

A WONDROUS NECESSARY MAN: THE VILLAINOUS
SUBORDINATE IN RENAISSANCE DRAMA

by

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ABSTRACT

A *Wondrous Necessary Man* shows that the villainous subordinate is a conventional character type in Renaissance drama. He exists in a symbiotic relationship with his master, and seeks to gratify his appetite by exploiting his master's passions. His master is deluded, believing him to be a subservient instrument offering fulfilment of his hopes. The villainous subordinate is an expression of his master's appetite, with its pre-eminence, the roles of master and subordinate are reversed. Ultimately, appetite consumes the pair; their destruction is the final event in a cathartic process which brings a rebirth of order.

The introductory chapter defines the villainous subordinate by showing his major characteristics. His principle is inversion, which has psychological and social manifestations. He shares a relationship with his master which commonly has overtones of a sexual bond; his utilitarian beauty is an illusion of good, which is represented as a literal or metaphorical disguise. By abetting his master's destructive vices, the villainous subordinate functions as Nemesis. He also is a personification of time, and provides ambiguous warnings which his victim fails to heed. He seldom lies, except about the availability of grace, in that respect, he is symbolic of despair. The villainous subordinate's characteristics relate him to prototypes in earlier drama. As a fully developed character, he is a result of a coalescence of earlier conventions, and he also reflects contemporary sentiments.

As overreacher, tempter, and destroyer, the villainous subordinate has demonic characteristics which identify him with Lucifer; as a victim of his own passions, he also exemplifies fallen man. The villainous subordinate, as Adam's antetype (Mephistophilis excepted), represents the end result of the Expulsion, and he labours to reduce his victim to his own fallen state. The sequence of subsequent chapters approximately parallels the Fall, Expulsion, and a cycle of decay and regeneration.

Chapter Two is an analysis of Guise (*The Massacre at Paris*) and the Cardinal (*The Cardinal*), as examples of the villainous subordinate as an ambitious overreacher. The moral suasion Guise exerts on Catherine results in civil strife, but his control is circumscribed by opposing political interests, and by moral forces which eventually destroy him. The Cardinal, on the other hand, spreads an aura of dislocation encompassing the whole social order. He fosters passion in others, and he turns reality into appearance by imposing his solipsistic psychology on the court.

Mephistophilis (*Dr. Faustus*) and De Flores (*The Changeling*) are the subjects of Chapter Three, which shows the villainous subordinate in his role as a tempter. Mephistophilis embodies the metaphysical and psychological principles involved in Faustus' fall. De Flores is a more individualized parallel, embodying his mistress' passions. De Flores is a victim of appetite as well, for both he and Beatrice-Joanna are brought to destruction by his lust.

Chapter Four is a consideration of Iago (*Othello*) and Mosca (*Volpone*), who are symbolic of the spirit of mockery. They attempt to affirm their superiority, using mockery to exploit their victims' fear of weakness.

Iago destroys Othello's belief in himself by exciting his fear of mockery, and Mosca exploits Volpone's dread of mortality, manifested as boredom, by providing opportunities for laughter at the legacy-seekers. Iago's and Mosca's defeat, like their triumphs, reflect cosmic laughter at mortal pretention.

Bosola (*The Duchess of Malfi*) and Vasques (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*) are discussed in Chapter Five. Bosola's ambiguity and Vasques' outward adherence to ideal codes of conduct present complexities which reflect social chaos and moral decay. The nature of Bosola's and Vasques' success does not accord with accepted conceptions of justice, so the divine scheme appears inscrutable. Bosola's obedience to vicious masters results in the deaths of innocents, and his choice of a moral course perpetuates his role as an assassin. He kills, and is killed, by mistake in an apparently random world. Vasques uses knowledge and restraint to manipulate Soranzo. His purpose is to destroy vice, so that his guilt is questionable, according to his society's rules. Ratiocination proves inadequate as a means of discerning moral truth, ideal codes of behaviour bear no relation to morality, and mercy exists as mere expediency.

Chapter Six deals with Malevole (*The Malcontent*) and Vindice (*The Revenger's Tragedy*). As revengers with legitimate grievances, they exemplify evil's self-destructiveness. Malevole and Vindice enhance disorder by abetting vice in their corrupt masters. Assuming disguises that reflect their perversion by injustice, they are moral critics who are morbidly fascinated with the vices they seek to destroy. Malevole's "killings" are symbolic only, but he does not escape the guilt of motive. Malevole's transformation and reinstatement, and Vindice's execution,

bring about a qualified moral regeneration in their societies.

The conclusion shows that the villainous subordinate's career as a conventional character type reflects a continuing strain of philosophical doubt. His dramatic importance, and the extent of control he is portrayed as achieving, may be indications of the degree of pessimism in English society; his dramatic centrality in the last play of the period parallels the social chaos which culminated with the Protectorate.

Examining Committee:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>ABSTRACT</i>		ii
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>		vii
<i>DEDICATION</i>		viii
 Chapter		
I	INTRODUCTION: A WONDROUS NECESSARY MAN	1
II	ASPIRING PRIDE AND INSOLENCENCE	26
	<i>The Massacre at Paris and The Cardinal</i>	
III	THE TREACHEROUS SERPENT	78
	<i>Dr. Faustus and The Changeling</i>	
IV	THIS FOOLISH-COMPOUNDED CLAY	124
	<i>Othello and Volpone</i>	
V	THE GOLDEN AGE AGAIN IN QUESTION	197
	<i>The Duchess of Malfi and 'Tis Pity She's a Whore</i>	
VI	A JUST REWARD	246
	<i>The Malcontent and The Revenger's Tragedy</i>	
	CONCLUSION	313
	A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	320

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DEDICATION

For the three ladies of Elysium

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: A WONDROUS NECESSARY MAN¹

Come near my love, come near, thy master's life,
My trusty servant, nay, my second self. . . .
(*The Jew of Malta*, III.iv.13-14)²

There is a savagely comic irony in Barabas' adoring summons, for Ithamore, the very embodiment of his master's baseness, is the single being whom Barabas should hate and fear most. Ithamore is a typical Renaissance dramatic representation of the conventional character I call the villainous subordinate; one who appears to be his master's subservient instrument, when in reality he is a destroyer who offers only despair. Barabas is deluded in his hopes; himself a predator who is betrayed by his own avarice and its physical expression in the character of Ithamore, he in the end descends into a hellish cauldron, a victim of Christian hypocrites as unredemptive as he.

Ithamore may be seen as representative of the cosmic mockery that brings all hopes, except faith in God, to nothing. Yet while mocking his master, he too is a victim of uncontrollable greed, and he brings about his own destruction. The villainous subordinate gratifies his insatiable appetite by exploiting his vicious master, until appetite consumes them both. A pattern of narrative and symbol is reinforced by imagery that defines and delimits the characteristics of the villainous subordinate. So consistent are the elements of plot, the nature of the

relationship between villainous subordinate and master, and the imagery of the demonic used to define the villainous subordinate's role, that we may identify him as a conventional type.

There are almost as many kinds of appetite embodied in the various kinds of villainous subordinate as there are traditional categories of vice.³ We associate Guise (*The Massacre at Paris*) primarily with the pride and envy manifested in his overweening ambition; the Cardinal (*The Cardinal*), hardly less ambitious in his aims, is a figure of wrath, De Flores (*The Changeling*) exemplifies lechery, Mosca (*Volpone*) is most often thought of in terms of avarice, and the malcontent types, Malevole (*The Malcontent*) and Vindice (*The Revenger's Tragedy*), display wrathful envy as their predominant qualities. Only sloth seems to be missing; indeed, the villainous subordinate typically is engaged in frenetic activity, as he seizes every opportunity to further his ends of self-gratification and destruction. While categories of the sort just named are useful as a starting point for defining the villainous subordinate in terms of his demonic qualities, they are of course far too facile, for each villainous subordinate partakes in some degree of the impulses for evil that are the most obvious ruling passions in the others. Moreover, there are those whose complexity of character and purpose is such that we would be hard put to label them as representative of any one vice over another. Iago (*Othello*), Vasques (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*), and Bosola (*The Duchess of Malfi*) may be cases in point.

Every villainous subordinate is, like Mephistophilis (*Dr. Faustus*), an expression of the monolithic nature of evil. Yet, with the exception of Mephistophilis, whose fall is metaphysical and irreversible, these

other villainous subordinates are themselves mortals, whose fallen condition consists in a state of mind, rather than in a wholly external principle of evil. Their demonic qualities as insatiate tempters and destroyers do not preclude the availability of grace, but as with their masters, their fates are assured through the necessity of their own natures. The villainous subordinate's fallen condition associates him typologically with the Fall itself. He commonly is represented as a "natural slave"⁴ whose circumstances place him lower in society's hierarchy than his victim. Guise is a youngest son, for whom the winning of a throne by colour of right would be highly unlikely; the Cardinal is not of the aristocracy, and is obsessed with establishing family ties with titled nobility; De Flores has some undefined gentility of origin, which rankles him in his servile condition; Iago is a mere ancient, and chafes at being passed over for promotion; Mosca thinks of himself as having fallen from above; Bosola is down at the heels, and out of favour, after having murdered for the Cardinal, and having endured imprisonment for him without reward; Vindice has been dispossessed of position and patrimony; and Malevole has lost a ducal throne. Each villainous subordinate, either through birth or circumstance, occupies a position paralleling his psychic state, and even those who have been deposed unrightfully have been corrupted by their vengeful passions, so that they too are fallen from virtue. All share with Ithamore, whose "birth is but mean" (II.iii.162), in his natural slavery.

The villainous subordinate's fallen condition is shown figuratively in his situation; similarly, the final act of destruction involves an event symbolic of a kind of death, although death is not always given a

literal representation dramatically. The Cardinal, for instance, dies by his own hand, but the King, whose fear and weakness he exploits, survives, having experienced a moral awakening which transforms and cleanses him after a long enchantment. In that sense, when the Cardinal dies, the King "dies" too, rising again with opened eyes, and restored to his true self. Mosca is sent to the galleys when his master is sentenced to confinement, and they are neither transformed nor killed, that is perhaps due, not only to the requirements of comedy, but also to the Jonsonian attitude that society itself, suffering an incurable moral disease, may contain and control evil for a time, but can never expunge it entirely. Although Giovanni, Isabella, and Soranzo die, Vasques merely suffers banishment, perhaps indicative of Ford's recognition of a corrupting element in human affairs that can be eliminated only in death.

Malevole survives his early *persona* as a malcontent, his vengeful nature tempered and finally destroyed through his recognition of virtue's survival in Maria; he diabolically "kills" Pietro's soul,⁵ and like Pietro, he undergoes a transformation. His relinquishment of his role as a cynic, and his resumption of his true identity as Altofront, may be seen symbolically as a kind of resurrection, after the death of his baser nature. Most common are the villainous subordinates and masters whose deaths are literal as well as figurative; Ithamore and Barabas, Guise and Catherine, De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna, Iago and Othello. The banishment, imprisonment, transformation, or literal death of the villainous subordinate and his master is inevitable, because of evil's self-destructive nature, their fates are to be seen as a fulfilment and consummation of their original and decisive life-denying choices.

The ritual theme of sacrifice, involving evil's self-destructive principle⁶ is implicit in the figurative and literal deaths of the villainous subordinate and his victim. The process is one of cleansing, ending in time's renewal and in society's often limited moral regeneration. The villainous subordinate, both as an embodiment of evil and as a sacrificial figure, may be seen as central to a dramatic scheme of events related to folk ritual and religious rites, and to the earlier drama, both religious and secular.⁷ Usually fully developed as a character, the villainous subordinate is the Renaissance successor to the antagonist of Greek tragedy, the mischievous slave of Roman comedy, the AntiChrist of the mystery plays, the Vices and devils of the morality play, and Bighead and Slasher, the agon figures of the mummers' plays.⁸

But while every traditional antagonist figure may be associated with Satan's rebellion and Fall, we do not necessarily think of them in that way immediately. We think of Herod (*The Wakefield Plays*) first of all as a tyrant who is punctilious in his obedience to Caesar, and we regard Bremono (*Mucedorus*) as an unregenerate wild man. By contrast, the villainous subordinate always destroys his victim by first undertaking to serve him; he abets his victim's designs for gratification, and by so doing, he becomes master and the master becomes his slave. There is no situation more typical of this inverted state of affairs than that of Barabas, who promises Ithamore the key to his coffers. By scriptural analogy, Barabas becomes a sacrificial figure, and Ithamore a parodic saint; having affirmed their pact in a grotesque "sacrament" of soup which is poisoned immediately thereafter,⁹ Barabas exclaims when he is betrayed finally by Ithamore, "What a damned slave was I!" (V.i.23).

Yet Barabas is typical of the villainous subordinate's victim, in having no understanding that Ithamore has become master of his, Barabas', destiny. Like Fortunatus (*Old Fortunatus*), Barabas becomes Fortune's slave, and as soon as he acts according to the promptings of his folly, the illusion of good vanishes like Shadow. The villainous subordinate thus may be seen as a personification of Occasion, or Fortune, an identification made specific by Maquerelle (*The Malcontent*) in reference to herself, but no less true of each antagonist who waits for and uses his master's every weakness as an opportunity to bring about his fall.

The reversal of roles, and the villainous subordinate's embodying of appetite, show him to be a manifestation of the demonic. Representative of passion's pre-eminence over reason, and evil over good, every villainous subordinate is, in Iago's phrase, the "monster" in his master's thought. Beatrice-Joanna's lust, the King's fear of disapproval (*The Cardinal*), Othello's jealousy, Faustus' intellectual vanity, Volpone's avarice, and Lussuriosso's lust (*The Revenger's Tragedy*); all are personified in villainous subordinates, who in this respect may be seen as Vice figures descended from their prototypes in medieval psychodrama.

The villainous subordinate is representative of the subjectivity of passion in his master, who deceives himself in believing that he is ruled by reason, in the same way that he believes his subordinate is an instrument of his will. The villainous subordinate's power in this respect is a manifestation of a far wider dislocation which has social, and even cosmic dimensions, for the villainous subordinate must be

extirpated before society can return to sanity, and before the process of renewal is complete. It is a theological commonplace that Creation forms an indivisible unity, which in its completeness, is Good, and that its parts are ordered according to divine reason.¹⁰ The divine order is reflected in human affairs in direct proportion to the extent that men discern and comply with reason's dictates. Further, evil is simply non-being,¹¹ an absence of good. So the villainous subordinate, in so far as he is representative of evil, is himself insubstantial, a mere illusion of reality, as an embodiment of appetite, he preys on his master when his master's weakness of reason and absence of virtue make him vulnerable. Weakness and a failure of positive virtue are the features which all those who fall prey to the villainous subordinate have in common.¹² Guise, the Cardinal, and Malevole exploit the weakness of their rulers, who would sooner allow others to make decisions rather than suffer disapproval, De Flores and Vindice take advantage of a weakness of feminine virtue, Iago uses Othello's ineptness in the courts of love, and Vasques exploits Soranzo's irrationality and lack of understanding.

Representative of illusion, each villainous subordinate wears a mask, which is either a literal disguise, or a pose. His mask is the product of his victim's own predilection, as Ithamore implies in telling Barabas, "my profession's what you please" (III.iii 163). Each master has a diathetic tendency in a particular direction, so that the villainous subordinate wears the mask that is most effective in providing an illusion of good. The Cardinal's religious hypocrisy, commanding manner, and flattering demeanour give his weak, fearful, and indecisive monarch an illusion of order, stability, and serenity, which conceal the social and

political chaos engendered by the Cardinal's wrath and ambition. Similarly, the repulsive De Flores takes on a utilitarian beauty for Beatrice-Joanna, and her affection, like that of Volpone for Mosca, makes him appear sexually attractive to her. The more obvious masks of the Protean malcontents Malevole and Vindice provide their masters with the prospect of gratifying their lusts for sex and vengeance. Appropriately, the villainous subordinate often is associated with images of artificial brilliance, connoting his demonic and deadly seductiveness

As subsequent chapters will show, the theme of demonic inversion¹³ implicit in the reversal of social relationships is enhanced in patterns of imagery suggestive of the diabolical. The Cardinal, whose anger is most often compared to a consuming flame, is shown to be the antithesis of his ecclesiastical office, and he controls his monarch much as Guise controls the Queen Mother Catherine, whose lust for power appears to proceed from a religious zeal Guise adopts as his own mask. Beatrice-Joanna, thinking to make De Flores her instrument, finds herself enslaved to his lust, a condition represented in terms of situation and image in such a way that connotations of death and diabolism accompany their union. Volpone--who gives up his keys to Mosca--finds himself reduced in station and dispossessed by a servant whose very name bears associations with the demonic. Lussurioso, thinking to employ Vindice as a pander, discovers too late that he has placed himself at the mercy of a revenger whose associations with the imagery of blood unite in him the themes of sex and death.

The imagery of inversion and demonic perversity gains its clearest significance in exegesis. The protagonists are most usually shown as

Christ figures in reverse, who deliver up to their unholy heirs a spiritual legacy of evil. The villainous subordinate as heir is "converted," and becomes a demonic destroyer. The plot design of plays in which the villainous subordinate plays a significant role may be seen as a perverse re-enactment of scripture, whereby the master, once having given himself into the power of his subordinate, is himself "converted," and in the fullness of time attains, not the City of God, but its anti-thesis. Only in such rare instances as Pietro's conversion by Malevole, and the Duchess of Malfi's resistance of Bosola's torments does the pattern vary. The strength of resolution shown by the villainous subordinate's victim is usually in reality an arrogance which breeds despair in God, so that the victim, like Barabas, makes the villainous subordinate the repository of all his faith and hope. Faustus provides the clearest example of this sort of inversion, whereby even hope and despair are reversed. Images of demonic inversion form a central motif in descriptions of social disorder associated with the villainous subordinate, and often it is he who describes this perverse world whose principle he shares. Vindice, for example, customarily expresses his disillusionment in images of hollowness, revealing the absence of inner virtue, masked by outward pretences of worth.¹⁴

In an age given to analogical modes of thought, the moral, natural, political, and social orders were to be seen as reflections of each other, so that the relationship between the villainous subordinate and his master was regarded as "unnatural." Much work has been done already by scholars who discern that kind of perversity represented in the history plays portraying weak or vice-ridden monarchs who lose their thrones to

usurpers. *Richard the Second's* Bolingbroke may to some extent be seen as one kind of villainous subordinate who, like Marston's Malevole, may have some justification for his provocation, but Bolingbroke's violation of divine order in deposing a king results in a curse that finally is expunged only with Richard III's death (*Richard the Third*). What distinguishes between Bolingbroke and the fully developed villainous subordinate is that he does not lead Richard to self-destruction by abetting his folly and exploiting his weakness. Rather, he is appalled by Richard's frivolous policies, and acts out of indignation to depose him.

Marlowe's *Edward the Second* has its physical expression of the violation of natural order in the homosexual relationship between Edward and Gaveston. Unnatural love, and the resulting elevation of the parasitic Gaveston to an unduly exalted position result in political chaos and murder, personified in the younger Mortimer. Neither Gaveston nor Mortimer may be regarded as villainous subordinates in the complete sense, while Gaveston's relationship with Edward leads to Edward's destruction, Gaveston himself is not an agent of death. On the other hand, Mortimer, who never expresses more than obligatory fealty to Edward, destroys both him and Gaveston; eventually, he destroys himself, corrupted by the power his violent acts afford him. *Edward the Second* is perhaps unique in showing separately, in the characters of Gaveston and Mortimer, the opposing principles of love and hate, seductive appearance and destructive reality. These are the qualities which usually are melded in a single villainous subordinate. De Flores embodies Beatrice-Joanna's lust, and he also is the direct agent of death; Iago probably is attracted homosexually to Othello and Cassio, and works to destroy

them; Mosca and Volpone seem to gratify each other's exhibitionistic and voyeuristic instincts, and the pair defeat each other. Vasques, Malevole, and Vindice each display a vicarious fascination with acts of sexual license, and each is bent on destroying the source of his perverse delight. While there is little evidence concerning Guise's relationship with his mother, it is clear that he is favoured over her other sons, and the functional attraction mother and son have for each other perhaps has Oedipal overtones. Shirley's Cardinal is determined to control, and if necessary, destroy the nobility, a state of mind which finds expression in his urge to ravish Rosaura.

The sexual attraction most villainous subordinates display towards their victims is Mephistophelean, in the sense that they achieve a loving bond of death, lacking in any spiritual quality, and motivated wholly by destructive appetite. A relationship with sexual overtones, usually thought of in connection with fecundity and birth, becomes for the villainous subordinate and his master a coupling which has death as its consummation.¹⁵ Appropriately, a good many of the death scenes occur at wedding feasts and in marriage chambers, and the initial bond between the pair is usually marked by some episode which may be seen symbolically as a perversely sacramental exchange of vows like that performed by Barabas and Ithamore. De Flores, Iago, Mosca, and Vasques undertake exchanges of vows with their victims, exchanges with ritual overtones clearly reminiscent of the Faustian blood contract. However, the bond which dedicates the villainous subordinate to his victim's destruction often proceeds from an earlier bond undertaken by a man and woman. Othello's exchange of vows with Desdemona is echoed parodically in

Othello's avowal of faith in Iago, the Duchess of Malfi, like Rosaura (*The Cardinal*) enters into a marriage bond that is flawed and made vulnerable by innocence in her deliberate disregard for the surrounding corruption; Giovanni's and Isabella's exchange of vows (*'Tis Pity*) serves symbolically as a summons for the diabolical Vasques, who himself provides a perverse echo of their trothplight in the pact he makes with Hippolita.

The Mephistophelean contract creating a bond which links the destinies of the villainous subordinate and his victim, seen as a perverse "sacrament," is a confirmation of a commitment the victim already has made; that is, a summoning of evil and a subsequent bond, which appears to proceed from the necessity of the victim's own nature. Like Faustus, each protagonist is master of his own destiny, and free to choose, but once having chosen a course, he or she becomes Fortune's slave, in obedience to the dictates of contingent necessity.¹⁶ By relinquishing rational control of appetite, the victim becomes controlled by it, and hence by its embodiment, the villainous subordinate. In *The Changeling*, for instance, De Flores appears before Beatrice-Joanna, as if summoned the moment she decides to make him the instrument of lust. The villainous subordinate in this respect functions both as a psychomachic personification of vice, and as a symbolic representation of appetite's ascendancy over reason in the victim's inverted psychology.

An increasingly "psychological and subjective" attitude towards reality during the Renaissance¹⁷ appears to parallel the growing tendency towards greater dramatic delineation of character. Even Mephistophilis, lacking full development as a character, and clearly a representation of

evil as an objective metaphysical principle, may be seen as the corrupt element of Faustus' consciousness. There is perhaps a certain comforting simplicity in Marlowe's representation of a villainous subordinate whose operating principle is clearly evil, and results in evil actions by the fond victim; but with the Jacobean, villainy increasingly seems to be construed in terms of complex psychological motivation, so that the resulting actions often are ambivalent. Malevole's actions, for example, may not be seen either as entirely virtuous, nor as wholly lacking in merit. Rather, motive becomes all-important in our consideration of the extent of his guilt, and we must address ourselves to the problem of revenge as justifiable when it is born of self-interest.¹⁸ The darkening world of Jacobean tragedy seems to question the possibility of man's motives and actions, in redressing evil, being moral at all.

Jacobean doubt about the possibility of moral action seems to have involved the comfortless conviction that evil necessarily corrupts the moral man, for he must participate in evil by acting against it. In the earlier drama, we have seen that Barabas and Ithamore are already corrupt when they become victims of their villainous subordinates, their corruption, although represented in other characters, initially proceeds from within. By contrast, Rosaura and Hernando (*The Cardinal*) are initially good, but they are defenceless against the Cardinal's corrupting influence. The Cardinal is shown virtually to create an inverted world which is the image of his mind; the people in it are recreated, as it were, as images of his solipsistic thought,¹⁹ and he in turn becomes the embodiment of their vengeful lusts.

The master depends on his villainous subordinate for gratification,

and the villainous subordinate, as a symbolic representation of his master's appetite, in turn depends for his existence on his master's continued hope and faith in him. So each sees the other as essential to survival. In this respect, the villainous subordinate is not like the parasites of earlier drama, nor yet is he like the mischievous slaves of Terentian and Plautine comedy. Such characters admittedly are perpetuated in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. The Ward's servant (*Women Beware Women*) derives immense enjoyment in slyly deprecating his master, but he is essentially an extension of his master's will; while he depends upon his master for his livelihood, his master does not depend on him; nor does he exercise control over his master's destiny. Dildo and Catzo (*Antonio and Mellida*) earn their keep by catering to their masters' follies, and they are raucously pitiless in their contemptuous jibes concerning Castillio, a rutting sycophant, Balurdo, a cowardly and vain-glorious dolt, and Forobosco, a pedantic flatterer. But they operate always in accordance with their masters' whims, and while they provide satirical commentary, they are not responsible for their masters' downfall.

Certainly, the villainous subordinate belongs in the same tradition as these lesser figures, in that he serves a master whose appetites he both shares and despises. Mosca, for example, clearly is derived in some respects from the tradition of the mischievous slave, and Iago bears some similarity with Matthew Merrygreek and his prototype, Palaestrio (*Miles Gloriosus*). But the difference between the villainous subordinate and these others lies in his independence of will, his destructiveness, and his master's absolute dependancy on him. Nor is the villainous

subordinate simply a tool villain like *The Spanish Tragedy's* Serberine and Pedringano, who murder according to their masters' directions, and in hope of reward from their masters. Iago and Mosca are explicit in boasting that they have interests of their own, and that they are not content to receive reward for serving others, Bosola has been a tool villain, and continues for some time to serve in hope of reward, but he eventually attains independent stature when he realizes the futility of mere servility to another's will. When the villainous subordinate's aims cease to be consonant with those of his master, and when, like Ithamore, he requires payment of his bond, he is constrained by his very nature to undertake his master's destruction, and in so doing, he destroys himself in the act of consuming all.

As a destroyer, the villainous subordinate paradoxically functions as a Nemesis figure, as well as tempter; summoned by his victim's appetite, he is the instrument which brings ultimate justice. This element of paradox is characteristic of demonic figures, the villainous subordinate provides, not only a tempting illusion of good, but also a warning which his victim consistently fails to heed. He functions as time's messenger, a prophet of doom who, like Bosola, the "common bellman," sounds a knell marking time's inexorable pace, while calling on his victim to repent.²⁰ Mephistophilis is explicit in granting Faustus a mere twenty-four years, a span of time which appears at first as an eternity to Faustus, but which rushes by with increasing speed in the final moments, while Mephistophilis looks on with anticipation. Similarly, Vindice lives for the "present minute" of his revenge (I.iii.26), and the passing of time is marked off by the four stages of his transformation.

Like Satan, he begins in fallen impotence, becomes in turn an illusory promise of sexual fulfilment, then of wrath's gratification, and finally he sets his mask aside to stand revealed as the reality of consummated evil. Malevole, as "goodman tell-clock" (III.ii.12), restrains his frustration at time's slow passage with constant Senecan reminders of the inevitability of sublunar flux,²¹ and Mosca, recognizing the ephemeral nature of worldly delight, serves as time's prophet in warning Volpone against the fond hope of stasis in immortality. The Cardinal imposes his own psychological dimension of temporality on his subject society, only to find that, in his perversity, he has done so in obedience to a larger scheme of temporal necessity, which destroys him.

As a symbolic representation of time, and as a prophet of doom, the villainous subordinate is given to ambiguous speech, and the interpretation of his words of counsel depends upon the predilections of the hearer. In a sense the villainous subordinate is rather like a poet, he both instructs and entertains, and his victim is an audience who insists either on the ignorance of innocency, or on the gratification of appetite, and so refuses to heed the message of death. The victim's suspension of his rational faculty allows him to perceive only that which pleases, so that Faustus enjoys the procession of the Seven Deadly Sins merely as entertainment, and Othello seizes on Iago's silences and moralizing as evidence of Desdemona's infidelity. Othello "needs" certain knowledge as much as Faustus "needs" diversion. The villainous subordinate regularly expresses himself in a way that offers both reality and illusion, and the victim, in his weakness, chooses illusion because he is blinded to reality by his own passions.

The villainous subordinate seldom actually lies, except to urge his victim to abjure Grace and to endure a torment of unrealized hopes by having faith in him. There is an ironic reversal in Iago's exhortations to Othello to have patience and to trust in him as a source of certain knowledge,²² although Iago's mocking ambiguities provide Othello and Cassio with ample opportunity to perceive the nature of their errors. Mephistophilis laces his explicit warnings with threats and inducements, which Faustus persuades himself to be of greater substance than the threat of damnation. Similarly, Vindice's and Malevole's victims listen to their railing with contempt, amusement, or indignation, and only Pietro, who is sufficiently sensitive to be troubled, recognizes truth in vituperative utterance. Lussuriosso and Mendoza fail to heed warnings offering the prospect of their destruction, and they take heed only when the malcontents, in the guise of panders, offer the prospect of sensual delight. The warning implicit in the Cardinal's attempt to persuade Rosaura lies in his blatantly fallacious rhetoric, by which he unwittingly denies all that he purports to affirm. Rosaura, whose virtue at this point allows her clarity of vision, is able to heed the Cardinal's unintended warning. Similarly, Bosola's advice to the Duchess to despair, and to despise her own flesh, expresses truth in a perverse way, for like Mephistophilis, who turns the pages of Faustus' bible, showing him only those passages to do with the dark side of creation, Bosola avoids mention of hope in Divine mercy. The Duchess is unlike Faustus, who looks no further, for she has a reserve of inner grace from which to draw strength.

The perverse way the villainous subordinate presents incomplete and

obscure truth, together with persuasions meant to elicit trust in him, relates him to the Despair figures of earlier drama.²³ Mephistophilis is explicit in exhorting Faustus to be resolute in his rebellion, by continuing to despair of God's mercy, Mosca tentatively suggests suicide to Volpone; and Malevole tempts Pietro to despair of Divine justice, and to act in his own behalf in revenging his wife's adultery. Yet the evidence on which all these erroneous conclusions about despair are founded is literally true. The villainous subordinate simply offers an incomplete interpretation of the truth inherent in the facts, and he thus becomes a tempter to despair and self-destruction. Ithamore aptly points out to Barabas that "he that eats with the devil had need of a long spoon," then hands him a ladle which evidently is not long enough for Barabas to avoid his own damnation (III.iv.54-55).

The villainous subordinate usually is both a tempter and a demonic purveyor of knowledge. Mephistophilis holds Faustus in thrall to a large degree by his ability to provide knowledge of the natural sciences, and to produce direct experience of the past in insubstantial images. Iago similarly uses knowledge as a weapon against Othello, Vasques manipulates Soranzo by withholding and rationing out knowledge of Isabella's sin, and Bosola, as "familiar" and "intelligencer" (I.ii.183-185), gives Ferdinand information about the Duchess and Antonio, which Ferdinand receives with loathing, intensified, perhaps, by incestuous fascination. As a bringer of the knowledge of evil, the villainous subordinate may be seen typologically as the Serpent; yet in the sense that the knowledge he gains destroys him as well as others, he is a Promethean figure, and like Adam as well, a victim of his own desires.

Using his knowledge, cunning, and powers of persuasion to manipulate his victims, the villainous subordinate orchestrates events, thereby imposing a perverse order on disorder. The order he imposes is the logic of illogic, the harmony of disharmony, and he sees himself as an actor-director for whom each character plays a part until a climax of evil brings his "play" to a close. Iago and Mosca, lost in self-love, see themselves as consummate artists who order events so that their victims are destroyed. Iago carefully stages a drinking bout, with Roderigo waiting in the wings to attack Cassio, and he plays a part himself in his conversation with Cassio, so that Othello as audience will have evidence of Desdemona's adultery. Similarly, Mosca prepares scenarios with the legacy-seekers, for Volpone's enjoyment, and he is painstaking in ordering events so that Volpone's seduction of Celia will not coincide with Bonario's presence. But neither Iago nor Mosca can exercise the God-like control over events which they believe possible; Roderigo fails to slay Cassio, and Bonario appears in advance of the appointed time. Vasques, too, regards himself as a director of some grotesque charade, and he errs because the very passion he incites in Soranzo escapes his control. Similarly, the Cardinal institutes a perverse order in Navarre's society, advancing and persecuting its members at will, and by so doing, he breeds a chaos which he cannot master. This characteristic in the villainous subordinate's character relates him to earlier Vice figures, like Belial (*The Castle of Perseverance*), Cloaked Collusion (*Magnificence*), and Ambodexter (*Cambises*). Each of these allegorical characters introduces order among lesser Vice figures, and in each case, characters whose principle is disorder co-ordinate

their efforts only in response to threats and violence.²⁴

Given over to arrogant self-love which mirrors that of his master, the villainous subordinate inevitably succumbs to the chaotic demands of his own uncontrollable appetite. Ithamore, "graced," as it were, by Bellamira's "twinkling eye,"²⁵ cannot settle for half of Barabas' wealth, and like Mosca, he rises in his aspirations to his destruction. The bringer of knowledge finds that knowledge of evil destroys every possessor, and his accusation of Barabas, "I know what I know. He's a murderer" (Iv.vi.14), is no less true than Iago's affirmation that Othello has come to "know" enough to destroy himself.

Essentially demonic in character, the villainous subordinate displays characteristics relating him to Satan; the elements of the demonic emphasized in particular portrayals of the character type may be seen as parallelling the events of the Fall,²⁶ and the cyclic ritual of decay and regeneration. Subsequent chapters will concentrate on each of those elements. Guise and the Cardinal, wrathful in their pride, may be seen as enfleshments of the Satan who aspires beyond his reach in his attempt to usurp the heavenly throne, only to be cast from on high at the apparent moment of triumph. Mephistophilis and De Flores, suffering in their private hells occasioned by their fallen condition, are like Lucifer in their struggle to rise, and by subverting human virtue, to enlarge the kingdom of damned souls. Laughter often is demonic, for it signifies the devil's satisfaction in his brief success, when men and women expose their frailty in succumbing to their own bestial natures. Iago and Mosca use their victims' fear of exposure and self-revelation as potent weapons, and their mockery is both a means and a signal of

their success. Ironically, they are themselves objects of divine mockery, that laughs evil out of countenance when they destroy themselves. With Lucifer's brief triumph, chaos reigns in human affairs, and men no longer may perceive with any certainty the light of truth. Bosola and Vasques exist in such a world, a world in which the nature of good and evil no longer seems clear, where goodness is persecuted and evil rewarded. But the onset of chaos is the event penultimate to an inevitable rebirth of order through the death of society's corrupt elements. Malevole and Vindice, revengers in love with the evil they are constrained to hate and destroy, manifest the Satanic principle that evil is divided against itself, and must bring about its own defeat.

Besides an inherited ritual consciousness and dramatic tradition, contemporary Renaissance attitudes had much to do with the villainous subordinate's emergence as an identifiable character type. For example, a long-standing hatred and fear of the Roman Church, localized as a dread of ecclesiastical despotism in the English Church, had much to do with Shirley's development of the Cardinal's character. Similarly, a suspicion of all things Italianate, and a loathing of Machiavellian ethics were as significant ingredients of Tourneur's creative imagination as the influence of Senecan drama, in his drawing Vindice's character. These elements, combined with a belief in the reality of demonic possession and a horror of social and political disorder, were contributing influences to the development of the villainous subordinate as a convention in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. In every instance, the single most constant principle is the villainous subordinate's inversion of the existing order of authority in exploiting the weakness of virtue

and reason in his victim. Embodying his victim's vicious qualities, the villainous subordinate is representative of man's fallen state, the end result of the Fall and the Expulsion, and he is constrained to reduce his victim to his own fallen condition.

FOOTNOTES

¹*The Changeling*, V.i.90.

²Quotations cited are from Christopher Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*, ed., Irving Ribner (New York: Odyssey Press, 1970).

³E.g., the vices which assail Mankind in *The Castle of Perseverance*, and those which appear before Faustus (*Dr. Faustus*, I.vi.123-183).

⁴The term is common in the drama, and its connotation of natural subordination has a long history. The *Jeu d'Adam* (c.1100), for example, interprets the Expulsion as being occasioned by Adam's compromising of his suzerainty, and Eve's relinquishing of her natural position of "feudal" vassalage. For classical views on natural slavery, see Aristotle, *Politics*, I.5. For theological authority for a natural hierarchy of slaves and masters, see *Matthew* 10:24, 25 and *Ecclesiastes* 10:6, 7. The latter passage relates inversion of authority to the pre-eminence of folly over reason.

⁵For a description of the killer of souls as demonic, see *Matthew* 10:28. See also Chapter 6, pp. 253, 267, 271.

⁶For the self-destructive nature of evil, see Saint Augustine, *The Catholic and Manichean Ways of Life*, trans. Donald A. Gallagher and Idella J. Gallagher (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1966), p. 67.

⁷For ritual conventions in Elizabethan drama, see Muriel C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), pp. 1-97, and T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1928), pp. 47-49.

⁸See E. K. Chambers, *The English Folk-Play* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964); L. W. Cushman, *The Devil and the Vice in the English Dramatic Literature before Shakespeare* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1900); L. A. Gray, *The Vice: His Nature and Origins* (DAI 32:2642A, 1971); R. J. E. Tiddy, *The Mummer's Play* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923); Alan Brody, *The English Mummers and Their Plays* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969); and A. P. Rossiter, *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* (London: Hutchinson, 1958).

⁹For the theme of partnership with demons undertaken in "sacramental" drinking, see *I Corinthians*, 2:18-23.

¹⁰See A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 128; and Saint Augustine, *... Ways of Life*, p. 15.

¹¹For evil as non-being, see Saint Augustine, . . . *Ways of Life*, pp. 65-66.

¹²C. S. Lewis comments, "The real trouble about fallen man is not the strength of his pleasures but the weakness of his reason." See C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 54.

¹³See *Fulgens and Lucrez*:
 Yay, goeth the world so nowadays
 That a man must say the crow is white.
 (I.i.164-165)

The theme of inversion long predates English drama, and is explicit in the works of Macrobius and Dante. For traditions of inversion, see Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York: Pantheon, 1953); Ian Donaldson, *The World Upside-Down: Comedy from Jonson to Fielding* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), and Morton Gurewitsch, "Comedy. The Irrational Vision," *TLS*, 3837 (26 September, 1975), 1093.

¹⁴This kind of image is common. Cf. *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, in which Simon Eyre speaks contemptuously of "silken fellows" who are "but painted images, outsides, outsides," whose "inner linings are torn" (III v.49-50). The theme of inversion in its application to demonic figures relates the villainous subordinate to mumming figures. Flamineo (*The White Devil*) comments on politicians who "imitate the devil, as the devil imitates a canon," by coming in with their "backside towards you" (III.iii.15). Mummers traditionally entered houses backwards. (See Tiddy).

¹⁵John D. Cox shows a relationship between the Fall and sexual love, in pointing out the "importance of love as a common feature of the Fall and secular analogies of the Fall." See John David Cox, *The Shapes of Fancy: Figural Use of the Wanton Warrior in Elizabethan Drama* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1975).

¹⁶For contingent necessity, see Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Richard Green (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), pp. 115-119. The accepted traditional view is presented by Chanticleer ("The Nun's Priest's Tale").

¹⁷J. P. Dolan, intro., *Unity and Reform: Selected Writings of Nicholas of Cusa* (Chicago: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), p. 46.

¹⁸For Renaissance attitudes towards revenge as duty or as *talion*, see Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 18 ff.

¹⁹The imagery of eyes as central to both *The Cardinal* and to *The Massacre*, parodically parallels scripture, in relating the creating gaze to evil. Cf. *Matthew* 6:22, 23; and *Matthew* 7:4, 5. Both Boethius and Nicholas of Cusa describe divine creation as God's all-encompassing

gaze in the eternal present. The Cardinal and Guise may be seen as parodic anthitheses of God, in their attempts to assume the prerogatives of the Deity.

²⁰The villainous subordinate's function as an allegorical figure for Time relates him to similar figures in earlier drama. In *Respublica*, the themes of cyclic time, inevitable decay, nemesis, and inversion, are combined. Avarice complains:

Old Time the eavesdropper? I know him, pardee!
An ancient turner of houses upside down
And a common consumer of city and town.

(V.ii.1363-1365)

²¹For representations of cyclic time in the drama, see C. L. Barber, "The Saturnalian Pattern" in N. Rabkin, ed., *Approaches to Shakespeare* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1964), and A. L. Goldman, *The Structure of Time in Shakespearean Comedy*, DAI 2934A, University of Minnesota (1972).

²²The villainous subordinate's persuasion may be seen as a parodic reversal of Saint Paul's exhortation to patience and endurance (*I Corinthians*).

²³Cf. Despair figures in *Magnificence*, *The Castle of Perseverence*, and *The Faerie Queene*, I.ix.

²⁴*The Castle of Perseverence*, ll. 1774-1782, and *Cambises*, ll. 205-207. This theme is evident in *Titus Andronicus*. Aaron quells the factiousness of Demetrius and Chiron, who combine their efforts to ravish and mutilate Lavinia. For theological authority dealing with order in disorder, see Saint Augustine, . . . *Ways of Life*, p. 73.

²⁵Cf. *I Corinthians*, 15:52. Significantly, Mephistophilis uses the scriptural phrase in promising Faustus Helen's second appearance. The biblical promise of immortality is reversed here, for an appearance of recreated life masks spiritual death.

²⁶John D. Cox comments that the fortunes of the protagonists in Renaissance drama are "figurally modelled on the fall of man, the expulsion" (Cox, p. 22).

CHAPTER II

ASPIRING PRIDE AND INSOLENT¹

Considering the Renaissance reverence for order, it is not surprising that ambitious villains should have become central figures as demonic rebels and usurpers in the drama. The political overreacher's² centrality as a dramatic figure is usually proportional to the extent that he is successful in subverting and usurping legitimate authority,³ and it is perhaps indicative of the Duke of Guise's dramatic importance that *The Massacre at Paris*⁴ was known also as *The Guise*.⁵ As a villainous subordinate whose aspirations drive him towards a crown, Guise defies two successive legitimate monarchs; however, notwithstanding backing from the Church and the equally ambitious queen mother Catherine, he is thwarted before he attains his goal.

Despite the majestic tones in which Guise expresses his ambition (I.ii.39-108), he lacks Tamburlaine's greatness of spirit and Faustus' initial grandeur of aspiration, his goal is concrete and limited, and the extent of his control is circumscribed and finally reduced to naught by opposing political interests as well as moral forces. Throughout his struggle to rise by Machiavellian policy, Guise remains as undistinguished in dramatic stature as his fortunes.⁶ As limited a dramatic character as he is shown to be in political power, Guise does not dominate the action, and as the variant titles for the plays reflect, we are at least as interested in the situation and the other protagonists

as we are in Guise.

It may be indicative of the growth of political pessimism over the next half-century that James Shirley's *The Cardinal* (1641)⁷ formally bears a title unequivocally identifying its major protagonist.⁸ Shirley's pessimism appears to be implicit in the Cardinal's success, ephemeral though his ascendancy is. Unlike Guise, the Cardinal is not engaged in an uphill battle; he has already arrived at the summit as the play opens, and he controls a weak monarch and a cowed state. Whereas Guise's evil is limited in its effects to individual murders and the Saint Bartholemew Massacre itself, the Cardinal's influence spreads an aura of dislocation encompassing in its totality the whole social order. While Guise's monarchs, Charles IX and Henry III, are weak and irresponsible, the Cardinal's sovereign is actually powerless, and dares not even taunt him. The two villainous subordinates thrive on their nominal masters' weaknesses, while they work also towards their own destruction as victims of their ruling passions. As they act out their perverse aspirations, they effect an inversion of moral values and legitimate authority in their respective societies.⁹

Dealing with the theme of illegitimate political power, *The Massacre* is essentially a history play,¹⁰ with historical events and characters tailored to suit the author's purpose. Like most history plays of the Elizabethan period, the situation described is contrasted by implication to conditions in contemporary England, which is apparently assumed to be the best of all possible worlds. Thus *The Massacre* ends with Henry III's instruction to Navarre to "salute the Queen of England" (V.viii.106).

By contrast, *The Cardinal* has more of the characteristics of poli-

tical satire. Shirley enigmatically claims to say "nothing positive," and invites his audience to "think what (they) please" (Prologue.2-12). Yet Rosaura, in upbraiding the Cardinal for his acts of oppression, pointedly warns him to effect a "timely cure" (II iii.166) before "the short hair'd men/ Do crowd and call for justice" (II.iii 167-168).¹¹ Clearly, the audience is meant to associate the Cardinal with Bishop Laud. Shirley appears to satirize his own society by showing a looking-glass world in which temporal authority is subordinated to the Church, and the rightful authority of the state is reduced to mere hollow form. Shirley reveals a pessimistic awareness, too, of social disintegration in his representations of court corruption and disregard for an aristocratic order which has lost its vitality; its members are either easily destroyed, or they survive for a time by becoming as villainous as their persecutors.

Typically, the history play, like the political satire,¹² is concerned with a situation in which a villainous subordinate's power is derived from a ruler's weakness, an inadequacy of spirit reflected as political and military impotence,¹³ the result is an inversion of the rightful order of authority. While Shakespeare's Bolingbroke (*Richard III*) is a victim of injustice, and Marlowe's Mortimer the younger (*Edward II*) is an impetuous youth whose good intentions are subverted by his newly acquired power, Guise and the Cardinal are without even partially redeeming motives; lacking complexity of purpose, they have raw power as their goal.

The innocent suffer along with the guilty for no other reason than that they are not strong, so that the Admiral, Ramus, and hundreds of

Hugenots succumb to Guise's passion for blood and power without themselves suffering moral weakness making them vulnerable to retributive justice.¹⁴ Similarly, it is impossible to reconcile Alvarez' death and the Cardinal's persecution of the innocent Duchess and Hernando to any conception of justice. The villainous subordinate whose purpose is simply the attainment of power gratifies his need by subjection and destruction of others. He need not prey on their moral weaknesses, his exploitation of physical vulnerability affords him ample satisfaction.

The dimension that has boundaries coterminous with the limits of the ambitious villain's control is wholly the product of his own psychology. Its inverted order of authority and its topsy-turvy moral values exist because he, like a demiurge, creates through action an external world that is the image of his own mind. By imposing their own conceptions of "reality" on the world about them, Guise and the Cardinal effect Faustus' belief that his dominion extends as far as the reach of his intellect (*Dr. Faustus*, I.i.59, 60). So Guise's society is in danger of becoming a moral wasteland that is illusory, insubstantial, and li e-denying, while the Cardinal's society, wholly subject to his control, actually becomes so. The ambitious villain does not merely persecute innocents, however, but derives his power from irrational elements in the body politic. Thus while Guise exists in a symbiotic relationship with the power-hungry Catherine, he also thrives on Charles's preoccupation with pleasure and on Henry III's lack of tough-mindedness. Similarly, the Cardinal profits from the King's weakness. He exploits the state's fear of him, and he harnesses to his own ends the wrath and impulsiveness of Columbo, his army's commander.

In exploring themes of illegitimate political power, *The Massacre at Paris* and *The Cardinal* are remarkably similar in their imagery revealing the ambitious villain's solipsistic psychology, and its perverse influence on the external world. *The Massacre* was popular with contemporary audiences,¹⁵ thus it is useful in revealing accepted dramatic convention as expressed in Marlowe's portrayal of Guise's character. Marlowe's liberties with his sources¹⁶ make Guise the major planner and perpetrator of atrocities, rather than an equal co-conspirator with Catherine, Charles, and Anjou. In addition, Marlowe credits Guise with responsibility for Joan of Navarre's poisoning, and with direct involvement in the murders of Lorraine, the Huguenots, Ramus, and Seroune. On the other hand, Marlowe reduces other characters in stature, pointing up their vices and weaknesses. Charles is shown to be hypocritical and deceitful in comforting the Admiral before his death, and the Admiral is shown to be plaintive and naive. Anjou is credited with Ramus' murder directly, making him a bloodthirsty villain, while Navarre is made out to be ineffectual and sententious. Catherine is shown to be loving and trusting towards Guise to the extent that she is in his power, and her death is made to appear consequent upon his.

The total effect is to create Guise a monster whose crimes would appeal to the audience's taste for sensationalism, but there is a further effect which critics appear hitherto to have overlooked: Marlowe's portrayals of characters and events combine to make Guise a villainous subordinate with all the characteristics that identify the type; he exploits the weaknesses of his nominal masters, and he has a special relationship with one of them, Catherine, so that he preys on her

aspirations while appearing to further her aims. Typically, he exercises his will through her while she thinks the opposite to be the case. Marlowe's rearrangement of historical events places the poisoning episode in the context of the marriage celebrations, so that the life-affirming ritual becomes a rite of death, Guise thus exhibits characteristics of demonic reversal from the outset.¹⁷

While Guise is made a central focus for hatred, he never achieves a dramatic stature that could make his villainy admirable. For all that Marlowe diminishes Guise's enemies and victims, I believe he makes sure that Guise himself may be seen as a pedestrian character. Admittedly, Guise's first soliloquy (I.ii.34-108) is widely acknowledged as comparable with similar passages spoken by Tamburlaine and Faustus, and this speech has led some critics to ignore other evidence in seeing Guise as a villain of heroic proportions.¹⁸ Yet the truth about Guise appears to lie in the soliloquy's contrast between manner and matter. Claiming to pride himself on liking best that which "flies beyond (his) reach" (I.ii.12), Guise is ready at the outset to settle for a "royal seat, a sceptre, and a crown" (I.ii.104) to quench his supposedly "quenchless thirst" (I.ii.104). He is not like Barabas, who despises the Christians who victimize him, nor like Tamburlaine, whose military daring and boundless aspiration make him the scourge of God, nor yet like Faustus, who defies God in assaying necromantic art. Rather, Guise exults in mere verbal deception, winning Charles "with words" (I.ii.73), cynically using religion as an instrument of "policy" (I.ii.65),¹⁹ and exploiting his mother's affections (I.ii.76).

Although Guise claims to dare all, his boasting does not make light

of heavy odds, rather, he exults in reciting his advantages of money and power granted him by the pope, and in enumerating the forces at his command in the colleges and monasteries of Paris. The real Guise lacks daring, and reposes faith in his supposedly superior intellect and superior forces. Navarre shows us Guise as others see him:

But he doth lurk within his drowsy couch,
And makes his footstool on security:
So he be safe, he cares not what becomes
Of king or country. . . .

(IV.iii.40-43)

Guise's first soliloquy is a pale imitation of Tamburlaine's majestic tones, revealing a natural subordinate who has neither greatness of aspiration nor love of daring. He is a petty cozener with murderous instincts, whose grandiose tones are hollow bombast, and by associating himself with Caesar (I.ii.98),²⁰ he becomes virtually a caricature of all that he aspires to be.²¹

Marlowe uses the metaphor of vision as an image for Guise's subjective state of mind that causes him to view the world in terms of his own ambition. Eliminating Joan of Navarre because she is a "huge blemish in (his) eye" (I.ii.23), Guise is troubled by the continued existence of the province of Navarre as a Protestant enclave resisting the Catholic League. Another blemish, Navarre is "but a nook of France" that "blinds Europe's eyes" (I.ii.95). Thus Guise does not distinguish between his own fortunes and those of Europe, seeing his own aspirations as the embodiment of the state's hopes. Yet by eliminating that which obstructs his view and supposedly "blinds" the state, Guise aspires to wield a blinding power of his own, such that

. . . those which do behold, they may become
 As men that stand and gaze against the sun.
 (I.iii.100-102)

Guise seems unaware of the ironic inversion he expresses; by clearing the obstructions from his aspirations' view, he will obscure the vision of others, dazzling them with a Satanic brilliance.²² In effect, darkness and light are reversed for him.

Intellectual pride prevents Guise from regarding the other irrational elements in the body politic, Charles, Henry of Anjou,²³ and Catherine, as threats. Indolent and self-indulgent, Charles procrastinates by deferring decisions that will disturb the state's superficial tranquility, when Catherine bridles at a marriage which promises to unite opposing factions, Charles checks her with "Well, madam, let that rest" (I.i.17), and turns his thoughts immediately to the marriage solemnities again. Charles's moral abdication leaves a power vacuum filled by Guise and Catherine. Guise makes political decisions for which the monarch bears responsibility, neither knowing nor caring that he is a dupe, while Guise gloats, "I execute, and he sustains the blame" (I ii 75).

Although the Protestants have the "safety" of Charles's "word" (IV i.7), Charles protests only weakly against the projected blood purge. Under pressure from Anjou and Catherine, he allows his authority to slip to his subordinates, and rather than risk confrontation, he docilely permits Catherine to make decisions which he "ratifies" without question (I.iv.24-26). When Charles reassures the Admiral that his life is safe, we sense that he not only deceives him as part of the plot on his life, but that in some way he thinks to absolve himself by soliciting the Admiral's esteem. Charles avoids conflict even at the cost of his

integrity, and his first concern about the planned massacre is not that innocent blood will be spilled, but that

. . . it will be noted through the world
An action bloody and tyrannical.
(I.iv.5-6)

This weakness of character in Charles has an element of the psychological inversion embodied by Guise. Only in his dying moments does his inner vision begin to right itself, so that he achieves a perspective that has previously been alien to him, confessing that he has "deserv'd the scourge" (III.i.9):

O, hold me up! My sight begins to fail,
My sinew shrink, my brains turn upside down. . . .
(III.i.13-14)

In reality, psychological inversion has marked his mortal passage, and ends only with his death.

Henry of Anjou's weakness has a different quality, but is no less apparent. As his mercy towards a thief on his coronation day shows, he lacks the Machiavellian tough-mindedness that Marlowe commonly portrays as a desirable trait in monarchs, and his attentions are taken up with depraved pursuits.²⁴ Anjou's act of mercy is an act of irresponsibility, rather than of compassion, indeed, Marlowe's portrayal of Anjou's leading role in the massacre does not allow us to see him as having merciful instincts. Bent on pleasure, he immediately turns from dealing with a thief to other diversions, and Catherine notes with satisfaction:

. . . all his heaven is to delight himself,
And, . . . he sleeps securely thus at ease. . . .
(III.ii.46-48)

However, Catherine is deceived, because while Anjou's indulgence in pleasure may indicate self-interest, it does not mean that he relents in

vindictiveness and cunning. Engaging in cheap wit, he mocks Guise as a cuckold, and in so doing, he shows a pettiness of disposition "more than kingly or emperious" (IV.iii.17).

Because Guise shares Anjou's vindictiveness and murderous instincts, Anjou's words rebound on him as Guise reacts with rage. Mistaking reputation for honour, Guise is not so much incensed by his wife's infidelity as by the "deep disgrace" he will bear (IV.iii.27). Whether his wife is indeed a "strumpet" (IV.ii.36) makes little difference to him; if reputation makes her such, then such she is in his eyes. Obsessed with the externals of power and reputation, Guise perceives his wife's infidelity as a threat to his ambitions, the value of which are apparently obscure to her. In berating her he equates reason with passion, suggesting that what his sense-bound thought makes clear to him should be equally clear to others:

Is Guise's glory but a cloudy mist,
In sight and judgment of thy lustful eye?
(IV.ii.31-32)

As cowardly as he is irresponsible, Anjou immediately regrets having aggravated Guise's animosity, and sets about a reconciliation too late to save Mugeroun. Guise has a double motive, for while he avenges his "honour," perhaps his stronger motive is to injure Anjou by killing his favourite because Anjou's words "have incens'd (him) so" (IV.iii.25). Later as he gazes on Mugeroun's body, Guise gloats:

Revenge it, Henry, if thou list, or dar'st.
I did it only in spite of thee.
(IV.v.14-15)²⁵

Anjou's ill-advised mockery gives Guise an added purpose for attempting to seize the throne; Guise's personal hatred of him compounds with

ambition, so that his aim becomes "more (Anjou's) end than extirpation" (IV.v.20).²⁶

But Guise's ambition and wrath combine with his intellectual pride to defeat him. Like most other villainous subordinates, Guise believes himself invincible in his capacity for Machiavellian deception, and he delights in his supposedly superior understanding and execution of "matters of import aimed at by many, yet understood by none" (I.ii.54-55).²⁷ It is this pride that is Guise's real blind spot, because it prevents him from discerning the personal motivations of others. Catherine, he believes, is immersed entirely in his interests:

The Mother Queen works wonders for my sake,
And in my love entombs the hope of France,
Rifling the bowels of her treasury
To supply my wants and necessity.

(I.ii.76-79)

The exquisite pun on life and death reveals the perverse and destructive nature of their symbiotic relationship, each needing the other as an instrument by which to achieve sovereignty over France, for Catherine regards Guise as an extension of her will. When she hears of Charles's remorse over the slaughter of the Protestants, she makes it clear to Loreine that she "must have her will in France" (II.iii.41), and we may presume that she includes Guise in her statement of intent which refers primarily to Charles and Anjou:

For I'll rule France, but they shall wear the crown,
And, if they storm, I then may pull them down.

(III.i.46-47)

Catherine's affection for "sweet" Guise (II.iii.30)--reminiscent of "sweet" Mephistophilis, "sweet" Mosca," and "honest" Iago²⁸--is nonetheless genuine, her ambition making her his dupe. Receiving word of his

death, she cries, "I will not live" (V.iv.169), so that her death is made to appear consequent on his.²⁹ Like the genuineness of her affection for Guise, Catherine's religious motive appears to be based on conviction, and Guise's cynical exclamation, "Religion! *O Diabole!*" (I.ii.66) makes a mockery of her shattered hopes when she sorrows at his death. Apparently Catherine does not love Guise simply as her son, but as the embodiment and means of her aspiration. Thus in the same way that the Mephistophilis is deceptively appealing to Faustus as an instrument of his will, Guise has a utilitarian beauty for Catherine; only through him can she attempt to fulfil her vision of Catholic supremacy in France (V.iv.163-169).³⁰

Guise's display of intellectual pride in his dealings with Anjou is similar in principle to that which he shows towards Catherine. When his facade of religious fervour (IV.v.43-46) fails to convince Anjou that he, Guise, should retain an army, Guise makes a show of obedience (IV.v.61-65); but when Anjou in turn expresses affection for him (IV.v.66), Guise is far too vain to entertain suspicion, when in fact Epernoun apprises Anjou of Guise's treasonous activities at Paris. Thus Guise falls at the moment of his greatest self-confidence, murdered just when he believes Henry of Anjou to be in his power, majestically declaiming:

Now sues the king for favour to the Guise,
And all his minions stoop when I command.
(V.ii.50-51)

His reply to the Third Murderer's warning is a study in miniature of megalomania:

Yet Caesar shall go forth.
Let mean conceits and baser men fear death:
Tut, they are peasants. I am Duke of Guise.
And princes with their looks engender fear!
(V.ii.71-74)

His words do not express a realistic contempt for death; rather, they reveal Guise as so convinced of his omnipotence that he thinks himself invulnerable. One senses that Guise's bombast would have been met with hoots of derisive delight by the Elizabethan audience.

Guise's verbal posturing contrasts with the truth of his vulnerability and lack of stature. Having aimed at a glory beyond "a common good, that hangs for every peasant to achieve" (I.ii 40-41), the Duke experiences "grief" because he suffers an ignominious end at the hands of "peasants" (V.ii.87). Guise's death, like his wife's infidelity, is a cause of acute pain to him simply because the nature of the event does not match his conception of himself. But Guise refuses to recognize his lack of stature even in his final moment, and even while acknowledging what he considers to be humiliation, he expires, still comparing himself to Caesar (V.ii.94). There is bathos in this scene when we compare Guise's crabbed spirit with that of Tamburlaine, for while both lament their mortality, Tamburlaine's dramatic stature is more than mortal, and Guise's is less. Amyras' great epitaph for Tamburlaine, "Let earth and heaven his timeless death deplore" (*Tamburlaine*, Pt. II, V ii 253) is paralleled in *The Massacre* by the petty Anjou's chortling exclamation, "This sweet sight is physic to my soul!" (V ii 99), and Guise's son's ineffectual indignation, for which he is promptly marched off to prison (V.ii.126-131).

The sequence of events leading to Henry of Navarre's succession proceeds with a near mechanical simplicity, which by implication posits the working out of a moral order. The train of events set in motion by Guise inevitably brings about evil's destruction as Navarre becomes a

Nemesis figure. Unlike the others, Navarre begins as the single eye of reason in a world subverted by irrational self-interest. His initial inaction appears to result from an other-worldly Christian Stoicism that puts faith in a just order; apprised of the Guise's perfidy in counseling a massacre of Protestants, he replies sententiously:³¹

But he that sits and rules above the clouds
Doth hear and see the prayers of the just,
And will revenge the blood of innocents. . . .
(I.i.42-44)

Ironically, Navarre as Nemesis is ultimately the creation of Guise and Anjou, thus emphasizing the self-devouring nature of evil. With the old Queen of Navarre murdered, and Anjou's army under Joyeux advancing on him, Navarre responds by "resolving to fight" (IV.ii.10). The psychological inversion characterizing Guise, who turns "day . . . to ugly night" (I.ii.5) now imposes itself on Navarre, as he proclaims his purpose in tones associating him with the "scourge of God":

The power of vengeance now encamps itself
Upon the haughty mountains of my breast;
Plays with gory colours of revenge,
Whom I respect as leaves of boasting green,
That change their colour when the winter comes,
When I shall vaunt as victor in revenge.
(IV.ii.20-25)

While Guise is a hollow echo of Tamburlaine in vaunting his desires, Navarre's call for vengeance is much more convincing. With the ascendancy of wrath over rational restraint, Navarre reverses principles of life and death in his metaphor of the seasons, the "gory colours of revenge" are ironically suggestive of the "blood" Guise craves as the means of extinguishing the "never-dying flames" proceeding from his "deep-engender'd thoughts" (I.ii.34-36).

With Navarre's accession, comes the promise of time's renewal. The moral winter, "this day, this hour, this fatal night" (I.ii.7) has run its course in France, as Navarre's metaphor of seasons suggest, and Navarre's promise to revenge Anjou's death on Rome suggests the promise of a similar renewal throughout Europe. As J. B. Steane points out, "there is a true religious sense of God at work and triumphing through Navarre."³² Admittedly, the morality of *The Massacre* is thoroughly conventional, its characterizations are simplistic, and its events tend towards the sensational. Guise, Navarre, and Anjou all speak lines which make us suspect that Marlowe--and perhaps a later reporter--mechanically put Tamburlaine's lofty lines in the mouths of lesser characters to please an audience.³³

All of this hackneyed dramatic machinery admittedly has about it "a bad breath of psychic decay,"³⁴ yet it must also be admitted that the play provides us an opportunity to observe a process reflecting typical moral and dramatic conventions. I believe it probable that Marlowe gives Guise his sonorous "mighty line," reminiscent of Tamburlaine, early in the play as a means of contrasting Guise's pretensions with the reality of his littleness. Marlowe's point appears to be that Guise is not what he thinks himself to be; in reality, he is a natural subordinate who exceeds his capacity for power, but in the process of bringing about his own destruction, he imposes his perverse psychology on the world about him for a brief space.

While *The Massacre* is an early and ill-executed--or at least, poorly recorded--example of drama embodying elements resulting in the emergence of the villainous subordinate, *The Cardinal* is a skilfully

constructed reworking of many of the same conventions, which may be seen as marking the *terminus ad quem* for pre-Restoration drama and many of its themes.³⁵ Unlike the prosaic *Massacre*, *The Cardinal* is essentially poetic,³⁶ relying in large degree on the cumulative effect of imagery and symbol. The imagery of inversion in the political and social orders has visual impact; the Cardinal, and not the King, "sits at the helm of state" (I.i.40), and the channel he navigates runs counter to nature. Count D'Alvarez is thought by an observer to be "wiser to obey the stream" than to insist upon "privilege" (I.i.41-42), and in prosecuting his suit to Rosaura, he runs the risk of putting "both their fates upon a storm" (I.i.43); yet Rosaura, in favouring him despite the Cardinal's wishes, "moves by the rapture of another wheel,"³⁷ and is "transported by an adverse wind" (I.i.46-49).³⁸

The rage Rosaura arouses in the Cardinal is a psychological parallel for the "storm" of war threatening the state (I.i.63). The Cardinal's personal aims in furthering Columbo's interests are paralleled by his Machiavellian statesmanship, which apparently is the cause of war (I.i.67), and his devious machinations are as incomprehensible to court observers as his passions. Originating at a level of consciousness below the rational, the Cardinal's passions are, like the causes of war, "more than . . . present art can fathom" (I.i.69).

When a choric lord comments that "this flame has breath at home to cherish it" (I.i.71), he relates the Cardinal's choleric temperament and treasonous activities to the warfare he instigates, so that the political situation may be seen as a macrocosmic reflection of the Cardinal's inner condition. Significantly, Antonio reports the impending war to Rosaura

immediately after he has informed her that Alvarez has agreed to obey her summons in defiance of the King's and Cardinal's wishes; the juxtaposition of these causally unrelated events thus makes them parallel expressions of a disorder originating in the Cardinal's ambition and wrath. Indirectly, the Cardinal's statesmanship is the cause of Rosaura's compounding her dilemma, which ultimately results in Alvarez' death.

