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the Elizabethan drama*

Ann Elizabeth Hitchman

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Thesis Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is, firstly, to describe in summary form the development of the Machiavellian phenomenon and the Italian influence in England during the sixteenth century; and secondly the main part of the thesis, to provide an examination of how certain aspects of the Machiavellian myth were translated into dramatic terms in the Elizabethan theatre (that is, for the present purposes the English theatre of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries). The variety of dramatic effects generated within this essentially simple and single dramatic myth is considered under several headings in the respective chapters of the main part of the thesis.

The number of plays referred to in the thesis has been restricted in order that the argument may appear as clear, sharp and particular as possible, even at the risk of a certain loss of comprehensiveness. Apart from the occasional reference the works of Shakespeare have been deliberately excluded as being too massive and independent a body of work to be accommodated within the terms of a general view of lesser dramatists.

Finally an attempt has been made to provide a reasonably complete bibliography of material useful for the study of Machiavellianism on the Elizabethan stage.

Some Aspects of the Influence of Machiavellianism
on the Elizabethan Drama

A thesis presented for the degree of
M.A. in the University of Durham

by

Ann Elizabeth Hitchman

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The myth was of a superhuman sub-man, a creature of heartless, cool-headed, pitiless intellect, with a tool-steel will, indomitable in resolution, infinite in cunning faculty, inhumanly free from all the natural restraints of conscience, religion, law, and decency--and, moreover, utterly convinced that in this freedom lay his whole claim to be made of finer mould than other men.

(Rossiter, A.P., English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans, London, Hutchinson's University Library, 1950, p. 158.)

Preface

In the following thesis I have attempted firstly to describe in summary form the development of the Machiavellian phenomenon and the Italian influence in England during the sixteenth century. I have then endeavoured to examine how certain aspects of the Machiavellian myth were translated into dramatic terms in the English theatre of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Although I have read many plays in the course of my research, I have restricted the number referred to in order to make my points as clear, sharp and particular as possible, even at the risk of a certain loss of comprehensiveness. Apart from the occasional reference, the works of Shakespeare have been deliberately excluded as being too massive and independent a body of work to be easily accommodated within the terms of a general view of the lesser Elizabethan dramatists.

Finally, I have attempted to provide a bibliography which includes a reasonably complete listing of material useful for the study of Machiavellianism on the Elizabethan stage.

Introduction

Part I - The Growth of Machiavellianism in England

The attempt to trace the history of Machiavellianism in Tudor England presents one with an initial controversy. There is one school of thought, based upon the theory first suggested by Edward Meyer in 1897¹ which claims that the Stage Machiavel of Elizabethan drama was a direct outgrowth of Innocent Gentillet's famous tract against Machiavelli.² A second school, including such noted scholars as Mario Praz,³ Irving Ribner,⁴ Felix Raab⁵ and Hardin Craig,⁶ argues more convincingly that the Machiavellian legend was an established social and political phenomenon long before the Contre-Machiavel of Gentillet was written in 1576.⁷

In his lecture entitled "Machiavelli and the Elizabethans", delivered to the British Academy in 1928, Dr. Praz points out that the earliest mention of Machiavelli in English literature occurs in the Sempill Ballads (1568-1572) where William Maitland of Lethington, the secretary of Mary Queen of Scots, is referred to as "this false Machivilian" and later on again as "a scurvie Schollar of Machiavellus lair".⁸ Dr. Praz indicates that the particular importance of the first reference lies in the fact that here one finds the first English derivation of Machiavelli's name used as a common noun; one continually comes across his name in this form in the Elizabethan drama. Taking into consideration the close bond between

France and Scotland during this period, it is not surprising that the xenophobic attitude of the Huguenots should be transmitted to Scotland and take root among the Scottish Reformers.⁹ Further evidence to this effect is noted by John Purves who points out that the first French translation of Il Principe in 1553 was, in fact, dedicated¹⁰ to a Scotsman, James Hamilton, second Earl of Arran.

What is more interesting to remark, however, about the way in which the Scottish Reformers first employed Machiavelli's name as a term of abuse is the fact that it marks the beginning of an era of political and religious controversy in which Machiavelli was to play a conspicuous even if not a consistent role. As Felix Raab points out, the politician's name became synonymous with the charge of atheism and its usage was not confined to any one religious group; Protestants, Catholics, and Puritans all jumped on the bandwagon in accusing one another of having been schooled with the infamous Florentine.¹¹

In his search for an explanation as to why Machiavelli's name became such a popular weapon of abuse, Raab singles out an anonymous document entitled Treatise of Treasons against Queen Elizabeth and the Crown of England (1572), which describes clearly the threat which the Machiavellian doctrine represented to the Elizabethans. This tract, which is pro-Marian in tone, warns of

...the hazard of turning one of the most principal and Auncient Monarchies of Christendome, from a most Christian Governement unto a Machiavellian State . . . And that is it, that I cal a Machiavellian State and Regiment: where Religion is put behind in the second and last place: where the civil Policie, I meane, is preferred before it, and not limited by any rules of Religion, but the Religion framed to serve the time and policy; wher both by word and example of the Rulers, the ruled are taught with every change of Prince to change also the face of their faith and Religion: where, in apparence and show only, a Religion is pretended, now one, now another, they force not greatly which, so that at hart there be none at all: where neither by hope nor fear of ought after this life, men are restrained from all manner vice, nor moved to any vertue what so ever: but where it is free to slaunder, to belie, to forswear, to accuse, to corrupt, to opresse, to robbe, to murther, and to commit every other outrage, never so barbarous (that promiseth to advance the present Policie in hand) without scruple, fear, or conscience of hell or heaven, of God or Divel: and where no restraint nor allurement is left in the hart of man, to bridle him from evil, nor to invite him to good: but for the vain fame only and fear of lay lawes, that reach no further then to this body and life: that I cal properly a Machiavellian State and Governance. (12)

It would seem clear from this passage that what the author, like the majority of his countrymen during this period, feared above all was the menace of a Secular State. The concept of the Secular State forms an intrinsic part of Machiavelli's philosophy, for in his works he draws a clear dividing line between the world of politics and the world of theology. This^{is} what the Elizabethan, and the Tudor Englishman before him, found wholly unacceptable about Machiavellian theory.

It would seem that one should conclude, then, that

the Elizabethans had at least some acquaintance with the Machiavellian legend some years before Gentillet ever wrote his Contre-Machiavel; and that there is strong evidence to suggest that the Elizabethans inherited the spectre of Machiavellianism from their Tudor predecessors.

It is possible to trace one of the earliest written attacks on Machiavelli back to a Tudor Englishman, Reginald Cardinal Pole, one of the most famous and influential men of his age. There is little doubt that at some point during the twenties or thirties Cardinal Pole, cousin to Henry VIII and his chief cleric in Rome, read Il Principe, for in his writings he denounced it as a book which taught

...modi, quibus religio, pietas & omnes
virtutis indoles facilius destrui possent.(14)

Pole was painfully aware of the widening gulf between England and Rome, and the man whom he held responsible for this rift was Thomas Cromwell, Henry's wickedly devoted minister. There is evidence to suggest that it was, in fact, Cromwell who recommended Machiavelli's little book on statecraft to Pole in the first place; and so there is every reason for Pole to have linked Machiavelli's name, together with Cromwell's, with that of Satan himself. Pole's prejudice against Machiavelli, however, would be wholly comprehensible even if his reading of Il Principe was not inspired by Cromwell. The Cardinal, like his Tudor contemporaries, firmly believed that the whole of

human society was an expression of God's will, that there was no autonomous secular realm and that the monarch, as God's appointed minister, was bound to govern his people according to the pattern of Christian principles and moral teaching.

In 1536, after having broken all ties of allegiance with his royal cousin, Pole wrote The Defense of the Unity of the Church which he addressed to the Emperor Charles V in an attempt to exhort that monarch to liberate England from the embodiment of Machiavelli's prince, King Henry VIII.¹⁶ In the following passage Daniel Boughner paraphrases that portion of The Defense in which Pole takes issue with the Florentine's views on religion as they are set forth in Chapter 18 of Il Principe:

Taking up Machiavelli's advice on religion, Pole cites with alarm the detailed examples of men who lost life or power for keeping faith in all matters. He then denounces the author's emphasis on the transcendent value of prudence, sullenly noting his calm rejection of religion when it is a disadvantage and his counsel that the ruler by always seeming pious may avoid harm. He censures giving the highest place to craft and prudence in the conduct of government without regard to religion or virtue. This, he protests, is the doctrine advanced by Cromwell in his praise of Machiavelli's treatise. In horrified amazement, Pole declares that Machiavelli regards the actual practice of religious virtues as ruinous, and approves of them only when one gains an advantage by doing so. (17)

Certainly what the Cardinal could least abide about Machiavelli's political doctrine was the fact that Machiavelli

seemed to advocate an inversion of the practical relationship between religion and politics. Pole was a strong adherent of the doctrine that all rules of government fall within a theological context; therefore, it was virtually impossible for him to accept Machiavelli's justification of any division whatsoever between the two spheres: for Pole, the plea of 'necessita' had no place in Christian ideology.

Pole was also understandably outraged by Machiavelli's metaphor of the lion and the fox which advises the Prince to guard his power by combining the brute force of the lion and the shrewdness of the fox in his political actions. The Cardinal misinterpreted this metaphor to mean that Machiavelli envisaged the ideal government to be one based on fear and deception. It is no wonder, then, that Pole should have ultimately warned Charles V that Machiavelli "had already poisoned England and would poison all Christendom", if some measures were not taken to have his writings suppressed.¹⁸

Less than two decades later and still a quarter of a century before Gentillet's tract, Roger Ascham, the author of The Scholemaster, also denounced the impious teachings of the Florentine. In A report and Discourse...of the affaires and state of Germany (1551-2) Ascham angrily condemns those who, "with consciences confirmed with Machia-

velles doctrine...thincke say and do what soever may serve best for profit and pleasure."¹⁹ What Ascham, a devout Protestant, clearly found most infuriating about Machiavelli was the way he stressed political opportunism as a virtue.

It appears indeed, then, that it was during the Tudor period that the nucleus of the Machiavellian legend was formed, the principal charges against the Florentine being those of paganism and opportunism. From a strictly Christian point of view such an indictment was inevitable; it should be noted, however, that there were some few who were able to accept, at least partially, the political views of Machiavelli. Raab mentions two Italianate Englishmen, Richard Morrison and William Thomas,²⁰ who, from their extant works, appear to have been acquainted with Machiavelli's writings and, to a certain extent, favourably influenced by them. This is not to say that either Morrison or Thomas supported a totally secular approach to the political and social affairs of mankind. Quite the opposite, in fact, was true; however, both men displayed the ability to separate the spheres of politics and theology; they remained devout Christians, but nevertheless accepted the fact that the course of political events had to be, at times, governed by cold human logic as well as Divine Providence.

So then by the time Elizabeth came to the throne, literate Englishmen were coming across Machiavelli's name more and more often in the political and religious documents of the period.²¹ It is therefore understandable that there should have been a demand for his works, for the educated Elizabethan had an insatiable curiosity about all things foreign, particularly those of Italian origin. The next problem, then, is to determine the extent to which the writings of Machiavelli were accessible to Englishmen during the reign of Elizabeth.

To assume that the primary source of knowledge of Machiavelli in the last quarter of the sixteenth century was Gentillet's scandalous Contre-Machiavel would mean ignoring the large body of textual evidence presented by Napoleone Orsini and Hardin Craig whose respective studies demonstrate conclusively that there were at least three separate translations of Il Principe into English,²² and there is some evidence to suggest that at least one of these translations was in circulation in considerable numbers.²³ Although all three are dated later than Gentillet's work (The earliest translation has been tentatively dated 1585²⁴), at least two of the extant manuscripts have been definitely shown to have preceded the English publication of Gentillet's tract which, although it was translated by Simon Patericke in 1577, was not actually

printed until 1602.²⁵ There is, therefore, every reason to believe that at least as many Elizabethans were reading the English translation of Il Principe as were reading the Contre-Machiavel in French. Furthermore, it is quite reasonable to assume that the same Englishmen who had access to Gentillet's work in the years following its publication in France, also had access to the French translations of Il Principe, the first of which was published in 1553 (Paris, C. Estienne).²⁶

One must also not disregard the numerous Latin editions of Il Principe. The first of these was published by Pietro Perna at Basle in 1570, and it is known that there were at least five editions of this translation (made in 1560 by Tilius Sylvester²⁷) in circulation by the turn of the century.²⁸

In addition to the Latin and French translations, it may be concluded that there was a demand for the original version of Machiavelli's works in England because of the fact that John Wolfe, an English printer, published Italian editions of both Il Principe²⁹ and I Discorsi³⁰ in London in 1584.³¹ The fact that the destruction of Machiavelli's works was decreed by the Council of Trent in the edict of 1564,³² makes it unlikely that Wolfe had a license to publish the Florentine's writings.³³ One may speculate, therefore, that the demand for Machiavelli's

works was so great, that it was probably worth Wolfe's while to take the risk of illegal publication.

It is fair to assume, then, that a number of Elizabethans were avidly seeking out and reading with interest the works of Machiavelli in the latter part of the sixteenth century. To determine how they reacted on the whole, however, presents another problem. It would seem from the evidence which Raab and other scholars of the period present that, for the most part, those Elizabethans who were involved in political affairs tended to follow the tradition set by Morrison and Thomas earlier in the century: that is, without wholly accepting Machiavelli's political secularism they nevertheless referred to various passages of practical analysis in Machiavelli's works in order to support their own theories. They were probably careful not to delve too deeply into the more controversial aspects of Machiavellian doctrine, thus preserving their religious views and beliefs intact.

There were, however, also a number of Englishmen like Richard Hooker who did examine the more far-reaching implications of the Florentine's theories, particularly his views on the function of religion. These Elizabethan critics attacked Machiavelli's works along the same lines as Pole and Ascham, and it is certain that such condemna-

tions, similar to the one cited previously for the Treatise of Treasons were far more vehement and far more widely publicised than any attempts at his defense.

Finally there were those who simply bandied about Machiavelli's name as a convenient term of abuse. This was in keeping with the tradition begun by the Sempill Ballads cited earlier. The charge of Machiavellianism continued to be made at various times by Catholics and Protestants alike to accuse each other in politico-religious polemic.

It is within this context, then, that one may consider the influence of Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel. To deny that the tract exerted any influence at all upon Elizabethan thought during this period would be to deny the tract's very existence. It is important, however, to view it in the proper perspective, that is to say, against the background of all that preceded its publication.

Gentillet dedicated the Contre-Machiavel to Duke François d'Alençon, the fourth son of Catherine de Medici and Henry II and heir to the throne at the time. Although he was not a Huguenot like Gentillet, the latter hoped that the young Duke, who was an ambitious opponent of his mother, would restore France to traditional French rule.³⁴ France and her people had been ruled by the iron fist of Catherine de Medici who openly espoused the political

doctrine of absolutism. The French court abounded with Italian courtiers and Italianized Frenchmen during her reign, and many Frenchmen, both Protestant and Catholic, believed that this evil foreign influence was corrupting the government of their country. Certain patriots among them, such as Gentillet, held Machiavelli responsible for the civil and religious dissension which was causing the rapid deterioration of France. As Friederich Meinecke points out in his study of Machiavellianism:

It was only after the death of Henry II in 1559 that Machiavelli's name and renown had become known in France, and it was only since then that the business of government was carried on here 'à l'Italienne' or 'à la Florentine'. It was notorious that the books of Machiavelli had been as frequently in the hands of the courtiers, as a breviary in those of a village priest. The author of the Latin translation of Gentillet's work, which appeared in 1577, directly accused Queen Catherine of being the devil's chosen instrument for spreading the poison of Machiavelli in France.(35)

It has been generally assumed that the Contre-Machiavel was, in fact, an outburst triggered by particular circumstance and one current event in particular: the St. Bartholemew Massacre of 1572. The wholesale slaughter of Huguenots which took place was engineered by Catherine de Medici; her exact motives will never be known, but it has been conjectured that religious fanaticism was not her only inspiration--indeed, it may not even have been the principal one. It is far more likely that the Queen

viewed the Massacre as an opportunity to dispose of Coligny, the leader of the opposition who posed the greatest threat to her influence over her son, King Charles IX.

As a result of the St. Bartholemew Massacre and the continued dissension and bloodshed in the years that followed, Catherine earned herself the reputation of being a heartless tyrant of the order of Machiavelli's absolute monarch. Meinecke maintains that the Contre-Machiavel represents a direct attack upon Catherine de Medici's brand of tyranny as she had learned it from her Italian countryman and mentor, Machiavelli. In the following passage Meinecke analyses Gentillet's motivation:

It was not merely the pious huguenot in him that took offence; it was first and foremost the Frenchman in him, chivalrous in thought and deed, who suddenly realized that his whole world and way of life were threatened; that morality, honour, the interests of his class, and all peaceful and secure enjoyment of the old rights and privileges were no longer safe, if the State was to be ruled only by the diabolically cold calculation of princely advantage. (36)

If it was Gentillet's sense of morality which was offended by Machiavellian doctrine, then it is understandable that he should launch his attack from an ethical standpoint. This, however, indicates a basic refusal to accept Machiavelli's principal assumption which separates the sphere of politics from all standards of morality and religion. Since Gentillet refuses to accept this claim, or chooses

to ignore it, his arguments are often founded on fundamentally different premises. He persists throughout in applying the criteria of Christian ethics to the power relationships which Machiavelli sets forth in Il Principe and I Discorsi; he often removes these power relationships from their natural realm of politics and gives them a general sense which Machiavelli did not intend them to possess.³⁷

Meinecke also points out that Gentillet's polemic is rather badly written. The phraseology is often clumsy and the significant arguments become buried under an overwhelming amount of supporting material drawn from classical and contemporary sources. Englishmen who read Gentillet's tract in the original or in translation, therefore, might have been most impressed by the maxims which head each chapter and are printed in the form of a table at the end of the work. There are fifty maxims altogether, divided into three sections: 'Of Counsell; Of Religion; Of Policie'. Gentillet claims to have taken these maxims from Machiavelli's two main works; however, since the aphorisms have been skilfully lifted from their original context and are often misinterpreted by Gentillet, they hardly present a fair picture.³⁸ Thus Gentillet's systematic refutations of each of these maxims are frequently based on misconceptions.

This method of attack, however, does succeed in one important respect: Gentillet manages to focus attention on the most controversial aspects of Machiavellian doctrine, and when the maxims are presented starkly in the form of a list, they appear starkly heretical and immoral in the light of contemporary thought. Following is a list of those maxims, which characterise the Machiavellian villain of the Elizabethan drama:

I

1. A Prince's good Counsell ought to proceed from his owne wisdom, otherwise, he cannot be well counselled.

II

1. A Prince above all things ought to wish and desire to be esteemed Devout, although hee be not so indeed.

2. A Prince ought to sustaine and confirme that which is false in Religion, if so be it turne to the favour thereof.

III

4. A Prince in a country newly conquered, must subvert & destroy all such as suffer great losse in that conquest, and altogether root out the blood and race of such as before governed there.

6. It is folly to thinke, with Princes and great Lords, that new pleasure will cause them to forget old offences.

7. A Prince ought to propound unto himselfe to imitate Cesar Borgia, the sonne of Pope Alexander the sixt.

8. A Prince need not care to be accounted cruell, if so be that he can make himselfe to be obeyed thereby.

9. It is better for a Prince to be feared than loved.

10. A Prince ought not to trust in the amitie of men.

12. A Prince ought to follow the nature of the Lyon and of the Foxe, yet not of the one without the other.

14. A Prince ought to exercise cruelty all at once; and to do pleasures by little & little.

18. A Prince ought not to feare to be periured, to deceive and dissemble; for the deceiver alwaies finds some that are fit to be deceived.

20. A Prince, which (as it were constrained) useth Clemencie and Lenitie, advanceth his owne destruction.

22. Faith, Clemencie, and Liberalitie, are vertues very damageable to a Prince: but it is good, that of them he only have some similitude and likenesse.

23. A Prince ought to have a turning winding wit, with art and practise made fit to bee cruell & unfaithfull, that he may shew himselfe such an one when there is need.

26. Illiberalitie is commendable in a Prince, and the reputation of a handycraftsman, is a dishonour without evill will.

27. A Prince which will make a straight profession of a good man, cannot long continue in the world amongst such an heape of naughtie and wicked people.

31. Civile seditions and dissensions are profitable, and not to be blamed.

33. A Prince which feareth his subiects, ought to build fortresses in his country, to hold them in obedience.

34. A Prince ought to commit to another those affaires which are subject to hatred & envy, and reserve to himselfe such as depend upon his grace and favour. (39)

In 1577, the year after it was written, the Contre-Machiavel was translated into English by Simon Patericke under the title: A Discourse upon the Means of Well Governing and Maintaining in Good Peace a Kingdome or Other Principality. One may safely assume that, since the tract was translated almost immediately into English, there was a known audience for it. This assumption would further imply that Machiavelli was already well-known in England, even if only primarily by reputation. One is therefore

inclined to agree with Raab's conclusion that both in England and in Europe Gentillet continued a tradition; he did not start one.⁴⁰

It has been suggested that one direct outgrowth of the influence of the Contre-Machiavel was a poem by Gabriel Harvey entitled Epigramma in Effigiem Machiavelli.⁴¹ It appeared in a Latin work by Harvey written in 1578, the year after Patericke's translation. C. V. Boyer summarises the substance of the poem, in which Machiavelli himself is supposedly speaking, as follows:

Let no one think to govern who does not know my rules, nor think he has gained wisdom who does not know them well. My talk is only of kingdoms and sceptres, of camps and wars. In my hand I bear a sword and my tongue is sprinkled with a thousand poisons. My motto is and always has been: "Ambition; either Caesar or nothing." Milk is food for babes, I feed on blood. Blood is nothing, torture is nothing: let lowly minds perish. I alone have wisdom, I live, and triumph by myself. Fraud is my greatest virtue; the next is force. I know no other gods.(42)

Boyer points out that one interesting aspect of this poem is that Machiavelli is summoned forth in person to speak the words; Boyer suggests that it is quite possible that Marlowe had Harvey's poem in mind when he decided to make the spirit of Machiavelli introduce Barabas in the Prologue of The Jew of Malta. Boyer's contention may very likely be true; however, a fact of far greater significance is to be learnt from a letter written by Harvey in 1579 to the effect that the works of Machiavelli

had become remarkably popular at Cambridge during this period:

And I warrant you sum good fellowes amonst us begin nowe to be prettely well acquayntid with a certayne parlous booke callid, as I remember me, Il Principe di Niccolo Machiavelli, and I can peradventure name you an odd crewe or tooe that ar as cunnige in his Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Livio, in his Historia Fiorentina, and in his Dialogues della Arte della Guerra tooe, and in certayne galland Turkishe Discourses tooe, as University men were wont to be in their parva Logicolia and Magna Moralia and Physicalia of both sortes: 'verbum intelligenti sat' (43)

It is worth noting that Greene was studying at Cambridge in the year the letter was written, and that Marlowe went up in the following year.⁴⁴ It hardly seems possible that Machiavelli's works could have become so popular at the University simply as a result of Gentillet's attack; it should be noted that the time lag between Patericke's translation of the Contre-Machiavel (circulating in manuscript but not published until 1602⁴⁵) and Harvey's letter is a mere two years, perhaps hardly long enough for a popular following to develop. It would seem far more likely that Machiavelli's sudden popularity among the students at Cambridge was the culmination of a wide variety of influences. Certainly Gentillet's polemic would have been influential, but surely only as a secondary or corroborative source; for it has been shown that Machiavelli's sinister reputation was established and

available for popularization in England as early as 1572.

