the comedies. Although the following chapter traces the villains of the early comedies through to
those of the dramatic romances, discussion focuses upon five villains: Shylock, Don John, Angelo, Dionyza, and Iachimo. The plays in which these characters appear suggest the existence of a basic compatibility between the comic world and the Shakespearean attitude toward rational villainy.
VI. THE COMEDIES

Shakespeare wrote mainly comedies and histories while he was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company, and to this phase of his career belong *The Merchant of Venice* (1595-6) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598). *Pericles* and *Cymbeline* exhibit the last phase of Shakespeare's dramatic work, which dates from 1608, the year in which the King's Men took over the Blackfriars theater. The plays belonging to this last period are generally classified as dramatic romances or melodramas, but basically they are comedies with tragic overtones.

Although villainy has no power in the comic world, yet it holds a place of special significance. Despite the usual absence of tragic consequences, the comic world can mete out proper punishment to its villains, whether for Dionyza's attempted murder of Pericles' daughter or Don John's petty slander of Hero. Nowhere is it clearer than in Shakespeare's comedies that legality and justice are not necessarily one and the same. Often, villainy helps to expose the moral weaknesses of basically worthwhile individuals such as Claudio (*Much Ado*) and Posthumus and to test the virtuous capacities of characters such as Imogen and Isabella. Serving as a vehicle through which protagonists can come to know themselves, villainy in the comedies does not purchase
awareness at the price of death, as it most often does in the tragedies. Rather, Shakespeare shows villainy in the comedies to have regenerative moral effects on characters whose spiritual potential is being tried, and frequently these effects extend to the villains themselves. The villains of the comedies are not rationalists in the sense that Iago and Edmund are rationalists, but their reliance upon tricks, schemes, and other methods of duplicity nevertheless classifies them as villains of reason.

Because Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* displays the methods of the rationalist and the motives of the lover, his villainy is somewhat contradictory. A petty villain who betrays both his friend and his lady, Proteus is as shallow and changing as Claudio in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Proteus' practiced deceit elevates his awareness above that of the other persons in the play. By feigning reluctance to undertake the task assigned to him by the Duke and Thurio, Proteus displays the rationalist's tendency to use psychology upon those whom he wishes to deceive. Thus Proteus demonstrates a degree of human understanding, although like Claudio and Angelo he hardly knows himself at all. Proteus' emotional immaturity actually makes him incapable of love. Still, he has fooled Valentine, Thurio, and the Duke into thinking him "Love's firm votary."
That Proteus' self-awareness has occurred fully at the moment he first expresses contrition seems unlikely. In all probability, he would have accepted Valentine's offer; but Julia's swoon prevents our seeing what Proteus' reaction to the generous gesture of his friend will be. At this point in the play, however, Proteus can acknowledge with more than common understanding: "Oh, Heaven, were man/But constant, he were perfect!"

In both the comedies and dramatic romances, one finds a worldview in which love has been used to represent the ideal of immutability. Proteus is only one in a line of such gentlemen to follow and although these are not villains, strictly speaking, they nevertheless represent the principles of irrationality--infidelity and changeability. The villain in Shakespeare's earliest romantic comedy thus sets the stage for such romantic heroes as Claudio (Much Ado) and Posthumus. But in the later comedies of Shakespeare, the theme of moral regeneration has been treated with much greater care and ease of handling.

The most well-developed villain to appear in any of the comedies is Shylock, and the role may be played as an almost fairytale portrait of wickedness or with its tragic implications laid bare. While this latter interpretation may take too much attention away from Antonio the main character, an aura of tragedy nonetheless
hangs about the head of Shylock, an articulate villain whose words carry strong emotional impact:

...I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? (III.i.60-9)

As villain, Shylock represents a curious mixture of emotionalism and rationalism, and it is perhaps more indicative of his Judaism than his rationalism that he stands by the letter of the law in claiming the pound of flesh from Antonio. Despite Shylock's legalistic quality of mind, he identifies himself with non-reason:

As there is no firm reason to be rendered
Why he cannot abide a gaping pig,
Why he, a harmless necessary cat,
Why he, a woolen bagpipe, but of force
Must yield to such inevitable shame
As to offend, himself being offended,
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him. Are you answered? (IV.i.53-62)

While the audience realizes that Shylock's action is indeed as irrational as he indicates, the moneylender himself does not really believe so. Shylock's admission of non-reason merely stresses his cynical certainty that no one except perhaps Tubal is capable of understanding his motives, even if he were to state them in plain words. Shylock, however, has already provided the
audience with the following information in an aside:

I hate him for he is a Christian,
But more for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe
If I forgive him! (I.iii.43-53)

Later, as he readies himself to attend the Christians' dinner, Shylock complains:

...But wherefore should I go?
I am not bid for love, they flatter me.
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon
The prodigal Christian. (II.v.12-15)

Shylock has good reason to feel the way that he does about the Christians who appear in The Merchant of Venice, but his views are also exaggerated. After reminding Antonio of the indignities that the latter has dealt to the Jewish race, Shylock agrees to lend the merchant money; and Antonio, foolishly accepting the terms of the loan, erroneously interprets Shylock's willingness to lend him the sum as a sign of the Jew's latent goodness and generosity:

Hie thee, gentle Jew.
The Hebrew will turn Christian. He grows kind. (I.iii.178-9)

In The Merchant of Venice Shakespeare plays the somber usury of Shylock against the adventurous financial enterprises of Antonio the merchant and Bassanio his friend. The basic goodness of Antonio and Bassanio
does not alter the fact that they, too, dream about ducats. With Antonio's fortunes sailing somewhere upon the seas and Bassanio's hopes hinging upon his ability to choose the correct casket, Shakespeare underscores the worldliness of the Italian port city that serves as his setting. Humanity itself, symbolized by the pound of flesh, has become a saleable commodity in a place where fortunes are suddenly won and lost. The realism of Venice, however, is offset by Belmont—a fairytale world in which suitors for the hand of Portia must agree to depart from the castle and never to marry if they choose the wrong casket. Though Portia's father has set these conditions upon her marriage, she in effect chooses Bassanio for herself. Portia's use of the word hazard (III.ii.2) will probably filter back into Bassanio's unconsciousness when he reads the inscription on the leaden casket, "Who chooseth me, must give and hazard all he hath." Portia's song about Fancy is likewise meant to aid Bassanio by warning him, indirectly, to stay away from the gold and silver caskets.

