

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

Shakespeare and the Seven Deadly Sins: a necessary evil

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by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the idea that using the religious, moral and literary construct of the Seven Deadly Sins as an interpretative key to Shakespeare's plays may provide further insight into his dramatic art. It has involved reviewing and developing the body of research which maintains that medieval literary and cultural references continued to influence and adapt to new cultural, literary and religious contexts in early modern literature, more specifically, that of Shakespeare.

The development of the Sins in a cultural, literary and religious context is outlined, exploring the extent to which they survived the impact of the Reformation on Catholic imagery and continued to be a common frame of reference in post-Reformation literature. It considers the likely early influence of the Sins on Shakespeare as a writer, exploring the idea of a personal commonplace book as an early and accessible resource of Sins-related classical and secular references, a resource shared with most of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean audiences.

Finally the thesis seeks to provide a reading of a representative collection of Shakespeare's plays chronologically; according to genre, and by individual sins and virtues, using the religious, cultural and literary lexicon of the Sins, and to demonstrate the way in which the Sins were deployed to provide dramatic interpretation of source material, as well as psychological insight into character. It is the contention of this thesis that the popular, semi-secular nature of the Sins and the way in which they became embedded in most aspects of art and culture enabled them to slide beneath the bar of Protestant reform to provide continuity of moral and religious reference and, more importantly, to remain in the collective cultural memory of Shakespeare and his audiences as a 'polemically safe' resource through which to explore issues of good and evil, salvation and damnation.

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Shakespeare and the Seven Deadly Sins: a necessary evil

Introduction

Research originally carried out on Shakespeare's *Othello* in 2006 furnished evidence that using the religious, moral and literary construct of the Seven Deadly Sins as an interpretative key to Shakespeare's plays might provide further insight into his dramatic art. This path inevitably led to the, until relatively recently, somewhat unfashionable area of research surrounding Shakespeare's medieval cultural, literary and dramatic heritage, abandoned in favour of classical scholarship or new forms of literary theory and critical approaches. However, what became clear and which has been more recently and ably demonstrated by the work of Helen Cooper, Gordon McMullan and others¹ is that not only is the work led by Bernard Spivack (1958) and David Bevington (1962) not a critical *cul-de-sac*, but that rather medieval literary and cultural influences continued to be referenced and adapted to new cultural, literary and religious contexts in early modern literature. More specifically, it is in theatre that this continuity is more readily traced, leading to Helen Cooper's regret that 'drama is perhaps the area where the significance of the medieval has been most extensively overlooked' (Cooper 2013: 43).

This research has presented several challenges. The first has been, in order to enable interpretative reading, to catalogue and trace the history of the Sins; to include a brief review of their development and cultural, literary and religious interaction up to and including the early modern period in England, and briefly to examine a representative range of works which might reflect a Sins medieval literary tradition or heritage. It was then important to challenge the conclusion of Morton Bloomfield that by the late sixteenth century 'the tradition of the Sins was dead; they no longer evolved; they no longer inspired great writing' (Bloomfield 1952: 243). This task has been greatly assisted by the medieval historian Richard Newhauser, whose

¹ See *Reading the Medieval* (2007) edited by Gordon McMullan and David Matthews and *Medieval Shakespeare: pasts and presents* (2013) edited by Ruth Morse, Helen Cooper and Peter Holland

opportunely timed work on the Sins in the medieval and, latterly, early modern period has proved invaluable. It was also important to look more specifically at Shakespeare himself and attempt to explore the exposure he may have had to the religious, literary and cultural influence of the Sins, including to what extent it could be claimed that his drama might be consciously or unconsciously influenced by such a resource. In particular, the thesis examines the practice of ‘moral reading’ and ‘commonplacings’ taught in most grammar schools at the time Shakespeare and his audiences were being educated, and seeks to establish the theory that this practice and the habit and resources thus acquired might have had considerable impact on Shakespeare’s management and interpretation of dramatic source material throughout his career as a dramatist.

It is the contention of this thesis that the popular, semi-secular nature of the Sins and the way in which they became embedded in most aspects of art and culture enabled them to escape the more doctrinally contentious associations with Catholic liturgy, and slide beneath the bar of Protestant reform to provide continuity of moral and religious reference and, more importantly, to remain in the collective cultural memory of Shakespeare and his audiences as a ‘polemically safe’, dramatically and visually entertaining resource through which to explore issues of good and evil, virtue and vice, salvation and damnation. This has involved referencing the work of religious historians, notably Eamon Duffy (1992) and Alexandra Walsham (1999) on what seems to be a parallel conviction to that of recent literary criticism regarding the blurring of distinction between pre- and post-Reformation beliefs. In addition to this assumption, in reference the critical contention described by Quentin Skinner (2008) between those who regard Shakespeare as ‘a jobbing playwright’ and those who prefer to see ‘an author shaping a literary career’, it seems reasonable not to dismiss either influence over the length of Shakespeare’s writing life.

Finally the thesis seeks to provide a reading of a representative collection of Shakespeare’s plays chronologically; according to genre, and by some individual sins and virtues, using the religious, cultural and literary lexicon of the Sins. This has proved to be particularly difficult in terms of structure; the final presentation avoids most, but not all, of the pitfalls of repetition and rehearsal. The history plays, taken together enable a closer look at the sins of pride, sloth, anger and envy while

enabling an opportunity to observe their function and application as a dramatic model over time. They also provide an opportunity through closer study of the source and reference material to evaluate the extent to which Shakespeare may not only have read the source in the context of the Sins, but also edited the source material to reflect them. The tragedies section examines the extent to which the Sins lexicon contributes to and enhances the idea of the Senecan tragic hero, and in particular examines the contribution to this genre by the moralities, notably in terms of the Vice-figure. The comedies group introduces and examines the use made of the remedial virtues, and explores the extent to which the Sins provide a commentary by association on particular social groups or class. The problem comedies section discusses whether, by playing on the tradition or culture of the Sins and virtues, it is possible to provide a moral and social critique and commentary. Finally, the late plays group enables a discussion on the relationship between anger and patience and the nature of tragicomedy. It further explores the extent to which Sins literature has been adapted to accommodate a challenging religious and political environment and adjusted to a fundamentally different view on the nature of sin and salvation.

The medieval texts used to illustrate and reference influential use of the deadly sins in popular literature have been largely confined to the well-known and the well documented, and, in particular, concentrate on Chaucer and Gower, two authors known to have been read by Shakespeare. The terminology deployed within this thesis is, from the point of view of a religious historian, often encompassing to the point of generality. Sin and vice, which are to the theologian different, for the purpose of this thesis and its more cultural and literary exploration, tend to be regarded as the same. The modern terms for the Sins are used, in the main, with the possible exception of sloth whose strong modern associations with the simplistic interpretation of ‘idleness’ sometimes calls for the etymological reminders of *acedia* or even *tristia*.

In approaching the thesis, the temptation to become overly engaged with detailed polemical analysis of the plays and highly eschatological Christian allegorical approaches has been avoided. It has been important to concentrate on the Sins in the plays and the contribution they have made to the realisation of the drama: it is also hard to contextualise some of the more detailed theological exegesis in terms of the

pressured role of a writer and working dramatist. In emulation of the excellent historical models of Duffy and Walsham, discussion has assumed a common focus of understanding to be the likely cultural, religious and educational experience of an audience which had much in common with the author.

Chapter 1

The Seven Deadly Sins: a necessary evil

1.1 The tradition of the Sins

In his important work on the Seven Deadly Sins, Morton W Bloomfield acknowledges his purpose to have been ‘to present through the medium of the Sins an introduction to medieval culture and life’ (Bloomfield 1952: 243). His choice to conclude his analysis with Spenser, an author looking back linguistically, iconographically, sentimentally, and above all with political motive, to the medieval period, enables his conclusion that ‘the *tradition* of the Sins was dead’. Spenser’s consciously archaic work and others like it to be discussed later, conform to Eric Hobsbawm’s definition of ‘invented tradition’ in that they:

subscribe to a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. (Hobsbawm 1983: 1).

However, there is much in the history of the Sins that implies far greater independence and flexibility than this: their evolution more accurately reflects Hobsbawm’s definition of ‘custom’:

‘Custom’ in traditional societies has the double function of motor and flywheel. It does not preclude innovation and change up to a point, though evidently the requirement that it must appear compatible or even identical with precedent imposes substantial limitations on it. What it does is to give any desired change [...] the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history. (Hobsbawm 1983: 2).

It is this ability to accommodate which, it will be argued, allowed the Sins not only to survive well into the Renaissance in a meaningful way, far greater than the ‘concept’ which Bloomfield allows but also, contrary to his condemnation, to continue to inspire great mimetic as well as allegorical poetic drama. This has been confirmed more recently by Richard Newhauser’s re-evaluation of Bloomfield’s

conclusion which recognises that it is the Sins' movement away from the contained nature of Bloomfield's assessment which has enabled their survival:

Nevertheless, it is clear that the waning of the seven deadly sins in Catholic sacramental and penitential theology does not signal the end of the history of a conceptual category that has manifestly remained productive up to the present day. (Newhauser 2012: 164).

1.2 A pagan birth

The concept of evil and with it, sin, appears almost as old as belief itself, and all the Sins are, as Siegfried Wenzel points out in relation to Sloth, 'such a universal experience that one will find [them] analysed and condemned whenever man's reflection on his own nature has reached a fairly subtle stage' (Wenzel 1967: 1). The roots of the deadly sins rest largely in ancient classical literature and Jewish belief; however, similar notions are also found in the ancient Persian idea of a battle of good and evil to gain the human heart, and the Babylonian mythology which includes a belief in seven evil spirits. The custom of listing categories of evil or sins is one practised even among so-called early 'primitive' cultures and can be found in diverse cultures (Bloomfield 1952: 37). Long lists of sins exist in the writings of China, Tibet, Turkestan and Egypt. The history of Christianity's assimilation of a wide range of pagan beliefs and rituals as an effective tool of conversion is also extensively documented.²

All three major elements of the Sins: the concretisation or naming of evil; the ordering through lists or numbers, particularly seven, and the role they play in impeding success in the next world or life can be found in many pre- and proto-Christian cultures and beliefs. Emerging as a physical force, evil came quickly to be

² For example, preserved in the Venerable Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* is a letter from Pope Gregory I to Mellitus, arguing that conversions were easier if people were allowed to retain the outward forms of their traditions, while claiming that the traditions were in honour of the Christian God, "to the end that, whilst some gratifications are outwardly permitted them, they may the more easily consent to the inward consolations of the grace of God". In essence, it was intended that the traditions and practices still existed, but that the reasoning behind them was forgotten, effectively employing the subtle difference between 'tradition' and 'custom'.

represented as a physical being, or as demons. The Greek philosopher Plato (428/7 B.C. – 348/7 B.C.) and his successors were a further influence over understanding of virtue and sin. In Plato's transcendent world of perfect originals of which the world is merely a pale reflection, the highest form of good became identified with God. This is the world to which human beings ultimately aspire and Platonic philosophy believes that through the process of ascetic contemplation, or prayer, it is possible to participate in it. The resulting product of this contemplation is virtue and Plato believed that the impediment to the process was sin (Angela Tilby 2009: 10).

Aristotle (384 B.C. – 322 B.C.) evolved the less metaphysical construct of good and evil classified as virtues and vices, basing his thinking on an assumption of the primacy of desire. Aristotle believed that virtue was a rational choice which was based on the human desire for fulfilment. He considered it to be beneficial to society and therefore individuals within it to be virtuous. Furthermore, he did not believe in innate virtue, believing instead that it was something which could be developed through practice, a concept later developed in the Christian monastic tradition (Tilby 2009: 10). So for Plato and Aristotle the soul, rather than being an entity, is divided into reason which exists in one part and passion in another. In this sense passions are seen as involuntary responses which have to be controlled by the reasoning self. This philosophy accommodates moderate emotive reaction.

Later, the Stoic movement envisaged the dualistic state of living within and submitting to nature's law whilst avoiding the evil which arises from a preoccupation with the world (Bloomfield 1952: 9). Stoics believed that human beings were given to the *passions* of grief, fear, craving and pleasure. These passions were seen as negative compulsions which would give rise to many others when allowed to subsume control of the mind. The Stoics did not subscribe to the involuntary nature of passion, believing that an individual is responsible for his reaction to a situation. 'Passion, far from being contrary to reason, is rather rational in the sense that it is the product of assent' (Gertrude Gillette 2010: 2). Angela Tilby sees this concept of basic passion giving rise to others as a precursor to the Christian notion of the concatenation of sin (Tilby 2009: 9).

The origin of sin and evil has caused some philosophical difficulties in those monotheistic religions which subscribe to one God as the creator of all things. Palestinian Judaism, which perceived the world to be potentially good and had a largely monistic concept of an immanent, good God, resolved the problem of who created evil by supposing that evil was a rebellion against God's laws. However within Judaism, as well as Christian Gnosticism, there is also evidence of a struggle to reconcile the notion of the origin of evil in a God-created world. Ultimately, the discussion of whether, why and how God 'allowed' sin became one of the defining arguments of the Reformation debate on free will and predestination.

The syncretistic process which embodied religion, science and mysticism defined by Reitzenstein as 'Greek philosophical dogmas, Orphic and Pythagorean beliefs, ideas from Persia, ideas from Judea, with a plentiful dose of crude old magic' (Bloomfield 1952: 4) presented a wealth of philosophies and ideas about how to live which influenced early Christian thinking on sin. The Greek maxim to 'know thyself', variously ascribed to Socrates, Pythagoras and others underpins the need to examine behaviour and motive, particularly in the context of its effect on others and ultimately God. Versions of the Sins were an inherent part of that picture, and the medium in which they frequently operated, the 'Soul Journey' (Bloomfield 1952: 8), or in its broader context, the Otherworld Journey, is also represented across pre-Christian Hellenistic and Oriental religions, before emerging in Christian culture and beliefs. Some of the most well-known include: the sixth book of the *Aeneid*; the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and the Shintoist legend of Izanagi's search for his dead wife. The prototype in Christianity is Jesus' descent into hell. The fifth-century late Classical Christian poet Prudentius, 'with the epic tradition in his veins' (Bernard Spivack 1958: 78) introduced into the concept the added struggle for the soul by the warring personifications of virtues and vices, giving rise to the common medieval allegory genre named after his poem the *Psychomachia*. This genre culminating in the visions of Dante, Langland, Bunyan and others was to become a vitally important vehicle for the establishment of the Sins as allegorical symbols in Christian penitential material as well popular literature, drama and cultural belief systems.

Although the Sins have no biblical source as a concept (which led in part to religious distancing by reformers), Bloomfield links the Sins with the seven demons

driven out of Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2, Mark 16:9) and a further reference to seven spirits in Luke 8:26 (Bloomfield 1952: 327 n223). Within the more generalised predilection for the numbers one to ten in the philosophies of many civilisations, including eight (the early list of cardinal sins), the number seven, from earliest history, has been afforded significance all over the world including Babylonian, Egyptian and Greek cultures as well as appearing frequently in the Bible. A broad system of septenary forms of moral instruction, including the seven virtues was in use, largely through Christian catechism from the twelfth century (John Bossy 1990: 215).

It appears, therefore, that the Sins in pre- and proto-Christian custom emerge as already having the flexibility to reconcile the relationship of body to soul; of God-given nature to evil, and of free will to destiny through moral, psychological and metaphorical means. So whether derived from the four great moral traditions of Judaism, Graeco-Roman moral philosophy, Christianity or ‘crude old magic’, the common ground for the nature of the Sins seems to be rooted in psychological insight: what it is to be human and how that understanding or self-knowledge measures up against a model of spiritual or religious perfection, or its evil converse. In every model there seem to be four inherent characteristics:

1. An identification of human impulse, desire, motivation or behaviour characterised as potentially a vice (desire, motive or impulse) leading to sin (an action which suppresses or extinguishes the soul, an offence against God).
2. A developing concept of struggle against, denial or control of corporeal and emotional traits in the interest of the ‘soul’, a religious ideal, or a future non-corporeal existence.
3. The classification of such control as goodness, virtue or obedience to God.
4. A tacit or otherwise acceptance of the necessity of temptation for the development of purification of the soul or non-corporeal self, or as a test or assessment of goodness or virtue.

The Christian tradition, in adopting the Aristotelian concept of vice began to confuse the distinction between ‘vice’ as a behavioural impulse or ethically unacceptable character trait and ‘sin’ as a conscious act, specifically of commission or omission

against God. This ambiguity between ethics and belief, it appears, remained with the Sins, enabling their survival in some form in both religious belief and artistic and literary culture, and providing a useful and relatively safe reference point in the dramatic extra-denominational examination of human and societal weaknesses. Although there were credal distinctions between a sin and a vice, for the purpose of popular religious and secular literature, the two became more or less indistinguishable by the late Middle Ages.

1.3 The Sins and their role in the development of Christian confession

The Ten Commandments, inherited from Judaism, inform the social and personal ethic according to which Christian communities were expected to live. The Old Testament provided observations on virtue and vice which often reflected that of classical philosophy and which are in turn unsurprisingly paralleled in Early Christian Writings. Angela Tilby characterises them as having a more social as well as individual context:

Although the vices are set out as wrongs which individuals commit, they are not just private issues; they clearly also have social consequences, and the early Christian lists of vices and virtues are particularly concerned about their communal effects. (Tilby 2009: 12).

However the Christian notion of temptation to sin, particularly sins of the flesh and the world, what Augustine calls *concupiscence* or a longing for bodily enjoyment and worldly power, is heavily influenced by gospel accounts of Christ's temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4: 1-11), (Luke 4: 1-12) which are characterised by gluttony, avarice and vainglory. The association between the initial desire or inclination to sin, or passion as classical thought would name it, and actual sin is one which will underpin some of the differences in beliefs between the Catholic and Protestant faiths. The Letter of James suggests that the inclination to sin or to be tempted to sin lies within the individual:

[...] but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. (James 1: 14-16).

The distinction between forgivable and unforgivable, or mortal, sin may initially be raised in 1 John 5: 16, although there exist several interpretations as to the kind of death (spiritual or temporal) referred to and to the nature of the sin:

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is a sin, and there is a sin not unto death. (1 John 5: 16-17)

The idea was developed further by Tertullian (c.200 A.D.) who identifies those sinful acts which are incapable of pardon as murder, idolatry, fraud, apostasy, blasphemy, adultery and fornication.

The early Christian ascetic movement concentrated on an existence which enabled them to prepare for immortal life by disciplined mental and physical training aimed at transforming the self through controlling or healing the passions and, in that sense, shared the same approach as the Stoic and Platonist philosophers. Evagrius Ponticus, the fourth-century monk, who withdrew to the Egyptian desert to practise the ascetic life, conceived guidelines for dealing with temptation which he categorises as ‘eight thoughts’ or *logismoi*. These focus on the abstract human instinct or impulse which, if developed or acted upon, lead to an act or acts of sin; what Sister Gertrude Gillette calls ‘psychosomatic impulses’ (Gillette 2010: x). As Angela Tilby emphasises, Evagrius’ concerns were not with the full-blown demonic caricatures by which the Sins became recognisable, but the ordinary instincts tied up with human existence and survival, and the best way to understand and subdue them. Evagrius’ list includes gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, *acedia*, vainglory and pride (Tilby 2009: 18-19).

In the fifth century John Cassian, disciple of Evagrius, brought the eight sins to the West, particularly through his influential writings *De institutis coenobiorum* (c.420) which was intended for beginners in monastic life and *Collationes patrum in scetica eremo* (c.425). These works which Tilby considers to be substantially based on the work of Evagrius refer to the list as vices rather than thoughts. Angela Tilby concludes:

[...] he begins the transformation of Evagrius’ psychological and diagnostic approach to temptation into the more familiar list of vices. (Tilby 2009: 20).

The definition of a deadly sin as something thought or said which is contrary to the laws of God is attributable to Augustine (345A.D. – 430A.D.) who was a contemporary of Cassian. It was his interpretation of sin as the positioning of human will over God's will which gave rise to pride's superior position in the list of sins, and the assumption that it was pride that led to the fall, although arguments were also made for the sins of gluttony and avarice.

By A.D. 590 Pope Gregory, or Gregory the Great, utilised the work of Evagrius, amended by Cassian, to develop his version of a list of seven principal vices or capital Sins generated from pride: vainglory, envy, anger, sadness, avarice, gluttony and lust. Pride and Vainglory were conflated; lust, or *luxuria*, embraced extravagance and excessive desire for something while maintaining its sexual semantic associations, and sadness, eventually sloth, was a conflation of *acedia* and *tristia*. Gregory enlarged upon the metaphor of sin used by Cassian as 'some sort of plant with roots and seeds' (Tilby 2009: 23), developing the idea of concatenation in which each sin is related to, or develops from, another with pride, as the initial sin, giving rise to the others.

Although there were several versions of the list, the Gregorian order, the SIIAAGL (*superbia, ira, invidia, avaritia, acedia, gula, luxuria*) in particular became the most influential in the West, and figured well into the early modern period (Bloomfield 1952: 72-89). The rather shifting nature and constant refinement of the list, what Newhauser refers to as the 'cacophony of sin orders' (Newhauser 2012: 161) due to the many statements of concatenation and constant re-arranging of orders of importance and connections which carried on throughout the Middle Ages into the Renaissance, is, perhaps, early evidence of the adaptability of the Sins which ensured their survival. It is from this list and the lists which succeeded it that the later confessionals and guides, such as *Ancrene Wisse* or *Ancrene Riwe* are developed. Angela Tilby summarises the development over time of the Sins lexicon:

So from vainglory come disobedience, boasting, hypocrisy, quarrelling, wrangling, discord and novelty-seeking. From envy come hatred, gossip, scorn, rejoicing in a neighbour's bad luck, or being upset when they succeed. From anger come scowling, big-headedness, detraction,

rowdiness, indignation and blasphemy. From sadness come aggression, rancour, cowardice, desperation, lack of self-care, restless thoughts and other illicit things. From avarice come treachery, fraud, lying, perjury, lack of calm, violence, callousness towards the wretched. From gluttony, false jollity, dirty jokes, slobbishness, talking too much, dulling of the intellect. From lust, blindness of mind, lack of consideration, inconstancy, rashness, self-love, hatred of God, an obsession with the present moment and despair about the future. (Tilby 2009: 23-24).

She suggests that it is these lists which created the human caricatures of the sins, such as can be found in medieval literature and iconography, moving a concept which began as a diagnosis of the symptoms that can lead to sin to a full blown account of human perversities (Tilby 2009: 24).

As a tool of self-examination used within an enclosed community of religious whose act in becoming a monk or nun was to deny the world, the Sins represented a template of worldly behaviours, almost a human default setting, which were to be avoided in order to live a completely spiritual, other-worldly existence. As consideration of the Sins as a process of self-examination was initially introduced for use in religious communities, this was often evidenced by the importance and priority given to the threat of what would become, in a more worldly secular society, the lower order sins; that is those of the world and the flesh (Bloomfield 1952: 71).

The priority given to particular sins and the order of importance in which they were listed often shifted, reflecting the social or religious context of the penitent. The Sins were traditionally grouped into three: those of the Devil; those of the World and those of the Flesh. The content of these groupings was subject to some change. *Acedia*, later sloth, for example, was at different times associated with all three groupings. In religious communities sloth was seen in terms of a lapse of religious duty or spiritual despair and, in that sense, was regarded as the gateway to all the deadly sins. Even in later literature and sermons it is commonly referred to as the nurse (as in midwife) to all other sins. An extreme form of sloth, characterised as spiritual despair and associated with loss of faith, is also regarded as an 'unforgiveable' sin against the Holy Ghost because it prevents an individual from seeking or believing in forgiveness (Andrew Welsh 1974: 107). Therefore it was

often presented near the top of the list of seven. However it can be found in all three groupings, including, in the more bourgeois critiques, the Flesh, where it is styled as laziness. Pride is the only sin which maintains consistent first or root position in most hierarchies of the Sins³ because of its direct causal link to the Fall. Identified in Ecclesiasticus 10:13 as the beginning of sin and seen as the sin against God which led to the Fall of Lucifer, pride is usually conceived as having brought sin to the world and, in that sense, given birth to all others. Generally, the higher order sins of the Devil were pride, anger and envy, sometimes accompanied by *acedia* or sloth. The sins of the World were greed and sometimes sloth and the sins of the Flesh were gluttony and lust. While the Sins were all ‘breeders’ or originators of further sin, the sins associated with the Devil and therefore ‘inner’ or more cerebral, were the most offensive to God, dangerous and potentially damning. Although these sins, too, had their more prosaic subsets such as vanity in dress and idleness.

By the early thirteenth century, following the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, confession had become mandatory for all and the need for some guidance or template to assist priests in carrying out their duties led to a proliferation of manuals and other instructional material most of which figured the Sins and illustrative exempla. As Tilby suggests, once the Sins were no longer confined to monastic religious self-examination and became an essential part of religious observance, they became part of the landscape of medieval imagination:

They formed the conscience of clergy and laity. They depicted the terrible consequences of unrepented sin and how, in a universe founded on retributive justice, these consequences were inescapable, even beyond this life. (Tilby 2009: 29).

Preachers also found the Sins a very useful way of keeping the attention of their lay audiences. Bloomfield assesses their popularity:

In fact, they and the confessors impressed the cardinal sins so deeply on the popular mind that the Sins came to occupy a much more important place in the lay concept of religion than their position in theology warranted. They

³ Roger Bacon, whose later scholastic analysis (taken from Boethius) of the Sins is particularly noted for the popular medieval deployment of animals as representative of sins, unusually places Avarice at the head, claiming it to be the cause of all others except for Anger (Bloomfield 1952: 91-92)

became a vivid concept, much more vivid than the virtues [...] (Bloomfield 1952: 93).

As a custom, rather than a tradition, the Sins proved adept at reflecting the anxiety of the time and developing their capability for social comment. Avarice is a good example; what seemed to have little relevance to Gregory and his communities, became a sin much associated with the growth of merchants, usurers and the bourgeoisie of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and of even greater relevance to the theologians attempting to address the free market economic and ideological structure of the late medieval period (Bloomfield 1952: 90-91). The manuals contained extensive lists or subsets of sins within the main division of the deadly sin, providing a glorious variety of ways in which that particular sin could be identified, and a lexicon to accompany them:

In effect, the clergy were responsible for making judgements about the nature and seriousness of individual sins. At the heart of this system was the formal distinction between lesser sins and deadly sins. Lesser (or ‘venial’) sins could be forgiven without a formal priestly confession [...]. Deadly sins, on the other hand, would lead direct to hell if they were not confessed, repented of and absolved in the sacrament of confession. (Tilby 2009: 28-29).