On the verge of confronting the King regarding his command that she marry Columbo, Rosaura procrastinates when she hears the news that war is imminent, hoping that Columbo will die. The Cardinal's political machinations thus affect Rosaura, by inciting "an array . . . of killing thoughts" (I.ii.74) as a basis for hope. Rosaura's refusal to be intimidated by the Cardinal, and instead to chart her own course in loving Alvarez, places her in a psychological calm (to use Shirley's nautical metaphor), while at the same time making her vulnerable to the Cardinal's wrath. Thus Antonio's words to Columbo in presenting him with her letter of rejection are filled with irony:

Her Grace ne'r show'd more freedom from a storm
When I received this paper.

(I.i.114-115)

When the Cardinal discovers from the King what has transpired, Rosaura and Alvarez describe his wrath as "thunder" (II.iii.63) and "tempest" (II.iii.67, and while Rosaura "fear(s) no lightning" (II.iii.68), Alvarez "fear(s) shipwreck on the coast" (I.iii.71). The imagery of disorder in the elements, applied first to the Cardinal's passions, then paralleled in the imagery of storms threatening society, creates a cumulative impression of a single mind, governed by passion, spreading

its chaos to engulf and distort the consciousnesses of others.

The Cardinal's view of reality is illusory and distorted by self-love, and the nature of the distortion is given a visual correlative, as in *The Massacre*, through the imagery of optics. Ironically, the Cardinal unwittingly defeats his own argument in trying to persuade Rosaura to accept Alvarez' death with equanimity when he begins by complimenting her:

You look with nature's eye upon yourself,
Which needs no perspective to reach. . . .
(IV.ii.211-212)

Indeed, with the soul's right contemplation of itself, Rosaura looks with the eye of reason upon a social landscape that she recognizes as the Cardinal's distorted creation. Yet the Cardinal, referring to the weak king upon whom he has imposed his will, calls him "another eye in search of reason" (IV.ii.217). The ambiguity of the phrase shows the Cardinal to be a comically inept rhetorician, because it not only implies the King's supposed rationality, but the opposite, the King, blinded to reason by the Cardinal, may search, but he does not find. The Cardinal's argument is couched in convoluted syntax and tortuous logic, reaching the conclusion he wants, although the premises are contradictory and the argument is a fallacious travesty of logic (IV.ii.204-221). Rosaura is quick to discern the subjectivity³⁹ of thought of which she accused him earlier, when she told him:

You turn the wrong end of the perspective
Upon your crimes to drive them so afar. . . .
(II.iii.140-141)

Now her rejoinder to the Cardinal continues in the same idiom, illustrating for him that his reasoning process, like that of Guise, is

obscure to other minds:

Your phrase has too much landscape and I cannot
Distinguish at a distance.

(IV.ii.223)

The Cardinal's mind is a mirror, as it were, turned away from a higher truth, reflecting only the Cardinal's distorted image of himself, and Rosaura chides him for his failure to "behold (him)self in a true glass" to perceive correctly "those unjust acts that so deform (him)" (II.iii.164-165).⁴⁰

The distorted landscape of society, reflecting the Cardinal's tautology of spirit, is his solipsistic creation, a dead dimension without substance. In extending the world of his own consciousness to control society, the Cardinal is a seventeenth century version of 1984's O'Brien, whose solipsistic logic is no less perverse.⁴¹ Columbo's murder of Alvarez requires not even a pardon, for the accompanying inference of guilt would be "prejudicial to his fame" (IV.i.8). It is as if "the murder done had been a dream vanish'd from memory" (IV.i.9-10). Like 1984's Inner Party comprised of an overall-clad bourgeoisie, the Cardinal, Columbo, and the army are the new elite of Navarre. The Cardinal's hold is so universal that treason and deception have become the norm (I.i.71-72), conversely, natural virtue and love appear as "mutiny" (I.ii.27-28), and depend on a deceptive calm, "counterfeit(ing) peace," for their survival (I.ii.27-28). The rightful master has become a slave of his title, so that Rosaura's rank has become her prison. Forced to conceal her love for Alvarez, she laments:

What is it to be born above these ladies
And want their freedom? They are not constrain'd,
Nor slav'd by their own greatness, or the King's . . .

(I.ii.60-62)

Shirley hints at the unity of legitimate love with a hereditary social structure and the natural order.⁴² An alien in the Cardinal's inverted world, Rosaura is at first mistaken in believing that the King has forbade a match with Alvarez because of his lower station (I.ii.201-204), for according to the conventional ordering of society, Rosaura is correct in seeing only a "nice distinction" (I.ii.203) between their titles. She finds out, however, that the Cardinal's ambition is to blame, in his advancing of his nephew Columbo. Thus while her refusal of Columbo's love does not originate in a conscious rejection of him on grounds of social caste, ideas of natural love are linked to a concept of aristocratic order and degree which are seen to conform to natural law. A lord voices this sentiment in praise of Alvarez, whose noble birth, he asserts, presupposes worth:

Although Columbo's name is great in war,
Whose glorious art and practice is above
The greatness of Alvarez, yet he cannot
Want soul, in whom survives the virtue
Of many noble ancestors

(I.i.32-36)

The Cardinal, on the other hand, argues for merit, claiming Alvarez to be "not equal" to Columbo's "cheapest fame, with all the gloss of blood" (II.iii.102-103).

The Cardinal's usurpation of royal prerogatives has resulted in Columbo's being favoured beyond his due as a commoner, and the perversity of the situation is reflected in Rosaura's inability to regard him with affection. The Cardinal, like a malign deity, creates an inverted world, the virtuous live in dread of evil which for him has the appearance of normality, and the rightful social order is reversed. The ideal of order and degree is reduced to mere appearance, an image of reality with

nobility who are stilled "like pictures in an arras" (II.iii.149); the Cardinal even imposes his own dimension of temporality, marked off by the obedient voices of a debased puppet aristocracy who are "clocks to strike" at his whim (II.iii.151).

Yet this illusion of order imposed by the Cardinal is really disorder, exemplified in the confusion which makes Columbo love's victim. Always the bluff soldier, Columbo expresses himself at court in the comically incongruous argot of his profession. Without either grace or artifice, he finds court ceremony and the rules of courtship alien to him, and he displays his customary directness and impatience in wooing Rosaura: "I have not long to practice these court tactics" (I.ii.18), he tells her, referring to her as the victor's "glorious wreath" (II.iii.83), and to himself as her "conqueror" (I.ii.125). In the meantime, he believes it necessary to "not surfeit in this happiness" (I.ii.104), presumably in recognition of the soldier's maxim stated by Hernando, that weakness accompanies satiety, and diverts a soldier from his purpose.

Because Columbo does not understand the rules of amorous combat, he is defenceless in a *milieu* where other principles of war have no currency. Self-engrossed and ingenuous, he has no hesitation in believing Rosaura to be sincere when she plays the part of a maid forlorn at the prospect of her lover's departure for the wars (I.ii.118-120), and he never doubts that she will remain chaste while awaiting his return.⁴³ Like his uncle the Cardinal, and like Guise (*The Massacre*), Columbo interprets all experience subjectively, in terms of his own aspirations. When he reads Rosaura's letter, he is quick to construe Antonio's self-

saving report of Rosaura's placidity⁴⁴ as evidence with which to persuade himself that Rosaura's unequivocal rejection of him is simply coquettishness:

She expressed a trouble in her when I took
My leave, and chid me with a sullen eye,
'Tis a device to hasten my return. . . .⁴⁵
(II.i. 129-131)

Indeed, the Cardinal had noticed Rosaura's sadness during that meeting too (I.ii.133), but Columbo's pride and lack of insight prevent him from suspecting the cause to be any but his own departure. Thus even Rosaura's visible distress becomes evidence for Columbo to convince himself of her devotion. His response to her letter and the reply he makes playfully, thinking he is entering into the spirit of her game of love, manifests the looking-glass world of Columbo's psychology. What to the rational mind would appear as Rosaura's denial of Columbo becomes for him evidence of her affection; his reply, which ordinarily would mean his acquiescence to her demand, is meant to convey quite the opposite. Meaning is reversed, as her "no" becomes for him an impassioned "ye," and he says "yes" skittishly, when he means "no."⁴⁶

Rosaura's language is that of reality, a dimension in which affirmation and negation have their true values; Columbo's language is that of the world of appearance, in which illusion and non-being have the currency of reality, sadly, it is the language of appearance that has the upper hand in the Cardinal's upside down world.

Yet that is not to suggest that Rosaura's thoughts are, by contrast to Columbo's, wholly rational and moral. Although she has been subjected to pressure from the King to marry Columbo, she is not to be excused entirely for wishing Columbo's death, or for misleading Columbo

initially, by appearing to accede to the King's wishes.

Rosaura expresses her wish that Columbo journey "to the unknown world" (I.11.78-79), a metaphor for unexplored lands and death; the phrase may also bear a connotation of passion which cannot be understood because its source is irrational impulse. Thus Rosaura's wish is expressed in more ways than she understands, when Columbo discovers her rejection of him to be genuine, he takes a psychological journey to the wrathful core of his warrior's nature, bringing about his own and Alvarez' deaths. The "unknown world" to which Antonio refers (I.11.81-82) is thus symbolic of the unfathomable depths where Columbo's fury and the Cardinal's storms of anger and war originate. In the same way that the Cardinal's motivations defy understanding by the rational intellect, the Cardinal is equally unable to understand properly the forces he has set in motion. Using the same idiom a courtier has used concerning his state intrigues, the Cardinal muses on Columbo's reply to Rosaura's letter:

Strange arts and windings in the world, most dark,
And subtle progresses . . .

(II.111.92-93)

In the brief interval during which Rosaura believes her letter to have achieved her desired purpose, her expression of relief and elation reveals that she is not free of the same subjectivism that infects the Cardinal's psychology. In the same way that Columbo fails to understand the rules of courtship, Rosaura can have no conception of the soldier's preoccupation with "honour," so deeply grounded in the world's recognition of his *arete*. Otherwise, she would never have contemplated duping Columbo, nor would she have sent her letter, realizing the futility of

anticipating his acquiescence. Her relief and lack of suspicion upon her receiving his reply reveals her to be, like Columbo, a victim of naiveté that results in misunderstanding. By contrast, the Cardinal, who shares Columbo's sentiments in all things, reacts with incredulity and puzzlement.

Rosaura apparently senses that her deception of Columbo is less than justifiable morally, and she asks Virtue's forgiveness for having dissembled, defensively attempting to excuse her action by claiming that she has "not thought to tempt or betray" Columbo, but instead to keep her earlier "promise (she) first made to love and honour" Alvarez (I.11.155). Yet for all her temporizing, she clearly has injured Columbo in pursuit of her own fulfilment. In some degree, then, Rosaura as a deceiver is the Cardinal's creation, because he has imposed conditions that put her to the test, and result in exposing her spiritual weakness. Rather than incur personal suffering and enforced separation from Alvarez, she has been willing to mislead Columbo, and his ingenuousness makes him in some sense her victim. Rosaura's initial assurance to Columbo that he has her affection (I.11.100-120) certainly provides a basis for him to interpret her letter in a way that accords with his own desires.

Rosaura's conduct, while understandable, is nonetheless somewhat reprehensible, and in this respect as the Cardinal's creation, she takes on to some extent his associations with the demonic. There is thus some justice to Columbo's anger at her "juggling witchcraft" in betraying him to "make (his) love her horse to stalk . . . her curled minion" (III.11.149-151). His reference to Rosaura as being "possessed with a bold devil" and "wanting exorcism" (II.1.105-106) is not without foundation,

for her demonic tendency originates in a situation engendered by the Cardinal.

In the Cardinal's psychological world of illusion, where appearance usurps reality, the externals of reputation appear to have the value of inner worth. Proud with power, the Cardinal claims: "All great men know, the soul of life is fame" (II.iii.175). The Cardinal has virtually inverted the social order, and the soldier, who is distinguished beyond others by his lust for blood and fame, is advanced in the social hierarchy without regard for his rightful subordination to the ruling class. In defending Columbo's murder of Alvarez to the King, the Cardinal claims that a soldier above other men is committed "to vindicate" his honour, because his calling gives him "his nearest tie to glory" (III.ii.157-162).⁴⁷ In the Cardinal's estimation, "there (is) nothing dearer than . . . fame" (III.ii.157), and he adds off-handedly as a mere afterthought that Columbo's revenge "might have been less bloody" (III.ii.162), as if indulgently censuring a mischievous child for untidiness.

Mortal glory has usurped virtuous action as an ideal in the same way that passion has usurped reason in the major characters, just as the Cardinal usurps the King's authority, Columbo, a soldier, displaces Alvarez, an earl, as Rosaura's betrothed. Concerned with the concrete symbols of greatness, the Cardinal regards Columbo's projected match with Rosaura as a meritorious achievement in terms of Columbo's--hence his own--standing, for the match is the Cardinal's plan "to add more lustre to (his) family by the access of the great Duchess' fortune" (III.i.26-28). At first baffled by Columbo's letter of acquiescence to Rosaura's demand, the Cardinal describes Columbo's love for her as "sacred" (II.

iii.81) first "to honour" and only secondly "to (her)self," for in his eyes, she is a mark of Columbo's "merits, given him by the King" (II. iii.84-85).

Columbo shares a similar delusion; when he first receives Rosaura's letter, and before he is calmed by Antonio's conciliatory words, he reacts to her infidelity in much the same manner as the Guise (*The Massacre*) in somewhat similar circumstances; his concern is wholly with the injury to his image of himself:

How am I shrunk in fame
To be played thus withal?
(II.i.100-101)

Columbo is less concerned with losing Rosaura than with becoming a "post that's carv'd/ I' the common street," upon which "every scurrill wit" may "pin disgrace" (II i. 107-109).⁴⁸

The pre-eminence of "avarice for fame" (II i.34) in Columbo's psychology is typical of a society in which insubstantiality and illusion, qualities of the demonic,⁴⁹ have pre-eminence. This demonic element in the Cardinal is expressed in Shirley's extended metaphor of optics and fire which combine to suggest that he is a perverse deity, indeed, Rosaura claims to see his "cloven foot" (V.iii.164). As the Cardinal reads Columbo's letter, Rosaura comments in a fearful aside:

He looks as though his eyes would fire the paper.
They are a pair of burning glasses, and
His envious blood doth give 'em flame.
(II iii 76-78)

The ambivalent symbolic meaning of the flame is perhaps meant to involve a parodic reference to the flame of Divine Grace as well as to the Cardinal's devouring passion.⁵⁰ Rosaura portrays his passion-distorted vision as rays of hatred converging with searing intensity on a single

point, thus relating imagery of lenses and fire to describe the concentrated force of the Cardinal's destructive fury:

Let your contracted flame and malice, with
Columbo's rage higher than that, meet us
When we approach the holy place . . .
(II.iii.128-130)

While on the literal level Rosaura expresses defiance of the Cardinal's wrath, she also unwittingly prophesies her and Alvarez' death, for by undertaking a liaison despite the Cardinal's wishes, they "break through" (II.iii.131) his force by forfeiting their lives. By the liberating power of death, they hope pathetically to reach the "holy place," and "fix" their "sacred vows" (II.iii.132) for all eternity; when Rosaura decides to revenge Alvarez' death, and before she promises Hernando her favours, she vows, ". . . I must come to thee,/ Thy virgin, wife, and widow" (IV.ii.107), conceiving of her own death as a consummation of life-affirming love. So she, like Columbo, exhibits a psychological inversion effected initially by the Cardinal's perversity.

The imagery of storms, flames, and vision associated with the Cardinal and Columbo are reflected and united in Antonio's description of gathering clouds, thunder, and fire-shooting eyes (II.i.94-95) when he gives Columbo Rosaura's letter. And later, when Antonio reports the "prodigious flame" (II.ii.30) in Columbo's eyes, Rosaura echoes her earlier complaint that her heart is "in a mist" (I.ii.239), this time saying that her "soul doth bathe itself in a cold dew" (II.ii.39).⁵¹ The moisture, storms, and heat that indicate the pervasive anger and confusion originating initially with the cardinal's ambition appear in the King's descriptor of Columbo's temperament; the King's belief that Columbo's temperament is truly capable of calm self-criticism seems more wishful

thinking than fact. The King's words are reminiscent of traditional imagery for wrath, pride, and self-love that would have been known by many among Shirley's court audience:

His rage flows like a torrent, when he meets
 With opposition, leave to wrestle with him,
 And his hot blood retreats into a calm. . . .⁵²
 (II.iii.3-6)

The Cardinal is able to indulge his wrathful nature, like Guise, largely due to the King's weakness. Vacillating and amenable to persuasion, the King is vulnerable to the Cardinal's counsel, and the result is that he inadvertently elevates the Cardinal to an unnatural pre-eminence. Rosaura, in censuring the Cardinal for his "abuse of the King's ear" (II.iii.145-146), points out the unnatural inversion he has perpetrated by his "usurpations," and cautions him, "be what you were meant" (II.iii.152-153). The Cardinal's virtually hypnotic hold on the King is observed by Hernando to have a quality of demonic enchantment, so that he is moved to comment in wonder that the "charmed" King (III.iii.209) is bound in "chains of magic" (IV.i.10-11). The King apparently is so fearful of the Cardinal's power and subtle censure that he appears eager to share blame with Columbo for Alvarez' murder (III.ii.201-202). Ironically, the King reverses the meaning of freedom, imprisonment, and power, his crime, as he states the case, has been his freeing of Rosaura from her bond to marry Columbo. In reality, his guilt lies in his initially having enforced the bond, not through exercising excessive authority, but because he exercises too little.

Yet the King vacillates, attempting pathetically to keep the shreds of his tattered regal dignity intact, "or be no King" (III.ii.221), and he promises Rosaura that she shall "have justice" (III.ii.126). But

torn between Rosaura and the Cardinal, the King, like *The Massacre's* Charles IX, searches for a compromise that will allow him to escape the wrath of either party, his indecision in dealing with Columbo is so apparent to the court, that an exasperated and incredulous lord mutters in a contemptuous aside, "Ha, will he turn again?" (III.ii.126). The King's wholly unsatisfactory compromise is an attempt to reduce the magnitude of Columbo's offence, accusing him simply of an "insolent . . . breach of Law and Duty" (III.ii.215), as if murder were no more than a violation of the code of courtly conduct (III.ii.222-231).

The King mistakes appearance for reality, or at least he chooses to do so, in characterizing Columbo's crime as being, not the murder itself, but Columbo's destruction of the facade of order at court. Murder, it seems, is permissible as long as the King does not have to see it. His weakness is evident in the temerity with which first Rosaura, then Columbo, tell him his job, Rosaura threatens him to let her have "swift . . . justice," or face civil unrest (III.ii.118-123), and Columbo inveighs "against this ceremony" (III.ii.233), aggressively airing the soldier's traditional complaint of ingratitude (II.ii.236-249).

Expert in psychologically manipulating the King, the Cardinal is careful to give an appearance of subservience to bolster the King's ego, and in so doing, he exerts a powerful influence on the court through the monarch. When the King starts out to compliment the Cardinal on Columbo's successful conclusion of his campaign, the Cardinal interrupts him, and seizes the psychological advantage with a flattering protestation of Columbo's devotion:

King: Your nephew's glory--
 Cardinal: 'Twas your cause and justice
 Made him victorious. . . .
 (III.i.44-45)

The Cardinal's strategy is subtle, for while he appears to praise the King, he also reinforces the King's esteem for Columbo, while retaining the initiative in his own relationship with the King.

When Columbo and his confederates murder Alvarez, the confederates' escape and Columbo's boldness in remaining behind to "answer for 'em all" (III.ii.131) point to the King's ineffectuality. He listens in passive perplexity as the Cardinal, Columbo, and Rosaura argue their cases, and except for reading Rosaura's letter aloud, he interjects with only two short sentences in the eighty-one lines of dialogue. When the King accuses himself of having contributed to Alvarez' death, the Cardinal signifies his approbation by choosing words--"your judgment is divine in this" (III.ii.212)--which acknowledge the King's rank, yet which seem to express a tutor's approval of a deserving pupil.

The Cardinal, aware that the King is best managed by being allowed to preserve an appearance of regal authority, tries to make Columbo "humble himself" (III.ii.258); but the Cardinal's observance of courtly punctilio does not conceal his displeasure at the King's censure of Columbo (III.ii.257). The King, sensitive as he is to criticism from every quarter, perhaps senses that he has offended, but he is for the moment committed, in the presence of his court, to a display of anger. Columbo probably is encouraged by the Cardinal's attitude, and possessed of a choleric disposition in any case, he rejects the Cardinal's attempt at control, refusing to "beg (his) life" (III.ii.259).⁵³ Thus the King is cornered, with no other face-saving alternative but to have Columbo

imprisoned. The King's reluctant parting word to Rosaura in ending the interview is a vague promise that she shall receive an unspecified "recompense" (III.ii.263), which logically would imply Columbo's execution. Predictably, Columbo is freed later, and restored to favour.

Like Guise, the Cardinal delights in the challenge presented by the game of power, and he shows his greatest enjoyment when he must tax his wit against apparently insurmountable odds. When the King promises Rosaura justice, and has Columbo imprisoned, the Cardinal sees an opportunity to indulge his intellectual pride by proving his superior cunning; he exults in an aside: "Now to come off were brave" (III ii.127). Yet like Guise, the Cardinal errs in underestimating his opposition. Annoyed that Hernando has had the King's ear upon returning from Arragon, the Cardinal accosts him and engages in an unbecoming flyting (III i 32-39). He delights in the disfavour Hernando has incurred by his disagreement with Columbo, enjoying Hernando's discomfort much in the same way that Iago enjoys Othello's torment.

The Cardinal's petty venting of his spite when he has the upper hand is similar to Anjou's enjoyment of Guise's being cuckolded, and the result is similar. In the same way that Anjou incurs Guise's undying hatred, the Cardinal gives Hernando cause to seek revenge, not only for the injustice he has suffered at Columbo's hands, but for the additional insult from the Cardinal (III i.42).

The process which transforms Hernando into a revenger is completed when he is appalled at Columbo's acquittal. In the same way that Rosaura's madness from grief is not entirely feigned, the onset of Hernando's vengeful rage marks the ascendancy of wrath over reason in

his nature. Now "of no religion" (IV.i.19) because he has been unable to perceive the workings of Divine justice, he becomes himself an instrument of the moral order whose existence he denies, hoping to secure the Cardinal's damnation by killing him before he has "time for confession" (IV.i.31).

Hernando thus becomes like the Cardinal, who regrets Rosaura's madness, because she is "beneath (his) great revenge" and "not capable to feel (his) anger" that should make her "soul sweat" (V i 29-46).⁵⁴ A lord rightly points out, "That were too much" (IV i 29), but as Hernando observes, his injury "after another rate" (IV i 32) has been excessive. In the theological sense, Hernando has been reduced to committing the sin of despair by losing faith in Divine justice. In the same way that Henry of Navarre (*The Massacre*) gives up his stoic virtue to set about redressing the balance of the moral order, Hernando forfeits his capacity for rational restraint in becoming a revenger. The courtier to whom Hernando speaks now chides with some justification, "You are too passionate, cousin" (IV.i.33), for the Cardinal and Columbo unknowingly have succeeded in making Hernando over into a villainous subordinate in their own image.

Rather than investigate and resolve the matter of Hernando's dismissal by Columbo, the King merely plans to send Hernando back to Columbo as a courier, preferring to believe that Columbo's anger will abate (II.iii.1-6). Either the King is remarkably naive and a poor judge of character, or--and more likely--he hopes (like Charles IX) that problems will resolve themselves without his having to incur anyone's disapproval. Similarly, the King apparently lacks the moral courage to

tell Rosaura personally that he has deferred to the Cardinal by reinstating Columbo after Alvarez' murder; instead, he makes the Cardinal his emissary, probably at the Cardinal's urging.

What the King really wants, it seems, is to solicit Rosaura's approval of him through the Cardinal's ingratiating offices. It is in the Cardinal's interests to comply, because his power depends on the continued subordination of the aristocracy to the monarchy; too, he evidently is sufficiently arrogant to believe that his powers of persuasion are up to the task of bringing Rosaura into line. Anyway, for the King to go himself humbly to Rosaura with an explanation, especially when no satisfactory explanation is possible, would be quite out of the question. As it is, it takes all the Cardinal's aplomb to lend a superficial dignity to his errand by rationalizing the King's purpose as a willingness "to retain a just opinion," without stooping "to satisfy the vulgar inquisition" (IV.ii.207-209).

The Cardinal's surrogate "kingship" reflects the ascendancy of passionate excess over moderation, love, and community at the court of Navarre. In daring to defy him by loving Alvarez, Rosaura may be seen initially as representative of an ideal conjunction of the properties of Mars and Venus; Alvarez, on the other hand, displays qualities of restraint and compassion that probably in Renaissance eyes would have been regarded as somewhat excessive. The Cardinal's contemptuous comment on Alvarez' "effeminacy" (II.iii.112) and dandyish attention to his appearance in obedience to court fashion thus probably is not without some justification. On the other hand, Valeria's praise of Alvarez, when she tells Rosaura that "a face more tempting" would have "too much woman

in't" (I.ii.38-39) suggests that Alvarez is the ultimate of fine-featured breeding; if his features verge on the effeminate, he is the epitome of courtly fashion. In the same way that Columbo is "the darling of the war" (I.i.23), Alvarez is the darling of the court, and far more appealing to a typical court lady like Valeria than Columbo, a "rough-hewn man who may show well at a distance" (I.ii.54).

Alvarez' trepidation is not quite of the same order as Antonio's fear in *The Duchess of Malfi*,⁵⁵ although there are similarities in their situations. Alvarez' fear seems to be essentially a selfless emotion, because his primary concern is for Rosaura's safety, and his reluctance to enter into a relationship with her is because he wishes to "preserve her greatness" (I.ii.196). By pointing out to Rosaura that the Cardinal's plot to advance his nephew is the true cause of their difficulty (I.ii.212), Alvarez shows himself a realist without much fire, who nevertheless displays a certain stoic courage in professing to know "how to bear (his) fortune" although his "wounds . . . bleed inward" (I.ii.180-181). Like the true stoic who recognizes and accepts fortune's dictates, Alvarez claims the strength to "meet all tyranny of the stars" (I.ii.220).

It is difficult to know how praiseworthy Alvarez' professed stoicism really is; its result is Alvarez' inaction, yet Rosaura's action is destructive. The argument, whether to act or to wait, is a problem in Rosaura's and Alvarez' strategy of love parallel to that of Columbo and Hernando in the strategy of war. Rosaura is the voice of passionate action, while Alvarez speaks for rational passivity. We are never to know if a little judicious action in nudging fortune should be Alvarez'

course, for what works for Malevole (*The Malcontent*) does not necessarily work in the world shown us by the enigmatic Shirley. Nor can we accurately judge whether Alvarez' professed stoicism proceeds from an incapacity to love, compounded by timidity, or from sheer rational restraint enhanced by courageous self-sacrifice in his giving up his fondest desire.

While Alvarez is apparently somewhat effete--at least, by the Cardinal's description--he evidently is no worse than other courtiers, one of whom points out that he "cannot want soul" (I.i.35-36), yet while Alvarez seems to be accepted at court, a courtier points out with vague censoriousness that "men of coarser blood would not so tamely give this treasure up" (I.ii.31). Alvarez' passivity thus seems to be a necessary adjunct of his nobility, and makes him Columbo's natural victim. In that respect, Alvarez and Columbo stand in a similar relation to each other as Cassio and Iago. In neither case is the goodness of the innocent an adequate defence against demonic strength. A courtier's comment that Alvarez is "the last of his great family" (I.i.37) functions on one level as an expression of esteem, on another as an unconsciously ironic foreshadowing of Alvarez' death, and perhaps most importantly, as a hint that the aristocracy is in its final stage of degeneration through over-refinement.⁵⁶ Lacking defences and unable to survive despite his goodness, Alvarez is, like *The Massacre's* Ramus and the Admiral, reasonable and innocent, but negative virtue is not adequate to ensure survival in an imperfect world.

Columbo, on the other hand, exemplifies the warrior spirit, that in its own way is no less noble than Alvarez' capacity for selfless love.

If Alvarez is unduly cautious and possessed of courtly "virtues" in excess, certain of Columbo's excellent qualities as a military commander are excessive to the exclusion of love and rationality. Suffering the "soldier's curse" (II.i.138),⁵⁷ Columbo has the volatile "nature of gunpowder," and being "not well mixed," he has "too great a portion of fire" (II.ii.141-143).⁵⁸ Columbo's temperament in its proper element is his greatest asset, earning him an officer's expression of devotion and dedication, "You give us all new flame" (II.i.75). Yet Columbo's dash and military cunning savour of the irrational. A creature of will, he cannot brook Hernando's sound and well-intentioned opposition to his plan for battle.

In the same way that passion can subvert intellect, reason is seen by the passion-ridden Columbo as subversive, and he believes that Hernando's reasoned argument can "unsoul an army" (II.i.41). Will and judgment are reversed, and what passes for the army's "soul" is the irrational wrath and untrammelled impulse that rules its commander. Representative of patient and considered judgment, Hernando is necessarily subordinate at the outset. An alien in Columbo's psychological world of flame and fury, he is finally eliminated from it when he quits his regiment.

Hernando appears to be representative of moderation in the military milieu, in the same way that the Duchess is representative of an ideal balance of contradictory, yet complementary, virtues at court. It is possible, too, that Hernando's view of strategy⁵⁹ is an unconsciously ironic comment on the self-destructive principle of surfeit already in operation at the court of Navarre, suggestive of inevitability in mortal

affairs (II.ii.15-19); men destroy themselves either in striving to fulfil their aspirations rapidly by bloodletting, or in slowly decaying through satiety. Here, perhaps, is a strong hint of Shirley's pessimism; whether men proceed with patience or impatience, time is inevitably the destroyer of societies and armies.

Ironically, Hernando's physical departure signals his psychological assimilation, for from this point on, he becomes a revenging villainous subordinate whom Columbo has created, as surely as the Cardinal perverts Rosaura's goodness by Alvarez' death, making her a revenger. As subordinate in rank and service to both Columbo and Rosaura, he is perversely seductive in the service he affords both. The "service" he performs for Columbo is particularly perverse. Columbo's "mistress" is war (I.ii.56), and as destructive a mistress as she is, she demands a code of conduct as stringent as that of amorous combat. Himself a villainous subordinate of the King, "created," as it were, by the Cardinal's predilection for followers who reflect his own passion, Columbo shares demonic constraints like those of DeFlores and Mosca, who similarly honour a perverse and self-destructive code.⁶⁰ Courageous and cognizant of the warrior's ideals of conduct, Columbo admires similar qualities in his adversary, he accepts Hernando's challenge with an expression of respect and affection, so that his death at Hernando's hands is like the consummation of a perverse courtship:

Hernando, now I love thee, and do half
 Repent the affront my passion threw upon thee
(IV.iii.1-2)

Hernando's destructive and functionally seductive attraction for Columbo, and Columbo's expression of "repentance" similar to Volpone's

"repentance" at the prospect of delight Mosca promises,⁶¹ compounds Hernando's significance as Columbo's subordinate whom he has made his villainous familiar. Similarly, Hernando, as an agent of death, is the exhilarating object of Columbo's affection in much the same way that Mephistophilis is for Faustus (*Dr. Faustus*), and DeFlores for Beatrice-Joanna (*The Changeling*).⁶² Like Mephistophilis and DeFlores, Hernando as seductive destroyer is created initially by his master's passion, in the same way that Columbo is a villainous subordinate who thrives on the King's weakness, and its exploitation by the fiery Cardinal. Hernando becomes a source of gratification for Columbo only when Columbo is able to see him as a reflection of himself. So much in the same way that Mosca's society is a hierarchy of parasites and sub-parasites,⁶³ the Cardinal's Navarre is a hierarchy of villains, each of whom in turn creates the demonic subordinate who destroys him.

While the prospect of a duel stimulates Columbo to feel alive, the villainous subordinate he has created is really a master who brings death. Columbo's code of conduct as a warrior has a fatal attraction for him. Scorning the "base advantage" he gains by getting Hernando's sword (IV.iii.78), Columbo casts it aside, and even in death he honours his soldierly ideals in forgiving his opponent (IV.iii.79). His forgiveness is perhaps more an expression of thanks, for only by undertaking the ultimate trial in facing the challenge and risk of equal combat can Columbo feel truly fulfilled; his exhilaration is similar in kind to that which the Cardinal experiences when he sees Columbo's imprisonment as a challenge to be met for the sheer joy of testing his will against the weak King. Columbo, by his own death, consummates in blood his

subversion of Hernando's goodness, so that while Hernando wins in the literal sense, he loses at the metaphysical level.

Like Hernando, Rosaura is moved to revenge, and her sorrow is expressed by Antonio in terms suggesting her spiritual death as the result:

She never had so deep a cause for sorrow,
Her chamber's but a coffin of a larger
Volume, wherein she walks so like a ghost.⁶⁴
(IV i.13-15)

Upbraiding Rosaura for not having set about Alvarez' revenge, Hernando thinks to fire her with a description of Alvarez' death (IV.ii.120 ff), and in so doing he reveals the destruction of his own spirit; his "amaz'd soul," he says, "shrank and hid itself" (IV ii.133). He means, of course, that he recoiled at the horror of the deed, but his words have a broader significance beyond his own understanding. Rosaura, careless of her own life if Hernando should be the Cardinal's spy, makes it clear to him that she already is bent on revenge, and lacks only the means (IV ii.139-154). Now Rosaura and Hernando see each other as the means of gratifying their appetites, and their relationship is not unlike that of Faustus and Mephistophilis, Catherine and Guise, or perhaps more directly, Beatrice-Joanna and DeFlores. Their compact has a perversely festive quality, with Hernando's suggestion that "Columbo must be first cut up," with the Cardinal "for the second course," and his ghost to "lead the dance" following this feast of death (IV ii.168-170).

With Rosaura's promise of herself to Hernando, her servant in revenge takes on the quality of a perverse deity, and Hernando declares himself the fit object of Rosaura's idolatry.

Your cause is so religious you need not
 Strengthen it with your prayers, trust it to me.
 (IV.ii.198-199)

Her promise thus may be seen as similar to the Mephistophelean contracts and exchanges of vows which most masters undertake with their villainous subordinates, in becoming their slaves. Suffering now from the pride that plagues the Cardinal, Hernando boasts his daring in standing up to him in terms connoting his belief that his own evil is capable of destroying evil itself:

And he had all the horror of the devil
 In's face, I would not balk him.
 (IV.ii.201-202)⁶⁵

With Columbo's death, and Rosaura's feigned madness (which, like Hamlet's, appears also to be real), Hernando's functional beauty as a revenger wins him Rosaura's profession of love, now much more than mere "recompense" (IV.ii.189):

. . . must you not be my husband?

 Indeed, if you believe me, I do love
 No man alive so well as you
 (V.iii.24-27)⁶⁶

It is not to be suggested that the Cardinal's evil has had the power to make over Rosaura and Hernando into figures of monstrous evil in his own pattern; rather, the pair may be seen as joined in an unholy union brought about by their sense of injury at his hands. Initially decent and rational, they have been incited to vengeful passion by a surfeit of grief and outrage. To that extent, the Cardinal has been the cause of their transformation, and in that respect they now resemble him. In a world in which love has been extinguished, they can turn to no one but each other; their situation is elucidated by the parallel situation in

which Antonio and Placentia find themselves. Antonio tells her:

We two are only left
 Of my lady's servants, let us be true
 To her, and one another, and be sure
 When we are at prayers, to curse the Cardinal.
 (V.ii.1-4)

Antonio refers, presumably, to Celinda's disloyalty to Rosaura, which also is brought about by the pervasive corruption engendered by the Cardinal and Columbo. When Columbo bribes Celinda with pearls to undertake a sexual liaison with him, he transforms her into a prideful turncoat, much as he and the Cardinal transform Rosaura into a revenger. Hernando describes Rosaura to Columbo as "bribing her good angel with treasures of her eyes" (IV.iii.53-54), and while he means that she is at tearful prayer, his words also suggest the grief that perverts her goodness. Thus Columbo even makes a foolish girl into a villainous subordinate with aspirations beyond her degree. As Antonio observes, Celia "look'd with less state, when Columbo came" (IV.ii.95), but with Columbo's death, her brief and comic essay in overreaching ends with her fall; pregnant by Columbo, she settles for Antonio for a husband.

Antonio echoes the theme of a fall from a height of pride, in wishing the Cardinal would "topple from the precipice" (V.i.110), and it is the Cardinal's intellectual pride that finally defeats him. So sure is the Cardinal of his powers of persuasion, that he mistakenly believes he succeeds in ingratiating himself with Rosaura, while planning her ravishment and death. Even when believing his own death imminent from the wound Hernando has inflicted, the Cardinal continues to exercise what he believes to be his superior cunning. His "repentance" a sham (V.iii.119), he gulls Rosaura by tasting the poison he has offered her as an "antidote,"

too late discovering that he would have lived, and has caught himself in his own "engine" (V.iii.275). Like Guise, the Cardinal falls victim to his own cunning.

Like a fallen angel, the Cardinal's "wings . . . flag" (V.iii.283), and may not "catch the wind" (V.iii.283),⁶⁷ phrases the Cardinal uses in much the same way as the sorrowfully unrepentant Faustus, who cries, "I would lift up my hands, but see, they hold them, they hold them" (*Dr. Faustus*, V.ii.61-62). The Cardinal cannot take to the air, as it were, to use his "wind" metaphor for salvation, because he has defied the higher element to the last, in pursuing a course counter to nature. He dies in a "mist" (V.iii.284) of error, and although he once guided the ship of state, and like a demi-God has presumed to have the King "steer" Rosaura's soul (I.ii.68), he now forfeits his own soul, by which to "steer (his) wandering bark" (V.iii.285) through a hellish storm of his own making.

In *The Cardinal*, the state of Navarre is shown as a macrocosmic version of the individual psychologies to be found there. The King and his court, the state's natural and rightful leaders, have grown weak through over-refinement. The spiritual diathesis that weakens temporal authority is exploited by a power-hungry and corrupt clergy, represented by the Machiavellian Cardinal who uses a robust and unscrupulous soldiery to work his will. With the strength of vigorous impulse which is pro-creative when controlled and moderated by reason, but deadly when unchecked, the Cardinal and Columbo achieve pre-eminence. In the absence of strongly supported positive virtue at court, the Cardinal is able to impose his psychology, grounded in lust and avarice, on vulnerable

society. The good, the loving, and the rational are weak spiritually; without physical defences, they must allow their goodness to become subverted by evil in order to survive. While Alvarez dies an innocent, Rosaura and Hernando survive for a time only by becoming cunning reven-
gers in the Cardinal's image. The self-destructive nature of evil dictates that, once its domination is total, its instruments expire. The Cardinal dies, together with Rosaura and Hernando, whom he has corrupted to become the instruments of evil's self-destruction in a process of cosmic cleansing.

The Cardinal, like his precursor, Guise, and indeed like all demonic figures, dies unrepentant at having imposed his own distorted reality on a spiritually weak society. Once the Cardinal's looking-glass world is shattered, the spell he has cast is broken, and the King comments on the need for right vision for right rule: "None have more need of perspectives than kings" (V.iii.299).

Marlowe's Guise and Shirley's Cardinal are villainous subordinates whose ambitions rule their judgment. As they turn thought into deed, they impose their perverse psychologies upon the external world, turning reality into appearance, substance into shadow. Natural order and the structure of society become inverted, and passion rules reason. Ironically, the villainous subordinate who suffers from overreaching ambition rises to his own destruction in quest of fame and power, ideals as insubstantial as the world he creates from his own solipsistic psychology

FOOTNOTES

¹Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*, III.iv.75.

²I borrow the term "overreacher" from Harry Levin (*The Overreacher* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952)), but with slight modification of the connotation he gives it. Levin describes overreaching as "hyperbole of thought," a "state of mind to which all things are possible, for which limitations exist to be overcome" (Levin, p. 83). Levin imputes a quality akin to tragic grandeur to the overreacher, but the aspiring cast of mind is somewhat incongruous when the character's actions are petty, and his aims are concrete and limited.

³Such seems to be the case of Bolingbroke, who has secondary importance to the monarch in *Richard II*, as a successful usurper, he becomes the central focus in *Henry IV, Pt. I*. H. J. Oliver calls attention to a similarity of speeches in *The Massacre* and *Henry VI, Pt. II*, which suggests that Shakespeare was not unaware of certain similarities of plot and character. See H. J. Oliver, *Dido Queen of Carthage and The Massacre at Paris* (London: Methuen, 1968), pp. lxi-lxiv.

⁴Quotations cited in this chapter are taken from J. B. Steane, ed., *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969). While Steane accepts the controversial "Collier leaf" as authentic, he omits the additional lines from his text. I agree with his opinion of its authenticity, as do most modern critics, and where I make reference to lines in the "Collier leaf," I rely on F. S. Boas's published version, copied from the J. Q. Adams transcript with modernized spelling (1934). See F. S. Boas, *Christopher Marlowe: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940), pp. 168-171.

⁵The play first appears in Philip Henslowe's diary as "the tragedy of the gyves." The entry, dated 30 January, 1593, shows that the play was performed on 29 December, 1592. Henslowe frequently refers to the play as "The Guise," or a variant spelling thereof, while others of his entries show it as "The Massacre" (e.g., "the masacer," 3 July, 1594). See R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert, eds., *Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1961).

⁶Una Ellis-Fermor takes a similar view, suggesting that Guise has "less imagination" than Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Barabas, and that he is a "smaller figure," largely because the crown of France is a "precise" and "obtainable" desire. U. Ellis-Fermor, *Christopher Marlowe* (Hamden: Archon, 1967), p. 106.

⁷Quotations cited are taken from C. R. Forker, ed., *James Shirley: The Cardinal* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1964). Forker's copy text is the 1652 edition included in the octavo collection of six plays by Shirley, entitled SIX NEW PLAYES. Forker notes that *The Cardinal* was

the last play Shirley wrote before the closing of the theatres in 1642, and it was not acted before its publication (Forker, p. xvii, n. 1). I have modernized the spelling when quoting passages, wherever to do so has no effect on sense or pronunciation. Similarly, I emend substantives by replacing initial capitals with lower case letters.

⁸See C. V. Boyer, *The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1914). While Boyer does not deal specifically with *The Cardinal*, its central character may be seen as an example of the "villain as hero," according to Boyer's definition. More specifically, the Cardinal resembles the type defined by Boyer as the "later ambitious villain." Boyer cites as an example D'Amville (*The Atheist's Tragedy*). There is an obvious parallel in the Cardinal, who similarly reposes his aspirations to greatness in an advantageous union for a young relative.

⁹Suitably, Harry Levin entitles a chapter concerned primarily with *Edward II* and *The Massacre*, "State Overturned" (Levin, p. 82 ff.).

¹⁰Irving Ribner includes *The Massacre* in tracing the development of the history play, showing its affinity with such earlier works as *Republica*, *Cambises*, and *Gorboduc*. (I. Ribner, *The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957)). In these earlier plays the parasites and vice figures are "embryonic" villainous subordinates.

¹¹See Forker, p. 46 for references to other contemporary literature with similar phrases. Also see pp. xxxv-xlvii for an analysis of *The Cardinal's* probable political significance. For Shirley's association with Bishop Laud, and his possible personal motives, see E. Gosse, intro., *James Shirley* (London: Vizetelly, 1888), p. ix; and A. H. Nason, *James Shirley Dramatist* (New York: Nason, 1915), p. 32.

¹²By referring to *The Cardinal* as "political satire," I do not imply either that it is a consistent political allegory, or that its primary purpose is political. The political elements in the play are sufficiently strong, however, that I believe that term, among others, accurately describes the play. Similarly, *The Cardinal* is clearly a revenge play, and as Fredson Bowers points out, the plot is apparently modelled on *The Spanish Tragedy*. See F. Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 228-234.

¹³Michael Manheim refers to plays of this sort as an identifiable genre--or perhaps sub-genre. See M. Manheim, "The Weak King History Play of the Early 1590's," *RenD*, N.S., II (1969), 71-80. The idea of spiritual inadequacy as the cause of a monarch's fall is rarely omitted. A notable exception is John Bale's *King John*, in which a good monarch is subverted by the Pope and by anarchical elements in his realm.

¹⁴References in this chapter to historical events and characters in *The Massacre at Paris* allude exclusively to Marlowe's dramatic portrayal of them, except where I make it clear that I allude to historical fact and opinion.

¹⁵*The Massacre's* first performance produced the highest receipts of the season, and subsequent performances after the theatres reopened in 1594 brought receipts that compare favourably with returns for other performances of the period. See H. S. Bennett's summary of entries in Henslowe's dairy. See H. S. Bennett, ed., *The Jew of Malta* and *The Massacre at Paris* (New York: Gordian, 1966), pp. 169-170.

¹⁶For a summary of known sources, see Oliver, pp. lxi-lxiv; Paul H. Kocher, "Contemporary Pamphlet Backgrounds for Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*," *MLQ*, VIII (1947), 151-173 and 309-318; also Paul H. Kocher, "Francois Hotman and Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*," *PMLA*, LVI, 11 (1941), 349-368; Boas, p. 154; J. Bakeless, *The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1942), pp. 252-253; C. F. Tucker Brooke, *The Life of Marlowe* (New York: Gordian, 1966), p. 34. I take the view held by Boas that "*The Massacre*, in spite of its textual corruption, preserves more of the play as it came from Marlowe's hand . . . than his editors have been willing to allow," and I agree with Boas that Marlowe was working "with his source before him" (Boas, p. 153). By this view, *The Massacre's* departures from its sources in points of fact may be regarded as authorial and deliberate. In discussing the differences between the play and its sources, I rely primarily on Kocher's textual analysis (see Kocher, p. 349 ff.).

¹⁷Drawing attention to images of darkness and death in Guise's soliloquy (I.ii.31-108) which are opposed to images of light and life in the marriage rites, Steane comments that "Guise is established as one who in his own person reverses the normal values" (Steane, p. 244)

¹⁸For example, W. Sanders asserts that Guise is "clearly cast in the same mould that produced Tamburlaine, Barabas and Faustus," and that he is "Icarus and Lucifer." See W. Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (London: Cambridge, 1968), p. 22. Bakeless calls Guise "a violently ambitious superman" (Bakeless, p. 97).

¹⁹C. V. Boyer holds the view that the "element of religious fanaticism in (Guise's) character is too realistically portrayed to permit of his being classed as an egotist and an atheist" (Boyer, p. 75). In the absence of textual evidence to support Boyer's view, I agree with Steane that Guise "never had any religious motive" (Steane, p. 238).

²⁰F. S. Boas suggests that the references to Caesar show Guise's ambition to be of "boundless scope" (Boas, p. 155). Similarly, Oliver suggests that Marlowe may have regarded Guise as a "conqueror-villain-hero" (Oliver, p. lxxi). Kocher points out that Guise was often compared to Caesar in contemporary pamphlets (see note 19), so the appellation may have been common, and without much significance. Also, see

Bakeless, p. 85. Further, Guise appears to be a perverse parody of the Caesar portrayed in Marlowe's *Lucan's First Book*. See Stephen Orgel, ed., *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Poems and Translations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pp. 189-207. Marlowe's Caesar is the bloody purifier of a corrupt society.

²¹I assert that Guise's usually plodding lines and later unheroic actions are contrasted to the first soliloquy deliberately. This view opposes that of Bakeless, who attributes the "falling-off" to Marlowe's lapse of artistry (Bakeless, p. 97). Similarly, I disagree with Sanders that the "Marlovian theme" at the beginning of the play is "very quickly expended" due to Marlowe's "crippling dependence on source material" (Sanders, p. 23).

²²Guise may be seen as a perverse social satirist. His use of the metaphor of sight is similar to the imagery of optics in *The Cardinal*. John Peter points out that "mirrors and glasses had become standard equipment for the complainant, enabling him to reflect the blemishes in the world around him." J. Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), p. 105. Marlowe's use of the metaphor of sight is an apt expression of Renaissance attitudes. Nicholas of Cusa's *De Visione Dei* reflects the theology related to a growing belief that moral forces were dimensions of the individual consciousness, rather than objective forces operating in the external world. See J. P. Dolan, ed., *Unity and Reform: Selected Writings of Nicholas of Cusa* (Chicago: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1962), p. 46. This "subjective" view meant that Renaissance man began to think of himself as creating reality as a dimension of his moral consciousness, for as the image of his Creator, he too could create through his vision. A perverse psychology was thus empowered to disturb the natural order by imposing its own version of reality upon the external world.

²³In the latter part of this chapter, I refer to Henry of Anjou as "Anjou," even after his coronation, and I refer to Henry of Navarre as "Navarre," in order to avoid confusion.

²⁴In commenting on Catherine's observation, "his mind . . . runs to his minions" (III.ii.46), Oliver discusses the possible textual confusion of "Mugeroun" with "minion" (Oliver, pp. lviii, lix), which may hint at a homosexual relationship between Anjou and his favourite. Cf. references to Gaveston (*Edward II*) as a "minion." For Henry's "minions," see H. D. Sedgwick, *The House of Guise* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1938), pp. 263-264.

²⁵IV.v.14-16 are included in the Octavo text, and are in Steane's edition. IV.v.17-18 are from the "Collier leaf" (Boas, p. 169).

²⁶The "Collier leaf," Boas, p. 170.

²⁷Cf. Iago's and Mosca's speeches on their singular excellence as deceivers, Chapter 4, p. 157.

²⁸See Chapter 4, p. 166.

²⁹Kocher expresses the view that Marlowe departs from historical sources in showing Catherine "loving and subservient" to Guise (Kocher, p. 368). While her affection is evident, I disagree that the play portrays her "subservience" as being anything other than Guise's self-delusion. On the other hand, at least one contemporary account has her dying of "sorrow" (Sedgwick, p. 299), and Kocher acknowledges as much. P. H. Kocher, "Contemporary Pamphlet Backgrounds for Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*," Pt. II, *MLQ*, VIII (1947), 315. Thus Catherine's affection for Guise may have an element of historical truth. This tends to cast doubt on Oliver's view that Catherine's personal attachment to Guise is solely Marlowe's "own innovation" (Oliver, p. lxii).

³⁰Boas endorses this view (Boas, pp. 164-167). However, Kocher shows that contemporary opinion held that she used religion for selfish ends (Kocher, *Contemporary Pamphlet Backgrounds* . . . , Pt. II, p. 215).

³¹Ellis-Fermor regards Navarre's lines as "a string of flaccid, listless moralizings," and she suggests that Marlowe may have been trying to draw the "character of a prig" (Ellis-Fermor, p. 109). I agree with Oliver, however, that this view is probably anachronistic, and while Navarre's character lacks complexity and individuality, we are not intended to view him critically. Sanders considers Navarre a "model Christian prince" (Sanders, p. 26).

³²Steane, p. 243.

³³H. S. Bennett, for example, believes that there is nothing about the play "that leads us to believe that, had we the perfect text, we should have a great play." He calls *The Massacre* "one of the weakest plays of its day" that deals with events "in a shambling pedestrian way" (Bennett, p. 174), similarly Wilbur Sanders claims censoriously that Marlowe "capitulates . . . completely to the lowest appetites of his audience." W. Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), p. 20. John Bakeless terms the play "one of Marlowe's failures, . . . almost destitute of poetry" (Bakeless, p. 69). Frederick S. Boas, on the other hand, is one of the few critics to see dramatic merit in the play, believing it to have been "undervalued" (Boas, p. 166).

³⁴Sanders, p. 30.

³⁵Pointing out that *The Cardinal* is a "highly original . . . manipulation of old materials," Forker cites the play as occupying "a secure place in dramatic history as the last of a long line of Elizabethan tragedies of revenge" (Forker, pp. xlvii, lxi).

³⁶See Note 33 for Bakeless' critical commentary on *The Massacre's* lack of poetry. By contrast, Forker recognizes *The Cardinal* as "the work of a true poet" (Forker, p. lxi).

³⁷While the sense of the phrase is clear, its precise meaning remains obscure. Forker makes several conjectures (Forker, p. 11, n.). A "ship's wheel" seems the most probable.

³⁸The extended metaphor of wind, water, ships and wheels has an emblematic quality. See Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (1536), H. Green, ed. (New York: Blom, 1967), pp. 137, 181. The Cardinal's resemblance to Icarus and Narcissus is also suggestive of Whitney's emblems (pp. 28, 149). Similarly, the imagery of wind and water combines with the imagery of optics to create the effect of a verbal icon, reminiscent of Hans Memling's *Vanity* (c 1450). Venus is set in a landscape in which water and wind struggle for advantage under lowering skies threatening a storm. A windmill's sails appear to turn with a wind that is counter to a stream's direction. Venus gazes into a glass, enraptured by her image, certainly without the benefit of "nature's eye."

³⁹For philosophical and theological traditions relating to subjectivism, solipsism, and Machiavellian "political immanentism," see *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), vol. 7, 387-388; vol. 13, 420, 757-758. The Cardinal's Machiavellian qualities primarily resemble those of the stage Machiavel; however, his subjective mode of thought also is consonant with his philosophically Machiavellian methods.

⁴⁰Shirley's use of mirror imagery in his dramaturgical icon was a well-worn commonplace. See A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), p. 63; J. I. Wimsatt, *Allegory and Mirror* (New York: Western, 1970); and Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionis*, I, 14-15, W. H. Stahl, trans. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1952). Similarly, Shirley's imagery of lenses has a resemblance to comments in *The Romance of the Rose*. See Jean de Meun, "Nature Expounds the Properties of Mirrors and Glasses," ll. 79-90, *The Romance of the Rose*, Harry W. Robbins, trans. (New York: Dutton, 1962), p. 386.

⁴¹See George Orwell, *1984* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 199-200.

⁴²While Shirley implies criticism of the nobility at court, he appears to have been a strong supporter of hereditary aristocracy, and there can be no doubt that he was a royalist. See A. Dyce, ed., *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley* (London: Murray, 1833), p. xl, and R. S. Forsythe, *The Relations of Shirley's Plays to the Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1914), pp. 221-223.

⁴³The theme of the soldier's ineptness and vulnerability in affairs of love is traditional and conventional. Plautus' *Pergopolinices* (*Miles Gloriosus*) is an example in the comic tradition, as is his Elizabethan

successor, Ralph (*Ralph Roister Doister*). Neither succeeds in his wooing, because he mistakes military braggadoccio as a mode of courtship he believes irresistible. Othello's case is a reversal of circumstances, but the principle is similar, that is, he believes his Desdemona adulterous when she is chaste, because his powers of discernment are impotent in affairs of the heart. (See Chapter 4.)

⁴⁴Antonio's situation here, and his reaction to it, relates him to Terence's mischievous slaves, e.g., Davus (*The Woman of Andros*), who are placed in jeopardy through their masters' intrigues. The mischievous slave's typical response is to employ a stratagem that extricates him from a dilemma, while compounding the complications of his master's conflict.

⁴⁵Cf. De Flores (*The Changeling*):

I ha' seen
Women have chide themselves abed to men.
(II.i 90-91)

(See also Chapter 3, p. 97.)

⁴⁶For a discussion of the play's comic overtones reflected in deception, misunderstanding, and Columbo's incompetence as a lover, see Richard Morton, "Deception and Dislocation: An Aspect of James Shirley's Drama," *RenD*, IX (1966), 227-245.

⁴⁷Forker interprets the phrase "his nearest tie to glory" to mean "his life" (Forker, p. 61, n.). While the Cardinal's syntax is characteristically tortuous in this passage, I discern a meaning other than that attributed by Forker. The phrase in the context of the passage seems to mean what Alphonso calls elsewhere, "avarice of fame" (II i 34). The sense of the passage thus seems to be:

If a common man who lacks a soldier's sense of honour feels constrained to protect his good name, so much more must a soldier fight to keep his honour intact, because his calling is beyond all others concerned with the achievement of laurels.

⁴⁸Cf. Othello's reaction to Iago's subtle mockery. (See Chapter 4, pp. 140-141.)

⁴⁹The Cardinal may be seen as not only a tyrant, but as a self-created blasphemous idol. For the demonic connotations of optics, idols, and mists, see R. H. West, *The Invisible World* (New York: Octagon, 1969), pp. 39-44, 91, 92, 240. Spenser's Agdistes has similar properties as custodian of the illusory Bower of Bliss (*The Faerie Queene*, II, xii, 47, 48).

⁵⁰The flame of the Cardinal's wrath invites conjecture that Shirley intends it as a perverse opposite of the flame of grace. Proclus uses a metaphor of flame burning paper as an analogue for the divine illumination of material natures. See Thomas Taylor, trans., "The Philosophical and Mathematical Commentaries of Proclus . . .," II, 1788, 89, in

Thomas Taylor the Platonist, K. Raine and G. M. Harper, eds. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969). See also *The Romance of the Rose*, p. 386.

⁵¹Cf. *The Duchess of Malfi*, V.v.118. Also see Chapter 5, p. 200. The symbolism of moisture (dew, rainfall, storms, mists) was traditional as a metaphor for error, illusion, and the demonic. Spenser follows the Neo-platonists, in making extensive use of the convention in Book One of *The Faerie Queene*.

⁵²Shirley's *Narcissus* expresses the theme of self-love in images of deceptive calm originating in turbulence and passion, similar to those used to describe the Cardinal and Columbo. See "Narcissus," ll. 474-483, Dyce, p. 481. See also, *The Romance of the Rose*, 84, p. 387.

⁵³The Cardinal's self-control, and his unsuccessful control of Columbo is an example of order in disorder, like that imposed by Satan on lesser devils. This function of the Vice figure appears in earlier drama. In *The Castle of Perseverance* (ll. 1773-1782), Belial beats Pride, Wrath, and Envy for letting Mankind enter the castle, and he admonishes them to obey. E. T. Schell, J. D. Shuchter, eds. *English Morality Plays and Moral Interludes* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1969), p. 56. The Cardinal's influence over the King and his attempt to impose order on a lesser Vice figure relates him, like Vasques (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*), to Ambodexter (*Cambises*), and Aaron the Moor (*Titus Andronicus*). See Chapter 5, p. 219.

⁵⁴Cf. Malevole's expressed desire to "kill" Ferneze's soul (*The Malcontent*, I iii 156-157). Although Malevole's actions are benign compared to the Cardinal's crimes, the emotions and their expression are similar. See Chapter 6, pp. 250-252. Hernando's transformation to revenger is a familiar theme. Hieronymo (*The Spanish Tragedy*) similarly despairs of justice, and is moved to a divine fury, as it were, to avenge his son's death. Hernando's desire to ensure his victim's damnation by denying him an opportunity for prayer of course resembles Hamlet's sentiment (*Hamlet*, III.iii.93-95). Despair as the cause of self-destructive revolt is a central theme in *Dr. Faustus*. See Chapter 3.

⁵⁵See Chapter 5, pp. 205-206.

⁵⁶Cf. Ezra Pound's *In Kensington Garden*. Pound expresses a similar social phenomenon among the Edwardians with his description of a neurasthenic lady in whom is "the end of breeding."

⁵⁷The precise meaning of "soldier's curse" is problematic. (See Forker, p. 33, n.) I accept Forker's first conjecture that "Soldiers" is a singular possessive, rather than a plural substantive, and that "curse" is a substantive rather than a verb. The success of Columbo's campaign apparently is due primarily to his capacity to instill military ardour in his subordinates, and to construe the passage to mean that his "soldiers curse" him hardly seems logical.

⁵⁸Columbo's being "not well mixed" and having "too great a portion of fire" is reminiscent of the Jonsonian comedy of humours. See Morton, p. 228.

⁵⁹The strategy he advocates is a sound military maxim set down by Machiavelli:

To be revenged of a city or country without striking any blow, they must be filled with wicked manners.

("The Index or Table of Machiavel's Maxims . . .," Boyer, p. 241)

⁶⁰See Chapter 3, p. 104, and Chapter 4, p. 167.

⁶¹See Chapter 4, p. 168.

⁶²Columbo's words "now I love thee" (IV iii.1) in this context are reminiscent of Beatrice-Joanna's phrase, "who would not love . . ." in reference to De Flores. Similarly, Columbo's "repentance" of his earlier anger towards Hernando resembles Faustus' "repentance" to Mephistophilis. Columbo's new-found affection for Hernando is a reversal of earlier revulsion similar to that which Beatrice-Joanna experiences for De Flores. The perversity of love grounded in death-become-beautiful is equally characteristic of Hernando as for the others.

⁶³See Chapter 4, pp. 154, 157-158.

⁶⁴The motif of a sleeping chamber as a coffin is common, perhaps because of the ironic possibilities evident in a place often associated with sexual intimacy and procreation being also a place of death. Rosaura calls "Columbo's bed (her) winding sheet" (I ii.242), and later she tells Hernando that Alvarez "calls (her) to his marble bed" (IV ii.17). Similar imagery appears in *The Duchess of Malfi* (IV i.4-9). Also see Chapter 5, p. 223. In *The Changeling*, Alsemero's chamber becomes Beatrice-Joanna's tomb, when it was to have been her nuptial chamber. See Chapter 3, p. 110.

⁶⁵Forker's note defines "balk" as "avoid, fail to meet" (Forker, p. 78, n.).

⁶⁶Cf. Bel-Imperia's soliloquy of revenge after pledging her love to Horatio (*The Spanish Tragedy*, I iv.58-76), F. S. Boas, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955).

⁶⁷The Cardinal's inability to stay aloft, as it were, together with Antonio's desire to see him "topple" and "souse in the salt water" (V ii.111) combine to liken the Cardinal to Icarus.

CHAPTER III

THE TREACHEROUS SERPENT¹

Not the least of the villainous subordinate's characteristics associating him with the demonic is his role as a tempter, and Marlowe's Mephistophilis (*Dr. Faustus*) is perhaps the most celebrated example in Renaissance drama of the villainous subordinate who provides his master with the means of gratification leading to self-destruction.² Committed by cosmic necessity to the conquest of souls, Mephistophilis succeeds when Faustus subordinates reason and virtue to pride and appetite.

More a universally symbolic representation of the principle of evil than a fully realized dramatic character, Mephistophilis affords a wealth of opportunity for comparison to any of the more particularized characters whom I define as villainous subordinates. Yet it is his universality that imposes limitations on the extent to which his character yields to analysis. Mephistophilis is a bundle of principles, so to speak, and his prime dramatic function is as a foil, defining and delineating Faustus' predicament. For that reason, it is the nature of his relationship with Faustus that is of primary interest. Mephistophilis does not initiate action; rather, he reacts to Faustus' state of mind. Much of the discussion that follows, then, will necessarily centre on Faustus, as well as his demonic companion.

Because of Mephistophilis' relatively generalized qualities, I have chosen in this chapter to deal with Mephistophilis in relation

particularly to Thomas Middleton's *De Flores* (*The Changeling*) as a highly individualized parallel. While other villainous subordinates display certain elements of the demonic in varying degrees, it is *De Flores* who seems to embody them most explicitly, he is, so to speak, Mephistophilis with flesh on his bones. There is ample evidence that *Dr. Faustus* had a direct influence on Middleton,³ and the similarities between Mephistophilis and *De Flores* are specific enough that they are not to be ignored.⁴

These similarities to a considerable extent may be attributed to certain resemblances in situation between *Dr. Faustus* and *The Changeling*. Unlike most Jacobean playwrights, Middleton does not emphasize pervasive social corruption as a *donné* in *The Changeling*, rather, corruption and guilt are essentially individual, and their causes are not primarily attributable to a corrupt *milieu*. Thus the conditions of both Beatrice-Joanna and *Faustus* are initially Edenic. *Faustus*' fall begins when he leaves "the fruitful plot of scholarism" (Prologue.16), and Beatrice-Joanna's fall is described as her loss of her "first condition" (III iv.138) to become a "broken rib of mankind" (V.iii.146).⁵ More individualized than Mephistophilis as a dramatic character, *De Flores* nonetheless has psychomachic and metaphysical significance that makes him in large degree a demonic archetype.

A further element that relates *De Flores* to Mephistophilis is the plot situation that allows the major protagonists, *Faustus* and Beatrice-Joanna, freedom of choice. Free to choose either good or evil, *Faustus* and Beatrice-Joanna have predilections for vice that are shown to exist before the villainous subordinates appear, Beatrice-Joanna already is

infatuated with Alsemero, and Faustus already has been seduced by the prospect of a "world of profit and delight" (I.i.51). Both Mephistophilis and De Flores are summoned as the means of gratification of desires that already are present in their nominal masters. Such is not the case of, say, Iago, whose Machiavellian scheming initially subverts Othello's goodness. In these respects De Flores resembles Mephistophilis perhaps more than do most villainous subordinates, and as demonic figures they resemble more closely than the others their prototypes in earlier drama, the AntiChrists, devils and vices of the mystery and morality plays.⁶

Proceeding first, then, to a consideration of Mephistophilis, I shall as far as possible isolate and deal with his characteristics without undertaking to provide an exhaustive interpretation of Faustus' character or the play's meaning. Those already well explored avenues of investigation are to some extent unavoidable, but they are peripheral to the main purpose of this chapter. However, it is necessary to recognize, I believe, that Faustus' fall from grace is in principle a re-enactment of Satan's fall, and in that sense Faustus and Mephistophilis may be seen as reflections of each other.