The villainy of Shylock provides the means by which Portia can ransom her husband from the rival affections of Antonio. Portia's love for Bassanio is complicated by neither materialistic motives nor by emotional commitments to anyone else. Although the same cannot
be said of Bassanio, Portia nonetheless recognizes her husband's worth. The villainy of Shylock thus becomes a vehicle through which Portia can demonstrate her love for Bassanio as being no less than that of his friend, the melancholic Antonio, who seems not only willing to die but also a little overanxious for Bassanio to witness his death: "Pray God Bassanio come/To see me pay his debt, and then I care not!" At the trial, Antonio tells his friend, "Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you"; and later,

Commend me to your honorable wife.
Tell her the process of Antonio's end...
And when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a love. (IV.i.273-77)

There can be little doubt, it seems, that Antonio unconsciously intends for his death to place even Bassanio's soul in hock to his friendship. Through Shakespeare's portrait of Antonio, the poet implies that Portia's intelligence, like her father's is almost other worldly in its intuitive grasp of human subtleties. At Antonio's insistence, Bassanio parts with his wife's ring; but by the end of the play, the audience feels distinctly that he will never do so again.

To Elizabethan theatergoers Antonio's melancholia signified a particular character-type representing one of the four humors, but modern readers are as apt to detect a death wish at the core of Antonio's grim
bargain. Shylock for one has no illusions about the risks involved in Antonio's fortunes:

He hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies. I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men. There be land rats and water rats, water thieves and land thieves—I mean pirates. And then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks. (I.iii.18-25)

And the terms Shylock sets for the bond merely confirm his faith in the fickleness of fortunes such as those of Antonio and Bassanio. If Antonio likewise has this realization, he hides his fears from Bassanio in the same way that he hides them from his other friends during the opening scene of the play. Shylock attempts to defend his love for monetary increase by retelling the Biblical story of Jacob and Laban (Genesis 30:32-43); and Antonio's reply, by stressing discrepancies in appearance and reality, offers incisive insight into the nature of rational villainy:

Mark you this, Bassanio,
The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek.
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
Oh, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!
(I.iii.97-103)

Unfortunately, Antonio loses his reservations when Shylock lends him the three thousand ducats. Shylock's splenetic hatred implies a host of wretched victims of his moneylending practices while the defections of
Launcelot and Jessica from Shylock's household also help to round out the picture of his villainy. A man without love, Shylock misses his ducats more than he misses his daughter. Although he leaves Jessica alone in the house, Shylock has misgivings:

I am right loath to go.
There is some ill abrewing toward my rest,
For I did dream of moneybags tonight. (II.v.16-8)

After Shylock learns of his daughter's flight with some of his money, Salanio cautions: "Let good Antonio look he keep his day/Or he shall pay for this."

Shylock's classification as an alien is both literal and symbolic pertaining more perhaps to his inhumanity than to his Jewishness, at least in context of the play. By demanding a pound of human flesh, Shylock breaks faith with the common bond that exists among all men. Many times he is given the opportunity to show mercy, and in every instance he refuses. When Shylock sees that he has been defeated by Christian cunning, he offers to accept just the principal of the sum he lent. But Portia refuses to quit until she has charged Shylock with capital crimes carrying the death penalty or, in other words, until she has mercilessly demonstrated the meaning of mercy. Although news of the safe arrival of Antonio's ships seems to have been saved rather casually for the finale, the playwright probably wishes to stress the fact that
Antonio actually believes himself to be nearly penniless when he awards his share of the court settlement to Shylock's heirs.

Even if Antonio's militant Christianity seems distasteful nowadays, *The Merchant of Venice* nevertheless functions as an apology for Christian charity. Shakespeare sets the themes of Antonio's generosity and Shylock's miserliness against the contrapuntal strains of Old Testament justice and New Testament mercy, thereby producing a comedy of high seriousness and rich tones. The villain of the piece remains recalcitrant, at least to the extent that Shakespeare has given no indication of Shylock's becoming any better as a Christian than he was as a Jew. The ending of the play is therefore correct. While the Christian characters in *The Merchant of Venice* may believe that their imposition upon Shylock's religious convictions may turn the tide in saving his soul, the audience need not accept such an easy solution to the moneylender's moral problems. Yet, from the ashes of Shylock's intended villainy arise the secure futures of Jessica and Lorenzo, the love of Portia and Bassanio, and the unconditional charity of Antonio.

The main plot of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* revolves around the activities of Don John, a minor figure in the play. However, as G.B. Harrison has observed in the Introduction to this comedy,
He [Don John] is more important in person than in dialogue. He is a man of few words and therefore in the reading we are likely to overlook him. But when the play is adequately acted, with Don John malevolently brooding in the background, conspicuous and sinister in his silence, the story becomes far more effective.

The illegitimate brother of Don Pedro the prince, Don John relishes feelings of hatred without seriously attempting to justify their cause. One can gather easily enough, however, that the nature of his complaint is much like Edmund's in *King Lear*. Of his own villainy, Don John remarks:

> I had rather be a canker in a hedge than a rose in his grace, and it better fits my blood to be disdained of all than to fashion a carriage to rob love from any. In this, 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.27-33)

Actually, Don John can hardly be referred to as "plain-dealing." His lie to Claudio that Don Pedro intends to court Hero for himself prepares us to view Claudio's acceptance of Don John's slander of Hero as somehow approaching the inexcusable. What seems even worse, Claudio's vicious gullibility leads him to decide that he will accuse Hero during their marriage ceremony, before the whole congregation. Although Don John is the

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G.B.Harrison, ed., p.698
main villain of the play, it is actually Borachio who
plans the deceptive love scene at Hero's chamber window
for Don Pedro and Claudio to see. Yet, Borachio recognizes
the subordinate role he plays. As he tells Conrade about
the money he received from Don John, Borachio comments that
"when rich villains have need of poor ones, poor ones may
make what price they will." Shakespeare plays his trio of
villains--Don John, Borachio, and Conrade--against his
clowns. Ironically, if Leonato had tried harder to un­
derstand Dogberry, he could have stopped the plot at the
wedding altar. More importantly, the comical efforts of
Dogberry, Verges, and the Watch help to relieve suspense
by reassuring us that tragedy is not really so near as
it seems: Two villains have already been found out, even
if by the wildest of ratiocinative means.

