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Shakespearean Villains

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením této práce ke studijním účelům.

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1. The Shakespearean Villains in Context

It is common knowledge nowadays that a well-written and well-played villain is essential if the struggle between good and evil is to work. Although this kind of confrontation appeared already in the medieval drama, it was the Renaissance that perfected the character of an antagonist and transformed him into a real-life figure. Often reacting to one another, Renaissance dramatists succeeded in creating villains that still speak to modern audience. In this respect, none of them emerge as captivating as those of Shakespeare. Fascinating by their variety and complexity, his villains offer a vital glimpse into the nature of evil as it was perceived in the Renaissance, its language, strategy and motivation, as well as into Shakespeare's own understanding of it.

Seen as a whole, they often share personality traits and are subjected to the same unwritten laws. Because of this, it is possible to classify them as villains and divide them into different groups. Though Elizabethan and Jacobean notion of villainy is not strikingly different from the modern one, it has its peculiarities that start already with the use of the word 'villain.'

Denoting a bad character, it is nowadays used, more or less, in either a neutral or a humorous way. In the Renaissance, however, this word was strongly emotionally charged and used always in a most serious context, e.g. Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* calls her unknown accuser 'a villain' when she defends herself 'should a villain say so, / The most replenish'd villain in the world, / He were as much more villain: you, my lord, / Do but mistake.'¹ Similarly, Iago is called a 'villain' (*Othello, the Moor of Venice* V, ii, 238) when he stabs Emilia and repeatedly so when his villainy is brought to light.

'Villain' was, therefore, a very specific word used in concrete situations, usually when some crime has already been committed or slander uttered, and as such was rather powerful. For this reason it was also used as an offensive word. This can be seen best from Tybalt's comment 'Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford / No better term than this – thou art a villain' (*Romeo and Juliet* III, i, 63-64).

While the word was not uncommon, it had its personal character as one conversation in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster or Love Lies A-Bleeding* demonstrates. Here, when questioned by the Spanish prince Pharamond, a country fellow answers 'almost kill'd I am for a foolish / woman; a knave has hurt her.'² Questioning again, Pharamond

¹ William Shakespeare, "The Winter's Tale," *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) II, i, 86-89. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text. All future references to Shakespeare's plays will be cited parenthetically in the text.

² Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, "Philaster or Love Lies A-Bleeding," *Elizabethan Plays*, ed. Hazelton Spencer (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1933) IV, vi, 112-113. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

asks 'speak, villain, who has hurt the Princess?' (IV, vi, 122) only to receive a similar answer as before 'I told you, a rogue' (IV, vi, 127). As can be seen, from among the number of possible denominations for a person causing harm, 'villain' was the gravest one used only seriously. This is why the terms such as 'knave' and 'rogue' appear in this dialogue, 'villain' is used derogatively to show utmost contempt and to emphasize the importance of the situation.

This difference in usage is also apparent in a conversation between Cardinal Monticelso and Francisco de Medicis in John Webster's *The White Devil*. Perusing Monticelso's book listing the names of 'offenders / lurking about the city,'³ both men enumerate categories recorded there. Starting with informers, they end up with a long list including, among others, panders, pirates, usurers and murderers. Borrowing the book, Francisco eventually concludes 'if any ask for me at court, report / You have left me in the company of knaves' (IV, i, 72-73).

The use of 'knaves' rather than 'villains' in the sentence, confirms the semantic difference between the words felt already in the previous examples. Whereas 'villain' was limited to the worst crimes, 'knave' was a general word that encompassed all kinds of offences including the slighter ones. For this reason is Sir Andrew Aguecheek called 'a knave' (V, i, 204-205) rather than a villain when Sir Toby reproaches him at the end of *Twelfth Night* and Parolles is 'a knave' (III, v, 81) when Diana comments on him in *All's Well that Ends Well*.

This verbal distinction that makes of the villains a special category is in Shakespeare's plays repeatedly used to underscore their evil actions. Yet this is not the only means that serves to define them. Besides letting all his major villains reveal their thoughts and intentions beforehand, Shakespeare gives them the opportunity to prove beyond all doubt that they are villains.

Shylock is a typical example of this mechanism. Although his designs are apparent from the moment he utters 'If I can catch him once upon the hip, / I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him' (I, iii, 45-46), his villainy materializes only when he seems allowed to execute his revenge. The second he lays his knife on Antonio's chest, he becomes an undisputed villain.

Analyzing evil-doing, Geoffrey Scarre propounds in his essay 'Evil' Luke Russell's idea that 'there is a point at which wrongdoing moves into the "red zone" and becomes something worse, namely evil.'⁴ The moment Shylock is about to kill Antonio can be interpreted as the moment when he becomes the true villain. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Shakespeare is very specific about this 'red zone' or 'a point of villainy,' as it could perhaps also be called in

³ John Webster, "The White Devil," *Elizabethan Plays*, ed. Hazelton Spencer (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1933) IV, i, 31-32. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴ Geoffrey Scarre, "Evil," *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*, ed. John Skorupski (London: Routledge, 2010) 585.

this case.

Although shaped by the genre of the play, his villains always reach this red zone sooner or later. In the case of Richard III it is already in the first act - the determination to 'prove a villain' (*King Richard III*, I, i, 30) is speedily put into action and Clarence is promptly murdered in the Tower. The same enthusiasm for villainy can also be found in Don John from *Much Ado about Nothing* and Aaron from *Titus Andronicus* whose dedication to evil is absolute. Their villainy may thus also be seen in terms of St Augustine's and St Thomas Aquinas' philosophy as they both define it as the lack of goodness.⁵

Although showing similar readiness to embrace evil, Edmund from *King Lear* does not present himself in such a straightforward manner. As Martin Hilský argues, his first soliloquy reveals him not as a villain but as a critic of society and an advocate of equality for those who were born out of wedlock.⁶ It is his plot that turns Edgar into an exile which earns Edmund the qualification of a villain. In a similar way, the murder of Duncan makes of Macbeth a villain just as the murder of old Hamlet turns Claudius into another.

This slipping into evil is, however, most prominent in *Measure for Measure* where it is made use of in a manner that fits a dark comedy. By committing a crime similar to Claudio's and urging his execution to ensure that he is never discovered, Angelo turns into a villain who relies on his irreproachable reputation and position of power. The fact that the Duke intervenes and saves both Claudio's life and Isabella's honour does not cancel out Angelo's villainy – he still issues the death warrant and meets 'Isabella' in the garden. He even suffers pangs of bad conscience. It does, however, help to pardon him at the end. As no harm is truly done, the return from the 'red zone' is possible. Isabella uses precisely this principle when she later defends him: 'His act did not o'ertake his bad intent / And must be buried but as an intent (...) Thoughts are no subjects, / Intents but merely thoughts' (V, i, 450-453).

Angelo is given a chance to reform, an opportunity to become a better man. As Mariana argues: 'best men are moulded out of fault, / And, for the most, become much more the better / For being a little bad' (V, i, 338-440). To a conscience-stricken man, mercy in combination with all complications happily resolved is the turning-point that sets him on a new footing.

This also becomes true for Iachimo in *Cymbeline* who is released by Posthumus with the command 'Live, / And deal with others better' (V, v, 420-421). His contrition and the happy outcome of events lead to his pardon, yet they do not nullify his villainy. As Jan Mc Keith

⁵ Scarre, 591.

⁶ *William Shakespeare: King Lear*, trans. Martin Hilský (Brno: Atlantis, 2005) 35.

points out in his analysis of Don John whose callousness earns him no reprieve:

(...) the happier conclusions do not obscure the fact that the plan intended harm, the evil was uncompromising, the result potentially tragic, and the effects keenly felt amongst the characters. The society emerges scathed (...) ⁷

Angelo, Iachimo, Don John and even Caliban in *The Tempest* are therefore villains despite the pardon that the first two receive the end of the plays.

This notion of intended harm also denotes who cannot be held a villain. Although Leontes' accusations of Hermione, her detention and his banishment of the newborn baby may be regarded as actions detrimental to the society in *The Winter's Tale*, they are fuelled by his jealousy, fear for life and need for self-defence rather than by wilful desire to hurt. Leontes is no villain but a victim of his own ill-founded suspicions. The punishment for letting them take hold of him follows soon after the verdict of oracle in the form of Mamillius' and Hermione's deaths.

Convinced of a plot against his life, Leontes does not have the mind of a malicious evildoer. Unlike Iago and the above-mentioned villains, he is unaware of how much damage he truly causes. Whom he eventually punishes most is he himself.

Unlike Leontes, Othello is a subject to insinuations, a victim of a third party. Deeply dedicated to his own plot, Iago differs from his fellow-villains in one important point – his evil is mainly of a psychological kind. Calling it 'a special form of mental harm,' Geoffrey Scarre defines it as evil that undermines other people's self-respect and, mentioning the work of Stephen de Wijze, lists among its objects 'the dehumanization, humiliation and denigration of its victims.'⁸ Describing his plans, Iago speaks in very similar terms when he reveals his desire to make Othello 'egregiously an ass / And practising upon his peace and quiet, / Even to madness' (II, i, 311-313).

Although entering the stage already as a dishonest, scheming person, he does not qualify as a villain right from the beginning. Unlike Don John with whom he shares the seeing-is-believing scheme, Iago enters the 'red zone' rather carefully and slowly. The transition from wrongdoing into evil starts with Cassio's humiliation and culminates with dehumanization of Othello. Iago himself feels how subtle the process is and mischievously comments on it when he teases the audience with his question 'And what's he then that says I play the villain?' (II,

⁷ William Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, ed. Jan McKeith (London: Macmillan, 1982) 12.

⁸ Scarre, 588.

iii, 35).

Consciously causing harm, Shakespeare's villains receive enough space in the plays to contemplate their crime, see its consequences and repent, if conscience-stricken. All substantial villains, by which Richard III, Aaron, Shylock, Don John, Claudius, Angelo, Iago, Edmund, Macbeth and Iachimo may be understood, admit, at some point, their villainy which is either inherent in their nature or spurred by self-interest, uncontrolled urges or revenge. The ultimate object of their evil is to selfishly profit by it.

In this respect they differ from the conspirators in *Julius Caesar* whose aim is to protect the republic from becoming a dictator-led empire. Though Cassius attempts to arouse Brutus' self-interest in their conversation (I, ii, 25-306) and feigns letters to win him for the assassination, the emphasis is put on the issues of statesmanship and public good, not self-advancement. Brutus does not kill Caesar to replace him but to save the republic, as he argues: '(...) let our hearts (...) Stir up their servants to an act of rage / And after seem to chide 'em (...) We shall be call'd purgers, not murderers' (II, i, 175-180).

Although Shakespeare does not diminish the horror of the assassination, he does not treat Brutus as a villain in a way he later does Macbeth. Blood is here not a symbol of a secret murder but a proof of an act done for public good. Condemned by Antony, the conspirators become traitors and their act a treason that must be punished (III, ii, 187-199).

The noblemen in the *King Henry VI* trilogy, both parts of *King Henry IV*⁹ and to a certain extent also in *Richard III* are seen in a similar light. Rather than straightforward villains, they are rebels and traitors. As L. C. Knights argues in his book *Shakespeare: The Histories*:

(...) what we have to do with is not a self-enclosed world of evil. The characters (...) move in a dense atmosphere of hatred, suspicion, treachery and fear, but the standards against which we, the spectators, are expected to judge (...) are firmly presented.¹⁰

This does not mean that the gravity of the slaughter present in these plays is diminished. While to kill in an open fight is regarded as a way to gain honour, the destructiveness that is inherent in it is still poignantly felt. As Peter Saccio points out in his book *Shakespeare's*

⁹ Falstaff's petty crimes are wrong, yet he is not a villain. His actions are never evil, never include murders or sinister plotting. As Leonard Tennenhouse argues, he is a figure of misrule that is used by those in authority to assert their power. Although having the features of the Vice, he is not a villainous Machiavel, but an egoistic and life-loving soldier descended from Aristophanes' comedies, as Martin Hilský points out.

Leonard Tennenhouse, "Strategies of State and Political Plays," *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) 121. *William Shakespeare: Jindřich IV*, trans. Martin Hilský (Praha: Euromedia Group, 2003) 160.

¹⁰ L.C. Knights, *Shakespeare: The Histories* (London: Longmans, Green, 1962) 20.

English Kings, Elizabeth's, Margaret's and Duchess' mutual recriminations in *Richard III* (IV, iv, 9-125) reveal this cruelty.¹¹ As for Richard III, his ferociousness shown in battles is used by Margaret also to emphasize his brutality: 'I had an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him; / I had a Henry, till a Richard kill'd him; / Thou hadst an Edward, till a Richard kill'd him; / Thou hadst a Richard, till a Richard kill'd him' (IV, iv, 40-43).

Clearly defined, the Shakespearean villains appear in a number of roles, be it the main, supportive or minor ones as the vicious king Antiochus in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Their wide range reveals evil in many different forms. As usurpers, revengers, men either absolutely morally blind or swayed by passions they cannot control, but also as helpers dedicated to those they serve to. These include such villains as Borachio, the architect of the devilish plan to slander Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*, and the murderers of Clarence in *Richard III* who fit Geoffrey Scarre's description of those evil people who commit crimes 'from a perverse sense of duty and without any special relish for what they do.'¹²

The same diversity is also typical for the manner in which crimes are contemplated. While some villains such as Richard and Aaron go about them with gusto, others such as Angelo and Macbeth suffer from remorse even before they commit them. Shylock, on the other hand, hardly speaks of crime at all. Although Aquinas' concept of the vicious person for whom 'considerations of justice count for little or nothing in comparison with the rewards of injustice'¹³ could be applied to all Shakespearean villains, their villainy is best seen in the light of individual theories.

As Geoffrey Scarre argues, there is 'no single, simple or uncontested analysis' of evil¹⁴ and Shakespeare's villains illustrate it well. Although Don John who describes himself as the 'plain-dealing villain' (*Much Ado about Nothing*, I, iii, 36) fits David Hume's notion of the evil character to which 'the malice and the wishing ill (...) to others' is central, Aaron, who is also malicious and spiteful but who shows feelings for his child, does less so, similarly Hillel Steiner's statement that 'wrong acts (...) are pleasurable for their doers' may easily be applied to Iago, but less so to Claudius and hardly to Macbeth.¹⁵ Shakespeare's plays reveal villains of all kinds and their author does not omit to create even such a character as Cloten who, unable to recognize that his intended plan is morally wrong, escapes the definition of a villain

¹¹ Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle, and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 3.

¹² Scarre, 590.

¹³ Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics, A Historical and Critical Study, Volume I: From Socrates to the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 540.

¹⁴ Scarre, 593.

¹⁵ Scarre, 589-590.

in *Cymbeline* by having his head timely chopped off.

Although the Shakespearean villains are an intriguing group on its own, the attention they attract is also due to the good they destroy and harm. The trusting Othello and Gloucester, the innocent Hero and Imogen, the respected Duncan as well as other characters, all provide a perfect foil for the villains and their evil action. Yet Shakespeare never lets their villainy go unpunished. In his plays, moral order is always re-established, all evil exposed and dealt with.

In this respect he differs from many other dramatists, particularly Christopher Marlowe. His plays people such characters as Tamburlaine who has absolutely no rival among men, Barabas who exposes in *The Jew of Malta* that love of money dominates the whole society and the ambitious Machiavellian Duke of Guise. Despite imbuing some of his villains with the same boundless villainy, Shakespeare refuses to accept the Marlowean world devoid of order and lacking hope for victory over evil.¹⁶ Instead, he creates an environment where moral principles are more than empty words and explores the clash between the selfish, ambitious nature of the villains and the society governed by moral laws.

Because of this, the Shakespearean concept of evil is unambiguous and morally clear-cut. Murderers are never praised as in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* where, seeing Bosola refused by Cardinal, Delio describes him 'I knew this fellow seven years in the galleys / For a notorious murder; and 'twas thought / The Cardinal suborn'd it' (I, i, 70-73) and receives an answer from his friend Antonio 'Tis great pity / He should be thus neglected: I have heard / He's very valiant. This foul melancholy / Will poison all his goodness.'¹⁷ Whether joining evil voluntarily, as Borachio and Conrade do in *Much Ado about Nothing*, or whether being paid for it, as murderers in *Richard III* are, the Shakespearean villains are never considered good once their crimes are known.

Webster, unlike Shakespeare, presents a world where hardly anybody is guiltless and where corruption is natural, as Bosola himself remarks after killing the Duchess 'The office of justice is perverted quite / When one thief hangs another' (IV, ii, 354). The same corruption also appears in Ben Jonson's *Volpone* where one of the judges examining Mosca, who plans to inherit all what Volpone possesses, displays the same desire for wealth.¹⁸ Though less pessimistic than Webster's later tragedy, it reveals that mammon still dominates the society even when the main culprits become punished.

Using the Italian setting which was synonymous with corruption, murders and lechery in his

¹⁶ Irving Ribner, *The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1963) 38.

¹⁷ John Webster, "The Duchess of Malfi," *Eight Famous Elizabethan Plays*, ed. Ester Cloudman Dunn (New York: Random House, 1950) I, ii, 76-79. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁸ Ben Jonson, *Volpone; or, The Fox*, ed. David Cook (London: Routledge, 1993) V, vii, 63. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

time¹⁹ with care, Shakespeare explores evil in depth rather than the scale of it. While the anonymous play *The Revenger's Tragedy*²⁰ reveals a court where lust and ambition are commonplace, and while Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil* complicate these issues by extending them also to a brother-sister relationship, Shakespeare's *Othello* presents evil in the form of a single individual, Iago. Unlike his contemporaries, Shakespeare concentrates on psychology of evil and the disintegration its causes.

His plays reflect the transition from the old social system to the new one, not just the new philosophy as do the plays of his fellow dramatists. Enough place is given to the struggle between the traditional view of the world that understood nature and human reason as expressions of divine will and sources of moral laws, and the new view that, as Irving Ribner explains in his introduction to the plays by Christopher Marlowe, exalted 'the power of man to control the universe by his own strength and reason, without regard to divine influence.'²¹ Shaped mainly by the teachings of Niccolò Machiavelli, this new view colours many of the Shakespearean villains, giving them qualities felt as unnatural by the characters who adopt the traditional view and who are considered good.

Contrasting good and evil, old and new, this concept was accepted by Renaissance audiences without questions. Yet the centuries of social and political changes show evil present in Shakespeare's plays in a different light. Thus G. Wilson Knight can be found calling Hamlet in his book *The Wheel of Fire* 'a poison in the midst of the healthy bustle of the court' and 'an element of evil in the state of Denmark.'²²

Through the statement may seem rather extreme, it expresses the general positive image that Claudius enjoys nowadays. As he is considered a skillful statesman, Hamlet's bitterness and behaviour tend to receive negative comments. Yet such an approach would be impossible in Shakespeare's time. Although the desire to revenge was considered destructive, Francis Bacon speaks against it in his essay 'Of Revenge' and calls it 'a kind of wild justice,'²³ the theatrical practice influenced by Seneca's tragedies urged that the revenger should embrace it.

Hieronimo in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* shows this clearly when he first dismisses the revenge with the words 'Heaven will be revenged of every ill'²⁴ but embraces it

¹⁹ Martin Hilský, *Shakespeare a jeviště svět* (Praha: Academia, 2010) 547.

²⁰ *The Revenger's Tragedy* is often attributed to either Cyril Tourneur or Thomas Middleton. Colin Gibson, the editor of *Six Renaissance Tragedies*, lists the play as anonymous and his decision is respected here.

"Revenger's Tragedy," *Six Renaissance Tragedies*, ed. Colin Gibson (London: Macmillan Press, 1997)

²¹ Ribner, 30.

²² Knights, 38.

²³ Francis Bacon, "Of Revenge," *Essays of Francis Bacon*, Philipp Lessen, Nov 2003, 25 Dec 2013

< <http://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-5.html> >.

²⁴ Thomas Kyd, "The Spanish Tragedy," *Six Renaissance Tragedies*, ed. Colin Gibson (London: Macmillan Press, 1997) III, xiii, 2. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

after reading a Senecan play that encourages him 'Strike, and strike home, where wrong is offered thee' (III, xiii, 7).²⁵ Although the price for it is death, fate that awaits every revenger, be it Vindice in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Bosola in *The Duchess of Malfi* or Hamlet himself, comfort and justice (III, xiii, 18-20) are seen as worth it. Influenced by this way of thinking, the Elizabethan audience would therefore never consider Hamlet a villain as some scholars do now.

This difference in reading is, however, most conspicuous in the case of Shylock and Caliban. Since World War II reshaped the opinion on Jews, Shylock appears in most interpretations as a tragic figure. Although many of his lines are emotionally ambiguous and may be read either in a comic or tragic way, as John Russell Brown points out in his introduction to the play,²⁶ the Elizabethans, who connected avarice with comedy,²⁷ were certainly more inclined to interpret Shylock in a more comical way. Also Jessica's elopement did not contribute to Shylock's tragedy as much as it does nowadays when the audience is less familiar with the model of the city comedy on which it is based.²⁸

Similar modification likewise exists in today's perception of Caliban. Although Paul Brown argues in his essay "This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine" that he still remains a villain because he 'accepts the charge,' he also suggests that the cause of his crime is 'his inability to discern a concept of private.'²⁹ In view of this latter suggestion, Caliban is a native who has his own idea of social conduct and who is forced to accept foreign culture. Accepted particularly by Caribbean and Latin American writers and activists who identify with Caliban, this reading draws attention to colonialism that characterizes Prospero's approach to Caliban.

The lapse of centuries reveals the Shakespearean villains in a different light. Yet it does not deprive them of the essential features they were born with. Still the product of their age, they have as much in common with the new emerging philosophical ideas as with older literary traditions, particularly the morality plays.

Richard, Edmund, Iago, even Shylock have some of the qualities of the Vice, the character that embodied evil and generated laughter. As Edgar T. Schell and J. D. Schuchter explain in *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes*, 'vice is comic in the way that any ultimately useless activity is comic. (...) There is no point (...) in warning an audience against vices to

²⁵ Janette Dillon, *The Cambridge Introduction to Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 17.

²⁶ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Routledge, 1994) 42.

²⁷ Hilský, 160.

²⁸ Hilský, 162.

²⁹ Paul Brown, "'This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine,'" *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) 62.

which they may not be expected to assent.³⁰ Medieval evil was attractive and amusing and passed these traits on to later villains.

Humour thus spices not only Richard's plots but also Edmund's evil action, as can be seen from his reaction to Edgar's complain 'Some villain hath done me wrong' (I, ii, 170) to which he answers 'That's my fear' (I, ii, 171). Enjoying himself in the same manner, Iago adds to the medieval legacy the figure of Lord Misrule and creates the world where carnivalesque features, such as his role of a doctor, easily become a part of a destructive plan.³¹ Though able to conjure up a smile on the faces of their audience, just as their medieval predecessors did, the Shakespearean villains use humour that is often ironic and dark.

Yet the comic side of their characters is not the only feature that connects them with the vices. Often called the devils themselves, they are in word what their predecessors were in reality. Masters of deceit, they may be seen as a reaction to the Renaissance ideal of physical and inner beauty. As *The Book of the Courtier* by the Italian scholar Pietro Bembo suggests this ideal consisted of the belief that physical beauty reflected faithfully inner virtue and goodness.³² How fascinated the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists were by this idea may be seen from their plays as it appears already in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* where Faustus asks Mephistophilis 'Go, and return an old Franciscan friar; / That holy shape becomes a devil best'³³ and is still alive as late as John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* where Giovanni argues 'the frame / And composition of the mind doth follow / The frame and composition of the body.'³⁴

Although there is a possible allusion to corruption in the ranks of religious orders in Faustus' remark, it introduces a devil with an image that does not match his true nature. Always giving his evil a human form, Shakespeare explores this discrepancy between the inside and the outside to the fullest, creating such 'devils' as Richard who is deformed both physically and morally, Angelo, the 'angel on the outward side' (*Measure for Measure* III, ii, 274), who writes 'good angel on the devil's horn' (II, iv, 16), Shylock whose house is hell (*The Merchant of Venice* II, iii, 2) and whose skin is darker than Jessica's complexion (II, iv, 12-14), Aaron who 'will have his soul black like his face' (*Titus Andronicus* III, i, 205) and Iago, the most devilish villain of them all, whom Norman Sanders describes in his article on

³⁰ Edgar T. Schell and Irvine J. D. Schuchter, *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969) 9.

³¹ *William Shakespeare: Othello, the Moor of Venice*, trans. Martin Hilský (Brno: Atlantis, 2006) 33.

³² James L. Calderwood, *The Properties of Othello* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989) 53.

³³ Christopher Marlowe, "Doctor Faustus," *The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Irving Ribner (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1963) I, iii, 25-26.

³⁴ John Ford, "'Tis Pity She's a Whore," *Six Renaissance Tragedies*, ed. Colin Gibson (London: Macmillan Press, 1997) II, v, 15-17.

Othello as 'a devil creating his own hell on earth and effecting the damnation of others.'³⁵ Giving Iago's evil the semblance of honesty and goodness, Shakespeare turns Pietro Bembo's ideal of inner and outer beauty completely upside down.

Yet this is not the only instance when he complicates the understanding of evil. Showing Caliban truly repentant at the end of *The Tempest*, he highlights the dangers of such Machiavellians as Sebastian and Antonio. As ironic and unfeeling as they were at the beginning of the play, they remain the potential villains, the real things of darkness.³⁶

Because human nature is always the source of evil in Shakespeare, the term 'devil' is heavily used in the plays as part of the vocabulary of hatred and incomprehension. It often voices the horror of success that Machiavellianism can bring. Reacting to Machiavelli in his work *The Advancement of Learning*, Francis Bacon expresses doubts about the necessity of ruthlessness the Italian thinker recommends, but even he finishes in a sceptical tone, writing 'it is in life as it is in ways, the shortest way is commonly the foulest, and surely the fairer was is not much about.'³⁷

Shakespeare dramatizes these apprehensions that the new teachings inspired. Evil, as he portrays it, is divorced from the former concept of nature, lust replaces love and ambition motivates to spurn the acceptance of social order. The notion of reason as a source of moral feeling expressed already by Aquinas' who claimed that 'moral goodness is fixed by rational nature,'³⁸ becomes perverted as reason is made independent of nature and divine will. Intellect of such villains as Iago, Richard and Edmund shows precisely this alienation from God and his moral laws. This lack of moral consideration deprives men of their humanity and turns them into beasts.

Although most prominent in *King Lear*, men compared to beasts appear also in works of other playwrights, most notably Ben Jonson's *Volpone* where the main anti-hero complains 'I shall have instantly my vulture, crow, / Raven come flying hither (...) my she-wolf and all, / Greedy and full of expectation' (V, i, 81-84). Yet, as Shakespeare never forsakes the principle of order in the universe as many of his contemporaries do, his villains are never truly cut off from mercy and forgiveness. That many of them decide not to ask it, is a matter of their lack

³⁵ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Norman Sanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 32.

³⁶ Charles Moseley, "Masque Spectacle in *The Tempest*," *Critical Essays on The Tempest*, eds. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman Group, 1988) 124.

³⁷ Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, 26 Dec 2013

<http://books.google.cz/books?id=4JRTTqD7UEIC&pg=PT215&lpg=PT215&dq=the+shortest+way+is+commonly+the+foulest,+and+surely+the+fairer+way+is+not+much+about&source=bl&ots=OciYRB5y2d&sig=B9sYuUPAnqOpVV39PkazvpfMTAw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=vR7MUvvcFemB4gTU8IGwBA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=the%20shortest%20way%20is%20commonly%20the%20foulest%2C%20and%20surely%20the%20fairer%20way%20is%20not%20much%20about&f=false>.

³⁸ Irwing, 67.

of remorse.

Iago's and Don John's stubborn silence, Richard's inability to feel contrite, Aaron's proclamation 'Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did / Would I perform, if I might have my will: / If one good deed in all my life I did, / I do repent it from my very soul' (*Titus Andronicus* V, iii, 187-190) reveal their insistence on villainy. Having the reasons for it so ingrained in their minds, these villains perceive evil as the only possible reality. Often because it brings them the desired success.