Mephistophilis is representative of the metaphysical principles involved in Faustus' fall, and while his fall clearly has metaphysical implications, it also is psychological, at least during his twenty-four year span of self-damnation. The chorus in the Prologue describes Faustus as "falling to a devilish exercise" (Prologue 24), and one of his scholar friends expresses his fear that Faustus has "fallen" (I.ii.32) into the practice of necromantic arts. Faustus' "fall" thus occurs as a result of

his state of mind, even before he meets Mephistophilis, and it follows his rapid rise to academic "grace." "Graced with Doctor's name" (Prologue.18), Faustus forfeits a higher grace by rejecting traditional knowledge out of hand, and by aspiring with an egomaniacal idolatry born of self-love to become himself a "mighty god" (I.i.63). Satanic yet Adamic, Faustus determines entirely of his own volition to taste the "pleasant fruits" (I.i.86, 87) his blasphemous activities will afford him. That is important if we are to recognize the nature of Mephistophilis' function as a tempter. Faustus' summons of Mephistophilis is simply a physical expression of his, Faustus', psychology that has already summoned its own devil.

Faustus' relationship with Mephistophilis is characterized by his delusion that he is Mephistophilis' master when Mephistophilis appears at his command and does his bidding in transforming himself into a Friar (I.iii.6). Charging Mephistophilis to "wait upon" him (I.iii.39), Faustus sneers with mixed exultation and contempt:

How pliant is this Mephistophilis,
Full of obedience and humility!
Such is the force of magic and my spells.
Now, Faustus, thou art conjuror laureate
That canst command great Mephistophilis. . . .
(I.iii.31-35)

But the protean Mephistophilis' apparent subordination to Faustus is as illusory as his pleasing new disguise. Again, Faustus' delusion has an internal origin, and does not proceed from Mephistophilis. As we have seen, Mephistophilis initially does not appear before Faustus disguised as a figure parodically representative of virtue;⁷ it is Faustus himself who demands it. Similarly, Mephistophilis makes no attempt to delude Faustus about the real nature of their relationship; rather, he attempts

to correct Faustus' misapprehension, telling him that his obedience to Faustus' summons is only "*per accidens*," and that the necessity of his answering the summons lies in his being a "servant to great Lucifer" (I.iii.43). But Faustus persists in his delusion; after having made his pact with Mephistophilis, he rages when the demon will not name God, "Villain, have not I bound thee to tell me anything?" (II.1.73).

The necessity that prompts Mephistophilis establishes their relationship as symbiotic; while Faustus needs Mephistophilis as a means of gratifying his appetite, Mephistophilis is constrained to serve his real master by serving what Faustus believes to be his own interests: "O, what will not I do to obtain his soul!" Mephistophilis hisses in an aside, warming Faustus' blood to obtain a signature (I.v.79).⁸ Mephistophilis' subservience to Lucifer is not, however, an important element theologically. Traditionally, evil was regarded as monolithic, and there does not appear to have been a belief in a consistent hierarchy of devils.⁹ Thus Mephistophilis' obedience to Lucifer may be seen essentially as a dramatic representation of evil's operation according to a higher necessity. But Faustus' self-delusion, the necessity of his own nature, is such that he refuses to admit to himself the unvarnished truth of Mephistophilis' words. While admitting superficially that "there is no chief but only Beelzebub," he holds "damnation" at "nought," and thinks still to "confound hell in Elysium" (I.iii.64). His illusion of omnipotence is, of course, like that of Lucifer, whom "God threw . . . from the face of heaven" for "aspiring pride and insolence" (III.1.73).

Faustus' "hell" is psychological, as long as his redemption remains a theological possibility; it is Faustus' delusion that he "needs be

damned" (I.v.1) and that he has indeed become a "spirit" (II.ii.14). Faustus' damnation is assured, not from metaphysical causes, but only because he must be what he thinks he is. His "dominion" as a "demigod" stretches exactly "as far as doth the mind of man" (I.i.57, 58), that is, his demonic qualities and his damnation are real as long as he believes them to be so.¹⁰ Whether Faustus' damnation proceeds originally from a metaphysical principle operating through his psychology, or whether Faustus is damned because of what he believes to be the operation of Necessity makes little difference. His hell, whatever else it may be in addition, is certainly psychological, and his recognition of it is sporadic and cumulative.

By contrast, Mephistophilis is unequivocally a spirit, and his hell is a real one that he recognizes through the dubious "benefit" of hindsight. In the irrevocability of his damnation and suffering, he represents Faustus' future condition, and simultaneously he represents Faustus' delusion in thinking himself already a spirit and damned. Mephistophilis' hell is clearly metaphysical, a condition resulting from the Fall:

Faustus: Where are you damned?

Mephistophilis: In hell.

Faustus: How comes it, then, that thou are out of hell?

Mephistophilis: Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it.

(I.iii.73-76)

The hell Mephistophilis describes is a dimension no less real for all that it may not be assigned geographical referents, it is the condition in which the souls of the damned, as Mephistophilis knows from experience, "are tortured and remain for ever" (I.v.123), but which "hath no limits, nor is circumscribed in one self place" (I.v.124, 125). When Mephisto-

philis cites himself as "an instance," Faustus refuses to accept any evidence that is not apparent to the senses. Rejecting the possibility that "after this life there is any pain" (I.v.137), he also refuses to admit to the existence of hell without observable physical dimensions: "Nay, and this be hell, I'll willingly be damned here" (I.v.141). And later, having made Mephistophilis flee by naming God, he, Faustus rails, "A, go, accursed spirit to ugly hell" (II.i.79), as if hell has physical dimensions external to himself and Mephistophilis.

Faustus' condition is a case-book example of the sickness that subordinates reason to sense, and he can perceive only physical realities. Faustus contemptuously dismisses the legal phrase, "*sic una eademque res legatur duobus, alter rem, alter valorum rei*" (I.i.28-29). As a single inheritor, Faustus should gain from sense experience both the "thing" and its "value," but he rejects the value--that is, the meaning--and perceives only the concrete.¹¹ Mephistophilis as an objective principle of evil does not blind Faustus to less palpable realities, he simply performs in a manner ensuring that Faustus will perpetuate his self-deception.

Unlike Mephistophilis, Faustus' Good and Evil Angels seem to be psychomachic representations of his inner state, rather than personifications of objective metaphysical principles. Neither is a shape-changer suggestive of the ambivalence of external appearances; always consistent in their exhortations, they appeal in turn to Faustus the quintessential man, the will that is always free to choose. Faustus' will, it seems, is an irrational faculty that reacts to the stimulus of the moment. Responding at first to what Faustus perceives as the sciences' inadequacy to

satisfy, his will is easy prey for the blandishments of the Evil Angel; yet when Mephistophilis reveals the heavens to Faustus, his will prompts thoughts of repentance (II.i.1). The arguments the Good and Evil Angels present are primarily intellectual ones, each taking a theological position, and presenting it as fact:

Good Angel: Faustus, repent. Yet God will pity thee.
 Evil Angel: Thou are a spirit. God cannot pity thee.¹²
 (II.i.12-13)

Thus the Angels appear to be psychomachic representations of Faustus' mortal ratiocinative faculty; like Wit in *Everyman*, they leave him at the moment of his death (V.ii.124, 141). Faustus, having wanted to be "resolve(d) of all ambiguities" (I.i.79), insists on what he cannot have, a *coincidentia oppositorum*¹³ whereby he may "be a devil, yet God may pity" him (II.i.15).

Significantly, the Evil Angel does not tell Faustus he cannot repent, only that he "shall not." It is Faustus alone who believes his heart to be "so hardened" that repentance is not possible (II.i.17, 18). The psychomachic Evil Angel argues that Faustus will be dismembered if he dares repent (II.i.64). Whether or not Lucifer has the power to rend the flesh of the converted remains unresolved; but certainly, we know that Faustus' soul need never be beyond hope of redemption until his last moment is past. But Faustus' *hubris* in accepting the Evil Angel's argument that he, Faustus, is a "spirit" (II.i.13), and his consequent belief in his damnation, bring him to despair.

Mephistophilis, always ready to offer Faustus choices, provides not only the means of self-destruction--swords, knives, etc. (II.i.21)--but "sweet pleasure" to divert him. Yet those pleasures are also warnings,

could Faustus but see aright. Always the logician, Faustus defiantly summons memories of delightful interludes as proofs of present joy to buttress his flagging spirit. He recalls that Homer has sung to him of "Alexander's love" and "Oenon's death," and that Amphion has "made music" with Mephistophilis (II i.27-30). While Mephistophilis provides these delights, he seldom lies, and the seductive notes of Homer and Amphion contain a terrifying truth that a scholar of Faustus' attainments could not miss if only he would heed it.¹⁴ Faustus does not explore the meaning of Homer's music any more than later he dares see no more than diversionary entertainment in the dumbshow of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Faustus' persistence in self-delusion that gives Mephistophilis mastery over him is the product of psychological inversion. From the outset, Faustus looks only on the dark side of creation, and never sees the whole. His thought--or lack of it--is symptomatic of his refusal to accept that his apostasy does not deprive him of divine mercy. His contradictory thought on the subject of mercy and damnation is a manifestation of his disordered intellect. Faustus only believes what he wants to believe, and it is that weakness that subverts his rational faculty, making him prey to Mephistophilis. When Faustus recites scripture, he quotes only those parts that, taken out of context, appear to deprive him of moral choice.¹⁵

The psychological inversion Faustus manifests in his analysis of scripture results in his belief that he has rejected a divine determinism in favour of his exercising demonic freedom of choice, thus Mephistophilis provides Faustus with a mere illusion of power and freedom. In reality, the opposite is true; by believing himself a "spirit" and "damned," he is

unable to choose good. When in his last moments he agonizes, "I'll leap up to my God: who pulls me down?" (V.ii.155), it is Faustus himself, who by constantly denying himself freedom to choose grace, withholds the repentance that would bring God's mercy. Thus Faustus is Mephistophilis' slave only because he, Faustus, wills it so. Faustus cannot hope for redemption, because his inversion of values is such that he confuses hope with despair. Lacking the perseverance with which to continue to hope for God's grace, Faustus has despaired of it, mistaking his despair as an object lesson in "manly fortitude" for Mephistophilis (I.iii.84). Yet in his delusion, he believes that to turn to God would be an act of despair rather than of hope. Seduced by sensual delight, he remains arrogantly intransigent¹⁶ by always turning away from reality to revel in new diversions, rather than facing it with courage. His words expressing his future intent are as perverse as his deliberate movement away from truth:

Why should I die, then, or basely despair?
I am resolved Faustus shall ne'er repent.
(II.i.32)

Everything Faustus says and does reveals a psychological inversion that also has metaphysical implications. Indeed, the entire narrative structure has been seen as "an inverted saint's life,"¹⁷ and his contract with Mephistophilis is a perversion of the sacrament,¹⁸ by which Mephistophilis becomes Faustus' illusory deity.

As Faustus' deceptive joy gives place increasingly to fear and remorse, he presumably becomes less amenable to the inducements of diversionary entertainments, yet his fear makes him no less tractable, if exploited by Mephistophilis as his appetites once were.¹⁹ Consequently, Mephistophilis becomes imperious and threatening, and his former rather

neutral personality shows signs of the wrath that motivates Lucifer:

Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul
For disobedience to my sovereign lord.
Revolt, or I'll in piecemeal tear thy flesh.
(V.i.73-74)

Mephistophilis' threat has its desired effect as Faustus gives him assurance of his parodic "repentance," a continuation of his abject "revolt" that began as proud rebellion. The crisis past, and his anger assuaged, Mephistophilis subsides once more into mock subservience in gratifying Faustus' desires. Faustus now is much subdued, and where he once commanded, he now makes a craven request:

One thing, good servant, let me crave of thee,
To glut the longing of my heart's desire,
That I may have unto my paramour
That heavenly Helen. . . .
(V.ii.98-101)

Shown the universe by Mephistophilis, he sees only "what might please (his) eye" (III.ii.75), and views all as an entertaining charade in which he would play a part. Commanding Mephistophilis, "Then in this show let me an actor be" (III.ii.76), he plays the role of a "divine in show" (I.i.3), as he first described himself, but his outward appearance of celestial omnipotence materializes as cheap tricks.

Faustus' early dismissal of metaphysics, bidding "*on cai me on* farewell" (I.i.12) has been a mistake, because he no longer distinguishes between states of being and non-being;²⁰ the result is that he mistakenly believes Mephistophilis to have substance. As a reflection of Faustus' psychology, the theme of non-being is a unifying element throughout the conjuring episodes at the middle of the play, for Mephistophilis, himself insubstantial, engages in acts of "uncreation" for Faustus' delight.²¹ Between Faustus' banal tricks of conjuring and his final necromantic

achievement in producing Helen's shade, a subtle change has come over Mephistophilis. Having reduced Faustus with his towering wrath, his attitude becomes patronizing and even somewhat paternal. Addressing his victim as "my Faustus" (V.ii.95) in his usual way (also III.ii.31, 54), he adopts an almost frivolous tone in promising Helen's appearance "in twinkling of an eye" (V.i.96). As Faustus' fortunes descend with his approaching damnation, Mephistophilis gains in vitality and ebullience, and he anticipates Lucifer's capture of Faustus' soul with relish that rises to exultation at watching Faustus' feast of "pleasures" which "must be sauced with pain" (V.ii.47). As gluttoned with his conquest as Faustus has been with blasphemous delights, Mephistophilis takes perverse pride in his part in Faustus' fall: "I do confess it, Faustus, and rejoice" (V.ii.100).

But Mephistophilis' pride that comes to light only now in his moment of triumph is, I believe, as self-delusive as was Faustus' earlier. Before his victory over Faustus, Mephistophilis regularly has spoken with attention to the cosmic laws limiting his powers. He has lied only once by implying that he has the power to tear Faustus to pieces if Faustus repents. When Faustus, like other victims of appetite and ambition, has attempted to fix responsibility outside himself, Mephistophilis has been quick to point out, "'Twas thine own seeking, Faustus, thank thyself" (II.1.4). But now Mephistophilis professes the power to move men from goodness, claiming that it was he who "turned the leaves" and "led (Faustus') eye" (V.ii.2-4) in an incomplete reading of scripture that would lead Faustus to ignore holy writ offering hope.²² And at the last, Mephistophilis' earlier moroseness and suffering are dispelled in

grim satisfaction as he intones sententiously: "Fools that will laugh on earth, must weep in hell" (V.ii.7).

Yet the momentary demonic satiety is, like Faustus' pleasures, only a diversion for Mephistophilis who suffers in his own hell. He is constrained to "enlarge (Lucifer's) kingdom" (I.v.41) only because "*solamen miseris, socios habuisse doloris*" (I.v.42).²³ Demonic delight that rises with the reduction of the victim is a characteristic emotion shared by other villainous subordinates, all of whom, like Mephistophilis, recognize intuitively that the ascent of their fortunes depends upon the reduction of good, the villainous subordinate's rise of spirits thus is usually a measure of the extent of the victim's moral inversion.

All the characteristics that epitomize Mephistophilis as a villainous subordinate are to be found in De Flores. Figuring importantly in *The Changeling's*²⁴ theme of change and reversal that gives the title its significance,²⁵ De Flores becomes Beatrice-Joanna's master. Alsemero fittingly includes in his catalogue of transformations at the play's conclusion "servant obedience" which changes "to a master-sin, imperious murder" (V.iii.200, 201). Like Mephistophilis, De Flores is a demonic shape-changer whose ugliness becomes beauty in his victim's eyes. Like Faustus, Beatrice-Joanna's judgment is subverted by her appetite, so that she eventually even denies the evidence of her eyes. Yet De Flores is much more than a grotesque demon; he is also a pathetic man who is a victim of his appetite, and in gratifying each other's desires, Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores prey on each other.

The problems of the major characters originate in their erotomania²⁶ that distorts judgment in spite of the evidence of the senses. While

much has been written about the imagery of rings, fingers, and gloves,²⁷ somewhat less attention has been given to the pervasive imagery of eye-sight; it is this image pattern predominantly which reveals the cause of moral confusion at Alicant that results in Beatrice-Joanna's fatal relationship with De Flores.²⁸ *The Changeling's* opening line emphasizes sight as the originator of desire. Alsemero says, "'Twas in the temple where (he) first beheld her" (I.i.1), and so ravishing were "her beauties" (I.i.5-11) to his sight, he has since loved her with a spiritual fervour verging on idolatry. Alsemero's vision immediately affects his judgment to the extent that he rejects Jasperino's argument for setting sail, and he even ignores the evidence of a weather vane. Insisting that the wind's direction is adverse to his departure from Alicant, he can say only that "'tis contrary in my best judgment" (I.i.15, 16).

This reversal of reason in opposition to natural forces, and Alsemero's obedience to will seduced by sight are associated with sickness, a "hidden malady" (I.i.27) that Alsemero "understand(s) not" (I.i.28). Afflicted with what Tomazo terms "love's tame madness" (II.i.156), both Alsemero and the unfortunate Alonzo are remarkably obtuse and slow to comprehend when they are presented with evidence of Beatrice-Joanna's infidelity. While Jasperino restrains himself from exasperation at Alsemero's obstinacy, Tomazo is moved to chide Alonzo, "Do you apprehend so slowly?" (II.i.144).

Suffering from the effects of love at first sight, Alsemero suffers a malady induced by nothing more than external appearance, an error Isabella, disguised as a madwoman, points out to Antonio:

No, I have no beauty now,
 Nor never had, but what was in my garments.
 You are a quick-sighted lover? Come not near me. . . .
 (IV.iii.124-126)

Beatrice-Joanna's garment of flesh is equally deceiving in its effects on Alsemero, so that he finally cries,

Did my fate wait for this unhappy stroke
 At the first sight of woman?
 (V.iii.12, 13)²⁹

The themes of reversal and inversion, and their associations with the demonic, continue to build. Changing from "stoic" to "lover" (I.i.7), Alsemero is accused by Jasperino of going "backwards" (I.i.46) in turning from a venturesome seafaring merchant into a tame procrastinator who decides that he is "safer on land" (I.i.55). Deferring to Beatrice-Joanna's insistence that he refrain from challenging Alonzo, he reverses his statement that "the honourablest piece 'bout man is his valour" (III.ii.29). Becoming passive in his suspension of judgment, he allows her to chart a secret course, lamely concluding their discourse with an expression of mild acquiescence: "You teach wisdom, Lady" (II.ii.52). Alsemero's intellectual and spiritual passivity is parodied in the subplot by Franciscus, whom Isabella describes as a "body . . . without brains to guide it" (III.ii.24). Franciscus' mad comment makes clear the principle of inversion in intellectual passivity: "Now I'm a woman, all feminine" (III.ii.66) and Antonio refers to Isabella's charms as the "magic had such force thus to transform me" (III.ii.111).

The theme of judgment's perversion by sense is taken up by Beatrice-Joanna with her first appearance. Naive and not very astute,³⁰ Beatrice-Joanna displays her tendency towards hollow sententiousness as she coquettishly lectures Alsemero on the power of sight to deceive:

Our eyes are sentinels unto our judgments,
 And should give certain judgment what they see,
 But they are rash sometimes, and tell us wonders
 Of common things, which when our judgments find,
 They can then check the eyes and call them blind.
 (I i. 70-74)

Despite her moralizing, Beatrice-Joanna's infatuation with Alsemero results in her confusion of will with judgment, so that she calls on reason as cause for rejecting the visual evidence that had led her to agree to her betrothal to Alonzo: "Sure, mine eyes were mistaken" (I i. 82).

No sooner have the lovers reversed their judgments than De Flores appears, while he comes unbidden, it is as if the lovers' decisions have worked as invocations to a Mephistophelean demon. His first words in announcing Vermandero's approach are a double-edged commentary on the lovers' weakness that has caused him, De Flores, to appear: "Your eye shall instantly instruct you" (I i. 91). On the literal level, of course, De Flores' presence is owing to his infatuation with Beatrice-Joanna, but on the symbolic level, it is the lovers' abandonment to sense that summons their demon who is also a man.

Beatrice-Joanna's will is characteristically ruled by her senses, and until her sensual attraction to Alsemero dictates to her that De Flores may be a useful instrument, she finds her father's servant repulsive. Putting aside the demurely flirtatious manner she has adopted with Alsemero, she turns on De Flores with a vehemence that bespeaks her loathing. Having bade De Flores to desist from "unnecessary blabbing" (I i. 94), she explains graciously to Alsemero that her disgust, derived from the evidence of her "eyes" (I i. 111), is an "infirmity" (I i. 106), an error of sense. Because De Flores is "a gentleman in good respect"

(I.i.132) with her father, Beatrice-Joanna believes she should like him despite her natural revulsion, and in following the dictates of sense, she claims to be unable to "help herself" (I.i.131).

Beatrice-Joanna's epithets--she calls De Flores a "standing toad-pool" (II.i.61)--bespeak a foulness of mind that is ironic in its opposition to her physical chastity and beauty, and her vehemence reveals inner deformity like his. The fear that she experiences in De Flores' presence is intuitive, and she experiences it as physical sensation, rather than as rational response:

I never see this fellow but I think
Of some harm towards me, danger's in my mind still,
I scarce leave trembling of an hour after
(II.i.89-91)

While mere contempt would not be unusual, this violence of emotion in a well-born and otherwise outwardly demure maid towards a fawning and distasteful serving man is inappropriate to her station, and the course of events reveals that her fear and loathing is born of self-recognition. Spiritually diathetic from the outset, Beatrice-Joanna feels, but does not comprehend, that De Flores is an embodiment of the lust that becomes her ruling passion.³¹

Responding without restraint to the sensual stimulation of the moment, Beatrice-Joanna suffers a disorder paralleling Isabella's description of the symptoms of lunacy:

Yet are they but schools of lunatics,
That act their fantasies in any shapes,
Suiting their present thoughts; if sad, they cry;
If mirth be their conceit, they laugh again;
Sometimes they imitate the beasts and birds
.
As their wild fancies prompt 'em.
(III.ii.176-183)

While Beatrice-Joanna's intuition about De Flores happens to be right, it is nevertheless a symptom of her weakness for following her instincts in every situation, and it is the strongest stimulus that wins out. Alsemero's agreement with her that De Flores "does ill to tempt (her) sight" (I i.8) is ironic, for it is Alsemero himself who unconsciously has "tempted" her sight in another sense. Her adoration of Alsemero is far stronger than her hatred of De Flores and her love wins out over her hatred in her decision to use the subordinate she despises. While Alsemero is a tempter in the sense that he is the object of Beatrice-Joanna's desire, De Flores, like Mephistophilis, tempts by becoming the means of gratification. Significantly, Beatrice-Joanna calls De Flores a "serpent" (I i.219) even before she hits on a plan to use him in Alonzo's murder.

Expressing her love for Alsemero in idolatrous terms, Beatrice-Joanna calls her desires "requests that holy prayers ascend heaven for" (II iii.9), and having reached her "devotion's end" (I i.147)--an ominous play on words--she speaks of changing her "saint." Her words give theological significance to her reversals when she turns first from Alonzo to Alsemero, then to De Flores. Like Faustus, who has been characterized as an "inverted saint," De Flores is described by Alsemero as her "lip's saint" and also as her "lust's devil" (V iii.53, 55). Thus De Flores embodies Beatrice-Joanna's idolatry.³²

Like Alsemero, Beatrice-Joanna makes her love a religion, mistaking the promptings of passion for higher reason. This attempt to actualize an ideal and unattainable spirituality in sexual love is reflected in De Flores' reference to Beatrice-Joanna's "blessed" eye (II i.51) and in

his unconsciously parodic exercise of courtly conventions. His inferior position as Vermandero's attendant accords with the Renaissance social reality of gentlemen ushers who occupied the ambivalent middle ground implied by the title. Desperately infatuated with Beatrice-Joanna, De Flores is acutely aware of his lower station, having "tumbled into the world a gentleman" (II.i.50),³³ and he also recognizes the revulsion he prompts in her. Expressing himself with a coarseness revealing his inner ugliness as a reflection of Beatrice-Joanna's condition, De Flores indulges in crude sexual innuendo when he retrieves the gloves she has thrown down (I.i.226-229), and he expresses his pathetic hope of her favour in terms more appropriate to an expression of disgust:

I must confess my face is bad enough,
 But I know far worse has better fortune,
 And not endur'd alone, but doted on;
 And yet such pick-hair'd faces, chins like witches,
 Here and there five hairs whispering in a corner,
 As if they grew in fear of one another,
 Wrinkles like troughs, where swine-deformity swills
 The tears of perjury, that lie there like wash
 Fallen from the slimy and dishonest eye,
 Yet such a one plucks sweets without restraint,
 And has the grace of beauty to his sweet.

(I.ii.37-47)

For De Flores in his early relationship to Beatrice-Joanna, the artificial conventions of courtly love are physical realities. De Flores' inferior position and lack of worth are not feigned, the torments of his desire are real, and her spurning of him is much more than mere deference to convention. In every point, the fictions of courtly love are verities for De Flores. It is not to be suggested that De Flores consciously emulates the courtly lover; on the contrary, the fact that his emotions are genuine, and not simply observances of a ritual that apes an ideal, suggests a tragically comic confusion of values. It is this actuality

characterized by De Flores' masochistic compulsion that makes his situation a travesty of the spurned courtly lover's plight. In expressing his obsession, De Flores sounds like a clownish imitation of Ovid:

I can as well be hanged as refrain from seeing her,
 Some twenty times a day, nay, not so little,
 Do I force errands, frame ways and excuses,
 To come into her sight, and I've small reason for it,
 And less encouragement, for she baits me still
 Every time worse than other; does profess herself
 The cruellest enemy to my face in town . . .
 (I.ii.26-35)³⁴

As coarse and ugly of mind as he is ill-favoured of feature, De Flores is wholly convincing in his humanity. Cheated of happiness and fulfilment by accidents of birth, his frustrations gnaw at him unremittingly. Once given an opportunity to seize what he convinces himself is rightfully his, he has no hesitation in gratifying his desires and revenging himself on a world that he believes has cheated him. In the meantime he persuades himself (with an ironic literalness about the irrationality of sexual love) that "there's daily precedents of bad faces below'd beyond all reason," and his self-deception breeds optimism that "women have chid themselves a-bed to men" (II.i.86).

Slaves to sense, De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna are mirror images of each other. Abjectly finding excuses to "please (him)self with the sight of her" (I.ii.100, 101), De Flores' "basilisk" gaze (I.ii.112) communicates death; yet what Beatrice-Joanna sees is a reflection of her own will to "see (him) dead" (I.ii.103), and De Flores describes her glances in a manner hinting that she too is a "basilisk":

I live in pain now: that shooting eye
 Will burn my heart to cinders.
 (III.iv.153, 155)

Here is the life-denying reality that is counterpointed by Antonio's

light-hearted words to Isabella:

Look you but cheerfully, and in your eyes
I shall behold my own deformity.
(III ii.170, 171)

Sensible Isabella does not, however, reflect Antonio's lust in the way that Beatrice-Joanna reflects De Flores' life-denying passion. But both Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores are ruled by their destructive wills; she shall "want her will" (I.i.217) if she cannot have Alsemero, and De Flores is just as determined to "have (his) will" (I i. 231, 232). Easy prey to Beatrice-Joanna's flattery, De Flores is equally the temptress' victim as she is his.

Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores exercise their wills in obedience to their sexual impulses which they do not recognize as destructive, but which they know they must keep secret. The idea of secrecy is ambivalent, because in its context here it suggests not only the Machiavellian subterfuges Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores employ to keep knowledge of murder and lust from the others, but also the little understood wellsprings of passion that will destroy them both. An image pattern of secrecy unifies the major elements of the plot on several levels, both literal and symbolic, giving a cosmic significance of shameful sickness to Beatrice-Joanna's and De Flores' hidden passions. In describing Alicant to Alsemero, Vermandero uses an idiom suggestive of a macrocosmic parallel to the conditions of its individual inhabitants:

. . . our citadels
Are plac'd conspicuous to outward view,
On promonts' tops; but within are secrets.
(I.i.158-160)

Alsemero "venture(s) in" to be shown the castle's secret defences, despite the "murderers' (cannon) at the gate" (I.i.218, 219), and his

"daring" in entering is a symbol for his temerity in undertaking to know --in the carnal sense--Beatrice-Joanna and her secret lust that lies behind her destructive beauty. As the embodiment of her lust, De Flores describes appropriately his murder of Alonzo among the ordnance in the dark and narrow passages as "a work of secrecy" (I.ii.24). The "goodly munition" which is the last thing Alonzo sees is perhaps a metaphor for the passion that De Flores has seen in Beatrice-Joanna's "shooting eye."

The symbolism of secret sexual impulse that becomes destructive without reason's control is echoed in the comic sub-plot. Telling Lollo that he "must trust (him) with a secret" (I.ii.1), Alibius confides his distrust of Isabella's tender years, a "knowledge" of which he says is "deeper and sweeter" (I.ii.13) than the fact of his marriage to her. Placing his trust in Lollo because he "cannot always be at home" (I.ii.33), he mistakenly hopes to exercise restraint by putting Isabella in care of a would-be seducer. By entrusting his "secret" to Lollo, Alibius may be seen as a symbol of judgment that relinquishes its office to the will in the mistaken belief that the new master of impulse is a source of rational restraint.

The situation parallels Beatrice-Joanna's inner condition, mistaking will for judgment, she is ruled by impulse. The difference, of course, is that Isabella's virtue is unassailable.³⁵ The madhouse, like Alicant, is itself in a way symbolic of the human condition. Although the madhouse is defended from without with locks, the threats exist within; Lollo, a somewhat less malign villainous subordinate than De Flores, has the run of the madhouse, while Antonio and Franciscus have been admitted disguised as fools. Indeed, lust has made them what they

pretend to be. Even the conjugal chamber and bed, like Alicant and the madhouse, serve as symbols of a body that has become a repository of secret lust and death. Alsemero rages,

The bed itself's a charnel, the sheets shrouds
 For murdered carcasses
 . . . you (Beatrice-Joanna) shall
 Be my prisoner only, enter my closet,
 I'll be your keeper yet.

(V iii 86-90)³⁶

The pervasiveness of eros that has been shown symbolically to exist on all levels is expressed by Antonio as the hidden and irrational impulse that attends all sense experience:

Love has an intellect that runs through all
 The scrutinous sciences, and like
 A cunning poet, catches a quality
 Of every knowledge, yet brings all home
 Into one mystery, into one secret
 That he proceeds in.

(III.ii.114-119)

But Beatrice-Joanna's weakness of spirit and her naiveté cause her to rely excessively on her vulnerable intellect. Indeed, like Faustus she prides herself on her "judgment" which in reality is her will. She approves of Jasperino because he agrees to further her purpose, and she believes that Alsemero "makes his choice with good judgment" (II.i.7) in having such a companion. She claims a similar clarity of vision in congratulating herself on her own choice:

Me thinks I love now with the eyes of judgment,
 And see the way to merit, clearly see it.

(II.i.13, 14)

Crediting herself with excellence of intellectual insight, Beatrice-Joanna fails to comprehend the irony of her understanding of merit. The "true deser-er" who may be seen (so she thinks) like a diamond that "sparkles in darkness" (I.ii.15, 16) is a source of self-generated light,

and it is the diamond in her betrothal ring that throws "sparkles" in De Flores' eye when he murders Alonzo. The brilliance Beatrice-Joanna claims to see is in reality the darkness of the "eclipse" she desires so that Alsemero may "soon shine glorious" (III.iii.16) in her father's sight. The source of illumination she claims to be "the refulgent virtue of (her) love" (III.iii.17) is a light as artificial as that of a diamond, which ironically should protect Beatrice-Joanna from demonic influences.³⁷

This sense of the demonic attending the perversion of reason is embodied in De Flores. Tormented with the pain of envy like Mephistophilis, De Flores reflects Beatrice-Joanna's "envy" (II.ii.17) of what she judges to be her "necessities" (II.ii.11). Beatrice-Joanna's resulting reversal of judgment transforms De Flores, like "sweet Mephistophilis," into a beautiful creature in her eye of intellect, despite the evidence of her senses:

And now I think on one--I was to blame,
 I ha' so marr'd so good a market with my scorn,
 'T had been done questionless; the ugliest creature
 Creation fram'd for some use, yet to see
 I could not mark so much where it should be.
(II.ii.41-45)

It is not that Beatrice-Joanna is blind to the evidence of her eyesight, she still plans to rid herself of De Flores' "dog-face" (II.iii.151). But seduced by desire for Alsemero, she credits De Flores with an inner utilitarian beauty that she believes she perceives with her inner eye. Always sententious in reasoning for her own ends, she believes that she "was to blame" (II.ii.41) in her first judgment, in the same way that she believed herself "mistaken" about Alonzo. With her change of attitude towards De Flores that comes with her decision to have Alonzo murdered,

De Flores appears again as if summoned, knowing intuitively that her weakness for Alsemero will afford him occasion to realize his hopes if she will but "transgress" (II.ii.59).³⁸

With Alonzo's murder, Beatrice-Joanna is in De Flores' power, like Faustus and Mephistophilis, they have sealed their contract with blood, and the difficulty De Flores experiences in attempting to remove Alonzo's ring connotes nature's abhorrence in the same way that Faustus' blood congeals as he tries to write.

From this point on, De Flores' tone changes. Exulting in his triumph, he uses language reminiscent of Mephistophilis' words during Faustus' last hours. De Flores' "thoughts are at a banquet" (III.iii.18) as he gloats in anticipation of possessing Beatrice-Joanna as "sweet recompense" (III.iii.20), much as Mephistophilis anticipates Faustus' banquet of "pleasures . . . sauced with pain" as his victim dines at a perverse Last Supper with the scholars. Beatrice-Joanna's words of illusory joy and relief at Alonzo's death are similarly reminiscent of Faustus' situation as a victim:

My joys start at mine eyes, our sweet'st delights
Are evermore born weeping.

(III.iii.25, 26)

The inversion of values implicit in her naive exclamation parallels Mephistophilis' much more knowing observation, "Fools that laugh on earth, must weep in hell" (V.ii.106). Confident of his control over Beatrice-Joanna, De Flores prophesies his transformation in Beatrice-Joanna's eyes:

Thou'lt love anon
What thou so fear'st, and faint'st to venture on.

(III.iv.174, 175)

Like Faustus, whose love of Mephistophilis is born of despair, Beatrice-Joanna learns to love De Flores out of desperation as she seeks escape from the consequences of her decisions.

Like Mephistophilis, De Flores understands the nature of evil, and his suffering born of lust is accompanied by the agony of guilt. He does not rationalize his actions the way Beatrice-Joanna does, nor does he take refuge in shows of conventional morality. When Beatrice-Joanna cries, "Bless me! what hast thou done?" (III.iii.31) on seeing Alonzo's severed finger, De Flores points out to her the incongruity of her horror as authoress of the murder, and reminds Beatrice-Joanna that by her own deeds she has lost her "first condition" (III.iii.140) in the same way that Mephistophilis reminds Faustus that he is damned. Without the comfort of mental evasion, De Flores is himself plagued by conscience. Offered money as reward, he accepts Beatrice-Joanna's first "payment" with the comment, "'Twill hardly buy a capcase for one's conscience, tho'" (III.iii.45), and he is twice startled by Alonzo's ghost, whether we are to take the apparition as psychological or metaphysical makes little difference in terms of its effect. Encountering Tomazo, De Flores shies away, brooding:

I'd fain get off, this man's not for my company,
I smell his brother's blood when I come near him.
(IV.ii.40, 41)

And in a second encounter, he finds himself unable to harm Tomazo:

I cannot strike, I see his brother's wounds
Fresh bleeding in his eye, as in a crystal.
(V.ii.32, 33)

Characteristic of his demonic principle, De Flores is impotent to harm goodness and justice. Yet, as much man as demon, De Flores resembles

Faustus whose sense of guilt is attended by his seeing "Christ's blood streaming in the firmament" (V.ii.156).

De Flores' sense of guilt is complex in containing its demonic opposite, pride. Wholly motivated by lust, but without avarice, he assumes a posture of righteous outrage when Beatrice-Joanna presses gold upon him as quittance for Alonzo's murder:

Do you place me in the rank of verminous fellows,
To destroy things for wages? offer gold?
The life blood of a man! Is any thing
Valued too precious for my recompense?

(III.iii.68-71)

Acutely aware of the sanctity of human life, De Flores is cognizant of the enormity of his crime, and with demonic pride he demands recognition in the form of unlimited recompense as the price for his sufferings of conscience. Pride and guilt thus become complementary opposites in his personality. An offer of gold assumes De Flores' subordinate position as a hireling, and his rejection of it marks his elevation to a position of control. With a perverse code of ethics that eschews hypocrisy, De Flores pridefully points to his refusal to delegate Alonzo's murder to a "journeyman," claiming that his need to attend to the murder personally proceeded from his "own conscience" (III.iii.71, 72).

Like Mephistophilis, De Flores makes clear his torment as the condition that makes his conquest of his victim's body and soul a necessity. Yet unlike Mephistophilis, De Flores' pain is derived primarily from his love sickness. Describing his condition as the lover's "plague" (III.iv.153), he seeks consummation as a surcease from suffering, rather than as a source of delight:

. . . I'm in pain,
 And must be eas'd of you . . .
 (III.iii 100, 101)

and later,

I was greedy on't
 As the parch't earth of moisture . . .
 (III.iii 110)³⁹

De Flores' compulsion to act out evil himself, his recognition of his own guilt, and his labours to strip away Beatrice-Joanna's pretensions are Mephistophilean, for it is Mephistophilis who always apprises Faustus of his true condition, tempting him, and concealing nothing but divine mercy, in order to bring him to despair. De Flores' equivalent for bringing Beatrice-Joanna to despair that counterfeits delight is his making her recognize that their union is just and inevitable:

Nor is it fit we two, engag'd so jointly,
 Should part and live asunder
 (III.iv.98, 99)

His words are a kind of unmasking that reveals the hidden mystery of irrational impulse, and he symbolizes its triumph over reason. In the same way that Alsemero calls his love a "hidden malady . . . I understand not" (I.i 27, 28), Beatrice-Joanna shows her continued self-interest and obtuseness in replying to De Flores' argument, "I understand thee not" (III.iii 69), ironically, in not understanding De Flores she does not understand herself. Thus there is a similar irony in Tomazo's first impression of "honest De Flores" (IV.ii.36), because like "honest Iago" and Mephistophilis, De Flores is a source of self-knowledge for his victim.

But Beatrice-Joanna, always superficial in her judgments, mistakes De Flores' refusal of gold as a show of 'modesty' (III.iii.81), and she

rebuffs his first advances with a prim "How now, sir? This shows not well" (III.iii.92, 93). Mistaking physical virginity for real chastity, she accuses De Flores of making Alonzo's death the "murder of (her) honour" (III.iv.124), not realizing the true significance of her words. De Flores points out her hypocrisy, telling her:

Thou writ'st thyself a maid, thou whore in thy affection,
 . . . and that's a kind
 Of whoredom in thy heart. . . .

(III iv 145-147)

Hiding ugly truth from herself by masking it in commodious speech, she chides De Flores for the harsh reality his words intrude upon her:

Thy language is so bold and vicious,
 I cannot see which way I can forgive it
 With any modesty.

(III iv 124-126)

When De Flores dismisses her censure contemptuously, replying, "Push, you forget yourself" (III iv.127), and reminds her of her blood guilt, he is exhorting her also to look at herself. From her "self" proceeds the same impulse that has made her lust for Alsemero and bring about Alonzo's death. Yet she uses maidenly speech, perversions of reason, and belief in her superiority of birth (III iv.132-139) to conceal from herself the monstrous secret beneath her demure exterior. When Alsemero confronts her with her whoredom, her reply reflects her concern, not with the truth or falsity of the accusation, but with its being voiced, as if language had the power to create reality for her:

What a horrid sound it hath!
 It blasts a beauty to deformity. . . .⁴⁰
 (V.iii.32, 33)

Like Faustus, who claims to be a "divine in show" (I.i.3) while thinking to "get a deity" (I.i.63), Beatrice-Joanna attempts to bring

reality to her self-image as an ideal of maidenly perfection, while simultaneously submitting to concupiscence. But as Vermandero comments in replying to Alsemero's praise of her, "she had her fellow once" (III. iii.5-7), her mother who exists as a remembered ideal, an attempt to recreate the ideal as a living actuality would be a "sin" (III. iii.5). Once having created an illusory mental image of her own chaste innocence, Beatrice-Joanna retains it because she is afraid of self-recognition. When De Flores in demanding her favours says, "Justice invites your blood to understand me" (III. iii.102), she replies, "I dare not" (III. iii.113). At first refusing to believe the urgency and inevitability of De Flores' demands, Beatrice-Joanna insists on her pose of innocence, refusing to face her fallen condition that makes De Flores her master. The parallel De Flores makes with the Expulsion is evident:

You must forget your parentage to me,
 Y'are the deed's creature, by that name you lost
 Your first condition, and I challenge you,
 As peace and innocency has turn'd you out
 And made you one with me.

(III. iii.138-142)

De Flores' mastery of Beatrice-Joanna brings with it her understanding of her situation, if not of herself. When she cautions him to "take heed" De Flores' marks the play's *peripetæia* with a reply that establishes his dominance: "Take you heed first" (III. iii.95).⁴¹ Beyond the help of self-deception or dissimulation, Beatrice-Joanna finds her new "understanding" a "plague" (IV. i.6). Trying to find her way out of the labyrinth she has created for herself, Beatrice-Joanna still does not grasp that her machinations cannot bring her escape from herself. Isabella, disguised as a madwoman, utters words that superficially are doggerel, but which in fact delineate Beatrice-Joanna's situation as an

aspiring "Icarus" who falls, and who must "tread the lower labyrinth" of her own nature to discover a "clue" to thread her way out again (IV iii. 97-102).⁴² However, she remains irretrievably lost, because she persists in avoiding self-recognition.

Desperate, Beatrice-Joanna embroils herself further still in using Diaphanta as a tool to hide her loss of virginity, and when Diaphanta's transports of delight result in the plan's miscarriage, Beatrice-Joanna's words are an unconsciously ironic comment on her own weakness for passion:

No trusting of her life with such a secret,
That cannot rule her blood. . . .

(V. i. 6, 7)

Apparently wealthy and spoiled, Beatrice-Joanna has made the same mistake with Diaphanta that she has with De Flores. She finds externals of wealth impotent to serve her ends, because she believes that gold will provide her first with gratification of her desires, then with protection from the consequences. Placing her faith in the concrete and visible as always, she is unable to reckon with the passions of others any more than with her own.

Now symbiotically joined, Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores need each other. De Flores needs her for the gratification of his desires, and she now needs him for survival. When her scheme to conceal her lost virginity from Alsemero founders, she turns readily to De Flores as "a man worth loving" (V. i. 75). Taking his evil as her good, she perverts the Christian tradition that man's excellence is in large part determined by the beneficence of his actions,⁴³ by so doing she continues her self-deception that causes her to ignore the evidence of her senses, perpet-

uating the fiction that he is still her dotting subordinate:

How heartily he serves me! His face loathes one;
But look upon his care, who would not love him?
(V.i.69-71)

There is an element of Marlovian "bloody farce" when De Flores moves with calm efficiency amid the confusion ensuing from the fire he has set, and Vermandero in his ignorance approves of this Mephistophilis who assumes the proportions of Lucifer, in going about yet another murder in the hell he has created. Beatrice-Joanna, in seconding her father's opinion, declares with unwitting irony that De Flores is indeed "a wondrous necessary man" (V.i.90). He is necessary not only as her instrument, but as a cosmic principle bringing about her and his own destruction to restore the natural order which has been disturbed through the necessity of her nature.

As the evil mounts, images of blackness and deformity increase in frequency and specificity, producing a cumulative effect of hellishness now less a state of mind than a controlling metaphysical principle in the external world. Alsemero's essential goodness and freedom from blood guilt allow him to perceive correctly, when finally he is furnished with evidence of Beatrice-Joanna's adultery and De Flores' role as her demonic lover. Now he casts aside his idolatrous love, referring to "the temple where blood and beauty first unlawfully fir'd their devotion" (V.iii.75-77), seeing Beatrice-Joanna as she is, he calls her "all deformed" (V.iii.78). Alsemero is able now to distinguish between reality and appearance, and he sees De Flores without his "black mask" (V.iii.4), a shape-changing tempter who appears to the morally weak as a source of good:

How should blind men know you from fair-fac'd saints?
(V.iii.111)

But for Beatrice-Joanna, De Flores' actions that she believes will give her dreams substance continue to impart to him the brightness of Lucifer:

The east is not more beauteous than his service
(V.i.71)

And not until she overhears him admitting her whoredom to Alsemero does she abandon her illusion.

At Alsemero's bidding, De Flores joins Beatrice-Joanna in what was to have been her bridal chamber, and their deaths immediately following are perhaps meant to be seen as a parallel revealing the true life-denying nature of their final orgasm terminating a union born of lust and murder. The associations of Alicant with hell and of De Flores with the devil are compounded by the dying De Flores' boast,

. . . I coupled with your mate at barley-break;
Now we are left in hell.
(V.iii.166, 167)⁴⁴

All Alicant may be seen as within the confines of this "game's" hellish circle, and Vermandero echoes Mephistophilis' tortured words in lamenting, "We are all there, it circumscribes u here" (V.iii.166). Too late the remorseful Beatrice-Joanna recognizes that her vision of Eden was illusory and that she has been in hell all along:

I have kiss'd poison . . . , strok'd a serpent
(V.iii.69)

De Flores' role as a demonic tempter who exercises control in a hell both psychological and metaphysical is reinforced by *The Changeling's* time scheme during the perverse three-day "grace" period, as it were, that Beatrice-Joanna begs on the pretext of keeping her virginity a little longer. The progression of events roughly parallels the three days of Christ's crucifixion, his descent into hell, and the Ascension.

The night after Alsemero and Beatrice-Joanna first see each other is a time of ripeness marked by "big-bellied Luna" (III.ii.72, 73), associated usually with the onset of decay, and in the sub-plot, with love madness.⁴⁵

Alonzo's murder, De Flores' crime that like Faustus' signing of his bond, parallels the Crucifixion, results in the "eclipse" (III.iii.15) that Beatrice-Joanna has sought. Now Alicant is plunged into a dark "hell" during which Beatrice-Joanna's evil gleams briefly like the "meteor" (V.iii.156) upon which she blames her fortune, and De Flores shines in her eyes with artificial beauty. At this juncture "time opens" (II.ii.49) like hell-mouth in response to Beatrice-Joanna's will, while Tomazo, a symbol of nemesis, must "bear the smart with patience for a time" (IV.ii.79).⁴⁶ The time is one of error and misunderstanding, signifying the chaotic condition of this Alicant-hell; Tomazo mistakenly believes Alsemero guilty of Alonzo's murder, and Vermandero wrongly thinks Antonio and Franciscus guilty; appropriately, he says that "the time accuses 'em" (IV.ii.9).

Like Tomazo, Isabella waits with scant patience for time to run its course:

Oh heaven! Is this the waiting moon?
Does love turn fool, run mad, and all at once?
(IV.iii.152-153)

This sense of sanity in suspension in the impatient certainty that it will reassert itself provides, as in *Dr. Faustus*, an awareness of inevitability, a sure knowledge that time will run its course; dawn will come as the "day star" brightens (IV.v.26), paling Luna's "opacious body" (V.iii.198). The love-mad Franciscus' letter is the work of one who

attempts, like Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores, to create life out of death, and in the wrong season of time, yet even he knows the certainty of flux:

. . . 'tis the same sun
 That causeth to grow and enforceth to wither,--

 Shapes and transshapes, destroys and builds again,
 I come in winter to you,

 I spring and live a lover.

(IV.iii.17-24)

But before the cycle of time may be completed, the final convulsion bringing cosmic regeneration must occur. Manifested in mortal affairs at Alicant with the final events of Beatrice-Joanna's and De Flores' consummation in death, the moment of death and rebirth is a feast of fools not unlike the entertainment which Alibius projects for what he anticipates as a gay nuptial celebration:

A mixture of our madmen and our fools,
 To finish (as it were) and make the fag
 Of all our revels, the third night from the first
 To make a frightful pleasure,
 To teach it in a wild and distracted measure,
 Though out of form and figure, breaking time's head,
 It were no matter, 'twould be healed again

(III.ii.234-245)

The "celebration" that actually transpires is a climax of death for Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores in their "fatal hour" (V.iii.183) following a parodic sacrament of their flesh and blood sealing their final union.

When passion, De Flores' operating principle, reigns at Alicant, De Flores the man is its victim, dying defiantly and regretting nothing:

Yes, and her honour's prize was my reward,
 I thank life for nothing
 But that pleasure, it was so sweet to me,
 That I have drunk up all, left none behind

(V.iii.170-173)

Taken as symbol, De Flores' words express the self-devouring nature of evil, so that its consummation is also a purging. As a demonic figure, De Flores necessarily dies unredeemed because he is unredemptive; yet as a man he is an unfortunate victim of the circumstances of his birth. Twisted in feature and mind, he is denied that portion of worldly delight that perhaps is any man's due, so he seizes all he can by becoming Beatrice-Joanna's means of gratification and self-annihilation.

The self-destructive element in their passions proves in the end salutary for the moral and social order. Vermandero as Beatrice-Joanna's father takes on a symbolically universal significance as the Father when Beatrice-Joanna tells him with her dying words,

I am that blood was taken from you
For your better health
(V. iii. 152-153)

Not only is Vermandero's dynasty purged of evil, her and De Flores' deaths have been cathartic for society and the moral order. Alsemero, although for a time mistaken, has remained unstained in keeping "the same church, same devotion" (I. i. 36). Fittingly it is he who affirms the re-establishment of order through the working of immutable moral law:

. . . Justice hath so right
The guilty hit, that innocence is quit
By proclamation, and may joy again
(V. iii. 187-188)

Alsemero's observation resembles the choric conclusion to *Dr Faustus*. Like Beatrice-Joanna, a "broken rib" whose guilt finally is expunged by the working out of cosmic justice, Faustus, the deformed "branch that might have grown full straight" is "cut" (V. iii. 20).⁴⁷ In both plays, deformity is eliminated from society by violent excision.

Mephistophilis and De Flores as villainous subordinates are ultimately agents of purgation; themselves representative of moral deformity, their capacity to consummate desire brings death to their nominal masters as another kind of consummation, perfect and horrible in its finality.

FOOTNOTES

¹Eve: If I did wrong, it was not great surprise--it was the treacherous serpent closed my eyes (*Jeu d'Adam*, c. 1100).

²My consideration of Mephistophilis is based primarily on the 1616 edition of *Dr. Faustus*, the first of the editions referred to as the "B" series of texts (see Greg and Bakeless). My choice in preference to the "A" series starting with the 1604 edition accords with J. B. Steane's acceptance of the widely held view that "nowadays it is the 1616 text that is in favour" as the substantive text. (See J. B. Steane, ed., *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 261). While I agree with Steane that the A Text is perhaps "artistically stronger," I believe the B Text to contain material that cannot be dismissed as merely unauthorized, irrelevant, and second-rate writing by William Birde and Samuel Rowley. (For a posited history of emendations, see John Bakeless, *The Tragical History of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), pp. 293-296.) Regardless of authorship, the episodes concerned with Faustus' conjuring may be seen as integral to the theme, and highly significant. (See Warren D. Smith, "The Nature of Evil in *Dr. Faustus*," (*MLR*, LX, 1965), pp. 171-175.) I have used J. B. Steane's edition, in which he has taken the liberty of drawing occasionally on the A Text. While Steane makes no claim, therefore, to textual "purity," his edition provides the best version for critical work of the sort I have undertaken here.

³In *The Black Book* (1604) Middleton, using the *persona* of Lucifer, describes a "villainous lieutenant" who "had a head of hair like one of my devils in *Dr. Faustus*, when the old theatre cracked and frighted the audience." While references to Lucifer are of course Renaissance commonplaces, Middleton's description in *A Moral* invites comparison with Marlowe's devils. Other evidences of Marlowe's influence on Middleton include lines apparently borrowed from *Edward II*, and a reference to Tamburlaine. (See A. H. Bullen, ed., *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, Vol. VIII (New York: AMS Press, 1964), pp. 7, 13, 25, 266.)

⁴N. W. Bawcutt arrives at a similar conclusion in describing De Flores. (N. W. Bawcutt, ed., *The Changeling* (London: Methuen, 1958), p. lv-lvi.)

⁵This parallel has been noted by Bawcutt, *ibid*, p. lvi.

⁶For example, the Wakefield cycle's Pikeharnes (*The Mactatio Abel*), coarse of speech and always in a state of incipient rebellion, bears a similarity to De Flores. Mephistophilis cannot be shown readily to resemble such traditional figures in terms of his character, but as I show, he functions according to theological principles shared also by the devils of religious drama. The Wakefield cycle's Noah (*Processus Noe Cum Filiis*) provides a description of Satan's fall and subsequent enticement of man in terms similar to Mephistophilis' description when questioned by Faustus. (Cf. Noah play, 1.15 ff., and *Dr. Faustus*, I.iii.62.) Mephis-

tophilis' usually flat, humourless, and factual lines bear a resemblance to those of Death (*Everyman*), while his function resembles traditional vice figures in the morality plays (e.g., *The Castle of Perseverance*).

⁷Presumably Mephistophilis' disguise is also meant as a satirical barb at the mendicant orders, and the Roman Church in general. The joke was very nearly traditional, exemplified, of course, in Chaucer.

⁸The principle by which a demonic subordinate serves a demonic master while appearing to serve a nominal master who has fallen prey to appetite does much, I think, to explain the superficially inconsistent behaviour that Bosola displays (*The Duchess of Malfi*, see Chapter 5, pp. 204-205).

⁹See L. W. Cushman, *The Devil and the Vice in the English Dramatic Literature before Shakespeare* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1900), pp. 20, 21.

¹⁰Frank Manley's view that Faustus' transformation into a "spirit" and his damnation have metaphysical significance presents theological difficulties. However, he succeeds in showing the symbolic significance of the B Text's conjuring episodes, which he regards as substantive. See F. Manley, "The Nature of Faustus," *MP*, LXVI (1969), 218-231. W. W. Greg's view that Faustus keeps his human soul but becomes a spirit (i.e., "a devil in forme and substance") is based primarily on Faustus' own crazed lines, and those of his tempter; Greg's view thus hardly seems a satisfactory solution to a metaphysical problem. See W. W. Greg, "The Damnation of Faustus," *MLR*, XLI (1946), 97-107. Susan Snyder's view that "this amalgam of human and diabolical suggests a parody of Christ, at once human and divine" is perhaps a somewhat more balanced view because it stresses dramatic effect, rather than the metaphysical element, which must remain in doubt. See Susan Snyder, "Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* as an Inverte Saint's Life," *SP*, LXIII (1966), p. 572.

¹¹For a discussion of Faustus' enslavement to sense, see A. Mizener, "The Dualism in *Dr. Faustus*," in *Critics on Marlowe*, J. O'Neill, ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), pp. 115-117.

¹²These lines reveal a weakness in Frank Manley's argument that Faustus is meant to be taken as a "spirit." It would have been regarded not only as theologically unsound, but as actually blasphemous to represent Faustus, a mortal, as beyond redemption as a result of external metaphysical forces. Similarly, it would have been regarded as equally unsound to portray Satan as capable of appropriating for himself any part of divine creation, physical or spiritual, while God's mercy remained available (see *Matthew* 2). Even Faustus shows his awareness of this fundamental item of doctrine in his reference to *Luke* 23:43 (*Dr. Faustus*, IV.v.45).

¹³The theological proposition that all things temporal contain their opposites was held as a central tenet describing the dyadic nature of Being. The tension between essential elements, notably good and evil,

was held to be resolved only in the infinite. (See A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp. 83, 114, 120, 343.)

¹⁴ Tradition has it that Alexander played Roxana false, taking Statira to wife. Roxana revenged herself by stabbing Statira to death, and Alexander is reputed to have been poisoned by the conspirator Cassander. The moral appears to be that even a self-professed demi-god will reap the rewards of lust-motivated betrayal. Homer's song of Oenon's death has an equally prophetic irony. Pierced by Hercules' arrows, Paris called on his wife Oenon, whom he had abandoned for the fatal beauty of Helen. Oenon refused her healing powers, and Paris died. Grief-stricken and remorseful, Oenon hanged herself. When Faustus summons Helen's shade, he becomes himself a lustful Paris who has foresaken truth for mere appearance. Faustus' ambition to encircle Germany with "walls of brass" (I.1.87) is reminiscent of Amphion, described by Faustus as "he that built the walls of Thebes with the sound of his melodious harp" (II.1.28, 29). The myth of Amphion has it that all his children but two were slain by Apollo and Artemis, and that Amphion was himself killed by Apollo for trying to take vengeance on the Delphic priests. His punishment continued in Tartarus. The parallels implicit in Faustus' situation are evident; his unholy powers equalling those of Amphion deny him forever the City of God. See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1955) and the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (London: Batchworth, 1959). John Cutts draws similar conclusions to mine regarding the significance of the mythology in this passage. (J. P. Cutts, *The Left Hand of God* (Haddonfield: Haddonfield House, 1973), p. 137.)

¹⁵ For a detailed analysis of Faustus' consistently fallacious arguments from a logician's point of view, see G. Morgan, "Harlequin Faustus. Marlowe's Comedy of Hell," *HAB*, XVIII (1966), 22-34. Faustus' incomplete quotations from scripture (I.1.40-43) show his preoccupation with determinism and damnation. For the passages Faustus omits, see Romans 6:23 and I John 1:9. For a discussion of Faustus' omissions in quoting scripture, see Cutts, p. 117.

¹⁶ Susan Snyder cites Augustine's *De sermone Domine in monte* (I. XXII.74) to show that "Christian theologians have always recognized the arrogance at the core of despair, the stiff-necked refusal to beg as a gift the salvation one cannot earn" (Snyder, p. 567).

¹⁷ Susan Snyder points to Richard Baines's deposition against Marlowe, accusing him (among other things) of saying that "Moses was but a juggler." Snyder asserts that the words even if said in jest may reflect Marlowe's view of "the saint as magician," and hence an "inverted saint" whose history is a parodic parallel of a saint's life (Snyder, p. 566).

¹⁸ Sherman Hawkins sees the contract, with Faustus' parodic line, "Consummatum est" (I.iv.73) as a "black mass," a "perverse memorial of the Crucifixion" that "inverts creation" (Sherman Hawkins, "The Education of Faustus" (*SEL*, VI, 1966), 194).

¹⁹The theme of hope and fear as the two overriding properties of mortals making them vulnerable to the incursions of evil is dealt with explicitly in *The Duchess of Malfi*.

²⁰Rejecting the limitations Ramus places on logic (I.i.7), Faustus continues a search for first causes, citing Aristotle's doctrine as his authority (I.i.13). Yet Michael Hathaway holds that Faustus has "given his allegiance to Ramus." See "The Theology of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*," *RenD*, N.S. 3 (1970), 56. Hathaway's logic supporting his claim is somewhat tortuous; the sense of the passage more obviously seems to suggest that Marlowe is thoroughly critical of Aristotelean scholars. Marlowe's Cambridge background and his sympathetic treatment of Pierre de la Ramée in *The Massacre of Paris* seem to support my view over that of Hathaway. See also Cutts, p. 110.

²¹The figures of Alexander and Roxanne, in Faustus' own words, are "but shadows, not substantial" (IV.ii.55). By the time he conjures Helen's shade, Faustus is so caught up in his appetites that he no longer distinguishes between reality and illusion. Yet if Mephistophilis' creatures summoned at Faustus' command are illusory, the power of evil to create illusion is not. Benvolio, in thinking like Faustus, that "the devil cannot hurt him" (IV.ii.46) and that he can "control" evil, finds himself transformed. The horsecourser episode shows a beast without substance, and it is transformed into a "bottle of hay" (VI.vi.74). Cf. Geoffrey Whitney's emblem of "flesh (that) witherest like hay." See H. Green, ed., *Geoffrey Whitney: A Choice of Emblems* (New York: Blom, 1967), p. 217.

²²This passage is not included in the A Text, thus placing Faustus' responsibility for his damnation more directly with himself. I contend that the theological inconsistencies in Mephistophilis' final statements in the B Text are representations of demonic self-delusion induced by pride of conquest. The view I state here falls into the category that Harry Levin would call "pedestrian counterargument," perhaps. See H. Levin, *The Overreacher* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952), p. 132. I believe Levin to be far too heavily influenced in his view by nineteenth century romanticism and Goethe's *Faust* (Levin, p. 133). In taking a similar view of Faustus' aspirations as God-like, and of Marlowe as "blasphemous," Nicholas Brooke relies more heavily on the climate of Renaissance thought, rather than textual evidence. (N. Brooke, "The Moral Tragedy of *Dr. Faustus*," in O'Neill, ed., pp. 93-114.) His treatment perhaps is therefore somewhat anachronistic from a theological standpoint. By contrast, Leo Kirschbaum argues that "There is no more obvious Christian document in all Elizabethan drama than *Dr. Faustus*." (L. Kirschbaum, "*Dr. Faustus: A Reconsideration*," in O'Neill, ed., pp. 80-93)

23, "It is a comfort in wretchedness to have companions in woe." Lucifer's, and hence Mephistophilis' hell subsists on their hatred and envy of man whom God has placed above them, and it is this motive that in its simplest form approaches Coleridge's controversial judgment of Iago's aims as springing from "motiveless malignity." For traditional views of Satan's hatred and envy, see L. W. Cushman's summary of non-dramatic literary sources (Cushman, pp. 1, 2).

24. Written in 1621 or 1622, *The Changeling* was performed at Court in 1623-24. Quotations are taken from A. H. Gomme's edition in *Jacobean Tragedies*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969. In addition, I have consulted editions by N. W. Bawcutt (1958) and A. H. Bullen (1885), both of which were sources used by Gomme.

25. See Catherine A. Hébert, "A Note on the Significance of the Title of Middleton's *The Changeling*," *CLA*, XII, i (1968), 66-69.

26. The Renaissance regularly conceived of sexual desire and love as sickness. Not the least of its symptoms was considered to be distortion of judgment. See L. Babb, *The Elizabethan Malady* (East Lansing: Michigan State College Press, 1951), pp. 128-174. Among other sources, Babb cites Jacques Ferrand's *Erotomania* (1640).

27. The plethora of articles on this image pattern suggests that Middleton succeeded in appealing to his audience's capacity for fascination with the sexually morbid. See Norman Berlin, "The 'Finger' Image . . . in *The Changeling*," *ESA*, 12, 2 (1969), 162-166; D. Kehler, "Rings and Jewels in *The Changeling*," *ELN*, V, i (1967), 15, and T. Helton's discuss on of the ring and wound as "tokens." See "*The Changeling*: Ring Imagery," *Explicator*, XXI (1963), Item 74.

28. N. W. Bawcutt has recognized the presence of this group of images, although he does not accord them the central significance I suggest. (See Bawcutt, p. xlvi.)

29. The conventional Renaissance attitude towards instant infatuation seems to have been that the lover possesses a physical predisposition over which he has very little control when he is presented with the object of sense experience that excites his excessive impulses. See Babb, p. 132 ff.

30. Dorothy M. Farr comments that the characters' "keynote is mediocrity," and their "fate is a natural consequence of their obtuseness and simplicity." See "*The Changeling*," *MLR*, LXII (1967), 586.

³¹Beatrice-Joanna's presentiment is perhaps similar to an *oraculum*. See Babb, p. 16, and Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, W. H. Stahl, intro. (New York: Columbia, 1952), p. 89.

³²The passage connotes the idolatry implicit in soulless sexual love, whereby Beatrice-Joanna rejects God for the false deity, Amor. For an explication of the religion of love, and its medieval origins, see C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 6.

³³The circumstances of De Flores' birth are symptomatic of inversion. He for some reason has been "thrust out to servitude." Privileged positions of servility customarily were found for the illegitimate offspring of nobility, and that possibly is De Flores' situation. If that is the case, disorder in Alicant may be seen as having cosmic origins as a result of the original crime at De Flores' begetting. Alicant may thus be seen as a kind of House of Atreus, and De Flores functions in principle like *King Lear's* Edmund. Similarly, references to "deformity" are reminiscent of Richard III and the large body of literature dealing with his unnatural birth. While *The Changeling* does not provide sufficiently explicit details to support this interpretation as definitive, De Flores' character and situation bear associations that invite conjecture of this sort. Clearly either De Flores' illegitimate birth ("tumbling" suggests a fall), or a later fall from an unspecified position of privilege, is analogous to Mephistophilis' fallen condition, as a result of an earlier transgression.

³⁴Cf. Ovid's lines:

Through shouldering crowds on all her errands run,
Though graver business wait the while undone
If she commands your presence on her way
Home from the ball to lackey her, obey!