As the manuals developed, priests who were restricted in time spent shriving individuals, were often given guidance to concentrate their confessional examination according to assumed stereotypes; anger and lust for the young, vanity in women, avarice and envy in old men. This provided a rich foundation of commonly recognised caricature on which Chaucer and others could build their literary works. Vernacular manuals such as Mirk’s *Instructions for Parish Priests* and *The Lay Folks’ Mass Book* were written in rhymed couplets, probably to aid memory but in fact adding to the literary value of the confession (Targoff 2001: 60-61):

Hast þow do þat synne bale
By any wommon þat lay in hale?
Hast þow wowet any wyghte,
And tempted hyre ouer nyghte?
Hast þou made þe gay þefore
Þat heo schulde þe loue þe more?

(Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*: 1383-1385)

Between 1300 and 1500 there was also in circulation a number of vernacular liturgical and non-liturgical lyrics whose religious, often confessional, meditative themes frequently incorporated or were structured around catechismal lists such as the Seven Deadly Sins.

1.4 The Virtues

The concept of a virtue as a good or admirable attribute reflecting the culture of the society that forms it is, in a sense, more firmly rooted in the non-religious world view. As a term it inherits several early characteristics: a valuable or advantageous quality; a socially approved strength or talent, and a moral or Christian ideal or personification of an ideal which demonstrates a God-like behaviour or set of behaviours. The Aristotelian concept of virtue envisioned a golden mean, or point between two extremes. The classical *virtus* incorporated the martial qualities of courage, justice and temperance. *Virtus* operated as a set of public standards for service within the *res publica*.

Aquinas developed a set of seven virtues to balance the list of the deadly sins. His list combined faith, hope and charity, the ‘theological’ virtues taken from Paul’s teaching (1 Corinthians 13) with Cicero’s classical ‘cardinal’ virtues of justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude. The seven virtues were promoted as an antidote to the deadly sins and utilised in sermons and confessionals, but were a difficult parallel as the Sins did not easily correlate to them. In practice, as the medieval period progressed, the conception of virtues as a therapeutic or remedial control of sin led to a wider set of virtues which were introduced to confessionals, sermons and Moralities. Richard Newhauser identifies them as ‘contrary virtues’, a term he derives from *virtutes contrarie* taken from Latin patristic and medieval texts (Newhauser 2008: 136). These are the virtues used, for example, by Chaucer’s Parson as remedies for each deadly sin. Notably, more than one virtue is often volunteered as a remedy for a particular sin, demonstrating what Newhauser describes as ‘much *ad hoc* variation’ which extends well into the seventeenth century (Newhauser 2008: 140).

1.5 Catechism, the Sins and the Reformation

Incorporated into early education throughout the medieval and early modern periods was the integration of religious didacticism with the acquisition of literacy. The exposition of religious belief can be seen in examples of primers used in petty schools and provide clear evidence that catechism went hand in hand with a b c.

From the thirteenth century onwards the *Lay Folks' Catechism* formed the framework of instruction for the Roman Catholic laity. It centred on the 'irreducible core' (Duffy 1993: 53) of Catholic belief and included the Creed, the *Pater Noster*, the Ten Commandments, the Sacraments, the Spiritual and Corporeal Works of Mercy, the Seven Cardinal Virtues and the Seven Deadly Sins, and was imitated or directly used in dioceses all over England up to the Reformation. Declarative in style, its purpose was to reinforce orthodoxy and prepare the individual for confession.

The catechisms produced to instruct the population in the ways and beliefs of the 'new religion' were both diverse and numerous. Ian Green estimates that between the publication of the short catechism of the Prayer Book (1549) and 1646 when the Westminster shorter catechism replaced it 'over 300 different catechistical forms or works can be traced.' Not to mention the many others, particularly in manuscript form, supposed lost (Green 1986: 397-425). The new catechisms differed in content, style and purpose. Interrogatory in style, they reflected the Christian humanist fashion for classical debate, and were intended as a declaration of faith, rather than a self-examination.

Among the Catholic orthodox material with no scriptural authority which was dumped in this process were the Sins, although there is a sense that in the same way that the Sins were not actually theologically central to Catholicism, they were equally not so highly symbolic of the old faith to be lost altogether. It is important to remember how much older and more established the Sins were than the concept of purgatory for example, 'an imaginary place only three centuries old' (David Daniell 2003: 124). They also had the added protection of, if not collective, then at least individual, biblical justification to maintain a form of credibility. Within the

construct of predestination, they were able to provide a useful role as both tools of self-examination and Calvinist soul-searching for the chosen and indicators of damnation for the rest. Although the penitential practice was changed and the reformed church abandoned the practice of hearing confession, many priests felt that they had ‘thrown the baby out with the bath water’ (Peter Marshall 2009: 53). When the Sins had been suitably distanced from Catholic confessional and purgatorial associations, they could usefully be redeployed within the new beliefs. As individual vices, and even with a ‘deadly’ tag, once freed from an exclusive relationship with free will and purgatory, they continued to be referred to in later Protestant confessional prayers and sermons which make full use of the Sins lexicon. The term ‘deadly sin’, having been removed by Cramner, was re-introduced into the Litany within the 1559 Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer and remains in the revised version of 1662.

Many of the popular Protestant approved homilies, such as those which appeared in *Certaine Sermons*, the first collection in 1547, contributed to by Cranmer and published with the second collection in 1571, largely written by Bishop Jewel as a *Book of Homilies* and which continued to be used by priests long after Elizabeth 1’s death, took as their topic a vice from the list of deadly sins. They often concentrated on those bodily sins associated with the common people such as gluttony or lust; singling out certain aspects of the lexicon of higher order sins such as *idelnesse* from sloth and *excesse of apparel* from pride, which would, ironically, school the lower orders in knowing their place. In the homily *Against Strife and Contention* (1547: xii), the author draws on the commonly recognised sins of envy and anger to suppress contention in religion; drawing on classical reference to illustrate, and neatly combining the recognition of moral example from the classics with condemnation of their ‘heathen’ status:

Is it not a shame for us that profess Christ, to be worse than heathen people, in a thing chiefly pertaining to Christ’s religion? Shall philosophy persuade them more than God’s word shall persuade us? Shall natural reason prevail more with them than religion shall with us? Shall man’s wisdom lead them to those things, whereunto the heavenly doctrine cannot lead us? What blindness, wilfulness, or rather madness is this! Pericles, being provoked to anger with many villainous words, answered not a word. But we, stirred but

with one little word, what foul work do we make! How do we fume, rage, stamp and stare like madmen! (*Certaine Sermons* 1852:135).

The depth of variants and exempla in each category of the Sins was so extensive, they were an invaluable tool in the subtle task of casuistry and not therefore easily given up, even by the most fervent of converts. The second *Book of Homilies*, published in 1570, whose use with the first book every Sunday was required under Injunction thirty-two (Duffy 1992: 453), was furnished with an additional sermon in 1571, the widely circulated homily *Against Disobedience and Wilful Rebellion*, following the Northern Rebellion, a Catholic uprising in 1569. Congregations across the land will have listened to the subtle use to which the Protestant author puts the Sins; he skilfully manages not only to reclaim them to the Protestant cause, but also ascribes each of them to the Catholic rebels from whom they were stolen:

Thus you see that all God's laws are by rebels violated and broken, and that all sins possible to be committed against God or man be contained in rebellion: which sins, if a man list to name by the accustomed names of the seven capital or deadly sins, as pride, envy, wrath covetousness, sloth, gluttony, and lechery, he shall find them all in rebellion and amongst rebels. (*Certaine Sermons* 1852: 536).

So at a time when all effort is being made to distance the ways of the new religion from that of the old, one of its architects still feels free to utilise the term.

Newhauser also stresses the role which the sins play in Protestant polemics, often deploying the Sins, as a tool of the Catholic church, to criticise it, citing the Lollard text *The Lanterne of Liȝt* which uses the Sins to expose faults of the institutionalised church and which was printed in the first half of the sixteenth century. 'In this kind of polemical usage by Protestants, the sins became characteristic of a failed Catholic institution, from which a definite break had now been made' (Newhauser 2012: 165). *Piers Plowman* was published in 1550 by Robert Crowley to use in the Protestant cause as a defamation of Roman Catholicism and the Sins once more became the tool of the reformer: 'Crowley kidnapped this orthodox medieval demand for reform of monasticism and society, converting it through his preface and marginal notes, into a powerful revolutionary attack against monasticism and the Roman Catholic Society' (John N King 1976: 342-352). Fifteen years earlier, in 1535, the commissioners charged by Cranmer to enquire into the wealth and the state of religious houses

throughout England made similar disparagement by discovering ‘not seven but more than 700,000 deadly sins’ (Susan Brigden 2000: 127). By 1581 in Nathaniel Woode’s *The Conflict of Conscience*, the vices are being employed to persuade Philologus to convert to Catholicism.

However, as Renaissance humanism and later Protestant morality in its concentration on the individual and the state began to recast deadly sin as indicative of spiritual restriction and punishable on earth, Calvinism went further by ascribing a rigid system of predestined fault or unredeemable, except through justification, sin. What better way of reflecting this than the universally recognised custom of the Sins? Alexandra Walsham observes of the post-Reformation prophetic preachers:

In personifying vice, prophetic preachers were perpetuating the garish parade of the Seven Deadlies, the familiar rogues’ gallery of malefactors so beloved by the medieval friars. They habitually fell back on the structures and motifs of traditional vernacular complaint. (Walsham 1999: 317).

By the Reformation, the common secular preference for the Sins was sufficiently known for it to feature as a joke in one of Bishop Latimer’s Sermons:

I will tell you a pretty story of a Fryer to refresh you withal: a limitour of the gray fryers in the tyme of his limitation preached many times, and had but one sermon at all times: Which sermon was of the tenne commaundementes. And because the fryer had preached thys sermon so often: one that hearde it before, tolde the fryars seruaunt that his master was called, fryar John ten commandments; wherefore the seruaunt shewed the frier hys Master thereof, and aduised him to prech of some other matters; fro it grueued the seruaunt to here his master derided. Now the fryer made aunswer, saying: Belike then thou canst say the x commaundementes well, seeing thou hast heard them so many a time. Yea sayd the seruaunt, I warraunt you, let me heare them sayth the master: then he began, pride, couetuousnesse, lechery, and so numbred the deadly sinnes, for the ten commaundementes (*Frutefull Sermones* 1571 93v-94r).

As Newhauser suggests, the sermon may be aimed at exposing the ineffectiveness of the friars (Newhauser 2012: 168) and certainly the persistence of Catholic beliefs, but making the friar’s only sermon to be that of the Ten Commandments seems a rather strange way of going about it. What also

characterises these examples, however, is the low level of religious threat or danger represented by the Sins' endurance: their dogged survival seems to provoke more a feeling of amused frustration by pre- and post-Reformation clerics. There is no strong sense that the Sins were emblematic of major doctrinal dispute.

1.6 The art of confession: the iconographic and literary heritage of the Sins

Within the tradition of religious English vernacular, primarily aimed at the female religious and male and female secular communities, the Sins provided a framework around which self-examination could be carried out, usually for the purpose of individual auricular confession. From the early medieval period onwards there is evidence that priests would utilise the framework of the Sins as a guidance for the confessional, and there is a clear tradition of such extant vernacular works often written with a humanity and liveliness which reveals much of the writer's own character, and demonstrating a form of literary, entertaining didacticism that accounts for their survival. The earliest and arguably most charming and colourful is the *Ancrene Wisse or Ancren Riwe* (c1225) whose author provides one of the earliest English literary representation of the Sins with wild animals portrayed in the metaphorical wilderness of earthly life: the lion of pride, the serpent of envy, the unicorn of wrath, the bear of sloth, the fox of covetousness, the swine of greed and the scorpion of lechery. He deals with his subject in some depth, providing his female anchorites with a character sketch of each sin and its common behaviours. To this he adds biblical illustration:

Ʒe wreaðfule biuore Ʒe feond skirmeð mid cniues, ant is his cnif-wapere,
ant pleieð mid sweordes; bereð ham bi scharp ord upon his tunge. (Millet
Ancrene Wisse 4 81:31. 499-501).⁴

He links each sin with scriptural examples, emphasising the remedial, or preventative quality of opposing virtue, in this case love and accord, or peace:

Vre Lauertes leaste wordes, Ʒa he steah to heouene ant leafed his leoue
freond in uncuðe Ʒeode, weren of swote luue ant of sahtnesse: *Pacem*

⁴ The angry person juggles in front of the fiend with knives and is his knife-thrower and does tricks with swords. He supports them by the sharp point of his tongue. (Trans. Millet 2009)

relinquo uobis; pacem meam do uobis, þet is, ‘Sahtnesse Ich do imong ow; sahtnesse Ich leaue wið ow.’ (Millet *Ancrene Wisse* 4 94:59. 256-259).⁵

More importantly, he provides a colourful lexicon in his elaboration of the branches, or whelps, of each sin, developing Gregory’s concept of concatenation and highlighting the subtle variation and psychology of each sin for the purpose of better recognition, while supplying the imagination of the reader with a sympathetic understanding of the wealth of human frailty and potential complexity to be derived from each sin. For example, he includes within the ‘brood’ of the serpent Envy: ingratitude, rancour, malice, hatred, grieving at the good of another (jealousy), laughing or scoffing at another’s misfortune, exposing faults, backbiting and upbraiding or contempt:

Þe neddre of attri haued seouen hwelpes. *Ingratitudo*: þis cundel þret hwa-se his icnawen goddede, ah teled lutel þrof oðer forzet mid alle [...] Of þis unþeaw me nimeð too lutel zeme, ant is þah of alle an laðest Godd, ant meast azein his grace. Þe oðer cundel is *Rancor siue Odium*, þet is, heatunge oðer great hearte. Þe bret hit in breoste, al is attri to Godd þet he eauer wurched. Þe þridde cundel is Ofþunchunge of oþres god. Þe fearde, Gleadshippe of his uuel. Þe fifte, Wreiuunge. Þe sestet, Bacbitunge. Þe seouede Upbrud oðer Scarnunge. Þe eahtude is *Suspitio*: þet is, misortrowunge bi mon oðer bi wummon wiðuten witer tacne, þenchen, ‘þis semblant ha madeð, þis ha seid oðer ded, me forte gremien, hokerin oðer hearmin’ – and þet hwen þe oþer neauer þide[r]ward ne þenched. [...] Her-to limped alswa luðere neowe fundles ant leasunges ladliche þurh nið ant þurh onde. Þe nihed cundel is Sawunge of unsibsumnesse, of wreadde, ant of descorde. Þeo þe sawed þis deofles sed, ha is of Godd amanset. Þe teohede is Luðer Stilde, þe deofles silence, þer te an nule for onde spoken o þe oþer; ant þis spece is alswa cundel of wreadde, for hare teames beoð imengt ofte togederes (Millet *Ancrene Wisse* 4 76-77: 20. 308-335)⁶.

⁵ Our Lord’s last words when he ascended up to heaven and left his dear friends in a strange land were of sweet love and peace. *Pacem relinquo uobis pacem meam do uobis* (John 14.27) – that is, ‘I set peace among you, I leave peace with you.’ (Trans. Millet 2009)

⁶ The snake of poisonous envy has seven young. *Ingratitudo*: this offspring is bred by whoever does not acknowledge good deeds, but values them little or forgets them completely[...] Too little attention is given to this vice, and it is the one most hateful of all to God and most contrary to his grace. The

This list provides an idea of the dramatic richness any author might mine from such a work, with the added contribution to the development of character provided by the notion that the Sins and their subsets were progressive; each being borne out of another. There is, of course, no reason to suppose that Shakespeare or any of his contemporaries had any access to this particular work; but it illustrates well how rehearsal of these sin lexicons could develop a really useful internally referenced dramatic template with the added bonus of its being instantly recognisable by one's audience. This writer's psychological grasp of the essential humanity of the Sins is remarkable: he advises against attempting their total avoidance, suggesting that this in itself can lead to the sin of pride. Instead he advocates an understanding of humanity through experiencing temptation, prefiguring the later Calvinist view that 'virtue must prove its credentials in strenuous combat with its enemies, and in doing so must expose itself to something of their depraved power,' (Terry Eagleton 2010: 10).

Robert Mannyng of Brunne's rhymed popular penitential *Handlyng Synne* (c.1303) which is an originally free adaptation of the Anglo-French treatise *Manuel des Pechiez* follows a similar approach and is typical of the period, although perhaps less psychologically penetrating and more morally educational than *Ancrene Wisse* in tone. He categorises subsets of each of the Sins, defines them, and provides entertaining illustrations or exempla of the Sins drawn, not just from biblical sources, but from folk literature and history, fabliaux and chivalric tradition. Aimed at a different audience in order to divert common people from more morally dangerous

second offspring is *Rancor suie Odium* – that is, hatred or swollen heart. He who breeds this in the breast, to God all that he ever does is poisonous. The third offspring is Regret at Another's Good; the fourth, Gladness at his Harm; the fifth, Accusation; the sixth, Backbiting; the seventh, Reproaching or Deriding. The eighth is *Suspicio* lack of trust in a man or woman without certain evidence, thinking, 'She is making this pretence; she is saying (or doing) this to make me angry, mock me or harm me' – and that when the other one is never thinking of it.[...] to this pertain malicious new inventions and hateful lies produced by spite and envy. The ninth offspring is the sowing of Hostility, of Anger and of Discord. She who sows the Devil's seed is cursed by God. The tenth is Malicious Keeping of Silence – the devil's silence, the one for envy not being willing to speak about the other – and this kind is also the offspring of anger, for their progeny are often mixed together. (Trans. Millet 2009)

entertainment, this penitential concentrates on the activities of the ‘lewed’: tournaments come in for a particular drubbing, representing as they do for the writer all deadly sins rolled into one activity. The essence of the Sins’ literature in the vernacular is often what it can reveal about the writer’s picture of his own society: *Handlyng Synne* displays, ironically, an awareness and discomfort with the potential entertainment value of illustrating evil. In his railings against those activities which keep men from the service of God, in addition to the chivalric traditions, he includes the Miracle Play in any but the strictest religious context while at the same time, betraying his own ambiguity about sin and entertainment in the liveliness of his work:

hyt ys forbode hym, yn þe decree,
 Myracles for to make or se;
 For miracles 3yf þon bygynne,
 Hyt ys a gadering, a syght of synne;
 (Furnivall 1901: 4637-4640)

The Sins, it appears, come in many guises: in his exempla, he demonstrates their inherent ambiguity in distinguishing motive and action. It appears good can come from them, after the 1597 saying in found in *Tilley’s Proverbs* ‘Charity and Pride do both feed the poor’ (Arbor 1950:93). Among the stories told about greed in *Handlyng Synne* is the tale of Piers Toller the usurer, or tax collector who inadvertently saves his soul by throwing a loaf of bread at a beggar in anger (Furnivall 1901: 5573-5944).⁷ Even taking into account the popularity of rhyme for the purpose of mnemonics, this work is clearly written for amusement as well as self-enlightenment and it is obvious that despite his reservations regarding plays, the Sins and their narrative merit were too attractive to reject.

⁷ The story of St Peter the tax collector is one associated with the sin of anger. A sixth-century publican from Constantinople, Peter was appointed by Emperor Justinian to administer the Roman province of Africa. A cruel and angry person, Peter threw a piece of bread in fury at a beggar who had been asking him for alms, inadvertently saving him from starvation. In a near-death vision, he saw that this unintentionally kind result was the only good deed to balance against the many bad things he had done. This angry act had created good and ultimately saved his soul.

At the end of the fourteenth century, the Sins continued to be a mainstay of preaching and carried religious credibility for Chaucer's Parson, the sole moral character (P M Keane 1972: 227) in his collection of dubious religious pilgrims, to reject the option of secular entertainment and instead choose confession and the Sins as the main subject for his prose treatise despite indications that even at this stage, there may have been uneasiness about the popularity of the Sins over the Ten Commandments (Bossy 1990: 214-234). Chaucer's Parson gives detailed guidance on confession, thought to be translated in part by Chaucer from Latin originals, or possibly third hand, from a no longer extant French text. Taking each in order, he provides the traditional lexicon for the Sins, giving guidance as to how they can appear and what virtues are best to keep them at bay. The treatment is serious and avoids the comic 'sin' stereotypes enacted by his fellow pilgrims. In some cases, sloth, for example, he is more extensive than the more perfunctory definition of lack of church observance to be found in some priest's manuals and sermons, choosing to include indecision, inconstancy and despair. In the best tradition of confessional manuals, his advice displays a good understanding of human nature and extends to the highest and lowest in society, giving advice and guidance on good governance. The description of the Parson in *The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales* chimes with the very astute, humane character of the writer of the *Ancren Riwle*:

He was a shepherde and noght a mercenarye.

And thogh he hooly were and vertuous,

He was to synful men nat despitous,

Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,

But in his teching discret and benigne.

(Mann 2005: 22, 514-18)

Derek Pearsall and others have remarked on Chaucer's extensive use of the Sins in his portrayal of his pilgrims: Pearsall goes so far as to refer to Chaucer's 'plundering of this rich storehouse of quotations, sententious sayings, images, motifs and themes for the purposes of his imaginative writings,' noting in particular how the Wife of Bath's pride and the Merchant's lust in particular contribute greatly to their vivid characterisation (Pearsall 1985: 289-290). Some early critics (Frederick Tupper 1914: 93-128) had even attempted, not altogether successfully (John Livingstone Lowes 1915: 273-371), to suggest a framework for *The Canterbury Tales* based on

the Sins. The likelihood is that, as with Shakespeare, Chaucer also found it impossible to ignore the universally recognised and incisive semi-secular psychological resource provided by the self-examination of the confessional. As a writer who was concerned with the depiction of the whole of society, the Sins provided for him an opportunity to create a critique of his society within an acceptable religious construct and, like his Parson, without fear or favour:

But it were any persone obstinat,
 What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,
 Hym wolde he snybben sharply, for the nonis.

(Mann 2005: 22, 521-3)

Chaucer's decision to end *The Canterbury Tales* with this serious prose treatise, following it with what is known as 'The Retraction' in which he seems to be formally revoking all his 'translacions and enditynges of worldly vanities' in the light of the Parson's Tale may well be reflecting the contemporary discomfort with the secularisation of the Sins for literary purposes and, in the case of the Interludes, dramatic entertainment, as well as the obvious use he has made of them to criticise members of the church in his work. His decision to resist a rhymed tale for the Parson, even though the priests' manuals give him ample precedent, would suggest that he is utilising this last work as an apology to protect himself and his work from religious condemnation.

There are certainly fifteenth-century writings which contain evidence of a well-established irritation with the precedent and fascination often given to the Sins (Bossy 1990: 214-243). As has been demonstrated, the partiality the populace seemed to have for the non-scriptural Sins over the biblical Commandments was a matter of frustration for more than one cleric before the Reformation. As early as the latter half of the fifteenth century in the Scots *Ratis Raving*, a text in which a father gives moral advice to his son regarding the non-biblical nature of the Sins, Bloomfield suspects 'pop culture' is tainting the Sins' respectability; or perhaps it was the way in which they were increasingly used to expose the foibles of the church community. The son is irritably referred to confession books for clarification of the Seven Deadly Sins where, his father reminds him, also may be found the Ten Commandments which *God wrote with his own hands* (Bloomfield 1952: 219). Similarly Bishop Pecock in writing *The Donet* in the 1440s displays an albeit

pedantic dismissal of the nature of classification of the Sins, even when read with the ten commandments, while anticipating much humanist Renaissance argument in his discussion and reclassification of at least some of the Sins as human tendency (E V Hitchcock 1921: 104-107). He emphasises the importance for any study of vice to also include virtue:

And weel þou knowist bi þi philosophie þat a vice is never sufficientli
knowun but þoruȝ þe knowing of the vertu contrarie to þe same vice;

Rather than assuming, as Bloomfield does, that this evidences the decline of the Sins (Bloomfield 1952: 226); this level of denial and redefinition clearly speaks to the Sins' popularity, at least with the laity.

Piers Plowman (c1377), with its savage satire on clerical corruption could provide the clue as to why the religious establishment was becoming so uncomfortable with the Sins and their literary independence. As a social critique of corruption within the church, it links its lively and entertaining personification of the Sins in confession after the manner of the morality play, with the faults of the religious society portrayed in the narrator's 'Field of Folk' to produce a work aimed at exposing the instruments of social control, rather than individuals within it. The allegory proved enduring and can be found in several later critiques aimed at criticism of religious corruption including Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* written in 1511. Newhauser sees *Piers Plowman* as a 'key text' in demonstrating the link between the Reformation and their late medieval predecessors:

Though Langland stages the presentation of the personified sin-heptad in confession scenes, the drama, ironic misunderstandings, even humour of these vignettes move beyond the bounds of penitential literature properly so called. (Newhauser 2012: 80).

The late fifteenth-century poem by William Dunbar, *The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins*, written as an entertainment for the court of James IV, takes the satirical motif of the Sins out of the religious context found in *Piers Plowman* and applies it to both religious and court pretensions (Newhauser 2012: 182). This work draws heavily on sin iconography, presenting the vices as animals.

The most noteworthy literary transformation of the Sins comes with Gower's *Confessio Amantis* written in the late fourteenth century which, rather than using

literary devices to engage the reader of a religious work, reverses the process by utilising the framework of the confessional to produce a work of literature. In this work, which anticipates the humanist use of secular, classical literature to teach morality, Genius the confessor is the chaplain to Venus, often portrayed by medieval Christian culture as lust, and the confession is made by Amans, an ageing lover. Gower uses the framework of the confessional to tell a collection of shorter narrative poems grouped under the theme of each sin. Some of these tales are also to be found in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. As the work's title implies therefore, the bulk of the work is devoted to Amans' confession. Genius leads Amans through the Seven Deadly Sins, interpreting them in the context of the courtly love tradition. He explains the various aspects of each one with exempla, and requires Amans to detail any ways in which he has committed them. The design is that each book of the poem shall be devoted to one sin, and the first six books follow the traditional order for the first six sins: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, and gluttony. The model falters when the confession reaches lust and classical and Christian notions of love and lust collide. Here the ever flexible lexicon comes to Gower's assistance, providing the subset of incest, and the story of Antiochus as an example of lust which can be safely regarded as evil in both moral cultures. Although arguably moral and didactic in its purpose, by bringing together pagan classical literature with the chivalric tradition and a Christian confessional template *Confessio Amantis* is perhaps the clearest ever indication that the Sins have passed into cultural rather than ecclesiastical ownership. As one of the most copied manuscripts along with *The Canterbury Tales* and *Piers Plowman*, it is clear that as a literary format, the Sins caught the imagination of the time above all others.