Part of the plays with good ends, Angelo and Iachimo receive mercy and cease to be villains once all is put right. Unlike Caliban and Shylock, they suffer only emotionally, regretting their wrongdoing. Committing one crime after another, Macbeth remains a villain leaving Edmund the only one whose evil action causes harm but who repents and receives mercy. Although he pays a price for all he does, he escapes damnation explained by Thomas Aquinas as 'the punishment of loss' caused by having 'affections (...) stubbornly turned against (...) goodness.'³⁹ His regret therefore also helps re-establish faith in the almost lost moral principles and order.

As can be seen, the Shakespearean villains are characters that are diverse and that can be analyzed from many different points of view. This thesis uses a range of approaches that include a traditional close reading and a wide variety of theoretical methods, from Michel Foucault's philosophy to Postcolonialism. Ideas current in Shakespeare's time are also taken into consideration.

In order to explore the villains in detail, groups are developed that focus on villains sharing similar features. The key to this classification is the reason that motivates them to embrace evil and the way they themselves perceive their villainy. The groups concentrate on villains who reach their full potential by being evil (mainly Richard and Iago, but Don John, Aaron, Claudius and Iachimo also belong here), those who are the victims of social injustice (Shylock, Caliban, Edmund) and the villains who question the evil they cause (Macbeth and Angelo). As the scope of this work is limited, attention is given only to the major villains: Richard, Iago, Shylock, Caliban, Edmund, Angelo and Macbeth.

Thomas Aquinas: Compendium of Theology, trans. Cyril Vollert (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Book, 1947) 188.

2.

Villainy Unleashed

Profiting on their work of evil, the villains of this category use their cunning and intellect to succeed in the world. Motivated either by the sheer pleasure that villainy brings them or by some advantage, they embrace evil willingly and readily. Very good speakers, they are deceivers, manipulators and poisoners and their plots often feature seeing-is-believing scheme. As envy and ambition are often the factors that spur them to evil acts, villainy becomes a perverse means to freedom and self-realization. To this group belong Aaron, Don John, Iachimo, Claudius and the greatest villains such as Richard III and Iago.

2.1 Richard III

Richard III, the first villain in the Shakespeare canon, is a schemer whose personality is very much shaped by Renaissance philosophy, particularly by Niccolò Machiavelli's teachings. Ambitious to succeed, he is the example of a ruthless politician divorced from his conscience. Although a descendant of the medieval figure of Vice, he is a prototype of a modern statesman who employs a whole range of political manoeuvres and exploits every situation until he is crowned the king. A consummate strategist and performer, Richard succeeds due to his excellent verbal skills that are not only the key to his success but also to his villainy.

As Antony Hammond suggests in his preface to the play, the characteristic features of the Vice and Machiavel blend easily¹ which is why an otherwise unscrupulous politician is able to retain his entertaining character without complicating the issue of power. Eager to disclose his plans and thoughts, Richard forms a close relationship with his audience, similar to the one forged by the medieval figures of the Vices. Just like them he revels in his villainy and does his best to incite the audience to do the same. As Wolfgang Clement points out in his study *A Commentary on Shakespeare's Richard III*, he invites the audience 'to honour his skill in dissembling' and applaud with him to 'his own skill at disguise (...) and ability to cause trouble.'²

His ability to exaggerate faked emotions is likewise inherited from his medieval ancestors whose behaviour, as Douglas Cole mentions in his book *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of*

¹ William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond (London: Routledge, 1992) 104.

² Wolfgang Clemen: *Kommentar zu Shakespeares Richard III*, trans. Jean Bonheim (London: Methuen, 1968) 125.

³ David Cole, *Suffering and Evil in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962) 141.

Christopher Marlowe, was characterized by 'aggression against everyone, farcical behaviour and a trick of weeping.'³ This ability to dissemble becomes already voiced in *King Henry VI, Part 3*: 'I can (...) wet my cheeks with artificial tears, / And frame my face to all occasions'⁴ but is repeated again at the end of his initial monologue in *Richard III* when he states 'I am subtle, false, and treacherous'⁵. Although there can be no doubt about his link to the literary predecessors from the morality plays, his farcical dissimulation being such a striking feature, to make it absolutely explicit, Richard himself admits to it when he says in his aside: 'Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / I moralise two meanings in one word' (III, i, 82-83).

This open delight in villainy typical for the Vice is very close to dissimulation that Niccolò Machiavelli recommends in his book *The Prince*:

(...) he who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best. But it is necessary (...) to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived.⁶

Promising to 'set the murd'rous Machiavel to school' (*King Henry VI, Part 3*, III, ii, 193), Richard embraces this philosophy with the same eagerness he complimented himself for being as verbally skilled as the Vice. Yet, although he shows little moral consideration for his action, rather than by Machiavelli's real teachings, his character is shaped by the Machiavel-myth, an exaggerated interpretation simplifying Machiavelli's concept of power and presenting it, as Wilbur Sanders points out in his collection of essays *The Dramatist and the Received Idea*, either as 'delight in monumental villainy or (...) monstrous dissimulation.'⁷

In this respect, Richard is very close to those Machiavels created by Christopher Marlowe. He shares with Barabas the ability to pretend and with Tamburlaine the desire for power. But unlike the avaricious Jewish merchant, Richard is able to win the affections of both crowds and individuals and unlike Tamburlaine, he plots in secret in order to assert himself. As Jonathan Bate argues in his book *The Genius of Shakespeare*, Richard's aspiration is to rule the kingdom, not to conquest one nation after another, and for that reason the unlimited

⁴William Shakespeare, "King Henry VI, Part 3," *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) III, ii, 182-185. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁵William Shakespeare, "Richard III," *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) I, i, 37. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁶*Niccolò Machiavelli: The Prince*, trans. Norman Stone (Ware: Wordsworth Edition, 1993) 138-139.

⁷Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1968) 61-62.

expansion becomes substituted by destruction from within.⁸

Resolved to get the crown, Richard voices his intents already in *King Henry VI, Part 3* where he presents himself as a supreme actor who can control as ungovernable emotions as tears (III, iii, 124-195). Despite having no concrete plan, 'And yet I know not how to get the crown, / For many lives stand between me and home' (III, ii, 172-173), he already knows what means he will use to achieve it: 'I'll play the orator as well as Nestor, / Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could, / (...) Change shapes with Protheus for advantages' (III, ii, 188-192). Intent to excel in badness, Richard plans to surmount every obstacle.

Blaming love and nature for his deformation: '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 disproportion me in every part' (III, ii, 153-160), Richard presents his ambition as a compensation for his non-existing love life: 'And am I then a man to be belov'd? / O monstrous fault, to harbour such a thought! / Then, since this earth affords no joy to me / (...) I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown' (III, ii, 163-168). Complaining again at the beginning of *Richard III* of being 'cheated of feature by dissembling Nature' (I, i, 19), he deliberately casts himself into the role of a victim. Yet, although Richard's physical deformity is an important factor, it is his approach to it that is crucial.

Thinking after the murder of king Henry of his unusual birth, Richard explains his villainy in terms of his abnormalities. Perceiving himself outwardly a monster, he turns into the same monster also inwardly: 'O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!' / And so I was; which plainly signified / That I should snarl, and bite, and play the dog. / Then, since the heavens have shap'd my body so, / Let hell make crook'd my mind to answer it' (*King Henry VI, Part 3, V, vi, 78-79*). Although what he mentions, and what becomes repeatedly alluded to in the course of *Richard III*, is part of the image ascribed to him by the historians supporting the Tudor dynasty,⁹ the teeth serve as a means to resolve his argument with nature.

Playing with the idea that he was born with them, Richard likens himself to a dog and the physical similarities lead him to the psychological ones. This, eventually, makes him adopt the conclusion that his deformity as well as his fierce character were granted to him by the divine power. The propensity towards evil thus becomes natural and, as Richard is willing to develop it, his mind resembles his body.

Wilbur Sanders argues that thinking in these terms, Richard embodies the new kind of

⁸ Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 2008) 108.

⁹ Peter Saccio, *Shakespeare's English Kings: History, Chronicle, and Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 158.

¹⁰ Sanders, 62.

reasoning that appeared in the Renaissance.¹⁰ Citing H. B. Parker, he points out that the Elizabethans were confronted by two different interpretations of nature, the traditional one that perceived nature as essentially good and as a source of natural and divine law, and the new one that claimed that man's natural energy was amoral and that power was the central reality of the natural world.¹¹ Niccolò Machiavelli's teachings were built on this latter concept of the natural world as can be seen from his book *The Prince* where he says: 'A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good.'¹² Richard, the representative of this new philosophy, follows precisely this idea.

The Elizabethans, however, may have also seen his evil character in a slightly different, though not contradictory, light. As Francis Bacon reveals in his essay 'Of Deformity,' physical shortcomings were easily associated with evil:

Deformed persons are commonly even with nature; for as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature; being for the most part (as the Scripture saith) void of natural affection; and so they have their revenge of nature. Certainly there is a consent, between the body and the mind; and where nature erreth in the one, she ventureth in the other.¹³

Showing how body and mind are linked together, Francis Bacon proposes that deformity often implies desire to harm. Although he later also speaks of exceptions, he concludes that the only way to be free from scorn is to become either virtuous or evil.¹⁴ Richard's decision to become a villain therefore reflects this Elizabethan belief that physical deformity and affectionate character are mutually exclusive.

Because of that, the evil that Richard presents may be seen from different points of view. Both the Baconian interpretation that emphasizes the theme of revenge and the Machiavel-theme that concentrates more on self-realization are valid. Embracing both of them, Jonathan Bate claims that Richard's 'pursuit of the crown is compensation for physical deformity [as well as] a self-conscious performance.'¹⁵ Shakespeare's Richard may be thus understood as

¹⁰ Sanders, 62.

¹¹ Sanders, 62.

¹² MXH, "Things that Were Not Immediately Obvious to Me," *The Prince: Chapter 15*, 23 Dec. 2009, 21 Aug. 2013 <<http://www.mlsite.net/blog/?p=879>>.

¹³ Francis Bacon, "Of Deformity," *Essays of Francis Bacon*, Nov. 2003, 20 Aug. 2013 <<http://www.authorama.com/essays-of-francis-bacon-44.html>>.

¹⁴ Bacon.

¹⁵ Bate, 117-118.

the amalgamation of Elizabethan beliefs and the Machiavel-myth, a combination which suited the Tudor-propaganda that sought to vilify the Plantagenets.

Richard fully confirms his policy at the end of *King Henry VI* when he transforms himself into a ruthless schemer governed by self-interest: 'I have no brother, I am like no brother; / And this word 'love' (...) / Be resident in men like one another, / And not in me: I myself alone' (V, vi, 81-83). His plan to spread harmful prophecies in order to dispose of both Edward and Clarence leads him to conclude in a typically Machiavellian tone 'Counting myself but bad, till I be best' (V, vi, 91). When he recites his opening soliloquy in *King Richard III*, he is already 'determined to prove a villain' (I, i, 30).

King Henry VI reveals Richard as a member of the York family that during the Wars of the Roses slowly turns into a Machiavel. Having not yet the features of the Vice character, he is an individual that seeks to come to terms with his deformity and find a connection between his worldly ambition and unattractiveness. *King Richard III*, on the other hand, reveals him already as a Machiavel that comments on his action in the manner of the medieval Vice, a villain that takes up the role of a prologue to introduce himself.

In it Richard summarizes the general situation, gives reasons for his decision to become a villain and reveals his schemes. Because of this wide range of themes, the soliloquy may be divided into two parts, a public one where the present atmosphere of peace is contrasted to the former state of war, and a private one, starting with 'But I, that am not shap'd for sportive tricks' (I, i, 14) where Richard's private plans and his conflict with nature appear. Rich in alliteration, the dynamic speech sets the lively world of gallant courtiers against Richard's sombre world filled with the barking of dogs.¹⁶

Opening the play with the comment on the general atmosphere at the court, Richard takes up where *Henry VI* ended. Echoing Edward's speech at the end of the trilogy: 'Once more we sit in England's royal throne, / Repurchas'd with the blood of enemies' (*King Henry VI, Part 3*, V, vii, 1-20), he spices the borrowed solemnity with irony. Already his first two lines 'Now is the winter of our discontent / Made glorious summer by this sun of York' (I, i, 1-2) bear the stamp of it. As Wolfgang Clemen points out, Richard's word 'sun' refers to the king Edward because 'a Sun in splendour' was one of the Yorkist badges, but as Edward, 'the sun of York,' is dying, he no longer represents the radiant sun he used to, a sad fact that makes Richard's 'glorious summer' deeply ironic.¹⁷ The image of splendour that is used here does not correspond to the reality that is described.

¹⁶ L.C. Knights, Shakespeare: *The Histories* (London: Longmans, Green, 1962) 23.

¹⁷ Clemen, 4.

The more Richard speaks, the more it becomes apparent that his glorification of the events covers his own inner dissatisfaction. The sharp contrast between men in armour and men who 'caper nimbly in a lady's chamber, / To the lascivious pleasing of a lute' (I, i, 12-13) reveals his hidden scorn. Wolfgang Clemen therefore suggests that 'Richard's feelings are the opposite of the sentiments seemingly expressed' and that his 'high rhetoric (...) is [his] particular way of mocking the sentiments.'¹⁸

Dealing with the issue of his deformity, the second part of the soliloquy explains this sarcasm. Describing his exterior with particular relish for detail, Richard uses expressions such as 'curtail'd of this fair proportion,' 'unfinish'd,' 'scarce half made up' (I, i, 18-22). Having a negative meaning, they contrast with the vigour that underlies the whole speech. Yet they are still a part of the strategy that is to help him obtain the crown.

Because of that, his speech may be seen in the light of Murray Edelman's concept of language which he introduces in his article 'Political Language and Political Reality' and where he states that '[l]anguage usage is strategic. It is always part of a course of action to enable people to live with themselves and with what they do and to marshall support for causes.' Richard's detailed description of his deformity and of the disadvantages it brings him are part of a strategy he never surrenders. Even the succession of ghosts before the battle finds him, after a short flurry of doubts, faithful to the policy that enables him to live with himself.

Never losing the sight of his goal, Richard is a supreme politician. How strategic his language usage is, becomes clear soon after his soliloquy when he proves 'a lover' despite his statement 'since I cannot prove a lover, / To entertain these fair well-spoken days, / I am determined to prove villain, / And hate the idle pleasures of these days' (I, i, 28-31). Listing deformity as the reason for his villainy, he obscures his previous decision "love' (...) / Be resident in men like one another, / And not in me' (*King Henry VI, Part 3, V, vi, 81-83*).

Part of the plan to get the crown, Richard's wooing of Lady Anne turns into the demonstration of his ability to manipulate people. Using remarks such as 'Teach not thy lip such scorn; for it was made / For kissing, lady, not for such contempt' (I, ii, 171-172), Richard first appeals to Anne's femininity, traits such as gentleness and forgiveness. To intensify this pressure, he repeatedly stresses her beauty as the reason for the slaughter that took place. Their quarrel finds him thus saying: 'I did kill King Henry - / But 'twas thy beauty that provoked me. / (...) 'twas I that stabb'd young Edward - / But 'twas thy heavenly face that set me on' (I, ii, 179-182).

This constant appeal to Anne's beauty empasizes not only her prettiness and Richard's

¹⁸ Clemen, 4.

deformity, but also her femininity and his masculinity, her submissive character and his aggressive one. Because of that, Anne's acceptance of Richard eventually leads to acknowledgement of their social roles, she becomes the submissive loving woman he urged her to be while he becomes the victorious conqueror. Winning her over the corpse of her husband he killed, Richard demonstrates how will and ability, the cornerstones of Machiavellism, enhance personal power when combined with daring, and how adversity turns into an opportunity for achievement when these traits are applied.¹⁹ The unthinkable becomes not only possible but is also achieved and Richard comments on it at the end of the scene when he asks 'Was ever woman in this humour woo'd? / Was ever woman in this humour won?' (I, ii, 228-229).

The reason why this wooing scene retains such fascination lies in the fact that Richard's evil is fully exposed, Anne herself refers repeatedly to the qualities of her husband and contrasts them with Richard's moral depravity. Richard reacts to this in a typical Machiavellian way: 'Let him thank me, that help to sent him thither; / For he was fitter for that place than earth' (I, ii, 106-107). Grounding his evil in necessity and presenting it as a kind of sacrifice for the woman he pretends to love, he turns it into his virtue.

Playing the role of a lover whose love knows no bounds, Richard parodies all the traditional love scenes. Thus he offers only positive words such as 'fairer,' 'beauty' and 'fair creature' (I, ii, 81-131) to Anne's negative ones such as 'foul,' 'unworthy' and 'bloody mind' (I, ii, 88-101). When she spits on him, he reacts with the assurance that 'Never came poison from so sweet a place' (I, ii, 146). His dissembling reaches the highest pitch when he successfully convinces her that his life without her has no value for him. The morally uncorrupted Anne surrenders precisely at the moment when evil shows itself in its most destructive form.²⁰

Commenting on her, Wilbur Sanders defines her as 'a woman for whom the rhetorical inflation of reality is an habitual and dangerous addiction.'²¹ While it is true that Anne accuses Richard most vividly and in the same manner demands also his punishment, 'Heaven, with lightning strike the murderer dead, / Or, earth, gape open wide and eat him quick' (I, ii, 64-65), very little is known of her character in general. Therefore, rather than a woman who habitually succumbs to anyone's rhetoric, she is the victim of Richard's persuasiveness, dialectical skills and pretended remorse, policy she has never encountered before.

Unable to keep the moral standard she chose for herself, Anne accepts the very man she

¹⁹ Steven Marx, "Moses and Machiavell," *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Fall 1997, 17 Dec 2013 <<http://cla.calpoly.edu/~smarx/Publications/moses.html>>.

²⁰ Sanders, 86.

²¹ Sanders, 84.

cursed, confirming that Machiavellism can be highly successful when employed with conviction. Her decision not to be his 'executioner' (I, ii, 185-186), however, does not only empower him, it also fuels his evil. Richard's conclusion 'Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass, / That I may see my shadow as I pass' (I, ii, 263-264) is therefore no mere expression of satisfaction but a conscious decision to continue in his crimes because, as Clemen Wolfgang argues, 'the sun is to illuminate a Richard moving from one dark crime to the next.'²²

Though effective in the wooing-scene, Machiavellian dissembling brings Richard even bigger success when he employs it against the Londoners who, unlike Anne, do not suspect him of deceit. Combined with other strategies recommended by Machiavelli, such as the use of religion for personal gain¹⁷³ and the promise of advancement for those who serve him,²⁴ his ability to pretend earns him nothing less than the crown. Posing as a holy man, he wins the hearts of the people by saying precisely the opposite of what he means because his constant refusals such as 'I am unfit for state and majesty: / I do beseech you, take it not amiss; / I cannot, nor I will not, yield to you' (III, vii, 204-206) and 'For God doth know, and you may partly see, / How far I am from the desire of this' (III, vii, 233-234) confirm the image created for him by his ally Buckingham.

From the linguistic point of view, Richard's performance may be seen as a series of performative utterances which are defined by J. L. Austin as illocutionary acts that have the power to change the reality.²⁵ Richard is thus not only posing as an ideal ruler, he is actively creating a new social position for himself. Fully exploiting the nature of political reality, his impersonation of an exemplary king is more than a trick worthy of the Machiavel he is. It is manipulation built on the fact that political language is inherently ambiguous.

Analyzing it, Murray Edelman points out in his article that 'the critical element in political maneuver for advantage is the creation of meaning: the construction of beliefs about the significance of events (...) and leaders' and argues that 'it is not what can be seen that shapes political action and support, but what must be supposed, assumed, or constructed.'²⁶ It is precisely this set of intangible beliefs that Richard wants the citizens and Lord Mayor of London to construct when he presents himself as a man of good moral character. As expected,

²² Clemen, 38.

²³ Machiavelli, 173.

²⁴ Machiavelli, 182.

²⁵ "Performative Utterances," Wikipedia, 19 Nov 2013, 15 Dec 2013
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performative_utterance>.

²⁶ Murray Edelman, "Political Language and Political Reality," 21 Nov 2013
<<http://ed-share.educ.msu.edu/scan/te/danagnos/te9201a.pdf>>.

all support he receives from the Londoners becomes based on this assumed persona whose goodness is further highlighted by the denigration of the dead Edward and his children.

This abuse of those who cannot defend themselves is eventually also extended to Hastings who becomes labelled a traitor and publicly denounced. That his execution is approved by the Mayor immediately after he is given Richard and Buckingham's explanation is another example of the performative function of language which is, as Murray Edelman suggests, 'all the more potent in politics when (...) masked, presenting itself as a tool for objective description.'²⁷ Defining Hastings as a traitor dangerous to the state, Richard succeeds in giving his own designs precisely this veneer of objective description. His personal interests become presented as actions that are to serve the public.

As the modern theories prove, Richard's political strategy does not differ very much from the political tactics used nowadays. Commenting on these similarities, Martin Hilský refers in his interview for *Reflex* to the way in which political language and theatrical performance are linked and points out that Richard's manipulation of the public is the prime example of the power mechanism that characterizes the world of politics.²⁸ Because of this, his political career may be viewed as a series of performances which he not only directs and acts in, but which he also uses in order to legalize retrospectively such crimes as Hasting's execution.²⁹

Although Richard's policy, particularly his vigorous denigration of his political opponents and the promotion of the image that meets the public expectations, has much in common with today's political campaigns, it never stops reflecting the teachings of Niccolò Machiavelli. His description of an ideal prince can easily be applied to Richard:

(...) he may appear to him who sees and hears him altogether merciful, faithful, humane, upright, and religious. There is nothing more necessary to appear to have than this last quality, inasmuch as men judge generally more by the eye than by the hand (...) Every one sees what you appear to be, few really know what you are, and those few dare not oppose themselves to the opinion of the many (...)³⁰

Treating the traditional values as mere instruments, Machiavelli boldly presents a set of ideas that threaten the old social order. Seen in this context, Richard, who lacks respect for the community whose welfare he pretends to champion, does not only bring into focus this daring

²⁷ Edelman.

²⁸ Martin Hilský, *Respekt* č. 25, ed. Erik Tabery, Interview, 26 June 2011

²⁹ Martin Hilský, *Shakespeare a jeviště svět* (Praha: Academia, 2010) 336-339.

³⁰ Machiavelli, 140.

philosophy, but also the conflict between the old system and the new one.

From the Elizabethan perspective, Richard's success was terrifying for it showed how easy it is to succeed by being amoral. Even more alarming was, however, the Machiavellian attack on religion which formed the basis of the old social order. Although the notion of religion as a coercive doctrine imposed on people had existed well before Machiavelli's teachings, its successful revival was dreaded by the sixteenth-century authorities plagued by the protracted church crisis for a simple reason - Machiavelli substituted spirituality by utility, as Stephen Greenblatt points out in his *Shakespearean Negotiations*: 'its primary function [was] not salvation but the achievement of civic discipline, (...) its primary justification [was] not truth but expediency.'⁴⁰

Seeing Richard with a prayer book in his hand and in the company of bishops must therefore have had a profound effect on the Elizabethan audience for it externalized the dilemma they faced. Richard, as they perceived him, was not a simple cross of a Machiavel and a jesting figure of Vice, he was a potential political reality. Wilbur Sanders aptly sums this situation up when he compares it to the 'crossroads, before the onset of modern cynicism about 'politics' had emptied the public realm of moral significance.'⁴¹

Richard's holy man is the height of his dissembling, yet it is not the only instance when he hides himself behind an image of an honest man. Coming to the court after his meeting with Anne, he begins to complain about having his name sullied: 'Because I cannot flatter and speak fair, / Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive, and cog, / (...) I must be held a rancorous enemy. / Cannot a plain man live and think no harm' (I, iii, 47-52). Accusing others of the scheming he himself is guilty of, Richard protects his name from future slanders.⁴² Distorting the facts publicly, he creates a whole new situation and confirms Murray Edelman's words that 'political language *is* political reality.'⁴³

Because he is exactly what he pretends not to be, his defence of himself is rather ironic and has the features of a parody. Irony, however, completely permeates Richard's language and is found also in his pious oaths and proverbs which serve his political ambition. As Clemen Wolfgang points out, he employs these in a number of ways, not only as generalities to hide his designs as can be seen in his reaction to supposed slanders: 'the world is grown so bad / That wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch' (I, iii, 70-71), but also to shift blame from

⁴⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: the Circulation of Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: Los Angeles, 1988) 24.

⁴¹ Sanders, 69.

⁴² Clemen, 46.

⁴³ Edelman.

himself as in his explanation of the princes' deaths: 'All unavoids is the doom of destiny' (IV, iv, 118).⁴⁴ Given his subversive strategy, all these reactions are humorous in a dark way, particularly when he concludes his reconciliation with Queen Elizabeth with the sentence 'I thank my God for my humility' (II, i, 73) and the young prince's observation with a proverb 'So wise so young, they say, do never live long' (III, i, 79).

Although rather blood-chilling, none of these reactions obscure political reality. Jests, exaggeration and false assurances highlight the overall volatile political climate as can partly be seen from Richard's histrionic performance in which he displays his deformed arm. Starting with a feigned approval 'his lordship knows me well, and loves me well' (III, iv, 30), he turns Hastings into a traitor (III, iv, 66-78) within several seconds.

Demonstrating how language shapes reality, his action reveals that manipulation exists here not only on the emotional level but also on the semantic one. As Murray Edelman comments in his analysis:

The political language that generates and reinforces beliefs about who are allies and who are enemies is an especially striking instance of the projection of divergent assumptions into words and sentences. (...) Language often evokes a belief that particular groups are evil or harmful even though the language of history, analysis, and science suggests that they are scapegoats rather than enemies.⁴⁵

Referring to both Elizabeth and Mistress Shore as witches, Richard depicts them as enemies dangerous not only to him but to everyone. Yet were his accusations interpreted in a different light, these same terms would define him as an enemy.

That this does not happen is not only due to the absence of a party that would strongly oppose him, but also due to his tactic. Starting with a general question 'tell me what they deserve / That do conspire my death with devilish plots' (III, iv, 58-59), he lets Hastings, who readily answers 'they have deserved death' (III, iv, 65), sign his death warrant. As the execution follows immediately, this verbal trap may be regarded as the best example of transformative performatives defined by Eve Sedgwick as 'utterances (...) which create an instant change of personal or environmental status.'⁴⁶

Acquiescence of the council to Richard's subsequent command 'the rest that love me, rise

⁴⁴ Clemen, 124.

⁴⁵ Edelman.

⁴⁶ "Performative Utterances," Wikipedia, 19 Nov 2013, 15 Dec 2013
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Performative_utterance>.

and follow me' (III, iv, 78) only confirms his ability to curb opposition and mobilize support by the dynamic presentation of his political persona. Yet this does not obscure the fact that his success is also due to his ally Buckingham. Motivating him materially, Richard employs promises which Murray Edelman characterizes as utterances illustrating 'the sense in which language constructs what people experience as their subjectivity.'⁴⁷ Getting Buckingham involved personally, Richard makes his success inseparable from Buckingham's social advancement and this ensures him of his help.

This reward policy that forms basis also for Richard's relationship with Tyrrel and serves to motivate the murderers to dispatch Clarence reveals a world where desire to succeed is peculiar not only to Richard. Though the arch-villain and instigator of all corruption, he relies on his network of similar-minded individuals who follow him in order to receive what they are promised. Valued only as instruments that are to help him gain and retain the crown, they are determined by their usefulness just as their loyalty to him depends on Richard's willingness to fulfill his promises. Because of this, L.C. Knights argues that the play is not 'a dramatic presentation of the Tudor view of history [but] an elaborately formal dramatization of power-seeking in a corrupt world.'⁴⁸

While this hunger for power that permeates all strata of society, Richard's advancement is a not only a matter of his ambition but also of moral weakness on the part of others. Anne, who surrenders despite her hatred, Brackenbury, who decides to ignore his suspicion when he faces the murderers of Clarence (I, iv, 93-94), and even the Londoners, who silently accept Richard's legitimization of Hastings' death, are all partly responsible for Richard's success.⁴⁹ Enabling his evil to flourish, they are a part of an environment where Richard functions as a catalyst for social change.

