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The Villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays

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Toward a definition of the dramatic villain

Macmillan English Dictionary defines the villain as the main bad character in a story, play, film or some one who behaves in an immoral way or some thing that is responsible for a bad situation. Originally, the term that comes from an Anglo-French root referred to someone whose actions are seen as unchivalrous and vicious. Currently, it is used as a term of abuse and indicates unacceptable social, moral or legal conduct. For this paper, a villain is defined as a mean-spirited, unprincipled, hateful, Machiavellian and evil character who commits ruthless atrocities and/or violates the social and moral fabric and ideals of their time.

Literary historians identify six types of villains in the history of English drama: Revengeful, Seneca, Machiavellian, Malcontent, Tool and Elizabethan. For the purpose of this paper two types of villains will be discussed; namely the evil, and the Machiavellian. By identifying these types, literary historians helped characterize the classic villain's traits and set the basis for their dramatic stereotypes. The villain's characteristics, moments of extreme villainy and evilness will also be explored in the plays with villainous characters.

Shakespeare wrote during the Renaissance which is a time of great change. His concept of evil and villainy, the issues of his time that concerned the audiences and the difference between his characters and the characters he inherited from the previous European dramatic tradition such as the vice in morality plays, and the Machiavellian villain can be understood through the plays he wrote. In general, the drama of this period reflected the

change in thought especially the question of man's place in the universe.

The Renaissance humanistic view saw mankind as part of nature and must seek for his place in the universe as opposed to the medieval view that mankind held a superior position in the universe subject to a divine order of the cosmos. Shakespeare uses his villains to explore what mankind can know about evil through their acts and thoughts. Along with these changes in man's position in the universe, the concept of evil has also changed throughout history. The first notion of evil as represented by the devil appeared in the sixth century B.C. in Persia. In the 15th century, ghosts and witches were thought to have signed a contract with the devil. Parts of this belief continued into the 17th century. (Wernick 119-120). During the Renaissance, the perception of witches, ghosts and the devil was changing.

Categories of evil before and during the Renaissance

Four basic categories of evil are depicted through villains on the Renaissance stage. One category is evil as another-worldly force resulting from the super human power of ghosts, demons or witches as is the case in *Macbeth*¹. For this paper, evil as witchcraft is not a central concern. A second category of evil, however, is of vital importance. It involves evil portrayed as emerging from within the individual, (Smith 15). For example, in *Macbeth*, villainous action is prompted by the witches, but originates in the ambition of Macbeth and his wife. Richard III is motivated by the desire for power. Iago may have been originally tempted to villainy by being passed over for promotion, but the immorality of his actions as the play progresses shows that the origin of his evil lies within his own ambitious nature in a monarchical society. The evil of such villains emanates from the social environment in which they

dwell. The psychological state they reflect characterize the impending psychological and political turmoil inherent in the Renaissance era.

Again, the third category then overlaps to some degree with the second one. Villains function to reveal the collective psyche of the age. Shakespeare's plays answer questions about the Renaissance monarchical order which conflicts with Machiavellian philosophy. In large parts, the villains pose the questions. Shakespeare's villains bring out some of the most important questions Renaissance England grappled with. They question the status quo and offer different views of the world. John Gardner argues:

'Shakespeare talks about the things he talks about because they were the most important questions in Elizabethan England. He names them and he offers you possibilities of a future sometimes in a tragic way.' (Allan Chavkin 138).

Shakespeare is not simply representing evil for the sake of evil, he is telling us how we should behave, or not behave, he adds.

A final category of evil portrays revenge as the motivation for villainous actions. It should be noted that evil emerging from the individual, evil as a result of the social environment and evil as an enactment of revenge are often intertwined. They work in harmony with one another. In accordance with the Elizabethan socio-political norms, dramatic characters that conform are considered "good" while those who do not conform, namely the villains are evil. Villains articulate the voice of social non-conformity.