(*The Art of Love*, II, 223. R. Humphries, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966.)

Middleton evidently had Ovid in mind. Lollo comments on Antonio, "He's part *Ars Amandi*" (III 11.163). For Renaissance attitudes towards courtly love, see J. E. Ruoff, intro., *Major Elizabethan Poetry and Prose* (New York: Crowell, 1972), pp. 60-65.

³⁵Middleton generally regards women with sympathy for their weakness. In *Women Beware Women*, for example, Livia acts as a procuress out of pity for her brother, and Bianca becomes quickly inured to her seduction by the Duke. The nearest approach to feminine virtue in the play is Isabella, whom Livia tricks into a union with Hippolito, whose interest in her is much more than avuncular. Even she enters into a fraudulent marriage so that she can continue their liaison in relative security. Clara (*The Spanish Gypsy*) has moral strength, but is a victim of rape by Roderigo. *The Changeling's* Isabella is a rare example of feminine strength and virtue that goes unscathed, but her character probably is, like the sub-plot itself, the work of William Rowley (Bullen, p. lix).

³⁶The imagery of secret lust as a pattern relating individuals to Alicant, the madhouse, and Alsemero's bed is, I believe, far too explicit to be other than deliberate. A speech by Roderigo (*The Spanish Gypsy*) indicates that Middleton was conscious of such parallels, and used them for poetic effect:

. . . O, what vile
prisons
Make we our bodies to our immortal souls!
Brave tenants to bad houses; 'tis a dear rent
They pay for naught lodging: the soul, the mistress,
The body, the caroch that carries her,
Sins the swift wheels that hurry her away,
Our will, the coachman rashly driving on,
Till coach and carriage both are quite o'erthrown. . . .
(III. i. 1-8)

By analogy, *The Changeling's* Isabella may be seen as a Psyche figure, symbolic of the soul confined in a corrupt prison house of flesh, but unlike Beatrice-Joanna's weak soul, Isabella has the strength to resist the onslaughts of temptation, the "sins" that like Antonio would "hurry her away." Cf. imagery of "tenants" and "houses" in *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

³⁷A. H. Gomme provides a gloss on this passage, stating that "diamonds were supposed to be luminous" (Gomme, p. 253). See my comments on the associations of artificial light with the demonic in reference to *The Revenger's Tragedy* (Chapter 6, p. 298). Diamonds also were held to provide protection from demons, thus the diamond image in *The Changeling* is ambivalent.

³⁸De Flores' expression of anticipation presumably involves a sexual quibble:

She spreads and mounts then like arithmetic,
1, 10, 100, 1000, 10000. . . .
(II. ii. 62-63)

The idea seems to have been prevalent that women were given over to concupiscence and promiscuity once eros had made its initial inroads. Cf. the passage in *The Revenger's Tragedy* so similar that it may have been Middleton's source:

. . . Why, she first begins with me,
Who afterwards to thousands proves a whore.
(IV. iv. 80-82)

³⁹De Flores exhibits symptoms described by Babb as the second stage of the malady, "love melancholy," caused by "unsatisfied love." The best cure was held to be consummation (see Burton, III.218). Unlike the first, or "sanguine" stage, the "melancholy" stage is (as its name implies) caused by cold and dry humours (Babb, p. 134). Logically, the sufferer thirsts. Presumably Tomazo's "fiery thirst" (IV. ii. 67) has its origin in choleric disorder. Franciscus' letter is addressed to Isabella "from

whom (he) expect(s) his cure" from madness (IV.iii.27, 28), suggesting that sexual intercourse was seen as a remedy for a malady.

⁴⁰The capacity for language to create illusions of reality appears to have been of considerable concern. See Chapter V for a detailed treatment of the subject in its relationship to the theme of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.

⁴¹A similar exchange occurs at a parallel juncture between Vasques and Soranzo (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*). When Soranzo says loftily to Vasques, "Vasques, thou shalt know--", Vasques interrupts, "Nay, I will know no more, for now comes your turn to know" (IV.iii.276-278). In both cases, the villainous subordinate makes clear the facts of his nominal master's situation, but fails to make him understand himself.

⁴²Isabella confuses two myths to good effect. It was Ariadne who gave Theseus a thread to find his way out of the labyrinth. By juxtaposing this myth with that of Icarus' fall, Isabella reinforces the theme of secret impulse as the spring of passion leading to blasphemous aspiration. The reference to Icarus associates Beatrice-Joanna with Faustus (Prologue.21-22). When Alsemero threatens to "ransack" Beatrice-Joanna's heart, she replies, "'Tis an easy passage" (V.iii.40). The metaphor of a passage relates the depths of Beatrice-Joanna's nature to the passages of Alicant where Alonzo is murdered.

⁴³Lovejoy, p. 86.

⁴⁴A. H. Bullen provides a gloss stating that the game's alternate name was *The Last Couple in Hell* (Bullen, Vol. 6, 110), and A. H. Gomme draws attention to the sub-plot's specific parallel in a madman's line, "Catch there, catch the last couple in hell" (III.ii.151). I believe there may be a further significance to the game's name in this context. Conceivably the ring was made with bailey scattered on the ground, and the game played by couples of opposite sexes may have had some ritualistic significance originally as a harvest or fertility rite. Thus its life-affirming connotations are juxtaposed with associations of death, appropriate to the action in the play. See also Norman Berlin's commentary on the symbolism of these lines (*ESA*, XII, ii, 1969, 166). Further, there appears to be a possible analogy between the couple's attempt to escape the ring and the analogous extraction of Alonzo's finger from the betrothal ring. See Chapter V for other associations of rings with fertility and death.

⁴⁵The use of moon imagery in connection with love madness, time's decay, and the rebirth of order relates the play's structure to a long tradition evident in such earlier plays as *Endymion* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Franciscus pretends to rave nonsensically about "lycanthropi" (III.ii.77) being abroad on the night of the full moon. Babb cites Ferrand's *Erotomania* as a source expressing the belief that "lovers become wolf-mad," and he quotes Boastuau's *Theatrum Mundi*, which holds that if lovers are jealous, "they become madde, and playe the *Lycantropes*, and goe all night like raging wolues" (Babb, pp. 136, 137).

⁴⁶Dorothea Kehler has commented on the strong sense of moral certainty Middleton displays in *The Changeling*, in contrast to the scepticism of other Jacobean dramatists (*ELN*, V, 1, 1967, 15). Tomazo's presence and De Flores' reactions to him are central elements establishing the moral polarities Kehler suggests.

⁴⁷Cf. *John* 15:1-4.

CHAPTER IV

THIS FOOLISH-COMPOUNDED CLAY¹

Among his other demonic qualities, the villainous subordinate embodies the spirit of mockery, the cosmic laughter which accompanies the ascendancy of bestiality over divine reason in man. The villainous subordinate and his master, like most men, experience and display fear of the mockery that reveals their baser nature to themselves, the weaker the moral consciousness, the greater the baser nature's threat of pre-eminence, and the greater the fear of its revelation.² The villainous subordinate, arrogantly masking from himself a deep-seated and agonizing awareness of his inferiority, labours to reduce the stature of his master through mockery, thus affirming his own fancied superiority,³ the greater his social betters' fear of mockery, the more assured is the villainous subordinate's success. Iago's dry wit (*Othello*)⁴ and Mosca's gleeful chortling (*Volpone*) are both the means and the signal of their success in reducing their masters.⁵

We have seen in an earlier chapter that Guise (*The Massacre at Paris*) displays a dread of mockery to the extent that he will not stop at murder to eliminate its cause. Iago and Mosca similarly see laughter as a potentially devastating weapon, because it excites irrational passion in the victim who is its object, while affirming the victim's inferiority. They attempt to compensate for their sense of personal inadequacy and inferior status by mocking wit and cunning, which affords them a belief in their

own superiority over those whose weaknesses and follies they exploit.⁶ As embodiments of psychological inversion, Iago and Mosca experience the emotional release of triumphant laughter when they see their nominal masters' bestiality ascendant over their reason, because that condition, when engendered by the villainous subordinate, is evidence of his mastery.⁷ Thus the villainous subordinate, as one who mocks his nominal master, is symbolic of the absurdity that passion becomes when uncontrolled by reason.

Regarding his own advancement as the highest good, the villainous subordinate looks on his ability to destroy his victim as a high art.⁸ Iago derives cynical pleasure in asserting his intellectual superiority by victimizing Roderigo and Cassio, and his masterpiece is his destruction of Othello. Similarly, Mosca becomes exuberant in the self-congratulation that his reduction of the bestial legacy-seekers affords him. Iago and Mosca exercise their keenest wit when their fortunes are on the rise, and when they are prosecuting their aims without impediment; it is then that the comic masks concealing their inner ugliness from their masters are most secure. Yet these same comic masks reflect the inner ugliness of the victims, when Othello's savagery assumes pre-eminence over his veneer of reason, and when Volpone's appetite is most clearly revealed as insatiable, Iago and Mosca exhibit their greatest vitality and capacity for wit. Thus the villainous subordinate's wit, as a reflection of his demonic inner laughter, is a manifestation of his victim's delusions and psychological inversion.

While Iago and Mosca are similar in principle, each is highly individualized, and their societies are quite dissimilar. *Othello's* Cyprus

is an outpost of Venetian intrigue,⁹ yet the military society it contains does not appear as intrinsically corrupt, avaricious, and hypocritical as the merchant community of *Volpone's* Venice. Iago's vengeful exploitation of Othello's weakness admits of the hero's nobility and innocence as a source of his vulnerability, while *Volpone's* vulnerability proceeds wholly from his vicious tendencies. Thus Iago's jealousy of Othello and Cassio is characterized by his envy of their goodness, rather than the envy of rank and wealth that motivates Mosca's destruction of *Volpone*. Iago's brand of ambition is characterized only superficially by his seeking the preferment of rank accorded Cassio, and his desiring to revenge himself on Othello for supposedly having performed his conjugal "office" (I.iii.385) with Emilia. These reasons need not be dismissed as mere "motive hunting" on the part of Iago, nor need we discount the possibility of his latent homosexuality and misogyny.¹⁰ Together, Iago's motives--stated or unstated, conscious or unconscious--make up a matrix of evil impulse that operates according to its own necessity, a love of evil and a hatred of good which amounts to " motiveless malignity."¹¹ Emilia, whose experience of men evidently is based primarily on her unsatisfactory relationship with Iago, expresses the principle of evil having its own necessity, at least as she has seen to be the case in her husband:

They are not ever jealous for the cause,
But jealous for they are jealous: 'tis a monster,
Begot upon itself, born of itself.

(III.iv.156-160)

Thus Iago is indeed the embodiment of Othello's jealousy, the "monster in his thought" (III.iii.111),¹² although the unfortunate Othello uses the phrase with unconscious irony in referring to what he believes are Iago's suspicions.

Iago's professed belief in Othello's adultery with Emilia, and his complaint, as old as armies, that the gradation list has been ignored in Othello's promotion of a theoretician over a field soldier (I.i 18-27), square quite consistently with his more universal expression of envy; Iago hates Cassio, because above all Cassio has "a daily beauty in his life" which makes Iago "ugly" (IV.iii 18-19). Iago's jealousy springs from his own inadequacy, which he probably recognizes, but arrogantly refuses to acknowledge. Like Guise and De Flores, he is naturally inferior in his personal qualities, and vindictively petty in his instincts.¹³

Like other villainous subordinates, Iago achieves a brief ascendancy because of a weakness that already exists in his victim's psychology; and the disorder engendered by Iago may be seen as symptomatic of Othello's vulnerability. Moreover, Othello himself brings about disorder by entering into a relationship with Desdemona that seems to have been regarded from the Renaissance standpoint as unnatural in a number of ways. While I shall explore each of these more fully in later contexts, I shall refer to them briefly here as a preface to further remarks. First, Desdemona and Othello do not really fall in love; rather, they become infatuated with their ideal conceptions of each other.¹⁴ Othello makes Desdemona a projection of his ideal self, putting absolute trust in the perfection of her maidenhood, she, in turn, falls in love with the image Othello presents her of the indomitable warrior. Thus neither is in a position to evaluate the other's humanity, or to admit the least imperfection in self or mate without disastrous consequences. Desdemona dares not admit to having lost the handkerchief, and ironically succeeds only in concealing her innocence, while attempting to avoid Othello's suspicion. She

becomes Iago's victim by embarking on a career of seeming, thus hoping to protect herself through illusion. As a result, she shares in Iago's principle of demonic unreality:

I am not merry, but I do beguile
The thing I am, by seeming otherwise
(II.i.122-123)

Desdemona's choice of phrase now resembles Iago's demonic expression of his illusory and insubstantial quality: "I am not what I am" (I.i.65). Othello dares not admit his suspicions, because his relationship with Desdemona is founded on an unconscious lie of impossible ideality. Although, or perhaps because, Othello and Desdemona wed in absolute innocence, they regard each other as ideal beings. They inevitably become mockeries of their own humanity, a condition precluding any possibility of a satisfactory relationship.

Further points of conflict appear to be that Desdemona is a Venetian and a Christian by temperament, whereas Othello is a Moor, whose Christian restraint is acquired and superficial.¹⁵ Moreover, Othello is both a warrior and a negro, attributes commonly associated in the Renaissance with excessive passion; as Othello himself comments, he loves "too well" (V.ii.345).¹⁶ Othello compromises his warrior's nature by falling in love with Desdemona's adoration of him, and she undergoes a fateful change by falling in love with war, thinking of herself as a "warrior" (III.iv.152). So there is much in Othello's and Desdemona's relationship suggestive of a disorder that exists before Iago sets about perverting Othello's goodness. In that sense, the Mephistophelian Iago is "summoned," so to speak, by the unwitting protagonists who have disturbed cosmic harmony by their potentially unnatural union. When Iago gives his fabricated

account of Cassio's self-incrimination in his sleep,¹⁷ he ascribes to Cassio the words, "Cursed fate, that gave thee the Moor!" (III.iii.432). In Iago's account, Cassio supposedly refers to Desdemona, mistaking Iago for her, yet symbolically, Iago speaks a sinister truth. He, Iago, has indeed been given by fate to Othello. In that sense, Iago may be seen as a Mephistophelean demon whose diabolic "love" for Othello is the product of Othello's violation of the natural order.

While Othello, subjected to Venetian hypocrisy and prejudice, is a victim of a society in which he must always remain to some degree an alien because of his race and origins, he is above all a victim of his own innocence, nobility, and weakness of reason. Iago, like other villainous subordinates, reflects the passion which gains ascendancy as a result of Othello's weakness, and his existence as symbolic of a cosmic principle is evident in the storm imagery. By implication, the storm the Venetian ships encounter on their way to Cyprus is symbolic of the chaotic train of circumstances set in motion by Othello's imperfect union with Desdemona, or perhaps simply fortune, and references to the heathen Turk suggest the passionate and irrational element of human nature that cannot withstand the storm's buffets. Montano observes:

If that the Turkish fleet
Be not enshelter'd, and embay'd, they are drown'd,
It is impossible to bear it out.

(II.i 18-20)

There is a sinister foreshadowing in Cassio's "parting (of) fellowship" from Othello, but Iago, whose natural element, like that of Shirley's Cardinal, appears to be the storm of discord, has a "most favourable and happy speed" (II.i.67). The unsuspecting Cassio is as incapable of discerning malevolence in the elements as he is in human nature, so that

he pays a courtly compliment by attributing Iago's successful passage to a cosmic deference to Desdemona (II.i.71). Later, Iago uses the metaphor of wind and water in a way that points up Cassio's mistake:

If consequence do but approve my dream,
My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.
(II.iii.58-59)

Roderigo's expression of his desire to "incontinently drown" himself (I.iii.105) reveals his inability to endure fortune's deprivation; rather than suffer the pangs of lust in anticipation of gratification, he would court the same fate as the Turk at sea. The "Turk" becomes a metaphor for irrational passion, which not only makes a man subject to destructive external forces, but which also is self-destructive in its nature. Othello's nuptial celebration at Cyprus is thus heavy with irony, for the occasion serves also as a feast of triumph celebrating the destruction of the Turkish fleet at sea (II.ii.1-11). The event is a grim foreshadowing of death in rites which should affirm life, when Desdemona's bridal sheets become her shroud (IV.iii.23-24). Othello describes the moment of his death in the nautical phrase, "the very sea-mark of my utmost sail" (V.ii.268-270), and he expunges his jealousy, indeed his passionate nature itself, in the same way that he once killed "a malignant and turban'd Turk" who had "beat a Venetian" (V.ii.354-355). Only in this final liberating act does Othello cease to be "fortune's slave," subjected by his nature to the storm of chance in which he has been entrapped by his passionate love:

But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumspection and confine
For the sea's worth. . . .
(I.ii.26-28)

He must die, because the "Turk" in him has conquered the rationality of Christian restraint, which seems to be identified with the "Venetian" of his story. We recall that Iago much earlier identifies himself with the Turk, reviling womankind in light banter with Desdemona and Emilia, he ends by saying, "Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk" (II.i.114).

Iago's jeering assertions are palpably false, and the conclusion to Iago's colloquial syllogism must be that he is a Turk, the embodiment of Othello's passion. The image pattern continues as the Venetians take Iago presumably to torture him to death or submission, expunging the "Turk" from their society.

Othello's difficulties proceed at least in part from an uncompromising arrogance in his narcissistic insistence upon Desdemona's perfection as a projection of his self-conception.¹⁸ Convinced of the excellence of his "parts," his "title," and his "perfect soul" (I.ii.30-32), he acknowledges Desdemona's love of him "for the dangers (he) had pass'd" (I.iii.167), and he loves her "that she did pity them" (I.iii.168). Protesting to the Duke that his love for Desdemona is not simply sexual passion, he claims to desire her for her "mind" (I.iii.265), and Desdemona, seeing beyond Othello's external appearance, and finding his "visage in his mind," "consecrates" her soul to his "honours and valiant parts" (I.iii.252-254). What Othello loves most in Desdemona is simply his own reflection.¹⁹

Iago reflects Othello's fatal weakness with a narcissism and intellectual arrogance of his own.²⁰ He experiences the frustration of unrealized aspirations, because he believes himself to possess talents that others who treat him with condescension do not recognize. The

others constantly address him as "good" and "honest," terms which, while complimentary, carry a connotation of social inferiority. Iago, an "extraordinary honest man,"²¹ is evidently regarded in much the same light as De Flores (*The Changeling*), a "wondrous necessary man," prized for his utility in serving his betters. Iago receives snubs from the moment of his arrival at Cyprus.²² Apparently exasperated and annoyed by Cassio's courtly punctilio in greeting Emilia, Iago has to endure Cassio's assertion of a social superiority he, Iago, does not possess:

Let it not gall your patience, good Iago,
That I extend my manners; 'tis my breeding
That gives me this bold show of courtesy.

(II i.97-99)

Iago fails to distinguish between intellectual cunning and moral superiority, because he is convinced that his powers of intellect which should afford him gratification of his desires make him naturally superior to his fellows:

We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly followed. . . .
. . . others there are
Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves;
. . . these fellows have some soul,
And such a one do I profess myself.

(I.i.43-49)

Iago rejects any higher mode of knowing as "witchcraft," and relies wholly on his natural reason, or "wit," as he calls his cunning (II iii 362). He appears to reject the validity of faith in divine love, knowledge, and goodness,²³ in the same way that Brabantio attributes Desdemona's love of Othello to witchcraft. Exclaiming to Roderigo, "Virtue? a fig! 'tis in ourselves, that we are thus, or thus" (I.iii 319), Iago seems to conceive of himself as a deity, whose reason, the highest mode

of knowing in his view, is the sole source of restraint from "blood and baseness" (I.iii.328); in Iago's inverted psychology, natural reason usurps higher reason, and self-worship is the highest good. Claiming to know only "how to love himself" (I.iii.313), Iago deceives himself, and there is ironic truth in his statement that he has never known a man who knew how to love himself properly (I.iii.314). Of course Iago has never known such a man, for he is incapable of understanding a truly Christian man's selfless love of himself through a love of God and of others.

Setting about Cassio's humiliation in order to affirm his own superiority, Iago appears to experience gratification, not so much by Cassio's forfeiture of rank, as by Cassio's reduction to become a drunken brawler. Cassio, like Othello, suffers a particular diathesis which Iago is quick to perceive and exploit. Vulnerable to wrath induced by strong drink, Cassio resembles Othello in his vulnerability to suggestion and persuasion (II.iii.30-31); it is typical of the villainous subordinate's victim that he yields readily to the vice he fears most, his "unfortunate infirmity" (II.iii.37-38).

Iago becomes a demonic "master of revels,"²⁴ and Cassio's comic drunkenness has overtones of damnation, not only in terms of Othello's disapproval, but in a more universal sense. Cassio expresses his remorse in terms that relate the revels to a black mass, in which Cassio sacramentally delivers himself up to Iago, the presiding demon, in an act of bloodletting. The wine from an "unbless'd" cup (II.iii.298) has an "invisible spirit" which Cassio, with a knowledge of evil born of sad experience, christens "devil" (II.iii.273-275). Iago, an embodiment of the wrathful spirit of the wine, becomes Cassio's personal demon, a

"familiar creature" (II.iii.299).²⁵ With Cassio fallen into drunken brawling, Iago becomes virtually his master, and chides him with prim satisfaction for having "forgot all sense of place and duty" (II.iii.168), an ironically hilarious phrase which describes Iago himself, with judgment extinguished in him, Cassio for the moment has become the image of Iago, who is the embodiment of his vice.

The irony of Iago's chiding is compounded by Othello, who indignantly upbraids the assembly for having "turn'd Turks" (II.iii.161), a phrase we learn to associate both with Iago, and with Othello's controlling passion. At this juncture, Othello exhibits a possibly unconscious fear of his own nature, in the same way that Cassio earlier expressed a dread of the effects of wine.²⁶ Othello makes a point of including himself in the assembly, saying "we," rather than "you" in addressing the transgressors of order, and he lays heavy emphasis on the un-Christian nature of their behaviour. It is a "Christian shame," he says, to engage in a "barbarous brawl" (II.iii.164). Othello's words seem a conscious accentuation of his Christianity and his membership in the Venetian community, pointing up his acute sense of otherness, and his anxiety that strong heathen passions are an ever-present threat to be contained at all costs.

The incident reveals Othello's dangerous weakness, while bringing about Cassio's fall. The perverse sacrament serves to bind Cassio to Iago, whom Cassio believes to be a means of his salvation as an intercessor with Desdemona on his behalf; typical of Iago's Mephistophelean qualities as a villainous subordinate, he presents to his victim an appearance which is an illusion of utilitarian goodness, when in reality

he is a means of damnation rather than salvation. Iago now is Cassio's master, and where once Cassio admonished Iago to be patient, Iago now is in a position to caution Cassio to endure patiently, in hope of reinstatement. Iago's success lies in the symbiotic bond he forges with Cassio, Cassio is dependent on him, believing Iago to be a means of his deliverance, much as Iago needs Cassio's damnation for his own fulfillment. That is essentially the nature of the Mephistophelean relationship Iago establishes with Othello and Roderigo as well, and he is equally an embodiment of Roderigo's lust and Othello's jealousy.

The bond Iago forges with Othello is identical in principle to that which binds him to Cassio. Iago labours with Roderigo to convince him that Desdemona is a slave to lustful appetite, and while that does not appear to be the case at all, Iago's words also have a symbolic connotation suggestive of the flawed nature of her marriage to Othello. In the same way that Cassio slavishly drinks wine in which he perceives his destructive demon, Desdemona's eye "must be fed," according to Iago, for her compelling delight is to "look upon the devil" (II.i.224-225). Presumably Iago means Roderigo to take his meaning of "devil" as Desdemona's imputed lustful pleasure, reposing at the moment in her love of Othello. But in another sense, the "devil" is Iago himself, the embodiment of Othello's passions, and the vehicle of the destructive forces the marriage releases. By incorrectly representing Desdemona as impure, Iago also shows the life-affirming marriage sacrament to have a sacrificial quality, giving rise to his implied curse on the ill-fated couple:

Blest fig's end! the wine she drinks is made of
grapes: if she had been blest, she would never
have lov'd the Moor.

(II.i.249-251)

Othello's marriage, undertaken in innocence and ignorance, nevertheless may be seen as a prefiguring of the "sacrament of evil"²⁷ which binds Iago to Othello. Othello is the first to plight his troth, as it were--"I am bound to thee forever" (III iii 218)--presumably because his dependence on Iago originates in his own nature, and like Faustus, Beatrice-Joanna, and other victims of villainous subordinates, Othello initiates the pact which damns him. Only later, when Iago is sure of his hold over Othello, does he exchange his own vow, "I am your own forever" (III.iii 486). Iago's words are thus a "mocking echo"²⁸ of Othello's, and the union is a sort of perverse "marriage," a grim travesty of Othello's earlier exchange of vows with Desdemona. Iago's superficially hypocritical expression of affection, his hope that Othello will "consider what is spoke comes from (his) love" (III.iii.220-221), may also be a manifestation of Iago's latent homosexuality, but more importantly, Iago's "love" for Othello has a Mephistophelean quality, making of it a demonic necessity by which Othello's damnation is assured. The marriage of Othello and Desdemona may be seen as similar to that of Giovanni's and Isabella's exchange of vows (*'Tis Pity*), for in the same way that the incestuous lovers exchange the godly Friar for the demonic Vasques as the master of their destinies, Othello and Desdemona place themselves in Iago's power as a result of a far more innocent marriage, which nevertheless is flawed.²⁹

As the embodiment of demonic illusion, Iago appears to the other protagonists as uncomplicated human goodness, while in reality he is a destroyer of ideal conceptions. That is the nature of his destructive and mocking wit directed at Desdemona; as one who denies and negates

ideals, he is given to expressing himself in negatives, suggestive of his principle of non-being. Warning Desdemona that he is "nothing if not critical" (I.i.119),³⁰ he responds to her conventionally coquettish demands for flattery with a word portrait of the feminine ideal of decorum and moderation; yet his oration ends in a harsh and insulting reversal of all he has said. Only the mood and context of light banter prevents Desdemona's finding Iago's conclusion offensive:

Iago: She was a wight, if ever such a wight were--
 Desdemona: To do what?
 Iago: To suckle fools and chronicle small beer.
 (II.i.157-159)

Iago's sudden change of tone comes from his need for inner laughter that asserts his superiority over those who tend to ignore their human imperfection by espousing ideal images of themselves.³¹ His wit not only aims at destroying Desdemona's innocent pretensions, but denies the existence of ideals at all.

The harsh and bestial images of physical union Iago uses during the ludicrous street scene in which Brabantio finds out about Othello's love for his daughter are amusing in their coarseness. The blunt metaphors--"black ram," "barbary horse"--and the verbs descriptive of animal sexual congress--"tupping," "covering"--implicitly deny the possibility of romantic idealism in love, and give expression only to the bestial and absurd. Iago's rejection of the solemnities of love's social rituals is in principle the same sort of comic inversion that characterizes the off-colour joke. The anomalous spectacle of the noble and gracious being subordinated to the bestial is the essence of much comedy, and the victim who gives the villainous subordinate occasion to point out this inversion becomes the subject of his mockery.³² One senses that Iago

enjoys himself immensely as he stands in the street with Roderigo, insolently shouting his outrageous accusations to the distressed Brabantio, and behind every utterance there is a silent sneering laughter. Even the staging is symbolic of Iago's destructive wit. Brabantio, awakened from slumber, appears above, probably looking defenceless in night clothes, while Iago in the street below hurls coarse epithets which reduce Brabantio to rage and confusion; the pattern is set for all that follows between Iago and each of his victims.

Iago's treatment of ideals as illusion in a sudden reversal in speech reveals the demonic inversion reflected in his attitudes; ideals, the abstracted essences of mere forms, are the ultimate realities Iago rejects as illusory, while flesh and bone, the animal exterior form of man, apparently is for Iago the only "reality." When Cassio calls Desdemona "the riches of the ship" (II.i.83), she is in Iago's eyes a "carrack" to be "boarded" (I.ii.50). Like Bosola (*The Duchess of Malfi*), Iago makes regular use of epithets and references relating to the least noble members of the animal kingdom, a habit which Othello takes up when Iago succeeds in destroying his faith in Desdemona's, and hence his own, nobility of nature.³³ In the same way that Cassio sees his loss of reputation as leaving him nothing but the bestial in his nature (II.iii.256), Othello signals the pre-eminence of his own bestiality in his exclamation, "exchange me for a goat . . ." (III.iii.184). In this way, Iago may be seen as virtually recreating his victims in his own image, for he is symbolic of their baser natures; as the animal parts of their natures rise to usurp their reason, Iago's fortunes rise as well.³⁴ Accordingly, images of inversion are frequent. Iago claims the "divinity

of hell" (II.iii.431), Desdemona in playful innocence accuses him of praising "the worst best" (II.1.143), and Emilia much less playfully accuses her husband's wit of being "turn'd the seamy side without" (IV.ii.149).

Iago's expectations have not materialized, and the nature of his wit is to build expectations only to destroy them. He seizes every occasion to build hopes, then to reverse the course his victim logically anticipates; he feeds Roderigo's hopes of gratifying his lust, he leads Cassio to expect reinstatement, and he promises Othello certain knowledge to resolve his uncertainty about Desdemona. In each case he brings expectation to nothing, for the expectations he nourishes in his victims have no more substance than the shade of Helen conjured by Mephistophilis.³⁵ Each expectation that Iago can bring to nought is an occasion for his self-congratulation, for expectations--hopes and fears--are passions of the flesh, and he who succumbs to them becomes himself insubstantial spiritually. Iago has a conscious awareness that the disordered mind perceives unreality as having substance, and it is this illusion which he knowingly exploits in his victims:

. . . trifles light as air
 Are to the jealous, confirmations strong
 As proofs of holy writ.

(III.iii.327-329)

The final disappointment of expectations is a source of Iago's fulfillment, and affords him emotional release reflecting a cosmic demonic laughter reserved for the fools who fall prey to evil.³⁶

Iago's statements are a Mephistophelean blend of truth, half-truth, and falsehood, ignoring the Divine in man, and couched in ambiguous and misleading language. When Iago hypocritically censures himself in

Othello's presence for making his own "honesty a vice" (III.iii.380), he is subtly and ironically accurate; he is like Mephistophilis, in speaking the truth for those with wit enough to heed the real warning of his words, and only those whose reason is distorted by passion can miss a sinister import.

Othello's vulnerability to Iago's mockery lies in his conception of ideals as external concrete entities, which are themselves vulnerable. Deriving his self-image from his reputation for martial prowess rather than from any sense of inner worth, Othello dreads above all loss of face by becoming "the fixed figure for the time of scorn to point his . . . finger at" (III.ii.210). Exploiting Othello's weakness, Iago plays on it, goading him and making him squirm. Iago evidently enjoys the process

Iago: I see this hath a little dash'd your spirits.
 Othello: Not a jot, not a jot.
 Iago: I' faith I fear it has.

 . . . I do see you are much mov'd
 (III.iii.217-221)

and again,

Iago: . . . My lord, I see you are mov'd.
 Othello: No, not much mov'd,
 (228-229)

There is silent laughter in Iago's superficially innocuous and solicitous inquiry, ". . . have you not hurt your head?" and Othello is quick to respond, "Dost thou mock me?" (IV.i.59-60). Iago is able to savour to the full his advantage over Othello as he protests the innocence of his expression of concern; not only has he proven Othello gullible, but in his *double entendre* and subsequent pose of injured innocence, he proves Othello's intellectual inferiority.

Reputation and manhood are virtually synonymous to Othello, like the *arête* of the Homeric warrior, without reputation, Othello, like Cassio, conceives of himself as something less than a man, the "horned man," whose wife has cost him his reputation, is in Othello's eyes "a monster and a beast" (IV.i.62). Othello expresses his horror of Desdemona's adultery with a strong emphasis on the first person pronoun revealing his incredulity at Desdemona's supposed affront to his self-image: "Ha, ha, false to me, to me?" (III.iii.339). Because Othello has no inner spiritual defences, Iago succeeds in reducing him to his own bestial condition by appealing to his all-consuming fear of mockery. More than Desdemona's adultery, the "fleers," "gibes," and "notable scorns," which Iago convinces Othello that Cassio means for him, threaten Othello (IV.i.81-83). He believes the signal of his debasement to be the derision he cannot abide, and not the cuckoldry itself:

So, so, so, so--they laugh that wins.

.
Have you scor'd me? Well.

(IV.i.121, 126)

Iago's verbal ambiguity results in his victim's doubts, and the destruction of certainties. Othello thus begins to express himself in terms which are simultaneously affirmations and negations; contradictory, yet complementary elements of a single truth:

I think my wife to be honest, and think she is not,
I think that thou are just, and I think thou art not.

(III.iii.390-391)

Desdemona is, of course, both honest and dishonest, she is chaste, yet she conceals her loss of the handkerchief; similarly, Iago is unjust in his motives for tempting and persecuting his victims, yet he ultimately is an instrument of cosmic justice which exploits weakness to expunge

evil. Iago thus exemplifies the all-inclusive knowledge of the temporal paradox of opposites, and that kind of forbidden knowledge is the theological antithesis of Godliness.³⁷ When Desdemona calls Iago's puns "old paradoxes, to make fools laugh i' the alehouse" (II.i.138-139), she has no conception of the ominous truth of her words, for only the innocent and the ignorant dare laugh at Iago's forked speech.

The advice Iago provides is indeed both "free" and "honest" (II.iii.328), and his defence of it to Emilia is true:

I told him what I thought, and told no more
 Than what he found himself was apt and true.
 (V.ii.177-178)

Iago's "thoughts" are that all womankind is lascivious, and that any other view is a figment; yet he allows Othello to arrive at his own conclusions, even warning him against unjustly suspecting Desdemona, telling him to "scan this thing no further," and to bear patiently the course of time for certainty (III.iii.249-259). It is Othello who, without prompting, first mentions a "pain upon his forehead," which Desdemona innocently attributes to his "watching" (III.iii.288-289).

A master of "shows" (I.i.82), Iago reflects Othello's illusion of his own ideality, in the same way that Mephistophilis in a Friar's guise reflects the psychology of Faustus, a would-be deity who is a "divine in show."³⁸ Like Mephistophilis, Iago expresses a reality of evil for anyone less self-delusive than his victims; Iago's show of goodness is as superficial as Othello's Christianity; the difference is that Iago's deceptions are deliberate, while Othello's self-deception is unconscious and involuntary.

As an illusion of goodness for the passion-ridden, Iago expresses impeccably the Pauline doctrine of patience and endurance. "How poor are they that ha' not patience!" (II.iii.360), he counsels Roderigo, and he points out that drowning is fit only for Turks and blind puppies (I.iii.335-336). Indeed, Christian doctrine would not deny that unregenerate heathens, like unseeing beasts, lack the New Testament revelation keeping them from self-annihilation. Iago is careful, too, to avoid actually persuading Roderigo to indulge his destructive lust, simply telling him that if he insists on his need to "damn (him)self," there is a "more delicate way" (I.iii.353-355). The damnation Iago offers is that of worldly delight, which brings death just as surely, while requiring more patience in order to be "hang'd in compassing . . . joy" (I.iii.360-361). Cautioning Roderigo to allow "dilatatory time" (II.iii.363) to do its work, Iago echoes the Christian truth that time brings all things to fruition, but he omits the premise that vice's fulfilment lies in its own destruction at the moment of consummation. Thus Iago counsels patience and faith in himself as a means of damnation rather than salvation, in the fullness of time. Roderigo's acceptance of Iago's counsel and his subsequent death are assured by the necessity of his own lustful nature, Iago merely provides him with opportunities for self-destruction.

Iago is equally truthful (or untruthful, depending upon the beholder's predisposition) with Cassio, counselling him to see the hollowness of reputation:

. . . reputation is an idle and most
false imposition, oft got without merit, and lost with-
out deserving. You have lost no reputation at all,
unless you repute yourself such a loser. . . .

(II.iii.260-263)

Iago's purpose at this point is to comfort Cassio, warding off despair, and giving him cause to hope for reinstatement. He does so in an entirely negative way, however, and while he shows Cassio the insubstantiality of reputation, he avoids suggesting the real meaning of honour. As Iago would have it, the unimportance of reputation is established because it does not reflect physical well-being, and its absence is no indication of a "bodily wound" (II.iii.259). Reputation, according to Iago, has no origin except in self-esteem, and the question of true worth remains unspoken. Iago persuades Cassio, like Roderigo, to endure with parodically Christian stoicism, and Cassio is heartened with an expectation of Othello's forgiveness. Roderigo does not look beyond Desdemona as a source of fulfilment, and Cassio does not look further than Othello as a source of redemption, both practice a kind of idolatry as a result of Iago's suggestive words, which convince them that they should repose their faith in Iago and the changeable mortals from whom they seek relief from their anguish. Thus it is that Iago can gloat with demonic glee when he reflects on Roderigo's folly, that he has "rubb'd this young quat almost to the sense" (V.1.11).³⁹

Iago's advice to Othello regarding reputation is counter to that which he gives Cassio, reputation, he claims, is the "immediate jewel of our souls" (III.iii.161), and the theft of money is nothing to the theft of "good name." Yet again, as with his persuasion of Cassio, Iago does not compare the value of reputation with true honour, nor does he claim reputation to be a substitute for the spirit. Clearly, he speaks truthfully to both Cassio and Othello; reputation is valuable beyond mere money, and at the same time perhaps its loss is less grievous

than bodily harm. Further, as Iago rightly points out to Cassio, reputation is not as important as self-worth. Iago shows the truth of two complementary, yet contradictory attitudes towards reputation,⁴⁰ and he does so without ever discussing the real meaning of honour.

The nature of the "truth" Iago speaks, and the lie Othello creates of it from his own fevered imagination is exemplified in their exchange of questions, from which Othello concludes Cassio's guilt. Iago, the embodiment of the "monster" of doubt and jealousy in Othello's thought (III.iii.111), simply answers Othello's questions with further questions, which Othello may answer as he pleases: "Did Michael Cassio . . . know your love?" . . . "Indeed?" . . . "Honest, my lord?" . . . "Think, my lord?" (III.iii.94-109). Iago's echoic function as the embodiment of Othello's doubt reveals Othello's tautology of spirit which proceeds from his narcissism, Iago shows Othello nothing more than his own reflection, and continues to do so when Othello reaches conclusions prompted by his "will" (IV.1.34).

There is an important element of paradox in Iago's words, as well. Othello, by uniting with a woman "fram'd as fruitful as the free elements," finds his "soul so . . . infetter'd to her love," that she becomes the "god" of Othello's idolatry,⁴¹ resulting from his "weak function" (II.iii.332-339). Iago's diabolic ambiguity is a truthful reflection of a paradox central to the mortal condition. His situation as a natural subordinate who claims a place alien to his first condition is symbolic of Othello's situation as well, it appears; Othello's adoption of Christianity and his marriage to Desdemona are freedoms which he perhaps rightfully claims, but by so doing, he unknowingly becomes a slave of fortune. Iago,

perhaps aping Seneca's words, tells Othello in mock righteousness that he, Iago, must not accuse Cassio, because he is "not bound to that all slaves are free to, utter (his) thoughts" (III.iii.139).⁴² By these words, Iago claims a nobility that restricts him from exercising a slave's freedom. In the same way, Othello complains of Desdemona's supposed adultery that "'tis the plague of great ones" to be "prerogativ'd . . . less than the base" (III.iii.77-78), and he blames destiny for "this forked plague,"⁴³ which shows him (he believes) that "heaven mocks itself" (III.iii.280-282).

This is the ultimate cosmic mockery, by which nobility means slavery, and slavery means freedom. Othello, a barbarian by birth and temperament, has hitherto exercised the natural freedom of a warrior subservient to the Venetian state; by appropriating to himself the freedom to marry Desdemona, he attempts to escape his natural condition by becoming love's slave, and so becomes a slave to destiny, incapable of choice, and manipulated entirely by external influences. Whether or not Othello truly understands, this is the reason that it is imperative that he "not believe" Iago's manufactured evidence of Desdemona's adultery; by believing, Othello becomes wholly a slave to fate, and damns himself. But his nature is such that he cannot help but believe. Unable to look into his own nature for the source of his difficulties, Othello complains pitifully, "who can control his fate?" (V.ii.266); unable to do so by having forfeited his first condition, he deserves Lodovico's judgment that he has "fall'n into the practice of a damned slave" (V.ii.293), a "fall" which makes Othello like Iago, whom Montano describes by precisely the same term (V.ii.246).

Consonant with his spiritual vacuity, Othello finds not only his ideal conception of himself, but the cause of his destruction, in externals. He blames sublunary flux, the "error of the moon" (V.ii.112), and his "melting mood" (V.ii.352), when actually his "melting mood" has merely resulted in his transference of faith from one external to another, at first he draws his "life and being" from the warriors whose successes mirror his honour (I.ii.21-22), and later he "garner(s) up (his) heart" in Desdemona, in whom he "must live or bear no life" (IV.i.58-61).⁴⁴ She becomes virtually the "fountain" of his grace (IV.i.60), for Othello fails to recognize that a true exercise of grace relies on freedom of choice, responsibility for one's own choices, and hence control of one's own destiny. Othello is fortune's slave because he allows himself to be ruled by irrational impulse. Forced eventually to admit to the insubstantiality of the ideal wherein his being resides, Othello is left with only his impulse-governed existence as an animal subject to the whim of fate, as embodied in Iago, who weaves the web of his destruction.⁴⁵

Iago destroys Othello's certainties about Desdemona, and hence destroys Othello's faith in himself; presenting Othello with only the dark side of creation, he makes Othello a victim of his own conjecture. Othello's doubt, a new belief in his own lack of certainty, is the intolerable truth Iago brings him. Like Faustus, who must summon Mephistophilis to "resolve (him) of all ambiguities" (I.i.79), Othello becomes obsessed with a need for certain proof, and he becomes dependent upon Iago to supply it. So strong is his obsession, that his yearning for certain knowledge of Desdemona's guilt appears far stronger even than his longing for her innocence.⁴⁶

I swear 'tis better to be much abus'd
 Than but to know't a little.
 (III.iii.342-343)

Initially Othello, like Soranzo (*'Tis Pity*), expresses himself in terms manifesting his faith in himself, in his own knowledge, and in his capacity to instruct his subordinate. Yet what he "knows" is an illusion of truth; in commenting on Iago's report of Cassio's transgression, he says understandingly:

I know, Iago,
 Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter. . . .
 (II.iii.247-248)

Othello believes Iago's report, because Iago supplies only half the truth about the incident, in the same way that Mephistophilis turns the pages of scripture, letting his victim see only that which leads him to damnation.

Stretched on a rack of uncertainty by Iago, Othello's faith in himself is shaken, so that while he demands complete knowledge, he would be as content with complete ignorance. It is not truth and reality that concern him; rather, he is absorbed with his suffering with partial knowledge:

He that is robb'd, not wanting what is stol'n,
 Let him not know't, and he's not robb'd at all.

 I had been happy if the general camp,
 Pioneers, and all, had tasted her sweet body,
 So I had nothing known. . . .
 (III.iii.346-351)⁴⁷

With his loss of faith in himself through his loss of certainty about Desdemona, Othello bids farewell to his warrior's vocation (III.iii.363), a calling dependent on reputation. From it, Othello derives his "life and being" (I.ii.21), and with neither good name nor profession, he

regards himself as spiritually dead. Thus psychologically, he relates his doubt to his own destruction, and to the loss of his most precious possession, his good name.⁴⁸ In that sense, Iago reduces Othello to the same condition as Cassio, for whom reputation is everything, and without which, only the bestial remains. Now Iago represents for Othello, as he does for Cassio, his sole hope of "redemption," because Iago appears to him as a source of absolute knowledge. It surely is not coincidental that Iago tells Roderigo, "thou shalt know more hereafter" (II.iii.371), for the promise of knowledge as a means of fulfilment is Iago's most potent weapon for assuring his victims' obedience to his will.

When Othello transfers his faith from Desdemona to Iago, he exchanges order for chaos (III.iii.91-92), and the ancient becomes his tutor in much the same manner that Vasques becomes Soranzo's guide (*'Tis Pity*). Othello's last independent act by which he displays any superiority to his villainous subordinate before succumbing to him entirely occurs when he threatens violent retribution if Iago is lying, Iago's facade of injured innocence, presenting Othello with the prospect of losing his only means of being "satisfied" (III.iii.396) with certain knowledge, is sufficient to reduce Othello to grovelling reliance on Iago's advice and information.

Now it is Iago who professes to "know,"⁴⁹ and while Iago claims adultery to be "the fiend's arch-mock," Iago's enigmatic and diabolically prophetic words are equally a mockery of Othello's doubt-prone spirit:

. . . No, let me know,
And knowing what I am, I know what she shall be.
(IV.i.72-73)

Othello's reply, "O, thou art wise, 'tis certain" (IV.i.74) reveals

ironically that the only certainty left him is belief in a lie. Now Othello is reduced by doubt almost to servile passivity in his reliance on Iago, and he accepts Iago's reproof with uncharacteristic forbearance. Iago cautions him, like his other victims, to endure psychic pain stoically, daring now to use his good opinion of Othello as a marketable commodity to command his obedience:

. . . marry, patience,
Or I shall say you are all in all in spleen,
And nothing of a man.

(IV i 87-89)

The chastened Othello, believing he has been shown "ocular proof" of Desdemona's infidelity (III.iii.365), and succumbing entirely to Iago's deceit, accepts him unconditionally as his tutor, with the ominous compliment, "Thou teachest me" (V.i.33). Othello has learned well, for like Iago, he "kills for loving" (V.ii.42), appropriating to himself the Divine justice he believes his certain knowledge empowers him to dispense by strangling Desdemona.

Ironically, Iago is a sound teacher in the final analysis, for his deceptions bring Othello to an ultimate kind of knowledge about himself. Having been made to perceive the workings of cosmic justice, Othello is left with a single question unanswered, the reason that Divine retribution should be levied against anyone remains the unresolved enigma implicit in Othello's tortured lines:

Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
Why he hath thus ensnar'd my soul and body?
(V.ii.302-303)

Iago's last words, "Demand me nothing, what you know you know . . ." (V.ii.304-305) are true in their import; Othello in the end "knows" only that he "lov'd not wisely, but too well" (V.ii.346), a limited kind of

knowledge that does not reveal to him the design by which Fortune has made him her slave.⁵⁰ If Othello's epitaph should be, as he believes, that he did "but all in honour" (V.ii.296), Iago's should perhaps be Emilia's words, ". . . villainy hath made mocks with love" (V.ii.152). As a principle of evil in Othello's consciousness, Iago may be subdued, but he cannot be expunged while Othello lives. When Othello rages, "if that thou be'st devil, I cannot kill thee" (V.ii.288), Iago has the last laugh: "I bleed, sir, but not kill'd" (V.ii.289).

Like Iago, Mosca is driven by a need to prove his intellectual superiority over those who rank as his betters. But Mosca's self-congratulatory glee at confounding first the legacy seekers, then Volpone, is rather different in quality from Iago's sneering cynicism, born of his frustration and his envy of goodness in others. There is a joyous spontaneity in Mosca's laughter, he does not consciously ridicule worthy ideals or even unwitting pretensions. He has an exuberance which Iago lacks, and his brand of evil perhaps has more in common with the mischievousness of Plautine slaves, than with the sinister Machiavelleanism of Iago.

One may not say, however, that Mosca would not destroy goodness, given an opportunity, indeed, Mosca is instrumental in procuring Celia for Volpone. But with the exceptions of Celia and Bonario, Mosca's victims and their society already hold inverted values. *Othello's* Venetians may be naive and susceptible to vice, but *Volpone's* community of wealthy Venetian merchants and men of law is for the most part corrupt and hypocritical. To the extent that Volpone and Mosca reveal and defeat their

society's vices, Jonson appears to identify them with himself,⁵¹ while condemning them for their own vices. Whereas *Othello's* Duke, with all his sententiousness, is representative of an ultimately just social order, the *avocatori* of *Volpone* are shown through Mosca's deceits to share in a general corruption.⁵²

Even the institutions of law and the bonds of natural affection in the world of *Volpone* have become perverted as instruments of avarice. Here is a society which has prostituted its virtues to greed, the only art is the art of acquisition, a prostitution of intellect which parallels another prostitution of art in Jonson's own *milieu*. Jonson's opening *Epistle* criticizing poets who have debased their calling abounds in terms which appear with equal frequency in the play's text: "deformed," "unnatural," and "inverted "

As in the case of *Othello* and *Desdemona*, an unnatural condition exists in Venetian society, as a precondition for the villainous subordinate's ascendancy. However, while *Othello's* and *Desdemona's* imperfections arise largely from their innocence, *Volpone* and *Mosca* pursue their gratifications with conscious relish. *Volpone* has deformed virtue as surely as poets, in Jonson's view, have deformed their "mistress" art for their own ends.⁵³ Indeed, the "false pace" of *Nano's* verse (I.11.4)⁵⁴ seems not only to suggest disharmony, but to relate deformity to the state of poetic art, so that *Volpone* and hack poets are mutual participants in the state's general corruption. The artist's prostitution of intellect is paralleled by the theme of intellectual prostitution, suggestive of a society which debases its humanity by bending every thought to means of gratifying appetite. *Corvino* attempts to prostitute

Celia, who is perhaps symbolic of the Divine in man,⁵⁵ and he is so blinded by his hopes that Mosca's truthful slip of the tongue, ". . . or rather sir, to prostitute," prompts Corvino to reply, "Thanks, sweet Mosca" (III vii 73-75). Corbaccio prostitutes Bonario's patrimony, Voltore prostitutes his talents of oratory, Lady Politic Wouldbe apparently has offered herself to Mosca (V iii 40-43), and Volpone's house which functions symbolically as a metaphor for himself, is a "bawdy-house" (V vii 12) where his victims come to give far more of themselves than their possessions. All are manifestations of the degraded soul of a society which, like Androgyno's Pythagorean soul, has become sterile, whorish, and bestial in its latter metempsychoses (I ii 18-24).⁵⁶

Mosca, like the common scribes who "usurp" the place of the true poet, seizes the advantage afforded by Volpone's own prostitution of talent, and becomes for a time the consummate artist in a society which praises acquisition as the highest art, a society of "parasites and sub-parasites" (III i 13) whose members' sole interest is in feeding on each other. The social order itself, as embodied in Volpone and Mosca, eventually becomes as inverted as its moral values. Volpone, "by blood and rank a gentleman" (V.vii 116-117), betrays ideals of virtue normally associated with his class in a well ordered society, and Mosca seizes the opportunity to appropriate his rank and possessions. In the eyes of the *avocatori*, Mosca's real crime is his assuming "the habit of a gentleman of Venice, being of no birth or blood" (V.vii.111-112), but the ideals implied by the station of gentleman have long been dead; possession has become synonymous with worth, a condition of spiritual sickness and death, paralleled in Volpone's feigned diseases, and finally in his feigned death.⁵⁷

It is characteristic of Jonsonian irony that the denizens of this society of parasites should in the end be outraged and humiliated at being cozened by Mosca primarily because he is himself a "parasite" and a "slave," superior in the calling which has preoccupied them all (V.i. 194; V.iv.29-30). The legacy-seekers experience no other kind of remorse, and they are incapable of seeing themselves as simply less cunning than Mosca at their own game; in effect, they are blind to their natural subordinacy even in an inverted hierarchy of merit based on self-serving intellect. In this upside-down world where parasitism assumes the currency of high art, Mosca is rightfully master, for he alone is aware that all evidences of trust and affection are only sham; the others, Volpone included, accept his shows of loyalty and affection at face value, because they characteristically are unable to distinguish between external appearance and reality. Their idolatrous worship of possessions is symptomatic of the same condition. Mosca therefore may be seen as a vice figure in a community of fools, and while Volpone also functions as a tempter, he too is a fool in a way that Mosca is not. Mosca is foolish, of course, in the sense that he miscalculates the extent of his victims' greed. As a result, Corvino's early arrival with Celia is almost his undoing. Similarly, he estimates incorrectly Volpone's abhorrence of defeat at his hands.

So Mosca's undoing lies, not in fundamental misunderstanding, but in miscalculation; it is this difference in understanding which makes him so much greater in his capacity for evil than the others, and like other demonic figures who are villainous subordinates, Mephistophilis, Vasques, and Iago, it is this greater knowledge of evil from which he derives his

superiority. He alone glories in parasitism as a perversely divine art, and because his artistry is designed ultimately to serve him alone, its practice is an act of self-worship. Fittingly, Mosca boasts his prowess in terms suggestive of his self-deification. Claiming to fear that he will "begin to grow in love" with himself (III.i.1), Mosca describes himself as "a most precious thing, dropped from above,/ Not bred 'mongst clods and clodpolls, here on earth" (III.i.8-9). The implication of Mosca's gloating phrase is that he is not of the common clay of the rest of humanity, for his origin is in some sense divine; the phrase is ambivalent, as are so many of the lines spoken by the demonic Iago, for Mosca has indeed "dropped"--or perhaps fallen--into the shared psychological hell of those who exist to gratify their appetites. He is a perverse deity, a Mephistophelean figure who, like Iago, is constrained to procure pain for others to ease his torment. In so doing, he symbolically violates even the natural laws of necessity, in his ability to "rise and stoop, almost together" (III.i.23-24), thus demonically descending to hell, while ascending by creating an illusion of heaven.

While Mosca shares a desire for self-gratification with the others, he and Volpone differ significantly from the legacy-seekers and the *avocatori*. Corvino, Corbaccio, and Voltore suffer the agonies of Tantalus, and their greed is uncomplicatedly all-consuming, they are ready to pervert virtue, to abet murder, and even to part with their wealth in anticipation of gain. Suffering the torments of avarice, they so far mistake illusion for reality, that they each turn desire into what they take to be accomplished fact, the certainty that Volpone's estate is to be theirs. They do not suffer much anxiety of doubt, but only of antici-

pation, the only question in their minds, really, is the probable time of Volpone's death. The process of acquisition holds no delights for them, they are unimaginative dullards for whom the game is nothing, and the winning of tangible wealth is all.

By contrast, Volpone and Mosca live for the game of "getting" (I.1.26; I.1.29-31), an expression describing a sterile pursuit, but having ironic overtones of fecundity. Indeed, this highest of Venetian arts appears to transcend the sexual act in its capacity to afford delight, and it is only when Volpone and Mosca are actually engaged in cozening the legacy-seekers that they shed a crushing anxiety, and derive a sense of being alive. Volpone speaks with unconscious irony when he claims, "whom I make/ Must be my heir" (I.1.74), for Mosca, as the embodiment of Volpone's appetite, is indeed his creation; perhaps too, "make" may have a punning sexual significance.⁵⁸ In that respect, Mosca shares the over-reaching Guise's motivating principle, for Guise, too, affects to believe that heaven has "engender'd" him to gain a crown, and that he alone understands the art and practice of self-love through exercise of the intellect.⁵⁹ Iago, of course, makes precisely the same point when instructing Roderigo

Mosca's appetite for proof of intellectual superiority over the foolish and vicious is manifested in traits of character which, as I have suggested, relate him to other stage subordinates in the Plautine tradition, but as a truly villainous character, he displays certain radical differences. There is no sense of his tacit acceptance of an existing social hierarchy, nor of his subordinate place in it; and his self-interest far exceeds in its aims a mere avoidance of punishment.⁶⁰ He

secretly matches Volpone's overreaching ambition with similar aspirations of his own, and he is thus destined to become Volpone's antagonist. Although Mosca, like Volpone, seems to lust after praise, his ambition is not focussed on sensual gratification, but on his successful manipulation of voluptuaries who lack his mental agility. Like Iago, he delights in building expectations, "letting the cherry knock against their lips" (I.ii.89), only to withdraw the prize, for in that way he asserts a superiority which is confirmed for him by Volpone's admiration. Logically, one must see as his ultimate work of art his defeat of Volpone, the only other protagonist who is a fellow artist, and whose chagrin at being cozened is the only response that can afford Mosca more delight than that derived from Volpone's admiration. Mosca is Volpone's master in the art of illusion, for he is the truly demonic conjurer who can excite Volpone's hopes, which in the end "turn to air" (I.iv.169).

Mosca expresses self-conscious pride in his art by contrasting himself, a "true parasite," to mere imitators (III.i.33) who are entirely dependent on their masters, and are mere extensions of their masters' will; he shows the same contempt for this lower order of feeders that Iago reveals, and in an idiom so similar that the resemblance between the two villainous subordinates is unmistakable:

Mosca: I mean not those that have your bare town-art,
 To know who's fit to feed them, have no house,
 No family, no care, and therefore mould
 Tales for men's ears, to bait that sense; or get
 To please the belly, and the groin
 (III.i.14-19)

Iago: . . . You shall mark
 Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave
 That, doting on his own obsequious bondage
 Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
 For nought but provender. . . .
 (I.i.42-47)

So although Mosca calls himself a parasite, he recognizes himself as a particular type; he plans to have a house, certainly, and he plans not only to have Volpone "write (him) in" his family, (I.iii.35), but to be the family's head. In the meantime he clearly is not one of Volpone's family of fools, but a cunning knave who is far too clever to be of that class. As he tells Corvino, Volpone is "the true father of his family, / In all save me" (I.v.48). It is, of course, a family of fools; Mosca's ascendancy as the master jester, and the onset of unbridled chaos, are marked symbolically by his releasing of Nano, Androgyno, and Castruccio to run at large. As an aristocrat of parasites, Mosca plans not only to feed off his host, but to consume him, not realizing that the result--if one may continue the metaphor of parasitism--will inevitably bring his own destruction.

Already it is apparent that Mosca is no ordinary traditional parasite⁶¹ of the order of Ferrex and Porrex's sycophantic retainers (*Gorbuduc*, for example). Mosca, like Iago, has independence of will and action, and a desire to seek advantage over his master as evidence of his demonic brilliance of intellect. He is set apart from the usual conception of parasite, not only by his contempt for those who are content to remain subordinate, but also because his master needs him as a source of gratification equally as much as he needs his master. Today one perhaps would be more accurate in defining Volpone and Mosca as symbiots, rather than as host and parasite, because they feed each other's appetites for praise, while goading each other to ever more dangerous acts of cozenage. Indeed, Volpone is perhaps the more parasitic of the pair, for his penchant for voyeuristic participation in Mosca's deceptions affords him a delight

which Mosca does not appear to experience in observing his master's art. Volpone hugs and kisses Mosca in delight at Mosca's handling of Voltore (I.iii.79-80), but Mosca reciprocates by flattering Volpone only with ill-concealed impatience⁶² when Volpone badgers him for compliments on his performance as Scoto, he peremptorily ends the interview to pursue his designs which will earn him the admiration he needs:

Volpone: But were they gulled
 With a belief that I was Scoto?
 Mosca: Sir,
 Scoto himself could hardly have distinguished!
 I have not time to flatter you now, we'll part,
 And as I prosper, so applaud my art.
 (II. iv 33-38)⁶³

It is perhaps significant that Volpone's triumph as an impersonator of Scoto is affirmed for him both by a beating at Corvino's hands, and by Mosca's expressions of adulation, so that the self-destructive element of Volpone's "art" is seen as inseparable from his belief in its excellence. This hint of Volpone's masochistic tendency perhaps prefigures his and Mosca's final defeat when each achieves his masterpiece of cozenage.⁶⁴ This idea of blasphemous art's consummation in the destruction of the artist seems to be a central principle operating in the dramatic villains, both as a subliminal motivating force, and as a law of cosmic necessity. Faustus, for example, similarly expresses his urge to "level at the end of every art" (I.i.4), and in that respect Mosca performs a utilitarian function similar to that of Mephistophilis.

Mosca's unabashed reference to his praise of Volpone as flattery does not appear to trouble Volpone at all, so obsessive is Volpone's need to savour his sense of superiority. Not only does he need Mosca for that purpose, he retains him to provide spectacles of the legacy-seekers'

stupidity that will provide "rare meal(s) of laughter" (V.ii.87) to feed his ego. Having heard Mosca insult and beguile the fond and partially deaf Corbaccio, Volpone (who cannot discern that Corbaccio's defect of sense is a reflection of his own moral disease) can scarcely contain his hilarity until Corbaccio departs; he then abandons himself to the emotional release afforded by mirthful sensation:

O, I shall burst'
 Let out my sides, let out my sides.
 (I. i. 432-433)

Although Volpone initiates the broad design of cozenage which affords him occasions for emotional release, it is really Mosca who is the controlling agent in their relationship.⁶⁵ Mosca, having invited Corvino to join with him in shouting filth at the feigning invalid, is able to gratify his own ego both by reviling Volpone, and by receiving praise for doing so. Volpone does not apprehend the extent to which Mosca really has "outgone" himself (I. i. 548-549); not only has Mosca cozened Corvino, but he also has indulged his carefully concealed contempt for Volpone.

Mosca probably senses Volpone's moral sickness, expressed figuratively in a feigned failing of the senses; his feigning of mockery is a double bluff, because it is also a real mockery of Volpone's equally real spiritual sickness. Here, then, is the ironic ambiguity of statement which we associate with the villainous subordinate's demonic element. Volpone, like Othello and Cassio, is prevented by his lack of spiritual strength from apprehending any significance in Mosca's words other than that which reflects and enhances his own predilections. Rewarded with Volpone's admiration, Mosca has evidence of his master's obtuseness, and

therefore, of his own intellectual superiority.

Mosca's aside to Voltore in similar circumstances, "That he is not weaker" (I.iii.18), expresses his sentiments, but for his own ends, and not, as Voltore believes, as evidence of complicity to win Voltore a fortune. So Mosca derives satisfaction from speaking truth which is perverted by the hearer to mean what he wants it to mean. Mosca is the demonic embodiment of the vicious cunning Voltore uses best, his ability to "turn and re-turn" with "quick agility" in giving "forked counsel" (I.iii.56-60), and it is Voltore's indulgence in his skill which eventually defeats him. Voltore, Mosca observes, is one of those who "thrive with their humility" (I.iii.63); of course, Mosca himself is virtually a personification of the pride which apes humility with such dexterity.

Mosca is an expression of Voltore's vice in the same way that he embodies Corvino's greed for gold and Volpone's desire to exploit avarice, and he reveals his function with a continued ambiguity of statement. Corvino, excited by Mosca at the prospect of winning wealth by prostituting Celia, is as if possessed; Celia asks with virtuous horror:

Lord, what spirit
Is this hath entered him?
(III.vii.45-46)

The answer is easy, for Mosca, like a demonic familiar, speaks ironic truth to Corvino:

Am not I here, whom you have made? Your creature?
That owe my being to you?
(I.v.77-78)

Himself possessed with the desire of possession which Mosca apparently embodies, Corvino denies Celia her humanity, treating her simply as an object to be sold, like gold or clothing, along with honour, itself

another possession of little worth to him (III.vii.38-45). The theme of the would-be possessor who is himself possessed, is later made explicit in Voltore's supposed fit at the court, significantly, it is Mosca once more who has excited Voltore's self-destructive hope of gain.

As a general statement, it may be said that one of the villainous subordinate's most characteristic traits is an appetite so insatiable that it is self-consuming. De Flores' fleshly lust, Guise's need for power, and Vindice's urge for vengeance are typical cases, while Malevole's motivation is perhaps an exception because his villainy and subordinacy are conditions superimposed on his essential goodness as a result of evil circumstances.⁶⁶ The villainous subordinate is an "overreacher,"⁶⁷ and Mosca certainly is no exception. Volpone and Mosca need a sense of power expressed as laughter to ward off crippling anxiety born of a deep-seated fear of their mortality and spiritual worthlessness. This anxiety is manifested in Mosca by an agony of despair and indecision, which may be dispelled only through frenetic activity. A similar anxiety is manifested in Volpone by an enervating neurasthenia, he must laugh to feel at all. As soon as his spasm of mirth dissipates, Volpone's ennui reasserts itself, and he must seek new evidence of his intellectual superiority to feel alive.⁶⁸ The "cold sweat" and "continual rheum" (I.iv.48) which appear to ooze from Volpone are visible frauds reflecting a phlegmatic temperament which requires constant stimulation to prevent inaction and despondency.

The play's Argument, as a clear statement of Volpone's motivations and Mosca's role, is often neglected by critics who explore the theme of greed as the central vice.⁶⁹ The audience is told that "Volpone, child-

less, rich feigns sick, despairs." Here the themes of sterility, meaningless wealth, death, and crushing boredom unite to provide a portrait of a man who has everything, only to find his possessions empty and lifeless because they afford him assurance neither of his worth nor immortality. Like D'Amville (*The Atheist's Tragedy*) who strives for immortality through his progeny, and like Lussoriosso's father (*The Revenger's Tragedy*), a dried husk who seeks to perpetuate himself in being remembered by his successors, Volpone is unable to accept the prospect of death, and struggles to evade its precursory condition, his own spiritual lack. Lying "languishing," he derives gratification by watching Mosca delude the legacy-seekers, but that form of diversion soon becomes stale, and he must devise "new tricks for safety." Only by narrowly eluding detection in close encounters can he find security, not only from the danger of discovery, but from the crushing hell of inertia which envelops him when his intellect is not actively engaged in providing him with palpable proofs of his superiority.