When considering the factors which contributed to the development of the Stage Machiavel, then, one is inclined to agree with Irving Ribner's summary of the argument:

We can only conclude that the Contre-Machiavel was merely one of the many church attacks upon Machiavelli which helped foster an already existent misconception. That it was about the most important of these attacks is possible, but its influence in the creation of the "Machiavel" could not have been as great as that which scholars have attributed to it. Marlowe's Barrabas and Kyd's Lorenzo probably would have been created whether or not Gentillet had ever written. (46)

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Part II - The Italian Influence and the Vocabulary of English Machiavellianism

Along with the growth of English Machiavellianism in the second half of the sixteenth century, there developed a stereotyped view of Italy, the Italians and the 'Italianate Englishman'. In the early decades of the century Italy and her cultured society were revered by Tudor Englishmen; however, by the time Elizabeth came to the throne the common opinion of Italy had changed markedly. Although Englishmen travelled to Italy in ever-increasing numbers, the manners and customs which these travellers

brought back with them began to be regarded with scepticism and eventually scorn. Certainly the growing feeling of national pride led many Englishmen to suspect any foreign influence; but perhaps the most powerful force responsible for the rapidly spreading anti-Italian sentiment during the first decades of Elizabeth's reign was Puritanism.⁴⁷ It was the Puritans who raised the cry against the rampant vice which they claimed overflowed the boundaries of Italy. They were joined in their attack by other moralists and by writers of eminently saleable sensational accounts of Italian vice like Nashe,⁴⁸ who⁴⁹ denounced Italy as the homeland of atheism and Catholicism.

The splendour of the Renaissance which had once flourished in Italy had indeed begun to degenerate after years of war and pillage. The Italian people too had been affected by the political servitude in which they were forced to live: the spiritual ideal of liberty had all but vanished along with other Renaissance virtues once held in such high esteem. In his book The Italian Renaissance in England Lewis Einstein writes:

Foreign observers likewise commented on the degeneracy of Italy; some said that the long years of servitude had subdued the minds of Italians, who were ready to endure all kinds of indignities. Edwin Sandys thought their national faults to be sensuality, malice and deceit. In spite of his having met good men in Italy, he wrote, nevertheless, that "the whole country is stongly overflown with wickedness." There can be little cause for surprise

that moralists, when they saw the best youth of England returning from Italian travel, aping ridiculous customs and fashions and outwardly advocating immorality and atheism, should have preached against the foreign influence. "Our country men usually bring three things with them out of Italy; a naughty conscience, an empty purse and a weak stomach."(50)

It was, in fact, mostly English youth who travelled to Italy during this period. The ostensible purpose of their journey, which often included a stay of several months or even several years, was to expand their intellectual and worldly horizons. At leisure and with abundant funds at their disposal, however, they soon found that all the pleasures which Italy had to offer were available to them.⁵¹ When they returned to England, they continued to imitate Italian ways.⁵² Roger Ascham in his book The Schoolmaster, published in 1564, labelled such persons 'Italianate Englishmen';⁵³ he explains what he means by the term in the following passage:

If some yet do not well vnderstand, what is an English man Italianated, I will plainlie tell him. He that by liuing, and traueling in Italie, bringeth home into England out of Italie, the Religion, the learning, the policie, the experience, the maners of Italie. That is to say, for Religion, Papistrie or worse: for learning, lesse commonly than they caried out with them: for pollicie, a factious hart, a discoursing head, a mynde to medle in all mens matters: for experience, plentie of new mischieues never knowne in England before: for maners, varietie of vanities, and change of filthie luying. These be the enchantements of Circes, brought out of Italie, to marre mens maners in England...(54)

It was Ascham too, it seems, who imported into England the proverbial Italian comment on the Italianate Englishman and so summarized what became a common opinion: 'Inglese italianato e diabolo incarnato'; he interpreted it as meaning 'you remaine men in shape and facion, but becum deuils in life and condition'.⁵⁵

The term 'Italianate' continued to be used in Elizabethan England for a short time after Ascham introduced it. It referred primarily to those individuals who, as a result of having spent a length of time in Italy, were thought to be morally corrupt; or, if the term was used in a religious context, it referred to those who espoused Catholicism or worse--atheism. Gradually, however, the term fell into disuse and was replaced by the adjective 'Machiavellian',⁵⁶ for as well as bearing the implication of immorality and atheism, Machiavelli's name carried with it the import of those truly criminal and horrendous acts which were associated with the Italians. The following passage from The Schoolmaster clearly indicates the subsequent linking of Machiavelli's name with those insidious influences which were thought to emanate from Italy.

Referring to the Italianate Englishman, Ascham writes:

And they yt doo reade Pigius (the anti-Protestant) & Machiavell, with indifferent iudgment the two Patriarches of thies two plages, do kno(w) full

well, yt I say trewe...But wher a Monster is made of craft, & Crueltie, yt is to say, wher the discoursing head of a Machiavell, doth meet with the bloody hart of a N. yt, what mischef so ever craft can invent, Crueltie will lustelie execute it, what horrible danger may ther fall, wisdom shold, not only forseie it, & know it, but auth(oritie) also shuld see to it & remedye it.(57)

A somewhat later example of the relation between the Italian influence and Machiavellianism can be found in the works of Bishop Hall. Writing in 1616 he poses the following rhetorical question:

What mischief have we amongst us that we have not borrowed...Where learned we that devilish art and practice of duel, wherein men seek honour in blood, and are taught the ambition of being glorious butchers of men...Where the art of dishonesty in practical Machiavelism, in false equivocation...with too many other evils wherewith foreign conversation hath endangered the infection of peace?(58)

Certainly Marlowe's drama, The Jew of Malta, was another important factor in perpetuating the connection. Barabas is introduced to the audience by the ghost of Machiavelli in the Prologue, and then in the second act Barabas explains to the spectators that he learned the art of cunning deception in Florence.

From the 1590's onwards,⁵⁹ then, the term 'Machiavellian' was substituted for the adjective 'Italianate', and many dramatists, following Marlowe's lead, produced plays with a Machiavellian villain as the protagonist. In most in-

stances the setting for the action is Italy as will be seen in a later chapter. At this point in the discussion, however, we should examine the specific contemporary conditions which influenced the Elizabethan dramatists in their creation of the character of the Stage Machiavel and the natural setting in which he flourished.

It has already been established that the Elizabethans in general viewed Italy as the focal point of vice and godlessness in Western Europe. English travellers about to set off on a journey across the Alps were admonished accordingly; in addition, they were warned about the physical dangers which they risked encountering:

O Italy academy of manslaughter, the sporting
place of murder, the apothecary shop of all
nations! How many kinds of weapons has thou
invented for malice!(60)

Englishmen were inclined to believe that crimes of murder were common, daily occurrences in Italy, and to a certain degree there was truth in such a belief. The custom of revenging a personal injury or affront was an accepted practice, and murder was the accepted means of claiming
61
restitution. Italians considered adultery to be one of the most serious offenses demanding revenge. Fynes Moryson, an Englishman who spent six years in Europe and
62
Italy in the 1590's, recorded in 1617:

Adulteries (as all furies of Jelousy, or signes of making loue, to wiues, daughters and sisters) are commonly prosecuted by priuate reuenge, and by murther, and the Princes Judges, measuring their iust reuenge by their owne passions proper to that nation, make no great inquiry after such murthers besides that the reuenging party is wise enough to doe them secretly, or at least in disguised habbits.(63)

The Italians were particularly noted for the way in which they committed evil deeds in 'secrecy or disguised habbits', and this characteristic ability became part of the stock-in-trade of the Stage Machiavel, as will be seen in subsequent chapters. The personal pride of the Italians was known to be so great that revenge was often sought for the most trivial personal offense. Englishmen heard tales of vendettas long and painstakingly pursued in Italy. Thomas Mashe noted in 1592, "The Italian saith, a man must not take knowledge of iniurie till he be able to reuenge it."⁶⁴ This aspect of the revenge code also became associated with the Machiavellian villain of the Elizabethan drama; thus, one encounters such tortured stage figures as Vindice and Piero who have carried vengeance in their hearts for years while awaiting the perfect opportunity for claiming restitution from their enemies.

In other works, where the Machiavellian protagonists are inspired by ambition or lust as opposed to révenge, the villains often choose not to trust to chance, but

instead set out to create the ideal circumstances for their crimes. In all cases the string of stage villains who followed Barabas were famous for their 'Italianate', or, as they came to be called, 'Machiavellian' methods of murder, which were often so grotesquely complicated that the results might well be described as artistic creations. The idea of 'artistry in crime' will be explored in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

There is another aspect of the Italian mode of murder, however, which deserves some comment at this stage. One must consider the instrument of death usually preferred by the Italian murderer above all others--poison. Since the perpetrator of a crime sought secrecy at all costs in order to avoid prosecution, poison proved to be the perfect agent, for it was at once silent and sure; furthermore, it was a weapon which could be wielded from a distance to eliminate the risk of immediate apprehension at the scene of the crime. Another advantage of murder by poisoning was that it was usually difficult to detect the specific cause of death. Nashe wrote in 1592 of certain poisons from Italy which made it possible for the unlucky victim to be done away with "in the nature of that disease he is most subject to whether in the space of a yeare, a moneth, halfe, a yeare, or what tract of time you will, more or

lesse."⁶⁵

The matter of timing was also an important factor in regard to concealment, and Fynes Moryson commented on the fact that the Italians were especially knowledgeable in this respect, reducing the process of successful poisoning to a scientific art:

The Italyans aboue all other nations, most practise reuenge by treasons, and espectially are skillful in making and giuing poysons... In our tyme, it seemes the Art of Poysoning is reputed in Italy worthy of Princes practise. For I could name a Prince among them, who hauing composed an exquisite poyson and counterpoyson, made proofe of them both upon condemned men giuing the poyson to all, and the Counter poyson, only to some condemned for lesser Crymes, till he had found out the working of both to a minute of tyme, upon diuers complections and ages of men.(66)

There is much evidence to suggest that the Elizabethans generally thought the art of poisoning a specifically Italian practice. In 1614 Thomas Adams wrote, "If we should gather 'Sinnes' to their particular Centers, we would appoint...Poysoning to Italie."⁶⁷ English visitors to Italy were repeatedly warned of the danger of accidental or intentional poisoning. As early as 1572 George Gascoigne admonished a friend about to travel to Italy to beware of the "three P's", the first of which stands for poison:

Beware therefore where ever that thou go,
It may fall out that thou shalte be entiste
To suppe sometimes with a 'Magnifico',
And have a 'Fico' foysted in thy dishe,
Bycause thou shouldest digeste thy meate the
better:

Beware therefore, and rather feede on fishe,
Than learne to spell fyne fleshe with such a
Letter.

Some may present thee with a pounce or twaine
Of Spanishe soape to washe thy lynnenn white:
Beware therefore, and thynke it were small gayne,
To save thy shirte, and cast thy skinne off quite:
Some cunning man maye teache thee for to ryde,
And stuffe thy saddle all with Spanishe wooll,
Or in thy stirrups have a toye so tyde,
As both thy legges may swell thy buskins full:
Beware therfore, and beare a noble porte,
Drynke not for thyrste before an other taste:
Let none oulandishe Taylour take disporte
To stuffe thy doublet full of such Bumbaste,
As it may cast thee in unkindely sweate,
And cause thy haire per companie to glyde,
Staungers are fyne in many a propre feate:(68)

Although the means of administering poison, which Gascoigne describes in the above passage may seem rather incredible to us, it seems clear that the Elizabethans altogether believed in the fatal effectiveness of such unusual methods. Bowers points out that official Elizabethan law actually made mention of the various means of inducing death by poison:

'gusto' by taste, that is by eating, or drinking, being infused into his meat or drink: 'amhelitu', by taking in of breath, as by a poysonous perfume in a chamber, or other room: 'contactu', by touching: and lastly 'suppostu', as by a glyster or the like.(69)

It is generally held that the Elizabethans had little direct contact with poisons, but rumours and tales from abroad--especially from Italy--which recounted numerous incidents of poisoning, received a wide circulation in England. As a result, Englishmen developed an uncommonly deep-rooted fear of poison as an agent of death. It was left to the pamphleteer to express the unique quality of this fascinating but terrifying form of murder. The following passage provides us with an excellent view of Elizabethan feeling toward this strange Italian art:

Though there be sorts of 'Murther' with their several degrees, as open, or secret, acted vpon a friend, a stranger, or one selfe, yet in my opinion, I know not any of them which containes so much villany, neither including so many deepe circumstances in them, as that of poysoning... It is an Act done by Deliberation, or Meditation, no waies carried and hurried by the violence either of will or of passion, but done vpon a cold blood, and not seldome vpon fixed resolutions. Modus posterior, Celando, obtegendo, but a secret intent to hide and conceale it from God if it were possible, so it is given to the Patient vnder the shadow of some Physick, or other medicine, coloured with an outward shew of an honest intent, and as far as they can from the Publick Magistrate; or else to make a distance of time, either to excuse them selues, or flye away from hands of Iustice:(70)

That this dreaded instrument of death should be inextricably linked with Machiavelli and English Machiavellianism is not wholly surprising, despite the fact that at no point in his works on statecraft does Machiavelli

ever recommend the use of poison. Elizabethans automatically tended to associate Machiavelli with the sum of evil practices which emanated from Italy, and certainly the Elizabethan dramatists, beginning with Marlowe, played a major role in encouraging this view.

It should be noted that Machiavelli's name was also linked with the tainted name of the Borgias. It was certainly an understandable association since Machiavelli takes Cesare Borgia as his model in Il Principe.⁷¹ Guicciardini, too, devoted a large portion of his La Historia di Italia to the exploits of this famous Italian whose father, Rodrigo Borgia became Pope Alexander VI. What is interesting to remark, however, is that Geoffrey Fenton's translation of Guicciardini's Historie (1579) tended to interpret Cesare Borgia's campaigns and conquests in a most sinister light. Fenton attributed to the Duke of Valentino, as Cesare was known, the ability to practise 'subtle deceit', using this adjective 'subtle' in its most derogatory sense.

In her article entitled "The subtlety of the Italians", Jeannette Fellheimer points out that Fenton was not the only critic who emphasized this aspect of Cesare Borgia's character:

Apart from Fenton's translation, two other English Works, Civil Considerations by Remigio

Nannini, and Aphorismes Civill and Militairie by Robert Dallington, both of which drew upon Guicciardini, helped in disseminating this concept of the Borgia's political cunning. Nannini observed that Valentino was 'very subtle in all his doings'; Dallington that he followed 'his fathers principles of craft and subtiltie'.(72)

According to Fellheimer, 'sharpness of wit' was believed to be a basic ingredient of the Italian nature; eventually this kind of mental acuteness peculiar to Italians generally came to be regarded with scepticism by Englishmen who felt that it indicated a shrewd or sly nature. After providing a short derivational history of the English words 'subtlety' and 'subtle', whose Italian counterparts are 'sottigliezza' and 'sottile', Fellheimer arrives at the following conclusion:

Noun and adjective are then found with various meanings good and bad, but with reference to the Italians both came to be used almost exclusively with the sinister connotation of insidious cunning used to compass a dishonest end. This sinister connotation would, moreover call to mind the image of the serpent 'sotyler then all the beastes of the felde', and as the serpent had seduced Eve by means of his subtlety so would the wily Italian seek to beguile the innocent Englishman. (73)

Further evidence to this effect can be found in a pamphlet entitled The Subtlety of the Italians written in 1591; the author of this work, who may possibly have been a Frenchman, sets out to trace this Italian trait of deceitfulness back to its origin in Roman times.

He also explores in detail the cunning of the Italians in dominating the people of other countries and driving the foreign state into utter ruin. In this connection the author cites as an example the situation in France under the rule of Catherine de Medici. Lewis Einstein paraphrases this portion of the tract as follows:

In this manner, Catherine de' medici, with her council of Italians, had disposed of all the affairs of France. Like bloodsuckers, they sucked the blood of the poor people as dry as if it had been crushed in a wine press, filling their own purses in the meantime, while they managed to throw the blame on other people's shoulders. If any one should ask what had become of all the money levied in France, he had only to go to Florence and see its sumptuous buildings and "the wondrous wealth wherein many Florentines swim, which came like poor snakes into France."(75)

Here again, then, one finds the nature of the Italian compared with that of a snake, an understandably apt simile when considered from the point of view of the snake's sly method of attack, not to mention its poisonous properties.

The fact that Florentines in particular were singled out as possessing this quality of subtle deceit was probably a direct reflection upon Machiavelli. In what Elizabethans may quite likely have construed as an inadvertent confession of guilt, Machiavelli himself comments upon the 'sottigliezza d'ingegno' of the Florentines in his Historie Fiorentine(1532); Machiavelli's contemporaries,

Guicciardini and Botero among them, confirmed this view of the 'subtle' Florentine in their respective works.⁷⁶

The image of the false Italian became a well-known legend in Elizabethan England. Englishmen who travelled abroad brought back tales of how the natives of Italy would, without compunction, cheat and deceive guileless foreigners. A typical example of such reports is one found in the diary of Richard Smith, servant to Sir Edward Unton, who travelled abroad with his master in 1563: "In this contry of lombardie is indifferent good vitaille for travalliers the people notwithstanding very subtill and craftie gyven as the rest of Italians to deceive strangers".⁷⁷ For the most part, English travellers in Italy were repelled by the duplicity of the wily Italian, particularly because the Englishman considered himself to be of a singularly frank and honest nature.

This characteristic of subtle deceit peculiar to Italians, which the English traveller found so offensive, nevertheless fascinated many Elizabethan dramatists who succeeded in transforming the Italian's talent for duplicity into the dramatic art of dissembling. The following observation by Fynes Moryson captures the essence of this Italian trait as it was adapted by the Elizabethan playwrights in the character of the Machiavellian villain:

The Italyans in all their Councells are close, secrett, crafty, and the greatest dissemblers in the world...the Italyans being by nature false dissemblers in their owne actions, are also most distrustfull of others, with whome they deale or converse, thincking that no man is as foolish to deale playnly, and to meane as he speakes.(78)

Widespread reports such as Moryson's and Smith's generally led Elizabethan audiences to expect that any play with an Italian setting would quite likely include in the cast of characters at least one Machiavellian villain adept in the art of dissembling or pretending to be something he was not. The outstanding stage figure in this regard is, of course, Shakespeare's Iago who makes clear his position at the outset of the play with the statement:
"I am not what I am."⁷⁹

At this point in the discussion it is necessary to consider one last set of terms which became associated with the development of English Machiavellianism. It should be noted that in the same way as the words 'subtlety' and 'subtle' came to describe the deceptive machinations of the Stage Machiavel, the terms 'policy' and 'politic' were eventually used to denote the entire scope of the Machiavel's craftiness in achieving his wicked ends.

The word 'policy' in particular was often spoken in the same breath as the name of the famous Florentine.

Evidence to this effect can be found in a letter written by Gabriel Harvey in 1573. Harvey had not yet read Machiavelli but had obviously heard of him and was no doubt eager to gain a firsthand knowledge of his theories. He therefore wrote as follows to a Cambridge acquaintance:

M. Remington, you remember I was in hand with you not long agoe for your Machiavell, the greate founder and master of pollicies. I Prie you send me him now bi this schollar, and I wil dispatch him home againe, God willing, ere it be long as Politique I hope as I shal find him. For I purpose to peruse him only, not to misuse him: and superficially to surveie his forrests of pollicie, not guilefully to conveie awaie his interest in them. Although I feare me it had neede be a high point of pollicie, that should rob Master Machiavel of his pollicie, especially if the surveier be himself an straunger in the Italian territories...(80)

It is clear from this passage that Machiavelli's reputation as 'the great founder and master of pollicies' had preceded him into certain quarters, and it may be conjectured that such a reputation played a fundamental role in the diffusion of the Machiavellian legend throughout England during this period.⁸¹

Praz confirms this view in regard to the Elizabethan usage of the word 'politic':

To link 'politic', in the sinister sense, with Machiavelli, was customary by the end of the sixteenth century. In Lodge's Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse (1580) we read, for instance: "I feare me you will be 'politick' wyth Machavel."(82)

In this instance the adjective 'politick' is clearly made synonymous with the name of the Florentine Secretary.

Praz points out, however, that this sinister connotation attached to the word 'politic' is purely an English invention:

'Politico', then, in Machiavelli means 'in conformity with sound rules of statecraft'. It has a merely scientific meaning, and is opposed to 'corrotto', which is synonym to 'misgoverned'. There is no instance of the word being used in Italian in the sense of 'scheming, crafty'. The only cases, quoted by dictionaries, in which the word has the connotation of 'shrewd' are not earlier than the end of the seventeenth century. (83)

In his article entitled "'Policy' or the Language of Elizabethan Machiavellianism",⁸⁴ Professor Orsini points out that the noun 'policy' has an English derivational history dating from the fourteenth century, and that even at that time one of its meanings had a suspiciously villainous implication:

The chief living sense--defined by the N.E.D. as "(5) A course of action adopted and pursued by a government, party ruler, statesman, etc."--also makes its appearance early (c.1430). But the attested use of 4b ("trick, stratagem") in the fourteenth century excludes any Machiavellian influence on the original emergence of the 'sinister' sense of 'policy'. From which it may be inferred that politicians had acquired in England a reputation for craftiness long before Machiavelli (though the word 'politician', adopted from the French c.1588, belongs to the Machiavellian group): another proof, if any were required, that Machiavelli was not the original

inventor of cunning and deceit in politics. But he undoubtedly raised them to the dignity of a science in the most explicit and uncompromising manner, sharply calling the attention of men to the ethical problems involved. Hence, too, the extremely wide currency which the word 'policy' enjoyed in the Elizabethan age, and which is not brought out by the few examples quoted in the N.E.D.(85)

It has been shown in the previous chapter that many Elizabethans who came in contact either directly or indirectly with Machiavellian political theory in the latter half of the sixteenth century held the view that the Florentine tended to disregard altogether those 'ethical problems' to which Professor Orsini refers; instead those Englishmen who thought along the same lines as Pole and Ascham were inclined to conclude that Machiavelli's⁸⁶ approach to politics was aimed at determining the most expedient and advantageous method of solving the problems involved in the government of a principality: such an approach, they believed, was thought to necessitate the application of 'politic' cunning and deception wherever required, in order to achieve a desired end.

It was as a result of this interpretation of the Florentine's political theory that Machiavellian 'policy' gained the sinister reputation which many Elizabethan dramatists seized upon as one of the major themes for

their works. Praz notes that in The Jew of Malta Marlowe's protagonist Barabas uses the word 'policy' no less than a dozen times.⁸⁷ Toward the end of Act I Barabas, who has had his riches seized by the Governor Ferneze, finds himself in a state of desperation. In the speech which follows the Jew wrestles with the two alternatives facing him: suicide or counterattack. He chooses the latter alternative and elicits the help of his daughter, Abigail, in the execution of the plot:

Barabas. My gold, my gold, and all my wealth
is gone.

You partiall heavens, have I deserv'd this plague?
What, will you thus oppose me, lucklesse Starres,
To make me desperate in my poverty?
And knowing me impatient in distresse
Thinke me so mad as I will hang my selfe,
That I may vanish ore the earth in ayre,
And leave no memory that e're I was.
No, I will live; nor loath I this my life:
And since you leave me in the Ocean thus
To sinke or swim, and put me to my shifts,
I'll rouse my senses, and awake my selfe.
Daughter, I have it: thou perceiv'st the plight
Wherein these Christians have oppressed me:
Be rul'd by me, for in extremitie
We ought to make barre of no policie.(88)

The couplet at the end of the speech expresses clearly what is to become Barabas' motto throughout the rest of the play.

Webster's two most famous plays, The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi also abound with 'policy' and all its derivatives. Flamineo, the arch-villain in

The White Devil makes a number of axiomatic statements which refer to the wily methods of a cunning Machiavellian. He closes the first act of the play with the following words:

Flam. We are engag'd to mischief and must on:
As rivers to find out the ocean
Flow with crook bendings beneath forced banks,
Or as we see, to aspire some mountain's top,
The way ascends not straight, but imitates
The subtle foldings of a winter's snake,
So who knows policy and her true aspect,
Shall find her ways winding and indirect.(89)

and later on in the play he says to Bracciano:

Flam. O sir I would not go before a politic
enemy with my back towards him, though there
were behind me a whirlpool.(90)

Bosola, Flamineo's counterpart in The Duchess of Malfi, makes a similarly derogatory statement concerning politicians in the third act of that work:

Bosola. I would sooner swim to the Bermootha's
On two Politicians rotten bladders, tide
Together with an Intelligencers hart-string
Then depend on so changeable a Princes favour.(91)

Marston too appears to have been greatly influenced by the vocabulary of Machiavellianism. Mendoza, the wily dissembler in The Malcontent, philosophizes in a soliloquy about the nature of 'policy':

Mend. "And those whom Princes doe once
groundly hate
Let them provide to dye; as sure as fate,
Prevention is the hart of Pollicie."(92)

and in Antonio and Mellida there occurs the following apt maxim:

Fel. No sooner mischief's borne in regenty,
But flattery christens it with pollicy.(93)

Orsini notes that Shakespeare makes abundant use of words in the 'policy' family. The various aspects of 'policy' are discussed at length in the tragedies and especially in the histories, while the adjective 'politic' occurs frequently in the texts of the comedies. The most notable instance of Shakespeare's usage of the word is found in The Merry Wives of Windsor, where the Host asks the often-quoted question: "Am I politic? Am I subtle? Am I a Machiavel?"⁹⁴ Here, then, one finds the two terms most often associated with English Machiavellianism mentioned in the same breath as the name of the famous Florentine.