The Renaissance and the new dramatic space of the villain

Jonathan Dollimore observes that "the real watershed between medieval and modern England was the period 1580-1620." (Quoted in Dollimore 273). That was the transition period in which Shakespeare wrote his plays. His four great tragedies *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *King Lear*, break away from the medieval stock characters of the morality plays and miracle plays where the lines between heaven and hell are clear-cut rather than the Renaissance view where the battle between good and evil in man's heart takes paramount attention. Evil, within this new world view, does not take the form of the devil or vice of the morality plays, it becomes a force within the human soul itself. The transitional position of Shakespeare's work is underlined by the fact that:

'his plays are both allegorical and realistic at once; his characters both recognizable men and at the same time devils, demigods and forces in nature.' (Quoted in Harbage 83).

Using medieval dramatic traditions and incorporating with them the emerging Renaissance view of evil and good, Shakespeare created a new dramatic space for the battle between good and evil for man's soul. He uses the tradition of the allegorical vice in creating his evil villains; namely Iago in *Othello* and Edmund in *King Lear* while humanizing them at the same time. He includes more human qualities to the Machiavellian villain that was already staged in the late 16th century through his portrayal of *Macbeth*. In fact, Shakespeare's villain represents a progression toward realism without deserting the established tradition of morality plays and miracle plays.

In fact, Shakespeare, in his attempt not to break entirely away from the vice tradition, maintained many traits from the allegorical vice such as the soliloquy which is a method to inform the audience of the villain's unchivalrous intent. In drawing Macbeth in *Macbeth* and Claudius in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare pushed the boundaries of the villainous character further beyond the lines of cosmic destiny of an evil character. He offers the character the opportunity to make a choice between evil and good, thereby making them appear responsible for their actions by showing that they have momentarily silenced their human conscience.

The evil villain

Othello in fact has an allegorical framework. Othello represents Everyman, Desdemona represents good and Iago represents the vice. However, the strict allegorical form does not fit. Moving beyond the morality plays, Shakespeare forces Othello to look for his attackers, not in the form of a metaphysical power because '*evil is somehow woven with good into man himself.*' (Harbage 83). Yet, Iago appears the character most strongly aligned with the vice figure in Shakespeare's major tragedies. He never accepts responsibility for his actions or acknowledges a conscience. In his final appearance in the play, he places all the blame on surrounding characters: Bianca, Emilia and Othello himself. He defies Othello saying: '*Demand me nothing. What you know, you know. From*

this time forth, I never will speak a word' (5.2.311-12).

Iago lacks any sense of responsibility for what he has done. He even prides in the proportion of his evil by assuring Othello who has wounded him "*I bleed, sir, but not killed.*" (5.2.297). Iago, like the allegorical figure of vice, provokes no sympathy in the audience. He tries even to align the audience with his evil scheme through soliloquies. In an attempt to hide their evil from other characters, villains share it with the audience. (Heilman 35). Iago, like the vice, uses soliloquy in the first act to define

The villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays_____

his intention and to prepare us for the villainous actions he will inflict on other characters. By using soliloquy, Shakespeare gives the villain power through knowledge and uses the audience as witnesses of the villain's crimes. Iago uses the first act to tell us that he will undo the Moore:

I hate the Moore;

And it is thought abroad that twixt my sheets

He's done my office. I know not if it be true;

But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,

Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;

The better shall my purpose work on him. (1.3.387-92).

Like the motiveless evil of the vice, we know that Iago's evil is unmotivated. His accusations against Othello that he passed over him for the lieutenancy which was given instead to Cassio, is not supported by any other character. Besides, his suspicion of Cuckoldry in this soliloquy is baseless and has no proof. His expression of hatred to the Moore is falsely justified by such accusations. (Heilman 25-30). He even discloses to the audience his intentions to use his appearance of goodness to deceive the "free and open nature" of Othello. Besides, he expresses his intention to turn the virtuous Desdemona into a pitch by encouraging Cassio to speak with Desdemona to make her defense of him look bad in Iago's eyes. As with the vice, Iago's only motive is destruction. He uses soliloquy to inform the audience of his intentions to destroy them all:

*And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moore.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all (2.2.352-356).*

Symbolizing vice, Iago wants to destroy Everyman. He also establishes himself as an antithesis to the socially acceptable characters. Evil characters' actions are also plot drivers. In the first act, Iago summons Brabantio to take action against Othello:

*Arise, Arise!
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you
Arise, I say! (1.1.91-94).*