Villainy in Much Ado About Nothing does not go
undetected, but neither is it apprehended by means of
the lower reason. In confessing his crimes before Don
Pedro and Claudio, for instance, Borachio says of the
clowns: "What your wisdons could not discover, these
shallow fools have brought to light...." It is the
instinctive honesty of Dogberry, Verges, and the Watch,
that enables them to root out the evil lurking in the
streets on the eve of Hero's wedding. Beatrice likewise
recognizes her cousin's innocence, and she commands
Benedick to kill Claudio for the outrageous indignity he
committed against her cousin. Whereas Claudio has based his love upon physical appearances only, the love of Beatrice and Benedick represents a meeting of intellects. Benedick is unsure of Claudio's guilt until Beatrice avows that she knows her cousin's innocence from the depths of her own "soul." Thus Benedick submits to her request. Benedick's wonderful parodic references to Beatrice (my Lady Disdain, my Lady Tongue) and to Claudio (Monsieur Love, my Lord Lack-beard) demonstrate his ability to penetrate appearances as these apply to the conventions of love. Beatrice has similar perceptions, and therefore she too has become cynical. Fortunately, the intuitions of their friends bring Benedick and Beatrice together. The clowns and Beatrice represent an instinctive goodness that prevents their being taken in by the deception although Benedick, Antonio, and Leonato later reach the same conclusion. In addition, there is Friar Francis' goodness, which enables him to reason correctly from the evidence before him and thereby to conclude that the lady has been wronged.

The slanderous tongue of Don John should never have found willing ears. But Claudio is no Imogen, and so he must be taught a lesson. When conscience-stricken Borachio attempts to accept total responsibility for the crime, Leonato points the finger at others as well, including Claudio and Don Pedro. Claudio agrees to
perform whatever penance Leonato demands but he feels that his only sin was in "mistaking." Claudio's moment of recognition does not really occur until he prays before the tomb of the supposedly dead Hero. To keep alive the remembrance of his complicitous guilt in her death, Claudio promises to re-enact a yearly ritual of tribute to her memory. Also, he agrees to marry the daughter of Leonato's brother sight unseen. Thus he now accepts a bride (Hero in disguise) on grounds other than those of mere physical appearances. He insists that even if she were an Ethiope, "I'll hold my mind"—a far cry from the changeability that led him to suspect Don Pedro first, and later Hero. The moral weaknesses of Claudio, however, in no way equal the guilt of Borachio, Conrade, and Margaret who surely realized her part in the plot, if not before and during her scene with Borachio then at least after Hero had been publicly accused. Nevertheless, the audience feels satisfied when Benedick promises to devise "brave punishments" for Don John.

In Much Ado About Nothing as in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, villainy serves as a medium through which individuals can come to know themselves. In the former play it is the villain who experiences regeneration and in the latter it is the hero. That the playwright would have identified his theme of "constancy" with Platonism is suggested, moreover, by the manner in which he treated
love in "The Phoenix and the Turtle." Too, the comedies bear a thematic resemblance to the sonnets. These works imply a degree of sympathy toward Platonism whereas the rational basis of the histories and the tragedies seems more dependent upon the Aristotelian concept of reason. If, however, Shakespeare did in fact incline toward Platonic doctrines he would have had difficulty in reconciling his views to the idea of villainy. But in attempting to deal with this problem as it relates to the comedies, one risks the danger of overinterpretation; for the comic world itself is ample reason to absolve all of its participants, including villains, from harsh judgment. Don John is one of few comic villains to pay for his crimes. Even so, it might be added that Benedick's resolve to punish the villain is made in such joyful tones that one could easily assume the "brave punishments" to mean little more than perhaps a public dunking in a tub of water, if indeed that terrible. Don John and later Iachimo must appear as petty villains next to Iago, for neither practices upon someone of Othello's stature. Yet, Don John and Iachimo manifest essentially the same type of villainous approach as that used by Iago. The legal punishment for slander hardly ever seems to equal its evil potential, however, and it is perhaps for this reason that Shakespeare found this type of villainy challenging enough to explore so often
in his plays.

The two villains in As You Like It, Oliver and Duke Frederick the usurper, are egotists whose jealousy of their brothers has prompted each to attempt murder. Although Oliver has done his best to turn Orlando into a fool by depriving him of an education, the latter possesses so many natural good qualities that all who meet him soon recognize this fact—including Oliver, who bitterly complains that he himself is "misprised." The enviousness of Oliver and Frederick recalls the villainy of Claudius, in addition to that of Iago and Cassius; and they seem to share with these tragic villains the same degree of intensity in responding to this emotion. However, both villains in As You Like It undergo conversion experiences, and Oliver's is so complete as to make him even capable of love. By the time of Shakespeare's middle period, villainy in the comedies begins to assume a more sinister shape. The themes of repentance and forgiveness, moreover, are treated with greater seriousness as characters struggle to work out their moral flaws while in the process of overcoming obstacles to their worldly happiness. Thus, As You Like It stands as the last of the joyous comedies.

Following Twelfth Night and Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare wrote Measure for Measure (1604). This play has been designated as one of Shakespeare's "problem
plays," a term first used by F.S. Boas and later by other critics. A problem play is one that contains ethical difficulties. All's Well That Ends Well (1602-3) also belongs to this group, its very title suggesting the non-Aristotelian idea that the end justifies the means. In Measure for Measure, Shakespeare uses for his villain a man that does not at first know himself. But then, neither does his heroine whose forthcoming marriage at the end of the play seems far away from her intentions of entering a cloistered religious order and from her complaint that the rules of the order are not strict enough. Both Angelo and Isabella represent untried chastity, much as the proverbial medieval knight's, but Isabella refuses to yield to temptation whereas Angelo degenerates into a murderous reprobate and hypocrite. W.W. Lawrence has pointed to Shakespeare's use of material from folk legends in having the Duke of Vienna mingle unrecognized among his people. Acting the part of a slightly imperfect God-figure, the duke understands that Angelo's virtue is of an unknown quantity:

2Good discussions of All's Well That Ends Well and Measure for Measure are to be found in E.M.W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's Problem Plays (London: University of Toronto Press, 1950); and W.W. Lawrence, Shakespeare's Problem Comedies (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931).
Lord Angelo is precise,
Stands at a guard with envy, scarce confesses
That his blood flows or that his appetite
Is more to bread than stone. Hence shall we see,
If power change purpose, what our seemers be.
(I.iii.50-4)

Actually, the duke had his doubts when Angelo backed out of his pre-contract with Mariana when her dowry with her brother was lost at sea. That alone, however, has not been sufficient to convince the duke of Angelo's worthlessness, for there may have been some question of the lady's honor. By becoming Mariana's confessor during the period of his disguise, the duke learns that Angelo's insinuations at the time had indeed been false, although Angelo had perhaps rationalized himself into thinking them true.