The earliest surviving British wall paintings of the Seven Deadly Sins date from the first half of the fourteenth century, sometimes as the Tree of Vice or *Frau Welt*, a graphic representation of the Sins in a female form, on the walls of a church, as well as incorporating the Sins into the Dance of Death motif, as was probably the case in Shakespeare's own town on the wall of the Guildhall Chapel. Gill notes that the Seven Deadly Sins are included in a sculptural programme of the battle of the Vices and Virtues on the chapter house portal at Salisbury Cathedral (c1260-70) (Rosalie B Green 1968: 153-4). However, probably the most well-known iconographic representation of the Sins is the Prado *Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins*, generally

attributed to Hieronymus Bosch and his workshop and thought to have been completed around 1510 (Henry Luttikhuizen 2012: 261). In the centre of the work surrounding a central figure of Christ, in a wheel-like arrangement radiating out from the centre, are depicted scenes representing each sin. Luttikhuizen suggests that, rather than being intended as a piece of furniture, for which there is no archival evidence, the design of the panel was deliberately circular in order to emphasise the circular, repetitive nature of sin, with one sin leading off another (Luttikhuizen 2012: 262-263). This makes it unusual in its representation of the Sins as it does not offer any hierarchy, or root sin such as pride. Each scene is a good example of the range or sub-set of sins within each category, such as those elucidated by Chaucer's Parson: there is a strong sense of the sin lexicon in the way the vignettes portray a selection of wrong-doing associated with each sin. The scenes deal with all walks of life: Laura Gelfand has even suggested that certain sins are more frequently associated with a particular type or social status (2007: 229-256) often with the worst or most culpable offenders being those depicted with wealth, position and status and from whom a greater level of propriety might be expected. Avarice, for example, highlights corruption in the law, depicting a judge taking bribes but also including those who are offering the bribes and those in the profession who are turning a blind eye. However, John Bossy chooses to interpret the lessening of the sins of concupiscence, and the emphasis on pride and envy, to be rather related to keeping the lower orders in their place (Bossy 1985: 35-36). Luttikhuizen has also pointed out the manner in which the vignettes demonstrate the concatenation of sins by including within the scene the suggestion of another sin brought about, or about to be brought about, by indulgence in the first:

Although the seven vices are separated in the painting by the spokes, their meanings often overlap, reinforcing the notion that one sin can easily lead to another. The deadly sins are not radically isolated from one another.

(Luttikhuizen 2012: 271).

The panel provides a reflection as to the level of interpretive subtlety and variety to which confessional or Sin literature has developed by the sixteenth century.

As the inheritor of sin iconography, metaphorical didacticism and religious and political critique, it seems appropriate to deal with the work which Bloomfield holds up as indicative of the death of the tradition of the deadly sins: the procession of the

Vices in Book One and the manifestation of the Sins in Book two of *The Faerie Queene*. The elaborate but static treatment of the seven deadly sins reflects the highly iconographic and archaic nature of Spenser's work. He disowns the Sins in the same way as Protestant preachers to provide religious polemic by presenting the Sins as essentially Catholic, but nevertheless continues to utilise them in order to provide a current political and moral commentary. Newhauser summarises:

The procession [...] presents an ostentatious display of the iconography of the vices [...] as he also embellishes the pageant with some of the potential for social criticism [...]. In particular, the royal court is implicated in the highly decorated pageantry of the vices, and in one instance it is referenced explicitly (*FQ* I iv 23) when Gluttony is said to be unfit to belong to a royal council.[...] Spenser's use of the sin-heptad, then, is rightfully seen as typical of the end of the seven deadly sins tradition in sacramental Catholic theology. But more important, it depicts one more step in the process of reception, adaptation and change [...] (Newhauser 2012: 186-188).

In addition to Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, there were other works published towards the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, all of which could be loosely placed within a category of moral literary composition and which were perfectly comfortable in drawing upon the structure and literary heritage of the Sins. William Baldwin's *Treatise of morall philosophy* (1547), which contained a compilation of commonplaces including a listing of the seven deadly sins and virtues, was re-issued on a large scale (Skinner 2014: 297). Thomas Lodge's prose work, *Wit's miserie and the world's madnesse: discovery in Devil's incarnat of this Age* (1596), allocates a named devil to each sin and discusses the many categories of each deadly sin much in the same way as the author of *Ancrene Wisse*, presenting them as progeny of the central sin. Thomas Nashe's moral satirical prose work, *Pierce Penniless*, uses the structure of the deadly sins to construct a critique of society and other nations' characteristics. John Lane's semi-satirical verse critique of contemporary London, *Tom Tel-Troth's Message, and his pens complaint* (1600), is structured around the seven deadly sins and also includes some of the remedial or contrary virtues. Dekker's plague pamphlet, *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606), deploys the visual construct of a parade of the Sins, adapted

to the particular iniquities of the city, and Samuel Rowlands' satirical verse collection, *The Four Knaves* (1611) includes, in addition to several verses dedicated to individual sins, the poem 'Seaven Deadly Sins all Horst and Riding to Hell' which presents the Sins in a mock parade which echoes that of Spenser but replaces the medieval pageantry and archaic language with doggerel in which all the commons vices of the age are exposed:

Lust on a goat, after her sister Pride,
The selfe-same journey doth, consorted, ride,
Rich in attire, all outward lives to sin;
Full of diseases and the pox within.
(*The Four Knaves* 1843: 115)

1.7 From Vice to vice: allegory and the development of mimetic tragic character. The Sins and the psyche.

From their inception, the confessional guides tended to represent the Sins in concrete form, sign or personification. Perhaps it was easier and less culpable to conceive of being persuaded or 'overcome' by a sin than to own to its creation. The Virtues, whether Aquinas' list which combines the theological faith, hope and charity with the four classical virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice, or Prudentius' scheme of contrary virtues including humility, kindness, abstinence, chastity, patience, liberality and diligence, are less frequently represented in this way. Their role as a moderator or active agent rather than a motive or driver tends to cast them as tools of control rather than independent entities.

The culture that developed the Sins' lexicon and created the visual dynasty of the Sins as a dramatic iconography of animals, devils and other concrete manifestations capable of speaking for themselves, as well as the tendency to allegorise from the pulpit (Owst 1933: 56-109; Wenzel 2005: 145-169; Holly Johnson 2012: 107-131) inevitably led to their early exploitation as dramatic allegory. While the biblical mystery plays largely developed from the ritual of the Mass, the moralities came from the allegorical sermon tradition. Consequently the appearance of the Sins in the *N-town* or mystery plays is more limited. Rosemary Woolf has identified the *Ludus Coventriae*; the Townley Noah's enumeration of the Sins and their appearance in the

hybrid Digby Play of *Mary Magdalene* (Woolf 1972: 278, 132, 239). Spivack identifies the first major use of allegory in English drama as the Paternoster Plays which, in representing the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer as remedies against the Seven Deadly Sins, hold vice up for public scorn (Spivack 1958: 60). *The Castle of Perseverance* written in the first quarter of the fifteenth century represents an early version of morality play which follows more closely a pattern of penitential theology, involving the personifications *Confessio* and *Penetencia*. Man is described by the Good Angel as 'set in sevene synnes sete' and the Good Angel and the Seven Virtues argue against the Seven Deadly Sins. Newhauser reads a dramatic breaking away from the sacramental tradition in the psychomachic battle between vices and contrary virtues. He cites John of Reading's Chronicle for 1362 which describes tournaments planned in London under Edward III in which one group of knights was to joust using the disguise of the seven deadly sins (Newhauser 2012: 175). The *Psychomachia* inspired didactic drama which provided a moral definition of life, a psychological method and an artistic motif capable of holding a mirror up to medieval and early modern society. As Helen Cooper puts it, 'It coupled psychological analysis with what amounted to moral propaganda, ultimately a Christian urging of salvation' (Cooper 2013: 106). These morality plays and Interludes were hugely popular, often rivalling the mystery plays. In the same way that the amusing exempla aimed at 'lewed men' in confessional literature often meant that secular entertainment took precedence over religious edification, so the dramatic representation of the Sins marked a subtle shift from religious to lay ownership and eventually from personification to psychology. In a sense the lay population had been prepared for this through their training in moral and psychological self-assessment in confession. It is this 'disconnection from a purely sacramental significance' as Newhauser describes it, which is one of the keys to the longevity of the Sins in the Middle Ages (Newhauser 2012: 174). Helen Cooper sees it dramatically and linguistically as a gradual integration of 'ethical qualities' via the moralities into mimetic drama:

The move away from a predominantly external or mythographic process of treating the immaterial as real towards using it for psychological exploration had been underway throughout the Middle Ages, and was taken further in the sixteenth century. (Cooper 2013:103).

Once the Sins became identified dramatically as personified identities, they also became more detached in terms of causal link and more appealing. Doctrinally, evil has always been difficult to place in terms of its relationship to God and a God-created universe. As Eagleton observes, evil is often thought to be its own cause, and in that sense is set apart, self-generating, ‘Apart from Evil, only God is said to be the cause of himself’ (Eagleton 2010: 4). This can make it, as Milton found, powerful, intriguing and attractive, particularly once the Sin becomes seen as an intrinsic part of the sinner’s psyche, in a struggle with virtuous intention for the sinner’s soul.

The gradual change in ownership of the Sins from the spiritual to the secular and political is mapped out by the progression Spivack observes in the morality play genre which, he claims, mirrors the whole secular revolution of the Renaissance. He identifies a shift of emphasis in terms of content from spiritual to secular values while maintaining the didactic format. At the same time he sees this shift as mirrored by ‘the gradual substitution of history for allegory’ through the move away from an allegorical plot, peopled by personifications and type figures to a mimetic plot, real or imaginary containing literal personages. In particular, he links this move to what he sees as a humanist religious and societal shift away from heavenly, or purgatorial judgement to one where punishment is manifest in terms of earthly success or failure (Spivack 1958: 62-67). So the morality play, and with it, its star performers, the Sins or vices, shifts in emphasis from Christian eschatology with its contempt for the world and concentration on the post-mortem destiny of the soul, to consideration of human life in its own terms of success or failure. This is also the case for the Protestant morality plays characteristic of the period 1560 to 1580 such as *Enough is as Good as a Feast* in which Heavenly Man is given worldly success prior to his salvation and Worldly Man endures pain and illness on earth with no promise of salvation afterwards. These homiletic tragedies call for punishment and damnation for the unrepentant sinner. Thomas Lupton’s *All for Money* (1577) also incorporates the Calvinistic notion of predestination by demonstrating the distinction between those ‘chosen’ and those not. The concept of grace is embodied in the speech of Judas as he is tormented by Damnation in Hell:

But had I had grace to have asked mercie therefore
And repented my faulte as Peter did before,
I should have been pardoned as other sinners be,

And accounted no sinner,
 (*All for Money* ii 1454-57)

‘Deadly’ can therefore maintain in essence the quality of damnation without regard to denomination. It also applies in a purely secular context in the modern sense of ‘doomed’.

As the morality play begins to lose the defined landscape of man as the earthly battleground on which the Sins battle for his soul, the character of Man, ‘man the felde’ (*The Assemble of Goddes*, c.1480) loses his place within the allegory. Spivack observes that he ‘is not a personification but a universalized type; and he is placed in the position, absurd from the viewpoint of allegory, of fraternizing with his personified attributes’ (1958: 92-93). In Henry Medwall’s *Nature* (c1495), as his Reason and Sensuality fight it out, his only role is one of commentator. Once this struggle is internalised the psyche becomes the battleground and man’s comment becomes the voicing of internal thought, that is, the soliloquy. Similarly as the morality play increasingly portrays the Sins as competing with and exposing one another, the already dramatically weak personification of Virtue becomes unnecessary, a trend Shakespeare eventually reverses with his articulate, active female ‘virtue’ figures. ‘While the virtues talked, the vices acted, and their physical exuberance and verbal pungency transmuted the pious monotony of the homily into the profane excitement of the play’ (Spivack 1958: 123). In *Nature* Envy intrigues against Pride, Man’s favourite, tricking him into retreat by threatening him with Anger. Plots therefore become more complex with intrigue supplanting the metaphoric battle (Spivack 1958: 112). Much is made of the personifications of the Sins who boastfully speak of their own capacity to be seen as good. This is the first drama in which the disguise of vice as a virtue is acted out on stage and not simply described (J A Alford 1995: 151-157). Greed, for example, emulating her antecedent in the *Psychomachia*, disguises her grim nature by assuming the affable countenance and modest clothing of Thrift, pride becomes Worship and Wrath becomes Manhood. As they become increasingly internalised, secularised and reflective of societal priorities, what was seen as dangerous disguise becomes an ambiguous, merged psychology. Jane K Brown identifies the development as a gradual coming together of three strands: Aristotelianism, Renaissance Neo-Platonism and the indigenous tradition of the morality play (Brown 2009: 46). In the later Interludes

honour, wealth and fame become increasingly prominent as rewards for virtue. The potential for obfuscation identified as early as Gregory's *Moralia*, 'For cruelty is frequently exercised with punishing sins, and it is counted justice, and immoderate anger is believed to be the meritoriousness of righteous zeal' (J Bliss 1847: xxxii, 545), becomes Nicholas Ling's 'every vice hath a cloak and creepeth in under the name of vertue' (1597: 272) and Dekker's 'All Vices maske themselves with the vizards of Vertue [...] the better and more currently to pass without suspicion' (*The Bellman of London*, 1608). The Sins, at this stage, more than ever become subject to the kind of ambiguity and political hypocrisy which is the stuff of great dramatic intrigue:

The condemnation of pride and vainglory, for example, had been a basic part of Christian teaching since its beginnings, but humanists correctly saw that reviving ancient traditions of public virtue would be impossible without also reviving the ancient prizes of fame and glory. So rewards of virtue were transposed from the next life to this. (James Hankins 1996: 125).

Once the morality play moves into the mid-sixteenth century, the inner struggle of the merged psychology is further emphasised by practical staging requirements. Spivack (1958: 140) effectively makes the case for the dramatic necessity due to stage restrictions and plot requirements for there to be one Vice, who is the major intriguer and who assumes the multiple persona of all or some of the Sins. Limitation of actors in travelling troupes combined with dramatic economy and clarity as the plays shifted away from the *Psychomachia* led to the development of the Vice, his easy familiarity and confidence-sharing with his audience making him beloved to the extent that he remains 'in the memory of the generation that outlived his active career'. The Sins, flexible as ever, complement this arrangement, as their religious history of breeding one from another sits well within the multiple personality of the Vice. Spivack (1958:132) is careful to disassociate the Vice from the Devil; he cites Charles M Gayley's evaluation of the Vice:

The Vice is neither an ethical nor dramatic derivative of the Devil [he] is allegorical – typical of the moral frailty of mankind. Proceeding from the concept of the Deadly Sins, ultimately focussing them, he dramatizes the evil that springs from within. (Gayley 1903-14: li-lii).

This makes him more than adequately prepared to cross from allegorical to mimetic drama where he becomes the villain, often speaking directly to the audience of his plans in a foreshadow of the dramatic soliloquy. This is a point taken up by Eagleton in his observation of Shakespeare's plays: 'In Shakespearean drama, those who claim to depend upon themselves alone, claiming sole authorship of their own being, are almost always villains' (Eagleton 2010: 12). This it seems particularly applies to the sin of anger, which finds in Renaissance Senecan revenge tragedy a genre all to itself.

Helen Cooper draws attention to the inherited 'slither' in mimetic drama between personification and idiom or syntax in a sixteenth-century dramatic language inherited from the medieval: the difference in Shakespeare's work, she suggests, between a visual and imaginative psychological characterisation and a personification can sometimes be a mere matter of capitalisation (Cooper 2013: 107-108). Through the evolving genre of the morality play, then, the Sins move from soul drama to psyche drama, with the tragic ending transferring from its post mortem struggle to an earthly resolution and the union of Sins and man concentrating on motive as well as action. This enables the Sins to be reflected in many mirrors: Catholic, Protestant, humanist and political and to increase opportunities for endless moral obfuscation and ambiguity, what Spivack describes as when 'the playwright's ascetic left hand is largely ignorant of what his very worldly right hand is doing,' (1958: 211).

As a dramatic concept, evidence suggests the Sins were also still popular in general theatre throughout the reign of Elizabeth I. Richard Tarlton is known to have written a popular, but lost, play on the Seven Deadly Sins which is thought to have been staged in Oxford c.1585 and was seen and recorded by Gabriel Harvey (Andrew Gurr 1996: 210). There is also a surviving 'platt' or plot, known as 'The Platt of The Secound parte of the Seuen Deadlie Sinns' which provides an outline of the second part of a two-part performance on the Sins delivered by means of a framing device in which the poet Lydgate presents to Henry VI three playlets about envy, lechery and sloth. Until relatively recently, this was believed to be from the Tarlton play; however Scott McMillin (1989: 53-62) has cast some doubt on the original assumptions made by Chambers (1930) and Greg (1931) and suggests that

this may be another play, possibly owned and performed by the Chamberlain's Men at a later date, possibly when Shakespeare was one of the company. This is a view which has more recently been strongly supported with a further suggestion that the play was performed in London in the period 1597-8 (D Kathman 2004: 13-44). What is clear, however, is that the dramatic concept of the Sins was still in the collective conscious of the theatre-going public at the turn of the century.

Of Shakespeare's contemporaries, the most notable extant use of the Sins in a dramatic context is that of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, probably written around 1590. Of particular interest as proof of the Sins' literary survival is the fact that the Morality-like pageant, in which the seven deadly sins are presented to the spiritually wavering Faustus as a form of distraction or entertainment, was not part of the original source material. Clearly then, to Marlowe and his audience, the Sins continued to be a recognisable iconography within the theatre.

The presentation of the personified Sins to Faustus by Lucifer within the context of *Doctor Faustus* is somewhat problematic. Presented as they are, lacking in the iconographic representation or doctrinal subtlety of language that might be expected from a traditional morality or Vice function, the Sins reflect more the contemporary social satire to be found in Dekker's *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606) or Rowland's satirical *The Four Knaves* (1611).

The objective of the pageant appears to be to distract or persuade Faustus away from his expressed desire for marriage, a religious ceremony which represents a continued desire by Faustus to recognise the laws of God and Heaven. Lucifer wishes to reaffirm Faustus's contract and allegiance to himself and Hell. However, there is little sense of psychomachic struggle and, as Douglas Cole observes, the Sins display none of the traditional signs of active agency in attempting to convert or persuade Faustus, nor do they attempt to present or disguise themselves as virtues. Faustus does not appear to recognise them, requiring each one to name himself, and his response to each sin is rather perfunctory, almost dismissive. Cole argues that Faustus delights in them, and by association, their evil, basing his argument on Faustus's assertion that they feed (or delight, in the B-text) his soul:

Faustus does not even get the dubious credit of being attracted to evil under the apparent guise of good: he delights in it for what it really is, [...]

Faustus, therefore, needs no deception to lead him to sin; he is his own worst deceiver, his own worst enemy, his own worst tempter. (Cole 1962: 237)

Other critical works,⁸ and some productions, have chosen to interpret Faustus's encounter with the Sins as terrifying, arguing that their appearance is intended to intimidate him into compliance with his contract with Lucifer. These readings assume Faustus's apparent delight with the sins is ironic affectation as he confronts his damnation. Either way, the exchange is an uncomfortable one, but one which symbolically marks Faustus's moral descent via the concatenation of the deadly sins. As David Bevington asserts (1995: 7), Faustus does embrace each of the sins at various times in the course of the play. While it is easy to see that the scene could be interpreted as a comic exchange with a parade of deadly sins that have, as Newhauser asserts, 'become loosened from a sacramental and penitential environment' (2012: 179) providing an almost secular, certainly anti-Catholic, polemical satire, the fact that Faustus claims that they have fed his soul remains puzzling. Thomas Healy has observed:

The sins are a wonderful piece of circus-like frivolity that it is difficult to imagine any production playing as sinister, let alone weighty. Faustus's response seems in an inappropriate register (Healey 2004: 185).

What appears more convincing, given the nature of Faustus's terse, assertive exchange with the deadly sins, is that it is the sight of the Sins being dispatched to Hell which actually feeds his soul, providing him with a sense of control or superiority over sin. Lucifer is quick to feed this sense of control by reinforcing Faustus's compulsive desire for knowledge with another book. By this action, Faustus's attention is again deflected from repentance. It is the book which symbolises Faustus's fateful sin.

⁸ See WW Greg 'The damnation of Faustus' (*MLR* 41 1946: 97-107). Malcolm Kersall also considers Faustus's reaction to the Sins is ironic (*Christopher Marlowe* 1981: 173).

The most interesting aspect of Marlowe's use of the Sins and that which connects it more closely to Shakespeare's dramatic use of the Sins is the way in which Faustus's descent into damnation is brought about by a particular sin which, traditionally, leads to all others. That sin is sloth, notably reticent in revealing himself to Faustus during the pageant, and as will be seen in later discussion, a sin which carries with it considerably more complexity than the act of physical idleness with which it is later associated. It is, in particular, the sin of the scholar, and can be traced back to Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. The combination of *acedia* and *tristia* created a sin which embodied aspects of laziness, indecision, over-hastiness, dereliction of religious or worldly duty, moral cowardice, depression and suicidal despair (an unforgiveable sin). It was also key to Faustus's downfall, known to be an enabling sin, allowing access or giving birth to, the other sins. Sloth is a sin which Bacon associates with obsessive learning (1972: 150), often also associated with the academic scepticism and atheism characterised in Faustus's lack of belief. In his essay on atheism Bacon portrays a clever, talkative man whose knowledge is more of the lip than the heart (1972: 49). Joseph T McMullen establishes a connection between Marlowe's protagonist and the sin of sloth, correctly identifying the essential characteristics of sloth as seen by Renaissance and medieval learning as being indicative of one for whom the purpose of learning is dispute and who is prone to irresolution and despair. He sees a close correlation between them and the character of Faustus:

Through the conduct of Faustus, [Marlowe] presented sloth as the well-spring of intellectual and spiritual blindness [...] and maintained the powerful intensity of the action through the inclination of Faustus to despair of God's mercy, (1956: 9).

McMullen rightly emphasises the medieval and Renaissance understanding of sloth as misdirected or corrupted intellectual energy coupled with lack of personal conviction or insight:

Even though very active, a man may be the victim of sloth [...] and no matter how much information he may gather, he remains deficient in a mastery of ethical principles needed to guide his life and sustain his faith (1956: 9).

Faustus attempts to gain what Sherman Hawkins describes as ‘omnipotence through omniscience’ (1966: 193) but instead sinks deeper through the Sins, ending with the worldly sin of lust in an attempt to block out his spiritual despair. Steeped in sloth, he continues to be troubled by despair while constantly deferring the day of repentance through indecision. Throughout the play, his obsession with time and time passing also marks him as a victim of sloth. The similarity between this character, based on sloth and that of Hamlet, and by association, Richard II, has been observed by Emily Bartels (1993: 115-117). This step towards the interiorisation of character by means of the Sins is an important dramatic progression away from the more static iconographic display of the sins pageant and indicative of the way in which Shakespeare makes use of the Sins in dramatic structure and character development.

1.8 Christian humanism: moral reading and the role of the Sins

The deployment of classical learning within Christian didacticism may have been made new by the Renaissance, but the rhetorical devices of ‘auctoritee’ and ‘exemplum’ were very familiar to Gower, Chaucer and their religious contemporaries as essential illustrative and sometimes entertaining digressions in works of both literary and strictly moral character. Gower’s extensive use of pagan and classical sources plus the appropriation of the structure of the Sins within the confessional to his literary construct in the *Confessio Amantis* indicates the comfort with which the later medieval writer used non-Christian sources for moral purpose. The schematic organisation of quotations often gathered under headings related to the Seven Deadly Sins and Cardinal Virtues for the purposes of referencing writing and sermons has been traced by Ann Moss as far back as the thirteenth century (Moss 1996: 27-31).

As Renaissance Neo-Platonism began to replace the Aristotelianism of Saint Thomas Aquinas, attempts were made to join the great works of antiquity with Christian values in a syncretic Christian humanism. The new humanist focus on a classical education and its shift of purpose from training for the church to the more general acquisition of classical training and cultural knowledge was embraced by both Catholic and Protestant scholarship, as both recognised the political power of

the classroom. The new humanist pedagogy worked hard within its conservative environment to reconcile the Christian suspicion of reason and worldly matters with the classical reverence for physical beauty and clarity of thought. What emerged was an emphasis on equipping the individual with the ability and knowledge to acquire, as asserted by Pico della Mirandola in 1486, ‘the power, in accordance with the judgement of your soul to be reborn into the higher orders, those that are divine’ (Borghesi *et al* 2012: S23, 117).

Just as Eamon Duffy’s research exposes the lack of uniformity in an often indifferent, and certainly stubborn, nation’s conformance to Protestant reformation, and scholars also acknowledge that the post-Reformation religious environment probably owed as much to state intervention and political interest as to ideology, so recent scholarship is uncovering a somewhat muddled picture of early modern English humanism. In his summary of the historiography of English humanism, Ian Green outlines the modern tendency to recognise a greater blurring of edges between medieval scholasticism and Northern European humanism (Green 2009: 11). He acknowledges the view of Paul Oskar Kristeller that although Early Modern England would have had clerics and teachers ‘with a humanist classical and rhetorical training who explicitly discussed religious or theological problems in all or some of their writing,’ that there would also have been many grammar school teachers and educated laity who ‘accepted the teachings of Christianity [...] without necessarily discussing religious or theological topics in their literary or scholarly writings’ (Kristeller 1961: 86-87). In short the political, religious and literary landscape was capable of both recognising and exploiting the power of education whilst at the same time striving to remain unexposed in matters of political and religious currency.

Peter Mack’s detailed analysis and thorough evaluation of curriculum content, teaching and learning in the Elizabethan grammar school provides a fascinating insight as to how this flexibility may have been achieved. As morality and ethics provided a common ground between classical philosophy and Christianity, and as the parental, societal and political expectation that schooling should include a strong dose of moral training has not changed since schools were invented, the ‘transferable skill’ taught to the Elizabethan schoolboy may have been the application of rhetoric, but the ‘knowledge’ was moral and generally referenced to Christian interpretation.