In conclusion it may be said that along with the development of the character of the Stage Machiavel in the Elizabethan drama, there evolved a set of peculiarly Machiavellian terms. Orsini sums up the position:

The vogue of the words we have studied goes far to show the extent of the impression made on the Elizabethan mind by the new conception of politics derived from Machiavelli. Its spread was immense; it exerted a strong fascination even on those who denounced it, more or less sincerely; and under the guise of 'policy' it became a 'leitmotiv', almost an obsession, of Elizabethan literature--and in particular of its greatest representative, Shakespeare.(95)

Footnotes - Introduction

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3. Praz, M., "Machiavelli and the Elizabethans", Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. XIV, (1928).
4. Ribner, I., "The Significance of Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel", MLQ, Vol. X, (1949).
5. Raab, F., The English Face of Machiavelli, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965.
6. Craig, H., Machiavelli's The Prince - An Elizabethan Translation, New York, Van Rees Press, 1944.
7. For an extensive commentary both on the work and its author, see Rathe, C.E., "Innocent Gentillet and the First Anti-Machiavel", Bibliothèque de Humanisme et Renaissance, Vol. XXVII.
8. See Praz, p. 4.
9. This theory is supported by Gargano, G.S., "Machiavelli e il 'Machiavellismo' nel teatro elisabettiano", Marzocco, 13th July, 1930.
10. Purves, J., "The First Knowledge of Machiavelli in Scotland", La Rinascita, Vol. I, (1938) pp. 139-42.
11. See Raab, p. 59.
12. Ibid, p. 60.
13. Reginald Pole (1500-1558), cardinal and archbishop of Canterbury, was a key political and counter-reformation figure of the time, and as such it is of some interest to know his reactions to Machiavelli. (See DNB).

14. See Raab, p. 31.
15. Boughner, D.C., The Devil's Disciple - Ben Jonson's Debt to Machiavelli, New York, Philosophical Library, 1968, p. 74.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid, p. 76.
18. See Raab, p. 32.
19. Ibid, p. 33.
20. For another detailed account of William Thomas' reaction to Machiavelli's works, see Weissberger, L.A., "Machiavelli and Tudor England", PSQ., Vol. XLII (1927), pp. 593-6.
21. For additional detailed references to Machiavelli in the political and religious documents of Elizabethan England, see Bawcutt, N.W., "Some Elizabethan Allusions to Machiavelli", EM., Vol. XX (1969).
22. See Ribner, p. 154.
23. See Craig, p. xix.
24. Ibid, p. xxiv.
25. See Raab, p. 56.
26. See Craig, p. xxviii.
27. Ibid, p. xv.
28. Ibid, p. xvi.
29. STC. No. 17167
30. STC. No. 17159
31. See Craig, p. xviii.
32. Ibid, p. xiv.
33. There is no mention of Wolfe's licence in The Stationer's Register.

34. Meinecke, F., Machiavellism, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957, p.51.
35. Ibid,
36. Ibid, p. 54.
37. Ibid.
38. See Anglo, S., Machiavelli: A Dissection, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1969, pp. 241-2. Anglo takes a different view and suggests that Machiavelli's "theorems are frequently extreme in tone" and that they therefore "beg for the kind of abuse hurled at them by Gentillet and others".
39. Boyer, C.V., The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, London, George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1914, pp. 34-5.
40. See Raab, p. 57.
41. See Boyer, p. 36.
42. Ibid.
43. See Meyer, p. 25.
44. Ibid.
45. STC. No. 11743.
46. See Ribner, p. 157.
47. Einstein, L., The Italian Renaissance in England, New York, Columbia University Press, 1902, pp. 155-9.
48. Nashe, T., The Unfortunate Traveller or The Life of Iacke Wilton, London, 1594, in The Works of Thomas Nashe, edited from the original texts by Ronald B. McKerrow, Vol. II, London, Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1910.
49. NED. Italianated Sense 1; 1581 Anderson Serm. Pâules Crosse '80 Oure Itâlienated Papistes. 1598 Barckley Felic. Man IV. (1603) 317 An Englishman italianated is a Devil incarnated. Notice how the adjective 'italianated' is applied indifferently here both to Pâpists and fiends.

50. See Einstein, p. 158-9.

51. Lee, V., "The Italy of the Elizabethan Dramatists", Euphorion, London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1884, pp. 60-1.

52. Ibid, pp. 63-4.

53. Parks, G.B., "The First Italianate Englishmen", Studies in the Renaissance, (1961) p. 200. Parks notes that Ascham makes the first literary application of the term 'Italianate' to persons; however he acknowledges the fact that the term does appear in print before Ascham's usage, but referring to language, not to persons. This is confirmed in the NED. Italianated Sense 1; 1553 T. Wilson Rhet. (1567) 82b, An other choppes in with Englishe Italinated.

54. See Parks, pp. 203-4.

55. Ibid, p. 201.

56. Ibid, p. 215.

57. Ibid, p. 202. Parks notes that the 'N.' alludes to a persecutor earlier hinted at, perhaps the Marian Bishop Bonner of London.

58. Bowers, F.T., Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, 1587-1642, Gloucester, Mass., Peter Smith, 1959, p. 55.

59. One finds the two terms used together in the same context: NED. Italianate Sense 2; 1592 Nashe P. Penillesse (Shaks. Soc.) 68, I comprehend...conveyances. The NED. cites a number of other references after 1590 in which only the term 'Machiavellian' appears; they are drawn from the works of such noted Elizabethan writers as Greene, Marston and Chapman as well as from other works by Nashe.

60. See Einstein, p. 160.

61. For contrast see L.B. Campbell's detailed account of contemporary views on revenge in Elizabethan England, "Theories of Revenge in Renaissance England", MP., Vol. XXVIII (1931).

62. McCain, R., "English Travellers in Italy during the Renaissance", Bulletin of Bibliography, Vol. XIX, No. 4 (1947) p. 95.
63. See Bowers, Revenge Tragedy, p. 50. DNB. says of Fynes Moryson, "He is considered a sober and truthful writer, without imagination or much literary skill...His descriptions of the inns in which he lodged, of the costume and the food of the countries visited, render his work invaluable to the social historian."
64. See Bowers, Revenge Tragedy, p. 51.
65. Bowers, F.T., "The Audience and the Poisoners of Elizabethan Tragedy", JEGP., Vol. XXXVI (1937) p. 495.
66. See Bowers, Revenge Tragedy, p. 53 (footnote)
67. See Bowers, Audience and Poisoners, p. 495.
68. Gascoigne, G., The Posies, edited by John W. Cunliffe, Cambridge, Mass., Cambridge University Press, 1907, pp. 345-6.
69. See Bowers, Audience and Poisoners, p. 503.
70. Ibid, pp. 497-8, "A Short Tract Vpon...Poysoning," sigs. B3-B4^v, in H(enry) G(oodcole), The Adultresses Funerall Day (1635).
71. N.W. Bawcutt goes into more detail on this point in his article "Machiavelli and Marlowe's The Jew of Malta", Rend. ns., Vol. III (1970) p. 33: "Machiavelli himself said little about the use of poison and stressed chiefly its unreliability. But to many readers of the sixteenth century the logic of the matter would have been, I imagine, as follows: Machiavelli recommends Cesare Borgia as a model to imitate; Guicciardini shows us that Borgia was a poisoner (and much that was wicked besides; Guicciardini obviously had no love for the Borgias); therefore Machiavelli recommends the use of poison."
72. Fellheimer, J., "The Subtlety of the Italians", EM. (1961) p. 28.
73. Ibid, p. 24.

74. See Einstein, p. 170.
75. Ibid, p. 171.
76. See Fellheimer, p. 21.
77. Ibid, p. 26.
78. Ibid, p. 26.
79. Othello, I.i.65.
80. See Meyer, pp. 17-8.
81. N.W. Bawcutt in his article entitled, "'Policy, Machiavellianism, and the Earlier Tudor Drama", ELR., Vol. III (1971) p. 209, emphasizes the point that in Elizabethan England, "It was not Machiavellianism that distorted 'policy'; it was 'policy' that distorted Machiavellianism". Bawcutt appears disturbed by the fact that readers of Orsini's article, "'Policy' or the Language of Elizabethan Machiavellianism", might wrongly conclude that the word 'policy' was only used in its pejorative sense as a result of its association with Machiavelli, whereas Orsini does, in fact, make it perfectly clear that the word was used in a 'sinister' sense as early as the fourteenth century.
82. See Praz, p. 13.
83. Ibid, pp. 10-1.
84. Orsini, N., "'Policy' or the Language of Elizabethan Machiavellianism", Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute, Vol. X, (1946).
85. Ibid, p. 124.
86. See Armstrong, W.A., "The Influence of Seneca and Machiavelli on the Elizabethan Tyrant", RES., Vol. XXIV (1948) p. 25.
87. See Praz, p. 13.

88. The Jew of Malta, I.ii.258-73.
89. The White Devil, I.ii.347-54.
90. Ibid, IV.ii.69-71.
91. The Duchess of Malfi, III.ii.308-11.
92. The Malcontent, II.v.
93. Antonio and Mellida, I.i.
94. The Merry Wives of Windsor, III.i.103.
95. See Orsini, p. 134.

Chapter I - Setting and Background

When one comes to examine the setting and background of some ~~some~~ well-known Elizabethan plays in which the character of the Machiavellian villain is prominent, one is immediately struck by a recurring pattern which raises two interesting questions: firstly, why did the dramatist invariably choose a foreign setting for his work, and secondly, why did he usually make the plot unfold against a court background? Before attempting to answer the first of these questions, we must consider briefly the development in the English drama of the stage villain.

There is some evidence to suggest that the character of the Stage Machiavel was a natural outgrowth of the figure of evil which evolved through various forms of the pre-Elizabethan drama. It has previously been noted that Machiavelli, according to popular myth in England, was thought to be the human incarnation of the Devil; so it is perfectly easy to understand how the stage version of that myth should come to supplant the outworn Devil figure of the mediaeval drama.¹ Characters such as Tourneur's Atheist and Marlowe's Jew, for example, would by definition be linked with Satan, but to emphasise the point the respective dramatists make their stage

villains repeatedly denounce the principles of Christianity in favour of their own 'politic' codes.

Flameneo, one of the main villains in The White Devil,² also expresses this idea in a scene where he is ironically engaged in the very practice of dissembling against which his words are a warning:

Flam. Your comfortable words are like honey.
They relish well in your mouth that's whole;
but in mine that's wounded they go down as
if the sting of the bee were in them. O
they have wrought their purpose cunningly,
as if they would not seem to do it of malice.
In this a politician imitates the devil, as
the devil imitates a cannon. Wheresoever
he comes to do mischief, he comes with his
backside towards you.(3)

and in Webster's other famous play, The Duchess of Malfi, the Cardinal's tool-villain, Bosola, who has temporarily fallen out of favour, refers to the former as follows:

Bosola. Some fellowes (they say) are possessed
with the divell, but this great fellow, were
able to possesse the greatest divell, and make
him worse.(4)

Bosola himself is characterized as an unscrupulous malcontent which is just one of many variations on the theme of Machiavellian villainy.⁵ One meets the archetype of such a figure in Marston's play of that name where the cynical Malevole is introduced to the audience by Pietro in the following passage:

Pietro. This Malevole is one of the most prodigious affections that ever converst with nature; a man or rather a monster; more discontent than Lucifer when he was thrust out of the presence, his appetite is unsatiabable as the Grave; as farre from any content as from heaven, his highest delight is to procure others vexation, and therein hee thinkes he truly serves heaven; for tis his position, whosoever in this earth can be contented is a slave and dam'd.(6)

Although mere mention of the Devil does in a fashion make him a member of the cast in that his name evokes his image,⁷ it is important to realise that the Elizabethan dramatist created in the Stage Machiavel a far more flexible character who could be moulded into a variety of dramatic possibilities.

In the English Morality plays which had so intimate an effect on the Jacobean drama the force of evil was distributed about the stage by personified Vices who, as in The Castle of Perseverance, battled with similarly distributed Virtues for the soul of Mankind. Here again one can certainly see how a stage figure based on the English misinterpretation of Machiavelli came to encompass all or any of the Vice characters, for the sins of ambition, deceit, revenge, adultery, avarice and others were part and parcel of the Machiavellian myth. One can see too that the staged distribution of Vices throughout the Morality play becomes in its Jacobean successor the

ubiquity of the Machiavel.

Unlike the shadowy aspect of Satan or the single-
8
dimension Vices, then, the Machiavellian villain appeared on the Elizabethan stage as a living, breathing specimen of humanity through whom, it could be said, the force of evil operated. English audiences were confronted by a character with whom they could not help but identify; he was, after all, an earthbound creature with something of the same limitations but the same aspirations as themselves--in short, a complex character who had to be comprehended in human rather than religious or allegorical terms. Clearly such a stage figure would provide the vehicle whereby the Elizabethan dramatist could bridge the gap between fantasy and reality: between an abstract configuration of Hell and the empirical world of contemporary
9
life.

This argument raises the first interesting question, for it is notable that hardly any of those Elizabethan works which have a Machiavellian villain in the title role has an English setting. One cannot help but wonder why, if the English dramatists sought to bring realism to the evolving art of drama, they did not more often choose the exciting and familiar London scene as the dramatic background? Why did they not choose to write about the milieu

in which they lived and with which, presumably, they were best acquainted? One plausible explanation might be that dramatists were quite likely aware of the fact that some of their prospective audiences probably knew as much about most people and places, manners and costumes as they did. This would have meant that their portrayal of the English scene would have had to be extremely accurate and that the realistic appeal of even the most minor character would have had to be sustained right down to the last detail of dialogue and action.

It was possibly as a result of such painstaking realism that the Moral Interlude, so popular in the first half of the sixteenth century, failed to establish an evolutionary link between the Morality genre and development of English tragedy. The authors of the Moral Interludes retained the allegorical formula of the Morality play, but made their dramas unfold against a dynamic London setting with characters drawn from the London streets who were intended to be contemporary counterparts of the old Vices and Virtues. Encounters between the stereo-types of the personified Vices generally tended to monopolize the dramatic action in the form of scenes of low-life, which usually degenerated into rowdy brawls with much brothel talk. When at the end of the Interlude the moral conversion of

the protagonist occurred, it was, as a result, often without foundation and too sudden to be credible.¹⁰ The probable reason for this was that the characters, although now embodied individuals, still represented nothing more than single-dimension abstractions; and the additional realistic touches of the well-known London setting served only to emphasise further the incredibility of such characters.

One may speculate that the Elizabethan dramatists, who set out to write serious drama, were determined not to fall into the same trap. In the same way as the personifications of Morality allegory failed to adapt to the realism of the contemporary London setting, so would a totally wicked character of the calibre of a Machiavel. The dramatists, no doubt, realised that their audience simply could not be convinced that their fellow compatriots, people whom they encountered every day, were capable of such evil and unscrupulous practices as those engaged in by villains like Barabas and Vindice. Their fellows were, after all, born under an English sun, raised on English soil, and governed by a beloved English Queen.

A foreign setting and background were definitely called for; the question which then must have presented itself to the early dramatists was how far removed should

such a context be from the ordinary experience of their audiences? To have placed the Machiavellian villain against the then exotic background of India would have been equivalent to a present-day staging of a Hitleresque drama in the sub-Arctic. The dramatists somehow had to strike a delicate balance between the wholly remote and the commonplace.

Their problem may have been in some respects analogous to the one faced by the authors of today's espionage thrillers who must regularly confront the difficulty of finding an appropriately remote--yet sufficiently realistic--setting for their larger-than-life villains and heroes to act out their intrigue. They usually try to select those locales which have recently been opened up to the inquisitive eye of the civilized world. Since the end of the Second World War the islands and peoples of the South Seas have captured the imagination of Westerners, and the ending of the cold war has similarly aroused our curiosity and interest in the countries behind the Iron Curtain.

Like the twentieth century writers mentioned, the Elizabethan dramatists, it would seem, also chose to take advantage of new intellectual and geographical vistas which were opening up as a result of contemporary trends and

and events such as the aftermath of the religious reformation, the increase in trade and commerce, and the desire for cultural exchange which characterised the Renaissance period. Western Europe and Italy in particular had become the focus of attention as being previously faraway places which had suddenly become accessible, if only in terms of conversation. As I have discussed earlier, young gentlemen were travelling across the Channel and even across the Alps to further their education and experience, and they usually took their servants along with them. Merchants, sailors and even tradespeople travelled abroad in various pursuits, and all, or mostly all, returned to share their personal experiences and impressions with their fellow Englishmen, who quite probably listened with a mixture of fear and awe of the unknown.¹¹ Records show that Europeans too travelled abroad and brought their respective languages and cultures within the observant sphere of the Elizabethans. Much was learned about foreigners and their ways of life in a relatively short time; yet much remained shrouded in mystery, particularly for those, comprising the majority of Englishmen, who had no first-hand knowledge of or contact with Europeans and were forced to rely on hearsay.

As one would expect, this type of atmosphere tended

to generate various rumours relating to foreigners, and these probably circulated widely among Elizabethans who were curious but basically uninformed. One may speculate that in much the same way as later generations have been inclined to measure an individual's intelligence by the colour of his skin, so did Englishmen tend to rate a foreigner's personal morality according to the country in which he was born. There is some evidence to suggest that Renaissance man believed that a warm climate encouraged the development of that aspect of human personality known as 'sottigliezza d'ingegno' which was referred to in an earlier chapter. According to Miss Fellheimer:

The climate was held responsible for this special degree of subtlety in the Italians, and had indeed been advanced by the Italians themselves to explain the 'sottigliezza d'ingegno' of the inhabitants of certain regions. This theory is treated at length in a curious pamphlet, A Discovery of the Great Subtiltie and wonderful wisdom of the Italians (1591), whose author, G.B.A.F., was possibly a Huguenot. Moderate temperature and "subtill ayre" are considered responsible for the advantages possessed by meridional nations with respect to "invention, craft and worldly pollicie", whereas the septentrional peoples are handicapped by "a grosse humour ingendred in them, by reason of the grosnes, and coldnes of the aier wherin they liue". Thomas Wright, in the Preface to his Passions of the Minde (1601), observed that the inhabitants of "hoter countries" were more inclined to "craftines and warines" than those of colder climates and that Italians in general went beyond the English in "subtiltie and warinesse". (12)

Italians are singled out as the most prominent illustration of this theory, but evidently the principle was intended to apply to Southerners in general. Spain, for example, provided Elizabethan dramatists with a popular foreign setting for this reason and also because, as a Catholic stronghold, it inspired distrust in a predominantly Protestant England. Spain also aroused intense political hatred among the English after the attack of the Spanish Armada, and so it is reasonable to assume that nothing could have pleased Elizabethan theatre-goers more than to watch a play depicting the Spanish royalty in a most unenviable position. This would at least in part account for the tremendous popularity achieved by The Spanish Tragedy in which the heir to the throne causes the destruction of the Spanish dynasty as well as that of Portugal through his Machiavellian practices.

The same reasons might apply in the case of The Jew of Malta where the villain Barabas wreaks death and havoc in his wake; as he pursues the goal of recovering his wealth, he nearly brings the government and religious institutions of the island, whose links with Spain were still strong, to complete ruin.¹³ It is interesting to note how Marlowe attempts to skim off the best of two worlds in creating an appropriate foreign setting for

his stage villain, for although the audience meet Barabas in Malta, they soon learn that at some point in his life the Jew spent time in Florence:

Barabas. I am not of the Tribe of Levy, I,
That can so soone forget an injury.
We Jewes can fawne like Spaniels when we please;
And when we grin we bite, yet are our lookes
As innocent and harmelesse as a Lambes.
I learn'd in Florence how to kisse my hand,
Heave up my shoulders when they call me dogge,
And ducke as low as any bare-foot Fryar.(14)

Although there may have been some in the original audience who were unaware of the special significance of Florence as Machiavelli's native city, it is unlikely that there were many who did not associate the Italian influence in general with a particularly demonic brand of villainy. It has already been shown how Elizabethans came to look upon Italy as 'the fountain-head of all horrors and sins',¹⁵ and presumably it was with the prospect of seeing such vice and treachery given a dramatic interpretation that crowds of Renaissance Englishmen flocked to the theatres. Nevertheless, one may still wonder precisely why this strong attraction existed. It is reasonable to assume that for some members of the audience, it was simply the sensationalism of the villainy that was so appealing; however, it may be that for others, and not necessarily those who were better educated or of a higher

social class, there was a more profound attraction, one of which they themselves were perhaps unaware.

One might suggest that on a deeper level there existed an allure similar to the kind which draws crowds to the scene of a crime. The act of witnessing the consequences of a stranger's misdeed tends to arouse a morbid fascination in most people. Although convinced that such an experience could never enter their immediate realm of reality, they are prepared to believe that such an eventuality might befall another, one with whom they share the common bond of humanity. They therefore watch the proceedings with a peculiar mixture of curiosity and detachment, eager to expand their worldly view by making someone else's experience part of their own reality, yet at the same time relieved that they are not having to live through it themselves.

One may speculate that the Elizabethans may have reacted in a similar way, drawn by the same morbid fascination to the public theatres where they could see not only the consequences of a foreigner's misdeed, but an actual performance of the villainy itself. They too would probably have felt sufficiently detached from the action shown on stage, certain that the depravity represented

by the Italian locale could never enter their realm of reality which only extended as far as the English coastline; yet they would most likely have been extremely curious to observe how the Italians, real people like themselves, behaved. In this way the Elizabethan spectators could enlarge upon their meagre second-hand knowledge of the villainy practiced in Italy without ever having to come any closer to it than they were to the stage of the Globe or the Red Bull.

The simple explanation, 'I am an Italian', then, dispensed for the dramatist with the need to establish the outrageous iniquity of the Stage Machiavel as realistic and credible (thus allowing him to concentrate on the detail of the villainy which often developed into a 'dramatic art of Machiavellianism' as will be seen in a later chapter). This was the case since the Elizabethan spectators basically accepted the fact that Italians represented in themselves both ordinary humanity and devilish cunning. Although they may have looked upon a horrific Italian drama as an estrangement from their own reality, they probably were still inclined to believe that it presented a version of reality--the real life of Italy. It is reasonable to assume that dramatists such as Webster,

Marston, Tourneur and many others were aware that they had only to point to the Italian at the beginning of a play in order to bring most of the subsequent aspects of their fiction home to roost.¹⁷ It is interesting to note as evidence in this respect that in some cases a dramatist even went out of his way to capitalize on the popular attraction of the foreign setting. Massinger, for example, in The Duke of Milan substituted the Duke of Milan and his wife Marcellia for Herodes and Mariamne of his source.