With the events of the recent wars still fresh in everyone's mind, Richard's orders for murders and executions become often perceived as just by their victims. Although none of them wishes to die, they all are aware of their guilt: Clarence's narration of his dream ends with the acknowledgement 'I have done these things / That now give evidence against my soul' (I, iv, 66-67), Hasting's repents of his delight over the death of his enemies (III, iv, 87-92) and Buckingham accepts his punishment with 'Wrong hath but wrong, and blame the due of blame' (V, i, 28). Because of this, Virgil K. Whitaker argues in his book *The Mirror up to Nature* that Richard serves an instrument of Providence that punishes the guilty and brings

⁴⁷ Edelman.

⁴⁸ Knights, 17.

⁴⁹ Sanders, 87.

about the reunion of England.⁵⁰

Although true, with the exception of the young princes whose innocence is stressed in Tyrrel's monologue (IV, iii, 1-22) and whose murder is to enhance Richard's villainous character, the theme of Providence is much more complex. As Wilbur Sanders points out, the idea of divine justice and the Machiavellian desire for power were concepts that did not blend easily.⁵¹ While the opinion that God directs the lives of people was still alive in the sixteenth century, it became questioned by thinkers such as Niccolò Machiavelli who claimed that 'God does not wish to do everything, in order not to take from us our free will and part of the glory that is ours.'⁵²

Richard III reflects this polemic. On one hand, it shows Richard seizing one opportunity after another to make his own fortune in the world and Queen Elizabeth accusing God of sleeping: 'O God! (...) When didst thou sleep when such a deed was done?' (IV, iv, 22-24). On the other hand, it reveals Margaret as the advocate of divine Providence, a prophetess whose curses become viewed by all other characters as fate they cannot escape.⁵³ Rivers, Vaughan, Grey (III, iii, 14-22), Hasting (III, iv, 91-92), Buckingham (V, i, 25-27), all remember her words before their deaths. Even Richard becomes alarmed when he hears of Richmond and recalls a prophesy foretelling his death (IV, ii, 105-106).

This theme of divinely ordained fate in which Providence and desire for justice merge together has its climax in Richmond's speech to his army: 'One that hath ever been God's enemy. / Then, if you fight against God's enemy, / God will, in justice, ward you as his soldiers' (V, iii, 254-256). In a play designed to promote the Tudors, the future Henry VII speaks in favour of both divine and social order, the opposite of chaos that Richard stands for. Consequently, his victory, blessed by the ghosts that enhance the theme of Providence, reveals Richard's Machiavellism as a tactic that eventually brings defeat.

Yet Providence is not the only means that is here to reveal the insufficiency of Machiavellism. The ruthless policy seems to contain a destructive mechanism in the form of conscience. Although Richard does not succumb to it, its mere existence shows that the moral and political spheres cannot easily be separated.

Banned from Richard's mind, it returns to plague him in a dream-like vision. Having the form of a dialogue it becomes presented as Richard speaking to himself: 'What, do I fear

⁵⁰ Virgil K. Whitaker, *The Mirror up to Nature* (San Marino: Anderson, Ritchie & Simon: 1955) 104.

⁵¹ Sanders, 95.

⁵² *Niccolò Machiavelli: The Prince*, trans. Peter Bondanella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 288.

⁵³ Sanders 94-96.

⁵³ Sanders 94-96.

myself? There's none else by: / Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I. / Is there a murderer here? No – yes; I am' (V, iii, 184-6). Analyzing his speech, Jonathan Bate argues that Richard 'cannot sustain a language of being - 'I am', 'I am not'- because he keeps coming to particular roles' and points out that 'the moment when an authentic self ought to be asserted, as in a deathbed repentance (...) the self collapses.'⁵⁴

This collapse of the self brings with it, however, also a surge of emotions: 'Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself? / Alack! I love myself. Wherefore? For any good / That I myself have done unto myself? / O! no: alas! I rather hate myself' (V, iii, 188-191). As self-love is the key-word that characterizes Machiavellism, the soliloquy may also be understood as a dialogue between Richard the Machiavel and Richard the non-Machiavel. The self-love he always cultivated and that motivated him to crime turns for a brief moment into hate.

Analyzing the dialogic nature of a monologue, Jan Mukařovský, citing V. Egger in his book *Kapitoly z České Poetiky*, suggests that 'nemůžeme umlčet svou myšlenku (...) nasloucháme jí jako hlasu cizímu, neboť je v rozporu s našimi přáními'⁵⁵ [we cannot silence our thought, we listen to it as if it were a voice of a stranger because what it says is contrary to our wishes – translation mine]. Richard's dialogue is precisely this conversation with a strange voice. The long suppressed and unwanted ideas come forth and cannot be silenced.

Despite this momentary fit of conscience, Richard remains the Machiavel till the end of the play. Denigrating his opponent, he calls to his army 'Conscience is but a word that cowards use' (V, iii, 311). There is nothing that would divert him from his desire for power, only his death.

Combining the qualities of the Machiavel and the medieval Vice, Richard is a clever entertainer that knows how to manipulate. Presenting his villainy as natural, he uses his ability to dissemble with confidence. This eventually brings him the crown and power he always desired. Unrepentant and remorseless, Richard can therefore be considered as one of the few villains that truly succeed.

⁵⁴ Bate, 119.

⁵⁵ Jan Mukařovský, *Kapitoly z České Poetiky, Díl První* (Praha: Svoboda, 1948) 142.

2.2 Iago

Sharing with Richard the ability to pretend, Iago is another villain whose object is absolute power. However, while Richard's ambition is self-advancement and the attainment of the crown, Iago's desire is nothing worse than to destroy those he hates. Plotting alone and in secret, he uses the image of an honest man to achieve his aims. A skillful manipulator and an excellent speaker that knows how to profit on his words, Iago works mainly on the psychological level implanting his own feelings and ideas into the minds of others. Aware of his mental superiority, he attacks others where they are most vulnerable masquerading his evil as goodness.

Considered the most insidious of all Shakespearean villains, Iago's villainy tends to be seen as problematic because he seems to lack any proper motive. While Kenneth Muir lists pathological jealousy of his wife and love of Desdemona as his main reasons,¹ G. M. Matthews argues that racial prejudices are the only source of Iago's hatred and states that any other reasons are mere justifications of his conduct.² Concentrating rather on the psychology of the character, A. C. Bradley criticizes such views in his *Shakespearean Tragedy* and states that Iago continually delivers reasons for his actions only because he himself does not understand his real motive which is his desire to 'heighten the sense of power or superiority.'³

As hardly anything is known of Iago's past, save what is revealed in the course of the play, interpretations concerning his real motive are innumerable. While his psychology certainly plays an important role here, so do his feelings towards other characters. His hatred of Othello is far from negligible and Iago refers to it several times. Never forgetting to emphasize the general's racial Otherness, he always describes him as an ignorant, gullible man with an insatiable sexual appetite.

Yet Michael Cassio does not fare any better in Iago's eyes. Though of the same skin colour, he is despised for his fair complexion, studies of warfare and the fact that he is a Florentine. As G. M. Matthews points out in his essay '*Othello* and the Dignity of Man,' Iago 'is sensitive to aliens.'⁴ Anyone foreign is a thorn in his side and earns his hatred, particularly, when he perceives that this person has done him some wrong.

Though intellectually gifted, capable and successful at selling his own ideas to other people, Iago is not lucky at promoting himself publicly. Combined with his tendency to feel slighted

¹ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Penguin Books, 1968) 20.

² G. M. Matthews, "*Othello* and the Dignity of Man," *Shakespeare in a Changing World*, ed. Arnold Kettle (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964) 131.

³ Andrew Cecil Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1992) 196.

⁴ Matthews, 130.

whenever his qualities are not appreciated, his failure to succeed in life makes him perceive the assumed wrongs done to him by Othello and Cassio all the more. Iago's scheme thus becomes a kind of revenge, a means to heal his wounded ego.

As he states to Roderigo right at the beginning, he knows his worth: 'I know my price: I am worth no worse a place.'⁵ To highlight his merits, Iago puts a spin on his own achievements and denigrates those of others, in this case of Cassio whom he describes as 'A fellow almost damn'd in fair wife, / That never set a squadron in the field, / Nor the division of a battle knows / More than a spinster' (I, i, 21-24). By contrasting Cassio's 'bookish theoretic' (I, i, 24) with his practical experience, he seeks not so much to share his feeling of injustice as to intentionally degrade his rival and enhance his own image. As A. C. Bradley points out, Cassio's knowledge is not as purely theoretical as Iago proposes here because Desdemona later refers to him as to 'A man that (...) Shar'd dangers with you [Othello]' (III, iv, 98-100).⁶

Iago willingly tampers with the facts which is necessary for his manipulation of Roderigo. Yet this tendency is also present in his soliloquies. Iago who has no proof of his wife's infidelity decides to suspect both Othello (I, iii, 386-390, II, i, 397-398) and Cassio (II, i, 309) despite Emilia's protestation: 'Some such squire he was / That turn'd your wit the seamy side without, / And made you to suspect me with the Moor' (IV, ii, 144-146). It is fear and insecurity that dominate his inner world and give rise to thoughts that 'like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards' (II, i, 299).

Iago knows what he is talking about when he warns Othello against jealousy and describes it as 'the green-ey'd monster, which doth mock / The meat it feeds on' (III, iii, 167-168). The persistent feeling of envy that, once lost control of, shapes the world to its own reality is not unknown to him. As he himself admits: 'oft my jealousy / Shapes faults that are not' (III, iii, 148-149). Keenly aware of his own inner mechanism, Iago shows no resistance to this negative force.

Rather than considering it a feeling he must fight against, he uses it as a base for his generalizations, letting it shape his outlook on life. Affection becomes non-existent as it is replaced by the conviction that lust and need for sexual gratification are commonplace. In such a view, the assumption that women are promiscuous turns into certainty.

As this conception of female sexuality leaves little room for the spiritual and emotional side of love, Iago's approach to women characterizes vulgarity. Emilia is 'a foolish wife' (III, iii, 305), 'villainous whore' (V, ii, 233) and 'filth' (V, ii, 236) while women in general 'rise to play,

⁵ William Shakespeare, "Othello, The Moor of Venice," *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) I, i, 2. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁶ Bradley, 182.

and go to bed to work' (II, i, 115) and are 'players in (...) housewifery, and housewives in (...) beds' (II, i, 112). Even though Iago knows that Desdemona does not correspond to his view of women and privately admits her good qualities (II, iii, 357-358) as well as her attractiveness (II, i, 294-295), he does not hesitate to relegate her to a mere tool in his scheme: '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' (II, i, 293-296).

Because jealousy is often perceived as a feeling generated by the insecurity of love and because Iago shows hardly any affection towards his wife and towards females in general, his jealousy often seems to be an implausible motive. This is what lies at the core of many essays on Iago's motive-hunting which A. C. Bradley so criticizes. In his view, Iago is not driven by hatred, ambition and passions but by 'his faith that egoism is the right and proper thing.'⁷ What motivates him is his failure and the triumph of goodness which he despises and considers foolish.⁸

Self-interest stressed by A. C. Bradley certainly plays here an important role as well as Iago's desire to humiliate goodness. Scorning the servants who follow their masters and praising those who 'trimm'd in forms and visages of duty, / Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves' (I, i, 50-51), Iago refuses to be 'his master's ass' (I, i, 47). Respect for the order of society and submission to it earn his contempt and so do those who support it and rely on it. The trusting Othello is disdained for his disposition to be 'as tenderly (...) led by the nose / As asses are' (I, iii, 401-402) while Cassio for his courtesy and politeness.

Yet the reasons supplied by Iago, and dismissed by A. C. Bradley, are not a mere smokescreen. As Martin Hilský points out, Iago is a racist.⁹ The allusions to Othello's skin constantly permeate his speech. In the riotous street scene he relishes to call him 'an old black ram,' and 'a Barbary horse' (I, i, 89-113) while later he emphasizes the racial difference by drinking 'to the health of black Othello' (II, iii, 32).

Uttered with similar zest, allusions to Othello's sexual drive are equally common. He is 'lusty' (II, i, 297) and 'fram'd to make women false' (I, iii, 398). His intercourse with Desdemona that takes in Iago's bawdy language the form of sheep breeding (I, i, 89-90) is so much on Iago's mind that it serves him as a vehicle for the description of the drinking incident: 'Friends all but now, even now, / In quarter, and in terms like bride and groom / Divesting them for bed' (II, iii, 174-176). Highlighting Othello's skin colour and imparting him strong sexual appetite, Iago creates the stereotype of the sexually hyperactive black man.

⁷ Bradley, 190-193.

⁸ Bradley, 190.

⁹ *William Shakespeare: Othello, the Moor of Venice*, trans. Martin Hilský (Brno: Atlantis, 2006) 27.

Painting sensual images, his Othello possesses uncontrollable animal sex drive that turns him into and uncivilized barbarian. Yet the real Othello differs from the one that Iago creates in his mind. His reaction to the brawl on Cyprus: 'For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl' (II, iii, 167) reveals that he is more civilized than Iago who, in fact, is responsible for the disturbance.

Iago knows how to manipulate and how to use his verbal skills. This becomes apparent already in the first scene where he incites Roderigo to spoil Othello's happiness by telling Desdemona's father about the secret wedding. Harboring immense hatred against Othello, he is the one responsible for stirring Brabantio up. Not only because he is the instigator but also because it is his anonymous voice that piques Brabantio's interest.

His boisterous exclamations 'Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves! / Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags! / Thieves! thieves!' (I, i, 80-82) contrast with Roderigo's mild 'What, ho! Brabantio! Signior Brabantio, ho!' (I, i, 79). Lynne Magnusson points out that one of Iago's 'key strategies for public situations is voice mediation' - Iago either appropriates 'other voices to his use' or takes 'the credit of an intermediate voice.'¹⁰ The scene with Brabantio is the example of the latter appropriation because Iago takes here on the voice that 'has power in public to stir up trouble, but little chance (...) to elicit belief.'¹¹

Iago's obscene language and sexual innuendos that translate the events into vivid images arouse Brabantio's emotions but they present the obscure speaker as an offender whose story is too implausible and who deserves to be called a 'profane wretch' (I, i, 114) and 'a villain' (I, i, 118). Roderigo's politeness, on the other hand, is a mark of a gentleman, of a social status and he appeals to it to be believed: 'Do not believe / That, from the sense of all civility, / I thus would play and trifle with your reverence' (I, i, 131-133). Iago, who is aware that Roderigo's involvement in this public disturbance will help him promote the information he has with maximum effect, employs him accordingly to remain anonymous in his schemes against Othello.

Sensitive to social environment, he knows how to profit on Roderigo's social status and his voice. The riotous street scene is, however, only a small sample of his verbal skills which could be interpreted in the light of Pierre Bourdieu's theory published under the title *The Economic of Linguistic Exchanges*. Analyzing the production of speech, Pierre Bourdieu

¹⁰ Lynne Magnusson, "Language and Symbolic Capital in *Othello*," *Shakespeare and Language*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 221.

¹¹ Magnusson, 221.

argues that:

Discourse is a symbolic asset which can receive different values depending on the market on which it is offered. Linguistic competence (...) functions as linguistic capital in relationship with a certain market.¹²

Because of this, 'one of the most important factors bearing on linguistic production [is], as he argues, 'the anticipation of profit' which means that a speaker is governed by 'the practical expectation (...) of receiving a high or low price for one's discourse.'¹³

Iago, who is aware of his own qualities knows exactly when to speak and what to say to capitalize as much as he can on his speech. This ability makes him an excellent rhetorician but it also motivates him to speak derisively of different speech styles, Othello's style is for him a 'bombast (...) / Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war' (I, i, 13-14) while Cassio's speech is just 'mere prattle' (I, i, 26). Hated for personal and professional reasons, these two men are also despised on the linguistic level.

Being a 'verbal chameleon,' as Lynne Magnusson calls him, Iago always pays attention to the social environment he finds himself in.¹⁴ Talking Roderigo out of drowning, he delivers an anti-sermon, as Martin Hilský points out, full of conventional phrases¹⁵ while later, inciting him to attack Cassio, he limits himself to brief commands such as 'I pray you, after the lieutenant; go' (II, iii, 138) and 'Away, I say! go out and cry – a mutiny' (II, iii, 152) only to pretend in public 'I cannot speak / Any beginning to this peevish odds' (II, iii, 179-180).¹⁶ There is a striking difference between the public and private Iago which supports his image of an honest soldier he enjoys.

Yet his aim is not mere reputation that would enable him to plot in secret. As Lynne Magnusson shows, he seeks 'an enhancement of his 'voice potential' which he also achieves when Othello later concludes 'I know, Iago, / Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter, / Making it light to Cassio' (II, iii, 242-244).¹⁷ Using Pierre Bourdieu's terminology, he receives a high price for his discourse.

Knowing that the value of his linguistic capital depends on the market, Iago tries and

¹² Pierre Bourdieu, "The Economic of Linguistic Exchanges," 20 July 2013 <http://webspaces.qmul.ac.uk/sbaumgarten/Pierre%20Bourdieu_The%20Economics%20of%20Linguistic%20Exchanges.pdf>. 651

¹³ Bourdieu, 653-655.

¹⁴ Magnusson, 220.

¹⁵ Hilský, 131.

¹⁶ Magnusson, 222-223.

¹⁷ Magnusson, 223.

succeeds in creating demand for it. Therefore, when Montano's wound and Cassio's shame turn him into the only man able to recount what happened, Iago is in no hurry to proceed. Rather, he pretends to be reluctant to speak and feigns regret 'And would in action glorious I had lost / Those legs that brought me to a part of it!' (II, iii, 181-182) and 'I had rather have this tongue cut from my mouth / Than it should do offence to Michael Cassio' (II, iii, 216-217). All this in reality increases the gravity of the situation and, also, the price of his discourse.

As Pierre Bourdieu suggests, 'the social value of linguistic products is only placed on them in their relationship to the market,' by which he means that 'their *distinctive value* is determined' by the 'competition (...) to all other products.'¹⁸ Furthermore, he argues that 'the dominant competence functions as a linguistic capital securing a profit of distinctiveness in its relationship with other competences.'¹⁹ Applied to Iago, it can be said that his dominant position on the market earns his linguistic capital a distinctive social value. Now it is Iago who is to 'look with care about the town, / And silence those whom this vile brawl distracted' (II, iii, 250-251).

This victory entails, moreover, Cassio's humiliation. Not only that he lost his reputation, he was also reduced to speak in a manner he despises: 'Drunk? and speak parrot? and squabble? swagger? swear? and discourse / fustian with one's own shadow?' (II, iii, 273-274). Iago manages to deprive Cassio, at least for a moment, of his graceful style, speech full of metaphors.

Yet his supreme position is not won by the principles of fair competition. Although all seems to be legitimate, Iago points to it when he says 'Yet, I persuade myself, to speak the truth / Shall nothing wrong him' (II, iii, 118-119), the market is manipulated. Not only that Roderigo is persuaded to anger Cassio, also Montano is poisoned against him by Iago's: 'He is a soldier fit to stand by Caesar / And give direction; and do but see his vice' (II, iii, 122-123). Even linguistic market is vulnerable to corruption and Iago takes advantage of it.

Although these tactics remain obscure till the end, they are more clearly manifested on the level of words. Robert B. Heilman speaks of 'a short-term economics' and demonstrates how economic terms permeate Iago's language.²⁰ Money becomes suggested already in the first act when Roderigo complains 'I take it much unkindly / That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse, / As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this' (I, i, 1-3). Although paid by Roderigo to

¹⁸ Bourdieu, 654.

¹⁹ Bourdieu, 654.

²⁰ Robert B. Heilman, *Magic in the Web* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1956) 82.

help him win Desdemona's love, Iago exploits him, as he himself acknowledges: 'I (...) should profane / If I would time expend with such a snipe / But for my sport and profit' (I, iii, 383-385), and later again: 'He calls me to a restitution large / Of gold, and jewels that I bobb'd from him, / As gifts to Desdemona' (V, i, 15-17).

The image of Iago as the owner of Roderigo's purse reveals, as Robert B. Heilman argues, the monetary character of their friendship which becomes stressed also later when Iago asks him to fill his 'purse with money' (I, iii, 344) and when Roderigo decides to sell all his land (I, iii, 380).²¹

Economic terms, so typical for Iago, become, however, most conspicuous in his speech on the good name:

Iago: Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls:
Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

(III, iii, 156-162)

As Robert B. Heilman points out, Iago works here with the 'images of theft' which he evokes by the use of such verbs as 'steal,' 'filch,' 'rob' and the 'value terms' such as 'jewel,' 'purse,' 'enriches,' 'makes poor.'²² This emphasizes the theme of gain and loss that belongs into the sphere of economics. Because of that, Iago presents, Robert B. Heilman argues, nonmaterial 'value of 'good name' (...) in 'economic' terms.'²³

The theme of stealing, employed by Iago in his speech, may, however, also be perceived as slightly ironic. Iago is, above all, a thief. He deprives Roderigo of his money, Cassio of his reputation and Othello of his name as well as marital happiness. However, unlike an ordinary thief, Iago likes to confer his own characteristic trait on others, as can be seen when Cassio comes to ask Desdemona for help.²⁴ Seeing him leave, Iago assures Othello 'Cassio, my lord? No, sure, I cannot think it, / That he would steal away so guilty-like, / Seeing you coming'

²¹ Heilman, 75.

²² Heilman, 74.

²³ Heilman, 74.

²⁴ Heilman, 79.

(III, iii, 39-41).

Iago is soon to present Cassio as a man that steals Desdemona's love and, using the opportunity, he already prepares the ground for it by making him depart like a thief. Yet Cassio is not the only one who is to externalize a feature of Iago's own character. Othello is to suffer deep pangs of jealousy similar to those that plague Iago himself.

Iago knows what he is speaking about when he later warns Othello 'O! beware, my lord, of jealousy; / It is the green-ey'd monster, which doth mock / The meat it feeds on' (III, iii, 166-168). This friendly advice and his confession that 'I, perchance, am vicious in my guess / (As, I confess, it is my nature's plague / To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy / shapes faults that are not)' (III, iii, 146-149) are moments when he publicly reveals his true character. Ironically, Othello is unable to realize that this is the real Iago.

Such a failure makes Kenneth Muir adopt the opinion that Othello is 'a gullible hero.'²⁵ Concentrating only on Othello's reaction, this attitude omits other important factors such as Iago's tactic, his image and also Othello's status of the Other. Proceeding similarly as he did in Cassio's case, Iago plays the role of an unwilling informer who has to be pushed to reveal the truth. Dangling his thought in front of Othello, he feeds him with apologies for his character and philosophical thoughts on duty. As in the scene with Brabantio, Iago arouses emotions and generates the feeling of uncertainty.

When Othello asks 'What does thou mean?' (III, iii, 156), Iago supplies his speech on good name which seems to imply that some information of importance will follow. But Iago never discloses a concrete fact, instead, he delivers his own experience with jealousy and lets Othello guess the reason 'Why? why is this? / Think'st thou, I'd make a life of jealousy' (III, iii, 177-178). Only after Othello assured himself that he could never be jealous, Iago strikes and produces facts, Desdemona's deception of her father 'She did deceive her father, marrying you; / And, when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks, / She lov'd them most' (III, iii, 205-207) and the character of the Venetian ladies of which Othello knows nothing 'I know our country disposition well; / In Venice they do let Heaven see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands' (III, iii, 202-204).

Iago tampers with the facts although what he presents seems difficult to doubt. Alluding to the senate scene, he seems to repeat what was already mentioned to Othello, Brabantio's warning 'Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: / She has deceived her father, and may thee' (I, iii, 293-294) and his disbelief that 'A maiden never bold; / (...) in spite of nature, / To

²⁵ Muir, 38.

fall in love with what she fear'd to look on! / It is a judgement main'd (...) / That will confess perfection so could err / Against all rules of nature' (I, iii, 95-102). In reality, however, Iago changes the meaning of the words.

As G. M. Matthews points out in his essay 'Othello and the Dignity of Man,' for Brabantio it was impossible that Desdemona could ever fall in love with Othello, he consider it against her character, her nature, but Iago adjusts Brabantio's sentence in order to imply Desdemona's sexual interest.²⁶ When Othello says a few lines later 'And yet, how nature erring from itself' (III, iii, 228), Iago again supplies an explanation that interprets Desdemona as a sexually active and deceitful woman: 'Not to affect many proposed matches / Of her own clime, complexion and degree, / (...) one may smell in such a will most rank, / Foul disproportion, thought unnatural' (III, iii, 230-234). Emphasizing social and racial differences, Iago slowly destroys Othello's idea that Desdemona ever loved him for what he was.

Similarly, her ability to stand up for Othello is turned into a propensity for deceit: 'She that so young could give out such a seeming, / To seel her father's eyes up (...) / He thought 'twas witchcraft' (III, iii, 210-213). Alluding again to what has been said, Iago takes up the topic of witchcraft for which Brabantio blamed Othello and ascribes it to Desdemona. Twisting one fact after another, he aims to convince Othello that he does not know his wife and, more crucially, that he can never know her.²⁷

Aware of his otherness, Othello relies on Iago: 'This honest creature doubtless / Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds' (III, iii, 243-244). G.M. Matthews explains Iago's honesty as 'a definite limitation' and claims that 'Iago is imprisoned within the boundaries of the epithet as a modern commodity is imprisoned within the slogan advertising it.'²⁸ Unlike Robert B. Heilman who interprets Iago's decision 'I'll set down the pegs that make this music, / As honest as I am' (II, i, 201-202) only as Iago's decision to 'bring discord where there is harmony,'²⁹ G.M. Matthews argues that Iago 'seems to recognize the limiting force of the description so automatically attached to him by the savage way he quotes it himself.'³⁰

Iago succeeds in bringing discord into the 'Othello music,' Othello's speech, because he is aware of how much he can capitalize on his good name. He cultivates this limitation in order to gain power, particularly over Othello. As Pierre Bourdieu says: 'Language is (...) also an instrument of power. A person speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed,

²⁶ Matthews, 132-133.

²⁷ Matthews, 140.

²⁸ Matthews, 134.

²⁹ Heilman, 115.

³⁰ Matthews, 134.

obeyed, respected, distinguished.³¹

Othello's belief in Iago's honesty and Iago's power are closely linked and when Iago decides to abuse his power he does so through his language. Starting the conversation with the simple question 'My noble lord- / (...) Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady, / Know of your love?' (III, iii, 94-97), Iago introduces the subject which he develops by a series of questions. Because Othello's speech is characterized by monologues, James Calderwood describes this situation in his book *The Properties of Othello* as a moment when 'Othello finds himself in Iago's dialogistic territory,' a place of 'musings meant to be overheard and silences loud with implication.'³²

Though an excellent speaker, Iago shines in private conversations, not in public speaking, and, for that reason, he naturally comes to dominate Othello. Echoing Othello by his short sentences 'Honest, my lord?' and 'Think, my lord?' (III, iii, 105-109), he implies more than he says. His victory comes with his statement 'Men should be what they seem; / Or, those that be not, would they might seem none!' (III, iii, 127-128) to which Othello answers 'Certain, men should be what they seem' (III, iii, 129). At this crucial point, Iago makes Othello repeat his words by which he manages to get him under his control.

It is also no coincidence that the sentences which get repeated concern honesty, the theme important to both men. However, although expressing the same opinion, Iago's statement is ironic because he is not what he seems. The whole dialogue, therefore, becomes characterized by two kinds of honesty – apparent and genuine one. Explaining success of Iago's apparent honesty, Robert B. Heilman argues that 'dishonesty can effect its purposes by talking honesty.'³³

Being an ensign, Iago presents his image of a good and honest soldier in a manner that corresponds to his occupation. By saying 'I must show a flag and sign of love, / Which is indeed but sign' (I, i, 156-157) he calls his seeming honesty a 'sign of love.' In terms of the Renaissance ideal of beauty, Iago's seeming goodness matches his physical shape while Othello's black skin considered by the same standards less perfect does not reflect his inner beauty.

James Calderwood describes this as the 'rupture between outward signifiers and inward signifieds, between Moor's evil-seeming black face and his 'perfect soul,' between his ancient's honest-seeming white exterior and the ulcerous evil that breeds around his heart.'³⁴

³¹ Bourdieu, 648.

³² James L. Calderwood, *The Properties of Othello* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989) 67.

³³ Heilman, 49.

³⁴ Calderwood, 53.

³⁵ Calderwood, 54.