The classical grounding undertaken by boys in the better grammar schools, of which Stratford was one, was therefore delivered within a context which Erasmus, Sturm, Ascham, Brinsley and the founders of the grammar school agreed should be one which promoted religion and moral virtue as well as wisdom and eloquence, and which linked all four (Mack 2002: 12-47). Within this environment, the Sins, with their combination of classical and Christian pedigree, continued to provide a useful non-denominational moral reference point. Any translation of the classics was at pains to justify its content in terms of Christian moral values, as in Golding's 1567 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which he draws heavily on the Sins in his dedicatory epistle to the Earl of Leicester to create his morally didactic intention:

The use of this same booke therefore is this: that every man
 (Endevouring for to know himself as neerly as he can),
 As though he in a chariot sat well ordered, should direct
 His mind by reason in the way of virtue, and correct
 His fierce affections with the bit of temprance, lest perchance
 They, taking bridle in the teeth, like wilful jades do prance
 Away and headlong carry him to every filthy pit
 Of vice and, drinking of the same, defile his soul with it:
 Or else do headlong harry him upon the rocks of sin
 And, overthrowing forcibly the chariot he sits in,
 Do tear him worse than ever was Hippolytus, the son
 Of Theseus, when he went about his father's wrath to shun.
 This worthy work in which of good examples are so many,
 (*Metamorphoses, Epistle of 1567: 569-581*)

And to justify morally his reader's attention to its pagan content, he recasts the gods as the stereotyped sinners of the morality play penitentials. As personifications of the Christian deadly sins, the classical gods convey the moral education to be drawn from the classical mythology:

But as there is no Christian man that can surmise in mind
 That these or other such are gods, which are no gods by kind,
 So would to God there were not now of Christian men professed
 That worshipped in their deeds these gods whose names they do detest.
 Whose laws we keep, his thralls we be, and he our god indeed.
 So long is Christ our god as we in Christian life proceed;

But if we yield to fleshly lust, to lucre or to wrath,
 Or if that envy, gluttony, or pride the mastery hath,
 Or any other kind of sin, the thing the which we serve
 To be accounted for our god most justly doth deserve.
 Then must we think the learned men that did these names frequent
 Some further things and purposes by those devices meant.
 By Jove and Juno understand all states of princely port;
 By Ops and Saturn ancient folk that are of elder sort;
 By Phoebus young and lusty brutes of hand and courage stout;
 By Mars, the valiant men of war that love to fight it out;
 By Pallas and the famous troop of all the Muses nine,
 Such folk as in the sciences and virtuous arts do shine;
 By Mercury the subtle sort that use to filch and lie,
 With thieves, and merchants who to gain their travail do apply;
 By Bacchus, all the meaner trades and handicrafts are meant;
 By Venus, such as of the flesh to filthy lust are bent;
 By Neptune, such as keep the seas; by Phoebe maidens chaste
 And pilgrims such as wanderingly their time in travel waste;
 (*Metamorphoses, Preface to the Reader: 47-70*)

The universities approached their teaching in accordance with the disciplines of humanism: students were expected ‘to discover arguments, to form syllogisms, to organise sequences of argument, to define words and distinguish shades of meaning, to read dialectically, to declaim and to take part in disputations’ (Mack 2002: 2). However, to acquire the resource for this level of productive eloquence, it was necessary to concentrate grammar school training on the more receptive skills of deconstruction, listing and sorting and learning by rote, with moral training serving as the impetus: ‘School pupils were trained to extract moral sentences from their reading and use them in their writing, to analyse and compose moral narratives, to collect historical examples illustrating ethical principles’ (Mack 2002: 2). They were also encouraged to do the same with the sermons preached at church (William Baldwin 1944: 1 346). This was achieved largely through the discipline of the commonplace book.

1.9 The Commonplace Book and its role in moral ‘framing’

Commonplace books were ‘the principal support system of humanist pedagogy’ (Ann Moss 1996: vii). This was particularly true of grammar school training where pupils were expected to fashion and maintain their own commonplace books. At this stage in a pupil’s schooling their commonplace books would be exclusively written in Latin, although it is possible a master might have encouraged boys to do the same with their vernacular reading, in particular, The Bible. Commonplacing would consist of grouping quotations and scraps of information under particular headings to be used in referencing the pupils’ own compositions. Whilst the commonplace books of learned scholars could, and did, cover ambitious and highly specialised topics, the grammar school curriculum dictated by Melanchthon and others required that those of the schoolboy were based on an initial study of ‘the moral life of man as an individual and social being [...] divided into sections under heads listing the main virtues and vices, and all their subsidiary manifestations’ (Moss 1996: vii). Charles Hoole’s mid-seventeenth century treatise on grammar school education, *A new discovery of the olde art of teaching schoole*, summarises:

[...] let everyone take one of those books fore-mentioned, and see what he can find in it for his purpose, and write it down under one of the heads in his Commonplace book [...] and thus they may always have store of matter for invention ready at hand, which is far beyond what their own wit is able to conceive. (Hoole 1661: 183).

Even before the humanist educators utilised the commonplace book and the practice of commonplacing as a form of social and moral ‘framing’, the most common use of topic, what Lechner calls *locus communis* (Lechner 1962: 201) was that which identified forms of virtue and vice. As Moss also demonstrates, however, what began in the Middle Ages as a collection of *florilegia*, exempla or ‘auctoritee’ became something altogether more thought-provoking and creative for the Renaissance schoolboy (Moss 1996: 136). It was also, as Kevin Sharpe tellingly suggests, habit-forming for the future reader:

The experience of reading for most boys was, it is not too much to say, the practice of commonplacing. (Sharpe 2000: 277).

As Lechner has indicated from her study of works of rhetoric produced in the Renaissance, commonplaces and commonplacing had strong association with the order and amplification of concepts of good and evil, notably collected and represented as categories of vice and virtue (Lechner 1962: 102-103). In particular, the commonplace would focus on opposing descriptions or ideas for the purpose of emphasis. Richard Sherry, writing in 1550, emphasises the inter-dependence of vice and virtue:

They are called commonplaces, because thei be entreated of, of bothe partes, althoughe not all one cause.

Lyk to thys sorte be sentences, whyche wee exaggerate as it were wythoute the cause, but so that they serve so the cause whiche we have in hande: as bee the amplification of vertues, and the exaggeracions of vices [...] A common place shall bee, wyth wordes to exaggerate howe much it profiteth to keepe goodnesse, to bee in companye wyth good men, and contrarye howe great myschefe the companye of evil men dothe cause.

(Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, 72).

The Renaissance schoolboy was engaged in a reading exercise in which his commonplace book was used as an interpretive tool or grid (Hamlet refers to his ‘tables’) for selecting, as Mary Thomas Crane characterises, the ‘flowers of morality and heretical thorns’ (Crane 1993: 76). Schoolboys were unlikely to be given complete texts for translation and study. It is more likely that schoolmasters provided selected excerpts.

The chosen texts for study in humanist schools, as Crane suggests, reflected the requirement to feed the underlying pedagogical structure of moral ‘framing’: Aesop’s fables, *The Distichs of Cato* and Lily’s *Carmen de maribus* were enhanced in the latter part of school education by the addition of Virgil’s *Eclogues*, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Cicero’s Letters and Erasmus, as well as selections from Sallust and Caesar. The likelihood is that, rather than studied as a whole, the appointed texts were used to extract fragments appropriate to the commonplace headings which ‘drove’ the moral study. Margot Todd, in a study which incorporates university students, concurs, finding those authors most and consistently used by students to be those whose moral outlook is more in line with Christian humanist thought (Todd 1987: 85).

The Sins, as the main categories of vice, therefore often figured as classification, or even more: ‘The seven deadly sins provided the interpretive grid for a pupil’s first reading of pagan authors, and nothing in the *Flores Poetarum* hints that the poets of Antiquity speak in any way differently from Latin poets of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries’ (Moss 1996: 38). They were, in effect, a syncretic tool in the humanist attempt to merge the classics with Christianity, and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* was one of the key texts in this exercise for grammar school boys. The Catholic background of the Sins seems never to have profoundly altered their perceived usefulness as heads for commonplacing. They can still be found listed as individual vices in Milton’s own commonplace book (Ruth Mohl 1969: 55).

However much the directed intention was towards moral ‘framing’, the process of taking out the kernel and making it your own (Bacon, *A Collection of Apophthegms*, 1625: Preface 3) must be therefore taken into account in any individual response and interpretation: such a process would consistently throw up ambiguities and contradictions to the perceptive reader:

There was an ambiguity at the heart of commonplacing to which some scholars have paid too little attention. For though what the compiler copied was extracted from a common storehouse of wisdom, the manner in which extracts were copied, arranged, juxtaposed, cross-referenced or indexed was personal and individual [...] Individual practices of selection, transcription and organisation, and still more personal notions of ‘use’, made the commonplace book not only an individual act of writing but a personal construction of meaning. (Sharpe 2000: 278).

This meant that the method of collecting material and re-presenting it under specific headings and within particular contexts was just as likely to throw up moral contradictions as confirm moral platitudes in the mind of the compiler. Arguably, any source to be used for dramatic realisation which has come through the moral reprocessing exercise of commonplacing can only be interpreted in the context of that individual collection of observation and references rather than from the original work.

Lynne Enterline's psychoanalytic study of practices in rhetoric and drama, whilst sometimes highly speculative in its assumptions of the traumatic effect of classical humanist education on late sixteenth century pupils and, by association, Shakespeare, does highlight the tendency of pedagogical approach to include the encouragement of imitation (Halpern 1991: 29), impersonation or even empathy towards figures of classical history and literature in addition to moral evaluation through reading and translation. She also argues that this process of education, with theatre as a 'ubiquitous presence' (Enterline 2012: 41) did not always produce the intended consequences, that is the social conformance and moral training that humanist schoolmasters intended (Enterline 2012: 24-25). This accords with the concept of unintended outcome ascribed by Sharpe to moral reading and commonplacing. She suggests that the practice of declamatory technique in school, by assuming the persona of a character and delivering his or her speeches coupled with the extrapolation of emotion that the exercise might bring about, might add a dimension of individual insight to schoolroom learning which would extend beyond the compilation and cross-referencing of a commonplace book. Enterline cites Lorich's immensely popular Latin translation of the fourth century Greek sophist Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*, a manual of exercises in rhetoric used in the grammar schools which concludes with the direction that a student should 'consult Plutarch's *Life*' for homework to find 'the words Cleopatra would have spoken over Antony's tomb' (Enterline 2012: 137). The practice of declaiming, used with moral reading, was closely associated with that of acting, and both were in evidence in the humanist schoolroom:

In several ordinances, 'declame' and 'play' are virtual synonyms. The Shrewsbury ordinances declare that 'Everie Thursdaie scholars 'shall for exercise *declame and plaie* one act of a comedie,' while St Saviour's grammar School in Southward [sic] required in 1614, that 'on play days the highest Form shall *declaim* and some of the inferior Forms *act* a scene of Terence or some dialogue'. (Enterline 2012:41).

Always underpinning the compromise of Christian Humanism, however morally contextualised, was the challenge of the secular absolutes of humanist philosophy which conceived of man as a creature of nature and therefore subject to natural instinct, the form that human energy takes when it is no longer controlled by

transcendental goals and focuses solely on temporal objectives. Here again, the custom of the Sins proved invaluable in illustrating the discussion around moral reasoning and the ambiguity of natural drivers. The end in justifying the means creates a debate around the value to society and the individual of the instincts and urges embodied by the Sins. Moderation becomes the key virtue, excess its deadly opponent. This ambiguity was nothing new for the Sins. For example, Bloomfield refers to a probable verse-sermon from a late fourteenth century MS, *Laud Misc 463* in which, while condemning pride in the rich and poor, the preacher is also ‘careful to point out that in some cases pride and envy are not sins’ (Bloomfield 1952: 209-10).

1.10 Living in sin: how chivalry made a virtue out of a necessity

Chivalry, with its close association to romance literature, managed through a number of rebirths and adjustments to continue throughout the medieval period into the Tudor period, finally enjoying a lively, if retrospective, Elizabethan revival thanks to the cult of Elizabeth and the literary reinventions of Sidney, Spenser and others. Like the Sins, to achieve this survival, chivalry had to adjust to the socio-political and religious changes which were constantly redefining the nature of ethical behaviour and the code by which a knight may live. Nigel Saul compares a medieval knight depicted in a thirteenth-century psalter as ‘like Chaucer’s knight, ‘a verray parfit gentil knyght’, a ‘worthy man’, a lover of ‘trouthe and honour’. Greed and avarice, and the other vices of which knights stood accused, find no place in his nature. His ideals are the Christian ones of truth and justice, righteousness and peace. He exemplifies everything that might be considered best in his order, with the image of Sir Geoffrey Luttrell in the dedication miniature of the Luttrell Psalter, c.1335-45:

In the famous arming scene [he] is shown being fitted out for war [...]. The emphasis in this scene is less on the visionary aspects of knighthood than on the insignia of status and rank.[...] What is narrated in this miniature is a story of lineage and dynasticism, not just idealism and knightly vocation. (Saul 2011: 2).

As Saul observes, although significantly different in the socio-political status they convey, what both Medieval and Renaissance knights have in common is

an attempt to convey an ethical dimension; that of being divinely ordained to protect society against disorder.

Throughout its existence, the chivalric code had an uneasy, often unsuccessful relationship with Christian doctrine. Consequently, and ironically considering the contempt in which many humanists held it, chivalric literature bears many of the same scars of forced reconciliation of worldly paganism with Christian doctrine as classically influenced Christian humanist literature. The close relationship between the waging of war 'for Christ' by a secular, engaged military as opposed to the idea of a monastic, withdrawn 'army of God' fighting with prayer did not sit well with a literal reading of the sixth commandment, and the deadly sin of anger. The Augustinian notion of the just war and the biblical condoning of righteous anger enabled the incorporation of chivalry into the Christian church as an upholder of the faith, with the ceremonial for knighthood becoming an integral part of Christian church ritual (Saul 2011:200).

The merging of courtly code with spiritual and moral vices and virtues is noted by Diane Bornstein (1975: 55-56). She cites the late-fifteenth-century translation of Christine de Pisan by Stephen Scrope, *The Epistle of Othea to Hector, or, The boke of knyghthode* which uses exemplum to give guidance on chivalric behaviour, covering both the 'deadly synnes'; counselling that the knight's role is to be at war against the vices (Warner 1904: 23); covering pride as the 'modyr of all evelles' (Warner 1904: 19), lust and gluttony brought on through drunkenness and envy which is 'to foule a spotte and ayens gentilnes' (Warner 1904: 31). The knight is also warned against the kind of competitive activity which leads to pride and ends in anger and urged to observe the cardinal virtues of 'Justice, Prudence, Fors, and Temperance' (Warner 1904: 2). Bossy notes the tension between sins and chivalric virtues, suggesting that this led to the elevation of the sins of concupiscence, lechery and avarice, above envy and anger, enabling a lessening of moral tension:

[The list of deadly sins] included sins which were actually regarded as virtues or obligatory in the only alternative moral tradition in the field, which turned on the notions of honour and dishonour. This tradition supported a code of behaviour which required retaliation for offenses,

entered into a confusing relation with ideas of Christian provenance in the concept of chivalry. (Bossy 1985: 39).

In practice, chivalric culture often embraced, rather than rejected the Sins in the same way that secular society dressed them in the robes of virtue. It created a society which, despite religious and political manipulation of the concept, often represented the public celebration of honour, status and ambition (pride); worldly, often extra-marital love (lust); competition (envy); conflict and fighting (anger); conspicuous display and ritual, lavish celebration (greed and gluttony). Despite its Christian pretensions, the society which Malory, for example, portrays is for the most part one whose goals are the achievement of earthly rather than saintly perfection and of necessity its protagonists must harness and control, rather than deny, the chief drivers of human behaviour. As Nigel Saul has pointed out, chivalry, too was prepared to change the root sin to suit political priority. Malory, he maintains, dropped the more Catholic and religious mythological elements of the Arthurian story, reducing the implication of war as the prime cause of Arthur's downfall and death and highlighting Guinevere's adultery as the major contributor.

This is further complicated by the distinction made between sin as a shared, public experience and sin as an internalised individual confession. In the same way as the church debated sin as a thought and sin as an act, so chivalric society experienced conflict between Margaret Mead's notion of shame culture and guilt culture (Mead 1937: 493). In a society which characterises its strength in terms of external, public honour, being shamed holds considerably more weight than being guilty and for the Christian apologist, this creates a problem in reconciling the difference between honour and virtue. As April E Cook (2008: 1) maintains: 'the social codes of the late medieval court were not only influenced by pre-Christian shame culture, but retained ideals that were, in fact, paradoxically in conflict with the broad tenets of Christian dogma, including [...] the emphasis upon the symbolic materiality of social honor, the manifest dichotomy of public and private existence, and the latent possibility of recourse to public shaming as the primary method of social control'. In other words, high on the chivalric agenda is the crime of being caught.

Brewer illustrates it well in his examination of the knot of conflicting moral codes which define the eternal triangle of Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere. In the first instance he notes that it is the cuckold who carries the dishonour of adultery rather than the guilty perpetrators. How affairs are conducted is of more importance than their occurrence, and the balance between public and private must be carefully managed. Brewer sees Arthur as someone who has failed to attend to his private obligations against Lancelot, who is so concerned with private obligations 'in particular his obligation, which is clear, however immoral, towards Guinevere, that he denies public values' (Brewer 1968: 28). This is embodied in Bors' advice to Lancelot regarding his knightly priorities which must, according to his code, mean he has to defend the queen, 'Whether ye did right or wrong' because otherwise 'all the world would speak of you to the world's end.'

The paradox created by, in particular, Malory's portrayal of a chivalric ideal is one in which to achieve this worldly perfection, its imperfections, represented by the Sins must be recognised, harnessed and made admirable. This, Brewer claims, reveals a basic inconsistency in medieval Christianity, or even human existence that 'the best is the enemy of the good' (Brewer 1968: 28). Thus the determination of chivalric culture to work with the imperfection of the world and try to improve it until something better comes along can be perceived as a genuine attempt to wrestle with the innate hypocrisy of Christian worldly existence and turn it into a beneficial social construct, or alternatively as evidence of 'the standing pool' of Catholic corruption Ascham and other Christian humanists considered it to be. However as Arthur B Ferguson points out, there is a kind of symbiosis between the Ciceronian ideal of the 'common weal' embraced by the humanists and a notion of chivalric society (Ferguson 1986: 57). Both societal constructs struggle with the tension between individual guilt and public shame. It was the humanist revival of the past and the need to connect with it which, Ferguson argues (1986: 57), enabled the Tudor revival of the chivalric tradition, however romanticised and symbolic. Elyot's portrait of a humanist courtier in *The Boke Named The Governour*, however distinct from the martial image of the medieval courtier, continues the struggle to reconcile the unworldly template of the Sins within the morality of 'common weal' and its human drivers like 'honour'. It can also be argued that in its attempt to assert the validity of a worldly ideal, however compromised, it provides the Sins with another opportunity

to insinuate themselves into society, creating additional dramatic ambiguity to their repertoire.

1.11 Shakespeare and the seven deadly sins

To some extent, it would be fruitless to rehearse the scholarly theories and partisan speculations regarding Shakespeare's own religious beliefs. The complex reference of belief systems displayed in the canon reflect the voices of the age and therefore are always sufficient to sustain the myopic claims to ownership of Shakespeare by the range of Christian faiths extant post-Reformation, as well as the gamut of religious fervour from recusant to humanist doubter. As Sarah Beckwith puts it:

Shakespeare's religious identity [...] will always exert a fascination for all those interested in Shakespeare, but such speculation can short-circuit and even pre-empt the density of the embodied world of the plays and the sheer complexity of that historical, social, and linguistic inheritance. (Beckwith 2011: 11).

Perhaps the only conclusion which can usefully be made is that Shakespeare grew up and lived in an area which was slower than most in giving up the Catholic faith, and an age where religious belief, its practice and political dominance, was such an integral and potentially hazardous aspect of society, that not to have absorbed its cultural, political and social references, both consciously and unconsciously, he would have had to be brought up in complete isolation. As Irving Ribner succinctly puts it:

The moral and metaphysical assumptions behind Shakespeare's plays were Christian because he was a Christian. (Ribner 1964: 105).

Even anyone who managed to live through the years of religious reformation by practising what Stephen Greenblatt describes as 'skeptical detachment' (2005: 94) would have required a good grasp of the local and national religious and political climate in order to navigate his way successfully around the potential pitfalls of daily public engagement. Eamon Duffy summarises the climate of 1559-61 'of weary obedience':

They had seen all this before – the books and images burned, the altars stripped and demolished, the vestments sold for cushions and bed hangings.

That destruction had to be reversed, with great difficulty and at enormous cost, and it was the rank and file of the parish who had borne the brunt. Now the newly acquired Roods and patronal statues, the untarnished latten pyxes and paxes and holy-water stoups, the missals and manuals still smelling of printer's ink [...] were to be once more pitched into wheelbarrows and trundled to the fire. And all at the behest of a Queen still unmarried and young enough for childbearing, whose prospects of a Protestant husband, and hence a stable continuation of religious policy, were minimal. Dislike of change, Catholic instincts, hope for a speedy restoration of the old ways, and Tudor thrift, combined to struggle against the instinctive obedience of well-schooled subjects, in a conflict not strong enough for resistance, but which ensured widespread inertia and concealment. (Duffy 1992: 571).

The young Shakespeare would certainly, even at William Fuller's time of 'but halfly reformed' religious change (Patrick Collinson 1967: 29), have been surrounded by visual as well as verbal references to the Sins. Those responsible for his immediate upbringing will themselves have been schooled at home and in the parish from an early age to repeat a catechism which included a list of the Seven Deadly Sins given equal weighting with the Ten Commandments. Furthermore, as the Sins appear to have escaped the critical glare of reforming scrutiny, they were perhaps a welcome and safe continuity in dangerous times.

For over two centuries, the use of catechism as a vernacular representation of the essence of the faith based on *The Lay Folks' Catechism* of 1357-8 (Duffy 1992: 54) was the major pedagogical tool for the church in educating its lower level clergy and the secular society to which they ministered. As discussed, the catechism as a major tool for religious didacticism and political re-education, was subjected to several revisions. When embraced by Protestant reformers, the Seven Deadly Sins, as well as the Virtues and other orthodox content were removed, although the Sins appear not to have represented at any stage a major issue of doctrine or observance other than a tacit relationship, via the confessional, with the concept of purgatory. However, although the content of the Primer, as the basic text for teaching children at school was strictly controlled, early education which involved the rote learning of the

alphabet and the catechism was conducted by a local man or woman, possibly a parent, often in his or her home. There is every possibility in an area as conservative as Stratford, particularly in an age of oral rote learning, that several versions of recited, if not recorded, catechisms, some including the Sins, were still active. The casual use of reference to the Sins which would therefore no doubt have played a part in a boy's domestic moral upbringing, whenever he was greedy, lazy, fighting, jealous, showing off, mean or later crude or overly lusty, would surely have elicited a rebuke from mother or father schooled by an earlier catechism: Tilley records many appropriate to the growing boy such as 'A belly full of gluttony will never study willingly' (Tilley 1950: 44 ref B285) and 'Be not idle and you shall not be longing' (Tilley 1950: 336).

The custom of the Sins would have been illustrated for Shakespeare when he went to Holy Trinity Church, both in the homilies read from the pulpit and, in the medieval carved misericords whose symbolism may have in some cases even by then have been lost to the collective understanding. Shakespeare would, however, have been able to recognise among the misericords the frequent use of animals associated with the sins, such as apes with sloth, lions and eagles with pride as well as other symbols of lust such as mermaids and a naked woman riding a stag (Mary Frances White 1974: 16). He would have had access, even at that early stage in his life, to the ambiguity demonstrated by these symbols, many of which had much more socially positive allusions within the courtly, chivalric tradition known to him and still valued in his society. Given his father's ambition, heraldic imagery is likely to have been a matter of some discussion at home and therefore the concept, for example of 'good' pride and anger represented through chivalric symbols of familial honour and aggression, may have been an early and personal example.

John Shakespeare's local position and background in civil leadership as constable, chamberlain, alderman and bailiff meant that the buildings and society of the Guildhall at Stratford would have naturally engaged the young Shakespeare, as a base for town politics and entertainment, as well as a stimulus for religious, political and social reminiscence. Much of this will have been contained in the Guildhall Chapel, transferred into civic ownership following the disbanding of the guild, a centre which reflected a local take on the reformed religion. Shortly after

Shakespeare's birth, his father as chamberlain took responsibility for the alterations which were required to the Chapel in order that the Guild conformed to the political requirements of a place of worship⁹. It appears the Guildhall had somewhat dragged its feet in terms of structural conformance to the Reformation, waiting until the early years of Elizabeth 1's reign. This has of course supported theories about the recusancy of Stratford or, at the least, low key resistance which suggested pragmatism rather than whole-hearted conversion. Whether this was the case or not; in a purely practical sense the 'defaying' of Sir Hugh Clopton's legacy of some hundred years earlier, must have seemed to all but those who had thoroughly embraced the symbolic sacrifice of iconoclasm, like a terrible destruction of what had been primarily a non-contentious emblem of middle class prosperity and spiritual aspiration. It therefore followed that John Shakespeare perhaps oversaw a less than enthusiastic job. In fact the workmen employed to whitewash out the offending artwork contained their activities to the main body of the chapel, portioning off the nave and its paintings to become a sort of play area and leaving the paintings which were apparently 'less offensive to the protestant authorities' (Clifford Davidson 1998: 11).