The accusation of evil against Othello will drive the play's plot. Throughout the play, Shakespeare continues to use soliloquies and insides to let us know of Iago's intentions and prepare for the unfolding of the plot. Carol Neely argues that Shakespeare strays from the strict vice figure with the character of Iago as his management of the action depends on coincidence and timing. He does not drive the plot of the play but merely takes advantage of situations as they arise. (Neely 70). For instance, Desdemona's accidental loss of her handkerchief is used against her. Though Iago was plotting to steal the handkerchief, he makes the best use of the accident when Othello unconsciously drops it. On picking it up, Emilia says

The villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays_____

'my wayward husband hath a hundred times wooed me to steal it'(3.3.308-309). In fact, Iago makes the best of external factors such as timing and coincidence and the carelessness of other characters to serve his purpose and make his plot advance. Without Iago's interference, the loss of the handkerchief would have been meaningless. By using actions evolving from the play, Shakespeare gives Iago's evil a more realistic element.

Calderwood agrees with Neely that Shakespeare moves away from the strict allegorical vice. Iago is neither an entire allegorical figure nor is a fully human being either. As he is two incomplete identities, he is a theatrical misfit. (Calderwood 198-199). As a transitional play, *Othello's* Iago stretches beyond the allegorical figure of vice in a number of ways: first Iago, unlike the vice, is not entirely free from human passion. He shows passionate emotions. Furthermore, he professes a dark side of passion when he reveals his jealousy through his intentions toward Desdemona in his soliloquy:

/

That Cassio loves her; I do well believe it;

That she loves him, it is apt and of great credit.

[-----]

Now I do love her too;

Not out of absolute lust; Though peradventure

I stand accountant for as great a sin,

But partly led to diet my revenge,

For that I do suspect the lustful Moore.

Hath leap'd unto my seat;(2.1.276-77, 281-286).

His desire for Desdemona is based on suspicion that Othello has cuckolded him with his wife.

In creating his villains, one can say that Shakespeare's villains depict drama in flux. Iago remains the character most closely aligned with the allegorical vice because he displays no signs of redemptive human characteristics than other villains. With Macbeth, Shakespeare retains such dramatic features of the vice as the soliloquy, but endows him with good and evil human qualities and a conscience. Thus Shakespeare moves beyond the strictly allegorical conventions of cosmic evil of the morality plays, towards realistic drama of the struggle of good and evil within each human being reflecting the Renaissance change of consciousness.

Shakespeare's Machiavellian villains

In addition to the vice figure, Shakespeare inherited a second figure of evil from the drama that preceded him, namely the Machiavellian villain and which developed as a reaction to the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli that was known before Shakespeare and which was a character with no redeeming values. Being aware of the writings of Machiavelli, Shakespeare adopted his dramatic tradition to handle Elizabethan and Jacobean political issues in his political dramas. Some of the debates in England about Machiavelli associated him with Satan. At that time, the church's view claimed that the ends of political power were divine not human as Machiavelli puts it, (Raab 31). As there was no separation in 16th century England between religion and politics, the general reaction to Machiavelli aligned him with total evil and Satan. Raab asserts that the Machiavellian dramatic figure repeatedly appeared on the stage in different ways as he committed all types of crimes. However, a few main themes characterized his appearance. They were '*a love of complicated, underhand stratagem*' and '*atheism*' (Raab 57). But Reibling claims that by the beginning

The villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays

of the 17th century, the real Machiavelli with his principle that a prince must impose his will upon the world for the good of society was beginning to replace the Machiavel, (Reibling 274). The gradual recognition of Machiavelli's ideas in the political arena of the early 17th century in England allowed for a more rounded villain with human characteristics.