He further points out that because of his misrepresentation, Othello is forced to adopt Desdemona as 'the sign for his soul' – her outward beauty stands for Othello's inner virtue and is a means Othello uses to construe his identity.³⁵

Because of this, Iago's attack on Desdemona has dire consequences for Othello. Attacking her, Iago attacks the way Othello's views his Otherness. How it effects Othello becomes apparent from his sentence: 'Her name, that was as fresh / As Dian's visage, is now begrim'd and black / As mine own face' (III, iii, 387-389).

Seeing that Desdemona's reputation is besmirched, Othello substitutes her for Iago. His blackness and Iago's evil thus become inseparable. In their symbolic marriage, Othello elevates Iago to the position of a lieutenant, but his 'Now art thou my lieutenant,' (III, iii, 479) suggests, as James Calderwood explains, that from now on Iago will function 'in lieu of him.'³⁶ Their exchange of promises resembles, as Martin Hilský points out, also a revenge pact with demonic overtones.³⁷

Just like a devil, Iago satisfies Othello's wish for a proof. First, he 'ocularizes his language,' as James Calderwood calls it, and vividly describes Cassio's passion for Desdemona.³⁸ Taunting Othello 'yet we see nothing done; / She may be honest yet' (III, iii, 434-435), Iago increases the tension by letting Othello suffer from uncertainty, only then he produces the handkerchief.

Considering Othello's description of the handkerchief and his sentence 'there's magic in the web of it' (III, iv, 74), Robert B. Heilman argues that the handkerchief symbolizes love and that Iago takes all magic out of it.³⁹ G.M. Matthews, on the other hand, points out that Othello, who becomes mentally dominated by Iago, imbues the handkerchief with more importance than it really has, which leads him to the conclusion that it is Iago's magic that is in it and he corroborates his point of view with Desdemona's scepticism 'Sure, there's some wonder in this handkerchief' (III, iv, 106).⁴⁰ Stressing two different kinds of magic, both interpretations see Iago as the desecrator of the handkerchief and also of Othello and Desdemona's love.

Iago the economist transforms the handkerchief into a mere commodity and trades it for Othello's madness. Doing so, he also turns Desdemona into a mere prostitute. Pierre Bourdieu

³⁵ Calderwood, 54.

³⁶ Calderwood, 55.

³⁷ Hilský, 241.

³⁸ Calderwood, 61.

³⁹ Heilman, 212.

⁴⁰ Matthews, 136.

argues that communication is based on an 'authority-belief relation' and that 'listening is believing.'⁴¹ Despite Othello's conviction that 'seeing is believing,' he becomes poisoned against Desdemona by listening to Iago whose authority he, after the handkerchief episode, does not doubt.

Iago's ultimate victory is Othello's change of diction. His threat 'I'll tear her all to pieces' (III, iii, 433) and exclamation 'O, blood, blood, blood!' (III, iv, 453) reveal that Iago succeeded in turning him into a beast. Othello's speech no longer resembles the elegant monologues from the first act but disintegrates into isolated words such as 'Handkerchief – confessions - handkerchief' (IV, i, 39-40) while Desdemona becomes dismembered into 'Noses, ears and lips' (IV, i, 42). Calling this state 'a verbal epilepsy,' James Calderwood points out how Othello's 'nonlanguage' accompanies his 'nonlove.'⁴²

Iago does his best to reduce Othello to the lowest level imaginable. Speaking of Othello's symptoms of epilepsy, he describes him to Cassio as an animal that 'foams at mouth' and 'breaks out to savage madness' (IV, i, 55-56). At the same time, however, he goads Othello "Would you would bear your fortune like a man' and comforts him by generalizations 'Think, every bearded fellow, that's but yok'd' (IV, i, 67). Yet, as G.M. Matthews points out, he succeeds only partly because Othello does not kill Desdemona out of hate, but rather out of duty.⁴³

Iago manages to force Othello his own speech and to make of him the beast he considers him to be. Although very successful, he proves to be a better short-term strategist than a long-term planner. His plan works out well until it is thwarted by consequences he does not foresee. Scorning the traditional social order, he is betrayed by Emilia who despite her practical view of the world remains a loyal servant to Desdemona and clears her name.

The end of the play reveals him in a rather desperate situation. Trying to save himself as everything collapses. But even despite his failure, Iago keeps his dignity. Rather than divulging his own non-rational hatred for Othello, he keeps silent, knowing that he would not profit by speaking.

Iago's silence imparts his evil a touch of mystery. Harboring immense inexplicable malice inside of himself, he represents evil that uses intellect to succeed but remains governed by emotions. His cynicism, hatred and desire to destroy that are hidden under his image of honesty make Iago the most dangerous villain.

⁴¹ Bourdieu, 649.

⁴² Calderwood, 62-63.

⁴³ Matthews, 141.

3.

The Villains with the Cause of Justice

Finding themselves in societies that determine their position, Caliban, Edmund and Shylock are characters whose discourse is dominated by the theme of justice. Though different in their methods, all three villains at some point strongly revolt against their social system. This negative reaction to social status influences their language to the extent that it inevitably becomes interconnected with the cause they fight for. Consequently, the study of their characters entails a detailed analysis of their use of language by which they defend their cause as well as of their positions within the social contexts of the plays.

3.1 Shylock

Culminating in a trial, Shylock's view of justice may be seen as the most challenging case of them all. This complexity is due to the Christian/Jew, merchant/usurer and law/mercy polarities that become in the course of the play so entwined that it is hardly surprising that the final law-suit tends to be a subject to many different interpretations. The crucial aspect that determines the light in which Shylock is seen is the way in which Portia's role is understood. Her speech on mercy may namely be interpreted in two different ways: either as a device liable to the medium of theatre or as a gateway to a juridical masterpiece.

Shylock and Antonio are more than representatives of different religions, they are competitors, merchants with conflicting views on profit and also individuals with their own limited opinions. This complexity is manifested already in Shylock's first aside where the subjects of religion and business appear close together '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.'¹ Antonio's 'low simplicity' both offends Shylock and reduces his profits. In his eyes, Antonio attempts to do business he does not fully understand.

But Shylock's critique of his rival's approach towards moneylending extends much beyond this simple business opinion. Being a Jew, he follows the laws listed in the Torah, the first five books of the Jewish Bible that roughly correspond to the Christian Old Testament.² Although acknowledged by Antonio, the doctrine present in the Old Testament is not followed by him for he, as a Christian, is released from the obligation of this law - for him it

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) I, iii, 41-44. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

² American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, "The *Torah* (Written Law): An Overview," *Jewish Virtual Library*, 2013, 5 Jan. 2013 <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/The_Written_Law.html>.

was fulfilled by Jesus.³

Antonio never cites any biblical text, yet his approach towards usury tends to reflect all negative attitudes that the Bible contains. Championing profit-free lending and borrowing, his opinions on moneylending echo the widespread arguments against the charging of any interest, best expressed in Thomas Wilson's *A Discourse upon Usury by Way of Dialogue and Orations*. Here Wilson claims that 'all lending in respect of time for any gain, be it never so little, is usury (...) because we are commanded to lend freely.'⁴

Ubiquitous and pervasive, these religious differences seem to dominate the disagreement of the two merchants as they are the basis for, what could be called, conflicting business philosophies. The conversation in the scene where the terms of the bond are determined shows this most clearly (I, iii). While for Antonio any interest is usury, Shylock speaks of 'well-won thrift' (I, iii), a deserved profit that leads to wealth, and to corroborate his point of view he readily supplies the biblical story of Jacob (I, iii, 75-89).

In Shylock's narrative Jacob gives nature a helping hand, rather than deceives or robs Laban of his share, in other words, he decides to be the master of his fate and undertakes a venture. Discarding Antonio's idea that Jacob was an instrument in God's hands, Shylock presents moneylending as a commercial opportunity and himself as a self-made man whose money breeds as fast as sheep (I, iii, 95). Though the later trial scene makes him abandon this view of himself and demonstrate the propensity to kill ascribed to him, this conversation shows him as a man that rebels against the values of society. His use of the word 'thrift' by which he calls his profit is, next to the story of Jacob, another way how he reveals his different attitude.

Shylock's identity is created by discourses not only within but also outside the play. His reactions and statements may be thus seen as the results of what both Foucault and Pêcheux see as the 'conflictual nature of discourse' - the fact that it is always in dialogue and in struggle with other discourses.⁵ Explaining Pêcheux's work in her book on discourse, Sara Mills points out that it is possible to come to a position of disidentification that helps us 'not only locate and isolate the ways in which we as subjects have been constructed and subjected but (...) also map out for ourselves new terrains in which we can construct different and potentially more liberating ways in which we can exist'.⁶

Shylock's tendency to use the word 'thrift' rather than 'usury' or 'increase' may be seen as an

³ M. Lindsay Kaplan, *William Shakespeare The Merchant of Venice text and contexts* (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2002) 244.

⁴ Thomas Wilson, "A Discourse upon Usury by Way of Dialogue and Orations," *William Shakespeare The Merchant of Venice text and contexts*, ed. M. Lindsay Kaplan (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2002) 196-199.

⁵ Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997) 14.

⁶ Mills, 15.

example of this disidentification and effort to find a new terrain liberated from the negative discourse on usury. His indignation at being considered a usurer illustrates how far that label offends him: 'Let him look to his bond: he was wont to call me usurer' (III, i, 45-46). His understanding of inevitability of usury leads him to speak about it in terms of a progressive economist, his attitude is close to the pragmatic conclusion expressed by Frances Bacon in his essay *Of Usury*: 'to speak of the abolishing of usury is idle. All states have ever had it.'⁷

That Shylock dissociates himself from usury is, however, most evident in his threats towards Antonio 'he was wont to call me / usurer; - let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian / courtesy; - let him look to his bond.' (III, i, 45-47). The label of a usurer is an offence for Shylock while Antonio's bankruptcy presents a clear proof that moneylending cannot be practised without a fee.

This changes in the course of the play because Shylock's insistence on the bond goes hand in hand with his growing decision to embrace the long to him ascribed general characteristics of a Jewish usurer 'Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause, / But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs' (III, iii, 7-8). The Hebrew word 'neshech' meaning 'to bite' and usually translated as usury takes here the shape of Shylock that will, like a dog, attack and bite Antonio. De Pomis' phrase that 'the Jews do 'bite' the Christians with usury'⁸ becomes in Shylock's speech grotesquely explicit.

Shylock offers a new interpretation of usury, yet he is no enlightened thinker that would adjust his interest rate to ease the financial burden of a borrower. Antonio's account of his rival's business dealings offers a picture of an unscrupulous moneylender that makes his debtors suffer 'I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures / Many that have at times made moan to me;' (III, iii, 22-23). Although it is his rival that speaks, Shylock's behaviour and language have features that could be easily ascribed to a usurer.

His conversation with Bassanio proves it:

Shylock: Three thousand ducats - well.

Bassanio: Aye, sir, for three months.

Shylock: For three months – well.

Bassanio: For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

Shylock: Antonio shall become bound – well.

Bassanio: May you stead me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your

⁷ Francis Bacon, "Of Usury," *William Shakespeare The Merchant of Venice text and contexts*, ed. M. Lindsay Kaplan (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2002) 208.

⁸ Kaplan, 219.

answer?

(I, iii, 1-7)

Shylock repeats all the facts with most care and to the greatest effect. Such absent-mindedness may give Bassanio the feeling that he has the whole situation under control but, as Lawrence Danson points out in his book *The Harmonies of The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock's seeming feebleness of mind is just a part of a clever strategy for it is always Shylock, the moneylender, who has the last word.⁹

A prototype of a modern banker, Shylock accepts words and profits on them by meaning more than he says. Leaving thus 'shall' out of Bassanio's statement 'Antonio shall be bound', he cleverly manages to allude to his power over Antonio.¹⁰ This phenomenon described first by Lawrence Danson becomes further expounded by Martin Hilský in his essay 'Kupec Benátský' where he highlights the importance of the word 'well' which emphasizes Shylock's sinister intentions.¹¹

Economical to the utmost extent, Shylock is able to say much by speaking very little. His reticence holds Bassanio in check and he relishes his control of the situation, letting him ask one question after another: 'My you stead me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your answer?' (I, iii, 6-7). Then instead of giving a straightforward answer, he sums up all the facts prolonging the insecurity and replies that 'Antonio is a good man' (I, iii, 10). Correcting Bassanio's assertion of Antonio's moral character by remarking that by 'a good man' he means that Antonio is solvent, he becomes the director of the whole dialogue. Not even misunderstanding catches him off balance and his sharp wit makes him cash on two meanings for the price of one.¹²

Linguistically gifted, he never stops being in charge of the dialogue:

Shylock: (...) I think I may take his bond.

Bassanio: Be assured you may.

Shylock: I will be assured I may; and, that I may be assured, I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

(I, iii, 28-31)

Emphasizing Bassanio's 'be assured' by adding 'will', Shylock suddenly transforms Antonio's

⁹ Lawrence Danson, *The Harmonies of The Merchant of Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978) 139-140.

¹⁰ Danson, 140.

¹¹ Martin Hilský, *Shakespeare a Jevišť Svět* (Praha: Academia, 2010) 181.

¹² Danson, 140.

personal qualities into an utterance on risk-taking. His 'assurance' no longer implies moral reliability but financial security. As many times previously, Shylock again capitalizes on Bassanio's words. In this case, he manages, as Martin Hilský points out, to punish Bassanio for his improper familiarity.¹³

In the sphere of moneylending, even entering a contract comes with a price. Being exposed as a hypocrite, is the one Antonio is made to pay. Shylock's long speech 'signior Antonio, many a time and oft, / In the Rialto, you have rated me (...)' (I, iii, 105-128) reveals with irony Christian tendency to condemn moneylending while seeking help of a usurer. Transforming himself into an 'actor's actor', as Lawrence Danson calls it,¹⁴ and performing one character after another, Shylock skillfully acts out offences and humiliation he received.

Shylock has classical features of a usurer of which his language is one – both his words and his pauses in the speech are signs of verbal usury.¹⁵ Even the word 'thrift' tends to fit the vocabulary of a usurer once Shylock returns home to his 'unthrifty knave' (I, iii, 174) and bids Jessica to 'Fast bind, fast find; / A proverb never stale in thrifty mind' (I, iii, 54-55). Yet his character is challenging because he initially refuses the label of a usurer.

Shylock is very human. Once at home, he is a weary old man hesitating to accept Antonio's invitation. His final decision to go 'But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon / The prodigal Christian' (II, v, 14-15) echoes his desire to 'feed fat the ancient grudge' (I, iii, 46) from his first aside, yet his musings are devoid of formal hatred 'I am not bid for love; they flatter me' (II, v, 13). Shylock is no longer an unscrupulous usurer but a domestic man concerned with his household and in no mood for feasting.¹⁶

Lawrence Danson perceives his change as negative and argues that he loses attractiveness of a witty villain.¹⁷ Shylock's request to Jessica to 'stop my house's ears, I mean my casements' (II, v, 34) is, in his opinion, a 'pedantic explication of a plodding joke.'¹⁸ Yet rather than a joke, the sentence may be perceived as a metaphor where the windows of the house and Shylock's ears become interchangeable. Seen from this perspective, Shylock is a man without a need of his ghetto because he carries it within himself.

The private scene is, despite Lawrence Danson's criticism, important for it reveals Shylock as an ordinary man. Beside that, it shows him also as a father. Calling his daughter three times, sharing his doubts with her and finally warning her against the upcoming carnival may

¹³ Hilský, 183.

¹⁴ Danson, 154.

¹⁵ Hilský, 181-182.

¹⁶ Danson, 159.

¹⁷ Danson, 159-160.

¹⁸ Danson, 160.

imply his genuine interest in her despite John Russell Brown's opinion in that Shylock is not tender towards Jessica and that she is just a keeper of his property.¹⁹ Despite generating different interpretations, the father-daughter relationship is an important factor stimulating Shylock's revenge. Although gone, Jessica is later never too far from her father's thoughts, even at the trial Shylock argues 'I have a daughter; / 'Would any of the stock of Barrabas / Had been her husband, rather than a Christian' (IV, i, 295-297).

Shylock's self-confidence apparent in his discussion with Bassanio and his loss of control over the situation caused by the loss of his daughter and his wealth are mutually incompatible. The domestic scene functions as a bridge between these two extremes and if Shylock's agile wit turns into an incoherent train of thought, it can be understood more as a step towards the next outburst of personal feelings than as a sign of weakness. The striking contrast between public and private behaviour does not diminish Shylock's attractiveness as Lawrence Danson suggests, it moves it into the sphere of sympathy.

Shylock retains his powerful presence no longer due to his skillful scheming but due to his display of vulnerability. Sharing of feelings and doubts with the audience as happens in the private scene paves the ground for the strong response to Shylock's final defeat. The crucial speech in which he justifies his revenge 'to bait fish withal (...)' (III, i, 52-71) and his conversation with Tubal that follows short afterwards retain their spell precisely because they are emotionally charged. Anger, despair and desire for retribution lead to a straightforward conclusion – revenge.

A useless pound of Antonio's flesh becomes in Shylock's speech a precious trophy, interest for all the wrongs and indignities. Its turning point comes with the simple question 'what's his reason?' (III, i, 55). Although the following comparisons of Jews and Christians present no danger, when succeeding one after another, they create a trap easy to fall in.

As both Martin Hilský and Lawrence Danson point out, Shylock does not make difference between physical similarities and the ethical question on revenge.²⁰ Equality on the physical level thus swiftly turns into the right to retribution. At the end of the speech, personal hostility is transformed into a justified act of killing.

Shylock's 'if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that' (III, i, 61-62) rules out the option to be even better. What is proposed is the tactic 'eye for an eye' but further conversation with Tubal shows that this is just another illusion Shylock creates. The comment 'were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will' (III, i, 124) betrays the intent to

¹⁹ William Shakespeare, John Russel Brown, ed. *The Merchant of Venice* (London: Routledge, 1992) 41.

²⁰ Danson, 140.

abuse the state apparatus to satisfy personal ambition.

Though always present in the play, the polarity Jew-Christian takes on its importance with Shylock's 'And what's his reason? I am a Jew' (III, i, 55-56) and culminates at the court when he almost loses his name and becomes addressed in most cases simply as 'Jew'. Business rivalry recedes into the background as religious generalizations come to the forefront. The centuries long oppression that Jews had to endure emerges and strengthens Shylock's right to his bond.

This stress on different religions becomes occasionally so prominent that it gives the case almost biblical dimensions. Shylock's 'My deeds upon my head!' (IV, i, 205) echoes the statement of the Jewish people at the crucifixion of Jesus 'his blood be on us, and on our children' (Matthew 27:25).²¹ All these allusions revive the biblical story of the New Testament and cast Antonio into the role of Christ that is to be crucified.²² This also contributes to the paradox in which the Christian law is to endorse a morally wrong non-Christian demand for a human life.²³

Shylock's case proves to be the touchstone of Christian values and moral behaviour, a test in which the participants do not score as high as they should. This is not only because of their generalizations but, also, because of their pressure on Shylock to show mercy and drop the case. As Martin Hilský argues, they request reconciliation by showing hatred which turns Shylock, the accuser, into the accused.²⁴

These hidden accusation reveal that the apple of discord are also moral values as such. Rivals in moneylending, Shylock and Antonio uphold completely opposite views on finance. Shylock's 'Let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy; - let him look to his bond' (III, i, 46-47) and 'This is the fool that lent out money gratis. - Gaoler, look to him' (III, iii, 2-3) reveal that his aim is not only to gain a supreme position on the market but also to prove himself right. Money cannot be just given, it must be lend on interest and if his opponent is to pay for this truth by his body, the better.

Antonio's readiness to sign the contract and undergo such payment without remorse is similarly significant. Although his behaviour towards Shylock is hardly exemplary, his trade is understood as beneficial to society.²⁵ Antonio is thus like the merchant that Daniel Price extols in his work *The Merchant: A Sermon Preached at Paul's Cross*: 'the most diligent for

²¹ Kaplan, 95-100. also "The Holy Bible Online," *The Holy Bible Online Project*, 1994-2005, 14 Feb 2013 <<http://www.holybibleonline.net/>>. All future references to the Bible will be cited parenthetically in the text.

²² Hilský, 197-198.

²³ Hilský, 197.

²⁴ Hilský, 198.

²⁵ Hilský 178-179.

his life, the most assiduous in his labor, the most adventurous on the sea, the most beneficial to the land, the glory of his country, and the best pillar of his commonwealth'.²⁶ That also his fellow Christians see him as a paragon of virtues can be perceived from Salerio's descriptions of his argosies that are like 'like signiors and rich burghers on the flood' (I, i, 10) and that 'overpeer the petty traffickers, / That curtsy to them' (I, i, 12-13).

The vivid imaginative description casts Antonio into the role of a merchant-prince and makes the dangers of his venture aesthetically beautiful – in the case of shipwreck, his silk will 'enrobe the roaring waters' (I, i, 34).²⁷ Shylock's enterprise has, on the other hand, very little beauty in itself. He fits the description in Thomas Wilson's *A Discourse upon Usury* where usurers, unlike good merchants, are 'living idle at home (...) set out their money for profit, and so enrich themselves with the labor and travail of others'.²⁸

While Shylock earns money just to own them, Antonio gives them freely to his friend Bassanio and those in need. For him, as well as for Portia, they are merely a means to good life, music and entertainment,²⁹ not the purpose of life. Because of this, Shylock and Antonio become representatives of two opposing principles: of possessiveness and of generosity.³⁰ As the Bible praises the profession of a merchant saying 'again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man' (Matthew 13:45), Antonio is also an ideal Christian.

Acknowledging only Torah that roughly corresponds to the Old Testament, Shylock is a stranger to the Christian concept of mercy that is a part of the New Testament. For him, it is submission to law that demonstrates obedience to God's will and not grace bestowed from above.³¹ In this he differs from the Christians who believe in God's mercy and follow St. Paul who teaches them that 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth' (Romans 10:4).³²

Request for mercy that characterizes all the Christians in the courtroom is therefore nothing less than the true reflection of their religious doctrine. Portia's speech that locates mercy in 'the hearts of kings' (IV, i, 193) and her statement that 'earthly power doth then show likest God's / When mercy seasons justice' (IV, i, 195-196) build precisely on St. Paul's teachings and his statements that 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness' (Romans 10:10) and that 'we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law' (Galatians

²⁶ Daniel Price, "The Merchant: A Sermon Preached at Paul's Cross," *William Shakespeare The Merchant of Venice text and contexts*, ed. M. Lindsay Kaplan (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2002) 236.

²⁷ Hilský, 175.

²⁸ Wilson, 197.

²⁹ Brown, 53.

³⁰ Brown, 57.

³¹ Kaplan, 268.

³² Kaplan, 268.

10:16). God's mercy thus becomes interpreted as necessary because it is unavoidable to commit even a minor sin.

Portia explicitly stresses this point when she argues that 'in the course of justice none of us / Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy, / And that same prayer doth teach us all to render / The deeds of mercy' (IV, i, 198-201). Uniting law with mercy in her language, she echoes the *Sermon on the Mount* in the *Gospel of Matthew*, particularly the words of Jesus 'think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill' (Matthew 5:17) and suggests that mercy does not cancel the law but brings it to perfection.³³ Her explanation becomes so explicit that if Shylock paid closer attention he would realize that justice in a Christian city is always the outcome of both morality and law.

While Martin Hilský argues that Portia momentarily steps out of her role of a lawyer only to come back to it at the end of her speech,³⁴ Lawrence Danson claims that she never forsakes the legalistic concept of justice.³⁵ Although opinions on her speech differ, Shylock's reaction 'I crave the law, / The penalty and forfeit of my bond' (IV, i, 205-206) shows that her words have a rather opposite effect. Explaining this, both Martin Hilský and Lawrence Danson point out that the intention of Portia's speech is not to refute Shylock's statement as much as affirm his resolution.³⁶ The opposition of mercy and justice represented by Portia and Shylock respectively is therefore only one of the many illusions that the trial scene conveys. Rather than mercy and justice, the scene shows two concepts of justice.

The order in which these concepts appear in the Bible inspires Lindsay Kaplan in her book *The Merchant of Venice: Text and Contexts* to interpret the outcome of the trial in similar terms – Shylock's notion of justice is surpassed by Portia's one in a way the Mosaic law is surpassed by the teachings of Jesus.³⁷ Yet it could be argued that this comparison ignores Shylock's mistake in interpretation. Proclaiming 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth' (Ex. 21:24, Lev. 24:20, Deut. 19:21) the legal principle all wrong-doers should be subjected to, the Old Testament may seem to allow exactly that attitude which Shylock embodies. His behaviour motivated by the logic 'And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?' (III, i, 61) may seem quite in vein of the biblical 'eye for eye'. But, as Lawrence Danson argues, 'eye for eye' was in reality considered merciful justice because the culprits deserved a much harsher penalty.³⁸

Although Ellen Terry who played Portia several times explains her 'Tarry a little' (IV, i,

³³ Hilský, 202.

³⁴ Hilský, 202.

³⁵ Danson, 64.

³⁶ Hilský, 203 and Danson 62.

³⁷ Kaplan, 268.

³⁸ Danson, 109-110.

305) as an act of sudden inspiration,³⁹ it is more than likely that Portia's every move is the outcome of a very careful and studied plan. Opening her case with the question 'Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew' (IV, i, 173), Portia gives the semblance of impartiality. However, as Martin Hilský points out, this is far from reality because, being Bassanio's wife, her sympathies lie with Antonio from the beginning till the end, a fact that would immediately disqualify her, had the law-suit taken place in a real courtroom.⁴⁰

Knowing beforehand that statutes forbid Shylock to spill Christian blood, Portia, moreover, manipulates information she has and wilfully withholds from Shylock the scale of his punishment, assuring him instead that 'The Venetian law / Cannot impugn you as you do proceed' (IV, i, 176-177).⁴¹ Portia's final verdict demanding flesh without blood may likewise be considered legally treacherous. As Radim Seltenreich argues, blood is a natural part of flesh and should not be separated from it.⁴²

Portia's legal misconduct, however, moves the case from law-suits of everyday life into the realm of theatre where such trespasses do not count and where civil law changes into penal one in a snap of fingers.⁴³ In such a world, even an absurd and unrealistic trial over a literal pound of human flesh can easily take place. Antonio thus never tries to nullify the contract while no truly legal arguments, such as abuse of Antonio's financial distress,⁴⁴ are used against Shylock.

Yet despite all this, the trial scene may be understood, as Radim Seltenreich points out, in a way that anticipates the development in the field of jurisdiction and that enables to see Portia as a judge whose main object is to find a just law.⁴⁵ Her sentence 'Than must the Jew be merciful' (IV, i, 182) uttered quite shortly after her arrival seems to Shylock just another plea. His 'On what compulsion must I? Tell me that' (IV, i, 183) questions her statement as the notarial seal on his bond makes him sure of his victory.

From the legal point of view that honours freedom of contract and subjectivity of value, Shylock, indeed, has no cause for worries and may absolutely self-assuredly claim 'if you deny me, fie upon your law! / There is no force in the decrees of Venice' (VI, i, 101-102).⁴⁶ His bond is technically impugnable and cannot be quashed, a point Portia herself makes when

³⁹ Judith Cook, *Women in Shakespeare* (London: Virgin Books, 1990) 37.

⁴⁰ Hilský, 199.

⁴¹ Hilský, 203

⁴² Radim Seltenreich, "Shylock vs. Antonio: Shakespearův Kupec benátský ve světě práva," *William Shakespeare Kupec benátský*, ed. Dana Horáková (Praha: Národní divadlo, 2009) 70.

⁴³ Seltenreich, 67.

⁴⁴ Jindřich Ginter, "Lichváři stahují smyčku kolem hrdel tisíců Čechů," *Novinky.cz*, Borgis, a.s., 10 Oct. 2012, 2003-2012 <<http://www.novinky.cz/finance/284331-lichvari-stahuji-smycku-kolem-hrdel-tisicu-cechu.html>>.

⁴⁵ Seltenreich, 75-76.

⁴⁶ Seltenreich, 72.

she states that cancelling of the contract would be 'recorded for a precedent' (IV, i, 219).

Shylock's inhuman request may thus be seen as a serious challenge to the Venetian legal system, an inevitable question whether there should be a relationship between law and morality.