The 'less offensive' paintings included the *Daunce of Death* on the north wall of the nave. This appears to have been a depiction of what was a popular fifteenth-century European theme, most famously recorded on the cloister walls of St Paul's, London. This painting is said to be a copy of that on the wall of the churchyard in Paris, *Cimetiere des Innocents* whose accompanying text was translated by John Lydgate. This motif, which includes a depiction of the Seven Deadly Sins was thought to have been a favourite decorative feature in the larger churches and there is every reason to suppose that a copy of a version of this theme with an appropriate text from Lydgate's translation beneath them was made from a manuscript. However, as there is considerable question as to the accuracy of Wilfrid Puddelphat's highly

⁹ Although the Guildhall Chapel, given its ownership, was not directly under the control of the church hierarchy, the corporation would have found it difficult to ignore the Royal Injunctions of 1559 which required the removal of all signs of 'superstition' and 'idolatry', 'so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glasses, windows, or elsewhere within their churches and houses, preserving nevertheless or repairing both the walls and glass windows,' (W H Frere 1910: 16).

conjectural reconstruction of the fragmentary condition in which he discovered the wall painting in the 1950s¹⁰, it is not possible to claim other than that the seven deadly sins were represented both graphically and with accompanying text. This would be enough, however, to draw the interest of a schoolboy with little access to illustration and writing in the vernacular, and possible early access to the work of Lydgate.¹¹ This early connection with Lydgate and the Sins may also link with the outline ‘platt’ of the lost play in which Lydgate appears instructing Henry VI about the dangers of sin, and which appears to have a direct connection with *The Chamberlain’s Men* and Shakespeare.¹²

There were two further paintings which incorporated the Seven Deadly Sins, according to Thomas Fisher’s 1804 illustrations: the *Doomsday* above the chancel arch whose depiction of the Virgin Mary and purgatorial content would have been enough to condemn it to the whitewash and a further picture, often erroneously ascribed as *The Whore of Babylon* which is probably in fact a debased version of the *Frau Welt*. This is an allegorical female figure with animal attributes and motifs and is intended to represent the Seven Deadly Sins (Gill, 2001: <http://www.le.ac.uk/arhistory/seedcorn/schema.html> Leicester). It was sited on the north side of the west wall in the chapel, below a depiction of a highly chivalric portrait of St George killing the dragon. There appears to be no evidence available as to when or if this particular painting was covered. It is possible, given the Protestant authorities’ view on the cult of saints, that this particular panel did not pass the protestant censor, or it may have escaped by being shown not to have been ‘abused’ by use as a shrine for intercessionary prayer. St George did have strong associations with the area (Davidson 1998: 31) and was, of course later recruited to the Protestant cause by Spenser in *The Fairie Queene*, among others. It is generally considered that the commissioned painter(s) of the chapel¹³ will have copied the artwork from available manuscripts.

¹⁰ Puddephat places most of his re-constructive reliance on the French painting assumed to be the original template (Arnott 2008)

¹¹ Tillyard, for example, makes a case for Shakespeare’s very early access to Lydgate’s *Troy Book* (Tillyard 1965: 45).

¹² See page 41.

¹³ There is no public record of their commission.

Information as to the exact nature of the extant chapel paintings at the time of Shakespeare's birth is unreliable. Alterations to the chapel in the early 19th century and the illustrations made by Thomas Fisher at the time of the uncovered paintings in 1804 (Davidson 1998: 12) excluded *The Daunce of Death*, the one painting which can be evidenced as having survived the whitewash (Davidson 1998: ix) and which would therefore have been familiar to the young Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's early vernacular reading is unknown and speculation can really only be based on two forms of evidence: what was known to be read by his childhood contemporaries and what can be deduced as possible sources for his own writing. His schooling, if indeed he did attend grammar school, will have been conducted in Latin, but it is likely that one of his favourite sources, Ovid, studied in the original Latin at school, was made available to him as Arthur Golding's translation of *Metamorphoses*, possibly, like Lucius in *Titus Andronicus*, a present from his mother. It can be evidenced that he was extensively familiar with the Bible, probably both the Geneva Bible and the Bishop's Bible (Shaheen 2002); not unsurprising, given his interest in language and the much greater capacity of that age to acquire text through memorising. Helen Cooper suggests that the copies of 'the great Middle English Classics, not least Chaucer' that Shakespeare used were early versions which were probably around from his youth (Cooper 2013: 5). There is debate as to the extent that Chaucer was actually read, as opposed to praised, but if Shakespeare did come across Chaucer at an early age, it was probably *Troilus* and the more moral parts of *The Canterbury Tales*, which may have included the humble and godly *Parson's Tale*. Certainly later in his life, it is unlikely that Shakespeare did not read the poet of whom Sir Philip Sidney says in his *Apologie for Poetrie* (1581): 'either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumblingly after him,' (Shepherd 1965: 133). Similarly, it is a strong possibility that Shakespeare had early familiarity with Gower's work *Confessio Amantis* and its seven deadly sins framework. His knowledge of the Pyramus and Thisbe Story (Muir 1977: 68) and other plot episodes to be found in the *Confessio Amantis* such as the casket test in *The Merchant of Venice*, the Lucrece story, Appollonius' discovery of his wife in the temple as a source for the denouement of *The Comedy of Errors*, as well as his use of the character of the poet himself to introduce the story and

acknowledge the debt to Gower in *Pericles*, would seem to confirm it. Although there was no reprint of the *Confessio Amantis* in Shakespeare's time, it is certainly possible that he had access to the 1554 reprint, either through his teachers, or later through the libraries to which he was given access.

Although not strictly biblical, the Sins were individually referenced or illustrated by the Bible; although associated with popular entertainment in drama, literature and graphic art they contained enough didactic status to remain godly; although associated with the Catholic confessional and catechism, their metaphorical value continued to have an appeal to Protestant reformist religion, and their classical pedigree sat nicely with humanist thinking. In short, they were institutionalised and therefore easier to accommodate than eradicate. His humanist schooling, if it was at Stratford grammar school, would have required him to engage in moral reading; extracting from everything he read and heard effective quotations which he would reference under topics in his personal commonplace book dictated by his schoolmaster. The continued possession and use of this book by Shakespeare after leaving school might be a simpler but yet more intriguing explanation of Shakespeare's referencing than some scholarly research may suggest. Although there is much evidence that Shakespeare was a great reader and continued to be throughout his life, a cross-referenced book of quotations under a range of headings might have proved invaluable in his early writing, particularly given his lack of the university education which most of his contemporary playwrights possessed. It is also probable that, like Ben Jonson who was known to have a collection of commonplace books, Shakespeare continued adding to his own commonplace collection in English and Latin as his reading extended due to his access to the libraries of patrons and books he acquired himself, broadening his collection with reference to other texts and personal observations on character such as he portrays in *Hamlet*: 'My tables - Meet it is I set it down/ That one may smile and smile and be a villain-' (I v 107-108). Among the topics commonly dictated were the Sins, singly and collectively. Given the Catholic persuasion of at least one of the Stratford schoolmasters (Greenblatt 2005: 96-97) it would be strange if the Sins did not figure in his prescribed commonplace book topics. His study of the classics and of history would also have required him to evaluate and record the moral behaviour of the main protagonists, studying their vices and moral progress and gathering in his commonplace book appropriate rhetorical material for re-use (Mack 2002: 139). The

fact that, unlike many of his contemporaries, Shakespeare was not university educated and trained beyond this curriculum stage to the more ambitious and highly specialised levels of classical philosophy and higher rhetoric, may well have directed his dramatic art towards the moral and rhetorical analysis of his grammar school commonplace book. As Peter Mack correctly demonstrates, the 'grammar school created the Elizabethan audience' and however philosophically at odds they were, rhetoric and ethics crafted the morality of drama (Mack 2002: 47), and the best template for exposing it was the Sins.

Shakespeare's exposure to the Sins as personifications within dramatic productions will have been from childhood and through the bands of strolling players, including the Queen's Men initially booked by his own father when he was bailiff of Stratford in 1569 and with whom he would have had contact and a probable front row position for the performance. The performances will have been in the main morality plays or moral Interludes, a genre which continued to be extremely popular throughout the sixteenth century, and many of which will have featured all or some of the seven deadly sins in personification. Rowland Wymer has also made a case for Shakespeare's access as a young man to the mystery plays, more specifically the Coventry Cycle of up to 1579, and possibly other mysteries later if research regarding Shakespeare's residence in the north-west and the continuance of performance of Corpus Christi plays in that area after 1579 is accepted (Wymer 2004: 269-274). During his youth Shakespeare, with his interest in the theatre, will have observed the use of the Sins and the gradual development of the Vice often embodying several sins into one being, representing an embryonic dramatic character. Later he may have performed in such plays as an actor. By the time he was writing for himself, the Sins and their extensive psycho-confessional lexicon would have been a rich and instinctive resource on which to draw. Wymer's appraisal of Shakespeare's capacity to absorb and reprocess any cultural or educational resource rings true, and is supported by the early training in reading and assimilation he would have had through commonplacing, particularly in the case of such a dramatically useful concept as the Sins:

He was like a giant sponge who absorbed everything in his culture which might be dramatically useful to him. Despite his love of classical literature, he had no humanist scorn for the old-fashioned or the popular and was

happy to draw equally on both high cultural sources and low ones. (Wymer 2004: 284).

Rather than the more obvious and deliberately visual use made of the Sins as a metaphor of corrupt Catholicism or their symbolic use in overt social and political comment, Shakespeare's use of the Sins probably reflected that of his audience: a collective received wisdom, learned or passed down early in life on which he drew to categorise, characterise and ponder on the morality of others. To find the Sins in Shakespeare, it is essential to dig deeper than a search for explicit verbal referencing, such as that applied by Richard Newhauser:

Shakespeare himself, however, made very little use of the vices in his own plays, referring to them explicitly only once, fittingly enough in a play that focuses on the problem of reforming sin, namely *Measure for Measure*. Though the sins are spoken of in a context in which the heptad's ability to function as shorthand for all evil is invoked, it is merely a passing mention and made contingent by the psychology of the character who refers to the vices. (Newhauser 2012: 178).

Chapter 2

Moral History: from Sloth to Duty

2.1 *Henry VI*

Peter Mack contends that, for the purposes of education, particularly grammar school education, histories and conduct manuals were rhetorically linked; more specifically linked in terms of their use of moral stories and shared themes (Mack 2002:135). The introduction to Arthur Golding's popular translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with its emphasis on moral justification and frequent reference to commonplace topics such as the Sins, for example, illustrates Mack's view that 'the attraction of the idea of education was so great in sixteenth century England that many forms of vernacular writing justified themselves primarily as vehicles for moral teaching' (Mack 2002: 135).

Sir Philip Sidney's preference was for the greater effectiveness of fiction over history in the process of education in that fiction enabled a harmonisation between moral cause and teleological effect which tends to be lacking in actual history, what Sidney describes in *The Defense of Poesy* 1595 as 'the truth of a foolish world' (Shepherd 2002: 94). In short, literature enabled the good to win and the wicked to lose, thus avoiding the need to justify the ways of God to man and allowing the writer to paper over the cracks of Protestant struggle with the tension between individual moralistic cause and effect and predestination.

Classical and national history however, was the backdrop against which the internal contradictions inherent in a providential and deterministic reading of existence could be played out and resolved, and the paradox of divine omnipotence and moral autonomy displayed. Alexandra Walsham acknowledges the 'theological gymnastics' (Walsham 1999: 14) practised by theologians to resolve issues such as God's apparent responsibility for evil and individual moral responsibility. They allow an evil-doer simultaneously to carry out evil according to God's plan while being personally responsible in choosing Satan by acting according to individual lusts or inclinations. She also demonstrates that, at a popular level, providence was

also interpreted as manifesting itself as ‘signs’ and worldly punishments or trials of faith that looked not unlike some of the comforting old staples of Catholicism such as purgatory, miracles and other mysteries (Walsham 1999: 16-17). There could be no unequivocal conclusion drawn from the acts of what may loosely be termed fate. Preachers were as inclined to read evidence of divine election or damnation into both suffering and worldly comfort:

Providentialism of this ilk was both suspiciously self-confirming and potentially egotistical in the extreme. It was a set of rose-coloured spectacles through which the setbacks, no less than the successes of ‘professors of the faith’ were transformed into emblems of divine approbation. Evildoers, on the other hand, were ensnared within a catch-22. Whenever disaster overtook them, this was unambiguous evidence of God’s unappeasable ire, but so was a life of freedom and ease – it suggested the Almighty had completely abandoned them to their own sinful impulses and lost all interest in their spiritual welfare and health. (Walsham 1999: 17).

In the midst of this struggle to reconcile sin to salvation, the analysis of the past in order to determine guidance for the future provided a solidity that Sidney’s creative imagining could not. In the same way that the deadly sins and vices were becoming represented less as actions or the personified embodiment of the agents of Satan and more as the internal psychology, or ‘default system’, of human frailty or humours in the narrative of Christian humanist didacticism, so the reading of history and conduct manuals seemed engaged in similar arbitration between God and morality, providence and the agency of the individual, destiny and disposition, action and inaction. In its earlier editions under William Baldwin one of the most popular *de casibus*, ‘conduct from history’ books and Shakespearean source, the *Mirror for Magistrates*, reflects the care taken by the writer-compilers in their role as historians. The 1559 edition, built upon Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*, examines the role of authority and, in keeping with the moral didacticism of the age, acts as ‘a sort of inverted courtesy book’ (Paul Budra 2000: 31) which focuses on moral political education based upon negative, positive and, perhaps more importantly, socially inappropriate models of character and conduct. Following new trends in humanist historiography, the book engages in an evaluation of the moral cause and effect of some of the more questionable career moves in English history; emphasising moral

autonomy through the use of direct speech from the dead protagonists. In fact the protagonists themselves reflect the historiographical dilemma under which Shakespeare and others laboured: how do you acknowledge predestination, but avoid blaming God for the mess? In the *Mirror*, Shakespeare's first English historical protagonist, Henry VI, provides a remarkable synopsis of the collaboration of fate, divine punishment, individual action and psychology under God's purview, required to bring about evil:

Than destiny, our sinne, Gods wil, or els his wreake,
Do wurke our wretched woes, for humours be to weake,
Except we take them so, as they prouoke to sinne,
For through our lusts by humours fed, all vicious dedes beginne
(Campbell 1938: 214)

However, reading history through the template of moral commonplace consistently exposes the old medieval seam of vice and sin which peopled the morality play and structured the confessionals. Consequently humanist history inevitably resorts to the familiar labelling and narrative of human failure. It may be referred to as vice or even humour, seen as a disposition towards vice, but whether divinely hardwired or individually chosen, lurking beneath it all is the ubiquitous power of the deadly sin leading the way to damnation. King Henry VI continues:

So sinne and they be one, both wurking like effect,
And cause the wrath of God to wreake the soule infect.
Thus wrath and wreake divine, mans sinnes and humours yll,
Concur in one, though in a sort, ech doth a course fulfill.
(Campbell 1938: 214)

As raw material for Shakespeare's dramatic art, the sheer complexity of events and protagonists, coupled with diversity of geography and timescale in the chronicle sources, were as problematic in terms of factual representation as they were in terms of moral didacticism. In content Shakespeare's history plays effectively expose and reflect the variance of late medieval historical narrative and emergent political and moral exemplarism coupled with the growing national self-awareness and grasp of commonwealth which characterised history as it developed in the Renaissance. In exposition the plays combine the knowledge and pragmatism of scholar and actor respectively (an unusual combination and one known to have irritated Robert

Greene),¹⁴ provoking a coming together, not always entirely successfully, of the quite different worlds of mimetic classical rhetoric and drama reflected in the humanist tradition of moral education and the popular allegorical tradition of religious and latterly, political, morality plays.

Attempts to critique the early histories in particular, as either morality plays or Senecan tragedy in terms of dramatic form have failed to be entirely convincing. There is a general concession necessary to accommodate the impediment of reported fact which, however stretched for the purposes of dramatic cohesion, inevitably cuts across the clean and simple lines of both static allegorical didacticism and Aristotelian rules regarding unity of time and place. Interpretations of *Henry VI* parts one to three, in which England is characterised as the Everyman over which Good and Evil struggle (E M W Tillyard 1944: 169), tend to sink beneath the complexity of persona, action and motive crucial to the historical narrative and lose focus within the breadth of time and place necessary to incorporate key events. Similarly, the reshaping of recorded motive, character and action to conform to the oversimplification of a Senecan tragedy would dispense with too much historical fact and be politically exposing and therefore unwise. However, Shakespeare's moralistic grammar school training in the classics by schoolmasters steeped in Plutarch and well-versed in the tradition of commonplace moral evaluation of individual virtues and vices, will have been sufficient initially to encourage his kind of approach to the representation of historical material. A moral reading which centred on the lexicon of the Sins with their combined function in confessional narrative of individual moral psychology and the medieval tradition of public transgression (John Bossy 1975: 25-27) is ideally suited to a dramatic analysis of politically sensitive national history. To utilise the Sins as a template with which to organise the main protagonists against the confused array of reported action must have been compelling. Dramatically, they would be universally recognised and accepted; in

¹⁴ See Greene's often quoted remarks from *Greene's groatsworth of wit: bought with a million of repentance* (1592): 'those Puppets (I meane) that speake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colour. [...] yes, trust them not: for there is an vpstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you, and being an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake- scene in a country.' (Greene 1592: 41).

religious terms they enabled easy movement between the many conflicting and certainly confusing readings of God's ways, and politically they provided explanation or justification without the dangerous need to point the finger.

Three themes or types figure prominently in political history: duty and the obligations of office; the need for power and the struggle to get or defend it either personally or through others, and the covert manipulation for ill by those whose motives are often simply to bring about destruction for its own sake as well as their individual aggrandisement. These last are subscribers to the Gore Vidal philosophy that, 'It is not enough to succeed. Others must fail'. These three are best reflected by probably the three most interconnected, subtle and commonly 'rewritten' Sins: sloth, pride and envy. All three, in addition to anger, another political staple, are sins associated with the devil. Additionally, sloth has the more flexible capacity to be associated with sins of the flesh, the world and the devil.

Sloth, while initially being attached to a failure of religious office had assumed by the fourteenth century a secular parallel, what Siegfried Wenzel (1967: 91) defines as 'neglect in the obligation of one's *status* or profession', presumably this is even more so when that status is appointed by God, as in the case of a king. The newly revised chivalric code with its acquired sense of public or commonwealth awareness which underpinned the new concept of governance discussed in Elyot and others, subscribes to the need for strength and action in a leader. Bossy detects a reformist retention of the medieval concept of sin as a public action against the community despite 'a strong tendency to psychologize the sacrament; to reinforce the desocializing efforts of the earlier scholastics by suggesting that sin was essentially something which occurred in the mind' (Bossy 1975: 27). He cites Luther's single-minded social doctrine of confession which, although it identifies 'the secret sins of the heart also distinguishes those sins which upset the community'. Bossy identifies those sins as 'social' and, translated into a historical context, related to governance. They are of course the higher order sins, sins of the Devil, and perhaps to be expected in relation to the ruling class. Strangely, while perceiving the other higher order sins as social, Bossy defines sloth as a solitary sin by mistakenly committing it to the ranks of the lower order sins and defining it quite narrowly. In medieval chivalric code the avoidance or rejection of duty, particularly in the case of a prince

was probably the most shameful social sin of all and abdication its most public expression. By the sixteenth century, the commonwealth had been added as a required social beneficiary and 'to govern' was definitely an active verb. One can begin to imagine audience empathy with Dick the Butcher's desire to 'kill all the lawyers' (*3HVI* IV ii 72) when they had been subjected in church to the blatant attempt at social conditioning of the *Homily against Idleness*:

But as there be divers forms of labours, some of the mind, and some of the body, and some of both: so everyone (except by reason of age, debility of body, or want of health, be unapt to labour at all) ought both for the getting of his own living honestly, and for to profit others, in some kind of labour to exercise himself, according as the vocation whereunto God hath called him shall require. So that whosoever doth good to the commonweal, and society of men with his industry, and labour, whether it be by governing the commonweal publicly, or by bearing public office or ministry, or by doing any common necessary affairs of his country, or by giving counsel, or by teaching, and instructing others, or by whatever means soever to be occupied, so that a profit and benefit rebound thereof unto others, the same person is not to be accounted idle, though he work no bodily labour, nor is to be denied his living (if he attend his vocation) though he work not with his hands. (*Certaine Sermons or Homilies* 1840: 460)

However, as a tool in the moral analysis of political history, the sin of sloth is a compelling template for failure. It is associated with inaction, indecision, unwillingness to assume the duty given and pusillanimity. Sloth is often pictured in terms of withdrawal, mental distraction, despair, and dreaming. In his essay, *Of Studies*, Francis Bacon associates it directly with bookishness: 'To spend too much time in study is sloth' (Smeaton 1972: 150). Despite the efforts of the *Sermon against Idleness* to address the suspicions of the uneducated regarding the work of the mind, there is still a sense that study is only good when actively deployed in the running of the state. Even in the monasteries, it was cast as a kind of idleness of the mind, and most of all, it created a moral vacuum. It was an enabler of other sins.

Pride, with its close associations to honour, has been equally fraught with the subtlety of convenient reinterpretations for secular existence. Like its medieval precursor, so in the refashioned chivalry of the Renaissance, ambition and pride are to be found hiding beneath the cloak of honour. The sin becomes that of misplaced immoderation in pursuit of reputation and gain, or personal above public aspiration. In the morality plays it was not unusual to find the sins indicting one another. Sloth and pride are, in one sense, sins which oppose one another: to be slothful is to imply a *laissez-faire* lack of ambition or pride in oneself, whereas to be filled with ambition is to be presumptive, to assume duty and greatness that is not yours. However Norman Council (1973: 20) notes that Robert Ashley in his work *Of Honour* warns against the idea that they moderate one another. Ashley considers pusillanimity to be an equal threat to ambition in pursuance of honour:

Neither is the *Cynik Diogenes* or any other *Stoyck* which contemneth honour to be commended as modest in avoiding of ambition, since that true moderation consistes not either in suppressing and hiding of virtue or in not knowing the force and valew therof. (Heltzel: 1947: 46).

Interestingly, both are faults which can hide behind the moral dissimulation of predestination, Sloth was a danger against which Loyola warned in *The Spiritual Exercises*;

Fifteenth Rule. We ought not, by way of custom, to speak much of predestination; but if in some way and at some times one speaks, let him so speak that the common people may not come into any error, as sometimes happens, saying: Whether I have to be saved or condemned is already determined, and no other thing can now be, through my doing well or ill; and with this, growing lazy, they become negligent in the works which lead to the salvation and the spiritual profit of their souls. (transl. Thomas Corbishley 1963: 141)

There is, however, no acceptable face or beneficial by-product of envy. Never satisfied, envy never profits from its all-consuming actions, neither does it, like anger, require a motive: it is destruction for its own sake. Robert Burton summarises in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*: ‘Every other sin hath some pleasure annexed to it, or will admit of some excuse: envy alone wants both,’ (2001: 263). These three sins, pride, envy and sloth are the commonplaces which, it will be seen, again and again

provide Shakespeare with a template to make moral sense of ‘the truth of a foolish world’.

Baldwin’s protagonist Henry VI in Shakespearean source *A Mirror for Magistrates* portrays himself within this complex system of divine cause and effect as one more sinned against than sinning; a ‘vertuous’ prince. He is much occupied by the blame game as his careful definitions of providence and individual sin imply. His soliloquy, unusually for the often self-critical confessional tone of the *Mirror*, dwells at length on the action of others, as he whines his way through the catalogue of ‘mishaps’ done to him by his political and religious advisors, enemies, wife and, that all-purpose excuse for God, fortune. However, he defines his virtue by the extent to which as an individual he rejects the world and, by implication, the commonwealth:

The solace of the soule my chiefest pleasure was,
Of worldly pompe, of fame, or game I did not pas:
My kingdoms nor my crowne I prised not a crum:
(Campbell 1938: 214-215)

His self-criticism is light: he refers to himself as ‘sely’ or simple. His character is as static as his princely action. It is difficult not to suspect the Protestant Baldwin’s tacit disapproval of Henry’s rejection of his worldly role and even more difficult to accept that Shakespeare would read the positively worded ‘vertuous prince’ which acts as an authorial introduction, without a strong sense of religious irony. Igor Djordjevic (2010: 183) notes that the 1577 text of Holinshed presents an uncritical evaluation of a king who rejects his worldly kingdom in favour of the heavenly one:

[Henry] was of such pacience and integritie of lyfe, as nothing seemed to him woorthie to be regarded, but that apperteyned unto Heavenly matters and health of hys soule, the savyng whereof, he esteemed to bee the greatest wysedome, and the losse thereof of the extremest folly that might be. (1577, 2: Hhh4v)

Whereas, he points out that the revised text of 1587 includes an appraisal which suggests that he did not possess the qualities required to marry together his spiritual and worldly responsibilities, that ‘in deed he was thought too soft for governor of a kingdome’(1587, 3: 626). Djordjevic sees this as a victory for the public over private virtue embodied in the modern political manuals in which ‘the governed estate

expected its ruler to be able to adhere to the decorum of selfless dedication to the commonwealth in addition to the private ethics of Christian salvation' (Djordjevic 2010:187). Dramatically, the unspoken irony in Henry's form of absconding spirituality must surely be that of the king's supposed divine representation in governance.

In his first attempt at dramatic portrayal of English history, Shakespeare makes use of his audience's common understanding of the sin of sloth to characterise the lack of leadership during the reign of Henry VI which led to the political vacuum within which others could fight over power and land. Hall's description of Henry's preferring 'quietnesse before laboure' would strike a chord with the commonplace taught scholar and the morality play audience alike as the moral dissimulation of the Vice in Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest*: 'Slouthe or Idelnesse I paint out with quiete' (Brandl 1900: 14-64). This picture of Henry VI is conveyed quite brilliantly through the dramatic management of the protagonist: in all three plays Shakespeare gives him materially fewer lines than may be expected and few speeches reflect the high blown nature of his position; his presence on stage is limited, often static and silent, listening inactively or anxiously; rarely is he staged actually occupying his throne, and where stage directions are ascribed to him, he follows, leaves or is left behind. His torpor and lack of enthusiasm for office are reflected in his constant attempts to 'out-source' his role. His supporters, when referring to him tend to use the epithets 'virtuous', 'mild', 'quiet' and 'sely' whilst his enemies and his wife favour 'feeble', 'faint', 'easy-melting', 'poltroon', 'child-like', 'bookish', 'foolish', 'cold' (as in distanced, unresponsive), 'base', 'fearful', 'despairing' and 'shame-faced'.

2 Henry VI begins with an act of astounding personal and public sloth, leaving Shakespeare's audience with no doubt as to the sin which will underpin the political and civil unrest to follow. Whilst historically accurate, the proxy marriage to Queen Margaret so lavishly and boastfully recounted by Suffolk lends an immediate sense of unease to King Henry's lack of engagement in his role as new husband and king, and the irony of Suffolk's proxy sexual role adds to the suggestion that the king is more passive than proactive:

As by your high imperial majesty

I had in charge at my depart for France
 As procurator to your excellence
 To marry Princess Margaret for your grace,
 So, in the famous ancient city Tours,
 In presence of the Kings of France and Sicil,
 The Dukes of Orléans, Calabre, Bretagne, and Alençon,
 Seven earls, twelve barons, and twenty reverend bishops,
 I have performed my task and was espoused.