Generally speaking, Shakespeare's drama tended to depict worldly politics and human behavior as being shaped by the Machiavellian notion of virtu and internal conflict between good and evil rather than by the Aristotelian notions. The new view of evil was characterized by self-interest, pragmatism, interest in politics and war. Machiavelli's notion of political virtu is directly oppositional to Christian religious politics. Machiavelli's book *The Prince* shocked the 16th century audience who were accustomed to thinking of Christian and civic virtues. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli is drawing on the resources of humanism particularly its notion of imitation. The prince, due to Machiavelli, must appear to be good or virtuous in order to maintain power, so that he can use his oratory skill to imitate virtue. Imitation, no longer, involves correspondence to a moral standard or truth. It can be manipulated in the interest of power and political stability. In fact, his word "virtu" is pregnant with a variety of meaning, including character, virtue, valor, vigor, ability, courage and aggressiveness. Machiavelli strips virtue of its conventional associations with actions in accordance with correct principles, yet he does simply identify virtu with success. He breaks down the distinction between the talents appropriate to acquiring a state and those useful for preserving one. To Machiavelli heroic virtu is innovative while civic virtu is preservative. Whereas the former is that which through strength and valor builds a new order, the latter is that which through caution and prudence maintains and strengthens an existing order. Virtu is 'situational and cannot be codified into a method. The pursuit of what is good for the individual or the state may involve actions considered evil by traditional Christian standards, for example, deception

and murder. What is important is not that the ruler is actually virtuous but appears to be so. Machiavelli's views are not in consent with the religious beliefs of Shakespeare's time.²

Shakespeare locates villainy among those who exercise power or seek power. Machiavellian villains offer a stark contrast to Christian values and views of social morality, hierarchy and even kingship itself. Villains embody social ills and their criticism is often overt and blatant. They argue with conventional notions of hierarchy and in the cases of Richard III and Macbeth they pose questions about the very roots of the hierarchical system and kingship itself. In fact, Machiavelli influenced conceptions of the monarchy, he was '*an unmasker of the arcana of tyranny*' (Donaldson 18). Villains such as Iago, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and Richard III embody and enact Machiavellian philosophy. It may be of interest to note that dramatic villains' illustration of the tension inherent in the conventional hierarchy and monarchy prefigure an actual revolution against the monarchy which took place in the 1640s after Shakespeare's death.

In the hands of a villain, virtue begets evil. Shakespeare used all the Machiavellian characteristics of a villain to weave the complicated human villains of his four major tragedies whose heroes are involved in war and political dilemmas. For Machiavelli, religion was a factor in politics. He emphasized the here and now instead of postponing prizes for the after world. To him, life is best lived without religious consequences, and the end should justify the means. Richard III as the hero of *Richard III* is a Machiavellian villain. His actions propel the play's plot. Richard himself holds no moral values and is driven by his overwhelming desire to pursue his kingdom. Indeed he is "*subtle, false and treacherous*" (R 3 1.1.37). His personal characteristics are very much similar to traits of a

The villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays—————

Machiavellian villain. That is to say, he is an admirer of treachery, intelligent, remorseless, nonchalant in both torture and blood and a confider in the audience. No doubt, Richard embodies all these traits. In his discussion of plots made, Richard justifies his coming behavior in hopes of expelling the audience's sympathies:

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks [...]

Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature,

Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time [...]

Have no delight to pass away the time [...]

And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover [...]

I am determined to prove a villain

And hate the idle pleasures of theses days [...] (R3.1.1.15-31).

The action starts by Richard telling us that he is determined to become a king and proves himself a villain. He discloses to the audience that he has positioned both king Edmund and his brother Clarence against each other. He immediately shocks the audience by his attempt to woo Lady Anne to secure his rise to the throne by trying to seduce her on the street while men are carrying the body of her deceased father and husband whom Richard has killed so she might have "a far truer love" (R 3.1.2.218) He continues this depiction by trying to open her eyes to his good side:

If thy revengeful ear cannot forgive,

Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword

Which if though please to hide in this true breast,

And let the soul forth that adareth thee,

I lay it naked to the deadly stoke,

And humbly beg the death upon my knee. (1.2.199-204)

Throughout the play, Richard continues fooling the characters who pose a threat to his power. He manages through his deformation to evoke sympathy in the audience. By making Richard die on the stage, Shakespeare intends to deemphasize the other characters' deaths and increases sympathy for Richard's death. In comparison with his own evil conspirator Buckingham, Richard is entirely wicked and never questions his choices when faced with a moral decision. To Richard, the end justifies the means. In Act 4, scene 2 Buckingham's brief moments of reluctance makes Richard get rid of him. In fact, Shakespeare puts the audience in, though Buckingham is concerned with his own selfish welfare, Richard's villainy is more intensive. The ghostly appearance of Richard's murder victims in Act 5, Scene 3 allows the audience to sympathize for the broken –down Richard as he delivers his speech:

O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me! [...]