The following comic exchange between Lucio and a gentleman prepares the audience for what it is soon to learn about Angelo's virtuous austerity:

Lucio. Thou concludest like the sanctimonious pirate that went to sea with the Ten Commandments, but scraped one out of the table.
2. Gent. 'Thou shalt not steal?'
Lucio. Aye, that he razed. (I.ii.7-11)

One of the first things that Angelo does when he assumes office is, predictably, to launch an all-out attack upon the local bawds. But his municipal clean-up program claims a serious victim; and that is Claudio, brother of Isabella, who has got his intended wife with child. As he awaits execution, Claudio explains the extenuating circumstances of his relationship with Juliet:
Upon a true contract
I got possession of Julietta's bed.
You know the lady. She is fast my wife,
Save that we do the denunciation lack
Of outward order. This we came not to,
Only for propagation of a dower
Remaining in the coffer of her friends,
From whom we thought it meet to hide our love
Till time had made them for us. But it chances
The stealth of our most mutual entertainment
With character too gross is writ on Juliet.
(I.ii.149-59)

Although a great deal has been said about the marriage contracts in *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare himself does not take any great pains to quibble, except perhaps in allowing Claudio's to be clandestine while Angelo's is not. Isabella takes an absolutist moral position that is as disappointing and yet as necessary as Hal's rejection of Falstaff; but she does not wrong her brother:

Better it were a brother died at once
Than that a sister, by redeeming him,
Should die forever. (II.iv.105-8)

Isabella does, however, wrong Mariana. Like *The Merchant of Venice*, the play explores the themes of justice and mercy; and though Isabella admits that her brother's sentence is just, yet she would have Mariana perform essentially the same act that Juliet has committed, but that she herself would never commit, in order to save her brother. Despite the narrowness of her vision, Shakespeare's heroine is nonetheless virtuous. The playwright's use of the duke in *Measure for Measure* probably
recalls the Greek legend about Zeus' disguising himself as a beggar to test the hospitable practices of his people. It is up to the duke to test his people also. Moreover, he takes upon himself the task of straightening out for the characters some aspect of their behavior as it relates to the theme of the play: "Like doth quit like, and measure still for measure." Thus, he declines to tell Isabella of her brother's safety so that he can test her sense of justice toward Mariana. Tyrone Guthrie, in his Preface to the Heritage edition of Shakespeare's comedies, has offered the following observation:

I have never seen one of these great Finales played with anything approaching adequate brilliance. The technical demands are too great. But I have seen blinding flashes. I recall particularly, in a production of Measure for Measure by Peter Brook, the impact of Isabella's forgiveness of Angelo. Nothing is said. The text gives no indication of the moment. The effect is made by a sudden pause after whirlwind speed, by a profound silence after tumult, by stillness after movement— in short, by technical means inaccessible to a Reader, but which are the very fabric of good Theatre.

By joining Mariana to plead for the life of the man she thinks executed her brother, Isabella shows that she has indeed passed the trial by fire.

Whereas most of Shakespeare's villains have little trouble in deciding upon a course of villainy, Angelo at

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least displays something of a conscience-struggle. Angelo has fooled even himself by his sanctimoniousness. When given absolute authority that makes him beholden to no one, all of Angelo's defenses come tumbling down and he gives free rein to his passions. Isabella hits the right psychological key, unfortunately, when she asks Angelo to search inside himself to see if he can discover any fault like her brother's. The scene ends with a soliloquy (II.iii.162-187) that clearly describes the conflict within Angelo. "Oh, let her brother live," he says at one point; but more important are the last lines of his speech: "Ever till now/When men were fond, I smiled, and wondered how." Like Shylock, Angelo presents a curious mixture of emotionalism and rationalism. Now, when Angelo exclaims, "Ha! Fie, these filthy vices!" he plays the hypocrite and not simply the self-righteous prude. At this point, too, his struggle within himself ceases. He becomes the true villain by confronting Isabella with an imperative--She must submit to Angelo, or Claudio will die.

In keeping with the comic spirit, Shakespeare has taken the edge off our worries by having the disguised duke visit the prison. Since Measure for Measure does give us an essentially comic world, in which everything works out for the best, we cannot gaze too closely at its ethics, and wonder about dukes who disguise themselves as
friars and hear confessions. Actually, the only serious dilemma seems to be Isabella's; but that is really more of a problem to moderns than it was to either Shakespeare or Isabella. After getting the wronged Mariana to substitute for Isabella by means of a "bed-trick," the duke hies to the prison to await Angelo's rescinding of the order to execute Claudio. Instead, Angelo confirms the previous sentence and asks that the head of Claudio be sent to him. The untimely death of another prisoner enables the duke to fulfill the order issued by his proxy. Meanwhile, he is gaining a very good understanding of Angelo's character. Compromising a woman's virtue is bad enough, but going ahead with the execution of her brother out-evils evil, even if both plans do miscarry. To soften somewhat the audience's hatred of Angelo and prepare them for the mercy he finally receives, the playwright shows his villain's inner conflicts once again:

He should have lived,
Save that his riotous youth, with dangerous sense,
Might in the times to come have ta'en revenge
By so receiving a dishonored life
With ransom of such shame. Would yet he had lived!
Alack, when once our grace we have forgot,
Nothing goes right. We would, and we would not.
(IV.iv.31-37)

Claudio's reconciliation to death as well as his desire to receive pardon from his sister gives plausibility to Angelo's argument and suggests that Angelo's evil, though back, is not so black as it first appears. Despite the
duke's giving Angelo a number of chances to confess his crimes, Angelo remains the liar until Lucio pulls off the friar's hood, thereby revealing Duke Vincentio. At this point Angelo confesses:

O my dread lord,
I should be guiltier than my guiltiness
To think I can be undiscernible
When I perceive your Grace, like power divine,
Hath looked upon my passes. Then, good Prince,
No longer sessions hold upon my shame,
But let my trial be mine own confession.
Immediate sentence then, and sequent death,
Is all the grace I beg. (V.i.371-9)