Asking Portia to 'wrest once the law to [her] authority: / To do a great right, do a little wrong' (IV, i, 214-215), Bassanio reveals that for the Christians there definitively exists such a relationship. Unlike Shylock, whose insistence on the pound of flesh marks him automatically in the legal jargon as a 'legal positivist' – a champion of the opinion that law and morality are mutually exclusive, Bassanio promotes the idea that any law allowing this must be morally evil and should not be followed under any circumstances.⁴⁷ This point of view earns him and his fellow-Christians the term 'natural lawyers,' denomination used in legal terminology for all those who believe that human law and the laws of morality cannot be separated.⁴⁸

It is in the light of these two contrasting approaches that Portia's conduct may be most appreciated. Herself the advocate of the idea that law must be strongly moral, she deals with the case in a way that fully exposes Shylock's intent on wilful murder and restores the moral equilibrium of the Venetian legal system. Managing this under a cloak of a judge, Portia's personal inclination towards 'natural law' rather enhances her role in the courtroom than betrays her partiality.

Although Shylock's 'legal positivism' as such cannot be disputed, his assumption that judges are obliged to remain loyal to law is more than objectionable.⁴⁹ From the point of his potential success, it is this misinterpretation of the authority of a judge that proves to be the fatal mistake. Disregarding the issue of morality, Shylock omits to consider the fact that judges are ruled by it more than by law.⁵⁰ As John Gardner explains in his *Ethics and Law*, judges 'should not (...) tolerate just any moral deficiency in the law (...) they should strive to improve the law (...) And just occasionally, in cases of extreme immorality, they should simply disobey the law (while perhaps pretending to uphold it).'⁵¹

Though not disobeying the law, Portia proceeds with the case exactly in the way described by John Gardner. What may seem to be deception is virtually desire to establish Shylock's

¹⁰⁹ Michael S. Moore, "Law as Justice," *Philosophy of Law Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Larry May and Jeff Brown (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 108-109.

¹¹⁰ Moore, 108.

¹¹¹ John Gardner, "Ethics and Law," *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*, ed. John Skorupski (Oxon: Routledge, 2010) 425.

¹¹² Gardner, 425.

¹¹³ Gardner, 425.

true intent. Shylock with the status of an alien is about to abuse the city's legal system in order to deprive a Venetian citizen of his life and before Portia pronounces a sentence she must make sure that it is precisely so.⁵²

Her repeated advice to Shylock to accept the generous sum of money offered to him (IV, i, 226), further query for scales (IV, i, 254-255) and final suggestion to call Antonio a surgeon (IV, i, 257-258) prove Shylock implacable, hostile and intent on the brutal murder. Though the present moment may seem to be inconclusive to the standing-by Christians, Portia the judge may already celebrate. Her questions have managed to close Shylock all the doors to any possible reversal of the situation and manoeuvre him into a position from which there is no escape.

The 'merry sport' receives under her guidance not only a concrete shape but also a proper legal value. Portia's constant repetitions not only highlight the dramatic situation, as Martin Hilský points out,⁵³ they also invest it with power and transform it into a definite obligation. Seen from the view of J. L. Austin's 'performative utterances,' they confirm the validity of the contract and with it all consequences.⁵⁴

Once Shylock's knife is about to touch Antonio's flesh, she has the undisputable evidence she needs to proceed with the second part of her well staged plan. Her approach loses none of her previous meticulousness and if Shylock was given before every opportunity to dissociate himself from the bond, he is now with the same vigour forced to follow it in every aspect. Not only is he forbidden to shed a drop of Christian blood (IV, i, 306-307) but he must also cut out the exact pound of flesh (IV, i, 325-327). Shylock's famous 'I'll have my bond' (III, iii, 5) comes suddenly back to him like a boomerang leaving him firmly in the grasp of the law and justice he so obstinately demanded just a moment ago.

Turning the tables on Shylock, Portia manages to defeat him by reading the bond literally. Yet her sentence does not arrive without a possible previous warning. As Radim Seltenreich suggests, Portia's attempt to establish Shylock's true intention turns her 'then must the Jew be merciful' (IV, i, 182) into a piece of vital advice – Shylock must be merciful because if he proves guilty of a murderous attempt, he will be punished.⁵⁵ The subtle message that 'legal positivism' discarding all morality has no chance to succeed here falls, however, on deaf ears.

Shylock is too embroiled in his own cause to realize that Portia's words may contain a warning. Even her reluctance to follow Bassanio's wish to 'curb this cruel devil of his will'

⁵² Seltenreich, 75.

⁵³ Hilský, 203.

⁵⁴ Moore, 113.

⁵⁵ Seltenreich, 75.

(IV, i, 216) turns in Shylock's interpretation into an unmistakable support of his lawful claim. He does not realize that Portia may just as well mean that the practice of *stare decisis* that obliges judges to respect prior court decisions⁵⁶ could grant the future Shylocks the right to escape without proper punishment if Bassanio's wish was followed.

Portia's careful wording makes Shylock hear what he wants and also what his emotions dictate him because, despite financial nature of the bond, the case Shylock vs. Antonio is very much the result of Shylock's implacable hatred. Although his acknowledgement of 'lodg'd hate and a certain loathing' (IV, i, 60) makes it more than obvious, it carelessly presents these negative feelings as uncontrollable forces coming from his psyche. That Shylock's emotional state is much more complicated than that is apparent from his previous monologues and also from his refusal to show mercy.

Shylock certainly cannot forgive. Not only that none of the Christians ever rendered a similar service to him, as Martin Hilský points out,⁵⁷ forgiveness would also mean a refusal to take all the wrongs seriously.⁵⁸ As Martha Nussbaum shows in her study *Two Conceptions of the Emotions in Criminal Law*, emotions are no mere psychic forces, rather they function as judgements of value and participate in our evaluation of a particular situation, in Christopher Bennett's interpretation of her theory 'they embody certain claims about what is important'.⁵⁹ Shylock's downright refusal to forgive Antonio may thus be seen as a confirmation that he indeed has been seriously wronged. For him, to forgive would mean to forget, to pass all the offences and slights over and consider them insignificant. And that Shylock can never do.

Seen, however, again from the perspective of emotions, an important point concerning the perception of wrongdoing arises. As Christopher Bennett argues in his 'Blame, Remorse, Mercy, Forgiveness,' it is important to realize 'whether the judgements that seem to be embodied in our emotions really *are* justified'.⁶⁰ Shylock does not stop for a moment to think whether Antonio's death is that kind of justice he deserves and he does not fail to realize the advantage it would bring (III, i, 124). His judgement is purely personal and therefore biased despite the fact that it contains a grain of truth. Guided by extreme emotions Shylock reaches a similarly extreme conclusion and the price he pays for it is not negligible.

It is this absolute belief in his own cause that makes him blind to possible moral issues.

Building the whole prosecution strictly on the literal interpretation of law, Shylock

⁵⁶ Moore, 125.

⁵⁷ Hilský, 196.

⁵⁸ Christopher Bennett, "Blame, Remorse, Mercy, Forgiveness," *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*, ed. John Skorupski (Oxon: Routledge, 2010) 575.

⁵⁹ Bennett, 575.

⁶⁰ Bennett, 575.

determines not only the way in which the bond is to be understood but, unintentionally, also the manner in which his own conduct is to be judged later.⁶¹ His demand of what is precisely stated in the bond enables Portia to apply a similarly strict reading of the contract: to ask for the exact pound without a drop of blood and thus to surpass Shylock's strict law by even stricter ones.⁶²

Shylock is made to see that though his emotions may be justifiable, his judgement is not. Justice is a much more complex issue and cannot be interpreted on the level of single laws. Even Shylock's oath taken to intensify his moral obligation and to give weight to the importance of the contract cannot wipe out relevance of much higher moral principles such as respect for human life. Though not immoral, law can easily be morally unjustified, a whole situation must therefore be always considered.⁶³ It is this ignorance of the larger scope that brings Shylock the first disappointment and makes him exclaim 'Is that the law?' (IV, i, 314). His unshakeable belief in justice derives strictly from the man-made laws and forgets the spirit behind the legal system claiming that law is chiefly here to serve the common good and never a personal revenge.⁶⁴

His lesson is in the first place a moral one and Portia delivers it in a way that takes rank with modern professional procedures. As Radim Seltenreich explains in his study, once she saves Antonio from certain death, Portia closes the case Shylock vs. Antonio belonging to the court of common law and opens another, Republic of Venice vs. Shylock, belonging to the court of equity.⁶⁵ Portia anticipates the development of Anglo-Saxon legal system not only, as Radim Seltenreich points out, by acting as one judge for both cases,⁶⁶ but also, as Lawrence Danson shows, by finding out new rules and applying them.⁶⁷

The Christian reading of the trial is certainly a happy one. Generosity triumphs over possessiveness, love and friendship over usury while readiness to sacrifice oneself emerges as the most worthy value.⁶⁸ Translated on the business level, it is, as John Russel Brown mentions in his preface, the victory of money that promotes good life and that is here to be given and spent, over the money hoarded in bags at home.⁶⁹ With it comes also the message that love and mercy are the corner-stones of justice, a notion expressed in one of Paul's letters

⁶¹ Seltenreich, 75.

⁶² Seltenreich, 75.

⁶³ Gardner, 428.

⁶⁴ Moore, 113.

⁶⁵ Seltenreich, 75-76.

⁶⁶ Seltenreich, 76.

⁶⁷ Danson, 120.

⁶⁸ Brown, 53-55.

⁶⁹ Brown, 53.

to the Romans saying 'he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law' (Romans 13:8).

But although the end of the trial restores peace and demonstrates the importance of mercy, it does so in a manner that leaves a disturbing trace of dissatisfaction. Shylock's outcry 'Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that: / You take my house, when you do take the prop / That doth sustain my house; you take my life, / When you do take the means whereby I live' (IV, i, 374-377) reveals that confiscating his money is enough to make him feel the heavy hand of justice. Moreover, to have a half of wealth managed by his main business rival presents for Shylock surely enough humiliation and punishment that is exceeded only by the following forced conversion.

Despite fitting well into the Christian agenda as a necessity heralding Jesus' second coming,⁷⁰ the demanded conversion tends to show Shylock's judges in quite unflattering light. As there was no tolerance on the Christian side for his Jewishness before the trial, so is there no respect towards it after it. For them, Shylock is simply a Jewish usurer and is to be dealt with accordingly.

In his book Lawrence Danson tends to present the conclusion of the trial as a part of learning-teaching relationships.⁷¹ He claims that both parties, Shylock as well as Antonio, are given their chance to show their mercy and he emphasizes Antonio's merciful reaction that in his view undoes his previous misbehaviour.⁷² Yet, as Martin Hilský argues in his essay, even though Antonio, unlike Gratiano, is truly able to rise above retribution in terms of eye for eye, it is rather difficult to see his mercy as void of hypocrisy.⁷³ Not only that he discards the fact that he himself gave Shylock a good cause for his hatred, he is able to extend his generosity only when Shylock ceases to be the Jewish Other. Biblical 'love thy neighbour as thyself' (Mark 12:31) becomes here possible only when Shylock converts to another religion.

Such moral deficiency is striking after an ethically oriented trial teaching against hatred and urging forgiveness, though not wholly illogical. Shylock's complains are never genuinely considered as his individuality is denied to him. This leaves the case, as known to the audience, only half-solved.

Yet, on the other hand, it is also precisely because of this partial treatment that Shylock, despite his defeat, retains his relatively powerful position. Promotion of generosity and friendship may seem an ideal conclusion of the trial but not strong enough to fully conceal Christian hypocrisy lurking behind it. The fact that the Christians were desperate for

⁷⁰ Kaplan, 246.

⁷¹ Danson, 120-124.

⁷² Danson, 120-124.

⁷³ Hilský, 204.

Shylock's help highlights the paradox of his forced conversion.

Although their desire to promote Christian ideals may seem understandable, the irony that Shylock's money gained by usury helped to win Portia who eventually deprived Shylock of his trade, is still present. Thus despite his defeat, Shylock manages to cast a permanent sinister shadow on the Christian happy conclusion. And while he quietly accepts his fate, he never ceases to challenge their justice towards him.

3.2 Caliban

Just like Shylock, Caliban is categorized against his wish. But like him, he also manages to challenge this categorization and cast a disturbing shadow on the behaviour of the Europeans, in this case, Prospero in particular. His comments on the treatment he receives at the hands of his master highlight the issue of power that implicitly characterizes his relationship with him.

Described in negative terms, such as 'filth',¹ 'poisonous slave' (I, ii, 320), 'devil' (IV, i, 188) and 'misshapen knave' (V, i, 268), Caliban is perceived in a way that always denigrates him. Despite his ability to speak and think, he is never considered truly human although Prospero clearly states at the beginning of the play that he is: 'Then was this island / (Save for the son that she did litter here, / A freckl'd whelp, hang-born) not honour'd with / A human shape' (I, ii, 281-284). The gradual reduction of Caliban to a non-human being supports the fact that he has a rather unusual physical shape that is never precisely defined.

Analyzing his conspicuous appearance, Peter Hulme, author of the book *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797*, comes to the conclusion that Caliban is a 'discursive monster,' a character that 'can exist only within discourse (...) [because] he is fundamentally and essentially beyond the bounds of representation.'² Furthermore, he suggests that Caliban embodies two discourses, Mediterranean, on account of his African mother, and Atlantic on account of his name that connects him with the Indians.³ Because of this, Caliban may be understood in terms of the colonial discourse that dehumanizes him and denies him proper definition.

This colonial discourse may also be found in Prospero's critique of him, although, much of it is built on an irrefutable fact – Caliban's assault on Miranda. Labelled once an ungrateful and irredeemable villain, he is given an image that consolidates Prospero's position more than it describes Caliban's real character. A pawn in his master's quest for power, he is the

¹ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) I, ii, 347. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

² Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797* (London: Routledge, 1992) 108-109.

³ Hulme, 108.

disruptive other needed for promotion of order and the values of civilization.⁴

This becomes particularly apparent in the way Prospero interprets Caliban's instigation of his drinking companions. Though including a brutal attack on the sleeping Prospero, Caliban's attempt at a coup d'état is essentially a revolt against the system that classifies him as a slave. For Prospero, however, it is never anything else but a confirmation of Caliban's inherently bad character.⁵ His final verdict claiming that Caliban 'is as disproportioned in his manners / As in his shape' (V, i, 291-292) thus hardly differs from the image promoted by him throughout the play.

Such a conclusion may not be surprising given Prospero's policy, yet, as Peter Hulme points out in his study, Caliban's villainy is also allowed to flourish to further Prospero's own political ends.⁶ Deprived of his throne under similar circumstances, Prospero deliberately lets the group of servants develop their sinister plans, allowing a situation from his past to repeat itself only to defeat it this time.⁷ Re-writing his past, he reinforces his position of the ruler but, inevitably, also influences the way Caliban's villainy is viewed.

Therefore, despite his own motivation for the intended murder, Caliban's desire to escape oppression becomes coloured by the role of Antonio whom he unwillingly and unknowingly impersonates. This doubling of roles is most apparent in the way Prospero, the director of the mock-conspiracy play, perceives and presents Caliban. Adding Antonio's readiness to plot and betray to Caliban's promoted inherent villainy, Prospero emphasizes Caliban's treacherous character and diverts attention from any possible influence he himself could have on Caliban's motivation for revolt.

Peter Hulme sees this merging of one villain into another as a natural fusion of the Atlantic and Mediterranean theme present in the play.⁸ While this is certainly true, it is also a part of Prospero's power strategy as Paul Brown argues in his essay 'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.'⁹ By proving himself right about Caliban, Prospero justifies his use of power that keeps Caliban in slavery and legitimizes his harsh treatment of him.¹⁰

Absolutely in Prospero's hands, Caliban is thus first deprived of his human status and then even of the true motives for his villainy. He becomes the Other whose real self is ignored and whose identity is manipulated so that it supports the policy of his master. Presenting Caliban

⁴ Brown, 58.

⁵ Hulme, 122.

⁶ Hulme, 121.

⁷ Hulme, 121.

⁸ Hulme, 123.

⁹ Brown, 61.

¹⁰ Brown, 61.

either as danger that must be held in check by enslavement or a conspirator whose plotting confirms his bad and treacherous character, Prospero justifies both his subjection of Caliban and the appropriation of his island.¹¹

His powerful rhetoric creates a system able to turn any revolt on the island to his advantage. Consequently, Caliban's revolt becomes a means through which his civil power is restored.¹² Re-enacting his own deposal with Caliban in the role of Antonio, Prospero reinstates himself in a non-violent manner that even seems to highlight his moral superiority. This is because the staged drama, mainly fictitious in its nature, cancels out his former neglect of political duties as well as his brother's offence, making revenge on the real Antonio redundant.¹³ With such an outcome, Prospero may offer his enlightened advice not to 'burden our remembrances with / A heaviness that's gone' (V, i, 198-199) and strive for reconciliation.

Yet this way of overcoming the past, though relatively peaceful, has also its dark side. While the main conflict between the Europeans is resolved even before the characters reunite, the friction between Prospero and Caliban is not smoothed over so easily. Embedded in the nature of their relationship, the issue of power persists, although Caliban's disenchantment with his companions makes him recognize his master's superiority.

His experience teaches him to 'be wise (...) / And seek for grace' (V, i, 295-296) and this may seem to support Prospero's image of the magus who manipulates those around him with a well-meaning intention. With Prospero's acknowledgement of Caliban, this recognition may seem to be mutual, yet the harmony reached at the end of the play is not absolute. Although ready to pardon his brother, Prospero is unable to extend this forgiveness to Caliban.¹⁴ The fact that Caliban impersonated Antonio and that it is eventually him, not Antonio, who repents in the end, imparts a touch of irony to Prospero's generosity.

Although presenting himself as forgiving, Prospero cannot hide his interests that motivate him to keep Caliban in subjection. Using him only as a tool that helps him reach his ends, he profits on Caliban's illusion of power and his subsequent disillusion as much as he can. Particularly, when he silences his countervoice by humbling him and becomes the only narrator of the story. Because Caliban's indignation from the beginning of the play is not repeated, Peter Hulme calls this situation 'the wish-fulfilment of the European colonist' and interprets Caliban's silence as renunciation of his rights to the island.¹⁵

¹¹ Hulme, 132.

¹² Brown, 56.

¹³ Hulme, 121.

¹⁴ Roger Poole, "Music in *The Tempest*," *Critical Essays on The Tempest*, eds. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman Group, 1988) 60.

¹⁵ Hulme, 132.

Yet Caliban's attitude may not necessarily be understood as complete submission. As Diana Devlin suggests in her essay 'Caliban – monster, servant, king,' Caliban's decision to 'seek for grace' has strong Christian connotations – it implies a wish to serve 'something greater than a human master.'¹⁶ With this in view, Caliban may not be seen as simply yielding to Prospero but rather as moving towards inner independence from him. Speaking of Michel Foucault's concept of power, Sara Mills argues that 'no power relation is simply one of total domination'.¹⁷ It may be thus presumed that Caliban's resistance is still here, only its expression changes.

At the end of the play, it is only Caliban who is left with uncertain future. Though there is no guarantee that the island will be his again,¹⁸ he is sure to have his freedom back once the Italians depart. More experienced now, he knows what to expect and, perhaps even, how to defend himself, should later any other visitors unexpectedly arrive.

His two encounters with European culture, first with Prospero and his daughter, second with Stephano and Trinculo, share enough features to make Caliban realize the repetitive patterns characterizing both his and their behaviour. The most conspicuous one that plays at the beginning of both cases a significant role is Caliban's willingness to provide food. Eager to help the newly arrived, Caliban soon forges relationships that depend on his survival skills.

This is particularly apparent in his encounter with Prospero where the theme of food becomes central. Exchanging his knowledge of the island for affection, Caliban saves the lives of both newcomers when he tells them of fertile land and supplies of fresh water. This dependance on each other for food, however, does not cease with time, but reverses. Keeping Caliban in subjection, the withholding of meals from him becomes later for Prospero one of the means of control. Caliban makes this explicit in his reaction to Prospero's threats, giving a reason for his compliance, he says 'I must eat my dinner' (I, ii, 332).

Also the encounter with Stephano and Trinculo is dominated by the same theme. Though the emphasis is here, thanks to Stephano, rather on heavy drinking, food needed for survival becomes equally important. Knowing how to win Stephano over, Caliban delivers the most tempting image of himself as his servant.

His promise to show him 'every fertile inch o' the island' (II, ii, 145), 'the best springs' (II, ii, 158) and to pluck him 'berries' (II, ii, 158) echoes his earlier speech to Prospero 'I (...)

¹⁶ Diana Devlin, "Caliban – Monster, Servant, King," *Critical Essays on The Tempest*, eds. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman Group, 1988) 27.

¹⁷ Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997) 42.

¹⁸ Richard Adams, "The Tempest and the theme of social organization," *Critical Essays on The Tempest*, eds. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman Group, 1988) 77.

showed'd thee all the qualities o' the isle, / The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile (I, ii, 337-339). Even although Caliban's list of what he is ready to do for Stephano is much longer and more detailed (II, ii, 165-170), it can be assumed that it does not differ very much from what he did and does for Prospero. Hungry for affection and knowing from his previous experience how to please, Caliban seeks to satisfy those he believes to be gods.

This mix of naivety and neediness gives birth to relationships characterized by dependence and power where Caliban's knowledge becomes so important that he must be either befriended or enslaved. Thus Prospero, who possesses the ability to govern spirits, cannot do without him even when he knows geography of the island and confesses 'we cannot miss him' (I, ii, 313). Aware how crucial his help is, Caliban later urges Stephano to restrict Trinculo '(...) take his bottle from him. When that's gone / He shall drink nought but brine; for I'll not show him / Where the quick freshes are' (III, ii, 66-68). A key to survival, Caliban is kept under slavery not just for his attempt on Miranda, though that is the official version, but also because he is absolutely indispensable.

Prospero in this respect does not fall short of those that colonized the real New World. As both Peter Hulme and Stephen Greenblatt point out, the first settlers, depending on the Indians for food, tended to interpret their change from hospitality to violence as treachery and retaliated in order to renew the food supply.¹⁹ Prospero does not behave otherwise and the same could probably also be expected from Stephano if his role was not comic.

Caliban's gullibility in this respect, although caused by more factors such as alcohol and hatred against Prospero, resembles Miranda's enchantment when she meets Ferdinand for the first time. Brought up in relative isolation, she makes a similar mistake when she considers the prince a spirit (I, ii, 412-415). Vulnerability to form these wrong conclusions may, however, seem natural as both Miranda and Caliban are living on a magical island where spirits and gods are an everyday reality.

Though designed to amuse, Caliban's inability to conceive a different reality and thus different culture enhances the already-present theme of colonialism. All the more so as the repetition of his former helpfulness attracts the same material possessiveness. The ease with which Stephano decides to become a king (III, ii, 108-110) and his threats to Caliban 'if I should take a displeasure against you, look you-' (IV, i, 201-202), 'help to bear this away (...)' or 'I'll turn you out of my kingdom' (IV, i, 252-253) resemble Prospero's imposition of his own rules and consequent appropriation of the island.

¹⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: the Circulation of Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: Los Angeles, 1988) 29-30. Hulme, 131.

Caliban's personal disposition to serve and to seek relationships that define him as a servant seem to complicate his claim to ownership of the island. The host-guest polarity typical for colonial discourse takes here rather the shape of a landlord-tenant relationship with Caliban leasing both himself and the island out and longing to collect his rent in the form of love for his services. His need for companionship and desire to be useful make it hard to believe that he would truly be satisfied as his 'own king' (I, ii, 343).

Caliban thus unconsciously undermines the theme of exploitation, the very topic which he himself consciously draws attention to. Yet, though rather ambiguous, this feature is not as contradictory as it could seem. Self-undoing is always one of the factors that determine fate of the colonized and if Caliban misunderstands the mechanism and repeats the same mistake over again, his oppression receives extra attention.

In his constant fight against Prospero's narrative, this becomes a weapon. Demonstrating how genuinely helpful he is and has been before enslavement, Caliban destabilizes his negative image that is continually created. His conduct therefore manages, at least partly, to confront Prospero's words even when he is absent. On a larger scale, this results in a situation in which Prospero establishes order by producing Caliban, the disruptive Other, that threatens the given order by demonstrating its subjectivity.²⁰ To protect himself, Prospero retaliates by re-establishing his narrative and this leads, as Paul Brown points out, to his interminable discourse with Caliban.²¹

Hand in hand with this process comes inevitably negotiation of power. Understood by Michel Foucault as a form of relation between people,²² the issue of power characterizes the struggle between Caliban and Prospero. Due to Prospero's strong exertion of control, it becomes particularly significant at the moments when Caliban manages to obtain certain power for himself despite his powerless position.

Though Caliban never realizes it, one of these situations occurs not long after he appears on the stage. Entering with curses on his lips, he accuses his teachers 'you taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse' (I, ii, 364-365). For Caliban held in subjection, all previous refinement symbolized by the acquired language comes to nothing when he becomes 'stied' in 'hard rock' (I, ii, 343-344) and forced to work like a domestic animal.

Yet his curses, though an expression of helplessness, are far from being powerless. Rather, they prove to be a powerful style of speech that helps Caliban put up resistance. His genuine

²⁰ Brown, 58.

²¹ Brown, 68.

²² Mills, 39.

complaint spiced with a curse 'the red plague rid you / For learning me your language' (I, ii, 365-366) endows Caliban with momentary power over his master for it forces Prospero to forsake his eloquence, reduce himself to Caliban's level, take up his register and answer in the same angry manner 'hag-seed, hence' (I, ii, 367).²³

Caliban's curses are therefore a means of defence, deliberate debasement of the language of his colonizers. Yet, at the same time, they are still a part of the language that Caliban was taught and bear the stamp of his teachers. Imaginative and colourful, they resemble spell recipes: 'as wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd / With raven's feather from unwholesome fen / Drop on you both! A southwest blow on ye / And blister you all o'er' (I, ii, 322-325).

In a play permeated with Prospero's magic that, however, hardly becomes voiced, Caliban's curses represent the only visible spell casting. Though ineffective, being just a form of relief, they, in a way, complete Prospero's linguistically brief commands to his spirits. Being emotional and instinctual, they marry Prospero's mother tongue to the dark tone of Sycorax's black magic.

Such a union makes of Caliban, in a certain sense, a symbolic child whom Prospero can later officially acknowledge. Though his sentence 'this thing of darkness I / Acknowledge mine' (V, i, 275-276) can be understood as Prospero's physical appropriation of Caliban, which is what Paul Brown suggests,²⁴ or as Caliban's promotion from slave to a retainer managing Prospero's island, a view proposed by Peter Hulme,²⁵ symbolically, it links Prospero to Caliban on a deeper, more personal level. As Stephen Siddall points out, it is a moment of recognition that makes Prospero embrace his own dark, instinctual nature symbolized by Caliban.²⁶

Yet, because Caliban-Prospero relationship is built on more than their different characters, this symbolic acceptance may also be perceived as Prospero's recognition of his power strategy. Taking over the island after Sycorax' death, Prospero depends on his demonization of her to uphold his own system.²⁷ In his narrative, Sycorax, therefore, becomes an 'earthy blue-ey'd hag from Argier' (I, ii, 261-273), a woman whose story he appropriates from Ariel and retells him every time he refuses to co-operate. Used to highlight his power and virtue, Prospero's version presents her dangerous black magic in opposition to his white one.²⁸

²³ Brown, 61.

²⁴ Brown, 68.

²⁵ Hulme, 132.

²⁶ Stephen Siddall, "The Tempest: Confinement and Release," *Critical Essays on The Tempest*, eds. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman Group, 1988)

²⁷ Hulme, 61.

²⁸ Hulme, 61.

To consolidate this view, Prospero extends this strategy to Caliban who, as her son, also becomes demonized and termed 'a freckl'd whelp, hag-born' (I, ii, 283) and 'hag-seed' (I, ii, 367). As a mock-magician casting ineffective curses as spells and worshipping his mother's god Setebos, Caliban seems to be the devil Prospero makes of him. Yet despite that, he is able to subvert the established black-white polarity.

Cursing, Caliban manages not only to reduce his master to his level by making him curse in return, but also to demonstrate that Prospero's anger in which he threatens to plague him with 'old cramps; / Fill all [his] bones with aches, make [him] roar, / That beasts shall tremble at [his] din' (I, ii, 370-372) is not unlike Sycorax' 'unmitigable rage' (I, ii, 276) in which she confines Ariel into a cloven pine. Even without knowing of Prospero's threats to Ariel to put him back there if he disobeys (I, ii, 295-297), Caliban proves that darkness and black magic ascribed to him and his mother are, partly, Prospero's own. In this sense, Caliban becomes externalization of his master's dark side and, simultaneously, a monster created by his power strategy.