(2HVI I i 1-9)

This marital sloth is consolidated by the suggested question, given Suffolk's relationship with Margaret, of Edward's paternity. Henry's inclination to give away his son's inheritance; the boy's one-sided parental attachment to his mother and Richard of Gloucester's sniping remark to him, 'Whoever got thee, there thy mother stands,' (3HVI II ii 133) hint that even in this primary requirement of a king, Henry was slothful.

Henry demonstrates the same level of active engagement in his marriage as he does in the management of his kingdom. His casual acquiescence with regard to the forfeiture of the French territories as a form of reverse dowry reflects his consistent deference to others when decisions are made. His anxiety to hand over his responsibilities to others is palpable. In particular he creates this through studied indifference: his *laissez faire* approach becomes the vacuum of leadership within which the ambitious competition and later civil conflict of the court can flourish:

For my part, noble lords, I care not which:
 Or Somerset or York, all's one to me.

(2HVI I iii 100-101)

His lack of interest in the duty of kingship adds to the sense of his absence, whether present or not in the play. This is highlighted by the ambiguity embodied in his instruction regarding the Regentship:

My lords, what to your wisdom seemeth best
 Do or undo *as if ourself were here*.

(2HVI III i 195-6 my italics)

This can be read as 'behave as if I were here' or 'behave the way you wish as you do when I am here' suggesting not only a king frequently *in absentia* but also a free-for-

all irrespective of the king's presence. As sloth creates a vacuum for pride and ambition, so the potential of Henry's dislike of duty is recognised by Suffolk in the final lines of *1 Henry VI*:

Margaret shall now be queen and rule the King,
But I will rule both her, the King, and realm.
(*1HVI V vii 107-108*)

Later, this magisterial vacuum is symbolically and actually shown in the first scene of *3 Henry VI* when York is discovered seated on the empty throne, it is also realised by Warwick and Clarence towards the end of *3 Henry VI*:

I make you both Protectors of this land,
While I myself will lead a private life
And in devotion spend my latter days,
To sin's rebuke and my Creator's praise.
(*3HVI IV vi 41-44*)

Henry's pusillanimity, yet another of the sloth lexicon, is largely characterised by his shrinking nature: rarely does he confront, preferring to send others on his behalf:

I pray thee Buckingham, go and meet him,
And ask him what's the reason for these arms
[...]
In any case, be not too rough in terms,
For he is fierce and cannot brook hard language.
(*2HVI IV viii 36-7, 47-8*)

His anxiety can sometimes strike a note of farce as he strives to conceal the liberty of Somerset from York:

See, Buckingham, Somerset comes with th'Queen;
Go, bid her hide him quickly from the Duke.
(*2HVI V i 83-84*)

He is a man of few words and most of them are conveyed in writing rather than person. Often he attempts to evade confrontation through the written word, illustrating York's irritable accusation of his 'bookishness'. A favourite phrase of the king's is 'I'll write to him' and writing is the only proactive behaviour exhibited by him. He frequently attempts, and fails, to resolve issues and conflicts by pen: it is distinguished as the only action he does not delegate. It contrasts with York's active

dislike of all things bookish, a contempt he shares with the ‘seduced’ political activist Cade whose anti-education tirade illustrates the concerns of the establishment voiced in the *Homily against Idleness* and expresses, ironically, in Henry’s case, the illiterate’s frustration with the power of the pen.

Dramatically, however, if this interpretation of historical record was not enough to drive home the sloth lexicon, Shakespeare introduces in *3 Henry VI* a soliloquy for which there is no historical source. It is the king's only soliloquy and the longest speech he makes. He is portrayed still and seated on a molehill against the violent backdrop of battle at Towton engaged in a wilful act of sloth, a wishful daydream in which he betrays the full lexicon of slothful behaviours. Here is torpor, daydreaming, pusillanimity, reluctance and suicidal despair. The style of the passage, with its antiphonic, repetitive lines echoing the slow movement, almost suspension, of time and the poetic, bookish, objective summary of the battle reinforces the mental removal of the king from the action; in terms of bodily presence, this is something his repulsion by the Queen and supporters has already achieved. His disengagement from the battle is introduced with the lines:

Here on this molehill will I sit me down.
To whom God will, there be the victory.
(*3HVI* II v 14-15)

This is followed by despair, longing for death and the prolonged fantasy of how it would be to not be a king:

O God, methinks it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain,
To sit upon a hill, as I do now,
To carve out dials quaintly, point by point,
Thereby to see the minutes how they run:
(*3HVI* II v 21-25)

And beneath it all, the cowardice which underpins his frozen indecision and inactivity:

Gives not the hawthorn bush a sweeter shade
To shepherds looking on their silly sheep
Than doth a rich embroidered canopy
To kings that fear their subjects’ treachery?

(3*HVI* II v 42-45)

If final proof was needed to establish the close association between Henry VI and the sin of sloth, it is to be found in his frequently demonstrated and verbalised ‘exaggerated belief in the active intervention of divine judgement in human affairs’ (Edward Berry 1975: 63). This is depicted by his placid acceptance of the horrors and perceived outrages which appear to follow and surround him; for example his response to the battle at Towton, ‘To whom God will, there be the victory’. It is also demonstrated through his consistent refusal to accept blame in a manner reminiscent of the whining Henry in *A Mirror*, which can veer from the faintly ridiculous schoolboy excuses of ‘the Lord Protector lost it, and not I’; ‘The Earl of Warwick and the Duke enforced me’ and ‘’Tis not my fault’, to the saintly, stoical and static acceptance of providence and predestination implied by ‘Can we outrun the heavens? Good Margaret, stay’ (2*HVI* V ii 73).

Whether played out against the backdrop of Tillyard’s Tudor myth of providential teleology, reworked by Graham Holderness to incorporate the time’s growing awareness of historiography (Holderness 1992), or simply a strong theme of kingship and individual duty, it is surely no accident that predestination speaks so strongly to Henry’s sloth. Ronald Knowles’ interpretation of predestination in 2 *Henry VI* as ‘a burlesque on the idea of providence’ (Knowles 1999: 61) viewed by a sceptical late-sixteenth-century audience as being set against the equally suspect drama of Machiavellian individualism detected by Michael Taylor (2005: lxxv) is certainly reinforced by its being presented through the familiar language of sloth and pride. The idea that predestination might be equated with the sin of sloth was, in Catholic teaching at least, a concern and to present providence in these familiar quasi-comical terms as a Protestant notion of predestination illustrates once more the dramatic value to be had from the Sins.

Towards the conclusion of 3 *Henry VI* however, Henry’s sloth has crossed the saintly lines of Christian providence ascribed to him by Holinshed. This is a Henry who is transfixed by a superstitious horror of all external forces of fate, including God: his slothful decision to lie low and leave his fate to his lucky mascot Warwick is, in terms of destiny, a belt and braces job:

But, Warwick, after God, thou sett'st me free,
 And chiefly, therefore, I thank God and thee.
 He was the author, thou the instrument.
 Therefore, that I may conquer Fortune's spite
 By living low where fortune cannot hurt me,
 And that the people of this blessèd land
 May not be punished by my thwarting stars,
 Warwick, although my head still wear the crown,
 I here resign my government to thee,
 For thou art fortunate in all thy deeds.
 (3*HVI* IV vi 16-25)

As the early scenes of 2 *Henry VI* quickly establish, pride is endemic in the court over which Henry's sloth presides: the sin of pride rushes in through the door held open by the sin of sloth. There is a palpable sense of the pride lexicon and of its dominance in the court: ambition, vainglory, hypocrisy, presumption, disdain, contention and disobedience are rife. As plot and counter plot, factions and individuals sweep on and off the stage, there is no doubt as to the major driver of all this activity. The frequent use by all of the terms 'pride' and 'ambition' is pointed and noticeable. It is the commonest of insults: individuals are cast by one another as personifications of the sin in parody of the morality play. Salisbury says of Buckingham and Suffolk, 'Pride went before, Ambition follows him' and Suffolk is referred to by Warwick as an 'Image of pride'. The sin is on everyone's lips: there are few who do not have a pride-related epithet attached to their name, if only in transference to emphasise the subconscious behaviour of the accuser. Even the mild king is spoken of by York in justification of his planned usurpation as 'proud Lancaster' while in the same breath referring to Henry's 'church-like humours'. The Cardinal and his supporters charge Gloucester with pride; Gloucester attacks the Cardinal for his ambition and pride; Warwick, too is often designated as ambitious. The Queen is criticised for her pride, often in connection with her somewhat reduced family background: she in turn frequently characterises the Duchess as ambitious and proud.

Pride is a picture of chivalry turned sour. Always an uneasy partner with medieval Christian tradition and perhaps even more so with the bookish Christian humanist version of neo-chivalry, the concept of the knight's individual ambition for honour and glory through 'virtuous' battle and prowess is in the main trashed by the behaviour of this court. As may be expected, honour is often the cloak beneath which this seething mass of pride and anger are prone to hide and against which one might expect the virtuous action to be distinguished from the sinful. Talbot is an excellent example of the old-fashioned chivalry of the battle. He fights for king and country and the honour due to him in doing so. This is so closely associated with family and name that the two cannot be divided. His wish to see his son survive is not incompatible with his desire for honour:

In thee thy mother dies, our household's name,
My death's revenge, thy youth, and England's fame-
All these and more we hazard by thy stay;
All these are saved if thou wilt fly away.
(*IHVI* IV vi 38-41)

The neo-chivalric sense of honour with its strong emphasis on duty to religion and loyalty to king coupled with civic duty singles out Gloucester as the archetype counsellor described by Elyot in *The Governour*, whose role of protector and advisor to Henry VI displays not only his primary concerns for the state but also his scrupulous adherence, in the tempting face of such a biddable king, to remain consistently so, forfeiting his marriage and later his life in the cause of civic justice however weakly maintained by the king, who is at least able to recognise his virtues;

Ah, uncle Humphrey, in thy face I see
The map of honor, truth, and loyalty;
And yet, good Humphrey, is the hour to come
There e'er I proved thee false or feared thy faith.
(*2HVI* III i 202-205)

but who is yet powerless to defend them:

And as the dam runs lowing up and down,
Looking the way her harmless young one went,
And can do naught but wail her darling's loss,
Even so myself bewails good Gloucester's case

With sad unhelpful tears,
(*2HVI* III i 214-218)

Both Talbot and Gloucester's knightly virtue is unaffected by Henry's sloth because they owe allegiance to the crown and not an individual. Ironically, it is their old-world chivalry which protects them from the sin which everyone else succumbs to. York's presumptive pride however, enables him to move his motive swiftly from restitution of honour to usurpation as he measures his performance against that of the king:

I am far better born than is the King,
More like a king, more kingly in my thoughts,
(*2HVI* V i 28-29)

Certainly York demonstrates the greater understanding of the language, if not the spirit, of honour. His first pledge of humility to Henry is word perfect, but as empty as his later promise to wait until Henry's death to accede, and his easily lost struggle over the honour of keeping his oath. His knightly individualism has warped into evil 'otherness': his Machiavellian exploitation of the ambition and intrigue of others, and Vice-like asides shared with the audience declare him to be his son Richard's father. He understands pride and, as Iago with envy, can both provoke and harness it in others:

Do you as I do in these dangerous days,
Wink at the Duke of Suffolk's insolence,
At Beaufort's pride, at Somerset's ambition,
At Buckingham, and all the crew of them,
Till they have snared the shepherd of the flock,
That virtuous prince, the good Duke Humphrey.
(*2HVI* II ii 69-74)

The exchange between York and Clifford in *2 Henry VI*, which takes place before both men carry out brutally unheroic attacks, far from indicating the remains of some chivalric feeling, as Tillyard implies, is actually a tacit acknowledgement that fair play has no meaning for the truly ambitious. This is a battle where all means, no matter how debased, are justified:

With thy brave bearing should I be in love,
But that thou art so fast mine enemy.

(2*HVI* V ii 20-21)

Whereas a generation on, even the thin cloak of apparent nobility worn by his father is dispensed with by his son. Edward has no need for the subtlety of a mask. As demonstrated by his worldly, lower order association with lust, he is a man openly driven by base desire:

But for a kingdom any oath may be broken.

I would break a thousand oaths to reign one year.

(3*HVI* I ii 16-17)

While York's pride presumes to the throne, Warwick, the self-confessed 'king-maker' sees himself initially as advisor and God's instrument:

So God help Warwick, as he loves the land

And common profit of his country.

(2*HVI* I i 202-203)

Warwick writes the book on kingship and ultimately finds both Henry and Edward wanting. Some of the areas by which he measures Edward also echo Henry's past incompetencies:

Alas, how should you govern any kingdom,

That know not how to use ambassadors,

Nor how to be contented with one wife,

Nor how to use your brothers brotherly,

Nor how to study for the people's welfare,

Nor how to shroud yourself from enemies?

(3*HVI* IV iii 35-40)

Warwick's role as kingmaker while initially appearing to reflect patriotic disinterest, quickly supplants the will of God in the control of kingly destiny. He progressively promotes himself to God's equal: 'I'll plant Plantagenet, root him up who dares' (3*HVI* I i 48). This confusion or fusion with God is demonstrated at the heat of the battle in 3 *Henry VI* II iii, when Edward begins a speech to Warwick, switching to God partway and creating the sense that, in Edward's mind at least, the two have become one:

O Warwick, I do bend my knee with thine,

And in this vow do chain my soul to thine;

And, ere my knee rise from the earth's cold face,

I throw my hands, mine eyes, my heart to Thee,
 Thou setter-up and plucker-down of kings,
 (3HVI II iii 33-37)

It is only the use of capital letters, not seen by an audience, which distinguishes the addressee. Taking his own brand of determinism to its logical conclusion by supplanting the Almighty, finally Warwick declares himself superior to God by ‘uncrowning’ the king in response to an affront to his personal pride:

I was the chief that raised him to the crown,
 And I’ll be chief to bring him down again;
 (3HVI III iii 262-263)

His oft-expressed surety of calling is matched only by his presumptive death speech: part conventional *memento mori*, part grandiose claim for worldly and ethereal pre-eminence:

Thus yields the cedar to the ax’s edge,
 Whose arms gave shelter to the princely eagle
 Under whose shade the ramping lion slept,
 Whose top branch overpeered Jove’s spreading tree
 And kept low shrubs from winter’s powerful wind.
 (3HVI V ii 11-15)

When he finally dies assuring his fellow lords they will meet him in heaven, it is with a sense that he, not God, will have the final say in the matter.

The sin of anger, while obviously present during battle scenes, often demonstrating the unchivalrous aspect of revenge in battle, is also portrayed through the persona of Queen Margaret whose notable fury and desire for revenge haunts these early plays and marks her out as the embodiment of anger. Francis Bacon identifies the sin of anger to be the resort of the powerless and associates it in particular with ‘children, women, old folks, sick folks’ (Smeaton 1972: 166). As a woman Queen Margaret is completely dependent on men in the pursuance of her ambition: Suffolk, King Henry, the Lancastrian supporters from the court. Aware that she, rather than Henry, has the pride and determination of a prince, the frustration of her impotence erupts into anger which manifests itself in conflict, fury and invective. She converts the once chivalrous Clifford in his anger to her act of brutal revenge on Richard, Duke of York, earning herself the title of ‘tiger’s heart

wrapped in a woman's hide' (*3HVI* I iv 138); tiger being an animal long associated iconographically with the sin of anger. In particular, she is perceived as deploying the last resort of the weak and angry, the curse. This 'sin of the tongue' related to anger was often associated with the physically and politically weak, in particular women who also carried an association with witchcraft. Margaret, Elizabeth and the Duchess of York, while actually all succeeding to some degree in their objective, suffer the fate of their sin: that is, as Chaucer's Parson puts it, to have the curse return 'as a brid that retourneth again to his owene nest' (Mann 2005: 739, 620). All their curses tend to rebound on the initiator in some form or another as a way of punishing those who attempt to usurp God's vengeance.

2.2 Richard III

As Spivack points out, the history of Richard III as devil-monster comes virtually fully formed via more sources than any other English historical character.

He was morally organised by the history Shakespeare knew as a very bad man of great energy and cunning whose 'execrable desire of sovereignty,' as Sir Thomas More phrased it, led him from one outrage to another on his way to the throne, and also while sitting on it, (Spivack 1957: 387). History, and More in particular, describes him as malicious, wrathful, envious, and 'from afor his birth, ever forward':

And when he stood musing he would bite and chaw besely his nether lippe, as who sayd, that his fierce nature in his cruell body always chafed, stirred and was ever unquiete: beside that the dagger that he ware he would when he studied with his hand pluck up and down. (Hall 1809: 300).

His physical and behavioural characteristics would be instantly recognisable as indicative of envy: his association with sharpness; his boar insignia; his deformed body; his restless hurried discontent and resentment; his consistent unhappiness broken only by his momentary delight in the downfall of others; his constant plotting, argument, derision, and his lack of pity, the noted remedy for envy in the confessionals. His image would have been completely familiar to Langland, the fourteenth century writer of *Piers Plowman*'s personification of envy, down to the constant lip-biting:

His body was to-bollen for wrathe, that he boot hise lippes

And wryngyede with the fust – to wreke himself he thought
 With werkes nor with words whan he seyge his tyme.
 Ech a word that he warp was of a neddres tonge;
 Of chidyng and of chalangyng was his chief liflode,
 With bakbityng and bismere and beryng of fals witnessse;¹⁵
 (*Piers Plowman* B-Text ed. Schmidt 1995: *Passus V* 83-88)

Francis Bacon also singles out in his essay *On Envy* ‘deformed persons’ as envious (Smeaton 1972: 25) and describes its restless impulsiveness as a ‘gadding passion’ associating it with someone who is ‘busy and inquisitive’. Envy is also, as Bacon points out, the cause of the first murder, that of Abel by Cain, notably a fratricide.

Queen Margaret is the first to link the deformity with envious behaviour in referring to Richard as ‘That valiant crook-back prodigy, Dickie, your boy, that with his grumbling voice/ was wont to cheer his dad in mutinies?’ (*3HVI I* iv 75-77). His skill with words and ability to manipulate others by needling them to anger are displayed by the argument he presents his father to enable York’s easy rescinding of his oath to Henry. He is even to be found in the heat of battle biting the hand of Warwick:

’Twas odd, belike, when valiant Warwick fled.
 Oft have I heard his praises in pursuit,
 But ne’er till now his scandal of retire.
 (*3HVI II* i 147-149)

His obsessive wish to hear the details of his father’s death also indicates that his enjoyment of others’ misfortune is not limited to those he might rationally identify with enemies. But it is Richard himself, in Morality tradition, who provides the fullest description:

I that have neither pity, love, nor fear.

¹⁵ His body was all swollen up with rage and resentment, and he kept on biting his lip. He walked along with clenched fists, always dreaming up ways of getting his own back, verbally or physically, if he should see a chance. Every word he uttered was like a viper spitting poison. He spent his whole life in quarrels and accusations, backbiting and slander, and bearing false witness. (A.V.C Schmidt translation, 1992).

Indeed 'tis true that Henry told me of,
 For I have often heard my mother say
 I came into the world with my legs forward-
 Had I not reason, think ye, to make haste,
 And seek their ruin that usurped our right?
 The midwife wondered and the women cried
 'O, Jesus bless us, he is born with teeth!'
 And so I was, which plainly signified
 That I should snarl and bite and play the dog.
 Then, since the heavens have shaped my body so,
 Let hell make crooked my mind to answer it.

(3HVI V vi 68-79)

Within the construct of the first tetralogy, envious Richard, accompanied by his predestination-loaded birth imagery, provides the finale for the ancestry of the sins. With the nurse of sloth present to assist, the father of all sins, pride, traditionally gives birth to envy, alone in its sterility, 'the worst of all sins because it is contrary to all virtue and all goodness,' (Bloomfield 1952: 223). Tellingly, for a history steeped in providential reference, the author of *Ancrene Wisse* also singles envy out as the sin most hateful to God because it is against grace.

There is, as might be expected, a strong family connection between the sins of pride and envy and this is also reflected in the familial relationship between Richard and his father. York's partly justified ingratitude which also acquires him the epithet 'grumbling' and his insulting manner is picked up by his boy. The difference between them is motive: whilst York's family pride and semi-legitimate claim to the crown provides him with reason for his expectations and ambitious behaviour towards Henry, Richard's envy extends beyond the Lancastrians to his family and the rest of the world in a motiveless hatred of all:

I have no brother, I am like no brother;
 And this word 'love,' which greybeards call divine,
 Be resident in men like one another
 And not in me. I am myself alone.

(3HVI V vi 80-83)

Envy, never satisfied, will never stop until it has destroyed all and therefore has all by default. For many in the play, including Richard himself, he is perceived as destined to play this role.

This motiveless behaviour coupled with the highly stylised, punning, patterned rhetoric and argument of *Richard III* is probably what has led most readings of Richard in the play to recognise in him the persona of ‘the Vice’ or Iniquity within the morality play tradition. The Vice is an all-purpose representation of sin or the devil whose function is to cause destruction and to provoke evil in others while also providing comic entertainment.¹⁶ This is of particular appeal to those who read within the play a providential case for Richard as a scourge of God. There are certainly numerous references to Richard as a devil, a Vice and an Iniquity. This is further supported by Spivack’s very plausible argument that as the morality play developed, the small size of travelling companies necessitated individual vices or sins to be incorporated into the role of one actor, giving rise to the Vice-figure (and as he later argues, the tragic soliloquy). However, examination of the text demonstrates a much more precise adherence to the envy lexicon and an indication, as with sloth and pride in *Henry VI*, of a fatal, tragic development of the sin within the man from early indications to the point at which Richard gives himself permission to become his sin and systematically to destroy all around him while fruitlessly acquiring, but not gaining happiness from, everything they had: wives, status, title and power. Even the animal imagery applied to him is that associated specifically with envy, from the common ‘toad’, ‘wolf’, ‘boar’ and ‘dog’ to the rare and uniquely associated with envy, ‘hedgehog’. Driven by envy’s endemic suspicion, and the Machiavellian *realpolitik* which sits so comfortably with the sin’s obsessive, jealous anticipation of others’ gains, all his plans focus on his inevitable desire to create a world in which he is the last man standing. It is beautifully brought

¹⁶ Spivack (1958) and Weimann (1978) have established strong parallels between the portrayal of Richard and the morality play Vice. Rossiter (1965) bases his association on the biblical tyrant figure of the mystery plays.

into relief by the pre-battle rallying speeches of Richard and Richmond. Both dwell on country, home and family, but where Richmond paints a picture of future peace as the motivation for his army: 'You sleep in peace, the tyrant being slain', Richard motivates with envy's vision of the impending threat of destruction: 'You sleeping safe, they bring you to unrest'.

Psychologically, there is no room for interpretation with the Vice-figure: he is what he is. In terms of medieval Christian belief he is a tool of the devil, a devil himself. In post-Renaissance Christian providential belief he is a tool of God. Either way, he cannot help himself. As a sin, envy begins as an inclination and depending upon interpretation is either hard-wired to lead the sinner inevitably to damnation: 'I am determined to be a villain,' or it indicates a failed struggle and conscious choice to accept sin on the part of the individual: 'I am determined to be a villain.' The nature of sin in dramatic tragedy is often the tension between the two. A deadly sin, while potentially leading to damnation did not necessarily guarantee it: the dramatic value of a sin over the Vice in moral reading is its capacity to keep the audience guessing.

Richard's final soliloquy paints the inevitable end of a life dedicated to envy. There is no one left to mistrust and destroy but himself and in his grace-averse, envy-driven paranoia he begins to suspect himself of having a conscience:

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

Richard loves Richard; that is, I and I.

Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.

Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why?

Lest I revenge. Myself upon myself?

(*RIII* V iii 180-184)

As his conscience supplies the role of 'the envied', he finds himself faced with destroying it too, or being threatened with the sin of Judas, that of despair, the only unforgiveable sin:

I shall despair. There is no creature loves me,

And if I die, no soul will pity me.

(*RIII V iii 180-184*)

But envy is a sin which denies grace and pity:

Nay, wherefore should they, since that I myself

Find in myself no pity to myself?

(*RIII V iii 200-201*)

He dies true to his sin, without repentance or despair:

Slave, I have set my life upon a cast,

And I will stand the hazard of the die.

(*RIII V iv 9-10*)

2.3 *Richard II*

To someone trained to read in terms of moral commonplace, all the clues are in the historical sources which, to the developing playwright, can be easily accessed from his store of sin-referenced material without the need substantially to change character or events or even religious beliefs. The Sins' capacity to be read as allegorical or mimetic, providential or psychological and above all, their essentially human and universally familiar non-denominational context made them an obvious tool of the craft of transferring narrative, whether historical, classical or folk, to the stage.

The second tetralogy, as might be expected, reveals the extent to which Shakespeare's technique of moral reading has developed from the simple moral reading of a history chronicle. By utilising the results of his moral reading, and applying it to further source material the more experienced dramatist is able to identify a moral template and focus on adapting the historical material around it, editing and re-interpreting for dramatic didactic effect. The similarities between the political and personal histories of Henry VI and Richard II are immediately apparent from the source materials. Both were child kings who suffered from inadequate advice and protectorship; both failed in their management of the commonwealth; both failed in their obligation to provide a clear, inarguable line of succession, and both willingly gave up their responsibility to a usurper. In terms of moral reading, much in the sources for Richard II points to sloth. However, there were also striking differences, particularly in the historical sources. Richard is portrayed historically as

a more rounded king; even, in a sense, more immorally rounded. The sources present a much more multi-faceted character. In his analysis of the historical sources of *Richard II*, Charles R Forker (2002: 123-140) discusses several omissions, additions and subtle reinterpretations of, in particular, Holinshed and Hall carried out by Shakespeare apparently for the purposes of moral character refinement rather than neatness of plot action or dramatic delivery. These biographical edits, some of which would have had great dramatic potential if included, are considerably more explicable if examined against a preconceived moral template taken from the first tetralogy and based on the Sins.