The Argument is explicit in telling the audience that Mosca shares Volpone's affliction of mind: ". . . each tempts th' other again," and Mosca's proneness to the same kind of temptations as Volpone suggests that he is equally susceptible to anxiety. Volpone's idolatrous worship of gold is thus at one remove from the primary source of delight the pair pursue so obsessively. Volpone is like a divine who confuses his love of God--gold, in Volpone's case--with delight in his immediate preoccupation, the rituals and exercises by which he achieves "grace." While worshipping gold as a deity, he is in reality more concerned with self-deification by struggling to obtain it through his exercise of natural reason, a

poor substitute for faith. Certainly, he seems convinced of some sort of perverse sanctification, in the same way that Nano points out Androgyno as a "juggler divine" (I.ii.7). Like Faustus, Volpone may be seen as an "inverted saint,"⁷⁰ as perversely "blessed" and sterile as Androgyno (I.ii.61-62). As his secretly mocking tempter, Mosca functions as his Mephistophelean acolyte.

The tedium Volpone so dreads is a psychological "second hell" (III.iii.28), as he calls the suffering incurred by Lady Politic Wouldbe's "eternal tongue" (III.iv.84-85); her prattle drives him to distraction, and like all suffering, it seems to him to last an eternity (III.iv.84-85). But given this cacophonous infinity, he yearns for another eternity of silence in stasis, ruled over by the "dumb god" he worships (I.i.21), for it is gold which he takes to be like the First Cause, "struck out of chaos" (I.i.9), and giving coherence to existence. Indeed, this frenzied Venetian society, so busy at jostling and shoving to feed on Volpone's wealth, is in a state of confused hubbub, and there is no justice even in the courts, where "multitude and clamour overcomes" (IV.vi.18-19). While he awaits surcease, Volpone seeks to drive out the discordant notes of his own fears with the diversion provided by his family of fools to "make the wretched time more sweet" (III.i.2), not recognizing that he is entertained by personifications of his own folly.

Lady Politic Wouldbe's presence has made Volpone desperate for the exhilaration of a new encounter, delivered from her by Mosca, who is his source of "redemption" (III.v.3) from the hell of boredom she creates, and apprised of Corbaccio's imminent arrival with his will, Volpone finds immense relief. His veins course with new life at the prospect of a

fresh gamble (III.v.34-35), because revived hope gives him the illusion of immortality which Mosca seductively seems to promise in telling him that he "shall live/ still to delude these harpies" (I.ii.120-123).⁷¹ Yet with his perverse penchant for speaking truth, Mosca also subtly warns against the hope of immortality, much as Iago cautions Othello to patience. "Well, we must all go," he sighs, for "age will conquer" (I.iii.33).

Unlike Volpone, Mosca never seems quite to suffer the same death-like tedium that besets Volpone. Rather, he is virtually in constant motion, and if, as has been suggested by at least one other critic, he is bored by Volpone's evocations of the golden deity, and tired of being hugged and kissed,⁷² it is perhaps understandable that such performances repeated regularly by Volpone would result in Mosca's flagging interest. So Mosca suspends his activities only long enough to endure passively Volpone's attentions and self-adoration; if he experiences boredom, it is because Volpone is boring, and not because he, Mosca, shares Volpone's neurasthenia. Mosca puts up with Volpone out of necessity, and it is perhaps apposite to repeat the old maxim that bored people (like Volpone) are themselves usually crashing bores who adopt poses to conceal their vacuity from themselves as much as from others.

But except for those brief episodes during which Mosca must submit to Volpone's solicitations of flattery and lavishings of affection, Mosca's demonic vitality is unflagging; he exists either in a state of elation or anxiety, always busy, always in motion, like the vices and devils of the morality plays. He thus seems to embody only part of Volpone's make-up, the demonically frenetic side of his nature which replaces inertia.

Like gold, that son of Sol which shows "like flame by night," brighter than the source of light itself (I.i.8-10), Mosca partakes of Lucifer's artificial brilliance, reflecting the "rising sun" of Volpone's favour (I.iii.37). So Mosca is a reflection of Volpone's self-love, and like other demonic subordinates, "sweet" Mephistophilis and "honest" Iago, Mosca is addressed variously as "Beloved," "loving," "precious," "sweet," "honest," and "exquisite," all epithets emphasizing Mosca's seductiveness, and associating this "fine devil" (V.iii.46) with other diabolical figures whose subordinacy to their masters is a deadly illusion. In this context, Mosca's words, "All my hopes/ Depend upon your worship" (I.iii.35-36) is an ironic pun on his respectful form of address, as a substantive rather than a title, "worship" suggests Volpone's adulation, not only of the god gold, but of Mosca, a perverse deity of hell. Certainly, Volpone's blasphemous attachment for the demonic Mosca is so strong that it has overtones of sexual perversion, reflecting his inner condition.

Volpone's fear of death and his yearning for immortality are not unlike sexual desire; indeed, there is much evidence that his sterility of soul is reflected in physical impotence, and that he seeks to dispel an awareness of spiritual death with counterfeits of sexual activity. His delight in Mosca's successes has a strong sexual significance, reflected in his apparently homosexual attachment.⁷³ A "wanton gamester" by his own admission (III.v.36), Volpone displays a voyeuristic side to his love of risk, as he conceals himself at Mosca's urging to enjoy his parasite's sport with the legacy-seekers who believe him dead, his anticipation of the encounters amounts very nearly to physical sensation.

Thou art mine honour, Mosca, and my pride,
 My joy, my tickling, my delight
 (III. vi. 34-35)

The game played out, Volpone emerges to savour his triumph, lavishing affection on Mosca in terms redolent of homosexual attraction, yet of unfulfilment:

Let me embrace thee. O, that I could now
 Transform thee to a Venus!
 (V. i. 231-232)

Like other nominal masters of demonic subordinates, Volpone has only to reveal the direction of his destructive desires, and his familiar brings all to pass by producing illusions of gratification. Now Mosca promises release, for in the same way that Faustus and Othello exist in a state of longing for complete knowledge, Volpone longs for the ultimate carnal experience, an eternity of sensation to replace an eternity of death which he already experiences psychologically in the absence of diversion. Thus Volpone represents his desire for Celia as a hell of longing, a fire which must be extinguished. Mosca, like De Flores and Iago, seems to recognize a constraint of nature, requiring him to do the devil's bidding in affording delight which leads his master to his own destruction; his words as a dutiful servant are exquisitely ironic in their accuracy, because it is a master far more powerful than Volpone, whom Mosca serves with such devotion:

. . . I'm bound in conscience,
 No less than duty, to effect my best
 To release you of torment
 (II. iv. 15-17)⁷⁴

It is Mosca who first excites Volpone's desire for Celia, and it is he also who promises surcease from an agony of longing, the situation perhaps has a symbolic parallel in the fire which De Flores sets, so

that he may take a further step in creating a hell on earth while extinguishing the flames. Typical of other villainous subordinates such as Mephistophilis and Iago, Mosca ensures that his master remains a slave of passion by cautioning him against despairing of gratification; the result is that the unpenitent victim remains in a state of despair. That is, by despairing of a higher destiny, he continues in his arrogant attempts to create his own heaven. Like Mephistophilis, Mosca eschews the naming of God, and exhorts Volpone to an earthbound hope which is in reality the ultimate kind of despair:

Sir, more than dear,
I will not bid you despair of aught
Within the human compass.

(II iv.18-20)

Appropriately, Volpone welcomes Mosca's counsel with Faustian misunderstanding, evidencing the extent of his psychological inversion: "O, there spoke/ My better angel" (II iv 21-22); seduced by the prospect of delight, he expresses in an equally Faustian idiom his intention to continue in his blasphemous exercises, with an irrational arrogance born of his earlier successes:

Nay, then,
I not repent me of my late disguise.

(II iv.27-28)

A moment before, he had been close to the real despair that might have been a start of moral regeneration, as long as he stopped short of Mosca's temptation to suicide; but with revived spirits, he unknowingly avoids any hope of redemption, because he does not recognize the signs of his damnation.

Mosca's Mephistophelean promise of life everlasting is evident in the connection he makes between immortality and the prospect of sexual

gratification with Celia in "an eternity of kissing" (I.v.12). Mosca's description of this paragon of beauty and virtue is reminiscent of the diversions offered by Mephistophilis, promises of delight which hint subtly at the unattainable, with its implication of death. But like Faustus, Volpone grasps only external and obvious meanings, albeit that Mosca--as a man--may be unconscious of the significance of his own words, proceeding ultimately from Mosca the devil. Celia is a "blazing star," a "beauty ripe as harvest," with skin like "snow, or lilies," the first images suggesting an end of life, the moment of fruition before death, and the final image, a symbol of death itself. The possibility of possession is illusory, for Celia is of flesh that "melteth in the touch to blood" (I.v.13), an ambiguous invitation to indulgence if ever there was one! Mosca, speaking demonic truth, has given Volpone a glimpse of the inevitable outcome, which is a cosmic mockery of his hopes, whereby they are brought to nothing. The empty end of this encounter, and Mosca's ambiguous words foreshadow Volpone's eventual fall, and the episode with Celia has itself been prefigured in "Scoto's" beating, described by Mosca as an epilogue to be avoided.

Having excited lust in others, Mosca experiences the exquisiteness of love for himself; after all, as a parasite, he is fulfilled by creating want. Having excited Volpone's desire for Celia, and Corvino's desire for gold to the extent that he will see her virtue destroyed, Mosca expresses his exhilaration in words which, taken in the context of Volpone's expressions of almost sexual pleasure, have phallic overtones:

I fear I shall begin to grow in love
 With my dear self and my most prosperous parts,
 They do so spring and burgeon. I can feel

A whimsy in my blood. I know not how,
 Success hath made me wanton. I could skip
 Out of my skin now, like a subtle snake,
 I am so limber.

(III i 1-7)

A careful reading of the play reveals that Mosca not only engineers Volpone's entertainments and exploits, but actually suggests them,⁷⁵ they are, of course, by permission of Volpone's appetite initially. This pattern is evident from the beginning, when after the fools' first entertainment, Volpone asks, "Mosca, was this thy invention?" This, and Mosca's careful reply, "If it pleases my patron / Not else" (I.i.53-54), serve to establish the nature of Mosca's relationship with Volpone. Mosca's quick wit provides Volpone with delight when Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino first appear, and it is Mosca who first excites Volpone's interest in Celia. Again, Mosca is the one who arranges with Corvino the details of the tryst. Similarly, he is the author of the lie Voltore defends so eloquently, in defaming Celia and Bonario. Mosca, and not Volpone, torments the gathered heirs with the will; finally, Volpone's disguise as a *commendatori* is both suggested and facilitated by Mosca.

The single episode in which Volpone appears both to initiate a plan and carry it off is his masquerade as Scoto, and even in this instance, the idea of a disguise is suggested initially by Mosca. Both major episodes in which Volpone's hopes are dashed--his attempted seduction of Celia, and his masquerade at the court--have been conceived and set in motion by Mosca; in each case, Mosca has been instrumental in Volpone's defeat,⁷⁶ unintentionally in the former encounter, and deliberately in the latter.

It seems, then, that Mosca operates in obedience to a cosmic

necessity that he does not understand. Not only does he appear to operate according to some demonic necessity, he is much more vigorous than Volpone in pursuing ends which are much more clearly defined for him. The only real *tour de force* undertaken by Volpone, and at his own instigation from the outset, his masquerade as a mountebank, has as its goal a mere glimpse of Celia, a venture seeming hardly worth the effort, except that it affords him a chance to enjoy his clownish eloquence, which nets him not a penny.⁷⁷ The episode is simply another in a series of distractions to defeat boredom, and it is his own acting which seems to delight him at least as much as his sight of Celia. Volpone is merely a dilettante at the game of cozenage, an actor in love with his own posturing, who gambles with chance as a stimulus to dispel a more deadly kind of anxiety. But for Mosca, cozenage is a more deadly serious business, and the stakes are high. If he loves the gamble, he is not addicted to the point that delight in his own role obscures his aims for a moment. Never lapsing into passivity as Volpone does, he is the truer artisan, wholly bent on winning all, and the master whom he manipulates so adeptly is by comparison rather an amateur and a *bon vivant*. If Volpone is like Faustus in believing himself a master artisan, Mosca is like Mephistophilis, the real conjurer whom his "master" merely imitates.

When Volpone actually has before him the prospect of indulging his carnal lust, his wooing of Celia is a bizarre indulgence of his own vanity. His erotic fervour appears to be engendered largely by self-love as he flaunts his wealth, and capers before Celia, boasting his Protean abilities, but as a seducer and a shape-changing devil, he cuts a somewhat ludicrous figure, a less than able imitation of his servant, whose

diabolical abilities are more effective, and much less laughable in themselves. Volpone's poetry, compelling evidence of his perversely creative imagination, is a seductive and skilfully crafted pastoral in the Marlovian manner. Yet his song to Celia echoes Catullus' expression of destructive love,⁷⁸ and restates in a much more sophisticated way the ultimate emptiness implicit in Nano's stumbling verse.

Like Celia's pander husband, Volpone the posturing satyr denies higher values, calling conscience a "beggar's virtue" (III.vii.212). Suffering psychological inversion, he interprets as the worst sort of insult Celia's offer to "report . . . (him) virtuous" (III.vii.259) if he forebears to ravish her, for in Volpone's Venice immediate sensual gratification is the highest virtue.⁷⁹ So he equates virtue and restraint with sexual impotence, a condition which for him is a facet of death itself; impotence is evidence of mortality, and thus is a symptom of that which evokes his deadening fear. It has been suggested that Volpone really is impotent, and that were he not interrupted by Bonario, he would have proven incapable of consummating his passion in any case.⁸⁰ Certainly, the imagery of stones and death appear to imply physical as well as moral sterility. Sir Politic Wouldbe, exclaiming incredulously, "Stone dead!"⁸¹ underlines the inability of fools to conceive that the clown's mask is no promise of immortality. Volpone feigns for Corvino a belief that:

'Tis a vain labor e'en to fight 'gainst heaven,
Applying fire to a stone. . . .
Making a dead leaf grow again

(III.vii.83-85)

Yet deluded by a sterile "waking dream" (I.i.18) of future joy, this is precisely what he strives so futilely to do. In this respect, Volpone

resembles Lussuriosso's father (*The Revenger's Tragedy*), the aged Duke who has become a dried husk with the lusts of youth, and Mosca stands in a similar relationship to Volpone as Vindice (disguised as the pander Piato) stands to the Duke.⁸²

Yet Volpone's sexual attraction to Celia is itself probably a mere counterfeit, proceeding from Volpone's self-delusion, for his lust seems to be primarily a matter of self-esteem; the looked-for consummation is not really as much the sexual union itself, as it is the ultimate humiliation of Corvino. Certainly, that is the nature of the delight he experiences in cozening the *avocatori*, for he admits that the encounter brings him pleasure more intense than sexual congress (V.ii.11). This intensity of sensation is Volpone's illusion of life-giving energy, which in reality is an impulse towards self-destruction; Mosca is the embodiment of this joke which Volpone unconsciously plays on himself, and as such he is a manifestation of the cosmic mockery we have seen implicit in Iago's function.

Yet Mosca is no less prone to the same despair which besets Volpone. The pair are confounded temporarily by Bonario, whose innocence, like that of Tomazo (*The Changeling*), makes his natural distrust succumb briefly to the villainous subordinate's powers of persuasion. The pair's sense of superiority diminishes to the extent that Mosca suggests suicide for them both (III.ii.480-492), and succumbs to remorseful dejection,⁸³ yet it is essential to Mosca that Volpone's profane spirit be made whole again, for Volpone's laughter is the measure of his, Mosca's, worth--at least as long as it serves him to identify Volpone's aims with his own. The parasite relies on his host's well-being for his very existence, and

Volpone's laughter is Mosca's life-sustaining food. Mosca's wound is perhaps given him by Bonario, but more probably it is self-inflicted, as a device to elicit Volpone's self-pity in order to keep him malleable. Resulting probably at least in part from Mosca's chagrin, the wound is a physical parallel for the psychic injury he incurs through his miscalculation, he speaks truthfully when he wails remorsefully:

My life, my hopes, my spirit, my patron all
Thus desperately engaged by mine error.
(III.ii.483-484)

Indeed, Mosca not only has jeopardized his long-term hope of acquiring Volpone's household, but he is threatened with the "death" which failure brings; as an embodiment of a principle of evil, he dreads the triumph of good, for it signals his own destruction. No wonder he casts about frantically for somewhere to run and hide his "shame" (III.viii.1-2)! The sense of inadequacy brought about by failure is characterized in both Mosca and Volpone by anxious indecision: To Volpone's desperate "What shall we do?" when Bonario has discovered the real disease lying behind the mask of sickness, Mosca can reply only, "I know not . . ." (III.viii.11-12).

Yet as always, it is Mosca who displays initiative, and he sheds his paralysis of reason the moment a new challenge presents itself. Upon Corbaccio's approach with his will, Mosca, true to his nature as a creature "present to any humour, all occasion" (III.i.28), is himself like Fortune, ready to set about the destruction of the unwary.⁸⁴ Quick to recover himself, Mosca raps out sharp orders to Volpone (III.viii.19), and extemporizes adeptly to incriminate Bonario. Although Volpone may have initiated the grand design, it is Mosca who has the quickness of wit

to deal with every contingency, to "turn short as doth a swallow" (III. i. 26), handling Voltore's unexpected arrival with equal facility.

With the first courtroom episode safely concluded, Volpone has come so close to being unmasked, that his complacency is seriously undermined. His feigned sickness has failed to afford him assurance of security (V. i. 2-3), and he cannot even point to his intellectual skill as the source of his salvation, for while his disguise has been effective, he has been passively reliant, first on Mosca's setting the stage, then on Voltore's eloquence for his deliverance. With shaken confidence in his disguise, Volpone's feigned disease is replaced with signs of real sickness, a physical analogue of an inner disease which he dares not acknowledge (V. i. 5). So although his suspense is over, the experience does not afford him emotional release in laughter. Denied relief from fear, he is intuitively aware that the healing power of mirth is his only antidote, an intoxicating draught stronger than drink; even wine serves only as a temporary expedient in keeping him from having to face reality, and it is a poor substitute (V. i. 11-12).

Mosca, on the other hand, reappears with restored confidence, and addresses Volpone with patronizing familiarity:

How now, sir? Does the day clear again?
Are we recovered? . . .

(V. ii. 1-2)

Mosca's aim, to goad Volpone to further efforts, seems to be revealed first in the way he deflects Volpone's praise, transferring it to Voltore, in reply to Volpone's "Exquisite Mosca!" (V. ii. 3), Mosca extols the skill with which Voltore's argument was "carried learnedly" (V. ii. 4), then he elicits Volpone's admiration for the performance by accusing him of

having not been "taken with it enough" (V.ii.9). When Volpone protests that the triumph was better than "the pleasure of all womankind" (V.ii.11), Mosca now suggests that which he perhaps intuits as unacceptable to Volpone, that this last episode is their ultimate artistic creation:

. . . We must here be fixed;
 here we must rest. This is our masterpiece;
 We cannot think to go beyond this.
(V.ii.12-14)

Why does Mosca state, restate, and state a third time for emphasis, his belief that they have executed their *piece de resistance*? Why did he use a similar verbal device at the scene's opening; a series of rhetorical questions exultingly affirming their success? Perhaps Mosca's lines are no more than expressions of exuberance and satisfaction; on the other hand, I believe there is much more going on in his mind. He appears to be working to a plan by which he subtly manoeuvres Volpone, so that Volpone will sanction further risks. Mosca's purposes are threefold, perhaps: first, he may already have conceived his plan to force the "fox out of his hole" (V.v.78); second, he needs to embark on further enterprises immediately, because inactivity in proving his superiority brings the killing anxiety which also besets his master, and last, as a demonic figure he operates unconsciously or otherwise in obedience to a destructive impulse driving him towards his own and his master's destruction.

So Mosca's words, which superficially counsel an end to cozenage, are in reality a challenge, and Mosca probably is disappointed when Volpone at first agrees with him, qualifying his agreement by implying that it is only Mosca who has reached the full extent of his cunning: "True, / th'ast played thy prize, my precious Mosca" (V.ii.13-14). Now each has

condescended to the other, implying that the other has reached the full stretch of intellect in this latest encounter. But Mosca deflects Volpone's back-handed praise which must be as repugnant to him as was the implication of finality to Volpone. Again he demurs, praising Voltore's performance: "Nay, sir,/ To gull the court--" (V.ii.15-16). Again Volpone fails to take up the gauntlet, not only does he agree with Mosca, he even revels in recalling Voltore's words (V.ii.33-34) and the exquisiteness of his restrained mirth (V.ii.36-37).

Now Mosca changes his approach; he has succeeded in exciting Volpone's admiration of Voltore, but not sufficiently to incite him to further enterprise. Concentrating now on Volpone's anxiety, Mosca insidiously forces him to acknowledge the fear against which laughter is Volpone's only defence. Volpone cannot bear his admission of anxiety, or the prospect of Mosca's scorn:

Mosca: It seemed to me, you sweat, sir.
 Volpone: In troth, I did a little.
 Mosca: But confess, sir,
 Were you not daunted.
(V.ii.38-41)

Mosca makes Volpone squirm by forcing from him a grudging admission that the fear springing from his phlegmatic temperament--manifested physically by the cold moisture on his brow--is a reality, a humour which heretofore Volpone has merely feigned, using oils to simulate rheumy eyes.

This exchange, during which Mosca subtly exploits Volpone's fear of personal inadequacy, is remarkably like the similar exchange between Iago and Othello, when Othello, led by Iago to suspect that he has been cuckolded, evinces acute discomfiture while still insisting under Iago's probing that he is "not much mov'd" (III.ii.242).⁸⁵ Like Othello,

Volpone clings desperately to the shreds of his self-esteem, and Mosca, merciless in his probing, enjoys the dominance of his will over his master quite as much as Iago in a similar circumstance.⁸⁶ Mosca is afforded evidence of his intellectual superiority over Volpone as he plays on Volpone's weakness with a cunning born of psychological insight, while Volpone continues to insist with studied nonchalance:

In good faith, I was
A little in a mist, but not dejected,
Never but myself.

(V.ii.39-41)

Mosca's manipulation of Volpone finally affords him the opening he has been seeking,⁸⁷ and which he is quick to exploit, he points out with obsequious hesitancy:

. . . I must needs say this, sir,
And out of conscience for your advocate
He's taken pains, in faith, sir, and deserved,
In my poor judgment, I speak it under favour,
Not to contrary you, sir, very richly--
Well--to be cozened.

(V.ii 43-48)

Threatened by the possibility that Volpone is a better "artist," made fearfully aware of his own fear, and flattered by Mosca's change of tone in a show of admiring subservience, Volpone succumbs. If indeed there is a work of consummate artistry to be applauded, it is this *tour de force* by Mosca; Volpone, like a preening actor whose audience's applause is a plea for an encore, finally agrees to dispense the largesse of his talent:

. . . at thy entreaty,
I will begin e'en now to vex 'em all. . . .

(V.ii.55-56)

Volpone's acceptance of Mosca's subtle challenge seems to suggest Mosca's control over him, and typically, the beguiler never regards himself as

the victim of his own vice, thus Volpone does not realize until too late that Mosca has manipulated him for his own ends. Volpone, who mocks the legacy-seekers, is himself an object of mockery; quick to point out that vice in Corbaccio, he could as well have said it of himself, had he wisdom to heed his own advice:

Corbaccio: Dost thou mock me?
 Volpone: You mock the world sir.
 (V. vi. 14-15)

It is perhaps significant of Volpone's self-initiated psychological inversion, that he voluntarily subordinates himself to Mosca in his need to be a "sharp disease" to the others. Taking on the identity of a *commendatori*, whose drunkenness has resulted in his forfeiting his proper garb, Volpone himself suffers a drunkenness of sorts, induced by the prospect of laughter. So he assumes a guise ludicrously beneath his station, and which reflects his natural baseness. Both in this disguise, and in his earlier disguise as Scoto, Volpone is the victim of his own bluff. First as a mountebank, then as a sergeant, he attempts by demeaning himself to rise above others, whose vices reflect his own. Believing himself a consummate shape-changer, he is a mere imitator of Protean demons; his guises allow him to "stoop," but never to "rise."

By contrast, Mosca is the truly subtle shape-changer, beguiling others in his own identity; his finest deception, unlike that of Volpone, is characterized by his appearing to rise in fortune, rather than to descend. His ascent, of course, parallels Volpone's descent both in disguise, and in fortune. Mosca assumes Volpone's place in Venetian society, so that he stands in the same relation to Volpone as Volpone does to the drunken *commendatori* whose self-induced affliction of mind

has cost him his clothing, a uniform from which he derives his very identity. Significantly, it is Mosca who has made the *commendatori* drunk (V.iii.115). This detail enhances the significance of Mosca's parallel relationship with Volpone, who drinks wine only as a substitute for laughter, another means of drugging the senses. In the same way that Iago is the embodiment of the spirit of wine for the vulnerable Cassio, Mosca is the demon of intoxicating laughter for Volpone.

Mosca's usurpation of Volpone's place is both literal and symbolic. When Volpone gives Mosca his keys (V.xii.111), he figuratively provides the means by which Mosca's demonic possession of him is made complete at the same time that he is dispossessed of all he owns. Volpone's house, a virtual bawdy-house-cum-temple dedicated to the worship of gold, is a parallel for his body, which harbours a prostitute intellect in a state of spiritual decay. Mosca says pointedly, "His body and that house/Decayed together" (V.vii.12-13), a juxtaposition of ideas producing an analogy reminiscent of *The Changeling*.⁸⁸

Through imitation while in pursuit of laughter, Volpone has reduced himself to become a creature much lower in the natural order than the sergeant whose identity he apes. Made to "languish in his borrowed case" (V.v.8) by Mosca, he suffers in the spiritual death of anxiety and fear he has struggled so hard to evade; imprisoned in his impersonation, he fears discovery, yet is aware that the only way he can separate himself from it is to destroy both himself and Mosca. There has been a sinister truth all along in Mosca's earlier diagnosis that Volpone's cure might be effected by his being bound to a "flayed ape" (II.vi.30), for now Volpone is bound to his clownish identity, also personified earlier in

Nano, a "pretty little ape" (III.iii.12).⁸⁹ Volpone's cure lies in his being forced to choose freedom from this masked baser nature to which he is bound. Volpone has shown himself a natural subordinate, the "slave" (III.vii.101) to whom Celia would have been bound, had she heeded Corvino's threats and compromised her virtue out of a passion of either lust or fear. As long as Volpone's mask remains intact, he has merely an illusion of life, springing first from the stimulation afforded by hope, and then by the fear which Mosca's demands engender. Volpone has fulfilled Mosca's comment that he "will needs be dead before his time" (V.v.13) in a way far more real than the literal-minded Mosca means. Yet, self-deluded until Mosca disabuses him of his irrational hope, Volpone continues to look to Mosca to be "saved" (V.viii.28).

Mosca's demonic possession of Volpone is echoed in Voltore's feigned fit; Corvino exclaims that Voltore is "possessed" (V.x.10), and Voltore himself is convinced that Mosca is "doubtless some familiar" (V.x.10).⁹⁰ The implication is clear: Mosca is to be seen as "the devil (that) has entered" Voltore (V.x.35). Although Volpone manipulates Voltore, he is able to do so only because Voltore is possessed by passions embodied in Mosca, the same destructive passions which control Volpone. At last forced by the overreaching Mosca to reveal himself, Volpone arrives at the awareness that he has made "a snare for (his) own neck . . . out of mere wantonness" (V.xi.3-4), the "dull devil" in his brain is the demonic spirit of Mosca, who "gave it second" (V.xi.6). But from the outset we have seen that Mosca cannot be content with only part of Volpone's wealth, for not only does he share Volpone's disease, he is constrained to achieve perfection in his evil; only by consuming all does evil

destroy itself. Volpone, like Faustus, has fondly believed it possible to strike a bargain with the devil, only to find that the devil, too, is insatiable.

Fittingly, both Volpone and Mosca languish in a hell of unsatisfied appetite, because neither wins all; nor would their lust have been satisfied if either had succeeded, for stasis is the death for which, paradoxically, both strive, and which both struggle to evade. It has been said that Volpone's confinement in the hospital of the *incurabili* and Mosca's imprisonment in the galleys is symbolic of incurable spiritual sickness,⁹¹ but that is true only in a special way. As a demonic figure, Mosca remains silent and unrepentant after discovery, but Volpone clearly undergoes a change; he now realizes that he has entrapped himself "willingly, with laughter" (V.xi.2). Similarly, he admits to his identity, showing himself in his true form, for the first time publicly, as reality imposes itself on his delusions: "I am Volpone" (V.xii.89), he says, and he publicly exposes Mosca as his "knave" (V.xii.90). Unlike the Duchess of Malfi, who is able to claim that she is "The Duchess of Malfi still" because she has clung courageously to her identity, Volpone's admission has the quality of an awakening. So in some sense, Volpone has been cured, but Mosca has not, because his operating principle is illusion which comes with the license of passion. Appropriately, Mosca is made a "perpetual prisoner" (V.xii.113). But while Volpone is cured of illusory hopes, he may never escape his aspirations and appetites; he may only learn to recognize them as inevitable conditions of human existence to be reckoned with. So in that sense, Volpone ends as an Everyman figure, whom Jonson treats sternly, but with good humour. Perhaps

Jonson simply points in knowing acceptance to the ultimate mockery that he seems to see implicit in the human condition, the imperfections embodied in Mosca may be subdued, but not expunged, appropriately, Mosca is imprisoned, but not killed.

Laughter is a power the fool exerts over lesser fools.⁹² Mosca is for a moment sovereign in a realm of fools, and he ultimately destroys himself in having the last laugh. Mirth, according to this view, is essentially life-denying, and its pre-eminence in the individual psychology and in society is a mark of degeneracy.

The need for laughter in Iago's psychology destroys first Othello, then Iago himself. Given a broader social base in Volpone's Venice, the need for power is manifested by desire for wealth, the cleverer members of that society exploit greed to indulge in the destructive laughter which affords them a greater power. The triumph of mockery is accompanied by the ascendancy of the villainous subordinate, and the reduction of his nominal master, but with Iago's death and Mosca's banishment, the moral order rights itself, although much less decisively in Volpone's Venice than in Othello's Cyprus, where vice has been far more contained and individual. With the expunging of evil, the cause for mockery disappears, but all men, it appears, are doomed to the mockery of their mortal hopes, and self-knowledge is at best a partial cure.⁹³ Hope of gratification is by Volpone's own admission "like temptation to the devil" (III iv.32), and his hope has been for a laughter that brings a promise of eternity.

FOOTNOTES

¹Falstaff: The brain of this foolish-compounded clay, man, is not able to invent anything that intends to laughter, more than I invent or is invented on me. I am not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men (*Henry the Fourth, Part II*, I.1.11).

²The principle of fearful self-recognition in laughter at devils has a long dramatic tradition. Garcio's opening address to his audience (*Mactacio Abel*) is comic and coarse, yet although the audience is likely to laugh, Garcio warns them to see in his humour an image of themselves; he provides advice which implies that only unwary fools see cause for laughter:

Some of you are (the devil's) men.
But let your lips cover your teeth,
Harlots everyone!

G. England, ed., *The Towneley Plays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1897), p. 10 (modernized spelling mine).

For scriptural authority for this traditional view, see *Ecclesiastes* 6. Cf. Baudelaire's view (see note 92).

³Mockery as a means of humiliation may be seen as a form of sadism, by which the villainous subordinate projects his self-contempt. See L. Y. Rabkin and J. Brown, "Some Monster in His Thought: Sadism and Tragedy in *Othello*," *Literature and Psychology*, XXIII, 1 (1973), 60.

⁴Quotations cited from *Othello* are from M. R. Ridley's edition with modernized spelling, which is based on the 1622 First Quarto (Q1) and the 1623 First Folio (F). See William Shakespeare, *Othello*, M. R. Ridley, ed. (London: Methuen, 1958).

⁵Helen Gardner synthesizes Iago's sense of inferiority and his need for compensatory laughter, calling him a "past master of the sneer" whose "detestation of superiority" results in an "intolerable levity." H. Gardner, "The Noble Moor," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XLI (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 196-197.

⁶Iago and Mosca have much in common with Beaudelaire's description of Maturin's Melmoth (*Melmoth the Vagabond*) as an embodiment of demonic laughter:

And so, how he laughs and laughs, as he constantly compares himself with human caterpillars, he so strong, so intelligent, he for whom a certain number of the physical and intellectual laws that condition humanity no longer exist! And this laughter is the perpetual explosion of his wrath and suffering. It is . . . the necessary product of his dual and contradictory nature, which is infinitely great in relation to man, infinitely vile and base in relation to absolute truth and righteousness. . . . It is laughter that never sleeps, like a

disease for ever on its stealthy way, in execution of a providential mind.

Charles Baudelaire, *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, P. E. Charvet, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

⁷Traditional attitudes towards laughter were ambivalent; the Church position usually was that laughter is evil, and the antithesis of reason. (See E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York: Pantheon, 1953), p. 420 ff. In earlier religious drama, vice and Anti-Christ figures are generally coarsely humorous. See note 2 above.) The Renaissance view of laughter was perhaps more balanced than that of an earlier age. Sir Philip Sidney defends comedy because it makes the beholder "laugh at folly," and thus to avoid it. On the other hand, "quips, scoffs, carping and taunting" are not to be laughed at, but the listener should "laugh at the jester." Sidney observes that mirth does not necessarily signify delight, for "laughter hath only a scornful tickling." See Sir Philip Sidney, "An Apology for Poetry," in *English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance*, O. B. Hardison, ed. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963), pp. 121, 124, 140. Laughter, by Sidney's definition, is an instrument for good or evil; the villainous subordinates created by Renaissance dramatists invariably use laughter as either a destructive force, or as an indication of evil's triumph.

⁸ Madeleine Doran describes the nature of Iago's persuasions, calling him a "finished artist." (M. Doran, "Good Name in Othello," *SEL*, XVII (1967), 195-217.)

⁹The Venetians portrayed in Othello are hopelessly inept at intrigue. Roderigo's efforts are the only real attempt by a Venetian to engage in a subtle plot, and he blunders, despite Iago's careful directions. Except for Iago, the Venetians are more foolish than vicious, and even the Duke appears to be capable of little more than the mouthing of aphorisms.

¹⁰See M. D. Faber, "Othello: The Justice of It Pleases," *American Imago*, XXVIII, iii (1971), 229-246, and S. E. Hyman, "Iago Psychoanalytically Motivated," *Centennial Review*, XIV (1967), 369-384.

¹¹I believe it possible to acknowledge Coleridge's theory of "motiveless malignity" without altogether agreeing that Iago's stated grievances are mere "motive-hunting." Iago may very well believe in his stated motives, which are characteristic of his psychology. Iago appears to be motiveless to the extent that his predilection for jealousy works according to its own necessity, making him prey to imagined wrongs, and sensitive to slights. While I accept Kenneth Muir's view that Iago's references to his motives are unconvincing in their brevity, I do not agree that there is a "real" motive apart from those Iago states. Such distinctions seem based on the assumption that Iago's actions must have a single cause, and that we may accept one only by rejecting others. Iago's stated motives are, I believe, complementary manifestations of his condition. There is little need, therefore, to attempt a refutation of

Iago's stated motives, as Richard Flatter undertakes to do. Flatter overlooks Emilia's reference to some earlier accusation of adultery which Iago makes directly to her (IV ii 149), similarly, in his attempt to show that Iago's claim to seniority is without foundation, Flatter does not take into account the condescension with which Iago is customarily treated. I believe Flatter places undue evidence on minor points of syntax to support his case, i.e., "I hate the Moor *and* it is thought . . ." For criticism cited above, see T. M. Raysor, ed., *Coleridge's Shakespearean Criticism* (New Haven: Harvard University Press, 1930), pp. 44-256; K. Muir, ed., *Othello* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 21; R. Flatter, *The Moor of Venice* (London: Heinemann, 1950), pp. 34-39.

¹²See Rabkin, p. 60.

¹³Weston Babcock shows that "honest" Iago is portrayed as a soldier of limited ability and imagination, who is regarded with condescension by his superiors. Iago attempts to bolster his self-image by spiteful detraction and denigration. (W. Babcock, "Iago--An Extraordinary Honest Man," *SQ*, XVI (1965), 297-301.) See also, W. Empson, "Honest in *Othello*," in *Othello: A Casebook*, John Wain, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 98-122.

¹⁴Rabkin and Brown hold a similar view that "Othello loves Desdemona so much that it is questionable in human terms if he loves her at all" because he loves his image of her in the same way that she falls in love with his autobiography (Rabkin, p. 62). G. P. Elliott makes much the same point in showing Othello's "pride-in-love," an arrogance he claims to be as diabolic as that of Iago, and the cause of Othello's fatal insistence on concealing his jealousy: "The more he dissembles the more he is sure that she is doing likewise; his refusal to tell the truth prevents him from learning the truth." See G. R. Elliott, *Flaming Minister* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1963), p. xxi.

¹⁵Sandford Marovitz sees Iago primarily as a "catalyst," activating "that part of the Moor's psyche which has its deepest taproots in black African savagery", a savagery which "springs into life after years of lying dormant in the shadow of his more recently acquired training in Christianity and logical thinking." See S. E. Marovitz, "Othello Unmasked: A Black Man's Conscience and a White Man's Fool," *SR*, VI (1973), 115.

¹⁶For considerations of Othello as a negro stereotype, see Marovitz, pp. 111, 119, and Michael J. C. Echeruo, "The Context of Othello's Tragedy," *SR*, II (1967), 299-318. Cf. Aaron (*Titus Andronicus*) as an extreme example of demonic qualities ascribed to the black man. Shakespeare's primary source, Giraldi Cinthio's "The Story of Othello," shows Othello to be hot-blooded and vengeful, and Thomas Rymer (1657) in "A Short View of Tragedy" criticizes Shakespeare for representing a black man as having a position of command. See Leonard F. Dean, *A Casebook on Othello* (New York: Crowell, 1961), pp. 107-125, 255-264.

¹⁷Iago's account of Cassio's dream, while perhaps the soundest evidence of Iago's hatred having its origins in a homosexual attraction to Othello and Cassio, appears to have its source in Philocomasium's dream (*Miles Gloriosus*). See S. Rogers, "Othello: Comedy in Reverse," *SQ*, 24 (1973), 210-220, G. E. Duckworth, ed., *The Complete Roman Drama*, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1942), I, 563. The parallel episodes serve to relate Othello to Pergopolinices, underscoring Othello's tragic vulnerability, which is similar in principle, if not in presentation, to the braggart soldier's comic vanities. See also D. Stewart, "Othello: Roman Comedy as Nightmare," *Emory University Quarterly*, XXII (1966), 252-276. Iago is, of course, much more formidable and concretely human than either the *fallax servus* of Roman comedy, or such comically mischievous servants as Matthew Merrygreek (*Ralph Roister Doister*).

¹⁸For Othello's narcissism implicit in his self-consciousness as a soldier, see Faber, p. 230.

¹⁹Elinor Shaffer supports Coleridge's essentially Kantian argument, which has its premise in the existence of a quintessential self. As she points out, Coleridge's argument "is a refutation of the theoretical possibility of basing morality on self-love." Coleridge argues that the self is indeed a figment, unless it is grounded in an idea of God, which lends it reality. Self-love, in claiming a separate finite existence of the self as distinct from God, annihilates the self by separating it from God (E. Shaffer, "Iago's Malignity Motivated: Coleridge's Unpublished 'Opus Magnum'," *SQ*, XIX (1968), 195-212). By this view, the nature of Othello's love for Desdemona makes it Othello's unwitting negation of the self.

²⁰For a discussion of Iago's intellectual arrogance and egotism, see C. V. Boyer, *The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), pp. 122-131.

²¹The title of Weston Babcock's article is apt as an index of Iago's inferior status. Babcock points out that Roderigo addresses Iago familiarly as "thou," and Iago addresses Roderigo as "you." Presumably Roderigo enjoys a superior social position. Iago's use of "you" probably is part of his technique of persuasion, yet if the pair assumed each other to be social equals in the first place, the ploy would be clumsy and inappropriate.

²²See Babcock, pp. 299-301.

²³The pervasive imagery of witchcraft invites conjecture as to its function. Marovitz relates it to what he believes is Shakespeare's portrayal of Venetian colour prejudice (see note 16 above). David Kaula points to several images suggestive of Brabantio's and Desdemona's congenital susceptibility to the black arts (D. Kaula, "Othello Possessed: Notes on Shakespeare's Use of Magic and Witchcraft," *Shak. S.*, II (1966), 125). Aside from these more specific issues, I think the main point is that those characters who talk about witchcraft mistake it for something

else. Brabantio, unable to comprehend the love between Othello's attraction for Desdemona, attributes it to enchantment; Iago, unable to experience faith in Divine process, rejects as witchcraft all means of fulfilment that do not originate in natural reason. Thus "witchcraft" becomes in *Othello* a term of rejection used by those who are blind to any manifestation of Divine purpose.

²⁴I borrow the phrase from Anthony Low, who in referring to Cassio's drunkenness, observes that Iago becomes a comic yet sinister master of revels. See Anthony Low, "Othello and Cassio: 'Unfortunate in Infirmity'," *Archiv fur Das Studium Der Neueren Sprachen Und Literaturen*, CCIV (1973), 431.

²⁵The phrase in its context relates the wine to a demonic familiar.

²⁶Anthony Low notes the parallel between Othello's jealousy and Cassio's drunkenness, pointing out that "neither of (Iago's) victims, left to himself, would have succumbed" (Low, p. 430).

²⁷H. Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, 4 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), IV, 148-149.

²⁸W. H. Auden, "Iago. The Joker in the Pack," in *Wain*, p. 201.

²⁹See Chapter 5, p. 222. Hippolita's wrath at Soranzo's proposed marriage to Isabella (*'Tis Pity*) results in Hippolita's unholy pact with Vasques who, pretending to be both lover and helper, intends to help her destroy herself. The similarities of situation to that of Othello and Iago are enhanced by Vasques' and Hippolita's virtual paraphrase of their lines:

Vasques: . . . I am infinitely yours.

Hippolita: I will be thine . . .

(*'Tis Pity*, III.viii.8-9)

Hippolita brings about her own death, with Vasques' help, by drinking poisoned wine. The imagery and symbolism defining Iago's relationship with Cassio and Othello has a marked resemblance. Cf. also Mosca's words to Corbaccio when he receives Corbaccio's will: "I am only yours" (III. ix. 11-12). The giving of the will may be seen as similar to a Faustian contract, whereby Corbaccio delivers his soul, as it were, to his familiar.

³⁰Babcock cites a passage in John Earle's *Microcosmographie* (1628), in establishing a case for Iago's recognized inferiority. I think it significant that the same passage also may be seen as relating inferiority to the demonic principle of non-being. Earle uses negatives in a manner similar to Iago's idiom. Earle's pamphlet conceivably could have been influenced by Iago's lines, on the other hand, Earle may be independently expressing a commonplace which Shakespeare also used (see Babcock, p. 298).

³¹Iago's wit affords the kind of laughter characterized by Henri Bergson as a revelation of "primitive man capering preposterously under

the gorgeous robe of ceremonial." The assumption of that view seems to be that bestiality is the reality underlying man's higher conceptions of himself, which stand revealed as absurd when his bestial "reality" is laid bare. See H. Bergson, "Laughter," in Wylie Sypher, ed., *Comedy* (New York: Doubleday, 1956), p. 45.

³²Henri Bergson comments on the reversal of situation and inversion of role as a means of obtaining comic scenes, and points out the essence of parody as the "degradation of the solemn" (Bergson, pp. 121, 141). The unwitting sincerity with which Iago's victims continually describe him as "honest" makes Iago himself a grotesque parody of ideals of truth and virtue. This element of the grotesque in Iago relates him to the devils of earlier religious drama. A. P. Rossiter refers to episodes in the mystery plays as "the comedy of the terrifying-grotesque," and his description of "chuckling jocular fiends . . . who go about their dragging of souls to hell" is also a rather apt description of Iago. See A. P. Rossiter, *English Drama from Early Times to the Elizabethans* (London: Hutchinson, 1950), p. 68. Iago is not, of course, like the devils of the mystery plays, nor is he a riotous clown in the tradition of Preston's Ambodexter (*Cambises*). However, his coarse, undignified, and at times near comic demeanour relates him to all of these. Rossiter comments that grotesqueness arises from the wry humour that is the frightening reaction of devils and cunning fools to their own negative qualities.

³³Cf. Chapter 5, n. 23, p. 241. Kenneth Muir observes that Iago's use of animal imagery occurs mostly in the first three acts, Othello makes no use of animal imagery in the first two acts, but catches the trick from Iago, showing "the corruption of (his) mind by his subordinate." See Kenneth Muir, intro., *Othello* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

³⁴Iago's being cursed as a "dog" (V.ii.363) is perhaps significant of his demonic properties (cf. *The Witch of Edmonton*). The "doggyish" Malevole is associated with Diogenes, who speaks unwelcome and insulting truth (see Chapter 6, p. 273). There seems to have been a tradition that devils seldom lie, except about the nature of the Divine. Mephistophilis and Iago are examples. The canine image is particularly apt in combining connotations of the demonic and of perverse truth, as embodied in Iago. For a possible exegetical interpretation of Iago in these terms, see *2 Peter*, 2, 3:10-22.

³⁵Iago's use of reversal, and the gratification he experiences, are a tragic version of a comic principle. Bergson, after Kant, defines a kind of laughter which is "the result of an expectation which, of a sudden, ends in nothing" (Bergson, p. 116).

³⁶Baudelaire points out the Satanic quality of laughter which "comes from a man's idea of his own superiority" (Baudelaire, pp. 145-146).

³⁷See *Corinthians* 17, 18.

³⁸See Chapter 3, p. 81.

³⁹W. H. Auden notes a resemblance to Jonsonian comedy in the relationship between Iago and Roderigo. Iago, like Mosca, is "a clever rascal . . . gulling a rich fool who deserves to be gulled." Iago's evident enjoyment is typical of Auden's portrait of the practical joker who "must not only deceive, but . . . unmask and reveal the truth to his victims." Auden locates the practical joker's satisfaction in the discomfort of the victim who learns that he has been a puppet controlled by someone "who likes to play God" (Auden, pp. 199-223).

⁴⁰The extent of importance attached to reputation in the Renaissance is a vexed question, and critics lean towards one or the other of the views expressed by Iago as the accepted Renaissance attitude. Rabkin and Brown assert that "in the weltanschauung which guides *Othello's* Venetians, there is too great an emphasis on 'reputation'" (Rabkin, p. 63). Similarly, T. S. Eliot considers Othello "over-tender of his reputation" (T. S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," in *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934), pp. 38-40). On the other hand, Madeleine Doran shows that a man's good name was regarded as "a thing most precious, yet most precarious . . . in the sixteenth century"; indeed, occupation and membership in the community were so dependent on it that its loss was tantamount to a loss of personal identity and means of livelihood. According to Doran's view, Othello's and Cassio's sense of loss is altogether reasonable. See M. Doran, "Good Name in *Othello*," *SEL*, XVII (1967), 195-217. Rather than selecting either view as substantive, I hold that both attitudes expressed by Iago are valid. Few would disagree that loss of reputation is grievously harmful. Most importantly, however, all would regard inner virtue as the only basis upon which reputation can have real meaning. That is the critical factor which Iago cunningly avoids mentioning.

⁴¹The imagery used to express the theme of idolatry was traditional and conventional. See *Corinthians*, 6, 7:14-16 for references to temples, heathens, and blasphemous conjunctions of light and dark. Cf. Iago's reference to Desdemona: "As where's that palace, wherein to foul things/Sometimes intrude not?" (III iii 141-142). Cf. also the theme of idolatrous love in *The Changeling's* imagery of temples.

⁴²Seneca points out that slaves have a freedom of speech denied to kings (see Chapter 6, n. 30, p. 304). By citing this doctrine, Iago intends to imply that he has a nobility which restricts his freedom, he thus adopts the pose of a Christian Stoic who regrets the ephemeral advantages of rank.

⁴³M. R. Ridley explains "forked plague" as meaning a cuckold's horns. While that is perhaps the most obvious meaning, I believe the phrase also may refer to man's inescapable destiny, dooming him to the paradox implicit in the finite, free men are slaves, and slaves are free men. Certainly, the context (III iii.274-283) seems to invite this more universal interpretation. (Cf. Lear's situation in seeing himself as a "forked thing.")

⁴⁴Othello's failure of comprehension as a lover, and his subsequent destruction upon forfeiting his warrior's state of mind, appear to derive from a dramatic convention of the soldier's lack of aptitude in the courts of love. "Rude in speech" and "little blest with the set phrase of peace" (I.iii.81-82), Othello bears a resemblance to Columbo (*The Cardinal*). See note 17 above, and Chapter 2, p. 46.

⁴⁵The web and net images are complex. See Robert B. Heilman, *Magic in the Web* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1956), pp. 104-108.

⁴⁶John Bayley comments, "Doubt is not the lover's state of mind. And it is not the doubting person who is uncomprehending, but the person who must be sure of himself and others." See J. Bayley, "Love and Identity in *Othello*," Wain, p. 190.

⁴⁷Beatrice-Joanna (*The Changeling*) shows a similar concern with the mere appearance of chastity (see Chapter 3, p. 106). Whereas she would conceal her promiscuity from others, Othello would prefer to have Desdemona's supposed adultery concealed from himself. De Flores expresses his hope of winning Beatrice-Joanna's favours in much the same idiom that Othello uses; he expresses his belief that a woman, once initiated into lustful practices, may "prove a sutler to an army royal" (*The Changeling*, II.ii.64).

⁴⁸For a discussion of the interconnecting conceptions of adultery, lost certainty, and lost identity, see Bayley, pp. 169-198.

⁴⁹Cf. Vasques' lines ('Tis Pity), in which a similar reversal of authority through knowledge occurs (Chapter 5, p. 226).

⁵⁰Philip McGuire arrives at a similar conclusion in dealing with the epistemological problem in *Othello*. Othello's capacity to know is disrupted by Iago, but in the end, man's capacity to know is affirmed. The affirmation is "limited" and "qualified," however, and Iago's refusal to reveal his motives "suggests the point at which rational modes of knowing become inadequate." See Philip C. McGuire, "Othello as an 'Assay of Reason'," *SQ*, XXIV (1973), 199-209.

⁵¹William Empson points out that Volpone, in showing us the commercial hell of Venice, is "on our side against it, as the earlier literary guides through hell had always been." To that extent, at least, Volpone perhaps may be seen as a Dantesque figure. See W. Empson, "Volpone," *HR*, XXI, iv (1969), 651.

⁵²Unlike *Othello*, *Volpone* does not present heavenly justice as abstraction. Rather, as Ian Donaldson points out, justice is represented in the "too human form of the devious, blundering . . . avocatori." See I. Donaldson, "Volpone--Quick and Dead," *ETC*, XXI (1971), 121-134. For further comments on the continued corruption of society, see J. Arnold, "The Double Plot in *Volpone*," *Seventeenth Century News*, XIII (1965), 47-48.

⁵³ Cf. Sidney's belief that poets "are almost in as good reputation as the Mountebanks at Venice," and that "upon this necessarily followeth, that base men with servile wits undertake it" (Hardison, p. 136).

⁵⁴ Passages cited from *Volpone* are from Alvin B. Kernan's edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962). Kernan bases his text on the two folio volumes of Jonson's works (1616 and 1640). The 1616 volume was seen through the press by Jonson. The 1640 volume was not completed until after Jonson's death, but he prepared much of the material for print. Therefore, although the 1640 volume was carelessly printed, it cannot be discounted as a possible means of determining authorial intent. Kernan has modernized the spelling, and has annotated the text. He retains the original act and scene divisions, conforming to C. H. Hereford and Percy Simpson's Standard edition of the *Works* (11 vols., Oxford: 1925-52).

⁵⁵ See A. C. Dessen, "Volpone and the Late Morality Tradition," *MLQ*, XXV, iv (1964), 383-399. While Dessen regards Celia as symbolic of heavenly virtue, Speed Hill takes the view that Celia and Bonario are essentially negative characters who cannot be accorded much significance in the play's moral schema. See W. Speed Hill, "Biography, Autobiography, and *Volpone*," *SEL*, XII (1972), 309-328. However, I believe Speed Hill's deprecating view of Celia's "Griselda-like martyrdom" and Bonario's "smug confidence" suffers from a tendency to view Celia and Bonario from an essentially dramatic perspective. Admittedly, their dramatic importance is limited.

⁵⁶ See Charles A. Hallett, "The Satanic Nature of *Volpone*," *PQ*, XLIX (1970), 41-45, for the relationship between unnatural bestiality and the demonic in *Volpone*.

⁵⁷ For the imagery of death and disease as a symbolic parallel for spiritual corruption, see Kernan, p. 24, and Harriett B. Hawkins, "Folly, Incurable Disease, and *Volpone*," *SEL*, VIII (1968), 335-348.

⁵⁸ For "make" see *OED*, 5th edn., "† Make," v², vol. VI, p. 71.

⁵⁹ William Empson comments on *Volpone*'s capacity to enjoy the "pleasures of the human mind," unlike the others, who are "sunk in (their) instincts" (Empson, p. 659). While *Volpone* evidently is seduced by intellectual pride, I think Empson goes a bit far in connoting almost admiration for him.

⁶⁰ George Gascoigne's *Supposes* illustrates the distinction. When Dulippo changes places with Erostrato, an obvious inversion takes place. But there is tacit agreement between author and audience that the subservience of convention and scholarly vocation to the ends of true love is legitimate. Erostrato's father's failure to share that view arises from the fondness of age and his misguided devotion to his son's material success. Unlike Mosca, Dulippo never really assumes control; he is always an extension of his master's will, and the purpose of the masking is benign.

⁶¹I disagree with William Empson's claim that "the plot requires Mosca to be a conventional-minded parasite, actually *trying* to be a 'typical' one" (Empson, p. 662). Mosca has the characteristics of a conventional villain, certainly, but not of a conventional parasite. Nor does he try to be typical; rather, he tries for a greatness which transcends typical examples of his kind. Jonas A. Barish points out that Mosca's contempt for ordinary parasites suggests a hierarchy of counterfeits, ranging from those who are essentially false (like Mosca) to those who are merely "falsely false." The Politic Wouldbes are at the lower end of the scale. See J. A. Barish, "The Double Plot in *Volpone*," *MP*, 51 (1954), 172-193.

⁶²John S. Weld pictures Mosca as "standing by in deferential boredom" as Volpone worships at his golden shrine. Weld points to Mosca's "mildly impatient interruptions" in this opening episode. Mosca's impatience to get the flattery over with, and to get on with further devilry seems to suggest that Mosca finds his expressions of admiration a tedious necessity, not based on any real admiration. See J. S. Weld, "Christian Comedy: *Volpone*," *SP*, LI (1954), 172-193.

⁶³This peremptoriness and decisiveness is characteristic of Mosca. Except for a moment's doubt of himself when he is confounded by Bonario, he displays cool confidence. He initiates every scheme, and even when his plan goes awry, he is the first to recover. Therefore I disagree with Judd Arnold's judgment that Mosca functions "only by Volpone's fiat." See J. Arnold, "The Double Plot in *Volpone*," *SCN*, XXIII (1965), 47-48.

⁶⁴Alexander Leggatt emphasizes the destructiveness of Volpone's theatricality, suggesting that it is "the artist's instinct to bring his work to an end, to close it off and set it in its final form." This idea is similar to that of evil's fruition lying in its own destruction. See A. Leggatt, "The Suicide of Volpone," *UTQ*, XXXIX (1969), 19-32.

⁶⁵I have difficulty accepting Arnold's view that Mosca is "effective only while serving ends devised by his host" (Arnold, p. 48). Similarly, Frank N. Clary's view of Volpone and Mosca as Falconer and Falcon limits our view of them. Jonson's preoccupation with inversion makes it possible for us to see the fly in this upside-down world as superior to the fox. See F. N. Clary, Jr., "The Vol and the Pone: A Reconsideration of Jonson's *Volpone*," *ELN*, X (1972), 102-107.

⁶⁶See Chapter 6, p. 247.

⁶⁷See Chapter 2, n. 2, p. 65.

⁶⁸This serpentine habit of torpor between forays is characteristic also of Henry III (*The Massacre at Paris*). But Guise--if we are to believe him--remains wholly preoccupied with his plotting, while only appearing to have moments of sloth (see Chapter 2, pp. 32, 34). Like Guise, Mosca's intellect is constantly at work, unlike Volpone's mind, which becomes passive when no stimulation is at hand.

⁶⁹ Alan C. Dessen, for example, concentrates on the theme of greed in showing *Volpone's* debt to the late morality tradition. Dessen points out that a majority of the late morality plays were concerned above all with the idolatry of money. See Dessen, p. 384.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 3, n. 10, p. 116. Charles A. Hallett expresses a similar view in characterizing Volpone's recovery from feigned death as "resurrection," and his encounter with Celia as a "false paradise." See Charles A. Hallett, "Jonson's Celia: A Reinterpretation of *Volpone*," *SP*, 68 (1971), 50-69.

⁷¹ Cf. Mephistophilis' promise of limited immortality to Faustus. See Chapter 3, n. 10, p. 116.

⁷² Empson, p. 662.

⁷³ William Empson appears to attach little importance to the demonic significance of Mosca's fatally enticing homosexual attraction for Volpone. He claims that Jonson was inclined to denounce sodomy by others in order to conceal his own susceptibility. That is perhaps rather too conjectural an imputation of authorial motive. Noting that the audience "expected sodomy in raffish Italians," Empson asserts that Jonson does not treat the issue as crucial. However, Othello's and Cassio's apparent attraction for Iago, and the sexual relationship between De Flores and Beatrice-Joanna suggest that a sexual link between villainous subordinate and master (or mistress) was often seen as an important element of their hellish union. Rosaura's relationship with Hernando (*The Cardinal*) has the same quality when he becomes her agent of death, and the least conjectural example, of course, is Edward II's fatal affection for Piers Gaveston (*Edward II*).

⁷⁴ Cf. De Flores' concern with "conscience" (Chapter 3, p. 104) suggesting a perverse code of demonic conduct which the necessity of his own nature does not permit him to violate. Similarly, Iago often expresses his sense of "duty." Like Mosca, these demonic figures always omit to specify the nature of the authority which dictates to their consciences, and they avoid specifying the object of their sense of duty, presumably Satan.

⁷⁵ Judd Arnold attributes the successes of Volpone and Mosca to Volpone's "fertile imagination," a view which is difficult to credit in the light of Mosca's clearly greater initiative. See Arnold, p. 48.

⁷⁶ Alan C. Dessen hints at this view in noting that, while Bonario refers to the hand of justice, and to just reward, his opportunity to help Celia is more the result of "Mosca's complicated machinations" than to a "providential plan." See Dessen, p. 384.

⁷⁷ J. A. Bryant points out that Volpone's portrayal of Scoto presents him as a burlesque image of a giver of life, and that he is capable of fooling no one but fools like Sir Politic. The incident thus prefigures Volpone's attempt to seduce Celia. See J. A. Bryant, Jr., *The Compas-*

sionate Satirist. Ben Jonson and his Imperfect World (Athens, Ga : University of Georgia Press, 1972), p. 79.

⁷⁸Volpone's "Song to Celia" may be regarded as an imitative tribute by Jonson to earlier poets. Cf. Marlowe's *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*, Raleigh's *The Shepherd's Plea*, and Donne's *The Bait*. The "Song to Celia's" recognized excellence is such, that it has been published separately. See Gerald Bullett, ed., *Silver Poets of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Dent, 1947). As William Empson notes, Volpone "sees his chief charm as his poetic imagination," yet the "Song to Celia" is also indicative of Volpone's perversity and blindness. Our awareness of the "Song's" Catullan source (*Vivamus, Mea Lesbia*) compounds the significance of the words as an invitation to death.

⁷⁹See Hawkins, p. 343.

⁸⁰See Kernan, p. 24.

⁸¹For the imagery of stones and death showing spiritual degeneration, see Kernan, p. 24. Ian Donaldson further suggests a reference to the death of generation, implied by a quibble on "stone" as "testicle." See Donaldson, p. 129.

⁸²See Chapter 6, p. 289.

⁸³It may be conjectured that Jonson's use of traditional themes extended to his incorporation of Despair in the guise of Mosca, who resembles Mephistophilis in this respect. This further supports the view that Mosca is the true demonic shape-changer, and Volpone is a deluded copyist. Cf. earlier Despair figures who are tempters to suicide, e.g., *The Faerie Queene*, Book I, and *Magnyfycence*.

⁸⁴One of the clearest dramatic representations of Renaissance attitudes towards fortune appears in *Old Fortunatus*. Mosca's lack of resemblance to earlier traditional parasites is evident in his closer resemblance of function to Dame Fortune, than to Shadow, who deserts each master when he becomes Fortune's slave.

⁸⁵See p. 140.

⁸⁶I disagree with William Empson's interpretation, that Volpone and Mosca simply "boast together a little," after which Mosca "tenderly rallies (Volpone) to calm his fears" (Empson, p. 662). On the contrary, it seems to me that Mosca deliberately excites Volpone's sense of insecurity by appealing to remembered fear, and Voltore's superior skills, as goads.

⁸⁷This episode is of central importance in showing that Mosca manipulates Volpone, rather than vice versa. See note 65.

⁸⁸See Chapter 3, pp. 98-99.

⁸⁹ Jonas Barish points out that the imagery shows the equal unnaturalness of apes and parrots counterfeiting human behaviour, and of humans imitating beasts (Barish, p. 87).

⁹⁰ Charles Hallett cites Thomas Mouffet's *The Theatre of Insects or Lesser Living Creatures* (1658) as an example of the tradition that the devil often appeared in the form of a fly (Hallett, p. 46).

⁹¹ Hawkins, pp. 335-348.

⁹² Baudelaire writes:

. . . (Laughter) always implies a greater or lesser degree of ignorance and weakness. . . . It is certain that human laughter is intimately connected with the accident of an ancient fall, of a physical and moral degradation (Sypher, p. 143).

⁹³ See Donaldson, p. 129.

CHAPTER V

THE GOLDEN AGE AGAIN IN QUESTION¹

The Jacobeans, increasingly concerned with faculty psychology, seem to have developed an oppressive awareness of moral complexity in a world that presented no assurance of the intellect's capacity to discern the nature of truth and justice.² John Webster and John Ford reflect this scepticism in their creation of villainous subordinates whose temporary ascendancy and subsequent defeat defy explanation in terms of Renaissance conceptions of cosmic order.

Bosola (*The Duchess of Malfi*)³ is a villainous subordinate subjected to the pressures of a corrupt order of authority; he becomes a tool of the Cardinal's and Ferdinand's wills in order to survive. Resembling Marston's Malevole in his penchant for social criticism, Bosola is motivated largely by the prospect of reaping the rewards of service. He is loyal to his vicious masters initially, finally turning from them because they fail to reward him, and because he is eventually repelled by their relentless and ingeniously cruel persecution of the Duchess. Bosola exists in a world that appears to be subject to the operation of accident, and the laws of a larger Necessity remain inscrutable. He kills Antonio by mistake when he has hoped to destroy Ferdinand, and Ferdinand kills Bosola while trying to kill the Cardinal. Ironically, Bosola's choice of a moral course has much to do with his death. Our final judgment of Bosola remains uncertain, and so does our apprehension of a fate that,

hints at the futility of all action, moral or otherwise.

Ford's Vasques (*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*)⁴ exceeds Bosola in loyalty to his master; morbidly fascinated by the vice he professes to hate, he zealously furthers Soranzo's execution of vengeance on the incestuous Annabella and Giovanni. Vasques is acutely conscious of the value of rational restraint and of decorous behaviour, and he espouses external appearances of rationality for the consummation of vengeful passion. The only certain knowledge of divine purpose in *'Tis Pity* is that possessed by the Friar. It is a knowledge that proceeds wholly from faith, and proves ineffectual. Mortal concepts of justice and moral truth arrived at by ratiocination prove inadequate, and ideal patterns of speech and behaviour bear no relation to inner worth.

Vasques is a Nemesis figure who seeks out knowledge of the incestuous relationship by beguiling Putana, and uses his knowledge to destroy the lovers. The kind of knowledge that he obtains is the product of natural reason, which seems to be Ford's conception of man's highest voluntary faculty; its most common use appears to be the pursuit of a flawed conception of justice devoid of mercy. What "mercy" there is in this morally blind *milieu* is the product of expediency, and has no relation to mercy reflecting Divine love; Grimaldi goes unpunished for Bergetto's death, and Vasques is given his freedom. *'Tis Pity* gives us no guarantee that the temporal provides any certainties, or that human ideals arrived at by reason without faith can ever be more than the products of passion and self-interest. Vasques, like Bosola, is a denison of a chaotic world, and his ascendancy is itself a symptom of the chaos that Ford hints may be an unavoidable human condition.