What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.

Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I. [...]

For any good / that I myself have done unto myself?

O no! Alas I rather hate myself

For hating deeds committed by myself.

I am a villain. [...]

I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;

And if I die, no soul shall pity me. (5.3.206-28) .

The villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays—————

In fact, Richard realizes his own afflictions. He realizes that his course of action has led him to this point and the audience find themselves pitying him. Love is needed by all creatures and no body wants to feel unloved. In the end, we pity the death of Richard whose talent is wasted. In fact, the villainous Richard embodies evil and unprincipled ambition. Shakespeare does not allow Richard to keep sympathy for long. He always stops any feelings towards him with murder. Richard induces catharsis, and represents the pure Machiavellian villain even with his recognition of his sins.

Macbeth in *Macbeth* and Claudius in *Hamlet* are not entirely Machiavellian as they made the wrong decisions and did not follow Machiavellian principles to the end. However, we should differentiate between two categories of Shakespeare's Machiavellian concepts of evil as used in the four great tragedies. The first includes those villains who are closer to the traditional idea of evil and who lack any sense of a conscience and a newly emerging villain with a conscience who chooses the path of evil. Heilman states that traditionally villains are characterized by "an overdose of applied rationalism" (Heilman 61). Following the Machiavellian tradition of villains, Shakespeare depicts Iago as a rational human being who is pragmatic and is neither emotional nor prone to believe in religious ideas. Iago explains to Roderigo in a highly rational mode his reasons for staying under Othello's authority:

Were I the Moore, I would not be Iago:

In following him, I follow but myself;

Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,

But seeming so, for my peculiar end: (1.1.59-62).

He is assuring us that in serving Othello, he is serving himself and his own goals. It is all politics. No god or fortune will save him. The Machiavellian villain's traditional atheism becomes in Iago skepticism of all goodness, human as well as divine. (Rackin 71). Because Iago believes that the world is '*moved by egotism, appetite, and personal advantage*' (Spivack 87). he will do whatever is necessary for personal benefits and gains. Raab underlines the origin of Iago's evil in what he calls Iago's cynical Machiavellianism towards sex as a bestial act used to gratify his animal desire to further his ambition. He uses this view of sex to slander Othello and damage his public image. He tries to evoke the fatherly concern of Brabantio about the danger and shame of marrying Desdemona to Othello:

Zounds, Sir, you're robbed; for shame, put on your gown;

Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul.

Even now, very now an old blackram

Is tuppung your white ewe. Arise, Arise! (1.1.88-91).

By using such imagery Iago reduces Othello's relationship with Desdemona to nothing more than the coupling of animals and mirrors his own view point of sex.

Shakespeare and the drama of social reaffirmation

Shakespeare is seen as a conservative Elizabethan playwright who believes in the stability of social order. This requires, due to Machiavelli, severe actions. Thus the self-serving and self-centered Machiavellian villain of *Othello* becomes more politics-oriented in *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. While Iago did not hold a high position in the kingdom to affect its system and security, the villains of *Hamlet* and *King Lear* hold positions of authority and have the ability to affect the order of society. Shakespeare may have believed that if Macbeth and Claudius followed their

The villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays

Machiavellian schemes to the letters, they would not have met all this resistance from their opponents. Claudius, the villain in *Hamlet*, is most aligned with Machiavellian principles: He furthers his self-interest and ambition by killing his brother and marrying his wife. In spite of his villainous ascension to power, he has virtue and does not doubt his political power to the point of denying his unstable situation: "*all may yet be well.*" (3.3.72), he says. In fact, Claudius maintains the air of gentility and kindness though he has acquired the kingdom by ruthless ways. In fact he puts a mask of goodness. Machiavelli asserts that if the times are peaceful and the people are trustworthy in the state, the prince can afford the luxury of moral practice. But if it is otherwise, he must preach virtue and practice the opposite (Reibling 275). In asserting the importance of appearance and securing the love of subjects – as Machiavelli preaches – Claudius explains to his subjects why Hamlet's exile has to be considered:

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
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
And where' tis so the offender's scourge is weighed,
But never the offence. (4.3.1-7).