The dramatic style and management of the historical material in the second tetralogy undoubtedly reflect Shakespeare's more confident handling of source materials and narrative as a dramatist. Chronicle action is not allowed to dictate dramatic narrative and pace, and even key historical reportage, such as the rebellion against Bolingbroke, is heavily edited to avoid the parade of political 'events' depicted in *Henry VI Parts 1-3*. Nevertheless, if only because of the similarity of their political situations, Shakespeare returns to the moral reading of history through the commonplace of the Sins. In *Richard II* the Sins are confirmed in their dynastic association with sloth once again enabling the birth of pride. In this case they are politically reversed: sloth represents the house of York, creating a moral vacuum filled by the opportunist ambition of the house of Lancaster. However, the handling of the sin lexicon in this second tetralogy is more subtle, with moral reading less book-marked in action by the frequent rehearsal of verbal identifiers. The Sins are rather integrated into the psychology and character development of the key protagonists. Richard II's sloth is of a different flavour to that of Henry VI, drawing from a wider range of the sloth lexicon which also perhaps denotes a more conscious use and application of the sin lexicon rather than a simple reading of it. This time, rather than the moral reading interpreting the chronicle sources, there is evidence of manipulation of sources and style for the purpose of framing the sin as a central theme, as if the theory that sloth in the realm is a breeding ground for insurrection, once proven through moral reading, can be returned to as a given starting point in any analysis of failed state leadership. There has been a subtle shift from interpreting 'the truth of a foolish world' to a much stronger literary lead, a harmonisation of narrative with didactic message. Sloth is, ironically, leading the drama.

The first and most obvious variance from historical source to fit with the Sins template is in the character of Gaunt. As Forker demonstrates (2002: 123-140) the sources hold a very different moral view of Gaunt, according him the full gamut of the pride lexicon of arrogance, personal ambition, self-aggrandisement. He is described by Holinshed as one who is more inclined to 'studie more for his owne private commodity, than for the advancement of the common-wealth' (1587 3:418) and one who is out to 'destroie the king, and to usurpe the crowne' (1587 3: 445). Another important source, Samuel Daniel, in *The First Fowre Bookes of the Ciuile Warres betweene the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke* (1595), cited by Forker, calls him 'Too great a Subject growne for such a State'. However, in common with the unknown writer of the neo-morality play, *Woodstock*, Shakespeare chooses to portray Gaunt as an example of good governance, rather than suggesting, as the other sources do, that Bolingbroke's plot to take over the kingdom was initiated, or at least colluded with, by Gaunt. Instead, Gaunt is used as a template for virtuous chivalry. His pride is appropriately grounded in his country rather than himself and this enables his critique of Richard's kingship, which constitutes a model of slothful mismanagement, easily recognisable in medieval confessionals and literature. Gaunt reflects back to the king an image of himself as a failing, metaphorically bedridden monarch lazily allowing those who brought his lethargy about to continue to attend him. By referring to his body as 'anointed' and therefore emphasising the body politic, Gaunt reinforces that this sickness is a moral one. Richard's sin is clear enough. Instead of carrying out his God-given duty by the land and commonwealth, he has relinquished responsibility for it by leasing it out, and with it his management and control in return for material comfort. Gaunt is the first to identify in Richard his subconscious desire to relinquish his role:

Which art possessed now to depose thyself.
 Why, cousin, were thou regent of the world,
 It were a shame to let this land by lease;
 But for thy world enjoying but this land,
 Is it not more than shame to shame it so?
 Landlord of England art thou now, not king:
 (*RII II i 108-113*)

However in case the moral reading has been missed, the introduction which has no historical source, of the scene in which the country is metaphorically portrayed as a garden that has been allowed to overgrow with weeds and decline through slothful neglect, enabling fast growing pride to take over, clearly lays out the theme of the intended didacticism:

O, what pity is it
 That he had not so trimmed and dressed his land
 As we this garden. We at time of year
 Do wound the bark, the skin of our fruit trees,
 Lest being over-proud with sap and blood,
 With too much riches it confound itself.
 Had he done so to great and growing men,
 They might have lived to bear and he to taste
 Their fruits of duty. Superfluous branches
 We lop away that bearing boughs may live.
 Had he done so, himself had borne the crown,
 Which waste of idle hours hath quite thrown down.
 (*RII* III iv 55-66)

The model of good kingship portrayed by the garden metaphor and to which by default Gaunt alludes, is one also fully understood by York who is senior advisor to the king and regent of the kingdom in Richard's absence. It is York who should take on the role of advisor assumed by Gaunt. York, however has already succumbed to the sloth of the court. He has already given up his duty to advise the young king, as his assertion that Gaunt should not waste his breath suggests:

Vex not yourself, nor strive not with your breath,
 For all in vain comes counsel to his ear.
 (*RII* II i 3-4)

York is frozen by sloth between his duty to the crown and his duty to the commonwealth despite displaying the most comprehensive political understanding of what is happening. Acting almost as a static chorus in his analysis of the rights and wrongs of king and opposition, he vacillates between the two, incapable of any form of decisive action. Instead, he trails along after the action behaving, almost comically, as some kind of impartial but polite host:

But if I could, by Him that gave me life,
 I would attach you all and make you stoop
 Unto the sovereign mercy of the King.
 But since I cannot, be it known unto you
 I do remain as neuter. So fare you well-
 Unless you please to enter in the castle
 And there repose you for this night.
 (*RII* II iii 154-160)

Aspects of Richard's character and history, both good and bad, are systematically edited out in order to concentrate on the overriding template of sloth. Richard's success as a military leader and his activity in the Irish campaign are not included in the play as they would detract from his portrait as a 'talker' rather than 'doer', yet another facet of the sloth lexicon. The departure for Ireland is portrayed more as an escape and the only aspect of it incorporated into the play is the tardy return home which costs Richard his army, delay being one of the Peraldus subset of *acedia*, (*Summa de vitiis*, 1249). Holinshed ascribes this to Aumerle's poor advice, but Shakespeare tellingly omits Aumerle's involvement, using the opportunity to associate tardiness with Richard:

One day too late, I fear, my noble lord,
 Hath clouded all thy happy days on earth.
 (*RII* III ii 62-63)

Similarly, Shakespeare omits Holinshed's story of the trap set by Northumberland to capture the king at Flint Castle, preferring instead to suggest that Richard gives up in despair on hearing of York's defection. The dramatic opportunity afforded by Richard's envious prevention of Bolingbroke's marriage which has, as Djorjevic puts it 'the tone and plot formula of a chivalric romance' (Djorjevic 2010:109) is also edited out. Tempting as it must have been as a subplot, there is no room for another deadly sin, even one laid out ready by Holinshed, cluttering the apposition of the sloth and pride motif:

But what will envie leave unattempted, where it is once settled? And how are the malicious tormented with egernes of revenge against them whom they malingne, wringing themselves in the meane time with inward pangs gnawing them at the hart? (1587, 3: 495).

Whilst Holinshed does refer to Richard's early fear and despair, Shakespeare develops and dramatically highlights these slothful characteristics: from a much earlier stage the king is portrayed wrestling with his defeatism. From Gaunt's first mention of his deposing himself he is haunted both by the compulsive fear and attraction of it. Soon after his arrival in Wales, even before he has met with Bolingbroke's forces, he has to be 'chided' out of this depressed anticipation of defeat and hope of death:

Our lands, our lives, and all are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own but death
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.

(*RII* III ii 146-149)

Holinshed's chronicle delays all indication that Richard will be deposed until he is imprisoned in the tower and under threat of death unless he agrees. The formal deposition of thirty three articles which details the grounds on which Richard should be deprived of his crown is not omitted. Rather it is ostentatiously left unused in the play, and by the king himself, in favour of Richard's own voluntary relinquishment of office carried out not in the privacy of the Tower as chronicled, but as a massive public and ceremonial act of sloth containing vacillation, suicidal tendency and relinquishment of duty in the first four lines:

Ay, no: No, ay- for I must nothing be.
Therefore, no 'no,' for I resign to thee.
Now mark me how I will undo myself:
I give this heavy weight from off my head,
And this unwieldy scepter from my hand,

(*RII* IV i 194-198)

Initially Richard is portrayed displaying the familiar traits of sloth: his inclination to defer the running of the realm to subordinates or the impotent (and therefore in his own way equally slothful) York; his equivocation and capricious inability to make up his mind in judging the claims of Bolingbroke and Mortimer, and his indulgence in the trappings of kingship in preference to its duties. Where Henry VI's sloth was designated through his lack of language and movement (*torpor*), so Richard's is illustrated by the opposite extremes of languor also to be found in the Cassian subset

of *acedia* as identified by Seigfried Wenzel (1967: 21): incivility (*importunitas*), mental and physical restlessness, or lack of stability (*inquietudo, instabilitas*), curiosity (*curiositas*) and notably, language, often joking, for its own sake or without purpose (*verbositas*).

The ways in which Richard plays, and causes others to play, with language is distinctive enough for some to have variously suggested style and language to be a central theme of the play (Forker 2002: 55-65). Marion Trousdale has taken it further by seeing the whole play as a kind of exercise in using rhetoric to create a structural rather than action led narrative (Trousdale 1982: 65-79). This could lend itself to an interpretation which leans heavily on commonplace collections. In any case the play is so full of conscious rhetoric as to portray a king and therefore a court which has become so enamoured of language for its own sake that the play begins to look like an elaborate rhetorical sampler. Forker estimates roughly a third of the four hundred rhetorical terms in Lanham's modern *Handlist* can be found in the play (Forker 2002: 85). This is ideal to portray the rather cold bookish curiosity; verbal jokes and quibbling; rapid thinking aloud, and dramatic posturing in which Richard indulges. At Gaunt's bedside he asks himself rather clinically, 'Can sick men play so nicely with their names?' and entertains himself by competing in an exhausting stichomythic exchange with the dying man. He is obsessed with, and hides behind, ritual language in public when he is not entertaining his friends in private with his uncivil but witty nastiness. His restless questioning is often levelled at himself, in this case after the form of a catechism:

What must the King do now? Must he submit?

The King shall do it. Must he be deposed?

The King shall be contented. Must he lose

The name of King? A God's name let it go.

(*RII III iii 143-146*)

In addition to the historical edit which removes all indication of Richard II as a chivalric man of action, concentrating on his slothful neglect of the kingdom and idle, verbose self indulgence, Shakespeare also implies that the king's abandonment of duty has also extended to the marital bed. In the same way that it is hinted at in *Henry VI* that the king, in leaving his marital duties to Suffolk cannot therefore

provide an unquestioned heir. So, in his harangue of Bushy and Green, Bolingbroke alleges that Richard has been too engaged with them in his wasteful courtly existence to fulfil his kingly duty in the bedroom:

You have misled a prince, a royal king,
 A happy gentleman in blood and lineaments
 By you unhappied and disfigured clean.
 You have in manner with your sinful hours
 Made a divorce betwixt his queen and him,
 (*RII* III i 8-12)

On the basis of this speech Forker (2002: 310n, 491 *LN*) airs an interpretation that Richard's attachment to Bushy and Green is homosexual, whilst also acknowledging that there is no historical validity in it. He further concedes that dramatically, Richard's homosexuality would not accord with the apparent loving relationship between Richard and his queen. Holinshed does, however refer to the general loose-living of the court and includes the king in his accusation. Given sloth's reputation as an enabler of other sins, particularly of the baser sort, it seems more reasonable that what Bolingbroke is getting at here with his swipe at Richard's virility is more to do with sloth than sexual bias. Shakespeare also notably chooses to exclude any reference to Richard's designated successor, Edmund Mortimer, to exaggerate his failure to provide for the kingdom. In not providing an heir Richard is not fulfilling his role in the eyes of God and his country, and of course, providing Bolingbroke who has a son, with another reason to style himself as more kingly than the king.

However, as with Henry VI, the major representation of Richard's sloth lies in his complicated relationship with God and providence. Much more than Henry, Richard's *raison d'être* is tied up with the beliefs, ceremony and traditions of divine right and indefeasibility. His inclination, however, is to perceive his role as a privilege rather than a duty. Like the late fifteenth century morality play *Mankind* in which, put off by the hardship of preparing the soil, Mankind decides to sow his grain in the winter and 'let God work' (Lester 1981: 34, 546), so Richard in his sloth is inclined to assume God will make him invincible. He fantasises about Angels and other supernatural rescue and protection. He has not grasped, like Mankind, that it is a partnership of duties. As it is explained to him by the Bishop of Carlisle, God helps those who help themselves:

That power that made you king
 Hath power to keep you king in spite of all.
 The means that heavens yield must be embraced
 And not neglected; else heaven would,
 And we will not:
 (*RII III ii 27-28.3 Quarto*)

So Richard lurches from invincible to self-defeated, neither of which has any relationship to his own effort. Both states are elements of sloth and indicate a disinclination to act. Within the sin of *acedia* the medieval term for despair, *wanhope* was the most commonly referenced, but there was also *overhope* or vain trust.

The handling of the pride bred through Richard's sloth is also more subtle than the earlier histories. In *Henry VI* the atmosphere of pride and ambition was created through a flurry of verbal claim and counter claim, bustling competition, insult and hypocrisy often informed through the mechanism of the telling aside which revealed the private ambitions of the would-be usurper. Richard's court, with its strong sense of the ceremonial, exposes its atmosphere of pride more formally through the elaborate mechanism of chivalric trial by combat and the concept of personal honour. This ultimate in action-related resolution pits Bolingbroke and Mowbray against the vacillating management of their dispute by the king. Although trial by combat could be seen as providential, the chivalric code also hovered uneasily outside of Christian humility and deference. Honour can be seen as more important than anything else, including God. For Mowbray nothing is worse than public shame:

Mine honour is my life, both grow in one;
 Take honour from me and my life is done.
 (*RII I i 182-183*)

Cynically, trial by combat was also seen as a way of legally killing enemies. It is suggested by contemporary historians that Richard II himself abused the system by encouraging young sympathetic followers to challenge his old and not as fit enemies in return for the fallen knight's land (Knowles 2002: 53). Richard shows some awareness of this abuse:

And for we think the eagle-wingèd pride

Of sky-aspiring and ambitious thoughts
 With rival-hating envy, set on you
 To wake our peace,
 (*RII I iii 127.1-127.4 Quarto*)

Under Bolingbroke, pride, particularly shaped as chivalric honour, is activated and creates the pompous and faintly ridiculous scene (*RII IV i*) in which gage after gage is thrown down and accepted by Aumerle. Chivalric honour is an aspect of pride to which Bolingbroke is consistently drawn and much admires, leading him to envy Northumberland his son and fail to see the virtues in his own.

Although Bolingbroke continually has the epithet ‘proud’ applied to him by Richard and his supporters, his pride and ambition is, in the main, suggested through his highly suspect and carefully studied attempts at humility. To pretend to be a virtue is a classic deadly sin trick and recognised by York:

Show me thy humble heart and not thy knee,
 Whose duty is deceivable and false.
 (*RII II iii 83-84*)

As it is also by Richard:

Me rather had my heart might feel your love
 Than my displeas'd eye see your courtesy.
 Up cousin, up; your heart is up, I know-
 Thus high at least, although your knee be low.
 (*RII III iii 191-194*)

As Shakespeare provides no aside or soliloquy for this ‘silent King’, Bolingbroke’s ambitions are cleverly implied as humbly opportunist with a suspicion of the ‘gaping’ desire for power suggested by Holinshed hiding behind the act of humble silence. His increasingly royal demeanour and language such as the introduction of the royal ‘we’ betray a sense that he has been practising the role for some time. He subconsciously uses echoing of royal referents, such as ‘rain’ suggesting ‘reign’. Largely his motives are cleverly hidden behind the action of Northumberland, the kingmaker whose pride, much as that of his (dramatic not historical) predecessor Warwick, outstrips kings to vie with the Almighty: he drops the designation not only for Richard but also when referring to his protégé Bolingbroke. Richard describes his skills in manipulation, ‘You make a leg, and Bolingbroke says ‘Ay’’ (*RII III iii*

175). The 'kingmaker' is a man who finds it difficult to drop the knee to anyone, including God: 'My guilt be on my head, and there an end' (*RII V I 69*). He is the unsatisfied pride of the morality play who manipulates and infects others and it is for him that Richard reserves his curse:

Northumberland, thou ladder wherewithal
 The mounting Bolingbroke ascends my throne,
 The time shall not be many hours of age
 More than it is ere foul sin, gathering head,
 Shall break into corruption. Thou shalt think
 Though he divide the realm and give thee half
 It is too little, helping him to all.
 He shall think that thou which know'st the way
 To plant unrightful kings, wilt know again,
 Being ne'er so little urged, another way
 To pluck him headlong from the usurpèd throne.
 (*RII V i 55-65*)

There is a sense at the end of *Richard II* that both Richard and Bolingbroke have acquired self-knowledge if not redemption. Richard certainly has learned that the punishment for his sloth, is to be trapped morally in sloth with no prospect of redemption. With the obsessive interest in time which is another of the characteristics of his sin, he now understands and appreciates the poetic justice of that punishment, 'I wasted time, and now doth time waste me,' (*RII V v 49*). Incarcerated with only his own restless mind to play with he recognises why those who suffer from sloth turn to despair and suicide:

But whate'er I am,
 Nor I, nor any man that but man is
 With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
 With being nothing.
 (*RII V v 38-41*)

His attempt to fight back when attacked by his murderers betrays an attempt at redemption, just as the murder ironically provides a form of punishment for the popularity-seeking Bolingbroke, who is forced to plan a charm offensive on God:

I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land

To wash this blood from off my guilty hand.

March sadly after; grace my mourning here

In weeping after this untimely bier.

(*RII V vi 49-52*)

In returning to his exploration of sloth and pride and their role in history and the art of governance Shakespeare demonstrates a step change in moral reading. Whilst the writing of *Henry VI* can be termed as an example of moral reading, perhaps using a commonplace book to interpret ‘the truth of a foolish world’ in terms of deadly sins, *Richard II* is rather an example of moral composition: that of using the Sins to define and develop the narrative and shape the character of the protagonist for the purpose of dramatic didacticism.

2.4 *Henry IV*

The theme of individual chivalric pride, introduced in the instances of trial by combat set against the backdrop of the empty, slothful court of pomp and circumstance established by Richard II, continues to be developed in *Henry IV*. However the change in dramatic format away from tragedy provides new scope, within the contrasting scenes of court and tavern, for the introduction of lower-order sins. The medieval chivalric code whose ideology in the face of historical reality, as Djordjevic suggests (2010: 49), is already so shaky and prone to moral contradiction in Holinshed, demonstrates that it is ripe for exploiting dramatic moral tension. This is particularly true when overlaid with the moral didacticism of humanism. *Henry IV* presents a court presided over by a king who, because of his own pride, is overly impressed by chivalric honour and still carries a deep distaste for inactivity and idleness. His own status, still dogged by the associative guilt of Richard’s death remains as yet unpurged by the promised crusade, and the ambitious king-makers who helped him to his throne appear to be making good Richard’s prediction of insurrection. His son, his example of dutiful provision of an heir against which he measured Richard, is not proving to be a national asset.

Henry's political insecurity is fed by his concerns regarding lineal continuity and the threat posed by Northumberland. He weighs his situation in terms of his own pride and finds it giving birth to a new sin:

Yea, there thou mak'st me sad, and mak'st me sin
 In envy that my Lord Northumberland
 Should be the father to so blest a son,
 (*IHV I i 77-79*)

He recounts his past, contrasting his chivalric character with that of Richard's. His punishment for usurping the throne, it appears, is to have a son who seems more like Richard than Henry:

And in that very line, Harry, standest thou;
 For thou hast lost thy princely privilege
 With vile participation.
 (*IHV III ii 85-87*)

However, the chivalric honour with which Henry is so taken is showing signs of moral and political disorder. Hotspur's template of chivalry is, in fact, more a template of personal pride and ambition. He talks about shame, but it is a personal loss of face which does not include duty to king or country. He is even incapable of conforming to knightly behaviour in terms of courtly love – not that, in the course of this anti-chivalry play, it renders him anything other than less ridiculous. While Hotspur reflects the risible excesses of chivalric valour, Mortimer reflects the risible excesses of chivalric ardour. Contrasted with Hotspur's realistic marriage, Mortimer demonstrates the silly vanity of courtly love which is only capable of surviving when either party cannot actually understand one another. Hotspur's poetic, romantic inclinations are retained for love of himself and his own pride:

By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap
 To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon,
 Or dive into the bottom of the deep,
 Where fathom-line could never touch the ground,
 And pluck up drownèd honour by the locks,
 (*IHV I iii 200-204*)

Just as Henry is entirely taken in by Hotspur's honour, he completely fails to recognise the affectation of his own son's sloth. To interpret the play as a straight

morality with the prince as Everyman, as Tillyard and others do (Tillyard 1944: 270) is to fail to recognise who has the upper hand. Idleness is recognised in the confessionals as a favoured sin of youth, but even Warwick can see that Hal is merely playing at it. He does not so much practise sloth; he studies it like an insect pinned to a board:

The Prince but studies his companions,
 Like a strange tongue, wherein, to gain the language,
 'Tis needful that the most immodest word
 Be looked upon and learnt,
 [...] and their memory
 Shall as a pattern or a measure live
 By which his grace must mete the lives of other,
 Turning past evils to advantages.
 (2*HIV* IV iii 68-71, 75-78)

In Hal's case, this sloth is not a sin of the devil like that of Henry VI and Richard II. It does not characterise his behaviour, it amuses him. Further, to be doubly safe, he observes it out of his class, in its lowest form, as a sin of the flesh. Falstaff's environment is not the prince's natural home and his association with it can only be regarded at worst as youthful entertainment, particularly as he makes it so clear that it is he, not the sin who is in control:

I know you all, and will a while uphold
 The unyoked humour of your idleness.
 Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
 To smother up his beauty from the world,
 That, when he please again to be himself,
 Being wanted he may be more wondered at
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
 Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
 (1*HIV* I ii 170-180)

In his affectation of sloth, like Henry's assumption of false humility in *Richard II*, Hal has more in common with his popularity-seeking father than Henry believes. Both are extremely calculating:

I'll so offend to make offense a skill,
 Redeeming time when men think least I will.

(*IHIV* I ii 191-192)

It is this extreme self-confidence which later causes him difficulties in his association with Falstaff. To assume you have control over a deadly sin is a risky business and redolent of pride.

The play is able to convey signals regarding Hal's relationship with sloth through dramatic style. By basing Hal's relationship with the sin in comedic prose scenes set in low brow venues, the fleshly and worldly aspect of the sins in question are emphasised. When Tillyard speaks of Falstaff as 'the epitome of the Seven Deadly Sins' (1944: 292), he is mistaken. Falstaff is no generalised Vice: he is Gluttony (which of course includes drunkenness), with its strong concatenation with the other fleshly sins sloth and lust. He has the grasp of biblical knowledge and the power of subtle rhetoric that would be expected from the personification of a sin. His rhetorical hymn of praise to sherry sack is typical of the stereotypical sin or Vice-figure. At this stage he knows his place and positions himself firmly with the lower order sins. These are the sins Prince Hal is minded to give up when he becomes king: 'Banish plump Jack and banish all the world' (*IHIV* II v. 437). Falstaff's portly caricature is the opposite of the lean, hungry frame commonly associated with anger and war: he is no general. In fact, after the fashion of a deadly sin in a morality play, he takes up a spirited attack on his fellow sin, given to provoking war; that of pride:

What is honor? A word. What is in that word 'honor'? What is that
 'honor'? Air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? He that died o'Wednesday.
 Doth he feel it? No. Doth he hear it? No. 'Tis insensible, then? Yea, to the
 dead. But will it not live with the living? No. Why? Detraction will not
 suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honor is a mere scutcheon. And so ends
 my catechism.

(*IHIV* V i 133-139)

In representing as he does the lower-order sins of misspent youth (he even refers to himself as a youth), he symbolises Hal's wild time spent familiarising himself with sinful activity. He therefore cannot be judged independently from the prince's,

later king's, own moral development. In his observation of, and involvement with, Falstaff at Eastcheap, Hal learns a great deal about moderation and control through Falstaff's lack of it. Hal is later able to judge Hotspur's honour for what it is, displaying as he does a mature understanding of the humanist love of balance when he refers to it as 'ill-weaved ambition' (*IHV V iv 87*). When Hal discovers Falstaff's apparently dead body the words he speaks over it constitute a eulogy for his errant youth:

Oh, I should have a heavy miss of thee

If I were much in love with vanity.

(*IHV V iv 104-105*)

However he learns that it is not so easy to shake off a potential deadly sin, however lightly worn. Allegorically and ironically Falstaff's recovery and subsequent attempt to progress from his proper place among the sins of the flesh to pride, the highest of all sins, is aided by Hal's collusion in Falstaff's opportunist lie:

For my part, if a lie may do thee grace

I'll gild it with the happiest terms I have.

(*IHV V iv 151-152*)

Falstaff's ambition to profit by Hal's patronage has moved from a simple desire for money to a monstrous demonstration of concatenation. He aspires to leave gluttony behind in favour of position and Hal is confronted with the prospect of his sin not only following him, but transforming into something worse:

If I do grow great, I'll grow less; for I'll purge, and

leave sack, and live cleanly as a nobleman should do.

(*IHV V iv 157-158*)

Falstaff's attempts to appear reformed are as assumed as the innocence he credits Hal with destroying:

Thou hast done much harm upon me, Hal; God forgive

thee for it. Before I knew thee, Hal, I knew nothing, and now am I, if a man should speak truly, little better than one of the wicked.

(*IHV I ii 81-83*)

Hal's much criticised rejection of Falstaff, read in terms of the Sins, makes perfect sense. Confronted by Falstaff's assumed familiarity within the environs of his court the new king finally recognises that Falstaff has stepped over the line and that sin,

rather than withering as the sinner moves on, is more than equal to accommodating to new surroundings. The king's confession and rejection of sin must therefore be public and final:

I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,
So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane;
But being awak'd I do despise my dream.

[...]

Presume not that I am the thing I was,
For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
That I have turned away my former self.

(*2HIV V v 47-56*)

Shakespeare's audience will have been familiar with the morality tradition of the engaging, even endearing personification of sins. If Falstaff did not provoke sympathy he would be failing in his contract. However, by stepping beyond his social profile and assuming a sin beyond his 'place', he has demonstrated the danger of concatenation and has justified the king's rough handling. The new King Henry has learned about sin. He recognises its inevitability in the world (Falstaff is provided for, to contain his presumption) but he has learned that tolerance is a dangerous game to play with sin and it informs his later dealings with Scroop, Cambridge and Grey as well as Bardolph.