To someone of Angelo's pride, the shame of discovery is as a death. And although Angelo emerges from the situation much better than he deserves, Shakespeare gives enough instances of his villain's inner struggles to justify perhaps the words of Mariana:

They say best men are molded out of faults,
And, for the most, become much more the better
For being a little bad. So may my husband.
(V.i.444-6)

In the comic world of moral relativity, Shakespeare sometimes allows certain characters of high authority to assume all responsibilities, as it were, for the irregular ethical behavior of good individuals. The Duke of Vienna in Measure for Measure functions in this manner. The King of France in All's Well That Ends Well likewise suggests such a figure, while one might perhaps be led to believe that if Portia should fail to stop Shylock's plan then the Duke of Venice will probably step in at the last minute and do so himself. Don Pedro in Much Ado
About Nothing, however, manipulates events wisely at first but later succumbs to appearances and misjudges Hero along with the others. Oberon and Prospero likewise preside over events that occur although Oberon is in fact an immortal whereas Prospero is not. What the playwright seems to be suggesting is that certain persons such as the Duke of Vienna are to be accepted as possessing a sort of moral infallibility, possibly by virtue of their divine rights of rulership, while others such as Don Pedro are not to be viewed in this manner. Clearly, the plays do not provide any sort of blanket testimony to the idea that a person may do what he will so long as his motives are good. The laws are to be obeyed; but when innocents and sometimes even the guilty fall victims to the law, then those in authority must weigh all considerations and try to arrive at the most merciful verdict possible. This is easier to do in the comedies, of course, because serious catastrophe is averted. Isabella herself argues that intentions and thoughts are not the same as the acts themselves, although we do find this theory countered in Pericles. Despite its folk-tale aura, Measure for Measure strikes a stronger chord of realism than is to be found in Pericles, and so the ending to the latter play becomes an almost typical fairytale assurance that the good lived happily ever after while the wicked met disaster. Still, Shakespeare's comic villains seldom receive worse than they deserve, and they usually receive
better. The comedies, in fact, exhibit a great deal of humaneness in point of view. Some of the villains meet with justice but most find forgiveness and mercy. Although the villains of Pericles are punished for evil intentions that failed to take the lives of Pericles and his family, a murder has in fact taken place. Therefore, Dionyza must die and with her Cleon who, though unwilling to join her in villainy, became an accomplice through the knowledge of his wife's wrongdoing and refusal to act upon it.

Pericles is not included in the first folio, possibly because of its composite authorship. The writer of the first two acts is unknown while material in the last three acts is recognizably Shakespeare's. The main villain in the first part of the play is Antiochus, who tries to have Pericles killed for being able to solve the riddle of the king's incestuous relationship with his daughter. Later on in the play we learn that the king and his daughter have been killed by a bolt of lightning sent by the gods. So much for Antiochus. Bearing all of the characteristics of the envious rationalist, Dionyza orders Leonine to murder Marina, the daughter of Pericles, because Marina excels her own

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4 Tracing the images of growth and vegetation in Pericles, James O. Wood argues that the continuity of imagery suggests Shakespeare's having written the entire play during his early years as playwright and having revised the last three acts during his maturity. "The Running Image in Pericles," Shakespeare Studies, 5(1970), 240-52.
daughter in beauty and accomplishments. Since Pericles once saved their city from famine, Dionyza and Cleon the governor of Tarsus gladly agree to care for Marina as though she were their own, until such time as father and daughter can be reunited. Dionyza's disposition changes, however, as the seeds of envy and hatred begin to well up within her breast. As she instructs Leonine to murder Marina, the wife of Cleon uses language that reveals an emotionlessness similar to that which we earlier find in Lady Macbeth:

Let not conscience,
Which is but cold, inflaming love i' thy bosom,
Inflame too nicely, nor let pity, which
Even women have cast off, melt thee, but be
A soldier to thy purpose. (IV.i.4-8)

Dionyza likewise plays the role of hypocrite, pretending to love Marina and Pericles with "more than foreign heart." Leonine's attempt to murder Marina is interrupted by pirates who carry her off to sea. Like her mother and father, Marina must endure the sorrows of separation from her family as well as hazardous experiences that test both her virtue and her love for her missing father. Dionyza rewards Leonine's complicity in her scheme by poisoning him, an act of Machiavellian rationalism; and when Cleon censures his wife for what she has done, Dionyza accuses him of turning a "child again." His subsequent passivity in the face of injustice confirms, moreover, his wife's words: "But yet I know you'll do as I advise." Though Dionyza's part is
relatively small, Shakespeare makes the most of her rationalism. In the following passage the playwright presents with utmost economy of language his villainess' methods, her motives, her rationalizations, and her sophistry in seeking to justify her actions to Cleon:

Be it so, then.
Yet none does know but you, how she came dead,
Nor none can know, Leonine being gone.
She did distain my child, and stood between
Her and her fortunes. None would look on her,
But cast their gazes on Marina's face.
Whilst ours was blurted at, and held a malkin,
Not worth the time of day. It pierced me thorough;
And though you call my course unnatural,
You not your child well loving, yet I find
It greets me as an enterprise of kindness
Performed to your sole daughter. (IV.iii.28-39)

After years of hardship and suffering, Pericles and his family are finally reunited. At the end of the play Shakespeare pays tribute to Gower, one of the sources for Pericles, by having the medieval Latin poet speak the conclusion to the story: When the people learn of the actions of Cleon and his wife toward the man who saved their city, they burn the palace with the members of Cleon's family inside.