Only the final acknowledgement of him cancels out this duality and makes Prospero come to terms with the unconscious projection. Symbolically reconciling black and white magic, he accepts his responsibility for the 'demi-devil' he fathered. In this view, he may also be seen penitent because, as Stephen Greenblatt points out, it is he who at the end asks for pardon (V, i, 19).²⁹

Able to expose Prospero's manipulation even when submitted, Caliban presents a formidable opponent. This proves to be true already at the beginning when he manages to confront his master with his right to the island 'this island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, / Which thou tak'st from me' (I, ii, 333-334). Reminding him of his appropriation of it, Caliban destabilizes Prospero's narrative by offering his own one.

Though his defiant tone does not earn him release from subjugation, it manages to reveal the mechanism of power that enmeshes him. Caliban's objections to his position are again a part of the discourse that, in Michel Foucault's own words, 'produces power, (...) reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it (...) and makes it possible to thwart it'.³⁰ With much emphasis on education, this discourse between Caliban and his master becomes inevitably influenced by power-knowledge relations.

As Caliban makes obvious, an exchange of information was typical for the initial stages of his relationship with Prospero. At that time he would barter his knowledge of the island for a

²⁹ Stephen Greenblatt, ed., *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 2008) 372.

³⁰ *Michel Foucault: The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1980) 101.

piece of European wisdom 'thou (...) wouldst give me / Water with berries in't, and teach me how / To name the bigger light, and how the less / That burn by day and night (I, ii, 333-337). Applying Michel Foucault's notion of knowledge as the outcome of power struggles,³¹ Caliban's perception of himself and his rights turns out to be the result of Prospero's power over him and vice versa.

Though the initial teaching process may be considered a generous enterprise, as it is presented in Stephen Siddall's essay 'The Tempest: confinement and release' where Caliban is interpreted as an instinctual creature 'unable to respond to grace, reason and civilised values' behaving towards 'Miranda as an animal,'³² it is also possible to see it as a part of Prospero's power strategy. This view is embraced by Nigel Smith who argues that knowledge enables Caliban to see himself as subjected.³³ Sun/moon, teacher/student, master/slave hierarchies are certainly based on the same principle of subordination, yet Johnathan Bate expounds this idea in more detail.

Pointing out to Caliban's newly acquired sense of property, he proposes in his book *The Genius of Shakespeare* that his attack on Miranda is an attempt to repossess the island by having children with her.³⁴ Caliban seems to confirm this view when he answers to Prospero 'thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans' (I, ii, 351-352). Seen from this point of view, Caliban's sexual assault is a conscious act, a reaction to Prospero's sense of hierarchy he is taught.

Interpreted as ingratitude and treachery, it turns into a means by which Prospero's control of Caliban becomes conveniently justified. Yet with Miranda's virginity as the key to Prospero's restoration, the whole incident acquires additional political significance. Strategically as important as the island, Miranda figures in both Prospero's and Caliban's plans and their struggle over her body may be understood as their struggle over the island.

A threat to Prospero's political order, Caliban's unrestrained sexuality stands symbolically for physical desire that has to be subdued so that a higher form of love is achieved.³⁵ Expounded in speech to Ferdinand (IV, i, 15-23), this principle, beside being the expression of Renaissance moral philosophy,³⁶ forms an inseparable part of Prospero's strategy. Called by Michel Foucault a 'deployment of alliance' and described as 'a system of marriage, of

³¹ Michel Foucault: *Dohlížet a Trestat, Kniha o Zrodu Vězení*, trans. Čestmír Pelikán (Praha: Dauphin, 2000) 63.

³² Siddall, 83.

³³ Nigel Smith, "The Italian Job: Magic and Machiavelli in *The Tempest*," *Critical Essays on The Tempest*, eds. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman Group, 1988) 96.

³⁴ Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London: Picador, 2008) 247.

³⁵ Charles Moseley, "Masque Spectacle in *The Tempest*," *Critical Essays on The Tempest*, eds. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman Group, 1988) 122.

³⁶ Moseley, 122.

fixation and development of kingship ties, of transmission of names and possessions' with a set of rules 'defining the permitted and the forbidden, the licit and the illicit,'³⁷ it determines the way Miranda's, Caliban's and Ferdinand's sexual identities are shaped.

Having his sexuality defined and regulated by foreign standards, Caliban's identity becomes influenced by Prospero's exercise of power. In the sphere of clearly defined boundaries of sexual conduct, he becomes a rapist whose attempt to violate a chaste virgin highlights the propriety of Ferdinand's civil courtship.³⁸ Once identified in such terms, Caliban is termed dangerous and consequently punished. Being indispensable, his fate becomes slavery rather than any other sort of punishment. Torment he is subjected to becomes, therefore, not so much an act of justice as consolidation of Prospero's authority.

Causing excruciating pain, Prospero's harsh treatment of Caliban proves to be effective enough - mere mention of torment makes Caliban work (I, ii, 369-373). Seen in the light of Michel Foucault's theory of discipline, the notion of punishment becomes here a tool more useful than the punishment itself.³⁹ Consequently, given Michel Foucault's idea of 'political anatomy,' a system developed to control bodies,⁴⁰ it can be argued that Caliban's rebellious body turns into a body useful and subjugated.

A key to survival on the island, Caliban is never promised freedom. Rather, he is perceived as 'capable of all ill' (I, ii, 355) and, as a descendant of 'vile race' (I, ii, 359), considered thoroughly bad. As such, he is kept enslaved while his attempt at Prospero's life is used to justify this enslavement. Deprived of an opportunity to redeem himself, Caliban becomes a victim of a strategy that constantly recreates his image of a criminal and, with it, the necessity to punish him. What Michel Foucault perceives as a principle in which 'one must punish exactly enough to prevent repetition of crime'⁴¹ degenerates here into an excuse for Prospero's exertion of power.

Although Caliban's desire to have Prospero murdered may be seen as the first step towards a real murder, this is the interpretation embraced by Prospero, it may also be perceived as an inevitable reaction to his enslavement. From this point of view, Caliban is rather oppressed than incorrigible. To be free of slavery and to, as Stephen Greenblatt calls it, 'satisfy the enormous hatred he feels for Prospero,'⁴² he is ready to sacrifice both Miranda, he himself

³⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 106.

³⁸ Brown, 63.

³⁹ Foucault, *Dohlížet a Trestat*, 147.

⁴⁰ Sierra Jean, "HuffmanSie anthropology blog," 8 Sept. 2011, 29 June 2013
<<http://sierrajeansblog.blogspot.cz/2011/09/political-anatomy.html>>.

⁴¹ Aram Sinnreich, "Notes," 4 April 2005, 30 June 2013

<http://aramsinnreich.typepad.com/aram_squalls/2005/04/foucault_m_1995.html>.

⁴² Greenblatt, *The Norton Shakespeare*, 371.

desires, and his island.

Despite his credulity that inspires Trinculo to call him 'a very shallow monster' (II, ii, 142) and 'a very weak monster' (II, ii, 143), Caliban is much smarter than any of his new companions. For them to be a king means to wear fine clothes, whereas for Caliban, clothes are 'trash' (IV, i, 224) while the source of kingly power lies in skills that surpass his own. For this reason he repeatedly urges Stephano to take Prospero's books first 'for without them / He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not / One spirit to command' (III, ii, 93-95).

Characterizing his master's power, Caliban's piece of advice may be interpreted in terms of Michel Foucault's concept of power-knowledge relations that understands knowledge as a source of power.⁴³ With all spirits at his command, Prospero's knowledge gained from books makes him invincible and all-powerful. Yet, as Michel Foucault further points out, 'power and knowledge directly imply one another' which means not only that knowledge leads to power but also that 'power produces knowledge.'⁴⁴ Caliban's ability to reveal the existence of the books, to incite Stephano to murder and to subvert Prospero's position by curses are all results of this latter instance of knowledge produced by power.

The same could also be said of Caliban's self-awareness. Defined by Miranda as a result of language acquisition 'when thou didst not (...) / Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like / a thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes / With words that made them known' (I, ii, 356-359), it is considered a gift to be grateful for. Seeing knowledge of a language as the gateway to the civilized way of life, Miranda's remark emphasizes the necessity to share a common language in order to share one's thoughts.

Though in perfect harmony with the Renaissance perception of language, the argument omits the purpose and scope of Caliban's lessons. Designed to make Caliban adopt foreign culture and, as both Nigel Smith and Jonathan Bate argue,⁴⁵ accept his inferior position of a student, servant and eventually a slave, the education Caliban receives becomes rather limited. Taught the language not just to communicate but to have instilled in himself the social norms of another culture, he is expected to develop that kind of thinking which suits his colonizers.

Knowing that knowledge is power, Prospero ensures that Caliban receives only that education he considers safe. The effects of this caution become most apparent when Stephano and Trinculo appear on the stage. Taking Stephano's words on his cosmic origin literary 'I have seen thee in her [the Moon] (...) My mistress / show'd me thee, and thy dog and thy

⁴³ Foucault, *Dohlížet a Trestat*, 62.

⁴⁴ Brad Vermurlen, "Foucault: Power-Knowledge & the Church," *[theou poiema]*, 2009, 2 June 2013 <<http://bradv.blogspot.cz/2008/07/foucault-power-knowledge-church.html>>.

⁴⁵ Smith, 96.
Bate, 247.

bush' (II, ii, 138-140), Caliban turns due to his limited knowledge into a source of entertainment.

Because of this eminent connection between knowledge and power, Prospero's educational policy may be seen as another example of power-knowledge relations. As Michel Foucault argues, 'a corpus of knowledge' is produced by 'power-knowledge, the processes and struggles (...) of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.'⁴⁶ A product of Prospero's policy, Caliban's basic education becomes, therefore, a weapon powerful enough to help him to defend his point of view and thereby, also, to broaden his horizons.

His bitter disillusionment at the end of the play may be seen as the direct result of these power struggles that shape his knowledge. Though based on experience, it becomes an important lesson teaching him about human society and culture outside the island. Because of it, Caliban achieves better knowledge of the world than the equally ignorant Miranda whose remark 'how beauteous mankind is! O brave new world / That has such people in't' (V, i, 184-185) reveals with dramatic irony, as Martin Hilský points out, her indiscriminate admiration for everyone, including those who hardly deserve it.⁴⁷

Inseparably bound together, the themes of power and knowledge belong here to the sphere of colonialism that characterizes Caliban's subjugation. How closely linked all these issues are becomes most apparent in Caliban's complaint 'you taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse' (I, ii, 364-365). Contrasting his present degradation with the attention received previously, Caliban sums up in one sentence the feature that Ania Loomba calls in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* 'one of the most striking contradictions about colonialism' and which she defines as the desire of the colonizers 'both to 'civilise' (...) [their] 'others' and to fix them into perpetual 'otherness'.⁴⁸

Prospero's and Miranda's education of Caliban and their later demonization of him, which renders the former education useless, are strategies that fit this description of colonialism. But also the fact that Caliban must use the language of his colonizers, the proof of their effort to civilize him, to voice his grievance is a point that may be interpreted in similar terms. Citing

⁴⁶ Gretchen Haas, Brian Okstad, "Discipline and Punish," 17 Sept. 2012, 2 June 2013 <<http://www.comm.umn.edu/Foucault/dap.html>>.

⁴⁷ Martin Hilský, *Shakespeare a jeviště svět* (Praha: Academia, 2010) 750.

⁴⁸ Anita Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005) 145.

Reacting to Homi K Bhabha, John McLeod calls this 'ambivalence' and points out that the colonized are always 'in motion, sliding *ambivalently* between the polarities of similarity and difference,' between being 'domesticated, harmless, knowable, but also *at the same time* wild, harmful, mysterious.' In order to prevent this movement, stereotypes are used to describe the colonized in static terms. It is in this sense that Caliban is ambivalent. John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 53.

the Cuban writer Roberto Fernández Retamar, Anita Loomba, therefore, presents Caliban as 'the most appropriate symbol for (...) hybridity' by which she understands a situation when the language and ideas of the colonizers serve the colonized in their fight for their freedom.⁴⁹

Though Caliban is never given his desired freedom, mere verbalization of his thoughts challenges Prospero's rule and creates a world free of colonial oppression. Speaking of the island to dissipate Stephano's and Trinculo's fear, Caliban describes it as 'full of noises, / Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not' (III, ii, 136-137). In his monologue (III, ii, 136-144) it becomes a place of safety, harmony and comfort with soothing music to whose charm one can surrender without apprehension and he corroborates this by his own experience 'instruments / (...) and sometimes voices, / That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep, / Will make me sleep again' (III, ii, 138-141).

In Caliban's speech, the island turns into a 'pastoral space', as Paul Brown suggests, a place devoid of power struggles and 'beyond colonial appropriation'.⁵⁰ Unlike in Prospero's world where music serves political ends, here it becomes a source of happiness as it brings the memory of the former uncomplicated existence on the island when all its riches were at Caliban's disposal 'in dreaming, / The clouds, methought, would open and show riches / Ready to drop upon me, that, when I wak'd, / I cried to dream again' (III, ii, 141-144).⁵¹ Poetical and very personal, such an idealistic vision stands in strong contrast with the reality of slavery for which Prospero is responsible.

Because of it, Paul Brown calls it 'a utopian moment where powerlessness represents *a desire for powerlessness*'.⁵² While it is certainly true that Caliban is entirely in Prospero's hands when it comes to magical powers, on the whole, he is not so absolutely powerless. As has been proved by Michel Foucault's theory of power-knowledge relations, Caliban's reactions to his enslavement have the potential to challenge Prospero's supreme position and most of the time they also do so. Consequently, Caliban wields more power than he himself realizes.

His resolve to talk back has the power to disturb Prospero's narrative while his vision of the peaceful island proves that his ideas are do not belong to a mere beast. Though complaining 'you taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse' (I, ii, 364-365), Caliban manages much more with his language than just complain. The poetry with which he is able to speak shows that any definitions of him present in the play are inadequate.

⁴⁹ Loomba, 146.

⁵⁰ Brown, 65-66.

⁵¹ Brown, 65.

⁵² Brown, 66.

3.3 Edmund

Making illegitimacy the main reason for his villainous conduct, Edmund joins the ranks of those villains who become motivated by their desire for justice. Just like Shylock and Caliban, he is an outcast whose villainy may be interpreted as a reaction to the society that ostracizes him. Though later also propelled by self-interest and ambition, Edmund's designs stem primarily from the opinion that he has his right to recognition. Asserting himself, he develops his own practical outlook on life that serves him better than the values of the old social system.

Being rather unscrupulous in the pursuit of his justice, Edmund resembles Iago, particularly in the initial stages when he makes his father believe every word of the forged letter. Gloucester's impatient 'Let's see, let's see'¹ and his consequent credulity make him most blind precisely at that moment when he thinks he sees best, a situation not unlike that one in which Iago supplies the ocular proof. Yet, as A.C. Bradley points out, 'there is nothing in Edmund of Iago's motive-hunting and very little of any of the secret forces which impelled Iago.'²

Unlike Iago's, Edmund's motive is very clear-cut and appears already in his first soliloquy when he criticizes the general attitude towards those born out of wedlock '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?' (I, ii, 6-10). Even the forged letter is written in a similar vein for it complains of 'the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered' (I, ii, 49-51) and lists that he 'should enjoy half his [Gloucester's] revenue and live the beloved of your brother' (I, ii, 52-53). Interpreted by Gloucester immediately as conspiracy for it violates his own decision respecting primogeniture, defined as 'the right (...) of the firstborn son to inherit the family estate',³ and the legitimacy of his son Edgar, the letter evokes different reactions among scholars.

While Martin Hilský, in his reaction to Bradley's critique of the implausibility of the letter, emphasizes its role in the sub-plot,⁴ G. Wilson Knight denounces it in his essay *King Lear and the Comedy of the Grotesque* as 'crude and absurd' and composed to fit Gloucester's

¹ William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) I, ii, 44. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

² Andrew Cecil Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1992) 262.

³"Primogeniture," *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, 25 April 2013, 10 July 2013
<<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primogeniture>>.

⁴ William Shakespeare: *King Lear*, trans. Martin Hilský (Brno: Atlantis, 2005) 30.

'mentally (...) limited intellect.'⁵ Written with the aim to discredit Edgar, the letter is certainly modified to serve such a goal. Moreover, there is, as Wilson Knight suggests, a kind of dark humour,⁶ given the fact that Edmund plots to receive the whole estate, not just a half of it. Yet the letter may also be understood as a medium that highlights Edmund's motive as well as his need for affection.

From a psychological point of view, it could be read as a kind of projection for it fictitiously gives Edmund all he is missing in reality. The promised 'half of (...) revenue' (I, ii, 52) and offered help against 'the oppression of aged tyranny' (I, ii, 49-50) show desire for equality between brothers and a wish to be free of the customs that deny this to him while the appeal 'live the beloved of your brother' (I, ii, 52-53) betrays hunger for acceptance by a member of his family. Though against the old social system, the letter reveals how much Edmund's illegitimacy goes hand in hand with isolation and, ironically, how relatively little would suffice to prevent him from plotting against his own father and brother.

The projection of a loving brother defending his oppressed sibling is humorous in an ironic way for Edmund's estrangement from his family is evident from Gloucester's conversation with Kent at the beginning of the play. Snubbed by his own father, Edmund is introduced to Kent as a 'knave [that] came something saucily into the world before he was sent for' (I, i, 23-24) and a 'whoreson [that] must be acknowledged' (I, i, 25-26). Evading Kent's simple question 'Is not this your son, my lord?' (I, i, 9) by divulging the whole history of his affair, Gloucester shows that his acknowledgement of Edmund is still a problem for him despite his bold assertion that he is 'brazen to it' (I, i, 11). That he is still ashamed of having an illegitimate son and that he wishes him gone is also apparent from his resolution that Edmund 'hath been out nine years, and away he shall again' (I, i, 35).

Such treatment in public, even when Kent assures Gloucester that he 'cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper' (I, i, 21), intensifies Edmund's already strong feeling of rejection caused by his illegitimacy. Kept away from his family, he is more a stranger than a brother to Edgar and this isolation imparts his charade with the letter a tone that is not only humorous but also sad. The Iago-like tendency to manipulate people in combination with the Machiavellian self-interest presented in the witty Richard III-like manner turn Edmund into an insidious villain as vicious as his great predecessors. But even despite this, he remains a victim of his own origin and social injustices.

The emotional scars are an issue that does not disappear the moment Edmund receives the

⁵ G. Wilson Knight, "King Lear and the Comedy of Grotesque," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear, A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Janet Adelman (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978) 42-43.

⁶ Knight, *King Lear and the Comedy of Grotesque*, 43.

title of Earl of Gloucester (III, v, 19). It remains ever-present and is brought sharply into focus at the end of the play when the dead bodies of Regan and Goneril are displayed and Edmund remarks: 'Yet Edmund was beloved: / The one the other poison'd for my sake, / And after slew herself' (V, iii, 240-242). Although Kenneth Muir tends, eventually, to interpret this reaction as purely egotistical,⁷ he also suggests, earlier in his study, that the sudden realization that he, the 'deprived child, had won the love of two princesses' may be one of the reasons why Edmund decides to 'act disinterestedly for the first time' and speak of his command to have Lear and Cordelia killed in order to save them.⁸

Edmund's attitude towards Regan and Goneril is certainly coloured by his ambition. As R. A. Foakes points out, Edmund is 'self-serving, (...) willing to offer his allegiance to any master and (...) [satisfy] the lust of any mistress.'⁹ That his attitude towards both women is rather practical than emotional can also be deduced from his rumination: 'Which of them shall I take? / Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoyed, / If both remain alive' (V, i, 57-59). Dominated, as William Rosen suggests, by his 'desire for power and sexual pleasure,'¹⁰ Edmund seems to care only for himself.

Yet as G. Wilson Knight argues in his book *The Wheel of Fire*, Edmund 'has a sense of his own romantic self-adventure.'¹¹ This makes him depart from Goneril into the battle with the farewell 'Yours in the ranks of death' (IV, ii, 25) and still be courteous to Regan afterwards. Unlike Richard III, Edmund does not have to go through an elaborate courtship, being attractive, he can afford to remain relatively passive in order to enjoy all the interest taken in him. For anyone as rejected and ostracized as Edmund, such an attention is a bonus added to his quest for a respected social position as it promises him the crown.

Being illegitimate and unloved, he is unappreciated and denied the proper status - for that reason both become his aims. Although his plan to get the crown miscarries at the end, he succeeds in being appreciated: 'Yet Edmund was beloved' (V, iii, 240), the dead bodies prove it. They attest that there were those for whom he was indispensable while silently motivating him to realize the indispensability of Lear and Cordelia in return.

The rise to power seems to bring Edmund all he desires, yet it does not wipe out the issues of his illegitimacy and emotional deprivation. While the death of Goneril and Regan draws the attention to his need for appreciation, particulars surrounding his duel with Edgar reveal

⁷ Kenneth Muir, *William Shakespeare, King Lear* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986) 109.

⁸ Muir, 25.

⁹ William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. R. A. Foakes (London: A&C Black Publishers, 1997) 69.

¹⁰ William Rosen, *Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960) 21.

¹¹ G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen, 1965) 200.

how the notion of his origin still shapes his thinking. Though himself earlier considered inferior, he promises to forgive his opponent only if he is of noble birth: 'If thou art noble, / I do forgive thee' (V, iii, 166-167).

Pointing to this, Kenneth Muir suggests that Edmund abhors to be killed by anyone of lower rank as the title he receives makes him aware of his 'aristocratic blood.'¹² While it is true that his earldom plays a major role here, it is unlikely that he would, at this point, associate himself with it in such a manner. Intent to make a mark on the world, Edmund spurns the old values and develops his own philosophy which enables him to improve his status. He is the prime example of 'the New Man' that believes in nothing but himself, as John F. Danby argues in his essay 'Edmund and the Two Natures.'¹³

Edmund's conviction has been from the very beginning that he is no worse than his brother, his first soliloquy (I, ii, 1-22) makes it apparent that he considers himself as aristocratic as Edgar and deserves to possess as much. His insistence on the nobility of his opponent is, therefore, not a matter of growing awareness of his aristocratic background, as Kenneth Muir suggests, but rather a matter of self-respect. Having a strong sense of his own self-worth, Edmund rises in a short time from an outcast to a man of power.

His philosophy leads him to such success but it does not make him forget his origin. Even when Edmund overcomes the limitations it imposed on him, he is still thought of in terms of his illegitimacy. This becomes most apparent when Albany, who finds out about his affair with Goneril, calls him a 'half-blooded fellow' (V, iii, 80). It is for this reason that Edmund can forgive his opponent only if he is noble, to be defeated by anyone else would negate his social success and reveal him as the 'bastard' Albany still perceives him to be, a man so inferior that he can be killed by anyone of low origin.

Illegitimacy, therefore, becomes, despite all his efforts, a defining feature for him. In this respect, Edmund resembles his predecessor Philip Faulconbridge, called 'Bastard,' from Shakespeare's earlier play *King John*. Although Bastard has no reason either to plot against his brother or to rebel against the social system for he agrees to give his land to his younger brother in order to claim his name as the illegitimate son of Richard I (I, i, 134-154), he is a skillful leader of the army whose speech on commodity (II, i, 561-598) partly anticipates Edmund's materialism. Concluding his observation in a realistic manner by claiming 'Since kings break faith upon commodity, / Gain, be my lord, for I will worship thee' (II, i, 597-598), he shows how easy it is to develop the attitude that leads to greed and mammon.

¹² Muir, 108.

¹³ John F. Danby, "Edmund and the Two Natures," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear, A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Janet Adelman (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978) 53.

Yet, unlike Edmund, Bastard is no outcast, being illegitimate does not mean being inferior in his case, and the philosophy he develops is the outcome of his observation, not his personal conviction. As Martin Hilský points out, he is a character that shows immense courage and strong moral judgement.¹⁴ Though different from Edmund in his nature, he shares with him one important basic feature – the ability to excel.

Because of this feature, both Edmund and Bastard may be understood as typical products of their age. As Kenneth Muir demonstrates, illegitimate children were considered in the Renaissance mentally and physically superior to legitimate ones and their qualities were discussed in works of such authors as John Donne and the Italian humanist Ortensio Landi.¹⁵ The reason why they were perceived as better is particularly explored in John Donne's work *Certaine Problems* where Donne argues in the section entitled 'Why haue Bastards best Fortune?' that 'Nature (...) hauing denied women Constancy to one, hath prouided them with cunning to allure many, and so Bastards de iure should haue better wits and experience.'¹⁶ Edmund appropriately voices this common opinion when he concludes 'Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit: / All with me's meet that I can fashion fit' (I, ii, 189-190).

Attractive and smart, he seems to be absolutely perfect. There is, however, also another feature that is typical for him, and that is his inclination towards evil. Trying to explain the above-average success of illegitimate children, John Donne argues that 'they haue better meanes than others to bee wicked, and so fortunate.'¹⁶ Although Edmund is motivated by the sense of social injustice, he does not deny his propensity for evil when he says 'some good I mean to do, / Despite my own nature' (V, iii, 244-245).

Describing himself, shortly before his death, as naturally bad, Edmund partly echoes his attitude presented in his first soliloquy where he champions the illegitimate offspring '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?' (I, ii, 11-15). Showing how passions typical for extramarital affairs shape the character of children born out of wedlock, Edmund suggests that he, an illegitimate child, has more stamina than his legitimate brother. Energetic and capable, he is the 'natural boy' (II, i, 85), as Gloucester later calls him, a young man similarly unrestrained by social customs as his father was when he conceived him.

¹⁴ *William Shakespeare: King John*, trans. Martin Hilský (Praha: Evropský literární klub: Knižní klub: 2009) 104.

¹⁵ Muir, 20.

¹⁶ John Donne, "Luminarium Editions, Juvenilia: Or Certain Paradoxes and Problems," The University of Oregon, 2003, 15 July 2013 <<http://www.luminarium.org/editions/renascence/juvenilia.htm>>.

¹⁷ Donne.

Convinced of his own qualities, Edmund claims liberty to assert himself, to disobey the restrictions imposed on him in order to realize his full potential. For this reason he turns to nature as his goddess, 'Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law / My services are bound' (I, ii, 1-2). Edmund's concept of nature, however, differs here from that one used later by Lear and his followers. As R. H. Tawney points out in his book *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study*:

By the seventeenth century a significant revolution had taken place. 'Nature' had come to connote, not divine ordinance, but human appetites, and natural rights were invoked by the individualism of the age as a reason why self-interest should be given free play.¹⁷

When Edmund addressed his goddess Nature, he speaks precisely of this new concept that justifies selfishness, ruthlessness and ambition.

Primarily destructive, this nature is 'violent and predatory', as Cedric Watts points out in his essay 'Main plot, sub-plot and paradox in *King Lear*,' and contrasts sharply with the creative nature that Lear speaks of (I, iv, 279-293).¹⁸ Focused on human appetites, it sanctions power struggles and discards morality. Because of that, its adherents resemble beasts for they ignore all social norms that would otherwise force them to check their behaviour. In this sense they become 'unnatural,' as Cedric Watts argues, intent only on power and sexual pleasure which they choose over love and peaceful human relationships.¹⁹

Beastlike, these members of the new generation, to which Edmund, Goneril and Regan belong, are, therefore, often compared to animals of prey. Edgar sums their character up very aptly when he presents himself as a serving man, and concludes his description with the line 'hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey' (III, iv, 90-91). Taking on an assumed identity, Edgar reveals the degree to which the new society is corrupted.

As John F. Danby argues, this change in the perception of nature inevitably leads to a change in the perception of reason.²⁰ That these two concepts were inseparable for the Jacobean is apparent from Thomas Elyot's work *The Booke Named Governour*. Speaking of

¹⁷ R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1962) 183.

¹⁸ Cedric Watts, "Main Plot, Sub-plot and Paradox in *King Lear*," *King Lear: William Shakespeare*, eds. Linda Cookson, Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman, 1992) 12.

¹⁹ Watts, 12-13.