This sense of futility pervades *The Duchess of Malfi*. The world, like the "ruins of an ancient abbey" (V.iii.2), is in a state of decay. In the silence of a spiritual void, characters hear only the echoes, "so hollow, and so dismal" (V.i.5) of their own ineffectual voices; the moral landscape is as bleak and lifeless as the "Russian winter" (IV.i.97) to which the Duchess refuses to succumb. The prevailing mood of the play is nostalgia and regret for society's loss of spiritual vitality; the affairs of men, subject to inevitable flux, are at a nadir, and the "common fountain" (I.i.12) of state is polluted. Melancholy men move blindly in the darkness of their earthbound hopes and fears, ruled by Tantalus and alienated from each other. The Cardinal and Ferdinand are determined to deny the Duchess fulfilment by forbidding her marriage until they arrange an advantageous match, while Bosola hopes in vain for reward by serving their interests. The Duchess, determined to fulfil the demands of her womanhood, seeks to build a clandestine Eden with Antonio, her defiant optimism bordering on the irrational. Antonio, unlike the recklessly courageous Duchess, is so beset by fears that he is incapable of effective action. Like the tomb effigies Bosola describes, the characters cast their gazes downwards, "their minds . . . wholly bent upon the world" (IV.ii.161-4).

In an uncaring universe where, as Bosola observes, "the stars shine still" (IV.i.99) unmoved by mortal misery, frenetic and ultimately meaningless activity eventually subsides as each character discovers too late the futility of his worldly aspirations.⁵ The dying Antonio learns that he has chased "bubbles blown in th' air" (V.i.66), perfect in their sphericity, but without substance; the Cardinal finds that he has courted

death in pursuing mere "form" (V.1.53); Ferdinand at the last "come(s) to himself" in perceiving the world as just a "dog-kennel" (V.1.65-69); and even the Duchess welcomes death as a "best gift" (IV.11.225). Bosola, awakened from a "golden dream" (IV.11.325), finds solace for his own death only in having brought death to others to compensate for his earlier misdeeds (V.v.98). The world Webster shows us is one in which men seem doomed to deny their "good nature" (V.1.83) in pursuit of a happiness that always eludes the grasp.

Knowledge comes to Webster's characters only with suffering and the prospect of immediate death, and the nature of that knowledge is oppressive, it is simply a recognition of cosmic indifference. Antonio expresses the extent of mortal wisdom when he observes,

Though in our miseries Fortune have a part,
Yet in our noble suff'rings she hath none:
Contempt of pain, that we may call our own.
(V.1.56-58)

Musing on Antonio's death "in a mist" (V.v.94) of randomness and error, Bosola is aware of the arbitrariness and inscrutability of mortal destinies: "We are merely the stars' tennis balls" (V.iv.56, 57). Antonio's achievement, it seems, is all that man may look for, and the ultimate--indeed the only--affirmation of human dignity lies in attaining the knowledge with which to withstand suffering. Delio comments:

Nature doth nothing so great for great men
As when she's pleased to make them lords of truth.
(V.1.117, 118)

An awareness of randomness in human affairs is not, however, a denial of an ultimate order; rather, it is Antonio's recognition that "heaven hath a hand" in men's fortunes,

. . . but no otherwise
 Than as some curious artist takes in sunder
 A clock or watch, when it is out of frame,
 To bring't to better order.

(III.v.60-63)

Love, it seems, is the single mortal faculty linking men with the infinite, and Antonio hears--or believes he hears--the Duchess' mournful warning in the abbey's echoes (V.iii.20); with Antonio's death, love is gone from the world, there is no one left to hear. Having attained the limit of mortal awareness, the characters expire in silence, all "like dead walls or vaulted graves, . . . yield(ing) no echo" (V.v.97). In the stillness following the Duchess' death every footfall is heard (V.iv.33), and characters converse in muted tones (V.iv.5). With the vast melancholy that accompanies understanding, characters expire in "sadness" (V.iv.62)⁶ and "sorrow" (V.v.54). In such a world all endeavour seems pointless, the temporal appears as a momentary and apparently meaningless coalescence of matter that works only towards its own dissolution. Antonio sighs,

Heaven fashion'd us of nothing, and we strive
 to bring ourselves to nothing. . . .
 (III.v.80, 81)⁷

The dolorous mood of the play's final scenes expresses a regret, not for the tragic waste of human potential, but for the constricting limits of human possibilities. There is a keen sense of loss, an awareness of an earlier age in which a community of life-affirming love protected men from the "stormy weather" (V.iii.14) of capricious Fortune. And even the optimism of these men of an earlier age proved, like the Duchess' hopes, to be mere illusion. The "Church (they) loved . . . so well," which they believed "should have canopied their bones till doomsday" (V.iii.

15-17) has succumbed to the ravages of time in the same way that virtue inevitably is corrupted.

I have described the atmosphere of the play's final scenes as a starting point for a consideration of Bosola's character, because his full significance both dramatically and philosophically is best seen against the background of his social context; it is only in these last scenes that Webster shows his audience the full import of all that has gone before. Bosola as villainous subordinate and revenger is a creation of his society, an "actor in the main of all" (V.v 84), he is also society's victim who embodies evil's principle of self-destruction. Unrewarded by the Cardinal for an unspecified murder in his service, Bosola is a malcontent who rails at his society's vices; yet unlike Marston's Malevole (*The Malcontent*), his protests arise from the neglect he has been shown, and are reflections primarily of self-interest rather than his hatred of vice. Antonio notes that Bosola's railing

Is not for simple love of piety;
Indeed, he rails at those things which he wants. . . .
(I.ii.24-26)

Embittered by neglect, Bosola is recognized by Antonio as essentially "valiant," but perverted by "foul melancholy" (I.i.77). Bosola's situation is far more complex than that of say, Flamineo (*The White Devil*). Certainly Flamineo has reason to feel cheated of his birthright; there is nothing to suggest, however, that he has earned consideration through his labours, or that his service to Brachiano could in any way be construed, even by himself, as worthy. A man of noble blood who becomes his sister's pander presents our moral judgments with little difficulty. But Bosola, a loyal soldier who commits crimes while acting as an

extension of his betters' will only to go unrewarded, presents moral complexities when it comes to the affixing of blame for his later actions.

The Cardinal, himself a "melancholy churchman" (I.iv.81) whose jealousy prompts him to destroy others, has, by his neglect of Bosola, created him in his own image. Antonio says of the Cardinal, "the devil speaks in his lines" (I.ii.110), and ironically, it is the Cardinal who recognizes demonic qualities in his hireling:

. . . Some fellows, they say, are possessed with the devil,
but this great fellow were able to possess the greatest
devil and make him worse (I.i.46-48).

We find repeatedly in *The Duchess of Malfi* images of fragmentation having associations with the demonic;⁸ man's corruption severs a divine whole, and evil is the result. Ideally there is no contradiction inherent in conceptions of loyalty and truth, but because his masters are corrupt, Bosola has had to choose one course to the exclusion of the other. He seeks "rather to appear a true servant than an honest man," unable to be both (IV.ii.332, 333). Thus Ferdinand, enlisting Bosola as a spy on the Duchess, compounds his demonic qualities:

Bosola: It seems you would create me
One of your familiars.
Ferdinand: Familiar! What's that?
Bosola: Why, a very quaint invisible devil in the flesh--
An intelligencer.
(I.ii.183-5)

Because Bosola acts against his better instincts in serving the corruption of others, his diabolism is accompanied by self-loathing. His self-love is not like that of such other villainous subordinates as Mosca (*Volpone*) or Iago (*Othello*) who derive immense satisfaction from the practice of vice; rather, Bosola is seduced by avarice against his will.

His initial refusal of Ferdinand's gold with a pun reminiscent of Vindice's words (*The Revenger's Tragedy*) is a clear indication that his moral weakness makes him a prey to appetite, unwillingly subject to corruption by his masters, he tries weakly to resist temptation that is too strong for him:

Take your devils,
Which hell calls angels! These cursed gifts would make
You a corrupter, me an impudent traitor;
And, should I take these, the'ld take me to hell.
(I.i.187-9)

Awarded the Duchess' "provisorship of horse" (I.i.141) while in the employ of Ferdinand whose bestiality is most often expressed through equine images, Bosola blames his villainy on him in similar terms:

Say, then, my corruption
Grew out of horse dung: I am your creature.
(I.i.210, 211)

It is not beyond probability that the "horse dung" image has a wider significance of cosmic necessity. The popular conception of the world as a "dunghill"⁹ would indicate that Bosola's evil proceeds not only from his particular masters, but from the mortal condition itself.

Prevented by "the devil, that rules i' th' air" (II.i.52) from seeing beyond his hope of gain, Bosola in turn becomes a serpentine tempter, proffering fruit--appropriately ripened in horse dung (II.i.145)--in an attempt to discover the Duchess' pregnancy. The Satanic significance of the episode is more than coincidental; "You are an impudent snake indeed, sir" (I.i.38), Antonio chides, and a pair of gossiping servants conjecture that "'Twas a French plot . . . to see what the devil can do" (II.ii.51, 52). Bosola's role as Satanic tempter is part of an extended Edenic metaphor defining the situation of Antonio and the

Duchess, the circumstances of their brief idyll make their destruction as inevitable as the original Fall.

In the same way that the fruit Bosola brings come from boughs grafted onto unfruitful trees (II.i.55, 56), the love the Duchess bears Antonio grows in unfruitful soil. In the corrupt Calabrian society, the principle of fragmentation that denies ideal unities results in contradictions in human affairs. In the same way that Bosola must choose between service and honesty, the Duchess in seeking a mate must choose between birth and merit,¹⁰ as Malateste later illustrates, both are no longer to be found in one man. In choosing a social inferior, the Duchess herself must choose her own humanity over her social position.¹¹ Cariola appears to grasp the nature of this tension, and knows where it must lead:

Whether the spirit of greatness or of woman
Reign most in her, I know not; but it shows
A fearful madness. I owe her much pity.
(I.ii.424-26)

The fragmentation requiring these choices has implications of evil, as I have suggested, an attendant inversion of the natural order is evident, not only in the Duchess' choosing Antonio, but in her having to assume the active role in their relationship.¹² Presumably the brothers' sanctions prevent courtiers more elevated than Antonio from advancing their suits, and she takes matters into her own hands: "We are forced to woo because none dare woo us" (I.ii.366).¹³

With a courage born of an innocence verging on naivete, the Duchess determines to "assay this dangerous venture through frights and threatenings" (I.ii.269, 270). Antonio, timid in his hesitancy to "thrust his hands i' the fire to warm them" (I.ii.349, 351), is the passive member of

the lovers' conjunction. Ferdinand's threat in warning the Duchess against marriage reflects his own perversity that forces her to oppose his will.¹⁴

. . . the irregular crab,
Which though't goes backward, thinks it goes right
Because it goes its own way.
(I.ii.243-45)¹⁵

The brothers have created circumstances requiring the Duchess to reverse the social order and the natural relationship of the sexes in order to consummate her natural impulses. By leaving the "path of simple virtue" (I.ii.370), the Duchess thinks to escape the confines of the "rank pasture" (I.i.229) of the court, and she enters a "wilderness" of her own creation where is "nor path nor friendly clew" (I.ii.281-83). A delightful and terrifying Eden, the lovers' wilderness does not really lie beyond the "pasture" of the court, and it does not represent escape. Rather, the usual landscape, in which pastures are bounded by wilderness, is reversed. The Duchess and Antonio find themselves threatened by the court on all sides, and the brothers lurk without, like the madmen who later surround the walls of the Duchess' prison.

As the circumstances of its creation suggest, the lovers' idyll is illusory in its appearance of perfection to the Duchess. Bosola, standing third in a demonic hierarchy after the Cardinal and Ferdinand, is also present as a Satanic third man in a circle of superficially idyllic perfection¹⁶ encompassing the lovers. Images of circularity comprise a pattern revealing as illusory the perfection the lovers seek; Antonio says of the Duchess' proffered ring,

There is a saucy and ambitious devil
Is dancing within this circle.
(I.ii.355, 356)

Paradoxically, Antonio's qualities of excellence, recognized even by Ferdinand, serve both to win him the Duchess, and to destroy him. His having taken "the ring" in tilting (I.ii.7), taken in the later context of his "marriage" has a symbolically sexual significance,¹⁷ and it is this proven merit that places him within the Edenic circle. The circle's bounds are frail, being wholly of the Duchess' making, and her illusion that it will provide ample protection is both admirable and pathetic; she tells Antonio as she embraces him

All discord without this circumference
Is only to be pitied and not feared.
(I.ii.391, 392)

Her choosing Antonio is a negation of order and degree, so that the exclusion of discord is illusory.¹⁸

The Duchess' courage proceeds as much from love-induced blindness as from innocence. Having made Antonio "stark blind" (I.ii.333) by offering herself to him, she exults after their vows, "I now am blind" (I.ii.415). Taking their vows without Church authority, the lovers share an Edenic pristine innocence that makes them as unaware of good as they are of evil. Rejecting "all vain ceremony,"¹⁹ the Duchess weds by natural law, ignoring Church rites, rules of degree, and the strictures her brothers have imposed with the pretext that she is a widow. Blinded by love, the Duchess and Antonio disregard the fearful consequences threatened by Ferdinand and the Cardinal,²⁰ as if in anticipation of the outcome, Webster imparts to Antonio associations of transience and sacrifice in portraying the lovers' inverted relationship. The Duchess chides playfully, "You are a lord of misrule" (III.ii.6), and he replies with an irony beyond his own understanding, "Indeed, my rule is only in

the night" (III.ii.7).

For all that the lovers violate the rules of degree, their marriage is an affirmation of love and community that defies the life-denying world of alienated men. Like Marston's Altofront (*The Malcontent*), the Duchess shows the nature of the distinction by insisting that Antonio's affection be a reversal of a Machiavellian political dictum:

Make not your heart so dead a piece of flesh
To fear more than love me.

(I.ii 373)

The Duchess exhorts Antonio to reject deadening fear of authority in favour of love, yet in the inverted world of the court, the procreative impulse itself breeds death. When Antonio tries to conceal the Duchess' first pregnancy, the rumour bruited abroad that an assassin has been taken "with a pistol in his great codpiece" (III ii.41) has a symbolic truth underlying its literal falsehood.

This paradoxical situation arises because the brothers and their society insist on imposing on the Duchess ideals of womanhood that are life-denying empty forms. Insisting on her humanity as a creature of "flesh and blood" (I.ii.377), she protests that she is "not a figure cut in alabaster" (I.ii.375).²¹ The Duchess rejects symbols of order and authority as lifeless forms in the same way that she rejects Church rites and lifeless ideals of womanhood:

'Tis ceremony more than duty that consists
In the removing of a piece of felt. . . .

(II.i.130)

Indeed, the outward forms of respect and obeisance have become dead husks; respect has degenerated to become Castruchio's sycophancy, and the social hierarchy is as devitalized as his name suggests. Yet the Duchess' whole-

sale dismissal of symbols representing society's lost ideals is a rejection of the ideals themselves, and her pursuit of fulfilment is as self-destructive a course as that of the brothers. While the brothers are hypocritical in their pursuit of self-gratification masked by ceremony, the Duchess excludes from her circle of perfection both the forms and the ideals they symbolize. Thus while society's ceremonies mask an inner emptiness, the lovers' "circle of perfection" is also flawed. Antonio's comparison of the pair's "sweet affections" to the spheres (I.ii.492) is a carefree foreshadowing of his recognition that the perfection of these spheres has the fragility of mere "bubbles."

Bosola, always an opportunist shaping his arguments to meet the demands of the moment, leads Antonio to destruction by supporting the Duchess' rejection of a social hierarchy based on birth. Ironically, his argument is sound:

O, sir, you are lord of the ascendant, chief man with the Duchess.

Some would think the souls of princes were brought forth by more weighty cause than those of meaner persons. They are deceived; there's the same hand to them (II.i.103-115).

Yet he reverses his position with equal ease when it serves his purpose, chiding Antonio for showing baseness of birth by his fear. His purpose in the first instance apparently is to win Antonio's confidence, having observed the Duchess' early signs of pregnancy, and believing Antonio to be "the duchess' bawd" (II.iii.66). Having won Antonio's confidence, Bosola then is in a position to shame him into action that will lead to his destruction.

While it is in Bosola's best interest as Ferdinand's hireling to

see Antonio destroyed, he is obliged to ensure the Duchess' survival as far as possible, and to see that she returns to a chaste life. When the Duchess attempts to explain Antonio's "banishment" to Ancona with a lie about his negligent stewardship, Bosola evidently realizes that his first task is to win her confidence; he does so by arguing for Antonio's worth, a tactic that he perhaps thinks will find favour with her (III ii. 228 ff.). Yet Bosola's argument also is sincere, believing Antonio to have been a loyal steward engaged in procuring for the Duchess, he sees in what he thinks to be Antonio's unjust dismissal a parallel of his own situation:

He was an excellent
Courtier, and most faithful; a soldier
.....
(Who) deserved a far better fortune.
(III.ii.251-55)

At this point, Bosola has no reason to admire or pity the Duchess, believing her as vice-ridden and as neglectful of her subordinates as are her brothers.

Bosola's behaviour is entirely consistent with that of a villainous subordinate whose avarice makes him deny his better instincts, but whose good qualities prompt him to feel compassion for his victim. The apparent reversals in his arguments are equally consistent, not only with his villainy, but with a psychology that accepts lifeless ideals as real. If the premise were true, for instance, that merit and birth were synonymous, but that one of low birth could be meritorious as well, there would be no contradiction in his arguments. It is mortal imperfection that makes his statements contradictory, because by supporting one point of view, he must exclude the other. In that respect, the Duchess

resembles Bosola in her view of herself; having rejected a restrictively hierarchized social order, she finally identifies her individual worth with the title the world has bequeathed her: "I am Duchess of Malfi still," she tells Bosola (IV.ii.144).

These apparent contradictions inherent in the ideal and the actual and in good and evil lie at the heart of the human dilemma, and are the complementary yet opposed elements in everyone, Bosola is no exception.²² Seduced from goodness by the prospect of reward from the brothers who are "rotten and rotting others" (IV.ii.321), Bosola is constantly beset by self-loathing²³ arising from a stricken conscience. In this respect, as I have suggested earlier, Bosola differs in his self-love from most other villainous subordinates, who more typically are blinded by their narcissistic tendencies. Bosola of course loves himself in the sense that he is self-seeking; however, he never loses himself in self-admiration. On the contrary, he is painfully aware of his moral weakness. Filled with self-contempt but a slave to avarice, he feels himself forced to act the villain; at no time until his "conversion" does he consider another course of action. His attitude from his earliest involvement and until he discovers that Ferdinand's cruelty knows no limits is characterized by his comment when he first discovers Antonio's relationship with the Duchess. Moved now to admiration and sympathy for her, he agonizes:

. . . what rests, but I reveal
 All to my lord? O, this base quality
 Of intelligencer!
 (III.ii.328, 329)

Bosola's regret at the betrayal he regards as a necessity, and his evident self-contempt, suggest that his earlier discussion with the

Duchess during which he wins her confidence may not be dismissed as mere opportunism. There is a sincere note of admiration and perhaps envy of Antonio in his lines as he tells her:

. . . it cannot be said yet,
That any ill happened unto thee, considering thy fall
Was accompanied by viriue.

(III.ii.272-74)

The same note of conviction sounds in Bosola's expression of wonder at the survival of decency in a world he has taken to be wholly corrupted:

Do I not dream? Can this ambitious age
Have so much goodness in't as to prefer
A man merely for worth, without these shadows
Of wealth and painted honors? Possible?

(III.ii.272-75)

But as if by compulsion, Bosola moves to destroy virtue and happiness that he envies and admires, and in so doing he reflects the Cardinal's nature, the Cardinal, "where he is jealous of any man, . . . lays worse plots for them than ever was imposed on Hercules" (I.i.85).

With Antonio departed for Milan, Bosola instructs the Duchess, "You must see your husband no more" (III.v.97). Bosola perhaps believes that the Duchess will find "safety and pity" (III.v.108) if she returns to her brothers, but he has yet to find out the extent of their cruelty. While he has given Ferdinand the prognostication that fell from Antonio's pocket, it seems that he has not divulged Antonio's identity; it is with good reason, then, that he asks the Duchess if her children can "prattle" (III.iii.114). But the Duchess remains intransigent in her hatred of her brothers, and it becomes apparent to Bosola that a reconciliation is impossible (III.iii.116) if she continues in her fidelity to Antonio. Only now does Bosola change his tack and taunt her, trying to bring her to forget Antonio because he is a "base, low fellow," and "one of no

birth" (III.v.112, 115). At no point does Bosola display a persecuting zeal in serving Ferdinand by exceeding his master's instructions. Rather, he remains an extension of Ferdinand's will in word and act during the Duchess' final hours.

Unsuccessful in swaying the Duchess, Bosola has no alternative if he is to remain in the brothers' employ but to see to her imprisonment, an episode that is assumed to have transpired between acts. Having done so, Bosola has essentially the same task he had earlier, that is, to ensure the Duchess' survival and contrition, exhorting her to "live" (IV.i.68) and to "leave this vain sorrow" (IV.i.76) after pretending to show her the corpses of her family. In attempting to make her forget Antonio, and in trying to assuage what he believes to be her "despair" (IV.i.73), Bosola has not had to undergo any great conflict of conscience; if he were to be successful, he would on the one hand achieve Ferdinand's aims, and on the other, save the Duchess from her self-destructive course of action.²⁴

But the Duchess is impervious to Bosola's "comfort" that is designed to bring her to forget Antonio, and to "save (her) life" (IV.i.84); now Bosola is moved to pity in being unable to persuade her to start afresh and to have hope (IV.i.75 ff.). For Bosola, life has meaning only in terms of reward, and his own hopes and disappointments are for him the very stuff of life, he is incapable of understanding the Duchess' weariness of life--a "tedious theatre" (IV.i.92), she calls the world--and that she is really beyond despair. Thus he is moved to pity because he cannot conceive that the end of her hope brings her surcease from pain.

An extension of the brothers' wills as long as he retains some hope

of reward, Bosola still has no resolve of his own, despite his increasing distaste for his role as a tool villain. He knows that the Duchess cannot be further reduced in circumstance and that further mental torture can have no effect in bringing her to contrition, his pity for her prompts him to advise Ferdinand to "end here" (IV.i.114). Ferdinand's response, "Damn her . . ." (IV.i.118) makes it unmistakably clear to Bosola for the first time that Ferdinand is not concerned with bringing the Duchess to contrition, but with gratifying his own lust for vengeance. Bosola at first refuses with a flat "never" (IV.i.138) when Ferdinand instructs him to visit her again, yet with Ferdinand's simple "You must" (IV.i.139), Bosola qualifies his refusal with a weak "never in mine own shape" (IV.i.129), explaining lamely that he has forfeited his credibility with her (IV.i.130).

The symbolic significance of Bosola's disguise as the Old Man is complex. Instrumental in destroying the only life-affirming relationship in a spiritually dead world, Bosola has himself been spiritually dead. The beginning of his compassion and his disguising are signs of his awakening, and he moves from spiritual death to life. In that sense, the disguise is really a transformation. On the other hand, Bosola's adoption of a disguise is also an unmasking. Now, as the "common Bell-man" (IV.ii.173), he stands revealed as an embodiment of death.²⁵ Bosola's role in these final hours of the Duchess' life is ambivalent. Sent by Ferdinand as a "cruel physician" (IV.i.138) to induce penitence, Bosola equally keeps his promise that his "business shall be comfort" (IV.i.132). Comparing the Duchess' soul to "a lark in a cage," (IV.ii.131) he hopes to convince the Duchess of the insubstantiality of mortal existence.

By so doing, he would serve both his own ends in bringing comfort in the face of her impending death, and Ferdinand's ends in bringing her to contemplation of her eternal soul.

Yet both Bosola and Ferdinand misunderstand. Because the Duchess has achieved a majestic tranquility that transcends despair, she is not in need of comfort, and because she has no sense of guilt, she cannot be brought to penitence. She faces the strangling cord as fearlessly as she once wrought her "Gordian" with Antonio. Released from her love of life that had meaning only when she knew Antonio to be alive, the Duchess welcomes death as a release from torment:

. . . . Tell my brothers
That I perceive death, now I am well awake,
Best gift is they can give or I can take.
(IV.ii.225)

Bosola's exclamation, "This cord should terrify you!" (IV.ii.229) is a mixture of incredulity, chagrin, and perhaps admiration.

Bosola's moral regeneration is a dubious matter, because it only sets him on a path of revenge; nonetheless, his conversion, whatever its merits, is genuine. Bosola frees his will from the brothers by awakening from a "golden dream" (IV.ii.325) much in the same way that the Duchess becomes "well awake" just before her death. With her death Bosola finds that Ferdinand, suffering remorse, attempts to shift all responsibility to him. Ironically, it is Ferdinand's new-found capacity for pity and grief that Bosola himself has advocated, that deprives Bosola of his reward. Bosola's vengeful reaction is no simple disillusionment in experiencing what he earlier would have regarded as a personal injustice. Rather, he is like the Duchess in experiencing a freedom that comes with the end of hope. For her, the end of hope was her belief that Antonio

was dead; for Bosola, it is the death of his hope for reward. He learns that mortal expectations are illusory, and like Antonio's constant fears, they inhibit freedom of thought and action that comes with casting off worldly aspirations. Only now can Bosola understand the futility of hope and its power to pervert goodness:

. . . Off my painted honor!
 While with vain hopes our faculties we tire,
 We seem to sweat in ice and freeze in fire.
 What would I do, were this to do again?
 I would not change my peace of conscience
 For all the wealth of Europe.

(IV.ii.337-43)

Unlike most villainous subordinates, whose evil involves the subverting of the established order by overreaching, Bosola rebels only when his new-found freedom of will allows him to choose good. Yet in choosing good, he becomes a revenger who exploits Julia's lust, destroys the brothers and Antonio, and in so doing destroys himself. While the revenge motive cannot be seen as morally justifiable, the result is an expunging of evil and the re-establishment of a revived moral order. Like the apricot bough grafted to the blackthorn, good comes from evil. That seems to be a central paradox that Webster explores, and lies at the heart of his conception of men as complexes of good and evil in a contradictory yet complementary relationship. In a corrupt world, right action brings destruction, and to be too good, like the Duchess, is to die. The Duchess rebels against authority, for only then can her love survive, if only for a short space; Bosola rebels, for only then can justice be done and evil be expunged. When authority has its basis in fear, no goodness is possible until fear, and hence authority, are destroyed.

Yet there does not seem to be any assurance in the world of *The*

Duchess of Malfi that men are capable of good when they pursue any worldly end, so that goodness necessarily means physical wretchedness. Bosola laments on the Duchess' death:

. . . That we cannot be suffered
To do good when we have a mind to it!
This is a manly sorrow. . . .
My estate is sunk
Below the degree of fear. . . .
(IV.ii.360-65)

Perhaps Bosola means by "manly" that which is necessarily man's nature, so that all men by necessity act "'gainst (their) own good nature" (V.i.85) in pursuing any worldly goal that involves hope of earthly reward, while we admire the Duchess' innocence and courage, we are aware too that she, like Bosola, has been bent on self-gratification that has been in vain, and has excluded ideal conceptions of conduct. In the end, her nobility of spirit and Bosola's baseness have resulted in the same mistakes and the same outcome for each.

The only true nobility possible according to Webster's metaphysics, it seems, is to endure mortal suffering and die with dignity. Bosola expresses what Webster appears to conceive as the full range of human possibilities when he comments sententiously as he expires:

In what a shadow or deep pit of darkness
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live!
Let worthy minds ne'er stagger in distrust
To suffer death or shame for what is just
(V.ii.100-103)

The world Webster shows in *The Duchess of Malfi* holds no certainties except suffering and death, and no character can know that his actions are moral, even if he is disposed towards the good. In such a world not even a villainous subordinate thrives briefly, and he is no more assured of reward when he adopts a course he conceives to be just and good. His

blindness and that of his victims is characteristic of a world that has no faith in absolute moral values, and has lost its moral bearings. Bosola's complexity of character is a reflection of the moral complexity characterizing Jacobean drama, itself an expression of the anxiety that superseded the simplistic moral certainties of an earlier age.

Vasques, like Bosola, is an embodiment of the principle of social inversion that accompanies moral chaos. Superficially Soranzo's respectfully servile tutor and guide, Vasques in reality controls his master, manipulating his psychology to achieve their common goal. Yet although Vasques' vow to Soranzo's father is not revealed until the final act, we are not entitled to assume that Vasques' loyalty is simply a convenient rationale by which he exercises his obsessive hatred of vice. Rather, his ideal of service and his morbid morality may be seen as complementary motivations. Unlike Bosola, Vasques does not appear to seek material reward, and he is much more than a simple tool villain of the order of Pedringano (*The Spanish Tragedy*), an earlier Spaniard whose loyalty springs from self-interest. Pedringano remains a simple extension of Lorenzo's will until his death, and Bosola exercises no freedom of will until he chooses not to serve the Cardinal and Ferdinand. Vasques, on the other hand, exercises his will through Soranzo, and there is no disparity between his aims and those of his master.

Like a sinister Humphrey Wasp (*Bartholemew Fair*), Vasques works in what he believes to be his master's best interests in restraining Soranzo's excesses of passion. But the suppression of passion Vasques advocates cannot be equated with moral behaviour; it is merely a mask of expediency to be laid aside when Vasques judges conditions right for Soranzo to act.

Like Bartholemew Cokes, Soranzo escapes his tutor's control at times. His show of emotion towards Hippolita, and his resultant failure to placate her (I ii.67) incite her attempt on his life. Vasques compensates for Soranzo's indiscretion by cynically appearing to help Hippolita, while he brings her to self-destruction. Nonetheless, Soranzo's death results from his premature exercise of vengeful passion after Vasques has made careful plans for Giovanni's assassination by the *banditti*. Vasques introduces order into the forces of disorder, and by so doing, he resembles a Vice figure who enhances the effectiveness of evil.²⁶ His effectiveness is limited, however, by Soranzo's choleric disposition that is not always amenable to control.

Only with Soranzo's death and Vasques' relinquishing of restraint over his own passions--"I cannot hold any longer" (V.v.79)--does a cathartic convulsion occur as Giovanni is slain. Reasonable restraint of passion has enhanced the successes of evil, and unrestrained passion has brought about the expunging of guilt. The process is the opposite to that we should expect in terms of conventional values assigned to reason and passion. Significantly, Giovanni's and Annabella's deaths are not evidences of a cosmic cleansing; corruption in the state is perpetuated with the Cardinal's freeing of Vasques on "grounds of reason" (V.v.149) which do not accord with the audience's intuitions of a higher justice. Vasques is the embodiment of a principle of inversion by which reason and knowledge appear to control passion, but actually are perverted to ends having their origins in passion.

Vasques' apparent sincerity of motive shows his perversion of reason. Were Ford to show us a villainous subordinate who beguiles for

material gain or personal aggrandizement, we might be more disposed to admit to Ford's belief in the value of intellect. But Vasques repels us partly because his strength of conviction leads us to question the validity of mortal conceptions of loyalty, virtue, and justice. His commitment to Soranzo's revenge on Giovanni is sincere although wrong-headed, and his Machiavellian designs prove far more efficacious than the Friar's exhortations to virtue. Positive virtue proves ineffective, and retributive "justice" succeeds.²⁷ The spiritual and rational are subverted by the promptings of sense in a world where sickness of mind appears to be a normal condition.

Natural reason by itself is shown to be morally neutral, and wholly at the mercy of the senses, which in turn owe their well-being to a supra-rational divine faculty.²⁸ Thus it is that Giovanni's natural reason, perverted to wrong ends by physical desire, wins over the Friar's spiritual admonitions. Unlike arguments presented by Marlowe's Faustus, Tourneur's D'Amville (*The Atheist's Tragedy*), and others, Giovanni's arguments are logically sound. Only the idolatrous premises are faulty:

Must I not praise
That beauty which, if framed anew, the gods
Would make a god of, if they had it there,
And kneel to it, as I do kneel to them?
(I.i.20-23)

Unfortunately, the Friar's premises are no more demonstrable than Giovanni's, and the Friar can only appeal to faith:

These are no school-points;
. . . better 'tis
To bless the sun than reason why it shines. . . .
(I.i.2 ff.)

But Giovanni's malaise is characterized by intellectual pride, like Faustus,²⁹ he hears only what he wants to hear.

Annabella, on the other hand, speaks less, and does not attempt to justify her concupiscence with rhetoric. Unlike Giovanni, she recognizes the futility of argument in a world where human reason by itself has no value as a source of truth. Before committing herself, she answers Giovanni's suit with "If this be true, 'twere fitter I were dead" (I 1.221). Submitting to sexual desire compounded by compassion for Giovanni's longing, she shuts out her knowledge of moral truth, and revels in a "paradise of joy" (II.1.39).

The choleric Soranzo's jealous rage is controlled and exploited by Vasques' reasoned admonitions and encouragement, much in the same way that Giovanni's rhetoric justifies incest to his own satisfaction. By contrast, the protagonists of the sub-plot, Bergetto and Poggio, are innocently stupid, existing in a state of nature. Prompted by impulse, Bergetto gives his attentions first to Annabella, then to Philotis. The love he expresses for Philotis is forthright, refreshingly Rabelaisian (III.iii.37 ff.), and lacking in courtly decorum that other protagonists affect to conceal inner corruption. Ironically, it is the ill-fated Bergetto, a clownish *Miles Gloriosus*,³⁰ who most nearly exemplifies the theologically desirable knowing ignorance that the Friar advocates for Giovanni.³¹

It is characteristic of *'Tis Pity's* irony that Bergetto, intuitively wise in his natural love for Philotis, should be lacking in reason, and should be sacrificed by chance to the schemes of others. Richardetto's and Grimaldo's plan, the product of perverse reason grounded in their

desire for revenge on Soranzo, goes awry as a result of the randomness that can render all natural reason impotent. Bergetto's transparent simplicity and the comic pathos of his death reveal him as being far more attractive than the other protagonists who possess reason but pervert its ends.³² Poggio's relationship to his master is represented as correct, and points up in social terms the contrast between innocence and guilt of motive. Entirely loyal to Bergetto, he is a subordinate extension of Bergetto's will, and certainly is no more intelligent. By contrast, the cunning Vasques' fascination with vice is a motivation independent of his loyalty to Soranzo, and Vasques seeks always to control his master.

Bergetto's death and the Friar's departure are evidence that innocence and simple virtue are not enough for survival when the knowledge that gives power has no relationship to moral consciousness.³³ Vasques, controlled and logical, bears associations with the demonic. His pact with Hippolita, which she believes will result in Soranzo's death, is expressed in terms making Vasques her demonic familiar:

Vasques: I am infinitely yours.
 Hippolita: I will be thine . . .³⁴
 (III.viii.8, 9)

Hippolita's words imply her unknowingly servile role in her relationship with Vasques, and this pact of death is a revealing parody of betrothal showing the true significance of Giovanni's and Annabella's vows to each other.

Vasques' relating of his vow of service is a parody of liturgy, in his claim to "have been honest to the son," as he "was to the father" (V.vi.143, 144). Significantly, it is the father's death that has made Vasques Soranzo's tutor. A pariah whose tutelage of his master "in his

points of vengeance" (V.i 236, 237) results from an earlier death, Vasques may be seen as an embodiment of death itself. In counselling Soranzo to bide his time, Vasques cautions him,

Let my young master (Giovanni) take time enough,
and go at pleasure; he is sold to death, and the
devil shall not ransom him.

(V.i. 261-63)

After Soranzo's death, Vasques tells the Cardinal,

. . . I repent nothing but that the loss of my life
had not ransom'd his.

(V.vi. 121, 122)

The parallelism of the speeches is a further example of Vasques' associations with the demonic. Soranzo, like Giovanni, is "sold to death," and Vasques is no more able to "ransom" him than the devil of lustful passion is able to ransom Giovanni. With good cause the diabolical Vasques facetiously refers to Giovanni as "my young master." Paid by Giovanni to direct him to Annabella's chamber, Vasques comments,

Your liberality hath doubly
made me your servant, and ever shall, ever.

(IV.iii. 250, 251)

The probable quibble on "liberality" suggests that the silver Giovanni gives is symbolic of much more than cash. Giovanni has accepted Vasques' guidance to Annabella's chamber, and he has paid money, acts symbolic of his acceptance of guidance by the devil of the flesh, for which he pays with his life and his soul for "ever." In this context, Vasques functions symbolically as Annabella's pander. In principle, Vasques is a demonic familiar to Giovanni in the same way that he is somewhat more obviously to Soranzo and Hippolita.

As a demonic figure, Vasques is a symbol of non-being that appears as reality to the disordered mind. The proponent of a superficial

rationality, he protects and preserves Soranzo from his destructive impulses, and from those who attempt to disparage or harm him. Obsessed with outward forms of propriety, Vasques evinces evident relish in baiting Grimaldi to a duel, on the grounds that Soranzo would compromise his nobility by personal involvement with one he regards as inferior (I.ii.44, 45). In much the same spirit, but now performing with an air of prim disapproval, he attempts to deny Hippolita entrance to Soranzo unannounced. "Troth, you wrong my modesty," he chides (II.ii.24). Reproving her for her show of anger, he labours to shield Soranzo from a situation that will incite passion and dislodge Soranzo's reason:

. . . if my lord had a resolution as
noble as virtue itself, you take the course
to unedge it all.

(I.ii.62, 63)

Adopting the role of mediator, he attempts to steer Soranzo away from excesses of speech that will enrage Hippolita further, pretending that he does so out of compassion for her:

Sir, I beseech you, do not perplex her, griefs,
alas, will have a vent. I dare undertake Madam
Hippolita will now freely hear you.

(I.ii.63-66)

Recognizing the choleric Soranzo's penchant for irrational and self-destructive passion, Vasques permits him only as much knowledge of personal injury as he believes him capable of handling without upsetting his emotional equilibrium. When Soranzo, professing to be "sick to th' heart" at Annabella's rejection of his suit (III.ii.33), observes her physical sickness, Vasques conceals from him its true import:

Soranzo: . . . Her life's in danger.
Vasques: (Aside) By'r lady, sir, and
so is yours, if you knew all.

(III.iii.87, 88)

Vasques' aside has a double significance. Not only is Soranzo's life threatened by Hippolita, but Soranzo's destructive passion would be uncontrollable, and would endanger his own life, were he to know of Annabella's pregnancy.

Soranzo initially is as unknowing as Bergetto, and the differences between them are social status and temperament. Of lesser birth and sanguine in nature, Bergetto's weakness of intelligence does not make him as vulnerable to destructive forces as Soranzo, and the causes of Bergetto's death are unrelated to his stupidity. By contrast, Soranzo's nobility of birth makes him acutely conscious of his reputation, and his choleric disposition (V.ii.1 ff.) is a sickness of mind that ensures his misuse of knowledge. Bergetto remains ignorant and innocent, and Soranzo becomes knowing and vicious. Vasques calls Grimaldi a "poor shadow of a soldier" (I.ii.13); Soranzo, by contrast, refers to "This gentleman, whom fame reports a soldier,--for else I know not" (I.ii.34, 35). Although Soranzo's words are meant as insult, they point up the central element in his relationship with Vasques: Vasques knows, and Soranzo does not; Vasques gains knowledge, and Soranzo hears and believes. A paradigm for Soranzo's vengeful passion, Vasques also acts as Soranzo's senses, a source of knowledge giving focus to Soranzo's perverted reason. When Soranzo tells Florio that he has "willed" Vasques to "correct his (Grimaldi's) tongue" (I.ii.44), he unwittingly speaks only a half-truth. Subsequent events suggest that Soranzo's will is simply an extension of Vasques', and Vasques gives direction to Soranzo's potential for anger by supplying him with knowledge.

It is ironic that Vasques should be the advocate of rational

restraint. Admonishing Soranzo to be "ruled by reason" (IV.i.87), he prevents him from acting on his incomplete knowledge concerning Annabella's pregnancy. Reason and knowledge, regarded usually as foundations of moral truth, become Vasques' most powerful weapons to advance his schemes for Soranzo's revenge. Vasques, like his society, fails to discern the limits of natural reason, believing his cunning and his knowledge of the incest to be absolute evidences of man's highest faculty. Vasques regularly emphasizes man's essential nature as a rational being,³⁵ admonishing Soranzo that rage is "unmanlike" (IV.iii.80), and that failure to "be ruled by reason" is "unhuman and beastly" (IV.iii.84086). Deriving his own sense of manhood from his belief in his superior reason and knowledge, he reports his success in discovering the incest by saying to Soranzo:

Sir, I am made a man; I have plied my cue with
cunning and success . . .

(IV.vi.269, 270)

Intent on giving an appearance of being knowing, Soranzo uses such phrases as "But know, Grimaldi" (I.ii.39) and "Vasques, thou shalt know" (IV.iii.276). As long as Soranzo has only the appearance of knowledge, he is harmless. But like Malevole (*The Malcontent*) who incites Ferneze to take revenge on Mendoza, Vasques uses knowledge to manipulate Soranzo. Once Vasques has gained knowledge of Giovanni's guilt, and has formulated a plan for revenge, he tells Soranzo. ". . . Now comes your turn to know" (V.iii.277), says Vasques, and from that point on he calculatedly excites Soranzo's vengeful ire.

Vasques' loyalty to Soranzo in furthering his revenge is consonant with his own negative conception of morality. Vasques is fascinated by

vice, and the pleasure he derives from his professed loathing of incest has qualities of voyeurism and sexual sadism. Upon discovering Annabella's crime, he exults:

Why, this is excellent and above expectation.
Her own brother! Oh, horrible! To what
a height of liberty in damnation hath the
devil trained our age! Her brother, well! . . .
(IV.iii.248-51)

Purporting to believe in restraint, Vasques delights in giving Giovanni an opportunity to "go and glut himself in his own destruction" (V.iv.50). The cry, "Liberty!" taken up by the *banditti* as they set upon Giovanni is as much a symbol of Vasques' vicarious sexual license and untrammelled lust for revenge as it is symbolic of an incestuous relationship that defies all laws of restraint. Annabella's and Giovanni's union is a perversion of a life-affirming act, and its consummation is death. That is why Vasques, an embodiment of death, seeks his own fulfilment and release from restraint in allowing Giovanni and Isabella their final moment together:

. . . let my hot hare have law ere
he be hunted to his death, that if it be possible,
he may post to hell in the very act of his
damnation.

(V.iv.31-33)

In these words penultimate to the final revenge scene, Vasques, like Vindice (*The Revenger's Tragedy*), exhibits his perversely poetic sense in staging which he will find aesthetically satisfying. Vasques' pleasure is symptomatic of a society that consistently mistakes form for substance. Functioning rather as a theatrical player-director, he modulates his "actors'" tones, excites emotions, and designs situations all towards a desired effect that satisfies his perversely creative

aesthetic. The deadly earnest concourse of human affairs are for Vasques elements in a fascinating plot that he delights in controlling.

Apparently conceptualizing his world as a stage with *dramatis personae*, Vasques expects people to act parts that he considers appropriate. In the same way that Soranzo mistakes reputation for honour,³⁶ Vasques seems to believe that the way men and women play their parts, as it were, is the stuff of reality. Disturbed by Soranzo's outward show of self-defeating anger towards Hippolita, Vasques chides him, "You do not well . . ." (II.ii.94), and when Soranzo persists, Vasques comments, "This part was scurvily play'd" (II.ii.100). Because Soranzo's failure to play his part with aplomb has resulted in Hippolita's remaining a threat, Vasques himself assumes a role, promising her that he will "be a special actor" in her plan for revenge (II.ii.153). Somewhat more pleased with Soranzo's adherence to directions in dealing with Annabella, Vasques compliments him on the part he has played, and directs him further:

This is well; follow this temper with some
passion. Be brief
and moving, 'tis for the purpose.
(IV.iii.116, 117)

Having briefed the *banditti* to enter on a "watchword" ("Vengeance"), Vasques reports to Soranzo that he will "undertake for their parts" (V.iv.2).

Vasques' conception of the affairs of men as a play designed to mask real motives is symptomatic of his society's attitude towards language itself. The disparity between words and reality is regularly emphasized in *'Tis Pity*.³⁷ The dialogue abounds with terms expressing deceptive verbal expression; the terms "say," "word," and "vow" appear

with striking frequency, and in the majority of instances their context makes clear that verbal communication masks reality. Vasques' vow to Hippolita is a lie, as is Annabella's vow to Soranzo, the only vow that is kept is that of Vasques to Soranzo's father, and that is a promise that brings destruction.

Vasques is keenly aware of the power of language, and taking care to adopt a courtly and servile mask, he admonishes Soranzo to conceal emotional turbulence with commodious speech.³⁸ Only in his unguarded moments when he has the upper hand, or in asides, does Vasques show verbally his ugliness of mind. With Annabella's secret revealed and Putana in his power, Vasques gives vent to the venom he customarily concealed:

. . . I'll help your old gums, you toad-
bellied bitch. Sirs, carry her closely into the
coalhouse, and put out her eyes instantly,
if she roars, slit her nose . . .
(IV.iii.228-32)

Fascinated by the vice he professes to loathe, he delights in commenting obliquely on Annabella's incest, noting "how a smooth tale goes beyond a smooth tail" (V.i.237, 238). Giovanni apparently cannot resist boasting about his sexual prowess any more than he can control his intellectual pride. Vasques is quick to grasp the significance of Giovanni's dangerously revealing sexual punning concerning Annabella's sickness, and he delights in sly repartee of the same sort:

Giovanni: Took too much flesh, I believe.
Vasques: Troth, sir, and you, I think, have
e'en hit it. . . .
(V.i.245, 246)

Language functions in the world of *'Tis Pity* in much the same fashion as 1984's *Newspeak*. The speakers use words that are counter-

feits of reality, thinking to create realities themselves. Giovanni, with his hollow sophistry, creates his own "truth," but his words have no foundation in spiritual reality. He assures the Friar that he has not left a "word untold" (IV.i.17) in arguing the legitimacy of his love for Annabella, yet while claiming to heed the Friar as "a voice of life" (I.i.68), he remains deaf to the Friar's counsel. Like Soranzo, Giovanni mistakes reputation for honour, and he attributes to speech the power to create its own realities. He fears only the "speech of the people," for as long as his incestuous relationship with Isabella remains hidden, "'twere nothing" (II.i.49).

By contrast, Annabella has an agonized awareness of words that have no basis in truth. Although Giovanni's piteous pleadings win her over to incest, she is incapable of speaking falsely. She answers Putana's lascivious counsel with "Pray do not talk so much" (I.ii.75), and there is an underlying note of fear and regret to her playful retort to Giovanni's rhetoric purporting to prove the worthlessness of virginity:

'Tis well for you,
Now you can talk.
(II.i.13, 14)

Annabella prefers silence. Unlike Giovanni, who perverts truth with words, she tries to withhold truth by saying nothing. But her silences, indicative of virtue's absence, are eloquent testimonials of her guilt. She is a pathetic figure, whose inability to lie is a fatal deficiency in a world where survival depends on the power to deceive. In rejecting Bergetto, she finds herself cornered, and her assiduous attention to truth weighs light in the balance against what she leaves unsaid:

Florio: Well, what do you say
To young Bergetto's love? Are you content to
Match with him? Speak.

Annabella: (Aside) What shall I do? I must say
something now.

Florio: What say? Why d'ye not speak?

Annabella: Signor Donado, if your nephew mean
To raise his better fortunes in his match,
The hope of me will hinder such a hope,
Sir, if you love him, as I know you do,
Find one more worthy of his choice than me. . . .
(II. vi. 44-53)

Annabella's inability to use language as a means of concealing truth
springs from the promptings of an inner voice:

My conscience now stands up against my lust
.
And tells me I am lost.
(V. i. 9-11)

Ironically, Annabella's agony of conscience allows her an insight
denied Soranzo and Giovanni, who perceive only externals. Morally per-
ceptive, she is aware of the insincerity of Soranzo's courtly pleading:

Annabella: Yes, you'll say you love me.
Soranzo: And I'll swear it too, will you believe it?
Annabella: 'Tis not point of faith.
Soranzo: Did you but see my heart, then you would swear--
Annabella: That you were dead.
Soranzo: See you these true love's tears?
Annabella: No.
Soranzo: They plead your grace.
Annabella: Yet nothing speak.
(III. ii. 17-29)

Although words have become the servants of Giovanni's passion, it
is Vasques who recognizes the capacity of language to induce passionate
response. Excusing Soranzo's anger at Grimaldi, Vasques says:

Yet the villainy of words, Signor Florio, may
be such as would make any unspleened dove
choleric. Blame not my lord in this.
(I. ii. 58-60)

Vasques' measured speech and the restraint of language that he exhorts others to observe are symptomatic of a society for which concepts of speech, honour, and life itself are hollow forms. Life is lived according to a code of behaviour that conceals ugliness without expressing inner worth. Florio tells Vasques that the humiliated Grimaldi may threaten because "losers may talk by law of any game" (I.ii.58); in chastizing Hippolita, Vasques calls on "rules of civility" (II.ii.19). This elaborate code of conduct, so often summoned as authority for seemingly behaviour, has no moral significance for its proponents. Like the other "rules" of the code, the strictures of marriage are taken by Giovanni as a mere "formal law of sports" (V.iii.7), and he has no compunction about continuing his incestuous relationship with Annabella, even after her marriage to Soranzo. By disregarding the laws of venery in love's hunt, Giovanni becomes himself a prey whom Vasques gives "law" (V.iv.31) to ensure the legitimacy of his kill.³⁹

Like the somewhat more benign Malevole (*The Malcontent*), Vasques is represented as a predator, and his victims are those whose moral blindness has made them prey to their own passions. Their attention always fixed on outward forms of speech and behaviour, Giovanni and Soranzo are unable to see beyond externals. Unable to penetrate Annabella's silence, Soranzo threatens that he will "rip up" her heart to find her lover's identity (IV.iii.56, 57). Giovanni, equally blinded by sense, receives the Friar's censure--"Thy blindness slays thee" (V.iii.22), but Giovanni remains unable to credit even the evidence of his eyes. Shown Annabella's letter reporting their discovery, he responds, "'Tis but forged" (V.iii.39). Victim of his will, Giovanni sees and hears only what

pleases him. Hearing of Annabella's marriage to Soranzo, he cries:

Ere I'd endure this sight, to see my love
 Clipt by another, I would dure confusion,
 And stand the horror of ten thousand deaths.
 (IV.i.16-19)

Only in his last moments with Annabella does Giovanni claim to understand the futility of "vain and useless speech" (V.v.19) and the superficiality of her "gay allures." Yet he remains a victim of sense, insisting on seeing to believe the realities of Heaven and hell (V.v.29 ff.). Still placing his faith in externals, he hangs on Annabella's words, desperately wanting to believe that they will be united in eternity: "Have you heard so?" (V.v.34). Fulfilling Soranzo's threat in ripping out Annabella's heart, he is so far deceived that he believes the horrendous act to have a beauty blindingly bright in its perfection.

The artificial light of beauty that Giovanni believes he perceives in his murder of Annabella is a parody of the light of Grace, yet it is also the glare of a ghastly truth for Soranzo and the others at the feast. In his delusion, Antonio exults:

Be dark, bright sun,
 And make this mid-day night, that thy gilt rays
 May not behold a deed will turn their splendor
 More sooty than the poets feign their Styx!
 (V.vi.79-82)

For Giovanni, the darkness of death that he perceives as dazzling in its beauty springs from his idolatry and self-love. His Narcissism extends to self-deification as he declares, "Revenge is mine," thinking to justify Annabella's death by disputation that molds reality in the image of his words (V.v.88). Giovanni's exaltation of natural reason has resulted in his conception of himself as a god. Annabella has been guilty of a similar idolatry, telling Soranzo that Giovanni is "angel-like," and

that he, Soranzo, even on his knees, is "not worthy once to name his name" (IV.iii.37-41). Without faith,⁴⁰ men fail to perceive that they are created in God's image, and they create their own blasphemous gods. Deluded in his idolatry, Giovanni and his society in reality have created their own destructive demon whose essence is embodied in Vasques.

Entering the festive hall with Annabella's heart impaled on his dagger, Giovanni exclaims:

The glory of my deed
Darkened the mid-day sun, making noon as night⁴¹
(V.v.24, 25)

The world of *'Tis Pity* with its meaningless sounds concealing truth in a darkness of rhetoric and mannered speech, and with its false light that distorts reality, is like the Friar's description of Hell:

There is a place,--
List, daughter!--in a black and hollow vault,
Where day is never seen, there shines no sun,
But flaming horror of consuming fires,
A lightless sulphur, choked the smoky fogs
Of an infected darkness. . . .
(III.v.8-13)

The Friar's description of a metaphysical hell connotes also a subjective hell, a state of mind represented psychomachically. One is reminded of Mephistophilis' explanation of the world to Faustus: "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it" (*Dr. Faustus*, I.iii.76). Annabella's psychological suffering and Giovanni's delusion are suggestive of a hell on earth, and Soranzo tells Vasques, "I carry hell about me" (IV.iii.153). Soranzo, like Annabella, suffers most in his psychological hell during moments of silence when deceptive words do not ease his torment of vengeful passion: "'Tis well; the less I speak, the more I burn" (V.iv.30).

This conception of hell-on-earth is given physical dimensions in the circumstances of Bergetto's murder. In the darkness, Grimaldi misinterprets what he hears, and kills Bergetto by mistake. The episode is symbolic of a world in which no one sees, and truth is obscured and distorted by words.⁴² The light of truth reveals the ugliness of error:

Bergetto . . . Lights! lights! Ho, lights!
 Richardetto . . . bring lights.

 Give me a light. What's here? All blood!
 (III.vii.12 ff.)

In this darkened world lacking the light of divine truth, man's knowledge of virtue is dependent on faith which, with the Friar's departure, no longer exists even in an unheeded presence. Reason without faith results in misconception of moral truth.⁴³ Donado's observation on Giovanni's death, "What strange miracle of justice!" (V.vi.112) and the assemblage's cry of "wonderful justice" (IV.i.88) at Hippolita's death are ironic expressions of ignorance in a world from which, as Florio observes, "justice is fled to Heaven, and comes no nearer" (III.ix.63). Richardetto, who has unwittingly brought about Bergetto's death himself, comments with irony and presumption on Hippolita's poisoning, "Heaven, thou are righteous" (IV.i.89).

Justice, as *'Tis Pity's* characters perceive it, is simple retribution; mercy exists as mere expediency, or not at all. Grimaldi receives the Cardinal's protection as a consequence of his noble birth, and Vasques is acquitted because his loyalty to Soranzo accords with the Cardinal's conception of virtue based on "grounds of reason" (V.vi.149).⁴⁴ Significantly, the Cardinal himself is aware of the disparity between natural reason and moral truth, and points out to Vasques that the

dictates of reason do not mitigate his "offence" (V.vi.149).⁴⁵ Vasques, like the other characters, has no understanding of pity. Regarding it as a motive for revenge on Soranzo's behalf, he claims to act from "honesty and pity" of his "master's wrongs" (V.vi.119). With that exception, he values pity and forbearance only as shams to conceal other motives. Counselling Soranzo that it is "godlike to forgive" (IV.iii.105, 106) and "manlike to bear extremities," he merely pretends compassion for Annabella's benefit, and to further his design for revenge. Regarding pity as weakness, he excites Soranzo's blood lust, cautioning him, "Let not your pity betray you" (V.ii.22). Vasques is a controlling demon in a pitiless world like the hell described by the Friar, where "damned souls roar without pity" (III.vi.16).

In this world of human "justice" without mercy, the weak suffer and the strong prosper. Bergetto dies undeservedly, and the women are not accorded the mercy due their sex.⁴⁶ Ironically, Annabella's weakness of reason in succumbing to Giovanni's imprecations has a quality of pity; her compassion unites with the promptings of her own blood when Giovanni implores the gods to make her yield "for pity's sake" (I.ii.254). Certainly Annabella herself is deserving of pity in her weakness. Hippolita, whose passion for Soranzo has destroyed her marriage, dies rejected by him, "hated, scorned, and unpitied" (IV.i.101), and abetted by the merciless Vasques in bringing about her own death. Even Putana, morally and intellectually weak, but loyal and well-intentioned, suffers horribly for her trust in the beguiling Vasques.

The casualness of the Cardinal's closing comment,

Who could not say 'TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE?"
(V.vi.164)

is ironic in its meaningless conventionality, expressive of a society whose collective psychology is a pitiless hell in which words mean nothing. Concealing his ruthlessness and cunning in decorous speech, Vasques embodies the inverted system of values that has currency at Parma, and he thereby becomes the demonic master of those he pretends to serve.

Perhaps the most significant difference between Vasques and Bosola is that Bosola experiences inner conflict, and Vasques does not. Bosola's society makes him a villainous subordinate in spite of his finer instincts, whereas Vasques is without feelings that we approve. Even Vasques' fanatical loyalty to Soranzo is expressed only in terms of vengeance. Yet Vasques in the end departs unharmed, and Bosola destroys himself only when he tries to choose the good. Both *'Tis Pity* and *The Duchess of Malfi* portray societies in which vice thrives because there are no moral certainties,⁴⁷ and villainous subordinates are suppressed only when their interests interfere with those of other more powerful villains.

FOOTNOTES

¹Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *Philaster*, II, 1, 138:
Pharamond: Ten such camphire constitutions as this
will call the golden age again in question, and
teach the old way for every ill-faced husband to
get his own children; and what a mischief that
will breed, let all consider! --

²C. S. Lewis describes the dualistic attitude that seems to have grown in the sixteenth century, and prevailed in the seventeenth. (See C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1944), p. 3.)

The result was a distrust of intellect. Mark Stavig points out Ford's belief in the need to rely on traditional virtues, and the need to recognize the limitations of reason. (See M. Stavig, *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 95 ff.)

³Quotations are from M. L. Wine's edition with modernized spelling, based on the 1623 text. See M. L. Wine, ed., *Drama of the English Renaissance* (New York: Random House, 1969).

⁴Quotations are from Mark Stavig's edition with modernized spelling, based on the 1638 text. See M. Stavig, ed., *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1966).

⁵A number of critics, including Clifford Leech (*John Webster* (London: Hogarth, 1951), pp. 65, 66) regard Act V, in the absence of the Duchess, as anticlimactic. That perhaps would be true if one insisted on locating her at the play's moral and dramatic centre. On the other hand, if the moral centre may be taken as the mortal dilemma and the futility of human aspirations, the dramatic interest may be seen to reside in the interplay of all the major protagonists, and perhaps in Bosola especially.

⁶M. L. Wine includes a gloss defining "in sadness" as "in earnest." This definition seems unnecessarily restrictive. The modern meaning was also in use. (See *OED*, 5th edn., A, 5, b, c.)

⁷Apothegms of this sort were common. Lear's famous "Nothing will come of nothing" is perhaps the best-known example. R. W. Dent shows the remarkable extent of Webster's use of contemporary sources (R. W. Dent, *John Webster's Borrowing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960)). Dent does not attribute the quotation in question to any source. For Webster's sources, see also G. Boklund, *The Duchess of Malfi* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

⁸J. R. Brown notes the frequency of images relating to witchcraft. See J. R. Brown, ed., *The Duchess of Malfi* (London: Methuen, 1964), pp. xliii, xliv.

⁹Marston's *Malevole* (*The Malcontent*) uses a similar term, perhaps derived originally from a Latin equivalent by Seneca (see Chapter 6). Burton, too, refers to "the muckhill of the world" (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, III, 417).

¹⁰The debate over merit and birth has a long tradition; e.g., Thomas Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucreas*. The conventional judgment favoured merit. With the plays of Chapman and his Jacobean successors, the reasons for favouring merit become more extreme. Medwall probably was appealing to the sentiments of a largely new aristocracy, and was providing arguments justifying their recent elevation. The later drama, however, emphasizes abuses of power by an established nobility, and the argument for merit functions as criticism of those who have betrayed the obligations of birth.

¹¹When Cariola refers to "the spirit of greatness or of woman," I take her to mean the Duchess' recognition of her nobility on the one hand, and her womanly natural impulses on the other. Her "fearful madness" as Cariola would have it, proceeds from the tension between fear induced by the hazards of compromising social position, and a need for love inherent in natural womanly qualities. Opting for her womanhood, the Duchess dispels fear, and only "pities" her brothers. Travis Bogard (*The Tragic Satire of John Webster* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), p. 65) places a different interpretation on the passage, identifying the "spirit of woman" as "womanish fears." The context in which Webster uses "great" elsewhere, referring, for example, to "great men" (V.i.117) as meaning hereditary nobility, suggests that Travis Bogard may have missed the sense of the passage. There is nothing in the Duchess' character indicating that "womanish fears" are an element in her nature.

¹²C. G. Thayer's view that the Duchess "is almost completely passive" ("The Ambiguity of Bosola," *SP*, LIV (1957), 163) seems to defy the textual evidence.

¹³The theme of inverse relationship between the sexes is to be found in the earlier religious drama, and reflects a continuing tradition of thought regarding the right order of authority. The twelfth century *Jeu d'Adam* presents God as Adam's feudal lord, and Adam stands in a similar relationship to Eve. Satan's temptation of Eve results in her usurping of Adam's power of judgment. In turn, Adam disobeys his "feudal" Lord by subordinating his judgment to that of his "vassal" Eve. In *The Book Named the Governor* (1531), Thomas Elyot defines the correct relationship of the sexes according to what he deems their natural properties:

A man in his natural perfection is fierce, hardy, strong in opinion, covetous of glory, desirous of knowledge, appetiting by generation to bring forth his semblable. The good nature of a woman is to be mild, timorous, tractable, benign, of sure remembrance, and steadfast. (S.F. Lehmborg, ed., *The Book Named the Governor*, London: Dent, 1962, pp. 77-78.)

The qualities Elyot describes as feminine generally appear in Antonio's character, and the masculine qualities are more characteristic of the

Duchess. Antonio never initiates action, and safety is a major concern with him (III v. 58). It is the Duchess who plans the fearful Antonio's flight to Milan (III.v.53-55). G. Boklund comments on Antonio's "remarkable passivity" (Boklund, p. 165).

¹⁴Ferdinand characteristically uses imagery relating the Duchess to the demonic. J. R. Brown comments that for Ferdinand witchcraft "has become a synonym for the power of sex." (Brown, xlv).

¹⁵Backward movement was traditionally associated with the demonic (see E. K. Chambers, *The English Folk-Play* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 19). Webster uses similar symbolism in *The White Devil*:
 . . . a Politician imitates the devil, as the devil imitates
 a canon. Wheresoever he comes to do mischief, he comes with
 his backside towards you (*The White Devil*, III.iii.75).

¹⁶I borrow the "circle of perfection" idea from Marjorie Hope Nicholson (*The Breaking of the Circle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 153 ff.).

¹⁷Antonio's adeptness with lance and tilting ring target, even without the enhancing significance of his relationship with the Duchess, may be seen as having the kind of archetypally sexual significance that Jessie Weston suggests for the Grail legend (*From Ritual to Romance* (New York: Doubleday, 1957)). I believe the presence of reinforcing imagery and the situational context provide sufficient basis for the assigning of sexual significance to Ferdinand's lines about Antonio's tilting prowess. (For the sexual significance of rings, see also my comments on similar imagery in Middleton's *The Changeling* (Chapter 3).)

¹⁸J. L. Calderwood comments that this passage represents the lovers as "dangerously naive" in attempting to "create a private universe while ignoring "external realities." Calderwood shows that the Duchess' ignoring of "Degree" is a fatally "systematic disorder" (J. L. Calderwood, "The Duchess of Malfi: Styles of Ceremony," in Norman Rabkin, ed., *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Duchess of Malfi* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 76-84).

¹⁹"Vain ceremony" appears to include the formalities of degree as well as other kinds of ritual. J. L. Calderwood comments that the Duchess affirms the autonomy of her impulses by parodying ritual solemnities in the marriage scene (*Ibid.*, p. 78).

²⁰R. Ornstein, in referring to "the careless indifference" of the lovers, shows that it is not the marriage which is shameful, but "the moral compromise involved in hiding it" (*The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), pp. 130, 141). The lovers' plighting of their troth in Cariola's presence may be seen as an espousal *per verba praesenti*, normally recognized by church and state as legitimate sanction for cohabitation, and by denying the Duchess freedom to marry, the brothers violate natural law. Shakespeare's sympathetic portrayal of Claudio and Juliet (*Measure for Measure*) is

grounded in the same body of doctrine. For the lovers' marriage contract in accord with natural law, see G. Boklund, pp. 43, 165; also, Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, C. Morris, ed. (London: Everyman, 1907), p. 220. For doctrinal distinctions on this point between Catholic doctrine and Webster's Anglican attitude, see W. Empson, "Mine Eyes Dazzle," in N. Rabkin, ed., *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Duchess of Malfi*, p. 90 ff. Marriage customs and contracts are described in C. L. Powell, *English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1917), pp. 37-39, and L. Stone, "Marriage Among the English Nobility in the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, III (1961), 182-206.