If one had to select a single scene from an Elizabethan play which illustrates the multi-faceted villainy which the Elizabethans came to associate with the Italian setting, it would be the scene in The White Devil where the murder of Bracciano is enacted. One might almost imagine that Webster had the following passage from Gentillet's famous tract in mind when he came to describe in dramatic terms the death which one of his stage villains was to suffer at the hands of another:

According to the honour of his (Machiavelli's) Nation, vengeance, and enmities are perpetuall and irreconcilable; and indeed, there is nothing wherin they take greater delectation, pleasure, and contentment, than to execute a vengeance; insomuch as, whensoever they can haue their enemie at their pleasure, to be reuenged vpon him they murder him after some strange & barbarous fashion, and in murdering him, they put

him in remembrance of the offence done vnto them, with many reproachfull words and iniuries to torment the soule and the bodie together; and sometimes wash their hands and their mouthes with his blood, and force him with hope of his life to giue himselfe to the diuell; and so they seeke in slaying the bodie to damne the soule, if they could.(18)

In order to revenge himself upon his sister's murderer the Duke of Florence and his helpers, Lodovico and Gasparo come to Bracciano's palace disguised as certain famous heroes of war. During the festivities marking Bracciano's marriage to Vittoria, the Duke arranges for Bracciano's helmet to be poisoned. The deadly agent is slow to work, and while Bracciano is shown to be going mad from the painful effects, Lodovico and Gasparo, now disguised as friars, come to administer the dying man's last rites. When they are alone with him, however, they throw off these disguises as well and proceed to torture and curse him:

19
Gasp. Bracciano.
Lod. Devil Bracciano. Thou art damn'd.
Gasp. Perpetually.
Lod. A slave condemn'd, and given up to the gallows
Is thy great lord and master.
Gasp. True: for thou
Art given up to the devil.
Lod. O you slave!
You that were held the famous politician;
Whose art was poison.
Gasp. And whose conscience murder.
Lod. That would have broke your wife's neck
down the stairs
Ere she was poison'd.

age, instead suggests the echo of an indefinite number of shades already condemned to the eternal darkness of the nether regions.

Although to a modern-day audience this scene might appear fantastic, it is quite likely that the Elizabethan spectators would have accepted it as a typical portrayal of the Italian method of murder, especially as it bears a strong resemblance to contemporary accounts such as the one cited from Gentillet. Vengeance, the spectators probably knew, was often a motive, poison the most frequent agent,²² and the devices of disguise and dissembling were commonly used to avoid detection. Furthermore, it might well have seemed perfectly natural to a contemporary audience that one Machiavellian villain should murder another 'famous politician whose art was poison' in just this way. Yet it would possibly be a mistake to assume that the members of an Elizabethan audience would have been unmoved by such a scene as this one; for, although they may not have identified with either of these wicked characters, it is unlikely that they would have failed to recognise that at least Bracciano, whose last word is the name of the woman for whom he risked everything, is essentially human.

A careful study of the background of The White Devil leads one naturally to a consideration of the second question posed at the beginning of this chapter: why is it that the dramatic action of the majority of Elizabethan plays which feature the Machiavellian villain in the title role unfold against a court backdrop? According to the eminent Websterian critic, Travis Bogard, the main theme of The White Devil is expressed in the opening scene by the decadent Italian nobleman, Lodovico, as the evils of "Courtly reward, / And punishment".²³ Bogard goes on to discuss how this overall theme may be divided into three distinct parts, each of which receives careful development throughout the play. First, there is the corrupt prodigality of the court life which is enacted on stage repeatedly in the numerous scenes of lust, murder and betrayal. The second sub-theme refers to the intrinsically amoral structure of courtly society which encourages the vices of flattery and panderism as a means toward preferment and worldly success. Lastly, there is the capricious use of royal power as evidenced by the Duke's unpunished re-venge of his sister's murderers.²⁴

By virtue of the fact that an Italian locale proved to be more popular than any other foreign setting, it

followed inevitably that the Italian court should also predominate as a background. Since, however, Elizabethans were apparently inclined to believe that most countries in Southern Europe had generally fallen under the influence of a corrupt and Papist Italy, particularly France with her Medici Queen, any number of foreign courts would have provided dramatists with equally appropriate backgrounds for the development of a Machiavellian drama.

George Chapman's work, The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, offers an excellent example of a play which is structured around the political corruption of the French court during the Renaissance. The opening lines, spoken ironically by the play's Machiavellian villain, Baligny, proclaim the sad state of affairs:

Bal. To what will this declining kingdom turn,
Swinging in every licence, as in this
Stupid permission of brave D'Ambois' murder?
Murder made parallel with law! Murder us'd
To serve the kingdom, given by suit to men
For their advancement, suffer'd scarecrow-like
To fright adultery! What will policy
At length bring under his capacity? (25)

Throughout the entire first scene of Act I, two main characters, Baligny and Renel, discuss at length the moral decay which has overtaken the French noblesse. They remark on many of the same features as Bogard mentions and which are characteristically present in the Machia-

vellian situation such as flattery, the desire for great wealth and power, debauchery, avarice, legal fraud etc. When Baligny reveals in a closing soliloquy that he himself is one of the corrupt, the stage is admirably set for the Machiavellian conspiracy which makes up the remainder of the play.

The tremendous popularity achieved by those plays in which the stage villain plays a major role might be due at least in part to the way in which the Elizabethan dramatists combined the various aspects of Machiavellian villainy with the life style typical of foreign courts during the Renaissance. One may wonder, however, precisely how the additional factor of a decadent court background affected the total dramatic appeal of a particular play from the audience's perspective. In an attempt to get some idea, one might return to the previous analogy of the crowd gathered at the scene of a crime and expand the circumstances to include an extra element: in this case the main person involved is not just an average citizen but a person of importance. His sudden criminal exposure therefore allows the onlookers to indulge their morbid fascination in two directions at once, for although they are aware that the important person is still essentially

a human being like themselves, he nevertheless represents at this moment two extremes in a realm of reality which is beyond their experience; although he is evidently steeped in vice and corruption, he can be seen at the same time to bear the overt trappings of wealth and prestige. Both of these aspects have now been laid open for the comparative scrutiny of the ordinary bystander, who is curious to absorb the details of this dichotomy and thus broaden the narrow sphere of his own reality.²⁶

It is also reasonable to conclude that if the Elizabethan spectators found the profligacy of Italy in general to be a compelling subject, they probably would have been especially fascinated to observe such villainy performed within the splendid palaces of the Italian nobility. The two were often depicted together in works such as The White Devil, confronting the members of a contemporary audience with a wealth of dramatic material which exposed the extremities of a sector of real life with which they had no first-hand acquaintance.²⁷ Other dramatists too were no doubt aware of the popular dramatic appeal of this combination, and it is interesting to observe the way in which Tourneur and Middleton in particular tend to juxtapose the most lurid descriptions of degenerative court

life against visual displays of royal splendour.

In Women Beware Women, for example, the backdrop for the second scene of Act III is a lavish banquet, complete with song and dance, which is being given in honour of the Duke of Florence who has seduced the young wife of Leantio and persuaded her to leave her husband's poverty to live with him in luxury.²⁸ Soon after Bianca, the Duke and a train of noblemen make their grand entrance, Leantio arrives on the scene; as he observes the Duke whispering in his wife's ear, he remarks in an aside:

Lean. A Kissing too!
I see 'tis plain lust now, adultery boldened;
What will it prove anon, when 'tis stuffed full
Of wine and sweetmeats, being so impudent fasting?(29)

And when the Duke offers him a captainship, Leantio, still using the sensual imagery of food, comments bitterly on the vulgarity of stately lust and its consequences in respect to himself:

Lean. This is some good yet,
And more than e'er I looked for; a fine bit
To stay a cuckold's stomach: all preferment
That springs from sin and lust it shoots up quickly,
As gardeners' crops do in the rotten'st grounds;
So is all means raised from base prostitution
Even like a salad growing upon a dunghill.
I'm like a thing that never was yet heard of,
Half merry and half mad; much like a fellow
That eats his meat with a good appetite,
And wears a plague-sore that would fright a country;
Or rather like the barren, hardened ass,
That feeds on thistles till he bleeds again;
And such is the condition of my misery.(30)

A royal procession, like the sumptuous banquet in Women Beware Women was also a hallmark of the impressive magnificence of nobility, and Tourneur chooses to begin The Revenger's Tragedy with this typical display of pageantry:

Enter Vindice (holding a skull; he watches as) the Duke, Duchess, Lussurioso his son, Spurio the bastard, with a train, pass over the stage with torch-light.

Vind. Duke; royal lecher; go, grey-hair'd adultery;
And thou his son, as impious steep'd as he;
And thou his bastard, true-begot in evil;
And thou his duchess, that will do with devil.
Four excellent characters--O, that marrowless age
Would stuff the hollow bones with damn'd desires,
And 'stead of heat, kindle infernal fires
Within the spendthrift veins of a dry duke,
A parch'd and juiceless luxur.(31)

With a brevity of action and words, then, Tourneur firmly establishes in these opening lines the theme and mood of the entire play. ³² Vindice, as the Machiavellian protagonist, here plays the role of Presenter; he introduces the main characters who are to play major parts in the subsequent tragedy--one in which he himself seems at various points to take over the task of directing the dramatic action. What is particularly interesting to notice in the light of the present discussion is how in the first line Tourneur makes Vindice describe the principal object

of his vengeance, who is also a Machiavellian, as being halfway between a real man, 'Duke', and an allegorical personification, 'adultery'; this is the typical position of the stage villain as indicated earlier in the chapter. The apostrophe, 'royal lecher', also serves to combine perfectly the two extremes of nobility and depravity which make up the Duke's nature.

A number of courtly conventions became dramatically possible within this framework; the most popular by far was the device of the play-within-the-play, for a royal wedding, a coronation, or the visit of a foreign ambassador always offered an occasion for some entertainment, and in many works the courtly convention itself becomes just as corrupt as the background against which it is set. A court masque in the respective last acts of the two plays just mentioned serves to bring the plot to a bloody climax; the particularly ingenious way in which Kyd's *Stage Machiavel*, *Hieronimo*, uses the opportunity of staging a play for visiting royalty as a vehicle for his own revenge will be examined in some detail in a later chapter.

To conclude the present discussion one might make

one further speculation in respect to the contemporary English audience: because scenery design and stage props were at a minimum in the Elizabethan theatres, the audience's imaginative ability probably functioned at a maximum level. If one accepts this statement as basically accurate, then it serves to account at least in part for the tremendous success achieved by those works mentioned. It might also serve as an argument in support of the theory that the majority of Machiavellian villains who roamed the Elizabethan stage most likely appeared to contemporary audiences as totally realistic dramatic entities.

One may postulate the following scenario: a typically varied Elizabethan audience take up their places in the theatre as the play is about to begin. Initially they find themselves in a state of dramatic limbo, leaving their own sphere of reality to enter another which has been created for them by the dramatist. They are soon informed that the setting of the action is Italy, which, they were told by a friend of a friend, is a den of iniquity; the backdrop is a royal court, again they have no first-hand knowledge but have overheard just enough to allow them to imagine the splendid interior of an Italian palace.

The spectators are now prepared to suspend their disbelief, mainly because they have not been presented with any obvious reason not to; the characters who confront them-- although they are not English but Italian and despite the fact that they are not commoners like most of them but nobles, or at least courtly residents--are real people. They exist in a setting and background made up of just enough vaguely familiar elements to allow most Elizabethans to imagine them, and once they have established that image in their mind, it becomes increasingly more difficult to deny its reality, because the dramatist is continuously supplying in vivid poetry additional details of setting and background which constantly reinforce and expand it.

Toward the end of Act I the sensational horror of the Stage Machiavel's villainy begins to unfold, and now it is the spectators' morbid fascination which trains their attention unswervingly on the dramatic action. Although the first soliloquy of the Stage Machiavel creates the nightmarish impression of reality becoming detached, the tenuous thread of the villain's humanity now binds the audience firmly in place for the remainder of the play.

Footnotes - Chapter I

1. Wilbur Sanders discusses the Renaissance rejection of the Devil as a credible stage figure and describes at the same time the essence of the evil force represented by the Machiavellian villain who replaced Satan in so many Elizabethan works: "...it is the 'advanced' thinkers who are taking seriously the evil symbolised by hell and the demonic order. They have realised that a devil who can be ordered about like an errand boy is a paltry enemy beside the real forces ranged against humanity, just as the playhouse Satan is a vulgarisation of the Prince of the Power of the Air. The devil is not fearsome because of his blazing eyes and cloven hoof, but because he knows the heart of man, with all its potentiality for evil and can, with infinite subtlety, exploit his knowledge... As (Reginald) Scot saw, to rob Satan of his gimcrack stage appurtenances was simply to take him more seriously, which involves taking the evil he represents more seriously. 'The Diuell of late is grown a puritane', Nashe warns us, 'and cannot away with anie ceremonies...Priuate and disguised he passeth too and fro...' This new Satan lives closer to the pulse of man, seated in the blood, not so inescapably 'other' as his older stage counterpart had been, nor so easily recognised." The Dramatist and the Received Idea, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 200.

2. Hereward T. Price in his article entitled "The Function of Imagery in Webster" suggests that the image presented in the title of The White Devil prefigures the basic conflict which is developed throughout the play: "In Webster the foreshadowing is typically ironical. The good that is promised turns out to be evil. Webster especially uses imagery to convey the basic conflict of his drama, the conflict between outward appearance and inner substance or reality. He gives us a universe so convulsed and uncertain that no appearance can represent reality. Evil shines like true gold and good tries to protect itself by putting on disguise or a false show. What is hidden rusts, soils, festers, corrupts under its fair exterior. The devil is called the 'invisible devil'." Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism, edited by R.J. Kaufmann, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 228.

3. The White Devil, III,iii.12-9.
4. The Duchess of Malfi, I,i.46-8.
5. For a detailed examination of the development of the Machiavellian parasite see E.P. Vandiver's article, "The Elizabethan Dramatic Parasite", SP., Vol. XXXII (1935), and for an analysis of the malcontent tool-villain in particular and his associations with the Machiavellian image see L. Babb, The Elizabethan Malady, East Lansing, 1951, pp. 73-91.
6. The Malcontent, I,ii.
7. A prime example of this may be found in The White Devil where, as Price points out, the name of the Devil is invoked no fewer than twenty-six times in the course of the play.(p. 228).
8. For a comparison between the Devil and the Vice figures and a definition of their specific roles in pre-Elizabethan drama, see L.W. Cushman, The Devil and the Vice in the English Dramatic Literature before Shakespeare, London, Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1900, p. 63.
9. Bernard Spivak maintains that the Renaissance Englishman was probably well aware of the impact of Machiavellian doctrine upon their society: "The Elizabethans really understood him (Machiavelli) well enough, and indeed their traditional values within their transitional age taught them to apprehend the evil before they were actually aware of the man who later lent it his name. On their stage the Machiavellian villain, through his egoism, his ruthless energy unhampered by pious restraints, his deliberate disavowal of any law higher than his own appetite, his penetrating and cynical awareness of the animal impulses composing man's lower nature, enacts the thrust of the new realism against the traditional Christian sanctities applicable to the life of this world. Legitimacy, order, honor, loyalty, love, and the stable community of human creatures under God are the easy obstacles his purposes surmount because the pieties and simplicities of honest men render them defenseless against his policy. It is a rare villain in the drama of that time who is not in some degree a

Machiavel; for villainy in general, as the Elizabethans viewed and staged it, is rooted in an irreligious principle, to which the Florentine, from the same view, contributed not so much an origin as an affirmation, not so much a manifesto as a guidebook. The age was aware of Machiavellianism before it was aware of Machiavelli." Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil, New York, Columbia University Press, 1958, pp. 375-6.

10. See Rossiter's chapter on the Moral Interlude, pp. 102 ff.

11. See Lee, pp. 62-4.

12. See Fellheimer, p. 25. I. Donaldson quotes more extensively from Fr. Thomas Wright's The Passions of the minde in this regard in his article, "Jonson's Italy: Volpone and Fr. Thomas Wright", N & Q. (Dec. 1972), pp. 450-2. Donaldson suggests that Wright's treatise had a profound effect on Jonson in his creation of certain characters in Volpone, particularly in the way he contrasts the naivety of the English Would-bes with the guile of the Fox and his parasite.

13. W. Thorp points out: "The friars in The Jew of Malta violate the secret of the confessional, try to persuade the "converted" Jew to dower their houses, and act in general in a fashion certain to be pleasing to a Jesuit-baiting audience." The Triumph of Realism in Elizabethan Drama, Princeton University Press, 1928, p. 44.

14. The Jew of Malta, II.iii.18-25.

15. See Praz, p. 9.

16. This point of view is confirmed by F.L. Lucas in his "General Introduction to The White Devil", The Complete Works of John Webster, edited by F.L. Lucas, Vol. I, London, Chatto & Windus, 1927, p. 92. "The question of the reality of Webster's Italy is not merely irrelevant in dealing with his Italian plays. Drama is indeed more than life's mirror; yet it fails, if it seems to the hearer improbable, unconvincing, unreal. If it does seem so, however, it is not necessarily the poet's fault. Again and again critics have cried out at characters like Flamineo or Francisco or Ferdinand with the refrain of Judge Brack--"But people do

not do such things". And to that the only answer is "They did"; and the only remedy, to read the history of the time. Thus alone shall we understand where Webster found his world, how he and his audiences were fascinated by the spell of the South and its forbidden beauty..."

17. As M.C. Bradbrook remarks: "Thirdly, there were the stock stories, which acquired the incontestability of legend^A by their frequent use. The Revenge plays had a fixed narrative and fixed characters; consequently the speed of the intrigue steadily accelerated, yet the people would not feel the incidents to be incredible, though their effectiveness depended on their being extraordinary. The action is rapid and complicated but not orderly; it is conventionally representative of what Englishmen believed Italian court life to be." Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, Cambridge University Press, 1935, p. 40.

18. See Bowers, Revenge Tragedy, p. 52.

19. Disguise is a device used frequently by the Machiavellian villain to further his own ends. L.G. Salingar in his essay "The Revenger's Tragedy and the Morality Tradition" suggests that the dramatic convention of the disguise is a legacy of the Moralities: "Symbolic disguising with a similar dramatic purpose was a stock convention of the Moralities; sometimes there is a change of dress, sometimes only of name. This was not merely a convention of the stage; it embodied popular beliefs about the methods of the Deceiver--'the devil hath power To assume a pleasing shape.'" Elizabethan Drama: Modern Essays in Criticism, edited by R.J. Kaufmann, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 215. P.B. Murray confirms this view: "The primary moral connotation of 'disguise' was evil, for the Elizabethans associated the term not only with 'strange apparel' but with drunkenness, deformity, dissimulation and the devil. Satan, the Gospel's 'envious man' and for Elizabethans the archetypal 'malcontent', is 'nimble and sodaine...in shifting his habit, his forme he can change and cogge as quicke as thought'." A Study of Cyril Tourneur, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964, pp. 231-2.

20. The White Devil, V. iii. 150-67.

21. The White Devil, V. iii. 212-3.
22. See Bowers, Audience and Poisoners, p. 504.
23. The White Devil, I. i. 3-4.
24. See Bogard, T., The Tragic Satire of John Webster, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1955, pp. 119-20.
25. The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, I. i. 1-8.
26. M. Doran emphasises the point made by Aristotle in regard to the realistic portrayal of tragedy and adds another dimension to the present discussion of the dramatic appeal of the court background: "Tragedy should not deal with persons of mean estate, not merely because we are more shaken at the fall of the mighty, though that is important to the tragic effect, but also because it would not be in accordance with verisimilitude. Terrible crimes of passion do not happen in the lives of ordinary citizens. The implication is that they are too mean-spirited to be moved by great passion. Only lords and kings and military heroes are capable of the emotions which produce tragedy." Endeavours of Art, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1954, p. 117.
27. M.E. Prior notes that the Elizabethan dramatist was inclined to create a wealth of vivid detail in describing the accoutrements of court life in order to accentuate its evil vanity: "A typical example of Tourneur's more involved figures occurs in Vindice's address to the skeleton of his former love:
Advance thee, O thou terror to fat folks,
To have their costly three-piled flesh worn off
As bare as this. (I.i.48-50)
Fat folks is a reference to the well-fed luxury of the court, but 'costly three-piled flesh' is a brilliant development of the idea: 'three-piled' refers to an expensive and rich velvet, the wearing-out of which would be a blow to one's fashionable pride, and the identification of this idea with the wasting of a luxuriously fed body and the terror to indolent and vicious people of contemplating this event produces an extraordinary concentration of suggestions." The Language of Tragedy, New York, 1947, p. 141.

28. J.M.R. Margeson remarks upon Middleton's dramatic skill in emphasising this contrast by the way in which he links these two scenes together: "By now a striking ironic contrast has been built up between the wealth, splendour, and ceremony of the court and all its handsomely dressed creatures and the corruption of evil passions under the surface. Middleton presents us with a complete view of these contrasting states in the great middle act of the play, first in personal terms as Leantio comes home to his small house, completely unaware of the change in Bianca, and then during a banquet at Livia's house where all the main characters are brought together. Images of fair show and of rottenness beneath link these scenes together." The Origins of English Tragedy, Cambridge University Press, 1922, p. 147.

29. Women Beware Women, III. 11.

30. Ibid.

31. The Revenger's Tragedy, I. 1. 1-9.

32. Margeson describes the theme and mood admirably in the following passage: "Scene after scene shows the contrast between the splendour and dignity of the court, the pretence of justice, and the ugly reality beneath the surface. As the action moves forward, the irony is not merely a static series of contrasts but becomes an intense process of destruction in the clash of one evil ambition against another. Hippolito says of Lussurioso, in words that might apply to them all: 'How strangely does himselfe worke to vndo him.'" p. 143. "See also Lisca, P., "The Revenger's Tragedy, a Study in Irony", PQ., Vol. XXXVIII (1959), pp. 245-6.

Chapter II - Dramatic Irony

At the end of the last chapter it was noted that in the works referred to thus far the respective Machiavellian villains are revealed as such to the audience at the first opportunity. It may be assumed that the Elizabethan dramatist had a purpose in identifying the villain as soon as possible, usually in the first act of a play and often in the first scene. There are, in fact, several good reasons.

First of all, by revealing the Stage Machiavel at the outset of the play the dramatist provides the spectators with a figure against whom they can unreservedly direct their hate. In this way they become immediately involved in the dramatic action, and their interest can be maintained consistently throughout by having the Stage Machiavel successfully plot treachery upon treachery with the Fates in his favour. By continually offending their ethical sense with the unchecked criminal behaviour of the villain, the dramatist essentially casts the spectators collectively in the role of moral judge. Even if they might think the play a bad one, they would in all probability remain until the end in order to see the villain receive the punishment he so richly deserves.

This put the dramatist under the obligation of resolving the plot so that the villain does, in fact, incur a fate commensurate with his crimes.

The second possible reason why the dramatist exposes the villain to the audience immediately may be seen as an attempt to create a kind of 'art of Machiavellianism'. It has already been noted how, in most works, the dramatist has the Stage Machiavel successively perpetrate horror upon horror to shock the sensibilities of the spectators; the dramatist no doubt realized that the sensationalism of these incredibly wicked acts could be yet further heightened by allowing the audience to hear each one plotted out in detail before it takes place within the context of the play. From an artistic standpoint then, it can be seen how the dramatic impact of an evil scheme could, in effect, be doubled by forcing the audience first to imagine it as it is revealed in dialogue, then anticipate it for a given length of time, and finally see it carried out in action. This also gives the audience the opportunity of observing at firsthand the artistically evil machinations of the Machiavellian mind, as well as the tragic consequences it invariably produces. This notion of the 'art of Machiavellianism' will be dealt with in fuller detail in the following chapter.

Perhaps the most feasible reason for the revealing of the villain's identity at the first opportunity is that it enabled the dramatist to create an elaborate and complex scheme of dramatic irony. By telling the spectators first of all who the villain is and then by making him reveal each step of his plan, the dramatist puts the audience in the privileged position of knowing more than the unsuspecting characters against whom the villainy is directed. This is a most effective means of sustaining the audience's interest in the dramatic action, and indeed the element of suspense is not entirely lost, for at every stage the audience will expect the villain to be foiled by some trick of fate.

Before going any further with an examination of the plays mentioned in the last chapter, it should be said that it seems quite clear that in the construction of the majority of these works, the dramatist sought to make the entertainment of the spectator in the theatre his principal concern. For this reason an attempt has been made in the remainder of this chapter to view the plays under consideration directly from a seat in the stalls.

To begin with, then, one might suggest that the dramatic work whose plot is based on the character of the

Machiavellian villain evolves through a sequence of scenes which may be compared with a series of photographic stills. Set against a background of corruption and decay, the first snapshot is a self-portrait: the Machiavel provides a description of himself in a lengthy soliloquy.¹ The superficial features of his character emerge, and a time-warp is immediately created as the spectator is given a glimpse of the past, present and future in the life of the villain.

Like seeing a photograph of someone one doesn't know, there is an air of unreality about this first scene. The spectator searches for points of similarity between the stage figure and the average man--perhaps drawing on his own experience as a point of departure. He finds none, however, and this intensifies the unreality of the first impression. Yet the Machiavel stands there in bold relief, larger than life, an image of cunning depravity that must be reckoned with. Where, then, does the distortion lie?