Neither Cymbeline nor The Tempest can be termed "doctrinal," yet the Christian themes of forgiveness and mercy are implicit in both plays. Interestingly, Antonio (The Tempest) does not expressly repent for his sins in the way that Iachimo and Angelo do. Shakespeare focuses instead upon Prospero, the hero of The Tempest and the poet's idealized conception of virtue. Prospero
goes beyond the step of causing those in his power to do good. He relinquishes such power altogether, again placing his faith in the free use of human will. Moreover, he can forgive his brothers without insisting upon any ritualistic confessions of guilt and sorrow. Alonso is already penitent, but the same is not necessarily true of Sebastian and Antonio when Prospero pardons them outright and promises to "tell no tales." While Dionyza is the most rationalistic of the villains discussed thus far in connection with the comedies, it is not her rationalism which makes her more liable to punishment; it is the unregenerative spirit of her will. Iachimo, for instance, likewise displays more evidence of the rationalist in his character than that found in others of Shakespeare's comic villains. But he does not commit murder, as Dionyza does; moreover, he confesses his crime and repents, which Dionyza never does. Iachimo's villainy like Don John's and Iago's transfers a certain measure of responsibility to those who succumb to it; and while the lower reason cannot deal easily with this type of villainy, yet Shakespeare shows instances in which it is met and conquered--by the Friar in Much Ado About Nothing and by Imogen in Cymbeline. Both Imogen and Friar Francis display an ability to read the evidence before them and to reason from it correctly in determining the innocence of the one being slandered.
Cymbeline actually contains two rational villains, but one of them belongs more to the world of Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty than to the world of real men. I refer, of course, to Cymbeline's Queen, a wicked-stepmother archetype, who attempts to disclaim her role as such:

No, be assured you shall not find me, Daughter, After the slander of most stepmothers, Evil-eyed unto you. (I.i.69-71)

The Queen has managed to fool King Cymbeline, but neither Imogen nor Dr. Cornelius has any illusions about her evil intentions. She has caused Cymbeline to banish Posthumus because his marriage to Imogen has upset the Queen's plan for Imogen to marry Cloten, the Queen's brutish son by a former husband. One of the lords in the play exclaims fittingly of Cloten: "That such a crafty devil as is his mother/Should yield the world this ass!" Despite Posthumus' deplorable behavior in trying to get Pisanio to murder Imogen when he thinks her unfaithful, there is never any doubt that Imogen has acted wisely in choosing a husband for herself. Cloten is unregenerative, largely because of the way in which Shakespeare portrays his brutality and lack of awareness. Despite the confession of her crimes the Queen is likewise an unregenerate, repenting "The evils she hatched were not effected, so/Despairing died."

The conversation that opens Cymbeline presents a rapid exposition of what has already taken place at the castle, and it lays the groundwork for what is yet to
come. The cave of Belarius provides a pastoral setting, in which the brothers of Imogen develop a strong bond of affection for a hapless youth (their sister disguised as a page). Belief that the page has died occasions a scene of mourning and the beautiful lyric "Fear no more the heat o' the sun." The third significant setting in the play is the Italian setting of Posthumus' banishment. Whenever Shakespeare transports us to Italy, however, we are suddenly confronted by the sort of realistic world that produces men such as Iachimo, the villain of the play. Posthumus' smug assurance of his wife's chastity arouses the egotism of Iachimo and prompts him to wager that he can seduce Imogen. Iachimo's interference in the domestic life of others, his hypocrisy, use of trickery to gain evidence that will support his lies, and his egotism are all reminiscent of Iago. So, too, is Iachimo's lewdness. Unlike Iago, the villain in Cymbeline succumbs to the pangs of tormented conscience and confesses his crime.

Iachimo's deceit identifies him with a role of appearances. Instead of making a forthright and open attempt to seduce Imogen, Iachimo stretches the terms of the wager by swearing falsely against Posthumus. Imogen responds to Iachimo's accusations with a mixture of doubt and belief. But when Iachimo urges her to seek revenge for Posthumus' infidelity by giving herself to
Iachimo, Imogen immediately penetrates the deception--
"If thou wert honorable/Thou wouldst have told this tale
for virtue, not/For such an end thou seek'st...." Undaunted,
Iachimo admits the falseness of the charges he made against
Posthumus; he says that he was only "trying" Imogen and
promises to report her faithfulness to Posthumus. This
time, Imogen is deceived; she welcomes Iachimo as a friend
of her husband's and offers to install his chest of
jewels in her bedroom for safe-keeping. Iachimo has
apparently realized all along that his talents lay more
in the direction of slander than seduction. Hiding in
the chest until late at night, when everyone in the
castle is asleep, Iachimo emerges from his place of
concealment long enough to study the decor of Imogen's
bedroom, steal a bracelet from her arm, and take careful
notice of the mole on her left breast. Iachimo's trick
of hiding in the trunk recalls similar though less
theatrical actions on the part of the medieval Vice.
While it is the villainous logicians and sophists who
seem most representative of rationalism, those who resort
to the use of devices such as forged letters, stolen
handkerchiefs, etc., likewise exhibit rational qualities.
If anything, such devices tend to denote a degree of
foresight and planning on the part of the villain.

Although Posthumus almost deserves the treatment he
gets at the hands of Iachimo, Imogen does not deserve
the treatment she receives from either Iachimo or her husband. Obviously, Iachimo enjoys playing psychological games with his victims. Posthumus realizes that the description of Imogen's bedchamber could have been reported by hearsay, but he concedes the wager and hands over the diamond ring as soon as Iachimo produces the bracelet. But Iachimo refuses to allow Posthumus to concede at this point, and he even offers arguments as to why Posthumus should not suspect his wife upon evidence so slight as a bracelet. Actually, Iachimo wishes to humiliate Posthumus completely, in the same way that Iago sets about to degrade Othello, and to revel in his stolen victory. He achieves this end by referring as lasciviously as possible to the mole on Imogen's breast. Completely broken, Posthumus leaves the interview in haste and in his disillusionment begins to doubt the honesty of even his own mother. Posthumus has proved no match for the Italian sophisticate Iachimo. Unwilling to let matters lie until such time as he can confront his wife, Posthumus writes to Pisanio ordering him to kill Imogen. Fortunately, Pisanio only pretends to follow instructions.