²¹The "alabaster" image bears associations of both fecundity and chastity, an ideal juxtaposition of opposites hardly practicable in the temporal. Hermione (*The Winter's Tale*), appearing as a reincarnation in alabaster, is perhaps the best-known instance of the image in Renaissance drama.

²²Inexplicably, Clifford Leech seems unable to accept that a psychology of such contradictions and complexity is believable. Consequently, he dismisses Bosola as merely a compound of principles who is "less a character than a chorus" (C. Leech, *John Webster: A Critical Study* (London: Hogarth, 1955), p. 66). On the contrary, it is this complexity that makes Bosola so very human. That a man's conscience should prompt him to go only so far and no farther in serving evil masters is entirely consistent with human nature, as was illustrated countless times by ambitious men plagued by conscience in Nazi Germany, for example.

²³K. H. Ansari comments on Bosola's self-contempt by comparing the animal images he uses to those used by Ferdinand. Bosola characteristically compares himself to creatures lower in the natural order. (K. H. Ansari, *John Webster: Image Patterns and Canon* (Delhi: Sterling, 1969), pp. 138, 143.)

²⁴C. G. Thayer suggests that although it is possible that Ferdinand attempts here to "save the Duchess from herself . . .", "we are simply viewing Bosola as Ferdinand's creature." Thayer regards Bosola's earlier expression of admiration for Antonio as his "'real' face," and his later attempts to have her forget him as artifice. I do not think that distinction is necessary. Bosola argues according to his purpose of the moment always. His "real" face is simply that which he shows, consonant both with his own beliefs and with Ferdinand's aims. Bosola's conflict of conscience begins only when he perceives the Duchess' well-being and Ferdinand's purpose to be in opposition. Until that juncture, there is little more point in seeking Bosola's "real" face than in attempting to determine a chameleon's "real" colour.

²⁵As Death, Bosola resembles the allegorical Death figures of the morality plays. *Everyman* perhaps provides the closest parallel. Seen as an "unmasking," Bosola's adoption of a disguise resembles the Cardinal's ceremonial relinquishment of ecclesiastical office, to stand

revealed as a soldier. The dramatic device of "unmasking" by change of costume is common. Webster uses it in *The White Devil*, when Lodovico and Gasparo assume disguises as Capuchin monks to mask their murderous intent. The Church and the orders of knighthood they claim to have belonged to are perhaps shown symbolically in what Webster regards as their true form when Lodovico and Gasparo turn out to be murderers.

²⁶ Vasques bears a resemblance to Ambodexter (Cambyses), who quells the riotous disorder of lesser vice figures, and to Aaron the Moor (*Titus Andronicus*), who performs much the same function upon first encountering Tamora's sons.

²⁷ Vasques' evil as a symbol of retributive justice is a theme relating him to a long tradition of literary and theological debate over problems of justice and mercy. Robert Grosseteste's *Le Chateau d'Amour* (1253), a debate between Justice, Mercy, Truth, and Peace, favours mercy, while recognizing the inseparability of the four Divine ladies. The theme appears regularly in later morality plays, i.e., *The Castle of Perseverance*. Edmund Spenser takes up the theme in *The Faerie Queene*, Book V. Talus, Artegall's groom, lays about him with a flail at Artegall's bidding, and also desists on command. Servant to a master who symbolizes rational restraint and the godliness of chivalric ideals, Talus is symbolic of justice tempered with mercy. Vasques, as zealous in seeking to punish as Talus, knows no such restraint. In control of a master ruled by passion, Vasques may be seen as justice separated from mercy. By contrast, the Duke of Venice's compassionate judgment of Antonio (*The Merchant of Venice*) and Vincentio's restraint and humour in dealing with Angelo and Lucio (*Measure for Measure*) show the accepted Renaissance view.

²⁸ Ford's debt to Robert Burton is widely recognized, e.g., S. B. Ewing, *Burtonian Melancholy in the Plays of John Ford* (New York: Octagon, 1969). Following Burton's epistemology, Ford appears to portray intellects that are essentially passive and incapable of discerning disorder in sense experience. By this view, man is wholly at the mercy of his passions. The involuntarism by which the mind is either gifted with, or deprived of, a higher mode of understanding seems to be a foundation for Ford's scepticism. (See Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, vol. I, Holbrook Jackson, intro. (London: Dent, 1968), pp. 165, 258.)

²⁹ For Ford's possible debt to Marlowe, see Cyrus Hoy, "Ignorance in Knowledge: Marlowe's *Faustus* and Ford's *Giovanni*," *MP*, LVII (iii), 1960, 145-154.

³⁰ Bergetto's brand of absurdity identifies him with the dramatic tradition of the foolish suitor, i.e., the Ward in *Women Beware Women*, Accius in *Mother Bombie*, and Pamphilus (Terence: *The Woman of Andros*). The letter episode of course identifies Bergetto with Nicholas Udall's Ralph Roister Doister and with Plautus' Pergopolineses. However, Poggio lacks the mischievous qualities of Palaestrio or Matthew Merrygreek, and there is no suggestion of rebellion against his master.

³¹"Knowing ignorance" is the unspoken but apparently acknowledged corollary to the Friar's condemnation of "ignorance in knowledge" (V.i.27). This concept is in accord with Burtonian epistemology as well as sound Protestant doctrine. A commonly recognized fifteenth century authority was Nicholas of Cusa's *De Docta Ignorantia*.

³²Clifford Leech too readily dismisses the sub-plot as having the sole purpose of showing "the contrast between the intensity and the reluctance of Giovanni's love and the casualness and easy pleasure of Bergetto's" (C. Leech, *John Ford and the Drama of his Time* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 51).

³³M. J. Sargeaunt calls the Friar "either a complete knave or a complete fool, . . . something of an enigma" (M. J. Sargeaunt, *John Ford* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), p. 126), and H. J. Oliver asserts that the Friar's departure is "quite in character" because he is "a weak person" (H. J. Oliver, *The Problem of John Ford* (Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 1955), p. 89). Neither view seems satisfactory. There is nothing to suggest that the Friar is weak; his arguments are simply impotent to influence Giovanni's sick mind. His departure is a realistic recognition of futility, as well as an act that functions symbolically to show the departure of Grace from Parma. Another critic, Tucker Orbison, appears to have misread the play, claiming that the Friar urges Annabella "to conceal her illegitimate pregnancy by marrying Soranzo" (T. Orbison, "The Tragic Vision of John Ford," *STL*, 21, 1974, 54-55). The Friar's advice to Annabella to marry Soranzo (III.vi.56), his blessing of the marriage rites (IV.i.1-6), and his acceptance of her repentance (V.i.30) are both moral and sensible. Mark Stavig in his introduction to *'Tis Pity* (pp. xv, xvi), shows that the Friar is "the only sound moralist," and has no knowledge of Annabella's pregnancy. Stavig's argument stands up to scrutiny far better than the others cited.

³⁴For familiars, see R. H. West, *The Invisible World: A Study of Pneumatology in Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Octagon, 1969), pp. 79, 83, 84. Cf. *The Duchess of Malfi*, I.ii.183-85.

³⁵Ford expresses his belief that "a man's mind is the man himself" in *A Line of Life*, and that "to be a man . . . is to know, feel, and moderate affections, which . . . alter the laws of reason." ("A Line of Life," in A. Dyce, ed., *The Works of John Ford*, 3 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965), pp. 391-93.)

³⁶Ford must have been concerned about his society's proclivity for mistaking the externals of reputation for inner worth and honour. In *The Broken Heart* Tecnicus defines honour correctly:

. . . But know then, Orgilus, what honor is:
Honor consists not in a bare opinion
By doing any act that feeds content,
Brave in appearance 'cause we think it brave.
Such honour comes by accident, not nature,
Proceeding from the vices of our passion,

Which makes our reason drunk. But real honor
 Is the reward of virtue, and acquir'd
 By justice or by valor, which for bases
 Hath justice to uphold it. He then fails
 In honor who for lucre or revenge
 Commits thefts, murders, treasons, and adulteries,
 Which suchlike, by intrenching on just laws,
 Whose sovereignty is best preserv'd by justice.
 (III. i. 32-44)

³⁷ Like a good many other social critics of his time, Ford was conscious of the misuse of language as a mask for shallowness and error. Cf. Burton, I, 31, 32. For a discussion of the Renaissance attitude towards the potency of language, see Hardin Craig, *The Enchanted Glass* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), p. 181.

³⁸ Vasques' severely courtly demeanour and attendant insincerity accord with the Renaissance conception of the Spaniard. Shakespeare's Don Adriano de Armado (*Love's Labour's Lost*) is an absurd caricature of the type. Vasques' formality of speech combines with his Machiavellianism to make him particularly odious. His pride in rejoicing "that a Spaniard outwent an Italian in revenge" (V. vi. 146, 147) suggests that Ford conceives the Machiavellian spirit now to reside in the Spanish mind, much as Marlowe describes the same quality in Maltese society (*The Jew of Malta*): "The spirit of Machiavel is flown beyond the Alps" (Prologue, 1, 2).

This distinctly Spanish kind of Machiavel appears to spring from an earlier tradition exemplified by Thomas Kyd's Lorenzo (*The Spanish Tragedy*). The scene in which Lorenzo attempts to keep Hieronymo from pleading his case to the King is similar to that in which Vasques attempts to keep Hippolita from Soranzo. Like Vasques, Lorenzo appeals to the rules of decorous behaviour.

³⁹ "Law" in its sense of "an allowance in time or distance" (gloss by Wines) suggests also the "liberty" Giovanni enjoys in rejecting Divine law and the social code. Elsewhere "law" has its modern meaning, e.g., "law of any game" (I. ii. 58) and "law of sports" (V. iii. 7), used to mean a body of rules, e.g., "rules of civility" (II. ii. 19). The double meaning heightens irony by implications of both freedom and restraint.

⁴⁰ The importance of faith and the blasphemy of idolatrous love are central themes in *Christ's Bloody Sweat*. Although Pollard and Redgrave's *Short-Title Catalogue* attributes this long religious poem to John Fletcher, M. Joan Sargeaunt is satisfied that the author ("I.F.") is John Ford. (M. J. Sargeaunt, *John Ford*, p. 8 ff.)

⁴¹ The "artificial light" resulting from self-love and appetite is identical in principle to that described by Vindice (*The Revenger's Tragedy*), and expresses the principle of the diabolic described by Walter Hilton (*The Ladder of Perfection*). (See Chapter 6.)

⁴² According to Burton, men are particularly susceptible to deception through hearing. The resulting melancholia leads to distorted perceptions by the other senses, including sight, the "most precious" of the senses as a source of knowledge (Burton, I, 384, 403, 425, V, 157-58).

⁴³ Mark Stavig comments, "Underlying this separation of faith and reason is a typically Anglican suspicion of subtle theologizing about faith . . ." (M. Stavig, *John Ford and the Traditional Moral Order* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 22).

⁴⁴ Mark Stavig observes that "the villainous Vasques is only banished since he is able to appear virtuous through eloquent but hypocritical speeches about the duty of servants to masters and the glories of revenge" (p. 23). I do not agree that Vasques is "hypocritical" in this respect. I find no evidence suggesting that Vasques' loyalty and affection for Soranzo is less than genuine. That his lustful fascination with evil is a strong motive provides no warrant for us to assume that his protestations to the Cardinal about duty are merely self-saving deceptions.

⁴⁵ In acquitting Vasques, the Cardinal points out that he is "no Italian" (V v. 146). Although the text is not explicit on the point, it is possible that the Cardinal's show of mercy has political overtones. Characteristically pragmatic, the Cardinal perhaps is loathe to take action against a Spaniard for fear of Spanish reprisal against Rome.

⁴⁶ For the Renaissance attitude towards women, see Hardin Craig, *The Enchanted Glass*, p. 128 ff.

⁴⁷ C. F. Sensabaugh suggests Ford's "Baconian" cast of thought in representing "a world ruled by physical forces which can be considered neither evil nor good." (G. F. Sensabaugh, *The Tragic Muse of John Ford* (New York: Blom, 1944), p. 92.)

CHAPTER VI

A JUST REWARD¹

As we saw in *The Massacre at Paris* and *The Cardinal*, an originally innocent character who acts in destroying evil inevitably takes on guilt himself. The term "revenge" normally implies the redressing of an earlier wrong; yet it need hardly be restated that in the Christian context, revenge itself is a crime, and he who arrogates its execution for himself usurps the Heavenly throne.² Usually the revenger in Renaissance drama sets to rights moral disorder and social inversion by encouraging or perpetrating further disorder to the point of evil's consummation, a feast of blood which surfeits the revenger, and results in some convulsion which regenerates the natural order. Jacobean scepticism about the possibility of man's escape from his depravity to any significant degree is reflected in the limited nature of this cleansing, so that, as *Volpone* and *The Cardinal* reveal, society's regeneration and time's renewal are qualified and incomplete. So the Jacobeans, uncomfortably aware of a determinism which assured the depravity of man even at his best, seem to have dealt, not with questions of innocence and guilt, but with considerations of the nature and degree of guilt which was assumed to be unavoidable.

Malevole (*The Malcontent*)³ is a villainous subordinate who exemplifies the Jacobean awareness of the mortal dilemma, and critics remain divided and perplexed in their attempts to classify him either as a

moral hero, or as a villain-by-necessity.⁴ The character of Vindice (*The Revenger's Tragedy*)⁵ does not present quite the same degree of difficulty of interpretation, because, unlike Malevole, he does not execute a *volte face* to become a model of rational restraint; his final act is entirely consistent with his earlier vengeful characteristics. I contend, however, that aside from other similarities, the single element of overriding importance that marks both protagonists as villainous subordinates is that they both are revengers who gain ascendancy over their nominal masters by preying on their moral weaknesses and exploiting their vices. Malevole has seen his dukedom usurped and his wife imprisoned, Vindice, similarly, has lost his father and his beloved as a result of an aged sensualist's abuse of power. Disguised to take on the colouring of their corrupt surroundings, Malevole and Vindice seize on every opportunity for vengeance offered by fortune. Recognizing the legitimacy of their grievances, we sympathize with the revengers' situations, and we find satisfaction in their successes. To that extent, perhaps, we may regard the revengers as heroes.

Yet for all our indignation at Malevole's and Vindice's injuries and our pleasure at evil's defeat, we are repelled by their villainous characteristics. Vindice acts, not simply out of a desire to re-establish justice and order, but out of blood lust; Malevole's actions are not destructive in nearly the same degree, yet he too is motivated to a considerable extent by a desire for vengeance which qualifies our approval of him. Each protagonist is intent on being able to shed his mask and assume his rightful place by exploiting his nominal master's moral weaknesses. Vindice precipitates events, thereby assuming the role of

Nemesis, Malevole, on the other hand, is more circumspect in assisting the fluctuations of a fortune which Marston implies is extrinsic and implacable. In the darkening world of Jacobean drama, even heroes are usually in some degree villainous. Vindice is a passion-driven fiend, and Malevole is an icily logical tempter who may be the author's conception of the ideal hero.⁶

Malevole and Vindice are very similar in conception, and *The Malcontent's* influence on Tourneur's writing of *The Revenger's Tragedy* is widely acknowledged.⁷ There are, however, important differences, and in showing them I shall deal first with Marston's characterization of Malevole. Marston does not cast Malevole as a villain in the usual sense, in fact, critics generally agree that Marston did not intend him to appear villainous at all.⁸ On the one hand, Malevole is held to be a Stoic hero reflecting Marston's Christian conventionality,⁹ and on the other, he is taken to be a tormented soul who reflects his creator's inner conflict and fascination with the vice he loathes,¹⁰ his ultimately benign actions do little to alleviate our revulsion, and his role as a tempter and Machiavellian schemer¹¹ in furthering evil for the purpose of its own destruction give us the uneasy feeling that he is somehow corrupt himself. While Malevole is not a conventional revenger because of his Stoic avoidance of bloodshed, we are nevertheless faced with having to account for his morality in terms of motive and method, even though the ultimate effects of his actions both as Malevole the malcontent and as Altofront the reinstated ruler are benign.

It is in motive and method that Malevole's guilt seems to reside, and for that reason, he earns the title of "villainous subordinate" along

with other less savoury examples of his kind. For if the test of villainy were simply the ultimate expunging of evil as a result of a character's actions, quite a few other villainous subordinates would have to qualify as heroes. For all that, Malevole perhaps is the least reprehensible of *The Malcontent's* major characters. Mendoza, the major villainous antagonist, is a Machiavellian parasite who holds "the Olympus of favour" a "ravishing prospect" (I.v.32-33), only to exceed mere toadying to become a craven overreacher, moved by his "sole self-good" (IV.iv.130). Pietro, on the other hand, is a weak-willed pawn in a game of power politics. Having usurped the dukedom as a result of his marriage into the ambitious Florentine dynasty (I.iv.14-22), the "too soft Duke," as Malevole calls him (I.iii.10), is manipulated to revenge Aurelia's adultery. Thinking Stoic endurance a weakness, he acts precipitately, persuaded first by Malevole, then by Mendoza.

Marston's pessimistic world view shows us a society made up of predators and victims, intelligent men and fools; whatever virtue survives brings its possessor persecution, imprisonment, or even death.¹² With few exceptions, the noble are motivated by self-interest, and men fall from high station, not because they are bad, but because they are innocent, impractical, or weak. Malevole has lost his ducal throne because he has been "suspectless" (I.iv.14)¹³ in ruling justly and severely, without partiality to any faction or flattery to the mob; Pietro falls because he is weak-willed, indecisive, and undiscerning in his choice of favourites. Malevole triumphs in the end over Mendoza because Mendoza is incautious in his choice of accomplices, relying on Malevole to kill Pietro, and to poison the "hermit." Each ruler falls,

not simply because he is bad, but because he lacks cleverness, it is Malevole's craft, and not his goodness, that assures his eventual success.

While we sympathize with Malevole's situation, we cannot entirely condone his inciting the cuckolded Pietro to revenge against Mendoza. As events transpire, Mendoza redirects Pietro's hatred towards Ferneze, who is only wounded, and who later becomes Malevole's accomplice, but that does not exonerate Malevole from the guilt of his intentions. Goaded Pietro with visions of "every page sporting himself with delightful laughter" at the "egregious horns pinned to a lord's back" (I.iii.96-97), Malevole in his role as tempter to revenge excites Pietro's sense of outrage with thinly concealed exultant mockery, reminiscent of Iago's sadistic enjoyment in a similar circumstance,¹⁴ similarly, he functions as a demonic bringer of knowledge about Aurelia's sport with Ferneze, much as Vasques does in apprizing Soranzo of Giovanni's incest with Isabella (*'Tis Pity*). Malevole continues in an idiom that cannot be construed otherwise than as a strong exhortation to damnation,¹⁵ and Pietro's avoidance of that condition is quite accidental. Malevole clearly relishes his role as he provides the counterpoint of a perverse harmony, a verbal echo of the discordant tones which first announced his presence in the opening scene:

Pietro: Death and damnation!
 Malevole: Lightning and thunder!
 Pietro: Vengeance and torture!
 Malevole: Catzo!
 Pietro: O, revenge!
 (I.iii.100-105)

External evidence suggests that Marston may not have viewed his creation in the character of Malevole as villainous at all, and that the two faces, Malevole and Altofront, were meant to be complementary

properties of a single ideally conceived and integrated character, which nevertheless reflect the author's internal conflict. Marston's scathing social satire, *A Scourge of Villainy* (1599), seems to reveal an author who employs the cynic's license to lance the infections of his society, while being himself morbidly obsessed with that which he professes to loathe. Not at all hesitant to use a first-person *persona*, Marston begins and sustains a vituperative vigour in *The Scourge*, which differs hardly at all from Malevole's style:

Foul canker of fair virtuous action,
 Vile blaster of freshest blooms on earth,
 Envy's abhorred child, detraction,
 I here expose, to thy all-tainting breath
 The issue of my brain, snarl, rail, bark, bite,
 Know that my spirit scorns detraction's spite.¹⁶
 (*The Scourge of Villainy*, I.1-6)

The result has been that a number of critics express disapproval of Marston for much the same reasons that commentators on Malevole's character find him repellant.¹⁷ In that light, it may well be that Malevole is Marston's ideal *persona* as a satirist. Certainly, there are strong indications that Marston was a tortured soul, divided against himself, and perhaps filled with self-abhorrance, arising from his fascination with the vices he loathed and condemned. In that sense, there is perhaps little difference between Marston, Malevole, and Vasques (*'Tis Pity*), a villainous subordinate who is bent on destroying the vice he adores in others, and for which he exhibits a fatal attraction. It is typical of the villainous subordinate that he hates and destroys that which he loves. Iago, De Flores, and Mephistophilis are perhaps the clearest examples of that characteristic.

Further, Marston's prefatory letter "To the Reader" does not direct

any disapprobation towards Malevole, but reserves it for those who "have been most unadvisedly cunning in misinterpreting" him. Marston identifies the "ends" of "God and virtue" with "holy policy" and "comely superiority," and there is no reason to doubt his sincerity. The emphasis of these phrases is on the pragmatic business of ruling, the stuff of "virtuous Machiavellianism,"¹⁸ a term which suggests an inherent tension of conflicting principles. In accordance with his stated purposes, Marston creates a protagonist who is a model for princes, but who is markedly lacking in humility, love, and pity. While the results of Malevole's actions are the restoration of virtue and rational order, and while we admire his deviousness in destroying vice, we are repelled on the one hand by his coldly calculating Stoic rationality, and on the other, by his limited range of emotion that reveals little warmth, other than the heat of complaint.

As I have suggested, Marston appears to identify Malevole with himself, and to elicit our approval of Malevole's actions. In his disguise as a Cynic, Malevole castigates vice, and in his identity as Altofront he grants clemency to Pietro and Mendoza. It may be argued, too, that those without right on their side deserve Malevole's malign attentions. Yet Malevole's motives show him to be not simply a moralist, but a natural denison of a world in which only the fittest survive.¹⁹ That is not to say that Malevole is to be seen as wholly immoral, indeed, the bitter social criticism he offers bespeaks a strong moral awareness. Yet, his actions, designed primarily to bring about his own success, savour of amorality. He eventually succeeds, but not simply because he holds high moral ideals; he held them before, providing justice to all

and favour to none, sleeping the sleep of "fearless virtue" (I.iv.13). His pristine innocence was a naiveté that cost him a ducal throne. But, quick to learn, Malevole now employs "those old instruments of state, dissemblance and suspect" (I.vi.10). In the world Marston shows us, goodness does not necessarily bring its own rewards, rather, endurance and cunning are the first prerequisites of success.

Playing at being Pietro's cynical Diogenes, Malevole's frustrated railing at society's vices is not only a mask, but represents a real quality of character.²⁰ There is an intensity of truth in his expression of torment to Bilioso:

Only the malcontent, that 'gainst his fate
Repines and quarrels, alas, he's goodman tell-clock!
His sallow jawbones sink with wasting moan,
While others' beds are down, his pillow's stone.
(III.ii.11-14)

For all his ill-concealed frustration at time's slow tyranny, Malevole's stoic patience is the device by which he endures his subordinate role in order to exact his revenge and to regain a worldly throne; yet in keeping with Stoic other-worldliness, Malevole is intent on revenge against the usurping duke's spirit, rather than the blood revenge of conventional tragedy.²¹

He that gets blood, the life of flesh but spills,
But he that breaks heart's peace, the dear soul kills--
(I.iii.156-157)

The thrust of Malevole's words here is not suggestive of a benign motive in inducing Pietro's repentance; rather, the emphasis is on Malevole's desire for revenge, and on his need to eliminate an obstacle standing between him and his ducal throne.

While the end results of Malevole's motives are benign, the motives

themselves, temporal power and a lust for revenge, belie to some degree his Stoicism. Using an other-worldly philosophy for worldly ends, Malevole masks his rigorously imposed rationality in a show of passionate railing as a rational means to dissemble until he can gratify his desires. It is difficult to square Malevole's egotistical and passionate nature with his stoic and rational characteristics, yet it is an eminently human characteristic that he displays, in exercising forbearance primarily as an expedient to get what he wants.²²

Malevole is capable of subordinating his passions to his intellect in order to gain his object. Constrained by his passions to impose a rigid restraint on himself, Malevole adheres to the tenets of reason to the extent that his every act is predicated on forethought; as I shall show, he has little capacity for spontaneous emotion, except when his indignation at Maquerelle's corruption threatens to show through his mask as a pander, and when he expresses wonder at Maria's virtue. Yet Malevole's motives are grounded in a need for personal gratification in seeing his enemies destroyed, as strongly as they are in his desire to rid the world of vice. While these motives are not mutually exclusive, the former is personal, subjective, and vindictive, and the latter is general in its application, rational, and benign.

It may be that Marston suggests the corruption inherent in all human emotion, and that the only antidote is a more-than-human control, by which God-like reason suppresses that which inevitably is corrupt. That is the pessimistic view which Malevole appears to express in asserting that self-professed "usurers and bloodsuckers" (IV. iv. 19) are the world's only honest men; notably, Malevole does not exclude himself.

This concern with essential corruption suggests Marston's recognition of a tension between reason and emotion that remains unresolved, both in Senecan philosophy and in Malevole's character. The extent to which Malevole is a villain appears to be coterminous with his capacity for human emotion, with the single exception of his ability to express wonder and admiration in the presence of virtue; the degree of his heroism, on the other hand, is the extent to which his reason makes him more (or less) than human, by his stifling of normal emotion.²³ Pietro speaks truer than he knows when he comments about Malevole:

Th' elements struggle within him, his own soul
is at variance within herself.
(I iii 24-26)²⁴

I believe it is Malevole's Senecan Stoicism that accounts, perhaps, for what at least one critic has taken for a weakness of dramatic structure.²⁵ Marston evidently had an abiding interest in Senecan thought as a major basis for his dramatic themes, apparent in the ubiquity of Senecan *sententiae* in the plays, as well as in Marston's evident preoccupation with the theme of Stoic endurance, so central to the *Antonio* plays. In *The Malcontent* Malevole quotes Seneca's views on man's equality (III. iii.57-58), and Pietro quotes Seneca, unwisely rejecting him as a "coward and an epicure" (III. i. 25-27). By the time that Marston was writing, Seneca's dramatic influence, derived by the Elizabethans from Italian literature and Jasper Heywood's translations primarily, had seen its day. Marston's interest is not in dramatic presentations of ranting heroes possessed by divine madness, but in Seneca's thoughts about endurance and self-control. While the revenge theme still lived, the excesses of Senecan dramatic passion belonged to the earlier stage,²⁶

and probably were seen as rather "corny." Malevole chides Pietro scornfully:

O, do not rand, do not turn player. There's more
Of them can well live by another already.
(IV. iv. 4)²⁷

Malevole's own rant is equally unappealing, but it does not express self-pity and self-dramatization, rather, the tone is one of righteous indignation. Its coarseness parallels Malevole's degraded social position, which is symptomatic of a world in which the natural order is reversed. Unlike the villainous subordinates whose striving for ascendancy is unnatural, Malevole is by nature a ruler, in the same way that Vindice is the son of a displaced noble; it is their subservience, in these cases, which is unnatural, and not their attempts to rise. The imagery of disorder, illusion, and inversion which characterizes Renaissance dramatic representations of corruption in human affairs is explicit in Malevole's opening accompaniment of "vilest out-of-tune-music" (I. 1), a representation of the malcontent's "manna" of "discord" (I. iv. 38).²⁸ In a society out of tune with reason, truth is impotent, except as a source of diversion for Pietro, and a welcome relief for him from court sycophants. Nonetheless, Pietro appears to recognize Malevole's verbal attacks as having morally restorative powers:

. . . faith, he gives good intelligence to my spirit,
makes me understand those weaknesses which others'
flattery palliates.

(I. iii. 28)

In a morally inverted world, injury is a healing antidote which the innocent administer to the guilty. While the rational Altofront is Malevole's higher nature, Malevole himself functions as Pietro's conscience. Malevole's role as an artificial court fool is central to

Marston's vision of moral and social inversion. The evident wisdom of Malevole and the natural fool Passarello excels by far that of their masters, who are, of course, the true fools. The situation is analogous to a Feast of Fools, in which legitimate custom is suspended, but unlike such festivals, the situation at Pietro's court is one in which the masters participate unwittingly and involuntarily.

Malevole's words show us a world comprised of fools and wise men, irrespective of rank; in a rightly ordered society, the fool occupies a subservient position, as Malevole's comments to Equato--the name is significant--suggest, an "excellent scholar by art," Equato is really a "ridiculous fool by nature" (I.iii.68-70). Equato's social position, like his shallow and contrived wisdom, is artificial, and symptomatic of a reversal of the natural order; Malevole, however, provides the true measure by which this society may be judged. All men, he tells Celso, are "philosophical monarchs or natural fools" (I.iv.32-33). Even Passarello, whom I take to be a natural fool,²⁹ recognizes his kinship with his masters, claiming that he "can play upon instruments, scurvily, as gentlemen do" (I.viii.2-3). It is Malevole who is the "philosophical monarch," subject to "natural fools," and who imitates their discordant tones in order to survive; with the monarchy of wisdom and the liberty of speech that accompanies his lowly station, he is in the Stoic sense a free man, in a way that a ruler who is naturally a slave never can be:

Well, this disguise doth yet afford me that
Which kings do seldom bear, or great men use--
Free speech, and though my state's usurped,
Yet his affected strain gives me a tongue
As fetterless as is an emperor's.

(I.iii.157-162)³⁰

In Pietro's world, where servitude and sovereignty are reversed, slaves

are free and princes are fettered in chains of their own making.

In this upside down world, appearance takes on the complexion of reality, revealed for the audience by Malevole. His greeting to Bilioso, "And how does my old muckhill, overspread with fresh snow?" (I.iii.34-35) characterizes not only Bilioso, but the world of men, a "very muckhill" (IV.v.108) of corruption masked in deceit.³¹ Malevole's metaphor of a "pigeonhouse that was smooth, round, and white without, and full of holes and stink within" (I.i.v.83) is quite missed by the obtuse Bilioso, whose literalness is also the plague of a society preoccupied wholly with outward form:

Oh, yes, 'tis the fashion of them all.
(I.iv.83)³²

The imagery of inversion occurs repeatedly. Malevole, expressing his rejection of the deceitful world in which he nonetheless hopes to have a place once more, exclaims:

O world most vile, when thy loose vanities,
taught by this fool (Passarello), do make the fool seem wise!
(II.i.53-54)

Again, Bilioso, sensing that Passarello has the advantage of him in an exchange of punning wit, conceives of the world as inverted, yet, as Passarello is quick to point out, affairs are just as they should be when Bilioso is revealed as inferior:

Passarello: Why, then, if your lady take down your fool, your
fool will stand no longer for your lady.
Bilioso: A pestilential fool! 'Fore God, I think the world
be turn'd upside down too.
Passarello: O, no, sir, for then your lady and all the ladies
in the palace should go with their heels upward,
and that were a strange sight, you know.
(III.i.119-125)

Accompanying the imagery of inversion to do with folly and wisdom is a parallel idiom of inversion concerning slaves and free men, and the rise and fall of fortune. Malevole rails:

Slaves i' favour, ay! Marry, shall he rise?
 Good God! How subtle hell doth flatter vice,
 Mounts him aloft and makes him seem to fly,

 The end of all
 Is only that from height he might fall.
 (II iii 17-22)

The juxtaposed references to God and hell are echoed in Malevole's expression of confidence in his eventual ascent in fortune; there is a complex significance, both demonic and sacramental, in Malevole's words:

Malevole: I once shall rise!
 Mendoza: Thou rise?
 Malevole: Ay, at the resurrection.
 No vulgar seed but once may rise and shall,
 No king so huge but 'fore he die may fall. 33
 (I v. 15-19)

Protected by his disguise, Malevole voices with impunity his Stoic certainty of the rhythmic fluctuations of fortune that will bring about a further inversion:

With most servile patience time will come
 When wonder of thy error will strike dumb
 Thy bezzl'd sense:--
 (II iii 14-16)

Like Bosola (*The Duchess of Malfi*), who, disguised as a bellman, discourses on the transience and insubstantiality of the flesh, Malevole gives warning for those who will heed, by marking the fleeting passage of time, as "goodman tell-clock" (III.ii.12), Malevole both chafes at time's slow passage, and derives quiet satisfaction from its inexorable progress. Like Mephistophilis, he suffers what seems an eternity of torment in his fallen condition of unrealized desire, yet he exults in

the inevitability of time's bringing about the reduction of his victims. Bosola's victim of course need not heed him, because her cause has been just; but Pietro and Mendoza have as much cause to heed Malevole's warnings as Faustus has in hearing Mephistophilis' subtle truths.

A series of similar images reinforce the sense of inevitability that "he must needs rise who can no longer fall" (IV.v.138).³⁴ Fortune, says Malevole, is like "a well with two buckets, whilst one comes up full to be emptied, another goes down to be filled" (III.iii.60-63),³⁵ just he compares to "plummets hanging on clock-lines," which "ne'er ha' done till all is quite undone" (II.i.8-9). Malevole's rising by assuming a lowly station after having fallen is reminiscent of Mosca, the arch-parasite who can "stoop and rise, almost together" (III.i.23-24), for both use their appearance of subservient positions as a means to rise above their victims; appropriately, the imagery of falconry in *Volpone* has much the same significance as the imagery of hunting in *The Malcontent*.

Even Maquerelle, with her sexual punning, echoes the Stoic theme of inevitable flux:

. . . for we women always note the falling of
the one in the rising of the other.
(V.ii.40-41)

Malevole's relationship with Maquerelle underscores his questionable morality symbolically, perhaps more clearly than in any other part of the play. Pretending to be Mendoza's pander intent on procuring Maria for him, Malevole sings lewd counterpoint for Maquerelle (V.vii.1-4). Perhaps we are to regard Malevole as a false bawd, as distinct from the true bawd, Maquerelle, in the same way that Malevole plays artificial

fool to Passarello, a natural fool. Yet in the same way that Passarello shows wisdom in his supposed folly, Malevole makes us suspicious that he shares the corruption of the other fools, and that in some sense his role as a pander is genuine, although supposedly feigned. Our response to Malevole's joviality and camaraderie with Maquerelle is not unlike the uneasiness we experience at witnessing Iago's conviviality while drinking with the ingenuous Cassio, and the episode embodies that same sickness implicit in Vindice's evident relish while attempting to procure Castiza for Lussoriosso.

It is Passarello who serves as a measure of moral truth during Malevole's encounter with Maquerelle. When Malevole's mask of affection for the bawd begins to slip with his expression of revulsion in refusing to pledge her in wine (V.ii 25), Passarello points out with evident irony that he has not hesitated to pledge Malevole (V.ii 26). The implication is, of course, that Malevole need not be finicky, because Passarello sees no difference between the pair; Malevole has apparently become for the moment as truly a bawd as Maquerelle. When Malevole overcomes his revulsion and drinks in order to maintain the deception, Maquerelle comments pointedly, "Now thou has drunk my health, fool, I am friends with thee" (V.ii 31). Now, we cannot be entirely sure from the text whether Maquerelle addresses Passarello or Malevole, and perhaps the distinction is unimportant; for in the same way that Passarello intimates with perhaps unconscious wit that Malevole has become a bawd, Maquerelle shows with equally unwitting irony that Malevole is indistinguishable from the fool. The appellat "fool" seems to indicate Passarello, but the sequence of dialogue--Malevole having just pledged Maquerelle--suggests

that she addresses her fellow bawd.³⁶

The pledge in wine has a symbolic significance made clear by Passarello, he cites Griffon's error (*Orlando Furioso*) in becoming reconciled to a "quean" (V ii.34-37), then wisely removes himself from the pair's corrupting presence. Malevole, perhaps corrupted symbolically by his pledge, and lacking for the moment Passarello's natural wisdom, remains, commenting with unwitting irony on "this transformation of state" (V ii.39); perhaps it is he who has undergone a metamorphosis, to become what he has hitherto only pretended to be.³⁷ Certainly, the episode has overtones of a perverse sacrament, an exchange of vows, as it were, similar to that which binds Iago to Othello, Vasques to Hippolita (*'Tis Pity*), and Mephistophilis to Faustus. In this instance, however, the villainous subordinate is the one who changes, relinquishing his goodness for the moment, to become the tempter which he hitherto has thought that he could simply pretend to be. It appears that willy-nilly, Malevole becomes in truth a would-be bawd, while believing all along that he merely feigns the role.

Maquerelle's tedious disquisition on her lapdogs (V ii.40-53) appears to enhance further the symbolic significance of Malevole's encounter with her. The dogs' names apparently connote their natures, that which actively pursues gratification (Catch), and that which waits expectantly (Watch). It seems we are to recognize in Maquerelle's pets the characteristics of Mendoza, the grasping overreacher, and Malevole, the patient Stoic who endures want until Dame Fortune dispenses her largesse. Both beasts, Maquerelle tells Malevole, have "ravenous" appetites, and while she, like Fortune, usually favours Catch, she occasionally

gives pride of place to Watch. Malevole interrupts Maquerelle's prattle, so that we are left to conjecture that Malevole, as insatiable in his ambition as Mendoza, has won Dame Fortune's favour in pledging Maquerelle, an act symbolic of his becoming a pander. The depressing corollary that Marston seems to imply is that Malevole, originally the most righteous of men, necessarily becomes tainted by evil in his effort to destroy it; Malevole's villainy is thus much more than a pretense, it seems.

Maquerelle's earlier pun about "the falling of the one" and "the rising of the other" has an implicit meaning in its application to Malevole, whose rise involves Mendoza's fall; yet Malevole has demeaned himself in his association with Maquerelle, so that he has himself fallen, in order to rise as Altofront. Appropriately, Maquerelle continues her discourse by instructing Malevole in the art of pandering. Malevole himself is seduced by Maquerelle to doubt the possibility of virtue's survival in Maria, for Maquerelle's argument is based on her certainty that all women are vulnerable to seduction if approached at the right moment and in the right way. So Malevole's attempted seduction becomes his testing of Maria,³⁸ and he is in consequence far less pure than she, whose constancy resides in her unshaken reliance on Providence. By contrast, Malevole is shown symbolically to have wed himself to Fortune.³⁹

In becoming the bawd that he apparently believes he only pretends to be, Malevole taints himself in offering Maria jewels, and in trying mightily to persuade her (V iii.15, 19). The incident resembles Columbo's seduction of Celia (*The Cardinal*) with pearls, and Vindice's attempted seduction of Castiza with "angels" for her mother; it is difficult not to see Malevole as thoroughly lost in his role as these others. There-

fore one may perceive considerable irony in Maquerelle's persuasion when she tells Maria that Altofront is "in another world now" (V.iii.6), for Malevole, as ambitious bawd, has so compromised his goodness that he becomes a diabolical tempter like Vindice in his role as Piato, and De Flores as demonic servant (*The Changeling*). Maria's outburst, "here round about is hell" (V.iii.23), is not unlike Vermandero's observation that "hell circumscribes" the occupants of Alicant, and by implication Malevole is, like De Flores, this hellish dimension's devil; his rational consciousness, exemplified in his natural condition as Altofront, is indeed in "another world," a dimension alien to the psychological world of panders and predators, which Malevole has entered temporarily.

Maria's refusal to "stain" Altofront's honour (V.iii.26) appears to operate as a moral restorative for Malevole, averting despair and renewing his faith in the possibility of human goodness, so that through Maria's memory of him, and through his awareness of her unassailable virtue, he may recall his proper self--his first condition before he attained a knowledge of evil. His expression of wonder at her virtue thus may be seen as having the quality of an awakening for him (V.iii.33-45); he seems to experience a revelation of such intensity that he is in danger of revealing himself to Maquerelle by the exulting tone in which he castigates her for being a "weak pand'ress" (V.iii.56). Malevole's triumphant reaffirmation of his faith may be seen as prefiguring Mendoza's much less pleasant awakening to the reality of virtue's survival in Malevole, standing revealed as Altofront; Mendoza can only gasp in horror, "Do I dream? Or have I dreamt/ This two days' space?" (V.vi.112-113).

His long nightmare of doubt brought to an end in a moment of revelation, Malevole is in a way morally regenerated. Malevole has courted despair, and his "resurrection" from his psychological hell is brought about by his experiencing Maria's unassailable virtue. Malevole seems to possess a mixed nature, making him both a tempter and a moral judge, torn between these opposing roles, he appears to have a morbid curiosity about Maria's virtue, together with a higher nature which prompts him to rejoice when he fails as a bawd.

While Malevole's earlier expressions of frustration and bitterness have rung with the warmth of passion, his triumphant discovery of Maria's constancy is marked by an essentially "intellectual" quality, rather than the effusion of natural affection one might expect. Keeping his disguise intact, he greets Maria's profession of readiness for death before dishonour by exulting to Maquerelle that he has found an "honest woman" (V iii 34). Malevole's remark, signalling the end of his Diogenean search,⁴⁰ shows that his sense of triumph is real enough, but its main object does not seem to be Maria his wife, as much as it is Maria the abstraction, who represents the survival of goodness in womankind. He is quick to generalize, observing that "there is of women, as of all other things, some good, most bad some saints, some sinners" (V iii 33-34). Admittedly, Malevole cannot reveal his affection for Maria in front of Maquerelle, but even so, he shows a curious emotional detachment in turning to address his remarks to Maquerelle, talking about Maria as an example of a general rule, almost as if she were no longer present.

Malevole uses the occasion for a condemnation of society's corruption, but his pleasure in railing has gone. The cause of his frustration

no longer exists in the same measure as before, because he has seen that unassailable virtue survives. Disgusted now with his pretense, he is brought up short, unable to "hunt the letter . . . further" (V.iii.37). Now Malevole turns to his audience to utter an aside, and we might expect that we are to be made privy to his feelings of natural affection towards Maria. But we are disappointed, because Malevole's concern is with himself, and the distastefulness of the role he has relished until this moment:

. . . O God,
 How loathsome this toying is to me!
 That a Duke should be forc'd to fool it!
 (V.iii.38-40)

Malevole's love for Maria unquestionably is genuine and powerful, but it is a kind of ideal love, originating in the rational intellect, and hardly at all in the passions; he appears to be more in love with the idea of womanly virtue, than with the woman. When, during the masque scene, Malevole tells Maria that she is "more loved than . . . breath" (V.iii.104), we do not doubt his sincerity, but noble and ideal as the love he shows may be, we wonder at its lack of human warmth.

Until Maria shows her virtue, after which Malevole's tone becomes nearly lighthearted and exultant, Malevole has had to find an outlet for his frustration in his railing; he consistently stays his hand in submission to Fortune, in keeping with the Stoic notion of its existence as an extrinsic, implacable, and rhythmic determinant of human destiny. As he tells Celso, he has no intention of climbing "a falling tower",⁴¹ instead, he will "temporize" (I.iv.25-27), a term suggestive of both his opportunism and his wise submission to the tyranny of time's slow passage.⁴² Although Malevole perhaps courts despair in wanting to test

Maria, his forebearance proceeds from his "hope, hope, that never forsak'st the wretched'st man" (I. iv. 25); its affirmation of his faith in the course of fate gives him the strength to refrain from action that would be rash and premature. Malevole's brand of hope is the opposite of the irrational hope born of impulse that goads De Flores and other villainous subordinates to destructive action, yet, like the irrational hope of these others to satisfy their appetites, Malevole's hope has worldly gain as its ultimate end at least as much as a re-establishment of virtue. It is to Malevole's advantage that, unencumbered by the subjective hope that deludes, he is able to sense the shifting of Fortune's winds, when "the time grows ripe for action" (IV v. 144).⁴³

In righting the moral and social order, Malevole exacts the spiritual revenge against Pietro he has promised himself. Having determined to "torment" the Duke with his "fetterless tongue" (I. iv. 161-165), he taunts and goads the weak usurper until he cries, "Thou pinchest too deep, art too keen upon me" (IV v. 63). Now Malevole's revenge on Pietro is consummated in an ambivalent way. Malevole's revenge has the quality of a painful surgical probing and cleansing that precedes healing:

Tut, a pitiful surgeon makes a dangerous sore.
I'll tent thee to the ground.
(IV v. 64-65)

Malevole effects both the destruction and salvation of Pietro's soul, the "soul" that dies is the spiritual corruption that has possessed Pietro, so that his divine soul is saved from eternal death. Pietro is transformed when he is restored to spiritual life, his regenerate soul rising phoenix-like from the ashes of his baser nature.

Malevole functions rather as an allegorical repentance figure in a

morality play,⁴⁴ yet a strange moral healer it is who assails Pietro's conscience and brings him to repentance. Malevole brings about the destruction of vice by abetting it as well as railing against it.⁴⁵ His victim, dedicating his "breath to solitary holiness" in his contrition, conveniently renounces the regency, and avows his "breast's care shall be restoring Altofront" (IV.v.114-125).⁴⁶ Malevole's revenge consists in forcing Pietro to look at hurtful truth; while the result is morally salubrious for Pietro, it also profits Malevole. In one move, Malevole is able to savour the revenge he has sought,⁴⁷ and at the same time enlist an accomplice. While Maria's later affirmation of virtue's survival seems to temper and allay Malevole's vengeful instincts by rekindling his hope, his essential self-interest remains constant.

There is little to suggest Malevole's altruism, and much to suggest self-interest. The weak and vacillating Pietro has been swayed once already by Mendoza, and we have no reason to believe that his most recent repentance would be any more permanent if Malevole were unsuccessful in regaining his throne. Meanwhile, Pietro repents sufficiently to serve Malevole's purposes, and there is not much basis for a belief that Malevole has much further concern for this weakling whom he has bullied into a state of abject remorse. Pietro, terrified of a violent fall from power, entrapped by the very position that should give him freedom, and without even the self-respect of knowing his wife chaste, is of course mightily relieved to have his burden lifted; neither Malevole's "tenting" nor Pietro's response have much to do with Christian humility, love, and repentance.⁴⁸ Rather, each finds a satisfactory solution to his own problem, and if the pragmatically satisfactory result happens to satisfy

the requirements of Christian philosophy as well, then that is little more than a fortuitous circumstance which appears to be of secondary importance to both Malevole and Pietro.

It is this hard pragmatism and lack of concern for others that characterize Malevole's otherwise moral actions. His observation to Pietro that "great slaves fear better than love" (IV.v.69) is an ironic adaptation of a Machiavellian maxim;⁴⁹ Malevole's assertion that natural slaves who become princes are merely great slaves living in fear⁵⁰ indicates something about Malevole himself. Malevole's words and actions show that he prefers to be loved rather than feared, and in that sense he does not share Machiavelli's sentiment, yet clearly, his interest lies, like Machiavelli's, primarily in the politics of power, and not in love, except as it serves his ends as a ruler.

Malevole's words foreshadow his generous treatment of Pietro and Mendoza, yet they seem to spring at least as much from his pragmatic Machiavellianism as from any selfless Christian love and mercy, of which there is little evidence. Having reduced Pietro, Malevole "heals" him with a lecture on the insubstantiality of worldly gain (IV.v.105-108), and promptly enlists him as an accomplice in regaining the dukedom. The situation is ironic; Pietro now becomes Malevole's helpmeet in the materialistic endeavour of regaining worldly power for the man who has convinced him of its lack of substance and worth.⁵¹ Malevole neither congratulates himself nor Pietro, however, for it is typical of his rather cold Stoic detachment that he displays remarkably little warmth or spontaneity of emotion.

There is symbolic significance in Malevole's remaining disguised to

Pietro until he has completed the healing process; his revelation of himself to Pietro signals Pietro's new moral orientation that enables him to see the world as it really is. So even during the healing process, Malevole must effect the Cynic's tone. Gaining the upper hand, however, Malevole adopts a condescending, yet encouraging tone towards the quaking Pietro, as one might to a frightened child: "Come, be not confounded . . ." (IV.v.105), and "Now what art thou to lose?" (IV.v.116). Even as the malcontent, then, Malevole carefully modulates his tone according to the situation, if his words are sometimes a safety valve for his venting of frustration, they are nevertheless always calculated for effect, and under the control of an iron will that denies much spontaneity of feeling.⁵²

Similarly, Malevole's treatment of Mendoza and the other recreants is a Senecan exercise in the proper conduct of successful princes, rather than an *exemplum* of Christian forbearance and love. While the result is the same, Malevole uses legitimate means for Machiavellian ends. Indeed, his contemptuous words to Mendoza reflect neither compassion nor forgiveness, yet they are entirely consonant with Senecan Stoic philosophy:

Slave, take thy life.
 Wert thou defenced, through blood and wounds,
 The sternest horror of a civil fight
 Would I achieve thee, but, prostrate at my feet,
 I scorn to hurt thee: 'Tis the heart of slaves
 That deigns to triumph over peasants' graves,
 For such thou art, since birth doth ne'er enroll
 A man 'mong many monarchs, but a glorious soul.
(V.vi.128-135)

Malevole's motive for granting Mendoza his life accords with the Senecan view that it is pragmatically desirable for a prince to show mercy to

his fallen predecessor; for according to Seneca, Mendoza "loses" his life by being indebted to Malevole for it. It is perhaps significant that this view of the purpose and value of clemency appears in Seneca's epistle to the young Nero, as a guide for ruling,⁵³ the tone and apparent intent are remarkably similar to that of Machiavelli, and to much literature of the *speculum principis* genre, which so often has the ruler's well-being and avoidance of misfortune as its central concern.⁵⁴ In such literature, the good of the common weal is a happy, but secondary consideration, in the same way, Malevole's interest seems fixed on his proper behaviour as a ruler, rather than on any beneficial result for Mendoza. We may conjecture, too, that Malevole's sparing of Pietro, and indeed, his having saved Pietro from himself by bringing him to repentance, means that Malevole has his revenge in dominating Pietro and tormenting his soul, because Pietro now owes his life to his earthly saviour.

Less concerned with justice and social good than with affirming his superiority in granting life, Malevole, in scorning to hurt Mendoza, eschews revenge on Stoic grounds which may hardly be seen as anything other than egotistical. Seneca is quite explicit in providing an argument which seems to be the basis for Malevole's words to Mendoza. Vengeance, Seneca holds, has either of two purposes; it either compensates the injured, or ensures his future well-being. A prince, claims Seneca, is too powerful to have to seek revenge for either reason, even when he has been wronged by inferiors. In the case of his sometime peers, the prince is sufficiently avenged by seeing them below him, especially if he rises to occupy their places. As Seneca points out,

the unseated ruler, dependent on his successor for his very life, has lost his life, because he owes it to his new sovereign; alive, he is a testimonial to the prince's greatness, and serves to enhance his reputation. Further, says Seneca, a prince forfeits his comely superiority in anger, for anger reduces him to his victim's level. Life may be taken from a superior, but it may be granted only to an inferior.⁵⁵

In a world of predatory creatures, Malevole may be distinguished, not by his benevolence, but by his majesty as a successful bird of prey. Aiming a contemptuous kick at the grovelling Mendoza as he orders him removed, Malevole merely comments, "An eagle takes/ Not flies" (V.vi.154-155). The metaphor is typically Senecan; Seneca writes that "lions pass by those they have struck down," and that "relentlessness is the trait of ignoble animals."⁵⁶ Again, the thrust of both Malevole's and Seneca's words is towards the kind of face a ruler should show the world. Malevole appears unmotivated by mercy for this "fly," and he seems to have Seneca's idea foremost in his thought. Seneca writes that "some you would disdain to take vengeance on and recoil as you would from an insect that dirties the hand that crushes it," for not only is that a correct exercise of nobility, but "the opportunity for a notable clemency should be utilized."⁵⁷

For the lesser villains, Malevole can afford to display his satisfaction in giving them their desserts with the merest touch of condescending humour, if not of actual compassion.⁵⁸ Ordering Maquerelle "unto the suburbs" (V.vi.157) as befits a bawd, he dismisses Bilioso in banteringly familiar tones:

You to my worst friend I would hardly give:
Thou are a perfect old knave.

(V.vi.158-159)

Malevole's society thus seems amoral, even after his reinstatement; it is made up of the superior who has been a successful hunter, and the inferior, who has been hunted down like a beast. Malevole tells Celso that he "can track" Mendoza (III.iii.31), using the metaphor of hare and hounds, and it is a sign of Pietro's compassion born of his own misery that prevents him from joining a hunt, claiming that "'tis unfit one beast should hunt another" (III.iv.4). Pietro evidently experiences a sense of kinship with the prey, and Mendoza is a predator who in turn becomes Malevole's prey, once Malevole has run Pietro to earth.⁵⁹ There is no mistaking Pietro's anguished, "Would God nothing but dogs were at it!" (III.iv.2).

Pietro's fearful confidence to Ferrardo that of the "beasts," one "chaseth" him (III.iv.5) bears several connotations, he is terrified of Mendoza, plagued by his own fearful nature, and unbeknownst to him, he is hunted by Malevole. The imagery of the hunt and of dogs invites us to associate the theme of predation with the ravenous appetites of Maquerelle's lapdogs. Malevole, more adroit in his "doggish" guise as a Cynic, is by inference a superior predator to Mendoza. Malevole's first mention of an "eagle" compares the noble bird of prey to "subtle hell" which "doth flatter vice" by raising it aloft, "as the fowl the tortoise mock'd," and in the same way that the "ambitious shellfish" is let fall, the vicious are brought to ruin (II.iii.21-22).⁶⁰ Malevole's later description of himself as an "eagle," occurring as it does after his reinstatement, suggests he assumes a nobility in the hierarchy of predators, which he had temporarily relinquished, yet the image also associates him with the hellish principle by which evil is advanced to its own

ruin. Similarly, the imagery of dogs which we associate with Malevole before his reinstatement, invites comparison of Malevole and Bosola, whom we readily associate with the imagery of predators ranking low on the scale of beasts. The theme of predation is much less apparent after Malevole's reinstatement, and the image of the eagle becomes redolent primarily of Malevole's ducal majesty, yet we remain aware that Malevole has regained his throne essentially because of his superiority as a predator, rather than because of superior virtue.⁶¹

Ironically, it is Pietro who reveals qualities of warmth, compassion, and Christian humility that Malevole appears to lack.⁶² Aurelia, in her remorse at her adulterous behaviour, is moved to describe Pietro's capacity for a love which is both passionate and exalted:

As the soul lov'd the body, so lov'd he,
'Twas death to him to part my presence, heaven
to see me pleased. . . .

(IV v. 31-33)

A hunted man, Pietro is at least as sinned against as sinning, and seeks only surcease (III v. 4-5). It was not even he who effected Malevole's banishment and Maria's imprisonment (V. iv. 43), and when he finally is reduced by Malevole, his contrition is complete. Unlike Malevole, he shows himself capable of truly Christian forgiveness, granting Ferneze his "pardon and love" (IV v. 130); for that reason, we perhaps understand and sympathize with Pietro's human weakness at least as much as we admire Malevole's strength and cunning.

Malevole's way of manifesting "love" is unlike that of Pietro, and is perhaps as unappealing as it is admirable. His version of love appears to have little to do with natural affection, and seems limited primarily to moral approval. Malevole "loves" Maria's guardian, because

"Captain Conscience" (V.ii.113), as Malevole calls him, "stands for (him)" (V.iii.85). Malevole, here, as elsewhere, places his emphasis on himself; his love for the Captain proceeds only indirectly from gratitude in his knowing that Maria has been well protected, and primarily from his awareness that the Captain protects his, Malevole's, interests. Malevole's expression of love for Maria is primarily his incredulous recognition of her as an honest woman; he shows virtually no affection for the loyal Celso, except for his final comment to Celso and the Captain that he will take them "unto (his) breast" (V.iv.193).

Limiting his love to mere approval of those who have proven their loyalty to him, Malevole manifests a love of God that is perhaps little less egocentric, when he exults that "the great leader of the just stands for (him)" (V.iv.87). The distinction between a man who sees himself as standing for his God and one who sees God primarily as his helper is a fine one, yet in the context of Malevole's thought, his words seem to support the view that his first concern is himself. Although Malevole acknowledges that his God stands "above" him (V.iv.88), we cannot discount the possibility that he verges on a blasphemous *hubris*, nor can we dismiss lightly his many references to himself as a devil, which in so many respects he has shown himself to be while abetting self-destructive vice (I.iii.16), 54, IV.v.62).

Yet if Malevole does suffer from pride, it is different in quality to Tamburlaine's cosmic complaint that challenges the heavens with open passion. The cunning Malevole's reason dictates to him a requirement to submit to a higher will in order to attain his ends without fear of divine vengeance. This pragmatic Christianity appears to be an extension

of Malevole's belief in the possibility of virtuous Machiavellianism and egotistic Stoicism, conceptions with inherent contradictions which I contend that neither Marston nor his protagonist can hope to resolve. On these grounds, Malevole is to be seen as villainous despite himself, and perhaps even despite his creator's intention.⁶³

Markedly limited in his emotional range, Altofront appears to be Marston's perfect conception of the Senecan hero. As Malevole's venting of passion and his dissembling are humorously grotesque, and somewhat repulsive, still, the rational objectivity he displays after his reinstatement is hardly more endearing. Its end purpose, while perhaps incidentally virtuous, appears to be power and revenge, manifested as contempt. The warmth of honest wrath is perhaps preferable to this lofty indulgence of spite in the guise of mercy. Professing a Stoic rejection of the material world, Malevole at first finds liberty in his reduced circumstances. Yet there is a tension between his profession of Stoicism and his yearning for revenge and power. Malevole embraces an unworldly philosophy for worldly ends, revealing an ultimate cynicism that far exceeds his more obvious Cynicism as the malcontent. It may be argued that Malevole resorts to worldly means for the sake of his philosophical goals, but as I hope to have shown, Malevole's most commonly expressed purpose proceeds from self-interest, and his philosophical Stoicism provides a convenient design by which he pursues self-interested ends. As Duke, his acts of mercy would be worthy of a Christian saint, except that his motives hardly seem benign, perhaps the Stoicism of Altofront the ruler is no less a form of expediency than his earlier poses as a malcontent and a beguiling tempter. It is this recognition of the

need for obedience to the dictates of expediency which distinguishes between the old innocent Altofront, and his re-emergence as a much more worldly-wise ruler.

Marston's apparent approval of Malevole is equalled by his implication of an oppressive deity whom men are not constrained to love and serve, but merely to acknowledge and obey for their own ends. Dominated by the flux of time, princes do not fall because of their tyrannous and vicious actions alone, but because they "observe not heaven's imposed conditions" (V.vi.144). The "conditions," Malevole points out, are not simply a requirement for moral behaviour, but the need to dissemble in a dishonest world. Malevole seems to imply that the Deity demands the prince's corruption in deceiving, lest he show his goodness and precipitate a fall. Originally banished due to the "intemperate heat" of the multitude (III.iii.7), Malevole has learned that the commons

. . . love many princes merely for their faces
And outward shows, and they do covet more
To have sight of these than their virtues.
Yet thus much let the great ones still conceal.⁶⁴
(V.vi.139-142)

The prince is at the mercy of an inexorable destiny that governs an intrinsically corrupt world, he falls either because he practices only the appearance of virtue while defying moral law, or because he exercises virtue that does not appear as virtue to his subjects. His only hope of stability is to practice virtue while appearing to be pleasingly corrupt, it seems. Malevole's final acts of "mercy," then, are ambivalent. We can never be sure whether Malevole intends to practice true mercy, or merely its appearance; if, as it seems, truth and appearance are the same in this instance, that is a circumstance which is fortuitous, but

hardly reassuring.

Whatever our conclusions, we must admit that Malevole's words and actions make him less than wholly admirable; for Marston there perhaps can be no real heroes. Instead of heroes, we find characters who vary in degrees of villainy; the victor Malevole is villainous, it seems, although his rational restraint excuses him somewhat. We cannot be sure, in fact, that he is not more villainous than the weak Pietro. Pietro and Mendoza as natural slaves are villainous subordinates who usurp Malevole's dukedom; yet Malevole, a natural monarch reduced to subservience, is hardly less a villainous subordinate in his efforts to regain a ducal throne. All men share in the villainy of earthly corruption, and while that is an orthodox Christian commonplace, its dramatic representation by Marston reveals a Calvinistic scepticism that questions the possibility of moral action in the temporal. A strong element of chance prevents Malevole's blood guilt when he incites Pietro, and the only constant virtue to be seen is in Maria, whose goodness lies, not in positive action, but in her refusal to participate in the general corruption. Malevole, who acts in his own behalf to redress injustice, cannot avoid contamination by the society he purges. Marston's success as a dramatist lies in his clear representation of the philosophical dilemma through his characters. As Malevole the moral critic aptly expresses man's commonality in the "dungpit" of human existence, there is "but a pair of shears betwixt an emperor and the son of a bagpiper" (IV v 115)

The same theme of mortal equality founded on moral and social degeneration informs *The Revenger's Tragedy*, so that in the final analysis

there is little to distinguish between Vindice the wronged malcontent who lusts for revenge, and Lussuriosso, who lusts for Vindice's sister.⁶⁵ Indeed, the similarities of theme and style in *The Revenger's Tragedy* and Marston's work are sufficiently strong that Marston has been among the candidates for authorship advanced by scholars who believe the play too unlike other works by the shadowy Tourneur to be from his hand.⁶⁶ While the heavy atmosphere of flame-lit gloom in *The Revenger's Tragedy* bears a striking resemblance to scenes in *The Changeling*, and while Middleton is perhaps the leading contender for counterclaims to authorship, the theme of transformation and the imagery of hollowness and inner decay in *The Revenger's Tragedy* are immediately reminiscent of *The Malcontent*. If we accept that Tourneur was the author of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, we may acknowledge that he and Marston may have shared the same sources, but Marston's plays apparently exerted the most important influence on him; certainly, the similarities of plot are evident even to the casual observer.⁶⁷

The theme of transformation is perhaps less marked in single incidents in *The Revenger's Tragedy* than in *The Malcontent*, for the change in the major protagonist involves a continuously "deepening cynicism and evil transformation through (Vindice's) revenge,"⁶⁸ rather than Malevole's sudden re-awakening to an awareness of virtue's survival. However, there is enough similarity in the vituperative language of both malcontents to raise the same critical questions prompted by Marston, scholarly opinion about authorial distance, sincerity, and prurient interest remains divided.⁶⁹ Yet for all that, Vindice's character does not present nearly the problems of definition in terms of virtue and villainy that

we encounter in Malevole. Although a "strange-composed fellow" (I.1.96) who, like Malevole, makes himself evil's "most infectious exponent" after appointing himself its scourge,⁷⁰ we perhaps are able to distinguish somewhat more clearly between the author and his embroiled protagonist. The play's moral framework is more clearly evident, and we are able for the most part to distinguish between Vindice the moral commentator who addresses his audience with Tourneur's voice, and Vindice the vicious revenger in love with death.⁷¹

Vindice hisses his opening commentary at the unhearing "royal lecher" and the members of the torchlit family procession crossing the stage (I.1.1-13). The words show his hatred to be passionate and obsessive, yet they are not directed either to Gloriana's skull (which he carries), nor are they meant for the protagonists' ears, evidently, the first part of Vindice's speech, until he turns his attention to his grisly *memento mori*, is directed towards the audience,⁷² it is only when he addresses the skull later in the same speech--"Thou sallow picture of my poisoned love . . ." (I.1.14)--that the tone of righteous contempt, indignation, and outrage becomes overladen by his almost sexual fascination with death.⁷³ Here we see a Vindice who appears not to have Tourneur's approval, while Vindice may be the instrument of ultimate justice, he is shown to be as irrational in his single-minded pursuit of revenge as those who serve other kinds of appetite. Like Malevole, Vindice is a combination of "avenger, satirist, and tempter,"⁷⁴ but the distinctions between each function are much more sharply delineated in Vindice than his ambivalent prototype.

The same irony in Malevole's situation is apparent in that of

Vindice; the incorruptibility that Vindice sees as enshrined in his beloved's "shell of death" (I.1.15) is what prompts him to act as her pander;⁷⁵ certainly, he seems more infatuated with the skull's present reality, devoid of corrupting flesh, than with the remembered "bright face" (I.1.16) which has been the object of male lust.⁷⁶ Malevole's preoccupation with revenge lacks this macabre quality, but then his memory of Maria's living virtue and his hope for her continuing chastity have not been blighted by rape and murder. Vindice, for all his cunning, has a blind arrogance and moral naiveté that is less evident in Malevole Ambitioso's punning comment on Junior's execution that "the falling of one head is the raising of another" (III.1.28) is a mere parody of Senecan doctrine, and Vindice, like the Duke's sons, cannot read Fortune's signs with Malevole's accuracy, so that he eventually overreaches, bringing about the reversal that results in his own death.

Exulting that the Duke's murder was "somewhat wittily carried" (V.iii.96), Vindice is amazed and dismayed at Antonio's reaction in ordering his and Hippolito's execution; he defends his actions by presenting an argument which shows the totality of his misunderstanding:

May we not set as well as the duke's son?
 Thou hast no conscience: are we not revenged?
 Is there one enemy left alive amongst those?
 (V.iii.105-107)

Vindice's defence is based on his perfection as a murderer, so that he inverts reason by protesting his innocence in terms of his guilt. Perverse in his self-deception, he expresses with sorrowful and unwitting irony the self-destructive nature of evil: "'Tis time to die, when we are ourselves our foes" (V.iii.108).