²⁰ Danby, 50.

fraud and deceit, he shows that reason and nature were understood as the cornerstones of peace and order: 'reason requireth that nothing be done by treason, nothing by dissimulation, nothing by disceite (...) Nature is the fountayne wherof the lawe springeth.'²¹

Giving nature a new meaning and plotting to gain his brother's land, Edmund is a rationalist that changes the concept of both nature and reason. Accepting only logical explanations, he scorns Gloucester's belief that people and events become influenced by the stars. His reaction to his father's premonition 'These late eclipses in the sun and moon portent no good to us' (I, ii, 105-106) betrays a cold calculating mind: 'when we are sick in fortune (...) we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon and the stars: as if we were villains by necessity' (I, ii, 117-118).

Speaking of his natal horoscope, Edmund refuses that the stars could shape his character: 'my nativity was under *ursa major*: so that it follows I am rough and lecherous (...) I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardising' (I, ii, 123-125). His attitude is not unlike that of Cassius in *Julius Caesar* when he tries to convince Brutus that Caesar became too powerful: 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings' (I, ii, 139-140). Edmund, just like Cassius, believes that he is the master of his fate and the only person responsible for his own character.

In this respect, he is part of the debate that the Jacobeans found most interesting. For them, astrology was still a popular subject, despite the discovery made by Nicolaus Copernicus that threatened to destroy the geocentric system on which it was (and still is) based.²² Discussing it in his *Advancement of Learning* published in 1605, Francis Bacon rejects the casting of personal horoscopes but supports the drawing of charts for historical events arguing that the influence of the stars is limited.²³

Edmund represents this Renaissance scepticism. But although it was not unusual to doubt whether the stars affected man, his opinion is extreme and strengthens his divorce from the traditional concept of nature. It produces a highly individualistic mind that reduces nature to a dead mechanism that can be manipulated and that, as John F. Danby argues, renders Edmund 'free of nature and superior to it' because he no longer belongs to it.²⁴ Both reason and nature that Thomas Elyot saw as the sources of law and order come thus to stand for its very opposites, disorder and chaos.

The mutinies, treason and broken family ties, which this system produces, are frightening to

²¹ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke named The Governour* (London: Dent) 209.

²² Peter Whitfield, *Astrology, a history* (New York: Harry N. Abrams: 2001) 165.

²³ Whitfield, 167-169.

²⁴ Danby, 51.

Gloucester but to Edmund, they are, as Edwin Muir points out, natural for they 'give him an opportunity to rise.'²⁵ For him, personal needs are of more importance than needs of society. As John F. Danby explains:

(...) in the figure of Edmund the sense of separation from nature and superiority to it goes with a sense of the individual's separation from the community and a feeling of superiority to his fellows. As Nature goes dead, community becomes competition, and man a nexus of appetites. Reason is no longer a normative drive but a calculator of the means to satisfy the appetites with which we were born.²⁶

Fiercely competitive, Edmund is the prototype of that kind of man that later becomes described by Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*. Speaking of natural laws, Thomas Hobbes defines 'the condition of man' as 'a condition of war of every one against every one; in which case every one is governed by his own reason' and argues that 'every man has a right to every thing; even to one another's body (...) as long as this natural right of every man to every thing endureth, there can be no security to any man.'²⁷ The correspondence between Edmund's and Hobbes' vision of society shows the extent to which Edmund may be understood as a predecessor of modern thinking.

This touch of the modern man that seems to be rather typical for him may have its roots in the social change that Shakespeare himself witnessed. Raman Selden suggests it in his essay 'The Theme of Disorder in *King Lear*' where he argues that 'the unbridled economic self-interest' was a highly controversial issue during the crises of the 1590s and that it became tolerated only gradually.²⁸ Although *King Lear* was written later, the theme of the ownership of land is conspicuous and Edmund may be seen as a representative of the rising classes that acquired their estate and wealth by their own inventiveness.²⁹

Yet the old social system was crumbling away also for another reason and this was a change in thinking. As the writings of Michel de Montaigne reveal, the idea that aged fathers should willingly retire and let their children manage their property was not unusual.³⁰ Edmund thus expresses an existing opinion when he attributes to Edgar his own thoughts and says to

²⁵ Edwin Muir, *The Politics of King Lear* (Glasgow: Jackson, 1947) 21.

²⁶ Danby, 51.

²⁷ Thomas Hobbes, "Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and of Contracts," *Philosophy of Law, Classic and Contemporary Readings*, eds. Larry May and Jeff Brown (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing, 2010) 449.

²⁸ Raman Selden, "The Theme of Disorder in King Lear," *King Lear: William Shakespeare*, eds. Linda Cookson, Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman, 1992) 93.

²⁹ Selden, 94.

³⁰ Muir, 60.

Gloucester that 'I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue' (I, ii, 72-74). Because of this, his character is partly embedded in reality though he never stops being a fictional villain.

Being as good at acting as his brother who saves himself by taking on different identities, Edmund craftily engineers his own advancement. The episode with the letter, his conversation with Edgar as well as their staged fight, which anticipates their real one, are all engaging performances that show him as a skillful dissembler who enjoys imitating those he knows. Moving from one role into another, Edmund plays a part of a sympathetic brother concerned with Edgar's safety while in front of Gloucester, he pretends to be an obedient son, just like Edgar truly is but does not seem so because he is given Edmund's part.

The last, crucial part of his plot is engineered with a particular sense for detail. Anxious to prevent a meeting between Gloucester and Edgar that would foil his plan, he engages in a series of precautions. Kenneth Muir speaks of 'delaying tactics' as Edmund first charges Edgar with witchcraft to engage Gloucester's attention and stimulate his fear of unnatural events, 'Here stood he in the dark (...) / Mumbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon' (II, i, 39-40), then he reveals the self-inflicted wound to corroborate his story and only afterwards, when he knows that Edgar cannot be caught, he gives the directions 'Fled this way, sir' (II, i, 45) and establishes himself as a paragon of moral virtue.³⁰

His greatest success comes when he presents Edgar as the speaker of the lines 'Thou unpossessing bastard! Dost thou think, / If I would stand against thee, would the reposal / Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee / Make thy words faith'd?' (II, i, 68-71). Making the fictitious Edgar scorn him for being illegitimate and unimportant, Edmund enacts his feeling of inferiority. His cold, calculating mind stages an emotional drama that affects Gloucester so powerfully that he immediately promises him all his land, 'and of my land, / Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means / to make thee capable' (II, i, 84-86).

His desire for power and material wealth is not unlike the insatiable appetite of Lear's elder daughters. But the theme of land is not the only feature that is shared. Hiding his letter ostentatiously into his pocket, Edmund assures his father that he was reading 'nothing' (I, ii, 32) which motivates Gloucester to answer humorously 'if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles' (I, ii, 35). The word 'nothing' that played such a significant role in the first scene becomes important again. Here, however, it also acquires another function – it helps to define

³⁰ Muir, 65.

Edgar. Forced to hide, Edgar concludes: 'Edgar I nothing am' (II, iii, 21)³¹ while Edmund, who succeeds in his plot, finally becomes someone.

As a real Machiavel, he knows how to use any situation to his own advantage. When Regan questions Edgar's motivation 'Was he not companion with the riotous knights / That tend upon my father?' (II, i, 95-96), Edmund seizes the opportunity and promptly answers 'Yes, madam, he was of that consort' (II, i, 98). Kenneth Muir argues that he 'immediately realizes what she wants to hear' and reacts accordingly.³² Although there may be some kind of silent understanding between Edmund and Regan, it is unlikely that she would, at this time, know of Edmund's plot.

His staged fight with Edgar, however, definitively earns him, as he expects (II, i, 16-21), admiration of the royal couple. Cornwall's speech proves it: 'For you, Edmund, / Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant / So much commend itself, you shall be ours: / Natures of such deep trust we shall much need; / You we first seize on' (II, i, 113-117). Edmund's opportunism furthers his advancement but, as can be seen, it creates a world where hate and treachery turn into virtue.

Because of his absolute untrustworthiness, Cornwall's remark becomes highly ironic which is why Kenneth Muir describes this situation as 'a case of evil gravitating to evil.'³³ A part of the grim humour that surrounds Edmund's actions, this kind of irony appears also later when Cornwall rewards Edmund for his betrayal of Gloucester and assures him 'I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a dearer father / in my love' (III, v, 24-25). In this world of power, words are as corrupted as the persons that use them and the real family ties become substituted by profitable relationships.

Edmund's hypocrisy and indifference to his father are another proof of it. When Cornwall urges him to help him convict Gloucester, he finds it easy to pretend his love for him 'the conflict / be sore between that and my blood' (III, v, 22-23) but the same ease is also typical for his departure when Cornwall urges him out because 'The revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father / are not fit for your beholding' (III, vii, 7-8). Charles Moseley speaks in his essay 'Trial and Judgement: the Trial Scenes in *King Lear*' of Cornwall's 'false delicacy' and points out to the dissolution of 'all human bonds and conventions'³⁴ while Stanley Wells argues in his book *The History of King Lear* that Edmund's cruelty towards his father is as important as ingratitude of Lear's daughters and that the Gloucester's story should

³¹ Hilský, 30.

³² Muir, 66.

³³ Muir, 66.

³⁴ Charles Moseley, "Trial and Judgement: the Trial Scenes in *King Lear*," *King Lear: William Shakespeare*, eds. Linda Cookson, Bryan Loughrey (London: Longman, 1992) 72.

therefore not be considered a subplot.³⁵

This abuse of parents by their children that characterizes both families in the play resembles the biblical vision of the end of the world: 'Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death' (Mark, 13:12). This feeling of doom is even intensified by the invocation of gods and desire for justice.

Comparing prosperity of different characters, A.C. Bradley points out that the gods support only those who are evil and renounce them.³⁶ Applied to Edmund, this is true, but only to a certain extent, because while his exclamation 'I grow; I prosper. – / Now, gods, stand up for bastards!' (I, ii, 21-22) is, as G. Wilson Knight argues, 'half-mocking' because the gods, as Edmund sees them, are 'man-made,'³⁷ his final lines are delivered in a much different tone. Defeated in the duel, Edmund accepts Edgar's forgiveness and his explanation 'The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us: / The dark and vicious place where thee he got / Cost him his eyes' (V, iii, 171-174) and answers 'Thou hast spoken right, 'tis true. / The wheel is come full circle: I am here' (V, iii, 175-176).

Although his change may be interpreted as a result of his mortal wound, it may also be seen as acceptance of justice, a view adopted by Charles Moseley who, unlike A.C. Bradley, argues, that men have been given freedom and 'heaven cannot intervene to infringe that freedom, even if that freedom is causing cosmic cataclysm' and who states that there was only one exception to this concept, and that was a trial by battle.³⁸ The rule that 'might is right,' which appeared already in *Richard II*, is here given a particular significance. Not only is trumpet blown three times, the duel is also presided by a herold, witnessed by onlookers and the accusations are explicitly stated by Edgar: 'thou art a traitor: False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father; Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince' (V, iii, 133-135).

In a play where the notion of justice becomes so important that a servant does not hesitate to kill Cornwall, a man of high rank, Edmund is the only one who receives a proper trial.³⁹ Although the bond between him and Edgar imparts the duel apocalyptic features, it re-establishes, at least for a moment, a feeling of justice. Punished for his ruthless ambition, Edmund pays the price for his decision to fight against social customs in a most insidious way, the wheel of Fortune symbolizing the principle of rise and fall of men had turned, his

³⁵ William Shakespeare, *The History of King Lear*, ed. Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2001) 41.

³⁶ Bradley, 285.

³⁷ Knight, *King Lear and the Comedy of Grotesque*, 188.

³⁸ Moseley, 73-74.

³⁹ Moseley, 68-74.

life comes to an end.

Edmund is one of the few villains that repent, yet his repentance is far from being simple. His acceptance of Edgar's explanation for Gloucester's blindness and his later decision 'some good I mean to do, / Despite of mine own nature' (V, iii, 244-245) complicate the interpretation of his villainy. While Tillyard considers Edmund naive and describes him as 'one of those superlatively vicious men whom the stars and their own wills have joined to produce,'⁴⁰ Janet Adelman is of a different opinion.

She points out that Edmund's image of the self-made man is at odds with the image of a villain whose character as given and suggests that 'his dropping of the pose of utter control over the self and events seems to allow him to change indeed, and to take on true responsibility as a moral agent despite his own nature.'⁴¹ She also considers it ironical that at the moment when he tries to 'assert himself (...) as true moral agent,' his action is thwarted 'by events beyond his control.'⁴² To interpret Edmund as a man who overcomes his tendency to manipulate people and hopes to save lives is probably the only way how to avoid the complications that otherwise arise, however, it is rather questionable whether his design is truly foiled by events he cannot control.

As Kenneth Muir points out, there is a considerable delay between Edmund's reaction to Edgar's story: 'This speech of yours hath mov'd me, / And shall, perchance, do good' (V, iii, 200-201) and his actual confession.⁴³ Although this is also caused by the fact that the structure of the play requires that Lear and Cordelia die, there are interpretations that take into account Edmund's psychology. The realization that he was loved by Goneril and Regan is one of those Kenneth Muir considers possible while the knowledge that he is dying intensified by the deaths of Goneril and Regan is another.⁴⁴ However, seeing their dead bodies, he could also be prompted by the realization that Machiavelism causes suffering and pain. This kind of interpretation would then respect his comment that he speaks against his nature (V, iii, 245) because Machiavelism was based on the idea that man's natural energy was an amoral force.⁴⁵

Although Edmund comes from the new generation that seems to behave according to the Hobbesian philosophy in which desire plays the main role, he remains a Machiavel. For him, evil is not a psychological state as it was for Hobbes, nor does he perceive the world as

⁴⁰ Eustace Mandeville Wetenhall Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Penguin Books, 1972) 68.

⁴¹ Janet Adelman, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear, A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978) 16.

⁴² Adelman, 16.

⁴³ Muir, 109.

⁴⁴ Muir, 110.

⁴⁵ Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1968) 62.

potentially tragic and determined by the fall of man.⁴⁶ For Edmund, the world offers opportunities which should be exploited and evil is a means to it, a necessity that motivates men to use their will and courage, qualities of which their virtue consists.

His interest is his own advancement. Yet his villainy is primarily caused by his illegitimacy and social stigma attached to it. Because of that, he may be understood as a character whose self-interest and ambition developed as a kind of self-defence. Representing a new generation, he also reflects important social changes existing in Shakespeare's time.

⁴⁶ Warren Chernaik, *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 30-34.

4. The Villains with an Ethical Problem

Written for James I, both *Measure for Measure* and *Macbeth* contain villains that struggle with the notion of good and evil more than anyone else. Becoming slaves of passions and emotions both of these characters vent their suffering in monologues that betray their inability to control evil inside of them. As chief political representatives they are characters whose tyranny is closely linked with the abuse of power and violation of established order.

4.1 Angelo

Exploring the issues of justice, politics and power, *Measure for Measure* is a study of evil that results from the abuse of authority. Despite having its origin in Angelo's lack of self-knowledge, it penetrates all strata of society re-shaping the relationship between the subjects and their government and giving rise to double standards. As the one responsible for such a situation, Angelo becomes a villain whose strict reading of the statutes, suppressed sexuality and position in society turn him into a criminal far worse than Claudio whom he sentences to death.

Not unlike Shylock in his approach to law, Angelo is also disinclined to apply mercy when dealing with a case that demands it. For this reason, he turns into another Shakespearean character who prefers the letter to the spirit of the city ordinances. Yet, as with Shylock, his insistence on them is not without foundation.

Promoted to the post of a deputy, Angelo immediately receives Duke's power and with it also his responsibility for public good. Because of this, his insistence on law becomes propelled not only by his personal conviction but also by his sense of duty and desire to perform well. The rigorous reinstatement of all statutes and their enforcement therefore reveal his exacting nature as well as the mechanism of social justice.

As Mark Lilly points out in his study of the play, 'private individuals are required to forgive wrongs done against them, whereas judges in the public judicial system need to protect the public good by punishing wrongdoers.'¹ This is a principle that Angelo does not fail to suggest when he answers Isabella 'It is the law, not I, condemns your brother. / Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son, / It should be thus with him.'² The striking distinction between private

¹ Mark Lilly, *Measure for Measure by William Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1986) 4.

² William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) II, ii, 80-82. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

feelings and the public function of a judge that he sketches here serves him to illuminate the obligation he must follow.

But, as he later points out, this strict concept of justice is not devoid of mercy, though it could seem. Replying to Isabella's plea for pity 'I show it most of all when I show justice; / For then I pity those I do not know, / (...) And do him right that, answering one foul wrong, / Lives not to act another' (II, ii, 101-105), Angelo presents justice as a kind of mercy rather than as an attitude opposite to it.³ This point of view is further endorsed by Escalus who in his conversation with a gentleman named Justice defends Angelo's severity by saying 'It is but needful: / Mercy is not itself that oft looks so; / Pardon is still the nurse of second woe' (II, i, 280-282). How close he is to the truth becomes obvious soon enough when Pompey to whom he showed mercy earlier in the scene continues in his disreputable occupation until he is re-arrested.⁴

Responsibility for public good is, however, not the only factor that determines this idea of justice. The concept of power is equally important and the Duke makes it explicit when he lends Angelo his full authority ensuring him 'your scope is as mine own, / So to enforce or qualify the laws' (I, i, 64-65). Seen in the context of James' I vision of a king, this meant almost unlimited power. Thomas Bilson, bishop of Winchester, whose sermon preached at James' accession to the throne was most likely supervised by the monarch himself defines the rulers as 'keepers and supporters of the whole law' whose duties are 'rulling, judging, and punishing in God's stead,' as Louis A. Knafla points out in his essay 'Britain's Solomon: King James and the Law' where he analyzes Bilson's whole speech, kings were regarded as gods whose 'purpose [was] to repress the unbridled lusts of man's corruption: adultery, incest, rape, robbery, perjury, conspiracy, murder, rebellion, and treason.'⁵

Angelo may thus be perceived as the deputy of God himself, an authority whose duty is to uphold law and ensure that it is kept by the subjects. That the Duke is aware of all these obligations entailed in his position is apparent from his conversation with the friar. Not only that he admits here the neglect of his duties: 'We have strict statutes and most biting laws / (...) Which for this fourteen years we have let sleep' (I, iv, 19-20), but he also reveals his

³ Lilly, 25.

⁴ Lilly, 25.

⁵ Louis A. Knafla, "Britain's Solomon: King James and the Law," *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, ed. Daniel Fischlin, Mark Fortier, 20 Nov. 2013
<http://books.google.cz/books?id=cF_UPxm84wC&pg=PA51&lpg=PA51&dq=Knafla+Britain%27s+Solomon:+King+james+and+law&source=bl&ots=TD3ZxORMNv&sig=BP1hLLfID1Y9wETDqkFfRXZHcmw&hl=en&sa=X&ei=E6nSUriVKqGm4gTHvIHoBA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Knafla%20Britain's%20Solomon%3A%20King%20james%20and%20law&f=false>.

desire to have the laws enforced: 'our decrees, / Dead to infliction, to themselves are dead, / And liberty plucks justice by the nose' (I, iv, 27-29).

The justice the Duke speaks of is the justice Angelo is ready to exact. It is also that same justice that Isabella respects and finds difficult to go against: 'There is a vice that most I do abhor, / And most desire should meet the blow of justice, / For which I would not plead, but that I must' (II, ii, 29-31). Even Claudio who wishes to be saved does not dispute the sentence given to him. Listed by the bishop Thomas Bilson as a vice a ruler must repress among his subjects, consummation of a relationship prior to the marriage ceremony is also denounced by William Harrington in his *Commendacions of matrimony*: 'Yf that man & woman (...) do make matrymony secretly by them selfe without any recorde (...) they lyue in a dampnable aduotry.'⁶ Understood by everyone in these terms, Claudio's trespass is considered most serious, although the sentence is often perceived as too severe.

This ambiguity is inherent in the relation between the demands of law and human limitations. As Roxana Silbert, the director of Royal Shakespeare Company, argues, 'rigid rules and (...) cultural and social framework that do not allow the fact that people have very primal urges' results in 'putting people in an impossible position.'⁷ With Angelo in the role of God's deputy, the law he insists on is perceived as just, given from God himself, but at the same time as cruel because it ignores human nature. Isabella expresses this explicitly when she concludes: 'O just, but severe law! / I had a brother, then' (II, ii, 42-43).

Affecting the conflict between Angelo and Isabella, this issue of law and mercy is further complicated by the question of morality. The strict and religious Angelo, who succumbs to his urges and abuses his position of authority to satisfy them, is a means by which the relation between legality and morality is explored. To what extent should judges be loyal to law and how should Christian outlook mould the moral law are questions that surround his fall.

Very different from the rest of the characters, Angelo stands for self-restraint and inhumanity. The conviction that emotions can be ruled by intellect turns him into a Puritan famous not only for his exemplary life but also his coldness. Emotionally detached, he seems unnatural to the life-loving Lucio who describes him as 'a man whose blood / Is very snow-broth' (I, v, 57-58) and whose 'urine is congealed ice' (III, ii, 112). His tales of Angelo's origin are even more fantastical: 'they say this Angelo was not made by man and woman, after this / downright way of creation' (III, ii, 105-106) and 'some report a sea-maid spawned him; some,

⁶ Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare, A Study of Julius Caesar, Measure for Measure, Antony and Cleopatra* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963) 76.

⁷ Royal Shakespeare Company, "Talking about Sex – Measure for Measure – Royal Shakespeare Company," 16 Nov. 2011, 20 Nov. 2013 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZPvfKcuRGs>>.

that he was begot / between two stockfishes' (III, ii, 110-111).

Lucio emphasizes Angelo's unnaturalness and inhumanity helping to build his image of the Angel of death whose main purpose is to destroy those that create life.⁸ His comments always champion life that Angelo tries to stifle and suppress by laws. As J. W. Lever points out in his preface for the Arden edition of the play, sexual intercourse is for Lucio as natural as eating and drinking: 'it is impossible to extirp it quite (...) till eating and drinking be put down' (III, ii, 104-105) or as farming: 'As those that feed grow full, as blossoming time / That from the seedness the bare fallow brings / To the teeming foison, even so her plenteous womb / Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry' (I, v, 41-44).⁹ Together with Claudio and the pregnant Juliet, Lucio is the promoter of life.

There is, however, some truth in his exaggerated remarks. Believing that emotions can be ruled by intellect, Angelo imposes this view without considering that emotions may be the moving force in men's lives. As Mark Lilly suggests, he has 'a childlike naïvety about the world of human passions' which does not prepare him for the strong emotions he is to experience.¹⁰ Unable to deal intellectually with the surge of irrational feelings, he becomes their slave. As he used to refuse to acknowledge his potential for such emotional response, he may be seen as a victim of self-deception.

The strict Puritanical outlook that Angelo cultivates gives his transformation a particularly nasty touch. As G. Wilson Knight points out in his book *The Wheel of Fire*, '[s]exual desire has long been anathema to him, so his warped idealism forbids any healthy love (...) sex has been synonymous with foulness in his mind.'¹¹ While his refusal to marry Mariana without her dowry suggests that in his mind love is reduced to a connection for practical reasons, his denunciation of Claudio's conduct presents sex as licentiousness that must be punished: 'It were as good / To pardon him, that hath from nature stolen / A man already made, as to remit / Their saucy sweetness that do coin Heaven's image / In stamps that are forbid' (II, iv, 41-45).

Never letting emotionality to cloud his reason, the surge of unknown feelings brings sudden revelation about love: 'Ever, till now, / When men were fond, I smil'd and wonder'd how' (II, ii, 187-188). But as he considers sex foul, all this desire is immediately perceived as negative. Angelo feels tainted by it and paralyzed: 'I, / That, lying by the violet in the sun, / Do, as the

⁸ Schanzer, 95.

⁹ J.W. Lever, ed., William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (London: Routledge, 1992) 84-85.

¹⁰ Lilly, 67.

¹¹ G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen, 1965) 87.

carrion does, not as the flower / Corrupt with virtuous season' (II, ii, 166-169). What follows is disintegration of values and separation from God: 'Heaven in my mouth / As if I did but only chew his name, / And in my heart the strong and swelling evil / Of my conception' (II, iv, 4-7).

As G. Wilson Knight points out, Angelo is not an absolute hypocrite.¹² What is seen as the lack of human touch, is in reality constant striving for perfection, as the Duke says: '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' (I, iv, 50-53). Angelo's interpretation of sexual desire as of an urge that is evil is a consequence of this perfectionism that is part of his stern Puritanical outlook. As Terence Irwin points out in his article 'Christian Theology and Moral Philosophy: 'Jesus forbids not only murder, but even insulting words; not only adultery, but even looking lustfully on a woman.'¹³ Angelo's horror of his sexual desire is coloured by his incapacity to keep this moral law. Mere thought of Isabella is perceived as evil.

Because of that, Angelo's villainy is preceded by self-disappointment and self-disgust. Unable to sustain the ideal of virtue he set for himself, he accepts his failure with the conclusion that neither intellect nor social rules can harness his sexual urge: 'Blood, thou art blood' (II, iv, 15). While the same desire functions as unifying force, joining together Claudio and Juliet, Lucio and Kate Keepdown, Elbow and his wife who is 'with child, and / (...) great-bellied' (II, i, 96-97) just like Juliet who 'takes the shame with joy' (II, iii, 35), in Angelo's case it is sinister force separating him from society and giving birth to his evil.

He becomes the false ten-shilling gold coin that his name implies, a coin made of false metal with the stamp of an angel and lighter than the real coins,¹⁴ as his threat to Isabella suggests: 'Say what you can, my false o'erweighs your true' (II, iv, 170). But his fall is hinted at already in the first act, not only by his own wish 'Let there be some more test made of my metal, / Before so noble and so great a figure / Be stamp'd upon it' (I, i, 47-49), but also by the reference to candles that the Duke makes. His remark that 'Heaven doth with us as we with torches do, / Not light them for themselves' (I, i, 32-33) echoes the verses in Luke 'No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel (...) For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest' (Luke 8:16-17) and suggests that all that is now hidden will be revealed.¹⁵

The Duke's prophetic words 'hence shall we see, / If power change purpose, what our

¹² Knight, 85.

¹³ Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics, A Historical and Critical Study, Volume I: From Socrates to the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 374.

¹⁴ Schanzer, 95.

¹⁵ Lilly, 9.

seemers be' (I, iv, 53-54) soon become true. Angelo's abuse of his position is, however, caused by his self-deception, not by habitual pretence. What it precedes is personal change which becomes also manifested on the linguistic level. As Angelo succumbs to his desire, the 'filthy vices' (II, iv, 42) he criticized become 'sweet uncleanness' (II, iv, 54). As Mark Lilly points out, language becomes 'as ambiguous as the disguises and deceptions of human beings.'¹⁶

Already Angelo's first aside reveals this ambiguity: 'She speaks, and 'tis / Such sense, that my sense breeds with it' (II, ii, 142-143). Here, the first 'sense' denotes reason while the second sexual desire, a pun that is later repeated when he complains 'Your sense pursues not mine' (II, iv, 75) by which he means that she does not requite his advances, though he may appear to say that she does not understand him. The conversation between Angelo and Isabella (II, iv) in which he tries to convince her to sexual intercourse is based on similar ambiguous suggestions and ends with Isabella's request 'I have no tongue but one: gentle my lord, / Let me entreat you speak the former language' (II, iv, 139-140). Angelo's attempt to convey his intentions by speaking indirectly shows how sinister an otherwise unambiguous language can become.¹⁷

Arguing that Angelo was reluctant to accept the post of a deputy, G. Wilson Knight blames the Duke for Angelo's fall.¹⁸ Although it is true that Angelo did not have the ambition to rule in his stead, this is a point that is hardly sustainable. The Duke cannot be held responsible for Angelo's desire for Isabella which he would feel even if he was not the deputy.

Angelo suffers heavily from remorse. As he himself admits: 'This deed unshapes me quite (...) / A deflower'd maid, / And by an eminent body that enforc'd / The law against it!' (IV, iv, 21-24) and then again "Would yet he had liv'd!" (IV, iv, 33). Yet despite it, Angelo does not confess his crime until the Duke reveals the whole truth.