An example of this may be found in The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois where Baligny, the brother-in-law of the murdered Bussy D'Ambois, is considered by all but the King to be sincere in his desire to revenge this crime. The

audience too is deceived by the opening dialogue throughout which Baligny pretends to agree with Renel that the kingdom is in a sad state of decay, and that the unrevenged murder of Bussy D'Ambois is a perversion of justice.

However as soon as Renel leaves the stage, after promising to help Baligny and the others in their plan for revenge, Baligny reveals his position as a dissembler in the following soliloquy:

2

Bal. All restitution to your worthiest lordship
Whose errand I must carry to the King,
As having sworn my service in the search
Of all such malcontents and their designs,
By seeming one affected with their faction
And discontented humours gainst the state:
Nor doth my brother Clermont scape my counsel
Given to the King about his Guisean greatness,
Which, as I spice it, hath possess'd the King
(Knowing his daring spirit) of much danger
Charg'd in it to his person; though my conscience
Dare swear him clear of any power to be
Infected with the least dishonesty:
Yet that sincerity, we politicians
Must say, grows out of envy, since it cannot
Aspire to policy's greatness; and the more
We work on all respects of kind and virtue,
The more our service to the King seems great,
In sparing no good that seems bad to him:
And the more bad we make the most of good,
The more our policy searcheth, and our service
Is wonder'd at for wisdom and sincereness.
'Tis easy to make good suspected still,
Where good and God are made but cloaks for ill.(3)

It is interesting to note the entire absence of distinct moral colour in this carefully posed photograph.

The character of Baligny emerges entirely in an ominous shade of grey as he speaks of what, to the average person, is at least black and white. To Baligny that essential enigma of life--the difference between 'good' and 'bad'--is the simplest of all riddles to solve; in the realm in which the Machiavellian intellect operates, the two are simply interchangeable in response to the circumstances. For the skilled dissembler the attitudes suggested by 'good' and 'bad' can be as easily exchanged as can the two words in the way Baligny uses them in this soliloquy.

The spectator is drawn inevitably into subsequent scenes where he is permitted to relax somewhat and watch the Machiavel strike one conventional pose after another as he interacts in a seemingly normal fashion with the other characters in the drama. Then suddenly in another candid soliloquy the reigning surface reality is broken, and the spectator is again confronted with a still-life of the Machiavel: beneath the semblance of normality lurks the unreal spectre of the hypocrite who is caught by the telescopic lens in the act of manipulating characters and circumstances to his advantage.⁴ Although the dialogue goes on following the villain's interruption, the weirdly pulsating reflection of the Machiavel remains--an idee fixe--and permeates the rest of the act.

One such instance occurs in The Spanish Tragedy where Lorenzo plots to dispose of his tool-villain, Serberine, who he fears might expose his hand in the murder of Horatio. To this end he decides to employ the talents of a second tool-villain, Pedringano, whom he must then also take into his confidence. Although this scheme would at first appear to lead Lorenzo right back to where he started, he soon enlightens the audience as to the more intricate details of his plot:

Lor. Now to confirm the complot thou hast cast
Of all these practices, I'll spread the watch,
Upon precise commandment from the king,
Strongly to guard the place where Pedringano
This night shall murder hapless Serberine.
Thus must we work that will avoid distrust,
Thus must we practise to prevent mishap,
And thus one ill another must expulse.
This sly enquiry of Hieronimo
For Bel-imperia breeds suspicion,
And this suspicion bodes a further ill.
As for myself, I know my secret fault,
And so do they, but I have dealt for them.
They that for coin their souls endangered,
To save my life, for coin shall venture theirs:
And better it's that base companions die,
Than by their life to hazard our good haps.
Nor shall they live, for me to fear their faith:
I'll trust myself, myself shall be my friend,
For die they shall, slaves are ordain'd to
no other end.(5)

This soliloquy serves three important dramatic functions at once: first of all, it accounts for the otherwise unexplained presence of the guards at the murder scene; secondly it renders the dramatic irony of Pedringano's

subsequent trust in Lorenzo all the more poignant; and lastly it openly displays the cold-blooded reasoning of the Machiavellian mind. In much the same way as Baligny resolves the puzzle of good and bad in a few quibbling lines, so does Lorenzo dispose of the momentousness of life and death as though they presented no more than metrical problems. The lives or deaths of Serberine and Pedringano are indeed, at the plot level, simply to be arranged as Lorenzo's convenience dictates--murderer and victim might exchange roles and again it would make no difference. A technical problem is to be dealt with, a problem of metre and plot, and though it requires some consideration it does not demand much.

Lorenzo is not the only villain who realizes that for security reasons he must do away with the instruments of his villainy. In The Revenger's Tragedy one again finds the same pattern developing as in The Spanish Tragedy; in fact, Lussurioso's soliloquy in which he plots to murder his panderer is nearly identical both in phrasing and content with the soliloquy of Lorenzo cited above. However Tourneur has ingeniously created a double dramatic irony in this instance, for the man whom Lussurioso is about to employ to commit the crime in question is the

caricature figures are caricature, and to suggest, with all the forceful consequences of such a suggestion, that they are, if not precisely normal then at least recognisably⁸ human figures, and that the world is as they depict it.

In many Elizabethan plays where the plot revolves around the conspiracy of the Machiavellian villain, there can be found an intricate network in the basic plot structure. This is true particularly in those works where the villain must lay extensive groundwork for his treachery by seizing opportunities as they arise and using trickery and cunning to manipulate events to his advantage; these are techniques for which the Stage Machiavel's talent is especially well-suited. In order to keep the audience informed of the more spontaneous contrivances of the villain's scheme, the dramatist often had to insert an explanatory soliloquy at a strategic point in the action.

One example of this occurs in Othello where Iago makes Othello discreetly withdraw to a position from which he is able to observe but not overhear the ensuing conversation between Iago and Cassio. If the camera shutter were to click at this moment, it would capture an image of the Machiavel in the process of setting the stage for a grotesque scene in the Theatre of the Absurd. Cassio,

under the skilled direction of Iago, ~~is unknowingly being~~ primed to play a role similar to Camus' man in a call-box. Denied the opportunity to utter a word in his own defense; he is about to be manipulated into a situation where he will incriminate himself irrevocably with his gestures in the eyes of Othello:

Iago. Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,
A housewife that by selling her desires
Buys herself bread and clothes. It is a creature
That dotes on Cassio, as 'tis the strumpet's plague
To beguile many and be beguil'd by one.
He, when he hears of her, cannot (refrain)
From the excess of laughter. Here he comes.

Re-enter Cassio.

As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad;
And his unbookish jealousy must (conster)
Poor Cassio's smiles, gestures, and light behaviours
Quite in the wrong.(9)

After Cassio has made his entrance, the tableau of the absurd is complete. During the second part of Iago's soliloquy the audience's attention is riveted upon the villain and his ominous words, yet the spectators cannot help but be uncomfortably aware of the vacuum in which the other two characters are unsuspectingly suspended; still, by making Iago relate the villainy at the moment of its conception, Shakespeare gives the spectators a sense of being immediately present at the birth and first vigorous movement of dramatic action. They are, of course, helpless

to prevent the fatal turn it is about to take; they can only contemplate the way in which Iago deceives the men who have placed their trust in him. The fact that neither Cassio nor Othello are at any point in the least inclined to suspect 'Honest Iago' makes one section of the dialogue between Iago and Cassio mordantly ironic:

Iago. Why, the cry goes that you (shall) marry her.
Cas. Prithce, say true.
Iago. I am a very villain else.(10)

Perhaps the most reprehensible aspect of the Stage Machiavel's character is his ability to dissemble. Iago is successful at the practice of dissembling because of his established reputation as an honest man. The Stage Machiavels in all the works mentioned earlier can be found to play the role of the hypocrite at some point in their villainy. Iago's statement at the beginning of the first act of Othello, "I am not what I am",¹¹ may therefore be considered one of the identifying marks of the Machiavellian villain. This practice of dissembling, however, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to discern any kind of 'real' or 'human' character figure for the Machiavel.¹² Each act of dissembling adds another layer of what one would like to believe is masking distortion, obliterating further any 'essential' character for the villain. At the close of

scenes such as the one above from Othello, the audience is left to ponder the question suggested by Iago's paradoxical opening statement: If the Machiavel is not what he appears to be, then who or what is he?¹³ If it is increasingly difficult to hold to the view that the dramatic appearance of the Machiavel caricatures a 'human reality' beneath, if it is difficult to deny that the surface appearances are themselves, alas, human in some uneasily approximate way, then it becomes an easy imaginative step to posit some other than human fundamental force, some other than human energy as informing and uniting the successive diversity of surface appearances. It is perhaps at this point that the individual spectator's imagination gets to work and conjures up his personal vision of the Devil--not the outworn character of the Miracle plays who, by his actual appearance in the drama, became merely a stage figure and therefore nothing to be feared--but that unknown evil force which not only may be lurking offstage in the theatre wings, but which also crouches fearsomely in the sub-conscious mind of every human being.

From the first chilling 'photograph' to the last--which captures the villain revelling gleefully over a final success preceding his inevitable fall--the spectator is

dragged along by the natural sequence of film stills: each image corroborating the likeness of the previous one while at the same time evoking the inevitability of the next.

It must be noted that at times it was awkward for the dramatist to arrange a break in the dramatic action for the villain to confide in the audience. In some instances the spectators are expected to practice the suspension of disbelief as in the case of Iago's soliloquy, where they are to assume that they alone can hear Iago's plot even though both Othello and Cassio are on stage at the time.

There is much evidence to support the view that the Elizabethan audience was willing to suspend its disbelief on occasion, as long as the dramatic action continued to move swiftly and prove entertaining. This fact enabled the dramatist to make use of yet another dramatic convention as a means of advancing information to the audience; if it proved awkward or impossible to clear the stage for an explanatory soliloquy, the dramatist could still arrange for the villain to keep the audience informed by a series of asides.¹⁴ In the next few examples it may be seen how the dramatic irony is created simultaneously with the unfolding of the villain's scheme, thus allowing the stage action to progress rapidly at the same time.¹⁵

In Act II of The Jew of Malta Barabas pretends to encourage young Lodowicke in his efforts to make the acquaintance of Abigail, the Jew's daughter. In a series of asides, however, Barabas makes several threatening puns which reveal his intention to revenge the loss of his wealth on the unsuspecting Governor's son. The feigned subject of their conversation is a diamond:

Lodowicke. Well, Barabas, canst helpe me to a Diamond?

Barabas. Oh, Sir, your father had my Diamonds.

Yet I have one left that will serve your turne:

I meane my daughter:--but e're he shall have her (Aside)

I'le sacrifice her on a pile of wood.

I ha the poyson of the City for him,

And the white leprosie.

Lodowicke. What sparkle does it give without a foile?

Barabas. The Diamond that I talke of, ne'r was foild:

But when he touches it, it will be foild: (Aside.)

Lord Lodowicke, it sparkles bright and faire.

Lodowicke. Is it square or pointed, pray let me know.

Barabas. Pointed it is, good Sir,--but not for you.

Aside.

Lodowicke. I like it much the better.

Barabas So doe I too.

Lodowicke. How showes it by night?

Barabas. Outshines Cinthia's rayes:

You'le like it better farre a nights than dayes. (Aside.)

Lodowicke. And what's the price?

Barabas. Your life and-if you have it.--(Aside)

Oh my Lord we will not jarre about the price;

Come to my house and I will giv't your honour-- (Aside.)

With a vengeance.(16)

With each pun Barabas makes, Marlowe emphatically stresses the evil nature of the Machiavellian villain's crude but most effective wit. The Elizabethan audience appreciated skillful punning, and the pointedness and rapidity of the Jew's brutal witticisms provide solid entertainment as well as serving the practical function of advancing the story.

From the spectator's point of view the entire theatrical experience of watching an Elizabethan play in which the protagonist is a Machiavellian villain might resemble a piece of modern cinematography which has been accelerated to show the development of a flower from bud to bloom. The only difference in the case of the Stage Machiavel is that he does not actually change and grow the way the flower eventually does: it is instead the weird reality of his evil image which evolves and projects an ever increasing impact on the collective perception of the audience. The metamorphosis takes place only in the mind of the spectator, not on the stage. It is as if the audience's cumulative impression of the Machiavel has been infused with a life of its own quite separate and apart from the figure on the stage; it is this transparency which, with continuous reinforcement, enlarges upon itself while at the same time becoming more clearly defined and seemingly more real.

One does, in fact, often find the dramatic convention of the aside to be coupled with the satiric wit of the Stage Machiavel. A situation similar to the one in The Jew of Malta occurs in Jonson's Volpone, where the major part of the play's action may be classified as satirical comedy.

The actual names of the characters are derivated from the Italian words which reflect the various roles they portray: hence, Volpone is the old fox or master villain, Mosca is the fly who thrives as his parasite and tool-villain, and Corvino, Corbaccio and Voltore are the respective ravens and vulture who are waiting for the old fox to die so that they can feed on his remains. In the following dialogue, Mosca makes a number of derisive puns about Corbaccio's gullible nature, including a pun on his name which, no doubt, greatly amused the audiences of the day. Mosca has been playing the dissembler all along and has suggested to Corbaccio that in order to ingratiate himself with Volpone, he should disinherit his son and change his will in Volpone's favour:

Corb. This plot
Did I thinke on before. Mos. I doe beleeeue it.
Corb. Doe you not beleeeue it? Mos. Yes, sir.
Corb. Mine owne proiect.
Mos. Which when he hath done, sir-- Corb. Publish'd me his heire?
Mos. And you so certayne, to suruiue him--Corb. I
Mos. Being so lusty a man--Corb. 'Tis true.
Mos. Yes, sir--
Corb. I thought on that too. See, how he should be
The very organ, to expresse my thoughts!
Mos. You haue not onely done your selfe a good--
Corb. But multiplied it on my sonne? Mos. 'Tis
right sir.
Corb. Still, my inuention. Mos. 'Lasse sir, heauen
knowes,
It hath beene all my studie, all my care,
(I e'ene grow grey withall) how to worke things--

Corb. I doe conceiue, sweet Mosca. Mos. You
are he,
For whom I labour, here. Corb. I, doe, doe, doe:
I'lle straight about it. Mos. Rooke goe with you, rauen.
Corb. I know thee honest. Mos. You doe lie, sir--
Corb. And--
Mos. Your knowledge is no better then your eares, sir.
Corb. I doe not doubt, to be a father to thee.
Mos. Nor I, to gull my brother of his blessing.
Corb. I may ha' my youth restor'd to me, why not?
Mos. Your worship is a precious asse--Corb. What
say'st thou?
Mos. I doe desire your worship, to make haste, sir.
Corb. 'Tis done, 'tis done, I goe.(18)

In addition to being cleverly amusing, Mosca's remarks
aside to the audience also succeed in sustaining the dramatic
irony, for it soon becomes clear that this is all one of
Mosca's schemes to enrich further the estate of Volpone
who is, in reality, enjoying a fine state of health. Cor-
baccio makes the irony of the situation yet more crudely
humourous by insisting that it was actually his plan all
along.
19

Mosca's treatment of Corvino and Voltore is much the
same throughout the play--only the puns and witty insults
are subject to variation. Yet as one encounter follows
another, the audience's senses begin to reel at Mosca's
unflagging energy in unscrupulously duping each of Vol-
pone's birds of prey. In the spectator's mind the Machia-
vellian parasite seems to mushroom out like a poisonous

toadstool, flourishing in the fertile ground of gullibility in which he has chosen to operate.

The spectator is, however, repeatedly subject to a time-warp which occurs every time he shifts his attention away from this blown-up reflection of the Machiavel which has invaded his consciousness and back to the action on stage. There he finds the stage villain essentially unchanged from when he first saw him. The tableau is different each time, but the Machiavel can always be seen crouching in the centre, a single-dimension duplicate of the villain in the first scene.

In The White Devil Webster also stages a dramatically effective scene using the device of the aside in combination with the sardonic humour of the Stage Machiavel. The scene requires the audience to suspend their powers of disbelief to an unusually great extent, for Webster makes Flamineo, the dissembling villain of the play, carry on two conversations simultaneously while attempting to accomplish two opposing purposes. He has promised Camillo that he will convince Vittoria to bestow her wifely favours again upon him; but, in fact, Flamineo is dedicated to the effort of freeing his sister from Camillo's jealous suspicion so that he can pander her to his master, Duke Bracciano:

Flam. This is all: be wise, I will make you friends and you shall go to bed together,--marry look you, it shall not be your seeking, do you stand upon that by any means,--walk you aloof, I would not have you seen in't,--sister (my lord attends you in the banqueting-house), your husband is wondrous discontented.

Vit. I did nothing to displease him, I carved to him at suppertime--

Flam. (You need not have carved him in faith, they say he is a capon already,--I must now seemingly fall out with you.) Shall a gentleman so well descended as Camillo (a lousy slave that within this twenty years rode with the black guard in the duke's carriage 'mongst spits and dripping-pans)--

Cam. Now he begins to tickle her.

Flam. An excellent scholar, (one that hath a head fill'd with calves' brains without any sage in them), come crouching in the hams to you for a night's lodging?--(that hath an itch in's hams, which like the fire at the glass-house hath not gone out this seven years)--is he not a courtly gentleman? (when he wears white satin one would take him by his black muzzle to be no other creature than a maggot),--you are a goodly foil, I confess, well set out (but cover'd with a false stone--yon counterfeit diamond).

Cam. He will make her know what is in me.

Flam. (aside to Vittoria) Come, my lord attends you, thou shalt go to bed to my lord.

Cam. Now he comes to't..

Flam. With a relish as curious as a vintner going to taste new wine--(to Camillo) I am opening your case hard.

Cam. A virtuous brother a'my credit.

Flam. He will give thee a ring with a philosopher's stone in it.

Cam. Indeed I am studying alchemy.

Flam. Thou shalt lie in a bed stuuf'd with turtles' feathers, swoon in perfumed linen like the fellow was smothered in roses,--so perfect shall be thy happiness, that as men at sea think land

and trees and ships go that way they go, so both heaven and earth shall seem to go your voyage. Shalt meet him, 'tis fix'd, with nails of diamonds to inevitable necessity.

Vit. (aside to Flamineo) How shall's rid him hence?

Flam. (aside to Vittoria) I will put breese in's tail, set him gadding presently,--(to Camillo)

I have almost wrought her to it,--I find her coming, but--might I advise you now--for this night I would not lie with her, I would cross her humour to make her more humble.

Cam. Shall I, shall I?

Flam. It will show in you a supremacy of judgement.

Cam. True, and a mind differing from the tumultuary opinion; forequae negata grata. (20)

In this example the dramatic irony is created by the aides of Camillo, the character who is being duped; however, the portion of Flamineo's dialogue which Camillo does not hear may also be considered to be aside; for the crude jokes at Camillo's expense are presumably meant to amuse the audience as much as Vittoria. The comic ripple of irony, however, only barely covers the deeper waves of cruel and bitter tragedy. Flamineo's brutally humourous taunts aside, followed directly by kind words of encouragement to Camillo emphasize the powerful undercurrent of hypocrisy which comes to dominate the entire scene. ²¹ Once again, if the camera shutter were to close at this instant, the film might seem to reveal a double or even triple exposure of the Machiavel. Like the reflection from a three-fronted mirror the blurred photograph would disclose a tri-headed monster facing left,

right and centre all at the same time. The faces would all look alike, the expression on each a slight variation on the same theme. Which one, if any, is the true Machiavellian? Or is it possible, the spectator wonders, that the Machiavel in reality can be all three at once?

The present discussion of dramatic irony, as it revolves around the character of the Machiavellian villain would be incomplete without some reference to Middleton's play, Women Beware Women. In this work there are two villains, or rather one villain and villainess, who are clearly fashioned after the Machiavellian image. The conspiracy between Guardiano and Livia to pander the innocent Bianca to the Duke of Florence is inspired by the sole motive of conscienceless ambition. The immediate concern from the standpoint of the present discussion is with the role played by the Mother in the seduction of Bianca. By making the Mother an unwitting agent in the deception which leads her daughter-in-law into the lustful arms of the Duke, Middleton succeeds in laying the groundwork for the elaborate dramatic irony which centres around the chess game between her and Livia. The game begins when Guardiano leads Bianca off under the pretense of showing her the art work in Livia's house:

Liv. Alas, poor widow, I shall be too hard for thee!

Moth. You're cunning at the game, I'll be sworn,
madam.

Liv. It will be found so, ere I give you over.--(Aside.
She that can place her man well--

Moth. As you do, madam.

Liv. As I shall, wench, can never lose her game:
Nay, nay, the black king's mine.

Moth. Cry you mercy, madam!

Liv. And this my queen.

Moth. I see't now.

Liv. Here's a duke

Will strike a sure stroke for the game anon;
Your pawn cannot come back to relieve itself.

Moth. I know that, madam.

Liv. You play well the whilst:

How she belies her skill! I hold two ducats,
I give you check and mate to your white king,
Simplicity itself, your saintish king there.

Moth. Well, ere now, lady,

I've seen the fall of subtlety; jest on.

Liv. Ay, but simplicity receives two for one.

Moth. What remedy but patience!(22)

Middleton uses the symbolic device of the chess game to parallel the action which takes place above, as Bianca unknowingly walks right into the trap that has been set for her. This dialogue shows the terminology of chess to be the ideal language for laying bare the strategy devised by Guardiano and Livia to achieve their ends. ²³ Specific mention of colours also serves to emphasise the moral positions of the two opposing forces with white representing virtue and innocence and black representing unscrupulousness and lechery.

The act thus stretches forward inevitably toward the denouement. For the spectator the action on stage moves through a series of pictured incidents, jerkily animated from one scene to another, freezing only when the composition is dramatic and telling enough; and each of those frozen exposures emphasises the wildly wicked, cardboard caricature of the Machiavellian villain who has by now become a terrifying and as it were terrifyingly ordinary reality in the spectator's mind.

Above, there is no escape for Bianca; she is forced to give in and let the Duke have his way. Below, the conversation over the chess-board reflects the weakening of Bianca and the failure of her mother-in-law, whose charge she is while her husband is away, to protect her from the ensuing evil:

Liv. Did not I say my duke would fetch you o'er,
widow?
Moth. I think you spoke in earnest when you said
it, madam.
Liv. And my black king makes all the haste he
can too.
Moth. Well, madam, we may meet with him in time yet.
Liv. I've given thee blind mate twice.
Moth. You may see, madam,
My eyes begin to fail.
Liv. I'll swear they do, wench.(24)

The analogy between the game of chess and the plotted seduction is a stroke of dramatic artistry, for, in fact,

Livia and Guardiano are playing at the game of preferment. They are wholly unfeeling in their actions in this instance, and their motives are purely selfish. They have planned each successive move in advance with exact logic, using people as pawns.²⁵

The final chess scene refers to the action which is taking place upstairs at the moment, but which cannot be shown on stage. The ultimate treachery has been successfully committed, and this last piece of symbolic dialogue sums up all that has occurred:

Liv. The game's even at the best now: you may see,
widow,
How all things draw to an end.
Moth. Even so do I, madam.
Liv. I pray, take some of your neighbours along
with you.
Moth. They must be those are almost twice your
years then,
If they be chose fit matches for my time, madam.
Liv. Has not my duke bestirred himself?
Moth. Yes, faith, madam;
Has done me all the mischief in this game.
Liv. Has showed himself in's kind.
Moth. In's kind, call you it?
I may swear that.
Liv. Yes, faith, and keep your oath.(26)

Middleton can hardly be accused of overusing the symbolic device of the game of skill, for there are a very large number of applicable parallels, and, indeed, each sequence makes use of a different approach. The continuous

series of puns over the chess-board undoubtedly delighted the Elizabethan audience, and the dramatic irony upon which those of the Mother are based provides yet another level of audience appeal. Although the chess sequences cannot properly be considered as asides, essentially they function in much the same way; each one is an ironic commentary on the simultaneous developments of the plot, and each involves the dissembling and satiric wit of the Stage Machiavel. One might imagine that at the end of the chess scene the spectators would feel that they had watched the development of a photographic print, first in the developer and then in the fixative and were now waiting for the moment when they could switch from red to ordinary light.