Vindice's self-condemnation is typical of the villainous subordinate's weakness, for while his guilt might have slept "tongueless in brass" (V.iii.113), his intellectual pride customarily exceeds his cunning. Here is the essence of the cosmic joke that is played on Iago and Mosca, for by the necessity of his own nature, Vindice ends by tricking himself, having brought the expectations of others to nothing, he in turn finds that his own expectations of reward and admiration were chimerical.⁷⁷ Vindice's lack of awareness of his own guilt reflects the psychological inversion inherent in his view of himself, for despite his acute awareness of the weaknesses and vices of others, he reverses vice and virtue to accord with his own appetite for revenge. As an embodiment of vengeful passion, Vindice exemplifies the principle that evil does not know itself, he is as self-delusive in his corruption as the sensualists he destroys.

While we may sympathize with Vindice's situation, we recognize his actions as being villainously bizarre, and a contributing element to the general grotesquerie. Like Malevole, he is Stoic to the extent that he bides his time to seize "that bald madam, Opportunity" (I.1.55) by the forelock, and he uses his chances with a savage delight untempered by Stoic restraint. The violence of his actions exceeds that of Malevole's revenge, yet his evident relish is little different in quality. The means may differ, but the motives and emotions are much the same. Momentarily believing his plan to avenge himself on Lussuriosso has failed, Vindice's remorse reveals his passionate desire to gratify his appetite for blood:

Ah, the fly-flop of vengeance beat 'em to pieces! Here was the sweetest occasion, the fittest hour, to have made my revenge familiar with him: show him the body of the duke his father, and how quaintly he died like a politician, in hugger-mugger, made no man acquainted with it; and in catastrophe, slain him over his father's breast, and--O, I'm mad to lose such a sweet opportunity.

(V.i.14-20)

Vindice has staged an elaborate scenario, grotesque in the extreme. In the same way that others prepare festive tables, laden to indulge their gluttony, Vindice prepares a feast of vengeance for himself, and his feast of anticipation has been no less exquisite. His preparations are accompanied by a schoolboyish levity, manifesting a perverse glee at the cleverness of his prank: "So, so, he leans well; take heed you wake him not" (V.i.1).⁷⁸ While Malevole has a fascination with the vices he observes, Vindice goes further in giving free reign to his imagination, enjoying vicariously the prospect of the old duke's secret lust that will never see fulfilment;⁷⁹ yet, always the exhibitionist, Vindice desires as much to be seen as perfect in his villainy, by ensuring that his victim is fully apprised of his father's ignominious end before he, too, is murdered. Like the Cardinal, and like Malevole, Vindice considers himself revenged only if the victim is fully aware of his fate, is made to suffer, and is killed while his soul is without redemptive grace. Yet Vindice is perhaps even more single-minded in his desire for the act of revenge itself as the source of his gratification, and there is little to suggest that the conditions he contrives result primarily from his desire to see his victim's soul damned.

In the same way that Malevole's motives are mixed in his attempted seduction of Maria for Mendoza, Vindice's attempt to subvert Castiza's innocence by corrupting Gratiana is far too effective in its persuasive-

ness, and far too much a source of satisfaction for him, to be dismissed as mere sham. As in Malevole's case, we are constrained to believe that Vindice would have pursued the prostitution of his sister to a disastrous conclusion, had his moral surgery on Gratiana failed; yet his success in tempting her in the first place gives him little reason to rejoice, like that afforded Malevole by his recognition of Maria's virtue.

An irony that does not seem to have been noticed hitherto is that every reversal of events--Vindice's temporary belief that Lussuriosso will appear at his father's trysting place accompanied by courtiers, Gratiana's repentance, and finally the fortuitous murders the Duke's sons perpetrate on each other--is an opportunity for Vindice to alter his aims. Yet Gratiana's conversion has no effect on him except to feed his perverse pride; the fancied hitch in his plan to murder Lussuriosso deters him not at all, and the sons' murders serve only as a prelude to Vindice's own gloating admission of guilt. In this sense, the play is a history of Vindice's missed "occasions", unlike Malevole, who restrains his passion sufficiently to be able to read and understand "heaven's imposed conditions" (*The Malcontent*, V.vi.143), Vindice persists as doggedly as Faustus, whose very blood congeals as warning. While, as Muriel Bradbrook points out, the play's narrative may be seen as a "series of *peripeteia*, representing contrasts between earthly and heavenly vengeance . . . and justice,"⁸⁰ Vindice's course, with all its dramatic reversals, has a single blind direction, equally representative of his mistakenly human concept of justice, and of a higher reckoning which is ultimately just. Perhaps Vindice persistently overreaches Fortune because his world, unlike that of Malevole, is decadent to the extent that corruption is

unrelieved by any survival of virtue, other than that which Vindice himself can fan into life in his mother.

Vindice and his society (with the possible exception of Castiza) are so thoroughly corrupted that they do not pose the problems of interpretation to be found in *The Malcontent*. Unlike Malevole, who only goads his enemies to self-revelation and public dishonour, Vindice is himself an agent of death. Vindice is as aware of his role as a revenger as Tamburlaine, the "scourge of God," but his brand of *hubris* never reaches such heights of grandeur. His announcement of his role to Lussuriosso occurs, appropriately, while he masquerades as a debased and embittered scholar; it is equally indicative of Vindice's character that he chooses to enlighten Lussuriosso on the meaning of "Vindice," when he knows that he can enjoy a private joke with himself. Lussuriosso expects Vindice to be no more than a pander's assassin, and although his later revenge makes him something more than that, his character remains prosaic. In the sense that Vindice is an instrument of ultimate justice, he may be seen symbolically as a nemesis figure and an agent of good; yet seen as a dramatic character, he reveals the pettiness, self-deception, and intellectual arrogance typical of the villainous subordinate. His unnatural position of subordination, like that of Malevole, becomes his proper place, as he extinguishes what virtue and nobility he has, in pursuing his destructive aims.

Like Malevole's disguise as a malcontent, Vindice's successive masks, first as Piato, then as "himself," Piato's railing brother, reveal what Vindice actually becomes, at least as much as they conceal his accustomed identity. Like Malevole, he is the pander he pretends to

be, and he is also the railing, cynical assassin whose role he adopts; it may be that Vindice has a sardonic awareness of what he becomes,⁸¹ as his original character as an honest malcontent takes on progressive corruption, until he joins the society he so despises. As L. G. Salingar points out, it is in this way that Vindice may be seen to resemble Bosola, who functions both as villain and critic.⁸² While Vindice's masks of villainy conceal his identity, they also are symbols of his transformation, Vindice the critic's visual expressions of self-contempt.

If Lussuriosso and his family are responsible for Vindice's corruption as symbolized in his disguises, the reverse is true as well; having become Piato the pander, Vindice, like Malevole, abets vice to further its destruction of itself. Ironically, Lussuriosso and the old Duke have persecuted Vindice's father, only to create a demonic tempter in Vindice, who will destroy them. Lussuriosso, characterizing himself as the demon who "enters" Vindice by tempting him with gold (I.iii.89) to procure Castiza, is unaware that the man whom he believes he corrupts for the first time is the same whom he and the old Duke have already created their familiar. The exchange of gold and words has overtones of a perverse sacrament,⁸³ by which villainous subordinate and master are bound to each other, and committed to their mutual destruction after the manner of Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores, Othello and Iago, Vasques and Hippolita, and Malevole and Mendoza.

Vindice's disguise as the cynical scholar affords him the opportunity to rail with license, much as Malevole does as court fool; similarly, Vindice's railing may provide him an outlet, not only for his frustration at the corruption of which he has become part, but also for his vengeful

passion, which appears more obsessive than Malevole's. Vindice's society is easily fooled by his disguises, for its members are obsessed with outward show that conceals an underlying bleakness and sterility. The world is inside out; the controlling metaphors are of lifeless forms lacking inner substance, and the old Duke himself is a microcosm of the social, natural, and moral dimensions. "Dry" with age, the Duke is a "marrowless," "parched" and "juiceless luxur" who has reduced his victim Gloriana to his own likeness, a "shell of death" (I.1.15). It is ironic that there is so little to choose in principle between Vindice's *memento mori* and the Duke, for while the lifelessness of the former is an ambivalent symbol of purity and an object of nearly sexual fascination for Vindice, the old Duke and the corruption he embodies are no less Vindice's "study's ornament" (I.1.15). Vindice, like the society that has made him a revenger, reverses values, so that even sex and death appear to change places, and his lust for revenge is strongly tinged with sexual fascination that has as its focus Gloriana's skull,⁸⁴ and imagined images of secret lust and ravishment.

Like Vindice, who fills his spiritual void with lust for revenge, the Duke "would stuff the hollow bones with damn'd desires" (I.1.6); he and his family seek to fill a spiritual void with sensual delights, Lussuriosso lusts after Castiza, and the Duchess is incestuously attracted to the Duke's bastard Spurio. Like Pietro's court, described by Malevole in the metaphor of the pigeon house, the Duke's family is intent on creating illusory bowers of bliss, hells "rubb'd o'er with honey" (II.11.22), as Lussuriosso calls Vindice's blandishments to obtain Castiza for him. The atmosphere is thick with the cloying sweetness of remembered

and sought-after satiety, exemplified in the words of Spurio, a living testimonial to the old Duke's lechery, and the embodiment of the legacy of hate and corruption he has conferred on his other sons:

Faith, if the truth were known, I was begot
 After some gluttonous dinner, some stirring dish
 Was my first father: when deep healths went round,
 And ladies' cheeks were painted red with wine,
 Their tongues, as short and nimble as their heels,
 Uttering words sweet and thick.

(I ii 179-184)

The imagery of blood abounds in a multiplicity of contexts, suffusing the atmosphere as it flushes the cheeks of court whores, and possessing Vindice's mind in his madness for vengeance, here are sanguine temperaments ruled by erotic passion which manifests itself as both lust and hate. Ironically, Vindice's sexual fascination with the idea of revenge differs hardly at all from the Duchess' passion for Spurio, for the incestuous pair, the act of lust is motivated by their overriding desire for vengeance against the Duke (I ii.175-178).

Vindice's lust for revenge is as much a need to fill an inner void as are the other forms of gluttonous appetite at court. "O sweet, delectable, rare, happy, ravishing!" Vindice exclaims at the prospect of murdering the Duke (III.v.3), and Vindice gives free rein to an imagination both erotic and murderous, in visualizing the death tryst he has planned (III.v.11-16). Like the Duke, Vindice and Hippolito are hollow men, and they fill their spiritual void with gleeful anticipation of blood revenge in the same way that the old Duke makes his very marrow of "damn'd desires" (I.i.6). For them, as for all the others except Castiza and Antonio, evil appears to compensate for the absence of good. Vindice yearns for a revenge that "murders quit-ment," becoming "tenant to

tragedy" (I.i.39-40), and the brothers' wrongs are "for one scabbard fit" (I.i.57); Hippolito tells Vindice that Lussuriosso has tried "by policy to open and unhusk" him (I.i.69), but he has dissembled, keeping his thoughts "up in houses" (I.i.72). All of these images are of space stuffed with secret corruption. Filled with vengeful lust, the brothers are intent on murder as a corrective for the absence of positive virtue in others; not merely those who have persecuted them, but "fat folks" in general (I.i.45).⁸⁵ Convinced of the justice of his cause, Vindice never considers that he may suffer from the same deficiency, although his speeches reveal everywhere an emptiness in him which he fills first with anticipation, and eventually with gratification of his blood lust.⁸⁶

The Duke's psychology, which takes evil for its good, gives the currency of reality to external forms, while rejecting substance; thinking of honour as reputation, he never associates it with inner worth. Upon being informed of Junior's murderous rape of Antonio's wife, the Duke's concern is not with the bloody stain on the youth's virtue, but with the inkstains that destroy reputations (I.ii.1-10); in the same way that D'Amville (*The Atheist's Tragedy*) believes that immortality is to be won through his progeny, the Duke takes public reputation as the source of either eternal life or eternal death. Immortality therefore is for him a simple matter of stopping the mouths and pens of those who would reveal his family's crimes (I.ii.7-10). Unable to distinguish between outer form and inner substance, the Duke is easy prey for Vindice, whose "outward shape" and "inward heart" in his disguise as Piato appear to the Duke as if "cut out of one piece" (III.iv.10-12). The Duke's misunderstanding is, of course, also ironically correct. "Piato's"

inner corruption is there for the Duke to see, but he is blinded by lust, and sees only the prospect of sensual delight the pander offers.

Gratiana similarly mistakes the form of honour for its substance, or at least she chooses to do so when she has been corrupted by Vindice, and she sets about giving Castiza a lesson:

Dishonorable act!--Good honorable fool,
That wouldst be honest 'cause thou wouldst be so,
Producing no one reason but thy will.
And 'tas a good report, prettily commended,
But pray, by whom? mean people, ignorant people,
The better sort cannot abide it.

(II.ii.142-147)

Gratiana's inverted judgment takes Castiza's virtue, a quality grounded in reason, as the product of mere self-will, and represents her own greed as the reasoned basis for her argument; in this topsy-turvy world,⁸⁷ those of low station hold intrinsic worth to have substance, while their "betters" show their hollowness by ascribing value only to appearances.

As emptied of good as the others, Gratiana is vulnerable to evil's inroads when Vindice adopts the role of tempter. Vindice's motives, like those of Malevole in a similar circumstance, are mixed. Forced to act as Castiza's pander, he is placed in a situation requiring him to play out his assumed role, or to risk compromising his disguise at the possible expense of his revenge, and even his life; and like Malevole, he finds himself administering a test of virtue,⁸⁸ which he is desperately afraid his mother and sister will fail. When Gratiana capitulates virtually without a struggle, Vindice's aside, "Not, I hope, already?" (II.i.104) sounds his dismay, for if he has betrayed her in offering temptation she has perpetrated a far greater betrayal of him in providing him with final evidence of virtue's weakness. Yet for all Vindice's

trepidation that Gratiana will succumb, he pursues his task with a vigour and perverse relish that show him to be at least as fascinated as repelled by the passions he engenders, and by the prospect of Castiza's prostitution.⁸⁹ One senses that Vindice indulges in an incestuous eroticism, both in exploiting his mother's weakness, and in entertaining the prospect of Castiza's fall. Perverted in his instincts by his consuming blood lust, he displays the same unnatural sexuality as that which draws Spurio and the Duchess to each other, yet the voyeuristic nature of Vindice's fascination is reminiscent of the fascinated loathing exhibited by Vasques (*'Tis Pity*). Like Iago and De Flores, Vindice has a perversely sexual obsession with his victims.

He effects a demonic possession of Gratiana, in the same way that Lussuriosso "enters" him, so that his promise of "angels" is heavy with studied irony (II i.88).⁹⁰ Transformed by avarice, she elicits Castiza's incredulous outburst, "Why, are you she?" (II i.162), Gratiana has changed, like the world itself, from "one shape into another" (I.ii.163). Vindice has in effect consummated a repetition of the perverse sacrament he earlier undertook with Lussuriosso; given sight of devils disguised as golden angels, Gratiana is converted by Vindice's spirit entering her.⁹¹ So Vindice's scornful comment, ". . . in that shell of mother breeds a bawd" (IV.iv.10) perhaps contains the irony of loathing self-recognition. Vindice has the same diabolical power over his weak mother that the Cardinal exercises over his king (*The Cardinal*); it is the power of enchantment which Gratiana acknowledges together with her contrition: ". . . no tongue but yours could have bewitched me so" (IV.iv.34).

The themes of prostitution and rape are paralleled in Vindice's description of a landscape reflecting the extent of social decay, purportedly an Italian scene, but one clearly to be identified with Jacobean England.⁹² The rape of the countryside by enclosure, and its prostitution by ruthless profiteers and speculators, closely parallel the murderous rapes perpetrated by the Duke and Junior, and Vindice's own efforts to procure Castiza for Lussuriosso; it is the success of the new economic elite who have usurped the old order which Vindice cites in his attempt to persuade Castiza to follow Gratiana, whom he accuses of "usurping" the title of mother (IV.iv.9). If avarice usurps virtue, and if some transformed being masks as his mother, surely, reasons Vindice, Castiza could effect a similar inversion of moral norms to good advantage in giving herself to Lussuriosso:

Who'd sit at home in a neglected room,
Dealing her short-liv'd beauty to the pictures,
That are as useless as old men, when those
Poorer in face and fortune than herself
Walk with a hundred acres on their backs,
Fair meadows cut into foreparts?--O,
It was the greatest blessing ever happened to woman,
When farmers' sons agreed and met again,
To wash their hands and come up gentlemen.
The commonwealth has flourish'd ever since:
Lands that were meet by the rod, that labour's spar'd,
Tailors ride down, and measure 'em by the yard.
Fair trees, those comely foretops of the field,
Are cut to maintain head-tires--much untold.
All thrives but Chastity, she lies a-cold.

(II i 208-222)

The theme of Vindice's perverse argument is a justification of the old order's disinheritance by the *nouveau riche*.⁹³ The scions of the burgeoning new order are of doubtful parentage, a condition relating them symbolically to unregenerate villainous subordinates who, like Satan himself, have disavowed their parentage, or by some undefined

constraint of necessity, are beyond parental affection. These "farmers' sons" who "wash their hands" to effect their transformation as "gentlemen," deny their origins, and enter a state of moral bastardy as real as its literal embodiment in Junior. Yet unlike Junior, these new "gentlemen" lose their first condition purposely, in order to win an inheritance, the patrimony of others that never was rightfully theirs.

This presumptuous new order is reminiscent of the Seven Deadly Sins in *Dr. Faustus*, who proclaim proudly the baseness of their origins or lack of parentage (II.ii.112-160), reflecting Faustus' own folly in ignoring his God's right to disinherit a son who disavows him (I.i.31). Like De Flores, whose uncertain parentage seems somehow related to a disinheritance both literal and spiritual, and Mosca, whose fallen condition seems to proceed from some sort of expulsion, the members of the inverted new order rise in fortune as they fall from grace, corrupting and destroying goodness.⁹⁴ Vindice is both victimized and corrupted through his loss of patrimony, so that he is not only fallen in fortune, but becomes as spiritually unregenerate as his persecutors. He seeks to remedy his condition, but only continues his spiritual descent; like Mosca, he learns to "rise and stoop almost together" as he undergoes a series of protean metamorphoses, leading finally to both spiritual and physical death.

Vindice's persuasive argument in favour of prostitution as an analogy of social inversion and agrarian opportunism contains blatant fallacies of the sort used by the Cardinal to appease Rosaura. The rhetorical blunders are so evident that they function as denials implicit in the argument, much as Mephistophilis' diversions for Faustus contain a warning

for minds less susceptible to the promptings of appetite. Castiza is to be prostituted like the land, and while Vindice promises her jewels for her forehead, he describes the destruction by agrarian prostitution of the "fair trees, those comely foretops of the field"⁹⁵ Vindice ends his argument with an equally self-defeating statement:

Lose but a pearl, we search and cannot brook it,
But that once gone, who is so mad to look it?
(II.i.230-231)

The pearl, immortalized in the medieval religious poem of that name as a symbol of the soul and of purity, in all likelihood held strong associations for a Renaissance audience, and to abandon pursuit of the purity whose loss, by Vindice's own admission, is unendurable, would evidently contradict common sense.

This absence of rationality is a signification of an absence of grace and virtue, the "spark of heavenly intellectual fire within", as Gratiana calls it (IV.iv.118).⁹⁶ Grace has departed from the world, and is thought of only as a bawd's name (I.iii.16), and as an ironically incongruous term of address for the Duke who is "without Grace" (I.ii.111). "Faith" has become simply a hollow exclamation, and positive virtue hardly exists. Admittedly, Castiza defends her chastity vigorously, even to the extent that she becomes physically aggressive (II.i.31), and shouts her defiance of both Vindice and Gratiana, yet chastity alone is a negative virtue. Moreover, Castiza's later speech of submission to Gratiana's will raises some doubt as to whether she only tests her mother.⁹⁷ She claims so only after the sincerity of Gratiana's contrition becomes evident in her avowals that "tears salt enough to taste of Grace" (IV.iv.54) have ended her spiritual aridity.

It seems likely that Castiza is subverted by Vindice in the same way that Lussuriosso has subverted him. Vindice tests mother and daughter, and appears to be ready to pursue his end to the limit of their weakness; similarly, Castiza tests her mother, but were her mother to fail the test and show her repentance to be short-lived, Castiza's despair of virtue's survival would result in her prostitution. In this respect, brother and sister resemble Malevole; Castiza's continued chastity, and Vindice's relinquishing of his role as pander are wholly dependent on their perception of virtue in Gratiana, in the same way that Malevole's spiritual renewal depends on Maria's moral strength.

Unlike Malevole, Vindice does not undergo a faith-affirming transformation at the sight of virtue. He is no longer present when Castiza appears to capitulate to Gratiana's demands, so that he never has cause to suspect his sister's moral strength. But Castiza's angry rejection of his persuasions does not seem to have the morally salubrious effect that a similar experience had on Malevole. As a bawd, Vindice expresses sardonically his alienation and self-contempt, which is itself a reflection of his mother's corruption:

O, I'm in doubt
 Whether I'm myself or no!--

 Who shall be saved when mothers have no grace?
 (IV.iv 24-27)

Yet her contrition does not engender self-recognition in Vindice. Rather, his failure as a pander, and hence the failure of his disguise's usefulness, prompts him simply to exchange one mask for another, in becoming an embittered scholar. Having acted as a tempter like Malevole, he saves his victim from the evil he has spawned, only to assume a further guise

in abetting evil.

Vindice's transformation to become a railing malcontent appears to proceed primarily from his being denied a glimpse of maternal virtue that is wholly unequivocal, Gratiana's conversion is more an occasion for Vindice's self-congratulatory pride in his competence as a tempter who can manipulate his victim in any direction, than it is an opportunity for his own conversion. So Vindice's response is an expression of unpleasant pride. Like Mosca and Vasques, he has the consummate actor's vanity, preening himself on his dual role as devil's advocate and redeemer, and enjoying his audience's applause with indecent pleasure: "You make me proud on't" (IV iv 90). Vindice's enjoyment differs not at all in its quality from that which he derives from his "wittily carried" revenge on the Duke; naive in his vanity,⁹⁸ he solicits Antonio's praise in order to achieve the same gratification of his exhibitionistic urge afforded earlier by Gratiana.

Like Castiza's virtue, Antonio's goodness is essentially passive, and his avoidance of guilt lies in his inaction. He is dramatically undistinguished and unimportant, reflecting virtue's impotence in his corrupt society, he accedes to the ducal throne by default, after Lussuriosso and his brothers have destroyed themselves with the help of Vindice and Hippolito. Antonio's prime qualification for office appears to be that he has avoided sharing in the burden of guilt assumed by those who clear the way for him. Tourneur's pessimism is evident in his portrayal of a society in which the only surviving virtue is negative, and in which vengeful passion appears to be the only corrective for evil.

Even though the final event, Antonio's pronouncement of the brothers' doom, is a positive action not grounded in passion, and even though passionless revenge as duty may be seen as justifiable,⁹⁹ the act requires Antonio to assume blood guilt in some measure, a difficulty Malevole avoids by exercising clemency. There is a strong quality of ambivalence in Antonio's final words, which show him to be not merely a just ruler, but in some sense Pilate's unfortunate antetype: "Pray heaven their blood may wash away all treason" (V.iii.127). Similarly, Vindice and Hippolito are in a way sacrificial scapegoats who assume the guilt of mankind, and their execution is the final event in a rite of purification. But the cleansing is incomplete, and the justice is imperfect; Antonio's motive in passing sentence is one of self-interest, for he has good reason to fear that the brothers' next treasonous action will be directed against him.¹⁰⁰ The ultimate irony, pointing up Tourneur's awareness of the inadequacy of human justice, is Antonio's sentencing of the brothers for the wrong murder,¹⁰¹ so that the joke Vindice plays on himself¹⁰² is to be seen as part of the larger mockery which humanity perpetrates on itself in its vain attempt to emulate an ultimate moral order for the sake of self-preservation. Paradoxically, the brothers' destinies are worked out in obedience to a higher necessity, which uses the randomness of blundering human justice ultimately to its own purpose.¹⁰³

The "heavy season" (V.iii.126) that eventually passes with Antonio's judgment on the revengers culminates in a dance of death,¹⁰⁴ a time of revels during which evil is in the ascendant, and is obscured from the participants' views by its appearance as good. Like the "vicious minute"

of Junior's rape and murder of Antonio's wife, this moral winter is a time of "the height of revels," when music is "hard loudest," and "courtiers busiest" (V.i.38-39). Revelry conceals reality, and outward show masks sterility and death, "baths of milk" bring a superficial beauty to "superfluous outsides" while infants starve, and the revellers indulge themselves with "music, perfumes, and sweetmeats" (III.ii.83-96).

Unlike the somewhat more orderly masque scene in *The Malcontent* which serves symbolically as a prelude to a reassertion of order, the scene in *The Revenger's Tragedy* is suggestive of a final convulsion, a consummation of chaos in the fullness of time, when the inverted world of illusion arrives at its moment of self-destruction and terrifying self-revelation. Vindice describes the revels as "forgetful feasts" (III.v.90), for with the absence of grace, a Protean world is metamorphosed to become a dream of forgetting, as Castiza has learned:

The world's so changed, one shape into another,
It is a wise child now that knows her mother.
(II.i.162-163)

The perverse artificiality in this disordered world of frenetic revelry is exemplified in the reversal of day and night. Torchlight makes "an artificial noon" (I.iv.27) like the "artificial shine" of a "woman's bought complexion" (I.i.21-22) at the time when the forces of lust and death are at their strongest; Spurio exclaims on entering the Duke's chamber and finding Lussuriosso, "is the day out o' th' socket, / That it is noon at midnight?" (II.iii.44-45), and Vindice himself lures the expectant Duke "wherein 'tis night at noon" (III.v.14-19).¹⁰⁵

The process of time's renewal begins on the night following Gratiana's conversion to virtue, a night with a new moon,¹⁰⁶ like the ladies

of the court who are "great with laughter" (V.i.39). Now approaches the "present minute" (I.iii.26) towards which Vindice, through his transformations, has moved like inexorable time itself, indeed, he is personified as time by Hippolito (I.iii.21-26), and like Mephistophilis, Bosola, and Malevole, he functions both as agent of evil, and embodiment of time's inevitable movement by which all things, even evil and death, are brought to fruition at their predetermined moment.¹⁰⁷ The ingenuous Ambitioso speaks with unwitting irony in voicing his anticipation of "this time of revels," when "tricks may be set afoot" (V.i.92-93), unaware that the moment of damnation approaches, overseen by Vindice, a personification of "the Judas of the hours" (I.iii.70). This festive season's license has held sway already, in the reign of chaos that has seen the "trick" (III.v.73) to free Junior end in confusion and death. The festivity celebrating Lussuriosso's accession is itself a deception, the fond noble who observes sententiously that "time hath several falls" welcomes the revels, believing that "griefs lift up joys, feasts put down funerals" (V.i.153-154).

During this final and grandest of masques, Vindice, the personification of evil's self-consuming appetite, puts off his mask, destroys his antagonists, and ultimately himself. There is compound irony in his earlier comment to Hippolito that he must kill himself (V.i.6); thinking merely to indulge in a play of appearances, he first "kills" himself as a bawd, to rise again as a murderous malcontent, then he "kills" himself spiritually, so that Lussuriosso speaks an ironic truth when he calls the as yet undiscovered Vindice a "malevolent slave" (V.i.91). When Vindice gloats, "H'as lost; he may" (V.i.94), he displays his delusion,

for Lussuriosso is a victor, in having reduced Vindice to his own condition as a natural slave. While Lussuriosso's discovery that the corpse of "Piato" is really the dead Duke affords Vindice boundless enjoyment, his murder of the Duke involves the death of his own soul, and leads to his physical death.

As an agent of good, Vindice destroys himself because he is agonizingly aware of vice in others, while remaining blind to the evil nature of his own vengeful passion. Like Malevole, he seems to have an intuitive awareness of his corruption, as mirrored in others, so that to destroy corruption is to destroy himself. Sinning because he is sinned against, Vindice believes to the last that he and Hippolito are "innocent villains" (I.iii.167).¹⁰⁸ Tourneur's clear representation of Vindice's misunderstanding underscores the difficulty we encounter in conceiving of Malevole as a "virtuous Machiavel." The contradiction inherent in the terms defies resolution, if guilt and innocence are to be judged in terms of motive as well as act, except that Malevole does not shed blood, and that he is able to gratify his arrogance in shows of vengeful clemency, there is little to distinguish between the two protagonists. If Vindice is the greater villain, it is only for the reason that his intuitions about destiny are less astute, and because the extent of his society's corruption exceeds even that of Malevole's Genoa.

FOOTNOTES

¹A just reward for my misdeeds my death
Doth plain declare.
(*Cambises*, ll. 1165-1166)

²For the Church's traditional position on revenge, see the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 15 vols. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), XIV, 599-600. For Elizabethan attitudes and laws concerning revenge, see Fredson Bowers, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 12-19.

³See John Marston, *The Malcontent*, ed., M. L. Wine (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964). Wine has modernized the spelling and punctuation for the most part, and I have done so where he has not, while taking care not to alter meaning or emphasis. I disagree with Wine's judgment in only a single, but rather crucial, instance. (See note 64.)

⁴Samuel Schoenbaum claims Malevole's machinations "would be appropriate for a machiavellian villain," and that Malevole is "a strangely tortured individual whose activities are often perversely unpleasant." See S. Schoenbaum, "The Precarious Balance of John Marston," *PMLA*, LXVII (1952), 1069-1078. Similarly, Ejner Jensen shows Malevole to be "stretched and distorted by the tensions of his self-created role," and given to sublimating his vengeful tendencies through vile language. Yet Jensen appears to avoid the problem of Malevole's guilt by suggesting that Malevole is merely a mask for the moral Altofront. See E. Jensen, "Theme and Imagery in *The Malcontent*," *SEL*, X (1970), 367-374. On the other hand, Gustav Cross sets about refuting the view that Malevole is a tormented soul, fascinated by lust. See G. Cross, "The Retrograde Genius of John Marston," *REL*, II (1961), 19-27. Also, Michael Higgins suggests that Malevole is a "philosophical hero with whom the author enthusiastically identifies himself." See M. Higgins, "The Convention of the Stoic Hero as Handled by Marston," *MLR*, XXXIX (1944), 338-346. G. L. Geckle takes a similar view, in interpreting Malevole as a model Stoic and Christian hero. See G. L. Geckle, "Fortune in Marston's *The Malcontent*," *PMLA*, LXXXVI (1971), 202-209. John Scott Colley simply calls Malevole the product of Marston's "moral and artistic confusion," blaming the author for failing to resolve the ethical problems he presents. Colley's view of the artist's function seems hardly supportable. See J. S. Colley, "John Marston's Theatrical Drama," Salzburg: *Jacobean Drama Studies*, 1974.

⁵See Cyril Tourneur, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed., L. J. Ross (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

⁶See Higgins, p. 340.

⁷E.g., Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), p. 12, and Allardyce Nicoll, ed., *The Works of Cyril Tourneur* (1930. Rpt., New York: Russell & Russell, 1963).

⁸William Slights, for example, claims that Malevole's "intentions are beneficent." See W. W. Slights, "Elder in a Deform'd Church: The Function of Marston's Malcontent," *SEL*, XII (1973), 360-373. Characteristic of those critics who regard Malevole as a moral hero, Slights appears not to distinguish between motive, method, and result. Samuel Schoenbaum, on the other hand, admits that Malevole's methods "would be appropriate for a Machiavellian villain," and he believes Malevole's "hideous imagination" to be Marston's, as well (p. 1070). G. L. Geckle calls Malevole a "man who trusts in God, avoids vice, and manage(s) to transcend Fortune by trusting providence" (p. 206). The critics cited here are typical of those who view Malevole as heroic, because they see him as the author's ideal projection of self. Paul Zall goes further, in implying that Malevole is primarily an exemplar of "love idealized as virtue." See P. M. Zall, "John Marston, Moralist," *ELH*, XX (1953), 186-193.

⁹Geckle characterizes Malevole as a "Stoic Christian hero," and claims that *The Malcontent* is "both in theme and structure, essentially moral and Christian" (pp. 206-207). Similarly, Zall believes that Marston "hewed close to lines of conventional morality that were essential commonplaces" (p. 1075).

¹⁰Schoenbaum asserts on the basis of external evidence that Marston had a similar fascination with vice and with bodily functions (pp. 1070, 1073, 1074).

¹¹Schoenbaum describes Malevole's psychological torture of Pietro with visions of Pietro's wife's lasciviousness as Machiavellian, and Geoffrey Aggeler, in claiming that Malevole's plan for revenge against Pietro is "truly diabolical," sees Malevole as "more Machiavellian than Stoic." Aggeler further claims that the punishment Pietro intends is "far more terrible than blood revenge." See G. D. Aggeler, "Stoicism and Revenge in Marston," *ES*, LI (1970), 507-517.

¹²The heroine of *Sophonisba*, for example, is even less fortunate than Maria, and must pay for her virtue with her life.

¹³Altofront's original situation as a ruler, expressed in the imagery of the circle (I iv 11-13), parallels the virtually edenic perfection of the Duchess of Malfi's relationship with Antonio, expressed with similar imagery.

¹⁴Othello refers to himself as "egregiously an ass," as a result of Iago's insinuations. Malevole, like Iago, is bent on reducing his master to a state of animal passion.

¹⁵In view of this evidence, I find it difficult to accept Geckle's assertion that Malevole "chooses to combat Fortune with prudence and, ultimately, spiritual devotion" (Geckle, p. 206). I find it equally difficult, on the basis of this evidence, to accept Cross's view that Malevole's revenge "is aimed not at the death of Pietro, but at putting

him the way of repentance, and, ultimately, salvation" (Cross, p. 23). If that were Malevole's purpose, we would have to credit him with a foreknowledge not suggested by the text. Malevole's actions seem more consonant with Schoenbaum's view that they are "often perversely unpleasant" (Schoenbaum, p. 1069). Aggeler comments (rightly, I think), that "Malevole plans to goad (Pietro) into the additional crime of murdering Mendoza, . . . after which Pietro's conscience will drive him to total despair and damnation of his soul" (Aggeler, p. 513).

¹⁶Arnold Davenport, ed., *The Poems of John Marston* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1961), p. 95.

¹⁷See Davenport, p. 16, n. 3 for a summary of comments by C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and J. Peter, all of whom take a censorious view of Marston's invective. Peter finds similar passages by Tourneur as much more acceptable, because Tourneur maintains a greater distance than Marston. See John Peter, "John Marston's Plays," *Scrutiny*, XVII (1950), 132-153; and "The Revenger's Tragedy Reconsidered," *ETC*, VI (1956), 131-142. While Lewis, Eliot, and Peter attack Marston for prurience, insincerity, and lack of conviction, Davenport believes, much as I do, that Marston is "in much the same situation as his own Malcontent" (pp. 16-17).

¹⁸See Philip J. Finkelpearl, *John Marston of the Middle Temple* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 178-194. Although I do not subscribe to Finkelpearl's view, his concept of "virtuous Machiavellianism" contributed significantly to my counter-argument.

¹⁹Robert Ornstein describes the social world represented in Jacobean drama as one in which "the Machiavels are not isolated villains." Rather, it is a world in which "the politicians 'belong' . . ." Ornstein points out that "the norm of politics is no longer conceived . . . as the well governed state; it is the Machiavelian jungle in which the fittest survive" (Ornstein, pp. 27-28).

²⁰The extent to which Malevole's role as a malcontent is feigned is problematic, in the tradition of earlier revengers, whose madness is both feigned and real, e.g., Hercules (*Hercules Furens*), Hieronimo (*The Spanish Tragedy*), and the protagonists of *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*. Christian Kiefer further shows that the discordant elements in Malevole's nature, and his behaviour in howling and railing in indignation fit Robert Burton's description of the melancholy man. See Christian Kiefer, "Music and Marston's *The Malcontent*," *SP*, LI (1954), 163-171.

²¹Geoffrey Aggeler asserts that Marston "reconciles revenge with Stoic principles" because "the revenge does not involve the shedding of blood" (Aggeler, p. 512). I find this view difficult to accept. As *Hamlet* and *The Cardinal* show, the revenger saw his revenge as no revenge at all, if the victim's damnation was not assured. In keeping with Stoic thought, the matter of bloodletting and physical death were regarded as relatively unimportant, compared to the requirement that the victim should suffer, and should be aware of his impending fate. Except when

Malevole "tents" Pietro, his words and actions clearly are designed to lead his victim to damnation, while making him suffer.

²²Malevole's self-interest is characteristic of the Senecan brand of other-worldliness, referred to by F. L. Lucas as "egoistic Stoicism." See F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 56.

²³Paul Zall distinguishes between the types of love he believes Marston was out to portray: Love idealized as virtue, natural affection, and lust.

²⁴Anna Motto shows Seneca's self-admitted philosophical dilemma in commenting on Epistle LVI, which deals with the problem of a man's achieving other-worldly tranquility, while plagued with the ambition to achieve it. See A. L. Motto, trans., *Seneca* (New York: Twayne, 1973).

²⁵John Peter reproves Marston on the grounds that Malevole promises a formidable revenge on Pietro, only to transfer his enmity to Mendoza, whom he simply dismisses. Peter asserts that "the conclusion was altogether too perfunctory to accord with what had gone before." See John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), pp. 237-254.

²⁶This Jacobean interest in avoidance of excess presented a philosophical problem which appears to be manifested in Malevole's character. Paul Zall points out, rightly, I think, that "Marston was faced with the problem of bridging the discrepancy between the Stoic element of apathy and the Christian elements of moderation . . ." (Zall, p. 193).

²⁷Cf. Hamlet's speech to the players. F. L. Lucas comments on the decline of Senecan excess on the Elizabethan stage (Lucas, pp. 60-72).

²⁸For the significance of music in *The Malcontent*, see Kiefer.

²⁹Malevole's invective may be seen as having ritualistic overtones. See Enid Welsford, *The Fool* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1935), p. 66. Also, the relationship between Malevole and Passarello is typical of the traditional relationship between an artificial fool and a natural fool (Welsford, p. 159).

³⁰Cf. Seneca's "On Clemency":

You suppose it a disability for kings to be deprived of free speech, which the humblest citizens enjoy. "That is servitude," you say, "not sovereignty." Have you not found out that sovereignty is ours and yours the servitude?

Moses Hadas, trans., *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967), p. 74.

³¹Malevole's phrase is a traditional commonplace, inviting our recognition of Bilioso as a microcosmic personification of the human condition. Cf. *The Castle of Perseverance*: Mankind refers to "my flesh, that stinking dunghill." Also, Robert Burton refers to the "muckhill of the world" (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, III, p. 417). By inference, Malevole may be seen as the world's soul, reduced to impotent complaint. Marston himself refers to the "foul filth" and "slime" of the world, which stop the conduits of grace (Satire VII, *The Scourge* . . .). For a discussion of this imagery, see A. Caputi, *John Marston, Satirist* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1961), pp. 67-68.

³²Metaphors of this sort, suggestive of outward show concealing inner corruption, were common. Cf. Hector's lines (*Troilus and Cressida*):

Most putrified core so fair without
Thy goodly armour thus hath cost thy life.
(V. vi. 1-2)

See also Seneca's "On Providence" (Hadas, p. 44):

Other men I (the god) have surrounded with spurious goods,
I have beguiled their empty minds, as it were, with a long
deceptive dream. I have adorned them with gold and silver
and ivory, but there is nothing good inside.

³³Cf. Seneca's "Tranquility" (Hadas, p. 193):

. . . the man you call slave spring from the same seed, . . .
dies like you. You can as easily conceive of him as a free
man as he can conceive you as a slave.

³⁴Seneca uses the analogy of the tide's ebb and flow in asserting that the wise man sees pattern in what to others appears "kaleidoscopic shifts of rise and fall" ("On Providence," Hadas, p. 29).

³⁵Cf. Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale" for the imagery of buckets as a metaphor for Fortune's flux.

³⁶I am indebted to Michael Best at the University of Victoria for directing my attention to the thematic importance of Malevole's role as a bawd.

³⁷The imagery suggests also a parodic transubstantiation, whereby through this perverse "sacrament," Malevole, like the host, becomes in the flesh what hitherto he merely has represented. The idea of "transformation" and metamorphosis accompanying corruption and commitment to evil was familiar to Tourneur as well. Tourneur's *The Transformed Metamorphosis* ends with Eliza's "retransformation" of society, similar to Maria's renewal of Malevole's awareness of virtue. See Nicoll, pp. 51-74.

³⁸The theme of testing feminine constancy and virtue was traditional and conventional. Cf. Thomas Dekker's *Patient Grissil*, Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale," and Boccaccio's

Decameron, Xx. The theme is parodied in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

³⁹On the basis of my analysis of Malevole's encounter with Maquerelle, I disagree with Geckle's view that "Providence ultimately overcomes Fortune" because Malevole "transcends Fortune" through his "trust in God and avoidance of vice." Moreover, Geckle claims this to be especially true by Act IV, in which, he believes, Malevole "expresses a more positive Christian position" (Geckle, p. 206). On the contrary, it seems to me that this is the very act in which Malevole becomes corrupted by momentarily foresaking his trust in Providence, and by embracing Fortune to gain his ends. It is in this episode that Schoenbaum's comment about "images of lively things besmirched and reviled" (Schoenbaum, p. 1040) seems to apply to Malevole's own soul.

⁴⁰Marston's poetry gives rather clear evidence that Marston identifies himself with his railing Cynic:

A man, a man, a kingdom for a man.
Why how now currish mad Athenian?
Thou cynic dog, see'st not the streets do swarm
With troops of men? No, no, for Circe's charm
Hath turned them all to swine.

("A Cynic Satire," *The Scourge of Villainy*, VII, ll. 1-5)

⁴¹Seneca expresses the idea implicit in the imagery of the "falling tower" (Hadas, p. 69):

. . . the motives (of ignoble rulers) are not stable and they totter with the frivolity that gave them birth.

⁴²Seneca comments in his epistle "On the Shortness of Life" (Hadas, p. 56):

. . . the man who puts all his time to his own uses . . . is neither impatient for the morrow nor afraid of it.

⁴³Cf. Seneca's "On Providence" (Hadas, p. 30):

. . . they (good men) should take whatever befalls in good part and turn it to advantage.

⁴⁴Cf. Shrift (*The Castle of Perseverence*).

⁴⁵Regardless of how one may rationalize Malevole's position, the nature of his crime is clear, even in Senecan terms. Atreus calls revenge a "seed which none shall e'er approve," for "a wrong is not avenged but by worse wrong" (*Thyestes*, II.i.21-25). Malevole, in furthering homicidal plots, appears to commit a "worse wrong" than Pietro, there is no hint that the usurpation involved murder.

⁴⁶Jensen points out that "Pietro's withdrawal from the world is motivated more by his weakness than by his sense of wrongdoing" (Jensen, p. 379).

⁴⁷This episode in particular prompts John Peter's criticism (see note 25). In expecting a more violent *dénouement*, Peter appears to overlook the fact that Malevole has accomplished precisely what he set out to do, Malevole evidently shares the Stoic conviction that the soul participates in pure substance, and that the flesh is a mere corrupted shadow of this greater reality. For Malevole to revenge himself on Pietro's flesh would be no revenge at all.

⁴⁸Malevole's "tenting" of Pietro seems designed to make vice repulsive, rather than to make virtue attractive. While the result in either case ultimately would be the same, Malevole's method reveals a cast of mind less Christian than Stoic, perhaps. Cf. Malevole's line, "I had rather follow a drunkard, and live by licking up his vomit . . ." (IV v. 65), and Seneca's, ". . . one slave wipes up the hawking, another crouches to take up the leavings of the drunks" ("On Slaves," Hadas, p. 192).

⁴⁹It is better for a prince to be feared than loved." For Machiavelli's *Maxims*, see C. V. Boyer, *The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 241.

⁵⁰Seneca describes kings lacking "noble endowments": Their "might gave them no pleasure, its inevitable ending terrified them" ("On the Shortness of Life," Hadas, pp. 67-69).

⁵¹It is difficult to square Malevole's aims, if he is purported to be a Stoic, with Thyestes' apothegm,

Great peace attends on humble circumstance;
He has a kingdom who can be content
Without a kingdom.

(*Thyestes*, III.1.471-473)

⁵²F. L. Lucas writes that "the would-be sympathetic characters (of Jacobean drama) have all the wooden inhumanity of genuine Stoics." Lucas perhaps overstates the case.

⁵³See Seneca's "On Clemency" (Hadas, p. 144). Cf. Seneca's view and the traditional Christian position, which holds that the motive for clemency is "a certain tenderness or consideration toward the offender" (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, III, 925).

⁵⁴E.g., Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes* (1431-1438), its source, Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum* . . ., and the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1550). While these works admittedly indulge in Christian moralizing, their primary purpose seems to be to illustrate how unwary and unwise princes may topple. By contrast, Thomas More's *Utopia*, Erasmus' *The Christian Prince*, and Elyot's *The Book Called the Governor* appear to contain a much greater concern with the common weal as a motive for sound rule.

⁵⁵See Seneca's "On Clemency" (Hadas, p. 44 ff.).

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵⁸Cf. *Measure for Measure*. Vincentio's display of majesty in dispensing justice and mercy is similarly coloured with condescending humour, but with perhaps somewhat more warmth of compassion and tolerance of human imperfection. See also note 51.

⁵⁹The imagery of the hunt, with the chaotic and dissonant sounds of dogs and horns, underscores Pietro's spiritual sickness and fear. These images, occurring before his moment of repentance and self-revelation, appear to be related to a long tradition of hunting scenes, always to be associated with madness and moral sterility; e.g., *Sir Orfeo*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

⁶⁰Ejner Jensen regards the centre of *The Malcontent's* pattern of images to be the fable of the tortoise and the eagle, which "has as its target . . . undeserved preferment" in this instance (Jensen, p. 367). Cf. Peregrine's flattery of Sir Politic Would-be, and Sir Pol's undignified end (*Volpone*).

⁶¹M. L. Wine comments: "Where deception rules, intrigue is the way of the world; and the imagery of the hunt or the chase reflects this topsy-turvy world of humanity preying on itself" (Wine, p. xix).

⁶²See note 22. Pietro's display of natural affection, compared to Altfront's coldly virtuous love, perhaps justifies to some degree Samuel Schoenbaum's belief that "there is little genuine characterization, because Marston had little understanding of or interest in people" (Schoenbaum, p. 1077).

⁶³Except in this instance of passing conjecture, I have attempted to avoid imputations, a rather futile pursuit that seems to have been a major preoccupation for quite a few Marston scholars.

⁶⁴I have chosen to accept the First Quarto variant, "conceal" (1.151, above), rather than the Third Quarto's "conceive." While the context allows a case to be made for either, I believe the First Quarto reading is more consistent with the direction of Marston's thought. John Finkelppearl (p. 192) points out that there is "no textual justification" for the emendation.

⁶⁵L. G. Salingar comments that "the complete degeneration of virtue is represented by placing the 'usurper's son' (I.1.26) on the same footing of sensuality as 'the upright man'." See L. G. Salingar, "The Revenger's Tragedy and the Morality Tradition," *Scrutiny*, XI (1938), 406.

⁶⁶Ross, p. xiv.

⁶⁷The question of authorship has yet to be resolved with certainty. For Middleton's possible authorship, see Ross, p. xiv, and Samuel Schoenbaum, "The Revenger's Tragedy and Middleton's Moral Outlook," *N&Q*, CXCVI (1951), 8-10. For Marston's and Tourneur's use of common sources, see Ross, pp. xix-xx, and L. G. Salingar, "The Revenger's Tragedy: Some Possible Sources," *MLR*, LX (1965), 3-12. Lawrence Ross shows transformation to be the "central theme" of *The Revenger's Tragedy* (Ross, p. xxvii), and the significance of images of metamorphosis has been noted. See Peter Lisca, "The Revenger's Tragedy: A Study in Irony," *PQ*, XXXVIII (1959), 242-251. Similarities of this sort lead Ross to determine *The Revenger's Tragedy's* earliest date as the spring of 1606, due to its dependence on Marston's work (Ross, p. xiii).

⁶⁸See Ross, p. xxi.

⁶⁹For summaries of critical opinion, see Ross, pp. xxiii-xxiv, B. J. Layman, "Tourneur's Artificial Noon: The Design of *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *MLQ*, XXXIV (1973), 20-35; Robert Ornstein, "The Ethical Design of *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *ELH*, XXI (1954), 81-93; and T. B. Tomlinson, "The Morality of Revenge: Tourneur's Critics," *EIC*, X (1960), 134-147.

⁷⁰B. J. Layman.

⁷¹In noting the quality of objective commentary in Vindice's complaints, Ross suggests Tourneur's debt to Jonson, as well as to the morality tradition (see Ross, pp. xvii, xxi). For similar views derived from a recognition of morality patterns and conventions, see John Peter, "The Revenger's Tragedy Reconsidered," *EIC*, VI (1956), 131-142; and L. G. Salingar, ". . . Morality Tradition," pp. 402-424.

⁷²See Inga-Stina Ekeblad, "An Approach to Tourneur's Imagery," *MLN*, LIV (1959), 495. Ekeblad refers to this scene in particular, in showing Vindice's role as moral commentator.

⁷³Cf. Vindice's description of the skull's "unsightly rings" which remain to be fingered, and the imagery of fingers and gloves in *The Changeling*, which has been seen as having sexual significance (Chapter 3, p. 119, n. 27).

⁷⁴Salingar defines these roles in showing analogies between *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *Hamlet*, *Volpone*, and *The Malcontent*. See Salingar, ". . . Some Possible Sources," note 89, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁵Layman, pp. 22, 26.

⁷⁶Cf. *Hamlet*. L. G. Salingar notes that Vindice regards all flesh as fraudulent as "the painting of a harlot," so that Gloriana's perfection exists only in her "unmasked" condition of death. She has "only her own nullity to bestow" (Salingar, ". . . The Morality Tradition," p. 424).

⁷⁷ Samuel Schoenbaum refers to the event as "the final, cosmic irony" (Schoenbaum, p. 206).

⁷⁸ Cf. Ithamore's propping up of Barnardine's corpse (*The Jew of Malta*, IV.ii.25).

⁷⁹ Robert Ornstein observes that Vindice "is aroused and revolted not by what is seen, but by what is imagined. . . . He is the peeping Tom turned moralist." Ornstein points also to Vindice's contemplation of Gloriana's skull (I.i.23-28) and even of night (II.ii.149-161) as evidence of an erotic imagination. See Robert Ornstein, "The Ethical Design of *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *ELH*, XXI (1954), 83-84.

⁸⁰ Muriel C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 165.

⁸¹ Peter Lisca points out Vindice's obsession with metamorphosis (Lisca, p. 46).

⁸² Salinger, ". . . the Morality Tradition," pp. 410-411.

⁸³ Lisca, p. 249.

⁸⁴ Salinger, ". . . the Morality Tradition," p. 424.

⁸⁵ Layman, p. 25.

⁸⁶ The recurrent images of hollowness reflect a cosmic principle expressed elsewhere by Tourneur. *The Transformed Metamorphosis* presents a metamorphosed world, wintry, sterile, chaotic, and hollow:

Th' olympic globe is now a hollow ball:
The huge concavity black Pluto's hall.
(11.48-49)

⁸⁷ Anna Motto notes the parallels relating the idea of inversion in Renaissance drama to Senecan drama: ". . . such a pervasive sense of nature overturned is the dominant artistic motif shaping the drama's form and course" (Motto, p. 88).

⁸⁸ Robert Ornstein points out the parallel themes of testing in *The Malcontent* (Ornstein, p. 89). See also note 38.

⁸⁹ See Layman, p. 22, and Tomlinson, p. 137.

⁹⁰ Peter Lisca comments on this passage that "angels, ostensibly agents of salvation, have become agents of damnation" (Lisca, p. 249). The "angels" which bring Gratiana so far from her proper self may be associated to Faustus' Bad Angel, and with its prototypes in the morality plays. Similarly, Gratiana's "possession" is reminiscent of the seven deadly sins which possess Mary Magdalene, and are exorcised by Christ (see *John* 20.1-18, and *Mary Magdalene*, Digby MS 130). Renaissance belief held demonic possession to be metaphysical as well as psychomachic. See

R. H. West, *The Invisible World* (New York: Octagon, 1969), n. 57, p. 223.

⁹¹Lawrence Ross notes Vindice's "diabolic possession" of Gratiana (Ross, p. xxv).

⁹²Salingar, " . . . the Morality Tradition," p. 412; and Ross, p. xxii. See also R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1926), pp. 140-142.

⁹³B. J. Layman regards the theme of disinheritance as central, a representation of "the lost patrimony of all mankind" (Layman, p. 27).

⁹⁴Chapter 2, p. 43. The subjectivity of mind reflected in the argument's similarity to the Cardinal's obscure rhetoric is manifested also in D'Amville's fallacious constructions when he argues for atheism (*The Atheist's Tragedy*, I.1.40 ff.).

⁹⁵Cf. John Donne's "The Sun Rising," for imagery relating woman to soil yielding riches, governed by a male sovereign. Donne's "To his Mistress" provides an example of the female anatomy described in terms of landscape.

The play's image pattern involves references to the forehead in a number of contexts, and reveals Tourneur's use of irony. Its wide range of meaning in the seventeenth century included ideas of reputation, shame, fortune, and appearance. The theme of cuckoldry is implicit also, as shown in Iago's taunting of Othello: "forelock" and "foretop" were closely associated in meaning (e.g., Vindice resolves to hold occasion "by the foretop" (I.1.100). Cf. Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (1586), intro. Frank Fieler (New York: Blom, 1967), p. 181. For the etymology of "forehead" and related terms, see *OED*, 5th edn.

In tracing the morality theme, L. G. Salingar notes the similarity of style between this entire seduction speech, Volpone's "Song to elia" and a similar passage in Medwall's *Nature*.

⁹⁶For the doctrine of the "Divine spark" as intellect (synteresis), see Caputi, p. 60.

⁹⁷See Ornstein, p. 91, n; and Peter, p. 141.

⁹⁸B. J. Layman refers to the Duke's death scene as "the shameless *coup de théâtre* of an exhibitionist" (Layman, p. 22).

⁹⁹Bowers, p. 54.

¹⁰⁰See Ross, p. xxvi, and Ornstein, p. 52.

¹⁰¹See Ross, p. xxvi.

¹⁰²The theme of mockery in Vindice's villainy is similar to that in *Othello* and *Volpone*. Also, see Ornstein p. 90.

¹⁰³ John Peter argues for Tourneur's perception of a Calvinistic determinism, and an ultimate moral order not seen by men. This view supports Muriel Bradbrook's view of a divine justice, as distinct from mortal justice. See Peter, pp. 131, 142; and Bradbrook, p. 65 ff. For Tourneur's Calvinism, see also J. M. S. Tompkins, "Tourneur and the Stars," *RES*, XXII (1946), 315-319, and Michael H. Higgins, "The Influence of Calvinistic Thought in Tourneur's *Atheist's Tragedy*," *RES*, XIX (1943), 255-262.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of the imagery of the Dance of Death in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, see Schoenbaum, pp. 203-206. For a history of the Dance of Death, see Welsford. The theme is, of course, pervasive as a dramatic convention in Renaissance drama.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Walter Hilton, *The Ladder of Perfection* (c. 1350) (Middlesex: Penguin, 1957), p. 170: "Beware of the devil who walks at noon, and who makes his false light appear to come from Jerusalem." Also see Layman for the significance of artificial light in *The Revenger's Tragedy*.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. similar imagery in *The Changeling*. Schoenbaum shows further connection between *The Changeling* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* in terms of character, he draws a parallel between De Flores' relationship with Beatrice-Joanna, and Vindice's relationship with Lussuriosso. See Samuel Schoenbaum, ". . . and Middleton's Moral Outlook."

¹⁰⁷ For Vindice's symbolic function as an embodiment of time, see Layman, p. 28.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Ornstein comments that, while "Vindice serves as Tourneur's moral chorus," his "moral perceptions are limited, and in the end, perverse" (Ornstein, p. 86).

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have shown the villainous subordinate in such disparate roles as Mephistophilis, a disembodied spirit, De Flores, a menial household retainer, and Malevole, a deposed ruler. The villainous subordinate's nature in every instance embodies his victim's destructive passion, and his rise in fortune always marks the ascendancy of irrational impulse in his master. These manifestations of a principle of demonic inversion have both psychological and metaphysical significance, and the villainous subordinate is a concrete expression of disorder which was seen in the Renaissance as an inherent universal principle wherever virtue was wanting.

I began this study with words spoken by Ithamore, a heathen slave, who, like his master, exists beyond the pale of moral society, but who also reflects society's departure from its Christian ideals. In Marlowe's day, a dramatist could write with the assumption that some discernible norm for a moral society existed. Whether Marlowe approved of the cosmic pattern he saw remains a vexed question; nowhere does he show a worthy Christian society, nor does he provide any assurance that his conception of divine order accords with men's notions of justice. Mephistophilis participates in Faustus' self-destruction, brought about initially because Faustus is graced with an insatiable intellect, and Guise used religion as a manipulative instrument by which to advance his perverse aims. Much the same principles inform Shakespeare's darker

tragedies; Iago's destruction of Othello seems to question man's capacity for certain knowledge, and the possibility for innocence and love to survive in an imperfect world.

The Massacre at Paris, *Dr. Faustus*, and *Othello* are dark with doubt. They were written in an age of confidence and optimism, yet they reveal an uncertainty and scepticism that finds its fullest expression in the drama of the late Jacobean and Caroline periods. It is perhaps paradoxical that an optimistic climate of thought fostered the growth of Elizabethan theatre, for the dramatic impulse also produced the villainous subordinate, who seems an expression of the uneasiness that also was present. Notably, the villainous subordinate is to be found almost exclusively in plays of sinister import like those cited above, so that, as a conventional type, he reflects a continuity of theme and viewpoint in Renaissance drama. The convention of the villainous subordinate is a symptom of the brooding doubt that became stronger as the age progressed.

The degree of pessimism appears to be reflected in the extent to which the villainous subordinate is shown to subvert his society, as the element of questioning in Elizabethan attitudes deepens to a sentiment approaching despair, in the late Jacobean period. Early examples of the villainous subordinate achieve a temporary success which remains limited to individual victims in its effects. Iago fosters jealousy and doubt in Othello, and he murders Roderigo; Guise feeds Catherine's hopes, and directs the murders of a largely anonymous multitude, Mephistophilis destroys Faustus' soul with delightful diversions, and De Flores murders Alonzo and Diaphanta, before he and Beatrice-Joanna bring about their own destruction. They corrupt and destroy each other, and no one else

is to blame. In each instance, the villainous subordinate's control of society has boundaries. The villainous subordinate is corrupt, and those about him may be corrupt as well, but although he reflects his society's degeneracy, he is not specifically its product. His evil motivations originate primarily from within, and his actions exploit the passions of others; by assaulting their minds, he engenders their destructively irrational responses.

Perhaps the villainous subordinate's portrayal in these early instances is significant of an attitude towards evil; vice seems to have been seen as relatively unequivocal in its manifestations, and ultimately subject to being contained within manageable bounds. Even the brutal and hypocritical Christian community of Malta, plagued by folly, fear, and prejudice, cannot be held responsible for Ithamore's vicious qualities, and his destructive powers are limited in their direct effects to Barabas and himself.

Much the same observations may be made about Volpone and Mosca, who prey on an avaricious and pretentious community of merchants and lawyers. Mosca is an arch-swindler in a world of greedy cheats. When he and Volpone are removed from society, there is at least a probability that vice will not proceed with quite the same efficiency, because those who remain are ingenuous, and far less adept than Mosca. The lasting effects of Mosca's viciousness are confined to Volpone, for the kind of evil the pair possess seems to be essentially individual. Each of the legacy seekers and avocatori have a corruption that originates from within themselves, and Mosca is an opportunist who enhances their individual vicious tendencies.

The old moral certainties came into question increasingly, as the seventeenth century progressed. Where once Faustus brought about his own expulsion from a fruitful plot by summoning his personal devil, Bosola reluctantly derives nourishment from the poisonous soil of a thoroughly corrupt garden. He has finer instincts, but the Cardinal and Ferdinand have all but eliminated virtue from the court; the only alternative to corruption, it seems, is death, the course chosen by the Duchess. And when Bosola finally acts to destroy evil, he destroys himself, as well. Moreover, he must continue his career as a murderer in the service of good.

Much the same problem inheres in the situations of Vindice and Malevole, whose sense of injustice and hatred of vice incite their vengeful passions. They have no means of redressing their wrongs, except by joining in the general corruption. The earlier villainous subordinates are shown as self-motivated and evil characters from their first appearance, and they exploit the passions of others wherever they see hope of profit. By contrast, the later villainous subordinates are products of societies in which evil is so pervasive that goodness cannot survive. Vasques may be unique as an exception, for his prurient instincts do not result from society's perversion of any innate goodness in him. Yet Vasques gives cause for the same kind of moral uncertainties, he cannot entirely be faulted for his fanatical loyalty to Soranzo, nor is he criminal in searching out incest. On the other hand, his motives are characterized by zest for scandal, brutal intent, and fascination with vicarious sex. Vasques' actions may be seen as having a moral purpose in the strict sense, and even his motives are formally

moral. However, he is clearly villainous in his instincts and methods, so that the entire social code of morality is thrown into question.

By Shirley's time, the old certainties about moral values had all but vanished. The drama is heavy with social satire, directed at an audience made up of an effete aristocracy which was being eroded steadily by the inroads of zealots and time-serving prelates like the Cardinal. Shirley accords the villainous cleric a dramatic place as pre-eminent as his rank. The Cardinal's corruption encompasses the whole of an inverted social order, and he sets in motion a chain of events which subvert goodness even in Rosaura, the noblest of the protagonists. The Cardinal's ascendancy as a villainous subordinate, and the extent of his influence, reflect Caroline society's malaise, and an attendant decline of the dramatic medium to which the villainous subordinate owes his existence as a character type.

While the Cardinal perhaps is not the strongest representation of the villainous subordinate in the drama, his dramatic centrality, and the oppressive power he is portrayed as wielding, seem to mark a culminating point; the end of a dramatic form, and the destruction of the old social order that came about with Charles I's execution. Together, the villainous subordinate's early and late representatives in the drama provide an ironic chronological parallel to the history of drama and society in Renaissance England, for when the villainous subordinate is of least dramatic importance, he reflects the health and strength of his society, when he is dramatically pre-eminent, the English political situation is chaotic, and the social structure is on the verge of dissolution and collapse.

Ithamore, Mephistophilis, Iago, Mosca, and De Flores all rank second in dramatic importance to the protagonists who are their victims, as do Bosola and Vasques in the later drama. Guise, as a major protagonist, is perhaps a unique exception. By contrast, Malevole, and Vindice are major protagonists, reflecting the enormity of the social injustices which have made them villainous subordinates. By the same principle, the Cardinal is a major protagonist, reflecting the vast extent of the social dislocation he engenders. This final representation of the villainous subordinate reflects the imminent onset of chaos in English affairs, which eventually gave birth to a new order. So in a way, the villainous subordinate's career as a character type, in relation to the history of the period, parallels the pattern of his ascent and final destruction in each of the plays in which he appears.

The villainous subordinate's career spans the period of Renaissance drama's efflorescence from Marlowe's time until the closing of the theatres in 1642. It is widely recognized that the Commonwealth interregnum terminated a dramatic mode that was becoming decadent and overworked. When the theatres reopened with the Restoration, the new comic and epic genres of drama bore only slight resemblance to earlier comedy and tragedy, and reworkings of older plays mercifully have been relegated by time to decent obscurity. Restoration plays contain characters who have vestiges of the villainous subordinate's characteristics, but little more. The comedy does not castigate vice, as much as it lightly makes mock of affectation, so that there is little need for a character who corrupts, and is corrupted, in a more profound sense. Restoration comedy is as uncongenial a medium for the villainous subor-

dinate as Roman comedy, and, appropriately, many parallels between character types exist. The heroic mode, ushered in by Dryden and his contemporaries, features majestically versifying protagonists, who were purported to exemplify man at his most sublime. The heroic theme does not lend itself to inclusion of a character who compromises such ideal conceptions of human worth, for if the hero falls, he is a victim primarily of his own greatness. So the villainous subordinate passed with the passing of the great age of English theatre, because Restoration drama was not fertile soil.

The villainous subordinate is a "wondrous necessary man", necessary, so his master believes, for his gratification of passion, and necessary as a manifestation of an ultimate order which cathartically cleanses itself. The villainous subordinate plays a central role in the cyclic pattern that underlies the ritual structure of Renaissance drama, for in him dwell the falsely seductive beauty of evil, and the destructive impulse necessary to the process of society's moral regeneration, however incomplete that may be.

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