Though this passage refers to Hamlet, it shows how Claudius is aware of the importance of the love and opinion of the citizens. At the same time, it casts light on Claudius' crisis. Unlike the classic Machiavellian villains Claudius – being humanized by Shakespeare – shows signs of conscience:

*O, my offence is rank! It smells to heaven.
It has the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will;
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business bound
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. (3.3.36-42).*

Claudius recognizes in a moment of reflection the evil he brought and the chaos he caused in the state. However, his redemption is not complete as he still enjoys the gains of the unchivalrous deed, in other words, his maintaining of the kingdom and the wife of the murdered brother. In such rare moments of exploring his critical situation, he realizes that he did not continue what he has first started according to the principles of Machiavellianism. He becomes aware that he must get rid of all the opposing factions in the kingdom; namely Hamlet.

After learning of Hamlet's murder of Polonius, Claudius decides to kill Hamlet. It is now that he realizes the consequences of not doing this earlier, thus completing his Machiavellian schemes. The disorder that Claudius' deed has brought to the kingdom results, not in the death of Hamlet only, but Gertrude and the king himself. Claudius' evil deed overturned the social order.

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare returns to addressing political issues. He depicts Macbeth as a Machiavellian villain who is practicing virtue. As a contrast to Macbeth, Shakespeare offers King Duncan who is meek and trusting to shed light on the

The villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays_____

Machiavellian character of the general. In fact, Machiavelli warns that a ruler should be self-reliant and not dependent on the loyalty of his followers (Reibling 275). Duncan shows how dangerous a ruler is in Machiavellian terms when he voices his inability to understand Cawdor's treason:

There is no art,

To find the mind's construction in the face:

He was a gentleman on whom I built

An absolute trust (1.4.12-14).

Unlike his father, Malcolm learns from King Duncan's fatal mistake and turns into a true Machiavellian prince at the end of the play (Reibling 277). In fact, Macbeth who started as an ideal Machiavellian prince fails to camouflage his evilness as Claudius does in *Hamlet*. He does not cover his ambition. His wife explains this saying:

Your face, my thane, is as a book, where men

May read strange matters. To beguile the time,

Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,

Your hand, your tongue; look like th'innocent flower,

But be the serpent under't.. (1.5.62-66).

Lady Macbeth understands the Machiavellian principle of hiding the serpent under the face of innocence as a tool to further political ambition. He would not deserve the "honor" of being a villain unless he was able to blend into the crowd. His wife comprehends this weakness in her husband's personality. And she expresses her fear of that:

*Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full of the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend what thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win. (1.5.16-22).*

Macbeth fails to kill the king's son soon after he had killed Duncan. Thus he sows the seed for his death. Machiavelli insists on the importance of rooting out the blood line of the former ruler when building a new kingdom. (Reibling 282). Because he fails to eliminate Duncan's blood line in one stroke, he has to continue to fear the "scorned snake" as Lady Macbeth has stated "we have scorned the snake, not killed it." (3.2.15). Therefore, he reaffirms his dilemma that he must continue to kill to stay in power: "Things bad begun to make strong themselves by ill." (3.2.58). Macbeth moves from a political Machiavellian villain who behaves in an evil way to secure social order to a sinister Machiavel who kills ruthlessly to fulfill his ambition. By not fully adopting the new philosophy of Machiavelli, Macbeth is now judged evil by his subjects to a degree closer to the all-encompassing evil represented by the vice or Machiavel.

To understand Shakespeare's villain, we must be aware of the new social situations which prompted the formulations of the new political views such as Machiavellianism which opposed conventional views of the Christian order. The means of succession to the throne and the usurpation of it were key political issues at the time Shakespeare was writing *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Hamlet*. The three plays are about Machiavellian

policy and successful kingship. Macbeth is portrayed as Machiavel. Were he depicted as a successful Machiavel, Machiavellian philosophy might have been propagated as an acceptable political option. Shakespeare could not have presented Machiavellianism as fair for he knew it posed a threat to the peaceful succession of the throne and monarchical order. *Macbeth* and the other great tragedies function as an answer to questions posed about the monarchical order and hereditary succession which conflicts with the Machiavellian philosophy.