In this chapter it has been shown how a number of Elizabethan dramatists used the dramatic devices of the soliloquy and various forms of the aside to construct situations of complex dramatic irony; these in turn encouraging the rapid expansion and development of the web which the Machiavellian protagonists weave round and round their unsuspecting prey.

As the Machiavel's feats of intrigue grow progressively more daring, the spectators have the opportunity of predicting the circumstances of the villain's downfall. That it must

come eventually, the audience may be sure, for in each of the above-mentioned works, the Machiavel plays the role of a Satanic magician, building a house of cards which teeters dangerously on a framework of ironic treachery. As long as he is continuously able to subjugate every disturbance and ignore even the slightest distraction, he is successful. He must, however, keep adding cards all the time, juxtaposing one against another, in order to maintain the precarious balance of his own existence. What the villain fails to realise until it is too late is that each additional card in itself represents a greater threat than the last, for the taller the structure grows, the less the force required to topple it. The Machiavel and his machinations are more and more exposed to the forces of benign order which seek from some deeply subterranean point in the Elizabethan drama, and perhaps disturbingly, from some point in reality irrelevant to and outside it, to level the unstable outgrowth of malignity.

Footnotes - Chapter II

1. Bradbrook has also emphasised that "the expository soliloquy was particularly necessary for the Machiavellian villain." p. 115.
2. R. Ornstein notes that in The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois "The ultimate horror of policy, Chapman suggests, is not its rationalization of inhuman acts but its destruction of the fundamental trust upon which society rests." The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960, p. 71.
3. The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, I. 1. 121-44.
4. As Bradbrook points out in regard to the use of the soliloquy in these circumstances: "The growing interest in intrigue makes it of some importance to know how characters are prepared to act, and not only how they feel." p. 129.
5. The Spanish Tragedy, III. 11. 100-19.
6. In his article "The Comic Accomplice in Revenge Tragedy", RenD., Vol. IX (1966), pp. 126-7, D. Cole provides an interesting analysis of the grotesque dramatic irony resulting from the manner in which Lorenzo disposes of his two tool-villains.
7. The Revenger's Tragedy, IV. 1. 61-71.
8. See Ornstein's discussion of the Elizabethan dramatist's caricaturing of the Stage Machiavel, pp. 24-8. Allardyce Nicoll also comments on the caricaturing of the Machiavellian characters in The Revenger's Tragedy: "Hitherto the few comments made upon the persons of the tragedy have tended to suggest that they are monstrous 'caricatures' or 'laboratory specimens', figures at whom we look from the outside and for whom we never feel. Such, indeed, they appear when we compare them with Shakespeare's 'living' characters; and yet the fact remains that hardly anyone can escape captivation by these grotesques; they come to assume in our imagination a queer, vibrant existence of their own. Unquestionably, the paradox has to be explained largely by

reference to the intensity of the verse, but is also bound up with the dramatic structure and technique of the play as a whole. Symbolic of this structure is the opening scene wherein, on the one hand, we watch the terrible procession of Duke, Duchess, and prodigious brood, while on the other hand, we are ourselves led onto the stage by Vendice and, intoxicated by his words, become involved in the action. In this particular combination of remoteness and nearness, of objective presentation and direct engagement, of unreality and reality, of the artificial and the emotionally intense, appears to reside the ultimate secret of the drama's quality." "The Revenger's Tragedy", Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama, edited by R. Hosley, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1963, p. 313.

9. Othello, IV. 1. 93-104.

10. Ibid, II. 127-9/

11. Ibid, I. 1. 65.

12. E.E. Stoll agrees that "it is not easy to distinguish the natural from the artificail and assumed", particularly in regard to the Machiavellian Iago. He points as evidence to the fact that so many critics have attempted to supply him with understandable motives, and thus "dissolved away his malice or baseness". Shakespeare Studies, New York, MacMillan Co., 1927, p. 384.

13. Stoll concludes: "Certainly Iago, like Aaron and Richard, is meant to be a malignant being; and whether Shakespeare would have us conceive of him or not as that 'inconceivability' (so Mr. Bradley rightly calls it), one who loves and does evil for its own sake, his candour in soliloquy and aside lends colour to that interpretation." p. 385.

14. Bradbrook notes that "villains use the aside much more frequently than any other characters." p. 122.

15. Bradbrook confirms this aspect of the explanatory aside: "When any important part of the plot is explained in asides, the exposition at once becomes more brusque and cursory than if it were done in soliloquy." p. 121.

16. The Jew of Malta, II. iii. 48-67.

17. W. Sanders has commented on the use of the aside in The Jew of Malta as being "the heavy-handed dramatic technique, which has Marlowe continually drawing black lines under what he has already written in heavy type." p. 39. One tends to agree that the asides in Marlowe's play and in other Elizabethan works do seem "crudely superficial" when they are encountered by the twentieth century student of Renaissance drama; however, the use of the aside should also be considered from the perspective of the Elizabethan playgoer. As G.F. Reynolds points out in his article "Aims of a Popular Elizabethan Dramatist", PQ., Vol. XX (1941), p. 342, "At any rate there are in many Elizabethan plays which we have every reason to believe popular successes, innumerable stretches where a large part of the audience in the yard must have been pretty much at sea as to what was meant, and where neither business nor spectacle could have helped to hold their attention. It must have been the sheer incantation of words as delivered by the Elizabethan actors that 'tyed their eares'." It would be unfair to dispute this practical use of the aside which, one may assume, Marlowe and his fellow dramatists were aware of. Sanders grudgingly admits that the aside may actually have an artistic purpose in some instances: "Or there is the melodramatic aside which works, if it works at all, by presenting the humane in violently incongruous juxtaposition with the inhuman, undying love with inveterate malice." p. 39.

18. Volpone, I. iv. 109-32.

19. As Bradbrook states: "The bitter punning aside belongs to the Machiavel." p. 122. One may assume from the example drawn from Volpone that this statement applies to the Machiavels of the comedies as well as the tragedies.

20. The White Devil, I. ii. 119-70.

21. See p. 74, note 2.

22. Women Beware Women, II. ii.

23. See T.S. Eliot, "Thomas Middleton", Elizabethan Dramatists, London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1963, pp. 88-9.

24. Women Beware Women, II. ii.

25. Ornstein succinctly describes the final dramatic effect of this scene: "The double action on the gallery and at the chess table further deepens the horror of the seduction by associating the unspeakable and the familiar in such a way as to suggest that the unspeakable is all too familiar to Livia and Guardiano." p. 194.

26. Women Beware Women, II. ii.

27. Margeson, making reference to Bradbrook, confirms this argument in the following passage: "The complication of evil schemes in these plays is no mere element of structure, but a direct representation of the proliferating power of evil. New lusts and passions are stimulated, further characters are involved in temptation and crime, and new victims are drawn into the vortex of evil power. The structure in this respect mirrors the development of the theme.

How is this pattern of proliferating evil held together, and how does it come to a conclusion? As Miss Bradbrook has pointed out, the unifying power in structure and theme is dramatic irony. Irony is a basic theatrical quality in the villain play because of the way the villain's activities depend upon deceit and role-playing. However, the villain is usually himself caught up in an ironic process before the end: his cunning fails him at the last; he is over-confident, overreaches himself, and falls victim to the cunning of others. At this point the irony adds another dimension to the theme, suggesting that the world may be other than the villain thought it to be, or, at the very least, not controllable in all its details by his cunning!" pp.1140-1.

Chapter III - The Art of Machiavellianism

In previous chapters the realistic appeal of the character of the Machiavel has been discussed from various perspectives, and it has been shown to some extent how a number of Elizabethan dramatists succeeded in making what was originally a stereotyped villain into a truly credible stage figure of gigantic proportions. The notion of the 'art of Machiavellianism' has also been referred to at an earlier point, and in the present chapter I intend to show how the artistic vision of the Machiavel in the execution of his crimes adds yet another dimension of reality to the stage figure.

It has been seen previously that the Machiavel often appears as an opportunist, seizing upon situations as they arise and twisting them to his own advantage. He does, indeed, often operate in this way when it is convenient, but when chance does not favour him, the Machiavel never hesitates in taking the initiative and creating the circumstances which are necessary for the accomplishment of his goal. The villain's grandiose opinion of himself, however, never allows him to settle merely for the most expedient means to his ends. He seeks instead to contrive the most artistic invention which his imagination can

devise in order to render the final result a masterpiece of criminal ingenuity; and the artistic medium which the Machiavel frequently chooses is that of a theatrical production.

At some stage in the majority of the works mentioned thus far the stage villain can be found to behave like a power-mad Hollywood producer who, with all the flair and verve normally associated with the type, fabricates an ambience and peoples it by casting various characters into the existing roles. The Machiavel is also a perfectionist who feels that the final production must be worthy of his name--an achievement to be proud of, to gloat over at the finish; he therefore applies all his energy to the task of arranging every last detail. It is the villain himself who selects the backdrop appropriate to the action, who coaches the actors in their parts, who orders the various essential stage properties;;in some cases the Machiavel can even be seen to turn his attention to a minor aspect such as lighting or sound effects.

Such is the case in The Duchess of Malfi where Ferdinand, deeply angered by the disgrace his sister has brought upon the family by her second marriage, resolves to torture the Duchess and cause her as much mortification as he feels she has inflicted upon him. The Duke first

having risen initially to the bait of forgiveness has been mortally wounded by the cruel shock of the first staged scene which Ferdinand has presented to her. Assuming the waxen figures to be the actual bodies of her husband and children, she suffers a kind of spiritual death. When Bosola tries to offer her solace, she replies:

Duchess. Good comfortable fellow
Perswade a wretch that's broke upon the wheele
To have all his bones new set: entreate him live,
To be executed againe: who must dispatch me?
I account this world a tedious Theatre,
For I doe play a part in't 'gainst my will.(3)

The Duchess here clearly envisages the remainder of her life simply as a counterfeit of reality, although ironically she fails to recognize the most recent portion of it as unreal. Nevertheless, the instinctive insight which she expresses in her speech somehow fortifies her and enables her to endure with stoic patience the subsequent spectacles. Referring to the obscene, hell-fire invective of a group of lunatics whom Ferdinand orders to be brought to her cell she says:

Duchess. Indeed I thanke him: nothing but
noyce, and folly
Can keepe me in my right wits, whereas reason
And silence, make me starke mad.(4)

and when Bosola comes to her disguised as her tombmaker,⁵
she appears almost jovial:

Duchess. Let me be a little merry,
Of what stufte wilt thou make it?(6)

Throughout the staged scenes of mental torture by means of which the Duke hopes to drive her insane the Duchess retains a reasoned dignity. She accepts the theatrical context and her part in it with the resignation of one who has no hope for the future and no fear of death in the present, and it is this resignation that makes it possible for her to move freely in the unreal world which Ferdinand has fashioned for her as a prison.⁷ The Duke, failing to break the Duchess' stoic will, is eventually forced to let his captive go freely to her death, which is all she desires. Ferdinand and Bosola, who has functioned throughout the act as a sort of actor-stagemanager, are then struck with pity and remorse; the former goes mad with guilt, while the latter, spurned by his employer, sets out on a course of vengeance all his own.

One may note a similar pattern developing in the third act of The Revenger's Tragedy where Vindice, the incarnation of vengeance, wreaks his revenge upon the old Duke who years ago murdered Vindice's fiancée after failing to make her yield to his lust. As the scene opens in a secluded lodge, Vindice is relating to his brother Hippolito how he has set the stage for his moment of revenge, and how he has taken great pains in order that "nine years'

vengeance crowd into a minute!"⁸ Vindice is determined to burden each second of this precious minute with a significance as heavy as his heart, and to this end he himself has chosen to act the part of the Duke's pander in place of the one from years ago. He has also attired the skull of Gloriana so that it may again play the role of the maid to be seduced: on this occasion, however, both are to prove fatal to the lustful seducer:⁹

Vind. Now to my tragic business; look you, brother,
I have not fashion'd this only for show
And useless property; no, it shall bear a part
E'en in it own revenge. This very skull,
Whose mistress the duke poison'd, with this drug,
The mortal curse of the earth, shall be reveng'd
In the like strain, and kiss his lips to death.
As much as the dumb thing can, he shall feel:
What fails in poison, we'll supply in steel.(10)

In this speech Vindice clearly displays a theatrical propensity. The skull is not merely a 'useless property' of the stage act: the Revenger has invested it with a symbolic value greater than that of any of the actual characters in his drama except perhaps himself as the purveyor of the instrument of death.¹¹ The total effect bears closest resemblance to a scene out of the Theatre of the Absurd where an individual lives through years of torment for the sole purpose of witnessing the reversal of a past moment in time which, of course, can never be changed. Nevertheless, Vindice here appears resolved at least to see the poison

returned to the lustful lips from which it emanated, and his dramatic efforts have been contrived to satisfy this obsession.

So when Fortune fails to provide the right natural situation the stage villain produces an artificial one. One might then be tempted to conclude that the Machiavel is simply substituting fiction for reality; but this is not the case, for the Machiavellian superman is quite correct in his assumption that reality is 'equivalent' to what he creates.

This idea becomes clearer if one compares the Machiavel to an avid gardener who attempts to force a late-flowering plant by placing it in the man-made conditions of artificial sunlight and warmth while feeding it on tap water and fertilizer. The environment is an unnatural one, an imitation of the real circumstances, which has been carefully fabricated to fool the plant into thinking that the time is right for it to flower. It bursts forth in full bloom and the gardener's unnatural efforts are rewarded with a natural result.

So it is with the theatrical efforts of the Machiavel. He manufactures the artificial circumstances of a dramatic presentation, gathering costumes and props, and he persuades the necessary characters, who become the technical

tools, to take part. His fictional production has been skilfully designed to ensnare the intended victim who responds by instinct to the various stimuli which the Machiavel furnishes, totally unaware of the villain's secret intention to cause chaos in his contemporary reality and disrupt the course of his natural life. Trustingly the victim plays out his part, and suddenly the plot which was only fiction in the mind of the Machiavel becomes stark reality. Like the gardener who has forced his plant for the purpose of cutting it and making it into a decorative trophy of his superior horticultural ability, so does the Machiavel chop down his victim at the climax of the drama, and his death also becomes a triumphant symbol of the stage villain's criminal art.

When Vindice's victim's lips and tongue are burning with poison, the Revenger calls for torches to be lit in the darkened theatre so that the Duke may view the ghastly instrument of his doom. It is important to note here that Hippolito functions in much the same way as Bosola in The Duchess of Malfi: that is, both as an actor in the drama and as the stagemanager who produces the various special effects as soon as they are called for by the director of the action. It is Hippolito who raises the

perfumes when the Duke enters, and then brings forth the lighted torches at the moment of Vindice's triumphant revenge.

At the height of the Duke's despair and as he lies writhing and choking on the floor, Tourneur makes it seem that it is Vindice who gives the cue for the last phase of the Duke's torment to begin. It is only a moment after Vindice makes the triumphant announcement that the Duke's own wife is an adulteress that the Duchess and the Bastard make their entrance upon Vindice's stage of melodramatic revenge. At the sound of the musical flourish which heralds their arrival, Vindice, with Hippolito's help, prepares his captive audience for the next act:

Vind. Nay, faith, we'll have you hush'd; now with
thy dagger
Nail down his tongue, and mine shall keep possession
About his heart. If he but gasp, he dies.
We dread not death to quittance injuries.
Brother,
If he but wink, not brooking the foul object,
Let our two other hands tear up his lids,
And make his eyes, like comets, shine through blood;
When the bad bleeds, then is the tragedy good.(12)

The dramatic aphorism in the last line of this speech would appear to confirm the fact that Vindice has, in effect, taken over the task of directing this portion of the play's action, and the clandestine rendezvous of the Duchess and the Bastard seems to take the almost unfathomable form of a play-within-a-play-within-a-play.

In what respect does all this affect the realistic appeal of the stage villain? In a number of works the Machiavel appears to play three different roles. At the beginning of the play he is simply a stage figure in the main drama, and as such the audience can choose to accept or reject him as a credible theatrical entity. When he begins, however, to create a second context of dramatic action within the framework of the main play, he almost seems to become abstracted from the primary structure to take up a position similar to that of the playwright himself. This detachment, nevertheless, is usually short-lived, for in the majority of cases the Machiavel then also plays what is to become a fatal role in his own dramatic presentation.¹³ If one assumes that the audience is predisposed to consider everything which is shown on the stage as reality in some superficially fictional form, then one might argue that the villain becomes a more credible stage figure by creating his own dimension of dramatic reality in which to exist and die.

The somewhat skeptical spectator might, however, argue that a stage character cannot intensify his own realistic impact in a theatrical performance by creating a second fictional context within it. Surely, he would contend,

the inner drama does not even provide a fictional equivalent of reality to the same degree as does the main action. It is possible to counter this argument by reminding the dubious spectator that, in fact, the villain's theatrical efforts do in the end produce the reality of the principal drama by furnishing the artificial circumstances in which the Machiavel carries out a genuine crime. The spectator may indeed scoff while the villain spins out what appears to be an imaginary web, but he cannot deny the fact when ultimately the Machiavel catches at least one real fly from the main cast in it.

An example from Tournour's later play will serve to illustrate quite clearly this last point, for in The Atheist's Tragedy one again finds a Machiavellian protagonist whose crime evolves in the form of a theatrical production. D'Amville's overwhelming motive is ambition, and the dramatic plot which he devises reflects this aspect of his nature, for it requires two carefully constructed acts to develop it. D'Amville begins by casting his lead actor and coaching him in the first part he must play:

Bor. I bespeak
Employment in't. I'll be an instrument
To grace performance with dexterity.
D'Am. Thou shalt. No man shall rob thee of the honour.
Go presently and buy a crimson scarf
Like Charlemont's. Prepare thee a disguise

I'th'habit of a soldier, hurt and lame,
And then be ready at the wedding feast,
Where thou shalt have employment in a work
Will please thy disposition.(14)

A banquet complete with music and formal toasts, is the artistic backdrop which D'Amville has chosen for the first act of his performance. Borachio makes a grand entrance playing the role of a messenger from Ostend and delivers a lengthy speech in which he recounts the supposed circumstances of Charlemont's death, producing as false evidence the stage prop of the crimson scarf. D'Amville, acting the part of the grief-stricken uncle, rails at the messenger, but then, when his own 'audience' isn't listening, praises and encourages his star player:

D'Am. (Aside to Borachio) O th'art a most delicate sweet eloquent villain.
Bor. (Aside to D'Amville) Was't not well counterfeited?
D'Am. (Aside to Borachio) Rarely.(15)

In fact Borachio's eloquence as well as the Atheist's own play-acting, when later he pretends to lament his brother's death (even forcing a histrionic tear), are greatly satisfying to the Machiavellian play director's appetite for artistic perfection.

When his brother has changed his will, the scene is then set for the second act of the Atheist's stage play: the substance of this act is the 'accidental' death of

of Montferrers. As if the spectators were not acutely aware of D'Amville's ordering hand in the business, he and Borachio hold a postmortem after the final curtain of darkness has gone down on their successful dramatic enterprise:

D'Am. Here's a sweet comedy. 'T begins with O
Dolentis and concludes with ha, ha, he.

Bor. Ha, ha, he.

D'Am. O my echo! I could stand
Reverberating this sweet musical air
Of joy till I had perish'd my sound lungs
With violent laughter. Lovely night-raven!
Th'hast seiz'd a carcass.

Bor. Put him out on's pain.
I lay so fitly underneath the bank
From whence he fell, that ere his falt'ring tongue
Could utter double O, I knock'd out's brains
With this fair ruby, and had another stone
Just of this form and bigness ready; that
I laid i'the broken skull upo'the ground
For's pillow, against the which they thought he fell
And perish'd.

D'Am. Upon this ground I'll build my manor house,
And this shall be the chiefest corner-stone.

Bor. 'Thas crowned the most judicious murder that
The brain of man was e'er deliver'd of.

D'Am. Ay, mark the plot. Not any circumstance
That stood within the reach of the design
Of persons, dispositions, matter, time,
Or place, but by this brain of mine was made
An instrumental help, yet nothing from
Th'induction to th'accomplishment seem'd forc'd
Or done o'purpose, but by accident.(16)

This scene is a typical example of the Machiavel gloating over the cleverness of his crime. Critics have remarked on the building imagery which the Atheist uses throughout the play to describe the logical progression

of his plot; ¹⁷ one must not ignore, however, the theatrical bias of the villain's language. D'Amville describes the tragic murder of Montferrers as a 'sweet comedy', and in this respect the character of the Atheist is more reminiscent of the equivocating Vice of the Moralities than any other Machiavellian villain mentioned thus far. He differs, however, in his capacity for an artistic appreciation of crime, whereas the Vice figure rarely went beyond the expression of gleeful delight over his trickery. Even Borachio displays some artistic sensitivity, referring to the murder weapon as 'this fair ruby' and to the second stone which is the stage prop as a 'pillow'.

When D'Amville begins to recount the course of the action it becomes clear that he has indeed relished his powerful position as director of a drama of his own design. Having called into force all his cunning artifices, he manipulated the available resources 'Of persons, dispositions, matter, time, /Or place' and succeeded in producing a perfectly realistic dramatic 'accident':

Bor. And those that saw the passage of it made
The instruments, yet knew not what they did. (18)

Each artistically staged scene in the performance, as Borachio says, "Though false, yet cover'd with a mask of truth", ¹⁹ added another layer of fiction until finally,

when here D'Amville removes his actor's mask, he finds that through the medium of the drama he has brought his ambition to inherit his brother's wealth into the Machiavellian realm of reality.

The thunder and lightning which follow are interpreted by D'Amville for the benefit of Borachio who is frightened by the ominous sound:

D'Am. 'Tis a brave noise,
And methinks graces our accomplished
Project as a peal of ordinance
Does a triumph; it speaks encouragement.
Now Nature shows thee how it favour'd our
Performance, to forbear this noise when we
Set forth because it should not terrify
My brother's going home, which would have dash'd
Our purpose--to forbear this lightning
In our passage, lest it should ha'warn'd him
O'the pitfall. Then propitious Nature wink'd
At our proceedings; now it doth express
How that forbearance favour'd our success. (20)

Although the superstitious Elizabethan audience would hardly be satisfied with this explanation, the Atheist does convince Borachio that he has even influenced the forces of Nature and made them too play a part in his dramatic performance, in some supernatural manner. This is pure self-delusion, argues the skeptical spectator again, but is it? Has not each of the Machiavels mentioned thus far in fact succeeded in effecting a mysterious otherworld presence in the background of his theatrical presentation?

A dumb show.

Enter suspiciously, Julio and another, they draw a curtain where Bracciano's picture is, they put on spectacles of glass, which cover their eyes and noses, and then burn perfumes afore the picture, and wash the lips of the picture, that done, quenching the fire, and putting off their spectacles they depart laughing.

Enter Isabella in her nightgown as to bed-ward, with lights after her, Count Lodovico, Giovanni, and others waiting on her, she kneels down as to prayers, then draws the curtain of the picture, does three reverences to it, and kisses it thrice, she faints and will not suffer them to come near it, dies; sorrow express'd in Giovanni and in Count Lodovico; she's convey'd out solemnly.(24)

Each successive action in the dumb show intensifies the sensational impact of this theatrical murder. The spectacles worn by Christophero and Julio seem to distort their identities, and they appear to be grotesque demons called forth from the depths of Hell to act out their parts. One may also notice a sinister paradox inherent in the dramatic circumstances of the crime: Isabella is in the act of paying homage to her husband who emerges here as the master demon; thus it is an unwitting act of devil-worship which Isabella is committing when she is struck down.

The audience cannot help but be aware of the atmosphere of mystery and evil which dominates the entire scene. It is the witching hour of midnight when the Conjuror materializes with all the trappings of his art which include

some eerie music "To yield, as fits the act, a tragic sound".²⁶ However, not even the apparitions themselves, moving mutely across the dimly lit stage, playing out their assigned roles in this ritualistic performance of crime and death, can overshadow the most startling and uncanny aspect of the scene--the fact that Bracciano is at one and the same time, both figuratively and literally, a spectator and the murderer. He seemsto watch the gruesome spectacle from two vantage points and through two set of eyes: those of his real self and those of the painting. He murders in precisely the same way, for the decree of death comes from his own lips, while the sentence is administered by the poisoned lips of the portrait. Bracciano is at once an active and passive participant, and the dramatic precision with which the crime is carried out serves as a noteworthy illustration of what the diabolical stage villain is capable of when he turns his hand to the theatrical art of murder.