If one considers the complexity of the various actions taking place in Cymbeline, he can hardly view the last scene as anything but a stroke of theatrical genius. Shakespeare prepares the audience for Iachimo's
willing confession by skillfully incorporating a scene in which Posthumus disguised as a poor soldier of the British army, disarms Iachimo, a member of the Roman army, and then leaves without killing him. Iachimo then begins to wonder if all of Britain's common louts can thus equal and surpass Rome's knights; but more importantly, the incident causes him to look inward:

The heaviness and guilt within my bosom
Takes off my manhood. I have belied a lady,
The Princess of this country, and the air on 't
Revengingly enfeebles me. (V.i.1-4)

Posthumus' exercise of restraint echoes his earlier show of generosity in not killing Cloten when the latter engaged him in a sword fight. Posthumus has been having second thoughts of his own, meanwhile, and he bitterly regrets the order he gave Pisanio. Born after his mother's death, Posthumus was given his name by King Cymbeline. In context of the play, however, his name suggests much more. When Iachimo kneels before Posthumus, confesses his crime, and offers his life in atonement, Posthumus replies:

Kneel not to me,
The power that I have on you is to spare you,
The malice towards you to forgive you. Live,
And deal with others better. (V.v.417-20)

The King's reaction to this scene--"We'll learn our freeness of a son-in-law"--suggests that society itself has been redeemed through the more merciful inclinations of the younger generation.
In *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Tempest*, the playwright utilizes certain characters to suggest the attainability of right reason. Unlike the representatives of rational order in the tragedies, these individuals seem decidedly neo-Platonic, for each has achieved a level of knowledge that not only suggests otherworldliness but which is also complemented by virtue. The first of these is Cerimon, the doctor who restores the life of Thaisa, Pericles' wife. In speaking of his art (III.ii. 26-42), Cerimon mentions virtue and skill as being greater than nobleness and riches:

> Careless heirs  
> May the two latter darken and expend,  
> But immortality attends the former,  
> Making a man a god. (III.ii.28-31)

In *Cymbeline* it is Doctor Cornelius who possesses arcane knowledge. When the Queen asks him for poisons to experiment with on lower creatures, such as cats and mice, the doctor exercises wisdom by giving her potions that simulate death but cause the users to feel refreshed and revitalized after they awaken. Dr. Cornelius explains to the Queen that his "conscience" bids him ask her purpose in requesting the poisons; fortunately, he knows enough about her nature to withhold such drugs from her possession. It is Dr. Cornelius, too, who reports the unregenerate condition of the Queen's soul at the time of her death. The third figure to which I refer is of course Prospero. Harry Berger, Jr. has given a very interesting
reading of The Tempest, although the critic apparently does not think very highly of Prospero's Platonic tendencies:

For Prospero's secret study pretty clearly springs from and to a particular view of man. The curriculum consists of two courses, magic and liberal arts, a combination familiar to anyone acquainted with the optimism or meliorism of the Florentine Neoplatonists.5

Some criticism of this aspect of Prospero's personality is indeed implicit in Shakespeare's play, but not quite to the extent, I believe, that Professor Berger says. What Shakespeare does do, however, is to acknowledge the age-old dilemma of the Platonists—one that Melville certainly recognizes when in Moby-Dick he wonders how many have sweetly perished in Plato's honey-head. Prospero fully realizes that he is relinquishing one set of appearances only to embrace another of quite a different sort. But he must think of Miranda who, if we may judge by the optimism of her exclamations, will likely tread the same philosophical path as her father.

In Cerimon, Dr. Cornelius, and Prospero, the poet gives us portraits of virtuous men who have more in common with each other than with, say, Kent in King Lear or Lucius in Titus Andronicus. Though the plays, taken

as a whole, exhibit a variety of humanistic strains in portraying rational villainy against a background of right reason, the dramatic romances show a decided tendency toward neo-Platonism. However, Shakespeare's Platonists are men who have come to terms with the world. The themes of forgiveness and mercy as these apply to villains and protagonists alike may also suggest the possibility of Shakespeare's coming to recognize evil as a form of good in the making. From the early comedies through to the later dramatic romances, the tendency toward this view is present in Shakespeare. The Two Gentlemen of Verona and As You Like It are of course a different sort of comedy, and the villain is actually more at home in the later comedies, all of which have tragic overtones.

Shakespeare's comic villains are by and large rationalists. But the playwright does not place these figures against the type of rational background that one ordinarily finds in the histories and the tragedies. Moreover, the playwright has introduced a number of comic figures whose purpose is to parody and ridicule the principles of logic. The scurrilous Parolles, for instance, is a reasoner. At face value, the rational villains and comical logicians seem to indicate that Shakespeare distrusted the human reasoning faculty. Yet, nothing is actually farther from the truth. In
both the comedies and the tragedies, it is the perversion of reason that the dramatist lays open to criticism. Thus the "immutability" and "regeneration" themes of the comedies belong to a much broader background. In the comedies, Shakespeare has likewise tested Platonic theory against his own poetic imagination, arriving finally at the optimism which viewed the higher reason in terms of human attainability.
VII. CONCLUSION

The majority of Shakespeare's villains are rationalists in the sense that they exhibit the dominant characteristics of what we have differentiated as continental, or paradoxical, humanism—namely, materialism and self-interest. A corollary atheism, if not stated, is usually implied. Naturally, English humanists of the period regarded this type of thinking as irrational. To Shakespeare's audiences, skeptics such as Aaron and Iago represented the rebellious minority who had abandoned all moral principles in order to satisfy purely selfish ends. As empiricists, they are the skeletons in the Renaissance closet. Through the villains in the comedies, histories, and tragedies, the playwright has shown that reason without virtue can lead the mind of man no farther than the obvious limits of dead-end materialism. At the core of Renaissance humanism lies rational philosophy, and it leaves no room for rational villainy: To follow reason is to be virtuous, and to lack virtue is to be irrational. Thus by alienating himself from divine Logos, the villain separates himself from reason and all that is rational. Like Milton's Belial "clothed in reason's garb" he "makes the worse appear the better reason" and totally perverts right reason. In speaking of Shakespeare's great villains, Roger Burbridge aptly refers to the
"irrationality which is at once the lure and the mystery of evil."¹

One of the difficulties in assessing Shakespeare's attitude toward reason is that while the worldview of the plays demonstrates orthodox humanism, the playwright at the same time shows that he holds little affection for systems of logic. This attitude becomes particularly apparent in Shakespeare's merciless ridicule of reasoners who appear in the comedies, and it is also manifested in his portrayals of clerical villains. Shakespeare's contempt for enthusiastic logicians invites comparison with the opinion of Petrarch, who complained against "old dialectic cavilers." Both Petrarch and Shakespeare seem to be following their poetic instincts in questioning the ultimate usefulness of formal logic. While it is true that Plato utilizes the dialectic approach, his greatest moments are nonetheless recognized as being intuitive rather than logical. Moreover, the Greek philosopher readily abandons logic for myth whenever the occasion for it arises. The Rational worldview of Shakespeare's plays contains intermittent strains of Platonism, and these are more in evidence toward the end of the playwright's career. In discussing Shakespeare's familiarity with theological and philosophical theories of the soul, Rolf Soellner has pointed to the rather