Macbeth is presented as a potential usurper of the throne who fears his own ambition. But, Lady Macbeth is without conscience. She possesses true heroic virtue. She is ambitious to the point of being rotten with perfection. She has Machiavellian determination and endeavor. She is completely aware of the tools of Machiavellian villains. Lady Macbeth knows that the Machiavel must act improvisationally and adapt to the moment. After the murder of Duncan, she acts as a Machiavel and Macbeth becomes a conscience-stricken and guilt-ridden prince. Despite his human torment, Macbeth displays heroic Machiavellian virtue. With the guilt-ridden conscience, Shakespeare shows what a Machiavellian villain may endure if he decided to go against the established social order. In visiting the witches in Act 4, to know his fate, Macbeth appears anti-social. In fact, Duncan, Banquo, Lady Macduff and her son represent virtue and proper order. They are all sacrificed so that Macbeth, as a Machiavellian threat, can dramatically be realized. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are also sacrificed so that the audience can achieve catharsis and be purged of any Machiavellian threat. Thus, the Elizabethan social order is reaffirmed. Macbeth's moral degeneration through the play reflects the moral disintegration of English Renaissance society should Machiavellianism prevail. By being purified, the audience can achieve transcendence which corresponds to Aristotelian catharsis. In fact, it must be noted that the villains selected for analysis in this paper share three primary characteristics: they articulate an explicit Machiavellian

ideology which conflicts with Christian monarchical authority; they are scapegoats sacrificed so that conventional order can be reaffirmed; and they are all crucial to the strategy which characterizes the plays they appear in.

Conclusion

In the medieval ages and until late in the 16th century, Man in Europe used to stay within his religious, social and moral boundaries. There was no attempt to understand human motives or the operations of the human mind. Those earlier ages had their own socio-religious constraints that were reflected on the relationship of human beings to both the religious and the political institutions. Shakespeare had a remarkable talent in making drama reflect the reality of his times. His evil villains were closer to the vice characters of the morality plays. They never acknowledge a conscience and used to put the blame on other external factors. However, it is known that human beings- villains included- are driven by the same human passions; Love, hatred, power, care, understanding and greed. In the case of Othello, for example, it is his failure in managing his human passions-some of them are baseless -that makes him a good example of the evil dramatic villain. Psychological disorder might be behind a villain's unjustified conduct, though villains like Othello can create empathy on the side of their audience. Shakespeare partly structures his villains on the stereotypical vice character of the morality plays and miracle plays. Unlike these motiveless static dramatic creations, Shakespeare humanized his villains and made them true to life.

His treatment of the Machiavellian villain was used in the Elizabethan age to reaffirm the monarchical order and to thwart any revolutionary ideas that may provoke oppositional action against it. To Shakespeare any adoption of Machiavellian principles may have resulted in social chaos and disorder in the institution of the monarchy. The Machiavellian philosophy was a threat to the Christian world view that was popular in the

The villainous Character in Select Shakespearian Plays

Elizabethan and early Jacobean ages. The villains of Shakespeare's plays are in the habit of using soliloquy in order to seduce the audience into sympathy with their cause. However, this technique helped make the villains look and appear isolated from the world they belong to. Shakespeare's villains are depicted as rational, pragmatic and full of self interest. In applying Machiavellian principles to these villains, Shakespeare once again portrays the transition from an archetypal evil to a more realistic and humanistic conflict between evil and good in the heart of man himself. Shakespeare created a dramatic space in the Renaissance for his dramatic villains. In his treatment of his villains, evil becomes a force in the human soul and not an unavoidable destiny driving it. Humanizing the villain in Shakespeare's plays gave him this dramatic space. Though Machiavellian villains are treacherous, pragmatic and self centered, they are an embodiment of the unobserved protest and anger in the Elizabethan society. Thus Shakespeare presented them on the Elizabethan theater for social reaffirmation. He also discussed their tools in seeking their ends. Of course, villainous actions cannot be tolerated but the insight of the villain's psyche can help us better understand humanity.

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