Bracciano's aim isto free himself from his marital obligations so that he can marry Vittoria. To this end he also has the husband of his mistress murdered, and this crime is the substance of the second dumb show which follows immediately. Bracciano, obeying the instructions of the Conjuror, has only to "turne another way,/And view Camillo's far more politic fate".²⁷ The murder of Camillo is indeed

far more politic in design than that of Isabella, for Flamineo, who is Bracciano's tool villain, has arranged for his death to appear an accident:

The second dumb show.

Enter Flamineo, Marcello, Camillo, with four more as Captains, they drink healths and dance; a vaulting-horse is brought into the room; Marcello and two more whisper'd out of the room while Flamineo and Camillo strip themselves into their shirts, as to vault, ~~Compliment~~ who shall begin; as Camillo is about to vault, Flamineo pitcheth him upon his neck, and with the help of the rest writhes his neck about, seems to see if it be broke, and lays him folded double as 'twere under the horse, makes shows to call for help; Marcello comes in, laments, sends for the Cardinal (Monticelso) and Duke (Francisco), who comes forth with armed men; wonder at the act; (Francisco) commands the body to be carried home, apprehends Flamineo, Marcello, and the rest, and (all) go as 'twere to apprehend Vittoria. (28)

As with the murder of Montferrers in The Atheist's Tragedy every detail of the circumstances of Camillo's death is contrived to make it appear accidental. The mime is hardly superfluous; instead, it is the source of further distortion through exaggeration which serves to underscore the artificiality of the entire staged scene.

At the ~~At the~~ end of this dumb show Bracciano expresses his satisfaction with the way the plot was carried out; his simple comment, "'Twas quaintly done", ²⁹ is the artist's pleasingly understated praise for his own creation. Even

though Bracciano appears here as the passive bystander, the audience no doubt realises that he is the theatrical producer of both insidious crimes, and that the final guilt lies entirely with him. In his book entitled The Elizabethan Dumb Show Dieter Mehl comments on the effectiveness of the dumb shows in The White Devil and on the role played by Bracciano in the scene:

Thus the two pantomimes are not only a mere technical device, but an important contribution to the specific meaning and effect of the scene. They increase the tempo of the performance by telescoping the plot. They also stress Bracciano's guilt and the hideousness of his crime. The figures in the dumb show appear to be entirely his creatures who carry out his plans, while Vittoria's share in the crime remains rather vague and ambiguous. (30)

The eerie ambience of the stage set does indeed seem to endow the apparitions of the dumb show with a quality of fiendish puppetry, and Bracciano, who watches the performance with the objectivity of a professional, appears through the sub-terrestrial gloom as the Master Devil pulling the strings.

Bracciano then pretends to be the sadistic artist whose ego is not yet wholly satisfied, and therefore he complains to the Conjuror, "but yet each circumstance/³¹ taste not fully". The Conjuror is quick to comply and fulfill his role as Presenter of the drama by describing in detail the

action in this second dumb show as he did with the first.

Mehl defines the function of the Presenter as follows:

The figure of the presenter reflects the tendency, so typical of the popular Elizabethan drama, to make everything as clear and impressive as possible. Everything had to be said more than once, using different artistic means, in order to impress it on every single member of the audience.(32)

In this instance it is the morbid silence of the villainy which becomes palpably real with the verbal repetition of each action.

This aspect of realism which is created in the dumb show scene in The White Devil is further intensified by the dramatic concept of the play within a play. The Elizabethan dramatist was clearly aware of the fact that when a sub-play--whether a dumb show or one with dialogue--is incorporated into the structure of the main play, the realistic appeal of the primary play is thereby enhanced. The ramifications of this effect are complex and far-reaching; in simple terms, however, the process is of an audience drawn from one imaginary world into another and then back again, the first fictional setting as a consequence becoming more credible and the characters in it approaching a state of independent existence. Arthur Brown clarifies this point in his article on the play within a play:

At its best it can give an extra depth, almost an extra dimension, to the play of which it forms a part; for a time some of the actors themselves become an audience, inducing the actual audience to believe that they are watching not a play but something closer to real life; paradoxically it produces further realism through further illusion.(33)

This is particularly true in the case of Webster's work, for in the dumb show scene Bracciano for the most part plays the role of a spectator, with the audience essentially sharing the experience of watching a play with him. The dramatic impact of the murders is very considerable, and as the scene closes, the spectators are left in a state of emotional shock as if the crimes had actually taken place and the murderer was standing next to them in the stalls. Thus Bracciano, as the insensate Machiavellian villain, gains an almost life-like quality, and this added credibility makes the product of his sinister plotting all the more terrifying to contemplate afterwards.

It is interesting to observe that The White Devil is not the only Elizabethan play revolving around the theme of Machiavellian villainy in which the dramatic convention of the dumb show or play within a play is exploited. A number of other dramatists arrange for their Machiavellian protagonists to make use of the dramatic medium as a means of implementing their cunning plots. In both Women Beware Women and The Revenger's Tragedy the respective villains

commit murders of vengeance under the protective covering of a court masque.

In Middleton's work the arch-villains, Guardiano and Livia plan to murder their common enemy Hippolito during the performance of a play of their own devising which is to be presented at the court celebrations marking the marriage between the Duke and Bianca;³⁴ Vindice and his accomplices are even more enterprising in planning a double disguise trick whereby they murder Lussurioso while impersonating the real masquers who are to perform during the revels which celebrate Lussurioso's coronation as Duke.

What is most important to note in these works is the way in which the respective dramatists use the theatrical propensity of their Stage Machiavels to juxtapose a dramatic presentation in which a hideous crime is executed against a background³⁵ of regal merry-making. When at the end of the performance the stark reality of the hideous crime stares them in the face, the play actors and the characters who formed the once jovial backdrop suddenly seem to be torn from their frivolously artificial ambience to stand out in bold relief.

Somewhat different in scope and intent is the manner in which Kyd exploits the device of the play within a play in The Spanish Tragedy. One must first of all mention

that Kyd's use of this dramatic convention constitutes one of the first known instances in the Elizabethan drama where a play within a play forms an integral part of the basic plot structure. It is generally held that Tourneur, Middleton, Marston and other dramatists who use the convention as a vehicle of Machiavellian villainy were for the most part following the precedent set in The Spanish Tragedy. It is a noteworthy testimony to Kyd's theatrical genius that no Elizabethan dramatist, with the possible exception of Shakespeare, deploys the technique of the play within a play with such great success for the artistic and dramatic effectiveness of the work as a whole.³⁶ It may, therefore, be worthwhile to examine in some detail the way in which Kyd makes the device function as the primary instrument in a quest for revenge.

The Induction which opens the first act of the play leads the spectators immediately into a spiritual theatre. From this new vantage point they will watch, along with the Ghost of Andrea, the tragedy which is about to begin on an 'inner stage'; The personification of Revenge acts as Presenter:

Rev. Then know, Andrea, that thou art arriv'd
Where thou shalt see the author of thy death,
Don Balthazar the prince of Portingale,
Depriv'd of life by Bel-imperia:
Here sit we down to see the mystery,
And serve for Chorus in this tragedy.(37)

From the very beginning, then, Kyd creates the Chinese box effect of a play within a play, luring the audience into a dramatic dimension where fiction and reality continue to clasp and unclasp until the two eventually become almost indistinguishable.

Throughout the main portion of the dramatic action which follows, the character of Lorenzo shines hideously in the Machiavellian spotlight. Hieronimo, on the other hand, is depicted by Kyd in the first half of the work as the grief-stricken father who has been driven to the brink of madness by the sudden and violent death of his only son; as such, Hieronimo claims the entire sympathy of the spectators. In the last scene of Act III Hieronimo discovers by accident the identity of his son's murderers, and attempts to seek legal recourse through the King. When Lorenzo foils him in this effort, Hieronimo's grief and frustration lead him to an abrupt change of course which even a sympathetic Elizabethan audience cannot condone. In a soliloquy toward the end of Act IV Hieronimo struggles with his conscience, but his passion for revenge proves too strong. Reasoning that one crime paves the way for another, he renounces the Christian belief in a divine justice and vows to vindicate his son's murder himself. This decision also leads him to adopt the amoral

principles and methods of the cunning Machiavel.

Hieronimo's opportunity finally comes when Lorenzo and Balthazar approach him with the request that he again prepare some entertainment for the court's pleasure (Kyd here introduces the play within a play in a most plausible fashion, as Hieronimo has already once performed his duty as Master of Revels in the first act when he presented a dumb show at court in honour of the visit of the Portuguese ambassadors). Hieronimo readily agrees, providing Lorenzo and Balthazar will join Bel-imperia and himself in taking part in the play. If the audience had any doubts as to the ultimate purpose of Hieronimo's dramatic presentation, these would soon be dissipated when Hieronimo, alone on stage just before the performance, gives vent to his feelings:

~~Hier.~~ ~~Bethink thyself,~~ Hieronimo,
Recall thy wits, recompt thy former wrongs
Thou hast received by murder of thy son,
And lastly, not least, how Isabel,
Once his mother and thy dearest wife,
All woe-begone for him hath slain herself.
Behoves thee then, Hieronimo, to be reveng'd.
The plot is laid of dire revenge:
On then, Hieronimo, pursue revenge,
For nothing wants but acting of revenge.(39)

In this passage, as well as elsewhere in the scene, one becomes aware of a certain theatrical intensity in the language of Hieronimo. The last four lines of this

soliloquy reveal Hieronimo as the actor who motivates himself into the role he must play. He does, in fact, concentrate his mental powers to such an extent on the sole aim of revenging his son's murder, that he seems to be merging his whole existence with the cause of revenge itself. The repetition of the word also reminds the spectators that up until now the spirit of Revenge has been somewhere in their midst, watching the drama along with them. It seems here almost as if this spirit is materializing again but this time within the consciousness of Hieronimo where it seeks to infuse him with the strength needed to carry out his dramatic task.

The play is acted, the revenge performed. At the conclusion Hieronimo, in reply to the King's enquiry, "But now what follows for Hieronimo?",⁴⁰ makes the following speech:

Hieronimo. Haply you think, but bootless are your thoughts,
That this is fabulously counterfeit,
And that we do as all tragedians do:
To die today, for fashioning our scene,
The death of Ajax, or some Roman peer,
And in a minute starting up again,
Revive to please tomorrow's audience.
No, princes, know I am Hieronimo,
The hopeless father of a hapless son,
Whose tongue is tun'd to tell his latest tale,
Not to excuse gross errors in the play.
I see your looks urge instance of these words,
Behold the reason urging me to this:
Shows his dead son.

See here my show, look on this spectacle:
Here lay my hope, and here my hope hath end:
Here lay my heart, and here my heart was slain:
Here lay my treasure, here my treasure lost:
Here lay my bliss, and here my bliss bereft:
But hope, heart, treasure, joy and bliss,
All fled, fail'd, died, yea, all decay'd with this...

And here behold this bloody handkercher,
Which at Horatio's death I weeping dipp'd
Within the river of his bleeding wounds:
It as propitious, see, I have reserv'd,
And never hath it left by bloody heart,
Soliciting remembrance of my vow
With these, O these accursed murderers,
Which now perform'd, my heart is satisfied.
And to this end the bashaw I became
That might revenge me on Lorenzo's life,
Who therefore was appointed to the part
And was to represent the knight of Rhodes,
That I might kill him more conveniently...

And princes, now behold Hieronimo,
Author and actor in this tragedy,
Bearing his latest fortune in his fist:
And will as resolute conclude his part
As any of the actors gone before.
And gentles, thus I end my play:
Urge no more words, I have no more to say.
He runs to hang himself.(41)

It seems here once again as though the spirit of Revenge is speaking through Hieronimo's consciousness, thus incorporating all the plays within plays into one concurrently moving whole, amalgamating at the same time the members of all the audiences. Hieronimo does indeed seem to have become detached for the moment from the proceedings in order to take over Revenge's role as Presenter and impress upon every member of the compound

audience that none of what they have seen so far or are yet to see is 'fabulously counterfeit'--it is real.

Hieronimo goes on to recount the details of both 'tragedies' which, from the lofty position of his new role as Presenter, he appears to see as being contained within the same dramatic context of reality.

He begins by describing the first 'tragedy' in which he played the part of himself and which constituted 'the reason' for the second 'tragedy': 'See here my show; look on this spectacle...' Incredible though it seems, Hieronimo has kept the corpse of his murdered son and the 'bloody handkercher' as if he knew at the time that he would have the opportunity to use them as stage properties in the explanatory presentation linking the two 'tragedies'. Both of these props, like Ferdinand's waxen figures and Vindicé's attired skull, seem to pervade the atmosphere of this scene with a weird phantasmagoric presence. Hieronimo recreates the circumstances of the first staged murder in such vividly theatrical language that he forces himself along with the compound audience to see and hear it all happen over again:

There merciless they butcher'd up my boy,
In black dark night, to pale dim cruel death.
He shrieks, I heard, and yet methinks I hear,
His dismal outcry echo in the air:(42)

By thus establishing the initial plot so firmly in its histrionic context, Hieronimo has now set the scene for an account of his own stage play which, he makes it seem, is the natural sequel to this first 'tragedy': 'And to this end the bashaw I became...' In the total dramatic dimension which Hieronimo has brought to light through his role as Presenter he himself sees that the real world and the imaginary realm of the drama have become inseparable, and surely it must appear so from the spectators' perspective as well. Having merged his primary role as the revenger with his portrayal of the bashaw, Hieronimo, now recognizes that he has arrived at the supreme moment of his dual existence. Beyond this point he has no reason to live.

Unlike the Machiavels in the plays of Tourneur and Middleton, then, Hieronimo does not use the artificial device of a dramatic performance as a protective covering for his crime; the ultimate significance of this speech appears to lie in Hieronimo's instinctive realisation that his revengeful triumph over the murderers of his son has somehow become immortalized by the theatrically artistic context in which it has been performed and presented. The extreme anguish which he suffered as a result of his loss has enabled him to devise this method of revenge

whereby the the actual moment of vengeance has transcended the reaches of time.

In the last seven lines of the speech Hieronimo as Presenter refers to himself in the third person as 'Author and actor in this tragedy' and declares his intention to play out his part 'Bearing his latest fortune in his fist'. Presumably he is still clutching the knife with which he stabbed Lorenzo, as if it represented a moment of reality trapped for eternity in his hands.⁴³

The The idea that Hieronimo has, in fact, transformed his supreme moment of vengeance into an immortal reality by encapsulizing it within the artistic form of a dramatic performance is confirmed in the final Chorus which consists of a short dialogue between the two characters of the outer drama. The Ghost of Andrea and Revenge here seem to pick up where Hieronimo left off, for, after determining that Bel-imperia and Hieronimo and his family shall enjoy a pleasant eternity in the Underworld, they begin to set the stage in "deepest hell"⁴⁴ ~~for yet another drama~~ in which they will ⁴⁵ "work just and sharp revenge" ~~for ever~~ upon Lorenzo, Balthazar and their tool villains. Revenge closes the play with the suggestion that they now go and watch this eternal epilogue which will be performed by ⁴⁶ the same villainous cast:

Revenge. For here though death hath end their misery,
I'll there begin their endless tragedy.(47)

Although the Elizabethan spectators will not accompany Revenge and the Ghost of Andrea to the new theatrical location, this does not prevent them from envisaging the tortuous scenes which have been described in detail; nor can they avoid being aware of the horrifying realism which is created by this immortal continuity of the dramatic action.

One might argue, ~~that~~ concluding this chapter, that the artistic vehicle of the drama, more than any other art form, distorts the measurement of earthly time. The spectators are asked to step out of their own time zone and into another which the dramatist provides. Within this new dimension the dramatist, through the medium of his characters, can make anything happen, and the burden of adjusting to the dramatic laws of time, location and action rests with the audience. At the end of the fictional sequence the spectators are figuratively thrust back into contemporaneity and are again faced with the task of synchronizing their personal behaviour with their own particular chronological setting.

In all the works discussed in this chapter, however, one finds that the character of the Stage Machiavel suddenly

appears to take over the task of the dramatist in order to interrupt the passage of theatrical time so that he himself may insert a rehearsed segment of hours and minutes which will effectively accomplish a desired goal-- a goal which seemingly could not otherwise be achieved within the boundaries of the fictional world created for him by the Elizabethan dramatist. Each playlet then itself becomes a separate realm of dramatic reality, peopled by the Machiavel with characters who are destined to perform a pre-arranged sequence of actions leading always to a fatal conclusion.

In this way the Machiavel brings into operation the histrionic paradox referred to earlier in the chapter which suggests that when for some reason in a dramatic production the main action is removed one stage further from actuality, the result is that a heavier stress is laid upon some deeper reality. In all the works discussed that extra emphasis invariably falls squarely upon the character of the Machiavellian villain who, as the common denominator of both fictional worlds, emerges ultimately from this dramatic plurality and enters a realm of horrifying actuality.

The apprehension and unease which the spectators may feel when they leave the theatre could well be related

to a marginally conscious realization that the theatrical presentation which they have just witnessed has somehow invaded their own time and place and become part of their own past experience.⁴⁸ The possibility that the most realistic character in that drama may suddenly reappear at some future point in their own contemporaneity is hardly comforting.

Footnotes - Chapter III

1. R. Berry elaborates an interesting argument in defense of Webster's use of waxwork stage properties in the torture scene of The Duchess of Malfi, concluding that they "embody the appearance-reality theme" which is particularly relevant to Webster's ultimate purpose. The Art of John Webster, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 19-22.
2. The Duchess of Malfi, IV. 1. 136-42.
3. Ibid, 11. 97-102.
4. Ibid, IV. 11. 6-8/
5. Although "the motif of disguise often gave rise to the crudest improbabilities" in the Elizabethan drama, W. Creizenach goes on to point out: "Apparently English audiences, as it were by some tacit agreement, accepted these improbabilities as something traditional which was part and parcel of the dramatic manner." The English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare, London, Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1916, p. 223.
6. The Duchess of Malfi, IV. 11. 158-9.
7. J.R. Mulryne discusses in detail the death scene of the Duchess and its atmosphere of "shadowy theatricality" in his essay "The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi", Jacobean Theatre, edited by J.R. Brown and B. Harris, London, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1960, p.221.
8. The Revenger's Tragedy, III. v. 123.
9. P.B. Murray acknowledges the artistic perfection toward which Vindice's plot strives; however, he points out that "this perfect revenge against the Duke is an ironic perversion of the very value it is to affirm--the purity of Vindice's murdered love--and is therefore morally flawed." Cyril Tourneur, p. 234.
10. The Revenger's Tragedy, III. v. 99-107. 5/

11. Murray takes the view that the skull of Gloriana is one of the most important symbol's of the entire play, particularly in regard to the development of Vindice as a Machiavellian dissembler. Cyril Tourneur, pp. 193-5.

12. The Revenger's Tragedy, III. v. 197-205.

13. Margeson describes this process in terms of an all-pervasive scheme of dramatic irony: "The ironic structure of the play is therefore complicated by the varied roles Vindice plays. There are scenes of splendidly theatrical irony, growing out of Vindice's disguises and deceptions, scenes that Vindice enjoys because Tourneur has made him an ironist, conscious of the shifting differences between appearance and reality, and ready to use ambiguous language to sharpen his enjoyment...

At this point we may ask what Vindice's part is in the ironic scheme or the tragic idea. As a shrewd and cynical commentator on everything that happens, he is able to point clearly to the way that evil passions lead to self-destruction. He is also agent and tempter in this very process, tainted by what he condemns with so much disgust. Gradually, he loses the objectivity and the freedom of the satiric commentator: the black comedy of the whole series of situations is spiced with the irony of his increasing involvement, which he cannot recognize." p. 143.

14. The Atheist's Tragedy, I. 11¹. 231-40. x

15. Ibid, II. i. 117-20.

16. Ibid, II. iv. 84-109.

17. See Murray, Cyril Tourneur, p. 110.

18. The Atheist's Tragedy, II. iv. 134-5.

19. Ibid, I. 111.

20. Ibid, II. 152-64.

21. Bradbrook comments on the use and dramatic effect of this Elizabethan convention: "In addition to the conventional narrative and its formal arrangement the

Elizabethans relied upon their 'feeling for allegory'. On the level of the presentation this was developed in different kinds of representation, such as the dumb show, and conjuring; and on the level of the action by the contrast between different moods (almost different genus) of drama in the plot and subplot.

The early dumb shows were allegorical, and the later ones have a special atmosphere of portentousness which easily becomes allegorical. Silent movement is always doubly significant on the stage." pp. 43-4.

22. The White Devil, II. ii. 1-4.

23. Ibid, 1. 21.

24. Ibid, A dumb show.

25. As Murray points out in citing this first dumb show: "The ritual forms of piety have been perverted by the white devil so that they have become black masses to go with the black book that is Monticelso's bible." A Study of John Webster, The Hague, Mouton & Co. N.V., Publishers, 1969, p. 41.

26. The White Devil, II, ii. 37.

27. Ibid, ii. 34-5.

28. Ibid, A second dumb show.

29. Ibid, ii.38

30. Mehl, D., The Elizabethan Dumb Show, London, Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1964, pp. 141-2.

31. The White Devil, II. ii. 38-9.

32. See Mehl, p. 12.

33. Brown, A., "The Play within a Play: an Elizabethan Dramatic Device", E. & S., Vol. XIII (1960), p. 48.

34. Mehl gives a detailed analysis of the function of the dumb show in Women Beware Women, pp. 151-2.

35. Ibid, p. 133.

36. See Brown, pp. 38-9.
37. The Spanish Tragedy, I. i. 86-91.
38. A.H. Thorndike provides a detailed analysis of Hieronimo's development into the Machiavellian revenger in his article "The Relations of Hamlet to the Contemporary Revenge Play", PMLA., Vol. XVII (1902), p. 147.
39. The Spanish Tragedy, IV. iii. 21-30.
40. Ibid, IV. iv. 72.
41. Ibid, ll. 76-95...122-34...146-52.
42. Ibid, ll. 106-9.
43. When Hieronimo's attempt to hang himself fails, he bites out his tongue, and this gesture too symbolizes the Revenger's artistic eternity, as Tomlinson says: "Again, Kyd (with the help of his collaborator) stage-manages the business of Hieronimo biting out his tongue--and doing so for no very obvious reason--simply so that he can finalize his picture of the revenger pleased with his own art, for its own sake." A Study of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy, Cambridge University Press, 1964, p. 76.
44. The Spanish Tragedy, IV. v. 27.
45. Ibid, l. 16.
46. H. Hawkins discusses the effect of the 'outer drama' on the overall theatrical framework of the play. Likenesses of Truth in Elizabethan and Restoration Drama, Oxford University Press, 1972, p. 31.
47. The Spanish Tragedy, IV. v. 47-8.
48. Hawkins emphasizes this idea specifically in relation to an audience watching a performance of The Spanish Tragedy: "All their previous conceptions about the theatrical situation instantly crumble when the spectators realize that the show they thought was 'fabulously counterfeit' is in fact deadly reality--the human tragedy itself rather than a

dramatic imitation of a tragic action. Thus the Spanish and Portuguese audience ceases to experience the aesthetic delight of watching a well-acted play, and experiences the personal horror of death at first hand. And while the members of Kyd's audience view everything that happens on the stage as part of the fabulously counterfeit Spanish Tragedy, the action of his play forces them to ask how they might feel if the events seen on the stage suddenly turned out to be real." p. 30.

Conclusions

In this final section it is perhaps appropriate to consider briefly the influence of Machiavellianism on the conclusion of some of the plays referred to in the course of the present discussion. It is interesting to observe that in this regard a recurring pattern once again emerges: the Machiavel is usually either destroyed by his own hand or caught in a trap which he himself has constructed in order to ensnare others. One can of course accept that according to the code of human ethics which casts an audience into the role of righteous moral judge the Machiavel, like all subsequent stage and film villains, had to die or at least be seen to be punished severely for his crimes. This notion of justice by itself, however, does not account for the fact that in a number of cases the Elizabethan dramatist arranged for the Machiavellian villain to initiate directly his own destruction.