¹Burbridge, p.4
strong influences of both Aristotle and Plato. But Professor Soellner has shown that the dramatist, by aligning the mind with the soul instead of with the body, tends to give emphasis to the Platonic concept; moreover, the playwright follows the Orphic tradition by using soul imagery to express some of his ideas, notably in *The Merchant of Venice.*

Shakespeare chose to place his rational villains against a background of reason, but there are additional ways of expressing the ethical attitude. Some writers such as Dostoevsky prefer to stress the complex psychology by which the human conscience finally asserts itself. Others may deliberately omit the ethical attitude altogether. Take, for instance, the villain-narrators of Blake's "A Poison Tree" and Poe's "Cask of Amontillado." Both are rationalists who escape poetic justice in this life while the works in which they appear give no indication of future retribution. Although one might perhaps argue that a compulsion to confess provides indirect criticism of these narrators, it could just as easily be asserted that their revelations of crime stem from feelings of self-satisfaction. In fact, rational villainy

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is so closely linked to the ego that it clearly denotes a form of human pride in which self-love replaces love for God and one's fellow man. In Shakespearean drama the deliberateness of the villain's evil is delineated by his rationalism which, in turn, represents the willful perversion of man's godlike part.

The implications of man's middle position on the chain of being are explored in Hamlet as the hero struggles to reconcile the theory of man's angelic nature with the realities of his uncle's and his mother's actions. Like most of his contemporaries Hamlet regards man as a being composed of body and soul, a creature whose passions link him with the beasts and whose reason links him with God. Hamlet's thoughts are presented in a manner of clearcut simplicity. Because of Gertrude's hasty marriage following the death of his father, Hamlet identifies his mother with bestiality and passion—"A beast that wants discourse of reason/Would have mourned longer" (I.ii.150-1). To Hamlet the union of his mother and Claudius is a situation in which "reason panders will," and the shock of his mother's easy sensuality is a shock to Hamlet's whole theory of man. Thus in Hamlet's eyes her marriage is an affront to her own divinity. Since Hamlet's views are entirely orthodox, it cannot be argued that he expects too much. Still, Hamlet is an immature individual who is unable to witness discrep-
ancies in theory and practice without allowing himself to fall apart as a result. The hero's attitude toward Horatio provides an interesting contrast:

Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee. (Ill.ii.76-9)

Thus Hamlet identifies Horatio with reason and his mother with passion. Throughout his disillusionment, Hamlet remains committed to the idea of man's divinity and to the belief that it is man's reason which separates him from the brutes. But Hamlet is likewise an empiricist or he would never have allowed his ideals to be broken upon the rack of reality. The hero's complex metaphysical explorations are obviously drawn with a certain amount of sympathy. Clyde Williams has noted, for instance, that Shakespeare consistently disapproves of excessive drinking and that Hamlet serves as a means through which the playwright expresses this view.³ Though Hamlet's remarks on the subject are aimed at Claudius, the hero's censure of drinking has general application while his complaint that overindulgence breaks down the "pales and forts of reason" seems entirely characteristic of his way of thinking. If

Hamlet is Shakespeare's most skeptical play, then it must also be a work that finally argues for rather than against reason. Hamlet's lament over man's failure to fulfill the expectations of his divinity may or may not be Shakespeare's, but it is never denied that the key to such hopes rests somewhere in the reason.

The views expressed in Hamlet suggest a valid way of approaching the subject of Shakespeare's attitude toward reason; but it is of course one thing to oppose man's reason with his animal instincts and quite another to set humanity itself against man's reasoning. In Hamlet reason offers an alternative to passion, but the playwright's treatment of this faculty does not in and of itself provide a perspective for viewing rational villainy. For this purpose a theory of right reason is almost essential. Though definitions of right reason differed from one humanist to another, the remaining constants were always reason and virtue. The plays of Shakespeare reflect these varying humanistic attitudes toward rational order, but the playwright seems to be moving from a rather generalized acceptance of right reason to a more particularized preference for Platonic thinking on the subject. The plays are never without a humanistic worldview, but the emphasis shifts from external to internal order as one moves from the histories and early comedies through to the tragedies,
late comedies, and dramatic romances.

In the histories the representatives of rational order are individuals whose motives spring from a desire to insure the welfare of the state. However, only a few of Shakespeare's historical personages, such as Duke Humphrey, Henry Tudor, and Henry V, actually serve this function. The rational worldview of the histories tends to lie, rather, in the continuity of the plays. The chief symbol for rational order is the king, even though he may be inept, and a well-functioning state. Rational villains in the histories are agents of disorder. The power-plays of Richard III, Cardinal Beaufort, and Cardinal Wolsey, exhibit the rationalist's desires for personal aggrandizement and the moral irrationality which inevitably results from activated self-interest.

The rational background of the tragedies tends to be Aristotelian-Senecan, representing an ethical view as opposed to the religious view of Christian Providence which pervades the histories. Following classical and renaissance traditions of civic idealism, Shakespeare's tragedies express their author's realization that man must live in the world. Interestingly, the playwright applies this facet of humanism in a highly specific way by arguing the necessity for worldly wisdom. Brutus, for instance, possesses intelligence and virtue but lacks practical understanding. Menenius and Kent have
already learned that man must live in the here and now, but Prospero must discover it for himself. Worldly wisdom usually helps, though not always, to safeguard its owner from the dangers of deception and fraud. The rational villain makes it his business to observe the men around him whereas the tragic hero often shows deficiency in some vital area of human understanding. The villains of the tragedies cause a great deal of political damage, as they do in the histories; but it is the enormity of the personal injuries they inflict upon others which gives power to the villainy of Iago and Edmund. By characterizing these villains as continentalists, Shakespeare treats reason in a particular sense just as he has done in *Hamlet*. When used to promote self-interest, reason becomes a diabolical instrument rather than an emblem of the divinity in man. To proceed from the tragedies to the comedies is to move from Aristotelian ethics toward neo-Platonic Christianity and from external rational order to intuitive rational order. The comedies likewise betoken a changing attitude toward villainy. Although even in comedy the audience can derive satisfaction from seeing evil punished, Shakespeare declines this gambit in favor of forgiveness and mercy. In the comedies, villainy shows a gradual working out of Platonist theories evolved not overnight
but over a period of time as the poet sought to reconcile his belief in the divinity of man with the existence of evil in the world.


VITA

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