Instead, he relies on his image of a virtuous man when confronted by Mariana and Isabella, calling for justice 'good my lord, give me the scope of justice; / My patience here is touch'd' (V, i, 230-231) and claiming that 'These poor informal women are no more / But instruments of some more mightier member / That sets them on' (V, i, 232-234). As Jonathan Dollimore argues in his essay 'Transgression and Surveillance in *Measure for Measure*:' 'Angelo resorts to the claim that the State is being subverted (in order to discredit charges of corruption

¹⁶ Lilly, 54.

¹⁷ Lilly, 54.

¹⁸ Knight, 85.

against himself).¹⁹ Accusing a third non-existent party, he diverts attention from the real connection between the state and the low-life that there exists.

Speaking of power relations in his book *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault claims that 'there is no binary (...) opposition between rulers and ruled (...) no such duality extending from the top down.'²⁰ This is the principle that characterizes the relation between Angelo and the world of the brothels he tries to eliminate. Although he presents prostitution as dangerous and denounces it, the proposition he makes to Isabella is of the same nature.

The opposition between him and the subjects which he promotes therefore disappears as he commits the same crime. Jonathan Dollimore calls this 'a descent of the ruler into the sins of the ruled' and emphasizes that although prostitution is considered subversive, corruption is more political than sexual and spreads from Angelo to the those he rules.²¹ Despite his effort to suppress illicit sexual activity, it is Angelo's own uncontrolled sexual desire that becomes most subversive and exploitative.²²

The real master of the situation, the Duke settles the existing problems and gives Angelo a chance to change. Disregarding the biblical principle 'with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again' (Matthew 7:2),²³ he approaches law as recommended by James in his *Basilikon Doron*: 'laws are ordained as rules of virtuous and social living, and not to be snares to trap your good subjects: (...) the law must be interpreted according to the meaning, and not to the literal sense.'²⁴ Showing mercy, the Duke demonstrates that although the rulers are God's deputies, they are not answerable to law at all costs, morality always comes first.

His conduct becomes a lesson in mercy to Angelo and his decision to let him marry Mariana a solution for his religious crisis. A correct one according to the Bible as Paul recommends marriage as a remedy for sexual desire.²⁵ But the trial itself is also of importance in Angelo's case. Feeling shame and guilt, he craves death until he sees that Claudio is still alive.

A self-deceiver, Angelo is a villain whose abuse of power affects the whole social mechanism and cancels out the difference between the ruler and his subjects. Perverting

¹⁹ Jonathan Dollimore, "Transgression and Surveillance in *Measure for Measure*," *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) 77-78.

²⁰ Michel Foucault: *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1980) 94.

²¹ Dollimore, 73-74.

²² Dollimore, 84.

²³ "The Holy Bible Online," *The Holy Bible Online Project*, 1994-2005, 14 Feb 2013

<<http://www.holybibleonline.net/>>.

²⁴ James I, "Basilikon Doron," *Measure for Measure by William Shakespeare*, Mark Lilly (London: Macmillan, 1986) 5.

²⁵ Irving, 383.

language and moral values, his villainy gives rise to double standards that turn laws into instruments of corruption. As a judge and God's deputy, Angelo becomes a statesman whose lack of mercy and understanding is caused not only by his tendency to intellectualize his emotions but also by his need to hide his own crimes.

4.2 Macbeth

Reluctantly succumbing to his ambition, Macbeth is a villain whom crimes bring only despair. His murder of Duncan results not only in disintegration of his values but also of his personality. Affecting his language and behaviour, the crime he commits is perceived as horrible not only because it involves the killing of a king but also because it violates the code of virtue and honour he acknowledges.

Taken over from the Romans who used the word 'virtus' for manhood, 'man-ness', virtue became the symbol of supreme moral worth in the Renaissance England, as H. B. Charlton explains in his *Shakespearian Tragedy* and for that reason, virtue meant 'that which best becomes a man' and to display supreme valour, 'worthiness', was to attain moral excellence because courage was the measure of man's real worth.¹ This concept is fully explored in *Macbeth* and becomes repeatedly stressed by most of the characters. Even before he enters stage, Macbeth is celebrated as a brave and courageous warrior. He becomes nicknamed the 'Bellona's bridegroom'² and 'valour's minion' (I, ii, 19).

As J. K. Walton points out in his essay 'Macbeth' this courage and valour is inseparable from the notion of what it means to be man.³ This can be seen on numerous occasions. Lady Macbeth goads her husband to do 'all that may become a man' (I, vii, 39-51), Macduff challenges Macbeth with jeer 'Then yield thee, coward' (V, vii, 52-53), when Banquo's ghost disappears, Macbeth pronounces 'I am a man again' (III, iv, 107).

To incite her husband to murder, Lady Macbeth uses this concept of courage. She comments 'When you durst do it, then you were a man' (I, vii, 49), reproaches him for his being 'quite unmann'd in folly' (III, iv, 74) and sneers at his fear: 'would well become/ A woman's story at a winter's fire' (III, iv, 64-65). Appealing to his valour and courage that define him, she convinces him that to be man means to be bold and dare to do anything

Her idea is very Machiavellian. What she advises is pretence: 'Look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under it' (I, v, 65-66). Consequently, her notion is an

¹ H.B. Charlton, *Shakespearian Tragedy* (Norwich: Jarrold & Sons, 1961) 148.

² William Shakespeare, "Macbeth," *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New Lanark: Midpoint Press, 2001) III, ii, 182-185. All future references to the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

³ J. K. Walton, "Macbeth," *Shakespeare in a Changing World*, ed. Arnold Kettle (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964) 104-105.

individualistic one.

As J. K. Walton demonstrates, this view is perceived by Macbeth with apprehensions because he is still aware of the older feudalistic concept that defines man as a member of community which urges him to remain loyal to the interests of society and to doubt 'primary loyalty (...) to his own interests.'⁴ Unlike his wife, he cannot deny the depravity of his ambition that is triply heinous for he is Duncan's kinsman, subject and host. The rules of conduct dictate that he accepts the obligations the relationship of kinsman to kinsman, subject to king entails and that he fulfills the additional obligation as a host.

The struggle between the two different views becomes the source of inner tension that brings about his dreadful visions that horrify him, but also seduce him to the crime. A dagger with 'gouts of blood' (II, i, 46) on its blade beckons him to kill Duncan while murder is seems to prowl with 'Tarquin's ravishing strides' (II, i, 55). The erotic undertones that Martin Hilský describes in his essay on Macbeth are apparent in Macbeth's speech also after the murder is committed when the daggers lie beside the guards 'Unmannerly breech'd with gore' (II, iii, 116-117).⁵

Concentrating more on the use of daggers, Lisa Hopkins perceives the murder in her essay 'Macbeth and the failure of spectacle' as a perversive version of the great feast prepared in Duncan's honour.⁶ Lady Macbeth prepares a drink for her husband (II, i, 31) as well as for the guards, 'I have drugg'd their possets' (II, ii, 6), and lays the daggers ready (II, ii, 12). But as the daggers will not be used for 'a meal but for murder,' the murder mocks previous hospitality.⁷

Macbeth does not envision a glittering crown such as Richard III (*King Henry VI, Part 3* III, ii, 168-171). It is the bloody dagger that becomes the symbol of his crime. Unlike his wife who can clearly imagine the murder itself: 'Come, thick night,/ And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell / That my keen knife see not the wound it makes' (I, v, 50-53), Macbeth cannot visualize the crime.⁴⁰ The crime does only intensify his sensitivity. As A. C. Bradley emphasizes: 'His wife heard the owl scream and the crickets cry; but what *he* heard was the voice that first cried 'Macbeth doth murder sleep.'⁸

His exclamations 'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor / Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more!' (II, ii, 41-42) show that by killing Duncan, Macbeth murdered

⁴ Walton, 105.

⁵ Martin Hilský, *Shakespeare a jeviště svět* (Praha: Academia, 2010) 639.

⁶ Lisa Hopkins, "Macbeth and the Failure of Spectacle," *Shakespeare and Language*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 256-258.

⁷ Hopkins, 256-259.

⁸ Andrew Cecil Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1992) 311-312.

the person he used to be. The Glamis that defeated the rebel Macdonwald and was praised for his virtue turns here into Cawdor, a man that is treacherous. Yet, both these men are Macbeth. This schizophrenic split continues as Macbeth's despair makes him say: 'What hands are here?' (II, ii, 58) and 'To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself' (II, ii, 72). The alienation between the parts of Macbeth's physical body mirrors his alienation from the community he was part of.

This is further emphasized when the body is discovered. Macduff speaks of sacrilege when he speaks of murder that 'hath ope / The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence / The life o' the building' (II, iii, 67-69). His lines echo the Jacobean opinion on divinity of kingship well expressed in King James' *Basilicon Doron: Or His Maiesties Instrvctions to His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince* where the monarch advises his son: 'learne to knowe and loue that God (...) for that he made you a man; and next, for that he made you a little God to sitte on his throne, and rule ouer other men.'⁹

By killing Duncan, Macbeth kills God's deputy.¹⁰ As he cannot adopt the Machiavellian attitude recommended to him by his wife, this has dire consequences. With Duncan dead, the old system of values, everything that was 'serious in mortality' (II, iii, 94), crumbles into pieces. No water can wash the blood off his hands because it is the mind that became stained by the deed.¹¹

Morally sensible, Macbeth feels that the crime deprived him of purity of his soul. As he admits: 'For Banquo's have I fil'd my mind; / For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd / (...) Only for them; and mine eternal jewel / Given to the common enemy of man' (III, i, 65-68). The attainment of the crown brings him no pleasure because he is unable to re-instate the old order where his son would succeed him. Because of this, J. I. M. Stewart concludes in his tragedy in his book *Character and Motive in Shakespeare* that Macbeth 'and his wife are immensely potent, but their tragedy is a tragedy of sterility.'¹²

Macbeth's creative language contrasts with emptiness of his life. His monologues with impressive metaphors where pity takes on the shape of a 'naked new-born babe' (I, vii, 21) and 'all great Neptune's ocean' (II, ii, 59-60) cannot wash the blood off his hands have richness that remains hidden to the world. The only time he uses this private way of speaking in public is when the spheres of public and private come together: after the murder of Duncan

⁹ James I, "Basilicon Doron: Or His Maiesties Instructions, to His Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince," *Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy*, William Rosen (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960)

¹⁰ William Rosen, *Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960) 53.

¹¹ Rosen, 82.

¹² J. I. M Stewart, *Character and Motive in Shakespeare* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1949) 92.

(II, iii, 92-119) and during the banquet scene (III, iv).¹³ It is when Macbeth is confronted with his crime, that his language used in private seeps into the public.

Macbeth's moral disintegration is characterized by his inability to command language. Unable to control himself at the apparition of dead Banquo, Macbeth utters only a list of short sentences: 'see there! behold! look! lo!' (III, iv, 69). As Lisa Hopkins suggests in her essay 'Macbeth and the failure of spectacle,' the exclamations resemble 'a demented thesaurus (...) as speech continually glosses itself' and shows 'the slippage between signifier and signified which, even as the deictic is spoken, undermines its ability to show.'¹⁴

Macbeth's crimes violate not only his language but also his natural rhythm. The healing capacity of sweet repose that 'shuts up sorrow's eye' (*Midsummer-Night's Dream* III, ii, 435) and that as the 'nature's soft nurse' steeps 'senses in forgetfulness' (*Henry IV, Part 2* III, i, 6-8) works here no more. There is no 'balm' for him any more that would restore his raving mind (II, ii, 35-38) back to health.

Having broken the bonds of the old established order, he never succeeds in re-creating the world where reciprocal obligations and compromise are commonplace.¹⁵ Separated from others by his machinations he challenges the world itself. By attempting to exterminate Banquo's lineage and wiping out Macduff's family, Macbeth tries to assert his power even over nature itself.¹⁶ Violent and traitorous death of Duncan becomes a mere starting point, a milestone dividing a brave warrior from a brutal murderer racked by fear and feelings of guilt.

Symbiosis changes into a pool of parasites and predators where no-one's position is safe just as Macbeth cannot be safe of his position of a king. The 'snake' (III, ii, 13), the symbol of danger, is always scorched, never killed and the violence has no end because ultimate control is impossible. Yet Macbeth is ready to destroy the world in order to get this impossible: 'But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer / ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep / In the affliction of these terrible dreams / That shake us nightly' (III, ii, 16-19).

Macbeth's journey away from morality and humanity is the one towards isolation. Retreat into a world of his own is for Macbeth inevitable as the macrocosm of the society begins to reflect the evil that corrupts him. As Thomas Elyot says in his work *The Boke Named the Governour* 'a publike weale (...) is made of an ordre of astates and degrees, and by reason therof, conteineth in it a perfect harmony.'¹⁷ Although criticized for taking propaganda as a

¹³ Hopkins, 256.

¹⁴ Hopkins, 260

¹⁵ Rosen, 83.

¹⁶ Rosen, 81.

¹⁷ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke named The Governour* (London: Dent) 28.

fact, E. M. W. Tillyard analyzes this desire for harmony in his work *The Elizabethan World Picture* and states: 'If the Elizabethans believed in an ideal order animating earthly order, they were terrified lest it should be upset, and appalled by the visible tokens of disorder.'¹⁸ As a play reflecting the ideals promoted by James I, *Macbeth* is inseparable from this idea.

The ruined banquet scene shows exactly how Macbeth's crime has already affected the divine social order.¹⁹ The traditional ritual where the king sits at the head and presides a community of guest, each sat in his proper place is seriously disrupted when Banquo's ghost appears and takes Macbeth's place. Macbeth can then never join his guests for each time he makes a move for it, he finds it occupied by the ghost.²⁰ Forced to remain outside the festive circle, he no longer belongs to the community.

How infected the social order is, becomes apparent soon afterwards when Lady Macbeth concludes the banquet with 'At once, good night. / Stand not upon the order of your going, / But go at once' (III, iv, 117-119), a farewell that stands in sharp contrast with Macbeth's welcoming sentence 'You know your own degrees; sit down' (III, iv, 1). The solemnity and order with which it all started crumbles into pieces when Macbeth faces his lawlessness in the shape of his dead friend's body. Banquo's ghost becomes one of the symptoms of the disease that afflicts both Macbeth and his country.

The connection between health of the land and health of the king, of the micro and macrocosm is here very strong. The more crimes Macbeth commits the more his country bleeds and suffers. Aware of this, Macbeth promises a doctor his undying thanks if he finds the disease of his land and 'purge it to a sound and pristine health' (V, iii, 52). He never realizes, however, that he himself is the disease.

Macbeth's growing isolation and increasing scale of crime turn him into a practical realist who is hardened, untouched by moral considerations and who derives authority from nobody but himself alone.²⁰ No longer sensitive to atrocities he causes, Macbeth himself begins to determine what is good and what is evil and, because he suffers, this leads him to the idea that everything that affords freedom from the ever-present, oppressive fear becomes good.²² Creating his own norms, he seeks nothing but relief. Violence evolves thus into a mode of living where destruction becomes the purpose itself.²³

¹⁸ Eustace Mandeville Wetenhall Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (London: Penguin Books, 1972) 23-24.

¹⁹ Rosen, 88.

²⁰ Rosen, 88.

²¹ Rosen, 83-85.

²² Rosen, 85.

²³ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Routledge, 1992) 62.

Fear becomes ever-present and the atmosphere dangerous. Ross' words speak of it clearly: 'cruel are the times when we are traitors / And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumour / From what we fear, yet know not what we fear' (IV, ii, 18-19). Lady Macduff's remark further demonstrates that fear became even more important than love: 'All is the fear and nothing is the love' (IV, ii, 12). More fitting than their comments is, however, the answer of Macduff's son who easily reveals the painful truth about the present situation. Told that his father was proclaimed a traitor and that all traitors should be hanged by honest men because they swear and lie (IV, ii, 45-54), he readily replies that 'then the liars and swearers are fools; for there are liars and swearers/ enough to beat the honest men and hang up them' (IV, ii, 57-58).

Because destiny is embedded in time, Macbeth's quest against his fate becomes also a war against time. Being without a successor, a copy of himself, the only way for him to defeat time and fate is to keep the crown forever. Violence and crime become natural choice. Feeling 'cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in to saucy doubts and fears' (III, iv, 24-25) he is soon 'in blood / Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more / returning were as tedious as go o'er' (III, iv, 137-138).

However, the more Macbeth fights, the more elusive time remains. In order to get the prophesied 'hereafter' (I, iii, 50), he accepts the idea of his wife who feels 'now / The future in the instant' (I, v, 54-55) to 'beguile the time' (I, v, 63) and begins to 'mock' it 'with fairest show' (I, vii, 81). By doing precisely this, Macbeth loses his former normative attitude towards time he showed earlier in his 'come what come may, / Time and the hour runs through the roughest day' (I, iii, 145-6).²⁴ By mocking time, Macbeth deprives it of its healing powers.

The time that used to cure is out of joint and the natural cycle that determined the course of the world is broken. An owl kills a falcon (II, iv, 12-13), Duncan's horses eat each other (II, iv, 13-18) and the sky turns dark (II, iv, 5-9). Lady Macbeth's prophesy 'never / Shall sun that morrow see' (I, v, 60-61) comes true and 'darkness does the face of earth entomb,/ When living light should kiss it' (II, iv, 8-9). Nocturnal animals, bats, scorpions and shard beetles, appear to dominate the earth and to fill Macbeth's mind with murderous thoughts (III, ii, 36-43).

Preoccupied with murder Macbeth himself invokes a night to engulf him: 'Stars, hide your fires; / Let not light see my black and deep desires' (I, iv, 50-51) and contrasts with Malcolm who invokes symbolic light: 'which honour must / Not, unaccompanied, invest him only, / But

²⁴ George Walton Williams, Catherine M. S. Alexander, ed., *Shakespeare and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 242.

signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine/ On all deservers' (I, iv, 39-42).²⁵ As the time of night becomes the time of murder, darkness enshrouds the world for crime and violence become commonplace. Because by killing Duncan Macbeth murders sleep itself, 'the death of each day's life' (II, ii, 36), the horror of the fatal night is to last for him forever. Time collapses leaving him without medicinal sleep, natural cure embedded in the regular alternation of night and day.

Part of natural order that Macbeth violated, time turns to plague Macbeth and to deprive his acts of their finality.²⁶ Killed Banquo returns as if he were still alive and what is to happen seems to be decided beforehand by the witches. What used to be simple and free is turned upside down. Macbeth himself comments on this change when he says in his desperation that 'the time has been / That, when the brains were out, the man would die, / And there an end; but now they rise again' (III, iv, 78-80). Ghosts of the dead come to haunt him as nature and time revolt against him.

Constantly preoccupied with what can happen Macbeth never lives in the present. For him, it is always 'tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow' (V, v, 19) filled with warlike 'sound and fury' (V, v, 27) that is futile. Wasted opportunities of yesterdays transform life into a misspent fleeting moment leaving him tired and worn out. Macbeth the actor played his role badly on the stage of life and became awarded for his achievement with the loss of his life's meaning. The word 'tomorrow' becomes repeated so many times that it loses its original sense and becomes as insignificant as life itself.²⁷ As William Rosen points out, Macbeth who used to mock the time is now indifferent to time, the future is no longer sought after and time reappears again only after Macbeth's head is cut off, an act that Macduff announces with victorious 'Behold where stands / The usurper's cursed head. The time is free.'²⁸

Although Macbeth may appear to be the victim of supernatural powers, Hecate chides the witches: 'How did you dare / To trade and traffic with Macbeth / In riddles and affairs of death' (III, v, 2-4), his downfall is brought entirely by his own character and ambition. Analyzing his conscience, J. K. Walton suggests that Macbeth 'has not one conscience but two, each (...) corresponding to one of the opposing views of man' and he argues that 'while his individualist conscience prevails and thus prevents him from saying that what he has done is wrong, the other conscience continues to torment him.'²⁹ This point of view corresponds

²⁵ Rosen, 70.

²⁶ Rosen, 72.

Kris Joseph, "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow – Ian McKellen Analyzes Macbeth Speech," 24 May 2012, 20 Oct 2013 <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGbZCgHQ9m8>>.

²⁸ Williams, 243.

²⁹ Walton, 105.

with the conflict that Macbeth faces. Yet his torment could also be seen in a slightly different light.

Writing on conscience, John Skorupski describes conscience as 'the power of judging whether what we have done, or are thinking of doing, is in accordance with what we believe to be right' and states that 'On this conception conscience is not thought of as itself a way of knowing what *is* right.'³⁰ This definition explains Macbeth's inner tension not only as the conflict between thinking and doing but it also as disappointment caused by following the advice of his wife.

Although Lady Macbeth does not admit her despair, the killing of Duncan has similar consequences for her. What started as a mutual promising venture, turns into the lack of communication. Isolating himself from others, Macbeth withdraws from his wife. The murder of Duncan thus does not affect only the outer world, but also their relationship.

No longer open about his intentions, Macbeth keeps his fears and plans to himself. Even other prophecies remain known only to him. They poison his mind as he constantly tries to establish certainty and clear future. Paradoxically, the more he tries to evade the negative prophecies, the more he contributes to their fulfilling.

The duality that characterizes the speech of the witches: 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' (I, i, 10) or 'When the battle's lost and won' (I, i, 4) contributes to the atmosphere of uncertainty. While G. Wilson Knight speaks of the witches as of evil that is absolute 'therefore alien to man (...) shown as inhuman and supernatural,'³¹ Wilbur Sanders speaks of them as of evil that is 'independent of the human mind, while at the same time affirming the intimate connexion between the two.'³² The witches voice the deepest ambitions and fear that Macbeth carries within himself, showing him what may happen, yet leaving it up to him to make the choice.

Evil in *Macbeth* is inside of men themselves and as such makes them responsible for their crimes. Unable to adopt a Machiavellian attitude recommended to him by his wife, Macbeth becomes a villain that continues in his crimes in order to regain his peace of mind. The evil he causes becomes a means to alleviate his inner suffering and fear that plagues him. Constantly fighting against it, he totally loses touch with his former self.

³⁰ John Skorupski, "Conscience," *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*, ed. John Skorupski (London: Routledge, 2010) 552.

³¹ G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen, 1965) 140.

³² Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1968) 202.

5.

Conclusion

Inseparable from the concept of nature, the Shakespearean villains are part of an organic system which they react to. They represent new ideas that clash with the traditional view of the world. Undermining it, they affect the whole society and their villainy has often far-reaching consequences.

Detached and rational, Richard and Iago are the villains most influenced by the notion the Elizabethans had of Machiavelli's teachings. In the core of their villainy lies self-interest and self-love while remorse never prevails. When Richard briefly regrets his crimes, the voice of his conscience takes on the identity of a stranger because it is so suppressed in Richard's mind that he cannot recognize it as his own voice. Iago, on the other hand, does not feel even the slightest remorse, evil is not just a means to achieve Othello's dehumanization, it is accepted as the only possible way of thinking and acting. In this sense, it is absolute.

Although Shylock and even Caliban defend their causes very successfully, the primacy of intellect and verbal skills goes to Iago and Richard. Their language is highly performative and their verbal strategies infallible. Ghastly grotesque, Richard displays his deformed hand to accuse Hastings of treason and in a moment manages to convince others by his questions to consent to action that suits his plans. While Richard stylizes himself into roles and impresses other characters to the extent that they believe him, Iago does not have to strive so much to win the confidence of others. His seeming honesty is widely accepted and all he has to do is to use what is offered.

Iago senses the weak spots of others and attacks them. He abuses Roderigo's credulity and builds his plot on Othello's ignorance of Venetian mentality making him believe that he never knew Desdemona and never truly had her. Iago is the poisoner of mind, he cures himself by infecting Othello with his disease. Yet he is also an economist who capitalizes on his words and sells them at a high price. Unlike Richard, Iago deceives others by verbally creating situations that never happened.

This feature he shares with Edmund who is also a villain characterized by sharp intellect and strong ambition. Yet Edmund does not proclaim himself bad in the way Richard and Iago do. Rather, he presents himself in the best possible light. The power to convince equals the power of conviction and villainy hides itself under a mask of justice. Although Edmund has his ambition, the public humiliation he has to undergo from his father colours his decision to embrace it. The Machiavellian theme of man's character as naturally amoral is in his case intensified by his illegitimacy.

While there can be no doubt about his villainy, Shylock's and Caliban's self-justification makes the line between good and evil very fine and vitally contributes to polemics on the righteousness of their causes. Not only that they present themselves as victims, the grounds on which they argue in favour of their justice are to a certain extent well-founded. Antonio may hardly consider himself an exemplary Christian when he spits on Shylock and calls him a dog. Similarly, Prospero never offers an explanation regarding his appropriation of the island when challenged by Caliban. As Shylock's and Caliban's highest ambition is to have their justice, their villainy must always be seen as the dialogue between them and their environment.

Masters of language, the Shakespearean villains show evil in every form, even as a burden that is difficult to endure. While Richard and Iago use their verbal skills to attack and while

Edmund, Shylock and Caliban to justify themselves, Angelo and Macbeth use them to describe their inner states. Their language is the language of fear and spiritual loss.

In their case, the quest for power starts with doubts and ends with the confirmation that moral and political spheres can never be separated. Desires and emotions cannot be controlled. Angelo's language thus becomes ambiguous and full of double meanings while Macbeth's language which he uses in private and which is characterized by vivid metaphors seeps into public every time he is confronted by his crimes. His growing evil negatively affects the land as well as him.

The conflict between individualism and the old social order is most prominent in *Macbeth* but it is the theme that is evident in most plays where major villains appear. The new ideas are asserted vigorously, be it in the figure of Edmund who claims the same social rights or that of Shylock whose moneylending no longer causes such indignation. Although the old system is not depicted as faultless, morality always prevails. Evil is shown as both destructive and self-destructive causing pain and suffering. Yet it remains attractive and draws to itself more attention than the traditional social order.

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Jak název sám napovídá, práce *Záporné postavy v Shakespearově dramatu* je studií, která analyzuje zlo v divadelních hrách anglického dramatika Williama Shakespeara. Soustředí se převážně na nejvýznamější záporné postavy, kterými jsou Richard III, Jago, Šajlok, Kaliban, Edmund, Angelo a Macbeth, i když také velmi krátce zmiňuje Iachima, Claudia, Don Johna a Aarona. Sleduje, jakým způsobem přistoupil dramatik k otázce zla a věnuje se rozboru těch nejvýznamnějších padouchů.

V úvodní části načrtává literární zvyklosti v Shakespearově době a přístupy dramatiků k otázce zla. Definuje, kdo je zápornou postavou a kdo není. Zároveň ukazuje základní rysy, které se u padouchů opakovaně objevují jako je spojitost s postavou Neřesti a ďábla. Dále rozděluje postavy do tří skupin podle toho, jakým způsobem přistupují ke zlu, které páchají, a jakým způsobem ho podávají.

Těm, kterým se jedná o radost ze zla a kterým zlo slouží k seberealizaci či získání něčeho konkrétního, jsou Iago, Richard, Aaron, Don John, Claudius a Iachimo. Tyto záporné postavy často klamou své oběti lží, jsou velmi dobrými strategy a mají vynikající verbální schopnosti. Jagova schopnost přivést Othella až na pokraj zoufalství a proměnit ho ve zvíře, za které ho považuje, je výsledkem jak jeho intelektu, tak jeho slovní manipulace. Také Richard III je dobrým řečníkem a v jeho podání dostává zlo podobu Neřesti ze středověkých moralit a italského machiavelisty.

I když Edmund sdílí některé rysy s Iagem, za příčinu svého zla považuje ústrky a to, že je nemanželským synem. Je proto zařazen spolu s Šajlokem a Kalibanem do skupinky padouchů, kteří žádají spravedlnost. Stejně jako oni, i on se cítí obětí sociálních norem a názorů, proti kterým se bouří. U všech třech je tak při interpretaci brán ohled na sociální kontext.

Poslední skupinu tvoří Angelo a Macbeth, postavy, které jsou silně morálně založené a které se se zlem nedokáží vypořádat. Pochyby a nereálné vize se často objevují v jejich jazyce, který dochází změn. Jejich vnitřní konflikt negativně ovlivňuje celou společnost a způsobuje rozklad jejich osobností.

Analýzy všech těchto postav vycházejí z textů her. Nicméně dobové materiály jsou také použity a stejně tak i moderní teorie, které zahrnují jak Michela Foucaulta, tak postmodernismus.