When one comes to look for an explanation, two possible reasons present themselves. The first has to do with setting and background which, as was discussed in a previous chapter, draw in most instances on the vice and corruption found in foreign courts. The fundamental nature and assumptions of many of these plays therefore

is accurately reflected in a cast of characters who display against a regal setting most of the baser aspects of human nature as, for example, in The Revenger's Tragedy. Even in a play such as Women Beware Women which starts off with a group of personages who are fairly evenly balanced between vice and virtue, one finds that by the fourth act the respectable characters of Bianca and Leantio have been converted to the deceitful methods of the Machiavellians, Guardiano and Livia.

In two other works mentioned elsewhere, The Spanish Tragedy and The Duchess of Malfi, where there are principal characters who represent the decent qualities and goodness of mankind, it is still always the theme of villainy driven by self-interest which predominates, and the virtuous are either victims and are thus eliminated, like Horatio and the Duchess respectively, or they play essentially passive roles throughout the greater portion of the dramatic action, as do Belimperia and Antonio, before they are eventually struck down in the final scene.

One may assume from such examples as these that the Elizabethan dramatist did not intend that the moral outcome of his play should fall into the pattern of the Miracle and Morality drama, whose fundamental structure was so arranged that good triumphed over evil with a

dramatic as well as a metaphysical inevitability. Since the later dramatist apparently deliberately refrained from creating characters sufficient in stature to counteract dramatically the wickedness of the Machiavel--since he evidently chose instead to make the Machiavel's villainy seem to triumph until the very final scene--it became necessary to devise a new formula to satisfy the metaphysical demand that good should prevail over evil. The Elizabethan playwright therefore established a new pattern--one which was certainly more interesting dramatically than the Miracle-Morality pattern--whereby evil ultimately triumphs over itself. In order to achieve this result the Machiavel ironically had to be cast in the dual role of villain-hero.

That a character should be his own antithesis is not as improbable as it may first appear, particularly in the case of a character such as the Stage Machiavel, for a close analysis of his inner life does indeed provide the second possible reason why he is usually directly responsible for his own downfall. The character of the Machiavellian villain, as a human incarnation of the non-human evil force of the pre-Elizabethan drama, is a contradiction which cannot long survive in the world of men. As I have indicated in an earlier chapter the Machiavellian

myth merged with the stage figure of the Devil of the Miracle plays while also encompassing many of the Vices represented in the Moralities. He therefore provided dramatists with a human character gifted at the same time with a superior capacity for intellectual cunning and an entirely unregulated appetite for depravity. From a human perspective the Machiavel is an incomprehensible paradox. The gulf between his superhuman reason and his sub-human passions is too large to make easy sense; in addition both reason and passions seem to operate in a sphere which is removed from earthly laws and probabilities, and this permits the villain to create chaos and disorder in the lives of all with whom he comes in contact before he himself is ultimately consumed. I believe this is what Rossiter means when he describes the Machiavel as "a superhuman sub-man"², a character, as it were, who is allowably human for a short while on the stage because he 'brackets' the human norm not because in any sense he embodies it. The tension between extremes which keeps him allowably human must in the end break.³

To illustrate the adaptability of such a notion I have purposely chosen plays which fall into three distinct categories of the drama, tragedy, satire and comedy respectively: The Atheist's Tragedy, The Jew of Malta and

Volpone. In spite of the fact that Tourneur, Marlowe and Jonson apparently set out with entirely different dramatic aims, their works are remarkably similar in terms of theme and structure, a fact which, I would suggest, is the direct result of their choice of a protagonist fashioned after the Machiavellian image.

In all of the above-mentioned works it is again always the more virtuous characters who fall victim to the devised villainy of the Stage Machiavel or who play primarily passive roles. It is also important to observe that in each play there are at least two or three characters who, though not maliciously evil, are nevertheless guided by a doubtful code of morals which becomes most flexible when their personal interests are involved. In The Atheist's Tragedy, for example, one finds a sizable group of characters centering round the licentious activities in the house ^{of} ~~/~~ Cataplasm; while in The Jew of Malta Bellamira and Pilia-borza may also be found to be involved in the business of sexual promiscuity for monetary profit. Certainly the three birds of prey in Volpone are of questionable moral character, as they show themselves prepared to disinherit siblings and pander their wives in order to become rich.

In addition to these characters who practice corruption for self-interest, one cannot ignore those figures

who outwardly represent the highest established values in society, but who are, in reality, no more than fallible human beings, susceptible to the same earthly temptations as all men. Languabeau Snuffe, for instance, is an unscrupulous creature who sells his advisory influence to the highest bidder and freely enjoys the very illicit pleasures of the flesh which he should condemn. Marlowe also comments on the vulnerability of men of religion in the characters of the two friars who resort to physical violence in order to obtain the privilege of converting Barabas and inheriting his wealth.⁴ Finally, in the court scene in Volpone one of the judges shows himself to be more concerned with finding a wealthy match for his daughter than with administering his professional duties.

The pursuit of the Renaissance values of pleasure, profit and power, then, would seem to be the predominant theme in all these works, and in this connection it would appear that the three dramatists have sought to expose, albeit through a different dramatic medium, the same qualities of immorality, selfishness and ambition wherever they occur in human nature. These minor characters, however, serve to provide a minimum level of comparison as it were for the introduction of the Machiavellian figure who

stands out in bold relief against such a background like a monstrous snake among a slithering pile of worms. The proportions are so gigantic that the Machiavel appears to be some kind of mutant of the species, an atom of matter and form that has gone wrong but been allowed to develop through a careless oversight. The mistake must be corrected and ultimately it is, not by some supernatural impulse or counteracting force but by the villain himself.

When one comes to compare the three stage villains it immediately becomes evident that they share a number of character traits, foremost among them is their passion for material riches. Although the acquisition of wealth is a major theme of the plays as a whole and is a goal toward which many of the secondary personages strive, for the Machiavel it ^{is} often the principal part of his credo. D'Anville, Barabas and Volpone all seem to draw their lifeblood from physical contact with their gold or jewels. The Atheist compares the glittering, chinking pieces of metal to the stars in the heavens, in the belief that the former determine man's destiny. ⁵ As he unpurses his gold he worships:

D'Am. Here sounds a music whose melodious touch
Like angels' voices ravishes the sense...
These are the stars whose operations make
The fortunes and the destinies of men.(6)

D'Amville's passionate response to the sound of the gold is similar to the Jew's rapturous admiration of the jewels which surround him in his counting house. The terms he uses to describe them are, for the most part, not only sensual but energetic and animated. The

Bags of fiery Opals, Sapphires, Amethysts,
Jacints, hard Topas, grasse-greene Emeralds,
Beauteous Rubyes, sparkling Diamonds (7)

appear to him infused with a being all their own, an intrinsic quality which acts as an inspiration to those
8
who contemplate their worth. Under an influence so powerful the Fox too has become an ardent worshipper and spends the first part of every day in religious adoration at the only altar which he recognizes:

Volp. Good morning to the day; and, next, my gold:
Open the shrine, that I may see my saint.
Haile the worlds soule, and mine. More glad then is
The teeming earth, to see the long'd-for sunne
Peepe through the hornes of the celestiall ram,
Am I, to view thy splendor, darkening his:(9)

Like D'Amville and Barabas, Volpone extols the near blinding brilliance of his idol and emphasizes its immanent potentiality.

For all three Machiavels the luminous aura of their

wealth is the key to some deeper knowledge, enabling them to see beyond the mundane routine of daily life and philosophize in metaphysical terms. Consider, for example, the second part of Volpone's speech:

Volp. Well did wise Poets, by thy glorious name,
Title that age, which they would haue the best;
Thou being the best of things: and far transcending
All stile of joy, in children, parents, friends,
Or any other waking dreame on earth.
Thy lookes, when they to Venws did ascribe,
They should haue giu'n her twentie thousand Cupids;
Such are thy beauties, and our loues! Deare saint,
Riches, the dumbe god, that giu'st all men tongues:
That canst doe nought, and yet mak'st men doe all
things;
The price of soules; euen hell, with thee to boot,
Is made worth heauen!(10)

Volpone's meditation here leads him to the conclusion that gold is, in fact, the Unmoved Mover of the cosmos. It appears to him that material wealth is at once First Cause and Final Cause, and all things move toward it as the pure and supreme form, not by mechanical impulsion but by attraction, as the object of desire.

Although the possession of worldly riches plays an important part in inspiring the criminal schemes of these three stage villains, it would seem that in each case some sort of philosophical impetus lies behind their resolve to become wealthy men. Beginning with the Atheist one finds that his reasoning faculty has led him to deny

the existence of any supernatural force and place his trust instead in physical nature as the ultimate power in the universe. In the opening scene of the play D'Amville confirms his naturalist position in a conversation with his prospective tool-villain Borachio. It soon becomes clear that the Atheist believes that if a man uses his rational powers to their fullest extent he can escape the fact of human mortality and live on through his descendants who will inherit his wealth, the only key to true happiness on earth. Human reason then becomes D'Amville's guiding principle, and the goal toward which he strives throughout the remainder of the play is to provide his blood line with an heir and to provide that heir with a fortune.

Barabas, on the other hand, does not go to the trouble of rejecting religion; however, he has a great deal more faith in a cynically opportunist philosophy. There is no room in such a creed for any of the traditional ethical principles or values such as mercy, justice or love: life is simply a question of each man for himself. Intelligence alone is all that counts, and it is in this respect that religion does have some value for the Jew as a handy means of discriminating between those of the Chosen Nation

who, like himself, are superior in intellect and cunning, and the "swine-eating Christians"¹¹ whose grossly hypocritical attitude toward materialism only serves to confirm Barabas in his cynicism and pile fuel on the fires of his revenge when Ferneze seizes his wealth. With his venomous egoism aroused the Jew, like D'Amville, is prepared to "search his deepest wits"¹² for a plan to regain his lost riches and be revenged upon his enemies; like the Atheist Barabas also takes a pragmatic almost scientific approach to the problem. In the case of both Machiavels a kind of static intellectual passion repeatedly stimulates the active process of villainy.

If the character of Volpone presents us with a slightly different picture, it is nevertheless still possible to draw a number of parallels between the Fox and the other two stage villains. It seems from the opening speech of the play that Volpone is no Machiavellian at all but merely a miser whose avarice knows no bounds. He appears at first to be consumed by a passion for gold which allows for no other consideration, but it soon becomes evident that the Fox finds the trickery which he uses to procure his wealth a far more absorbing occupation than the worship of it.

In each of the dramatic works considered thus far, then, one finds an egotistical, amoral Machiavellian protagonist whose superior intellect and driving obsession for self-gratification have endowed him with a seemingly unlimited power to manipulate people and events, effectively disrupting the natural order of life and superimposing upon the anarchy which he has created a perverse order of his own design. Like a master architect the Machiavel methodically builds his hideous structure of deceit, combining all manner of materials which come to hand, spontaneously offsetting the stresses with counter-acting strains, so that the tension of the conflicting elements is sustained. Whenever a break occurs the villain must do some hasty patchwork to keep the structural framework intact, but as long as his ordering hand remains steady, the repulsive edifice continues to grow, warping and twisting its way upward in defiance of all the natural laws, reflecting in its tightly drawn tensions the tensions in the character of its creator.

Atop this massive outgrowth the Machiavel works fiendishly adding story upon story, stopping only occasionally to look down in gleeful admiration at his ugly handiwork. His triumph over this monument of perversity, however,

knows no bounds. Volpone is a far more volatile character than the other two Machiavels we have been discussing, and it is this very quality of explosive unpredictability which not only adds greatly to the comic effect of the play but also eventually proves to be the Fox's undoing. In much the same way as D'Amville and Barabas believe that they can have anything they want, Volpone believes that he can be anything he wants, and his subhuman greed to be and do what he wishes is finally the problem which defeats all his superhuman wits--as though his brutish greed cannot conceive that its desires may only be gratified by the most enormous and sophisticated intellectual effort. In the second act of the play he seems to attain the apex of exciting diversion with his inspired portrayal of the mountebank Scoto of Mantua, a disguise which he assumes in order to catch a glimpse of Corvino's beautiful wife Celia. Once struck by the pangs of love, however, the Fox never again performs at the high level of cunning he achieves in the first half of the play.

In an attempt to seduce the virtuous Celia Volpone subsequently throws off his death-bed act and advises her to follow his own creed, to discard the teachings of conscience in favour of the sensual argument put forward by

the power of riches:

Volp. If thou hast wisdom, heare me, Celia.
Thy bathes shall be the iuyce of iuly-flowres,
Spirit of roses, and of violets,
The milke of vnicornes, and panthers breath
Gather'd in bagges, and mixt with cretan wines.
Our drinke shall be prepared gold, and amber;
Which we will take, vntill my roofe whirle round
With the vertigo: and my dwarfe shall dance,
My eunuch sing, my foole make vp the antique.
Whil'st, we, in changed shapes, act Ovids tales,
Thou, like Europa now, and I like Ioue,
Then I like Mars, and thou like Eryeine,
So, of the rest, till we haue quite run through
And weary'd all the fables of the gods.
Then will I haue thee in more moderne formes,
Attired like some sprightly dame of France,
Braue Tuscan lady, or proud Spanish beauty;
Sometimes, vnto the Persian Sophies wife;
Or the grand-signiors mistresse; and, for change,
To one of our most art-full courtizans,
Or some quick Negro, or cold Russian;
And I will meet thee, in as many shapes:
Where we may, so, trans-fuse our wandring soules,
Out at our lippes, and score vp summes of pleasures.(18)

In this speech the quintessential Machiavellian character emerges to preach to a prospective convert with all the energy of an evangelist, a believer who has placed his unswerving faith in the infinity of wealth and the amusement it may purchase. The Fox's ambitiously possessive nature is most evident in the first five lines where the ephemeral images he conjures up are indicative of an extra-human effort to halt the passage of earthly time in order to drain the last drop of sensual pleasure from the

transient, fragile phenomena of nature which he mentions. This is the preliminary stage leading to a transcendent state of euphoria where Volpone sees a way opening into a further dimension; the entire spectrum of time and space would become perceptible and the soul might then escape from its physical bonds and metamorphose endlessly, one transfiguration eclipsing the last through the whole range of forms and experience.

In this scene then Volpone clearly envisages a kind of pleasure-filled eternity in which he and Celia might transcend their worldly selves and wallow in a glut of blissful sensation. Although the Fox's plan is prevented from succeeding, the detailed image which he creates is so powerful that for the moment he almost seems to have superceded the natural force of time and the resistance of the plot in order to impose a rapturous vision of reality all his own in which he can, in fact, be anything or anyone he wants to be. The intervention of Bonario, however, temporarily traps Volpone in a corner from which he is only barely able to extricate himself with the help of Mosca some scenes later. The Fox's fear and desperation then suddenly turn again into an even more frantic search for amusement; the final stratagem, which involves yet

another disguise so that he can go abroad and observe the reactions of the birds of prey to the news of his death, eventually ensnares him in a final trap which he admits is essentially of his own making:

Volp. To make a snare, for mine owne necke! and run
My head into it, wilfully! with laughter!
When I had newly scaptt, was free, and cleare!
Out of mere wantonnesse!(19)

It is perhaps interesting to speculate as to whether or not the cumbersome system of human justice, which has already been activated before Volpone launches his last scheme, could have eventually coped sufficiently to punish the Fox and the Parasite without their own self-incrimination. One would probably suspect that it could not, for Jonson has been at pains to note that one of the magistrates of the Venetian court is himself ruled by motives of self-interest and vanity.²⁰ One might conclude that it is fortunate for the sane world, represented in Volpone by the albeit wooden characters of Celia and Bonario, that the Fox himself supplants the ordinary course of justice which seems otherwise helpless.

Referring to the play's conclusion J. B. Bamborough makes the following comment in respect to the manner in which Volpone brings about his own downfall:

There is no room in this for tragedy, although we may feel if we will a kind of doomed or destined quality about Volpone (a modern psychologist might even say that his constant flirting with danger and discovery indicates an underlying desire to be unmasked and punished).

As Bamborough points out Volpone is not a tragic play, and it is therefore rather difficult to interpret the character of the Fox in terms of the way he might fulfill the role of villain-hero.²² One may nevertheless clearly see how Bamborough's statement applies to D'Amville and Barabas as well as to other Machiavels discussed in the course of previous chapters. The Atheist and the Jew, for example, can be seen to tempt the Fates repeatedly, and the rapid pace of the dramatic action in those works accurately reflects the level of feverish activity present in a Machiavel fatally obsessed by sub-human passions which only an angelic cunning can adequately serve.

In prosaic terms the character of the stage villain might be compared with the compulsive gambler who deludes himself into believing that his 'system' will always win, and who can never break the habit even when he seems to be winning; there is always the larger jackpot yet to be won. The Machiavel too is stimulated by a lust for perfection, or rather a lust requiring perfection, which propels him on in his glorious villainy with a pre-

determined kind of urgency, as if he knows instinctively that he must either attain his ultimate goal or destroy himself in the attempt. Another illustration of this notion may be found in the final death scene of The Duchess of Malfi where the three villains, Ferdinand, the Cardinal and Bosola are slain by each other.²³ Ferdinand comes to his senses at the last moment to remark:

Ferdinand. "Whether we fall by ambition, blood, or lust,
"Like Diamonds, we are cut with our own dust.(24)

In conclusion it may be suggested that the Machiavel is some sort of supersonic dramatic missile hurtling through time and space, breaking down all the natural barriers which obstruct the way, leaving behind a wake of chaos and ruin. Occasionally he must make corrections in order to keep in range of the ultimate target; the result is inevitable; his greatest success is his own final destruction. The Machiavel's fundamental programming is all wrong and toward the end the truth usually becomes evident even to him. A final thrust and he careers into his target; no amount of last minute rethinking can repair the basic disharmonies of his nature. Built into his being is a self-destruct mechanism; the Machiavel explodes into nothingness;²⁵ the insatiable demands of his brute desires home with accuracy upon what may most nearly satisfy them

and drive an angelic cunning and intelligence to destruction.

When the dust clears the rubble and debris seem to have vanished leaving no trace. The Machiavel is gone and on stage there remains only the spokesman of normality who proclaims the end of an interregnum and the restoration of the natural order. At this point it seems that the whole might have been a transitory illusion--a horror-filled moment in time which had no clear beginning and no explicable end. The Machiavellian superhuman sub-man now appears to have been some extra-terrestrial transfiguration, a demon who has erupted through the crust of earthly society to create havoc and impose a volatile reign of terror. He has disappeared, but an unease remains.

Footnotes - Conclusions

1. Margeson corroborates this view in regard to many of of the villain-heroes of the Elizabethan drama: "These villains represent the strong force of the individual will set up against society and the rest of the world. This is not to say that the rest of the world is good in contrast with the blackness of the villain. On the contrary, the world the villain is dealing with is likely to be hypocritical, as it is in The Jew of Malta, or thoroughly corrupt in the manner of the court in The Revenger's Tragedy or Women Beware Women. One of the remarkable features of the development of this kind of play is the gradual darkening of the world in which the villain lives and against which he acts." p. 138-9 See also Engelberg, E., "Tragic Blindness in The Changing and Women Beware Women", MLQ., Vol. XXIII (1962), p. 27.

2. See Rossiter, p. 158.

3. Ornstein elaborates on this point specifically in regard to Webster's Machiavellian villains of The White Devil: "In his 'glorious villains' Webster creates heroic characters who escape the restrictive bonds and illusions of morality only to be swept to disaster by the irresistible tide of their desires. They are not slaves of passion in any ordinary sense, confused and blinded by uncontrollable appetites. In a strangely perverse way they know themselves better than do Cornelia and Isabella, but that self-knowledge is a tyranny as well as an emancipation. Because they see their goals so clearly they recognize no alternatives, and although they create the circumstances of their lives they never transcend them." p. 137.

4. In his essay "Marlowe the Dramatist", Elizabethan Theatre, London, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., 1966, p. 96, N. Brooke points out: "Yet the force of Machiavel's stated attitudes is felt throughout the play, and his cap fits every single actor in it, Christian, Jew, prostitute or pagan slave."

5. Murray maintains that in this scene "D'Amville identifies himself quite clearly as antichrist, establishing his own religion with gold coins as the ministers of 'Mans high wisdom: the superior power'." Cyril Tourneur, p. 82.

6. The Atheist's Tragedy, V. 1. 8-9...14-5.

7. The Jew of Malta, I. 1. 25-7.

8. Several critics have remarked on this passage from The Jew of Malta, drawing particular attention to the way in which it emphasises the character of Barabas not as a mere miser but as a Machiavellian Superman. As Boyer says: "There is no grovelling, miserly greed in such a passion as this. It is the ambition of a Faustus for infinite power expressed in terms of gold. The man who is capable of such a stupendous conception of wealth has within him an imagination that commands our admiration, if it does not touch us with awe." p. 54. And Tomlinson observes: "From the Jew's restlessness over mere money and goods, Marlowe leads on to the metaphysics of riches without possessions. 'Fie, what a trouble 'tis to count this trash!'--Barabas despises money, the laborious goal of Western mercantilism, and will emulate the Indian jewel merchant and 'the wealthy Moor' who deal in metal and stones whose value bears no relation to size or quantity. From here it is an easy step to the final conceit which, outdoing Jonson, definitively states the difference between the miser's wealth and his attitude to wealth. The ultimate value of riches is expressed in the idea of power divorced from bulk or numbers. Money and goods can be accumulated, but only in arithmetical progression which is limited because its end is vague and out of sight, Barabas's conceit expresses the infinite of wealth in possession." pp. 90-1.

9. Volpone, I. 1. 1-6.

10. Ibid, 11. 14-25.

11. The Jew of Malta, II. 111. 7.

12. Ibid, I. 11. 221.

13. Volpone, I. i. 70-5.

14. H. Hawkins confirms this viewpoint in regard to the superman of the Elizabethan drama: "And time after time, in Elizabethan drama, there comes some such moment of truth when a character identified with supreme human power, whether it be the power of the crown or the power of art, is confronted by certain facts of ordinary life, by some empirical truth which no power of royalty, intelligence, or imagination can alter, and which therefore must be taken into account." pp. 1-2.

15. The Atheist's Tragedy, V. ii. 243-8.

16. The Jew of Malta, V. v. 49-50.

17. One is inclined to agree with Thorp in this regard: "Previously he had known only success in his favorite device of dissembling with two parties. Never for a moment does he suspect that anyone is capable of serving him in kind. Like Iago he counts on the stupidity of mankind and goes down as a result of his own myopic policy. The play has been justly criticized for the falling off in poetic brilliance and the degeneration in the character of the hero in the last three acts but Marlowe's judgment in connecting Barabas' fate with the one talent on which he most prides himself deserves high praise. Barabas is guilty of the only sin which exists in his moral code, ignorance, and he perishes as a result." p. 135.

18. Volpone, III. vii. 212-35.

19. *Ibid*, V. xi. 1-4.

20. R.H. Perkinson, in his article "Volpone and the Reputation of Venetian Justice", MLR., Vol. XXXV, (1940), pp. 11-18, suggests that Jonson especially chose Venice as the setting for Volpone because of its reputation for disinterested justice. Perhaps Mr. Perkinson overlooked V. xii. 50-1.

21. See Bamborough, J.B., Ben Jonson, London, Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1970, p. 88.

22. Ornstein, however, maintains that Jonson was a 'moral realist' in comedy as well as tragedy, and that as a result he came close to 'tragic grandeur' in comedy: "For the comic spirit presumes a moral security, an ineffable sense of the futility of vice, and an assurance that inhuman intent will be thwarted by human fallibility... In Volpone the helplessness of Celia and Bonario is inconsequential because avarice, lechery, and overreaching ambition are self-defeating." p. 88.

23. See Boas, F.S., Introduction to Stuart Drama, Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 202.

24. The Duchess of Malfi, V. v. 89-90.

25. Ornstein describes much the same process occurring with the character of Flamineo in The White Devil: "If Flamineo is a baffling character, it is not because he suspected, even in The White Devil, that the Machiavelianism which seemed to release man's heroic potentialities was ultimately a negation rather than a fulfillment of life. Fearful of confounding knowledge with knowledge, Flamineo shuts his eyes to everything except the 'necessity' which his own mind creates. Despite his intellect he pursues a base irrational goal, and like Webster's later Machiavels ends in a little point, a kind of nothing, playing desperate games with Vittoria before he is slaughtered, apparently without resistance, by his enemies." p. 139.

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