2.5 Henry V

King Henry V, as the last king of the two tetralogies has presented a problem of critical interpretation. Is he the perfect version of nationalist duty and Renaissance neo-chivalry as portrayed by Craik and others, or can he be portrayed as Gerald Gould (1919: 42-55) and more recently Ronald Knowles (2002: 87-101) attempt to do, as a cold, manipulative warmonger who is instrumental in conveying an insightful yet semi-covert social critique of war and its atrocities? Is he honour modified with Christian humility, or pride wrapped in a cloak of pseudo-chivalry? Both opposing critiques provide, given appropriate direction, what could be a convincing dramatic interpretation of the text. Others assume a deliberately ambiguous approach in the text or further, as in Norman Rabkin's analysis which

employs as its metaphor the ‘gestalt switch’ illusory picture of rabbits and ducks to illustrate his argument that the play consciously presents alternative readings:

In *Henry V* Shakespeare created a work whose ultimate power is precisely the fact that it points in two opposite directions, virtually daring us to choose one of the two opposed interpretations it requires of us. (Rabkin 1981: 34).

Knowles’ model of a knowing, anti-establishment message lurking beneath the overt patriotism and waiting to be discovered by a ‘discerning auditor’ can sometimes display the desperate ingenuity of those who find satanic messages in recordings which are played backwards. The central argument revolves around Henry’s interaction, in disguise, with his soldiers. Knowles questions the validity of the analogies the king uses to disclaim responsibility for the potential death and therefore subsequent damnation of his soldiers. The king, however, quite rightly makes the distinction between the responsibility he has as a king to ensure that the war is legitimate and just and the risk of life necessary, and the responsibility every individual has for his own soul. In using the analogies he does, King Henry makes the distinction between death and salvation. Knowles’ interpretation of Henry’s argument that ‘God works on the king’s behalf by punishing criminals in war who have escaped justice at home, seemingly a variant on the argument that war purges the body politic of the ill humours of criminality’ (Knowles 2002: 95) misses the point being made to the soldiers. How can the king be held responsible for an individual’s conscience at the time of his death, argues Henry, when for all he is aware they could even be escaped criminals:

Then, if they die unprovided, no more is the King guilty of their damnation than he was before guilty of those impieties for which they are now visited.

(*HV IV i 159-161*)

He has demonstrated for his part his kingly responsibility of establishing the justice of, and the preparation for, the war. Its outcome, as he frequently claims, is providential. In a version of Matthew 22: 21, he makes the division of responsibilities very clear, some might argue, a moral disclaimer:

Every subject’s duty is the King’s, but every subject’s soul is his own. (*HV IV i 161-162*)

Rabkin's careful restoration of the dual portraits of King Henry as 'exemplary Christian monarch' and at the same time, 'Machiavellian prince' lead him to conclude that Shakespeare finds both images equally convincing, and forces a reading that has the potential to maintain or share his conflict. Given the pattern of sins foregrounded in the structure of the two tetralogies, it might be expected that the final play will provide some form of developmental shift. In the first tetralogy the progress descended through sloth to pride and finally the envious excess of Richard III. In this second tetralogy sloth and pride give way to a model of control, or possibly humanist moderation depending upon whether the king is cast as the Christian hero of the chorus or the successful yet morally ambiguous, calculating, manipulative chief executive with a penchant for blame culture. Like all good chief executives, Henry has three, oft-repeated core values. He publicly rejects the escapism of sloth and the hubris of pride of his predecessors. He is concerned with: establishing the justice or legality of his own actions on behalf of the nation; re-enforcing the acceptance of individual responsibility for one's own salvation, and acknowledging providence above personal achievement. The care with which he ensures the church's authority in law and conscience; the sleight of tongue which enables Scroop, Cambridge and Grey to condemn themselves, and the wholesale transference of guilt for the outrages of war to the resisting nation has not endeared him to his critics. Nevertheless in terms of governance, he is scrupulously carrying out the humanist job description. As king, he picks his way between honour and pride, constantly reminding himself of his father's fault and weighing his actions. He is a model of moral realism which neither utilises providence to validate escape from duty nor to enhance individual honour. Grim-faced, he makes the difficult decisions and affords them a kind of moral legitimacy. The extreme opposite of Richard III, he depersonalises kingship and provides a stark contrast with the French who have not progressed from tossing the coin between pride and sloth: 'Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin / as self-neglecting' (*HV II iv 74-5*).

In this final example of monarchical sin-handling, there is a sense that although the model seems to have finally found a balance, chronologically speaking it is soon to be replaced by the backsliding Henry VI. Consequently, the emphasis in the play

is on individual responsibility. Whilst demonstrating the qualities of a Renaissance king, Henry manages at the same time to emphasise their vulnerability and impermanence; holding political reality, honour and Christian humility together through constant revision of the small print of his and others' actions. He recognises his potential for pride and controls it through his providentialism and he equally recognises his capacity for sloth and controls it through his commitment to duty. In this sense it displays the characteristics of Christian struggle literature, a quality detected by Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore's political analysis: 'even as it consolidates, it betrays inherent instability,' (Drakkis 1985: 214). Henry is not so much Everyman as Everyking. However, it also demonstrates, as might be expected, a maturity which exposes a growing awareness of the moral ambiguity of virtue and vice so tellingly exploited in the problem comedies that there is every justification for Rabkin's conclusion:

But in *Henry V*, it seems to me, Shakespeare's habitual recognition of the duality of things has led him, as it should lead his audience, to a point of crisis. Since by now virtually every other play in the canon has been called a problem play, let me add *Henry V* to the number (Rabkin 1977: 296).

This play is actually about understanding and controlling sin rather than stoically rejecting it. Henry's model of kingship is one learned through personal knowledge of sin. The Dauphin commits the mistake of judging him by 'our wilder days; / Not measuring the use we made of them,' (*HV* I ii 268-269). The moral judgement has shifted to the product rather than the process. King Henry perhaps represents a new humanist understanding of the deadly sins: that they are at once drivers of human potential and damnation and that the moral struggle is to see that and act on it:

There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
 Would men observingly distill it out.
 For our bad neighbor makes us early stirrers,
 Which is both healthful and good husbandry.
 Besides, they are our outward consciences
 And preachers to us all, admonishing
 That we should dress us fairly for our end.
 Thus may we gather honey from the weed
 And make a moral of the devil himself.

(*HV IV i 4-12*)

The progress chart of Shakespeare's moral reading as identified by his re-telling of history is remarkable. Using the moral template of the Sins, he develops from a grammar school textbook interpretation of historical sources and action to an increasingly skilful examination of the psyche in terms of moral duty and governance. Tillyard's discomfort with this final play is perhaps that its moral sophistication comes too early in the chronology of his Tudor myth. However the historiographical message it conveys is one of individual responsibility for salvation and the transience of achievement. Henry may have achieved 'the world's best garden', but as Richard II's gardeners know, it can only be maintained by constant vigilance and control. As the final lines of the chorus predict, it will not last.

Chapter Three

‘Pride separates a man from God; envy divides him from his neighbour; anger divides him from himself’: the Devil’s sins and the development of tragedy.

3.1 The sin of anger and its relationship to the tragic hero

Incorporating the deadly sin of anger into the complex narrative of a Christian humanist post-Reformation society was probably more comprehensively and easily achieved than for other deadly sins. Anger had already proved to be a sin which had shown itself amenable to necessary re-classification in the face of changing times and beliefs. It is perhaps the sin which most provokes ambiguity in identification with right or wrong and is best able, as with the sins of the morality plays, to hide behind a cloak of justice, even providential justice. As the sin most closely allied to innate response and individual feeling it is identified by the originators of the Seven Deadly Sins as being of the soul, or spirit, rather than the body and is often portrayed in flesh-denying terms of hunger or leanness. It is the inner struggle of man with his own psyche: a concept which is at once as old as stoicism and as modern as the humanist ideal of moderation.

To lose one’s temper had long been associated with the loss of one’s mind, or reason; its loss of control suggesting a form of madness or otherness in one who succumbed to it. Seneca’s comparison in *De Ira* with the uncontrollable velocity of one thrown off a cliff, captures not only the effect of anger on the individual, but maps the tragic progress of all deadly sins:

Once the mind has been aroused and shaken, it becomes the slave of the disturbing agent. There are certain things which at the start are under our control, but later hurry us away by their violence and leave us no retreat. As a victim hurled from the precipice has no control of his body, and once cast off, can neither stop nor stay, but speeding irrevocably, is cut off from all reconsideration and repentance and cannot now avoid arriving at the goal toward which he might once have avoided starting, so with the mind – if it plunges into anger, love or the other passions, it has no power to check its impetus, its very weight and the downward tendency of vice needs must

hurry it on, and drive it to the bottom. (*Moral Essays*, Transl. Basore 1928: 1.7.3-4, 125).

Lily B Campbell contextualises it in terms of Shakespearean tragedy:

The tragic hero sins under the influence of passion, his reason failing to check his passion. His passion may lead him to madness, but as long as his passion is in conflict with reason, he has not committed a mortal sin. When, however, passion takes possession of his will, has perverted his will, when in perfect accord with passion his reason directs evil through the will, then we have a villain, one who is dyed in sin, and one whose sin is mortal. (Campbell 1930: 101).

The conviction is that a conscious decision is made to cede authority or control to the passions and that the consequent destructive path is wholly attributable to the individual's initial choice. To make a choice in favour of emotion rather than rationality such as this is always, in the stoic view, an incorrect judgement and wholly attributable in terms of blame. While Seneca's stoic philosophy as portrayed in *De Ira* allowed for no form of justifiable anger it seems that Senecan revenge tragedy reflected a more ambiguous moral interpretation (Cedric A J Littlewood 2004: 37)) and it was this which seems to have informed Renaissance drama, along with the more nuanced Christian conception which grew out of the Platonic-Aristotelian notion in which reason or judgement controls, or balances, the emotive, involuntary part of the psyche. Within this construct it is admitted that at times an emotive reaction or passion can be justified, even right. The notion of righteous anger was largely due to the influence of the Scriptures. In addition to the several references in which anger is condemned there are a number of occasions in which anger is perceived to be on the side of good. God, particularly the Old Testament God, is frequently angry and is often vengeful.¹⁷ Christ's actions in turning over the

¹⁷ I am indebted to my supervisor, Dr David Bagchi for providing the following reference:

'Even more tellingly, it has been calculated that, of the 714 occurrences of verbs denoting anger in the entire Hebrew Bible, three-quarters of them have God as their subject (Wolde 2008: 1-24).

Sometimes these divine emotions have some foundation – humanity's wickedness leads to God's sorrow for having made Adam and Eve and his resolve to destroy their descendants in the Flood. But often God's passions seem to be driven by mere caprice – 'Jacob I loved but Esau I hated' (Romans 9:13. See also Malachi 1:2,3)

tables in the temple (Matthew 21:12) demonstrate the use of anger against the sinful. There is also the rather cryptic injunction from Psalms 4:4 which is repeated by St Paul 'Be ye angry and sin not' (Ephesians 4:26). Evagrius Ponticus, one of the originators of what became the Deadly Sins, is clearly influenced by this in his depiction of anger, reflecting early Christian writings such as the life of Saint Pachomius who is described as one who was angry after the manner of the saints.¹⁸ The classical concept of *virtus* also embodied a form of state approved anger which distinguished between the state champion, or defender, and the individually motivated combatant. As Charles Wells explains, to the individual ambitious for glory in battle the only secure way was to fight for his country, '*Virtus* stood at the summit of the Roman hierarchy of values in that it lauded the spirit of self-sacrificing patriotism. Only through service to the state might personal glory be acquired,' (Wells 1995: 95). Even then a fine line existed between *virtus* and what Wells categorises as 'vainglorious exhibitionism' and 'unfocused ferocity'. Similarly the chivalric concepts of 'just' combat convey an elevated status for the role of the knight-champion. However, in reality, these prescribed roles were idealistic, almost superhuman. So, just as pride was to be found masquerading beneath the cloak of humility, so anger was often tightly buttoned into courage and fortitude. There is no doubt that anger, particularly seen in terms of secular existence, equalled or possibly even excelled pride in terms of ambivalence.

By the end of the fourteenth century when Chaucer's Parson expounds his treatise on confession and the Seven Deadly Sins¹⁹ in *The Canterbury Tales*, the lexicon of anger has become quite extensive: he clearly sees its relevance to his secular audience, choosing to spend proportionately more time on it than any other sin. Defining anger as a sin which springs from the tongue, he portrays anger as being closely allied to two other of the Devil's sins; pride and envy: 'for soothly he that is

¹⁸ 'Il s'irritait a la maniere des saints.' Trans Veilleux. *La Viede Saint Pachome*, Spiritualite Orientale 38, Abbaye de Bellafontaine (1984): 306

¹⁹ The original source of the section on The Seven Deadly Sins is Peraldus *Summa de vitiis* (c.1236), although Chaucer's translation is thought to have been based on later variants (see S. Wenzel, *Traditio*, 30 (1974), 351-78) and considered by some to have been re-ordered and to have incorporated additional materials by Chaucer to reflect the earlier tales (see, eg L.W. Patterson, *Traditio*, 34(1978), 361-9).

proud or envious is lightly wrooth' (Mann 2005: 731, 534). In its extreme form it shares with *acedia* the act of suicide. It is a sin which, with greed, is often associated in medieval confessional literature with the old, weak and powerless in the same way that lust and sloth is often associated with the young. Francis Bacon, writing two centuries later, demonstrates the established continuance of the alliance: 'Anger is a certain kind of baseness; as it appears well in the weakness of those subjects in whom it reigns; children, women, old folks, sick folks' (*Essays*, Smeaton 1972: 166). In *Pierce Penniless* Thomas Nashe presents a similar portrayal, coupling anger, as is often the case in the Sins literature, with greed:

Lightly he is an old man, for those years are most wayward and teatish, yet be he never so old or so forward, since Avarice likewise is a fellow vice of these frail years, we must set one extreme to swive with another and allay the anger of oppression by the sweet incense of a new purse of angels.
(Steane 1972: 85).

The sin of anger, in its simplest Senecan definition the desire to repay an injury whether real or imagined, is the stuff of revenge drama. However the anger lexicon portrayed by the Parson embraces a wide range of the emotions including what might now be regarded as personality traits such as impatience, irritability, back biting and melancholia, as well as extreme passions such as hatred, fury, madness, cursing, violence, murder and state endorsed war. The Parson divides anger's cause into two categories: pride which often initiates anger and rancour, and a form of envy, which maintains and grows it: 'And right so as pride is ofte time matere of ire, right so is rancour norice and kepere of ire.' (Mann 2005: 732, 550).

In terms of direct Classical influence, there continues to be debate as to how familiar with, and influenced by, Senecan tragedy as a primary source material for tragedy Shakespeare was. Robert S. Miola, as well as citing the extensive if rather unenlightening work exploring derivative passages and verbal similarities by Jakob Engel (1903: 60-81), John W. Cunliffe (1893) and F L Lucas (1922) expands upon the rhetorical, structural, stereotypical and thematic inheritance arguably assumed to derive from Seneca's dramatic works (Miola 1992: 3-5). The strong attack on the apparent evidence of Senecan influence in favour of medieval and Christian traditions by T.W. Baldwin (1944: ii. 560-1), Howard Baker (1939:106-53) and G.K. Hunter (1978: 166-204) are judged by Miola as equally reductionist. His premise is

that to assume all traditions are discrete and retain exclusivity from other forms is to ignore the extent to which both medieval and Renaissance writers were exposed to works whose exploitation of the same collections of primary and secondary sources inevitably led to overlap and conflation. The practice of commonplacing as a moral, rhetorical and teaching tool throughout the early modern period seems to add credibility to this assumption, and in the case of anger, as Campbell maintains ‘The number of popular sayings in regard to anger imbedded in the literature and philosophy of the sixteenth century is astonishing.’ (Campbell 1930: 175).

This discussion highlights the common pool of philosophy, religion and literature on which a writer might draw and further illustrates the multiple sources from which the same material could be variously and collectively taken. However it neglects to consider the device or practice which may have aided this melange. In the same way in which a writer might today ‘Google’ a word or idea for inspiration, so a Renaissance author would surely have used a resource they had been trained to maintain and use since grammar school: their own, or possibly another’s, commonplace book. Much more than Gordon Braden’s assessment that ‘a small seam of Latin quotations from Senecan tragedy does run through English drama’ (Braden 1985: 173) the commonplace book would amalgamate related quotes, ideas, beliefs, historical and literary protagonists and stories under key moral concepts to encourage moral reading. A personal commonplace book such as that which Shakespeare may have kept from school would certainly have accounted for what Miola describes as ‘the classical eclecticism’ in *Titus Andronicus*. Of the collection of Latin quotations used in the play, nearly all might be found under a themed heading of justice, anger, or its contrary virtue²⁰ and although Miola points out that they do not appear in popular anthologies and florilegia, they nevertheless show some evidence of direct contact with Seneca (Miola 1992: 13). Moss confirms the prominence of Seneca in school commonplace books (Moss 1996: 180,186-7). As

²⁰ In particular:

Magni dominator poli (Seneca)

Integer vitae, scelerisque purus (Horace)

Non eget mauri iaculis, nec arcu (Horace)

Terras Astraea reliquit (Ovid)

commonplace books, particularly those begun at grammar school, were arranged under topics which often had moral or religious association, it is unsurprising that relevant philosophy, poetry, drama, history, biblical and classical exempla derived from Latin, Greek and English sources gathered together under a sin, vice or virtue produced the multi-faceted, frustratingly untraceable and often conflicting use of primary sources found in Shakespeare's work. It may also account for some of the alterations to the Latin phrases noted by Miola which may have been either misquoted or changed to fit more closely with the theme for the purpose of composition exercises.

3.2 *Titus Andronicus*

As might be expected from the pattern established through examination of the English history plays, this rather piecemeal gathering of traditions, beliefs and genres is more in evidence in the early work and does not benefit from the more selective theme or character-driven approach of the later plays. *Titus Andronicus*, as an early example of Shakespeare's work, deals with the theme of anger in the same way as the early histories handle pride and sloth: by flooding the play with it. In this revenge tragedy, anger is endemic: it is verbally tagged in the speech of almost every character, making maximum use of the sin's lexicon and visual references. The play includes every facet of the sin of anger warned against by Chaucer's Parson. In addition to the major category of revenge, this very busy play depicts rancour, hate and discord, manslaughter, blasphemy, cursing, falsehood, flattery, superstition, chiding and reproving, betraying of counsel to a man's disgrace, menacing, idle words, jangling, japery and buffoonery – all of which the Parson categorises as or associates with anger in his treatise (Mann 2005: 731-742, 533-653). As well as the symbolic and metaphorical references to storms of nature, the traditional beast associated with anger, the tiger, puts in several metaphorical appearances; in particular the 'wilderness of tigers' (*Titus Andronicus* III i 54), with which the disillusioned Titus characterises his once-loved city. Similarly, patience, the virtuous remedy for anger is a word which appears frequently, sometimes portrayed ambiguously as the patience of the planned revenge. In this anger-soaked society, patience is often used in a negative context of one who is prepared to endure in the

hope of exploiting a later opportunity to hit back, rather than as the stoic or Christian acceptance which is meant to cure anger.

Set against the backdrop of a rather hybrid Rome which seems to have both imperial and republican characteristics, the play presents a state rife with political strife, whose rituals, religion, culture and celebrations formalise and exalt conflict and anger; presenting it as *virtus* when performed under the direction, and for the protection, of the state. Anger is introduced into the sophisticated façade of this ritualised anger-driven society in its raw, undisciplined and personalised state in the personae of Queen Tamora, her sons and the black demonic servant/lover Aaron. Titus, in his role of state champion is presented as *virtus*; that is anger, glorified, tamed and civilised for the benefit of the state and its gods. He exists in an almost passion-free, depersonalised state, perceiving himself and his family as tools of Rome and his function as the meter-out of law and tradition. However, the martial ideology of *virtus* and the Senecan idea of one who legitimately and dispassionately carries out acts of revenge as justice on behalf of the state and the gods may be assumed by Titus, but it becomes all too obvious that he is acting under a false premise. The ideal state he represents does not exist. His pride is Rome's pride, his anger is Rome's anger, and is therefore in his eyes legitimised, but all around him and on every level there is temper, anger and dissent. Those who should be pictures of calm, civilised authority are split into factions squabbling over power, sex and popularity. Saturninus, who should reflect the gravitas of a great leader, in fact displays the childish, selfish irascibility and violent impulse that his name suggests. The bloody enthusiasm of Titus' son, Lucius, in his repeated, alliterative, almost chanted desire to mutilate Tamora's son, removes any impersonal religious authority from the ritual, making it the 'cruel irreligious piety' described by the Goths. In this play, heavy alliteration is frequently used to convey anger:

See, lord and father, how we have performed
 Our Roman rites. Alarbus' limbs are lopped
 And entrails feed the sacrificing fire,
 (*Titus Andronicus* I i 145-147)

Titus' proud image of himself as state champion, the disinterested providential tool of justice, is immediately recognised by the highly perceptive Tamora who uses it to argue for her son's life:

Wilt thou draw near the nature of the gods?

Draw near them, then, in being merciful.

Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge.

(Titus Andronicus I i 120-122)

The loss of his sons in battle; the lack of awareness regarding his daughter's feelings for Bassianus, and his extreme response in killing his son reinforce his formalised detachment from himself as an individual. In sacrificing his election and choosing Saturninus as emperor he is apparently acting in a statesmanlike manner by bringing together the old patriarchal ways and those of the new democracy. However, there is a sense, as with Lear's abdication of duty with expectation of continued status, that it doesn't matter anyway; as the champion and elder statesman he is, he will be deferred to, and his apparently humble rejection of the role is based on that proud assumption. His clear unease regarding Saturninus' temperament makes it obvious that he is acting for the state, not on behalf of the individual. Saturninus' position is more important to Titus than his individual leadership potential:

Tribunes, I thank you, and this suit I make,

That you create our emperor's eldest son,

Lord Saturnine, whose virtues will, *I hope*,

Reflect on Rome as Titan's rays on earth,

And ripen justice in this commonweal.

(Titus Andronicus I i 226-230, my italics)

As if to emphasise the façade of Roman sophistication there is the dislocated voice of Marcus Andronicus, set against the squabbling, violence and anger. His prolific poetic eloquence and humanist desire for moderation, rather than conveying the voice of educated reason, seems rather to float in disassociation above the reality of the world he occupies. The greater the evidence of violent conflict, the more elegantly idealistic and verbose he becomes, culminating with the grotesque mismatch of register and reality when he encounters his raped and mutilated niece in the forest:

Speak, gentle niece. What stern ungentle hands

Hath lopped and hewed and made thy body bare
 Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments
 [...]
 Oh, had the monster seen those lily hands
 Tremble like aspen leaves upon a lute
 And made the silken strings delight to kiss them,
 (*Titus Andronicus* II iv 16-18, 44-46)

Lavinia's rapists, the bickering sons of Tamora, whose childish 'braving' in constant ill-willed competition with one another comically mirrors and exposes that of the other brothers Saturninus and Bassianus, provide the 'jangling, japery and buffoonery' which Chaucer's Parson associates as belonging to the sin of anger (Mann 2005: 741-742, 642-653). The Parson's suspicions of the 'synnes that comen of the tonge' include the practice of joking, and making light of sin which he sees as being comfort to the Devil in the same way as holy words comfort the godly. The childish, almost comically impetuous nature of their behaviour is emphasised by the list of synonyms applied to them for bickering such as 'quarrel', 'grudge', 'brabble' and 'square'. They approach the rape and mutilation of Lavinia in a manner casualised by their grimly lighthearted 'double act':

Ch: An 'twere my cause, I should go hang myself.
De: If thou hadst hands to help thee knit the cord.
 (*Titus Andronicus* II iv 9-10)

As Rape and Murder they combine the dominant sin of their mother and their tutor Aaron, who says of them fondly:

Indeed, I was their tutor to instruct them.
 That coddling spirit had they from their mother,
 As sure a card as ever won the set.
 That bloody mind I think they learned of me,
 As true a dog as ever fought at head.
 (*Titus Andronicus* V i 98-102)

Miola describes the lexicon of anger which pervades the play as 'major changes which Shakespeare makes to the [Senecan] archetype' (Miola 1992: 23). He notes that the revenge action is spread among three rather than concentrating it on a single,

driven protagonist. This, he contends ‘multiplies rather than diffuses the shock value’ and allows for greater complexity of perspective. It could be argued that revenge action is demonstrated in far more than three: Lucius takes revenge for his brothers in killing Alarbus; Demetrius and Chiron take revenge for the killing of Alarbus; Saturninus takes revenge against Titus for robbing him of the people’s hearts. Titus, Tamora and Aaron, the three protagonists singled out by Miola do not all fit well into the Senecan archetype and it may be that the reading should look to the Morality plays and the deadly sins to find the explanation.

Tamora, who succumbs to anger and revenge on the death of her son is, as noted by Aaron, in fact ruled by lust, and although overtaken by anger and revenge through the death of her son, even in her revenge she utilises her sexual powers and, in particular, flattery, another on the Parson’s anger list as a tool of ‘the develes chapelleyens that syngen evere placebo’²¹ (Mann 2005: 738. 616), in maintaining quarrels to have others satisfy her hatred. Titus can see it:

But if you hunt these bear-whelps, then beware:

The dam will wake, and if she wind ye once,

She’s with the lion deeply still in league

And lulls him whilst she playeth on her back,

And when he sleeps will she do what she list.

(*Titus Andronicus* IV i 96-100)

However she, in her lust, is under the control of Aaron who knows well her vice and exploits both it and her newly acquired anger in response to her son’s death. She becomes a nurturer and provoker of lust and anger: in her exploitation of Saturninus’ predisposition to anger she emphasises her role as cultivator of his passions:

She will a handmaid be to his desires,

A loving nurse, a mother to his youth.

(*Titus Andronicus* I i 334-335)

But lust is not Aaron’s driver and he dominates all around him to fulfil his need for anger. As ‘the devil’s dam’ Tamora is taught to subjugate her vice to his and to utilise her vice on his behalf. She becomes a nurturer of anger, as is recognised by Lavinia:

²¹ The devil’s chaplains who always say what the hearer wants to hear

When did the tiger's young ones teach the dam?
 Oh, do not learn her wrath! She taught it thee.
 The milk thou suck'st from her did turn to marble;
 Even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny.

(Titus Andronicus II iii 142-145)

Tamora, whose mother-anger and desire for revenge is stirred by Titus' cold pride and the loss of her son, works her revenge through deception and flattery as well as the manipulation of others' anger, even that of Titus. In assuming the role of Revenge she believes she is using Titus' anger to effect her revenge on himself and his family when in fact he is actually doing the same thing to her, adding to her sins with a form of grotesque gluttony, a sin closely allied with lust. Their assumption of the devil personae of Revenge, Rape and Murder provides a suggestion of witchcraft: adding the supernatural to her list of anger-related sins while, as Miola points out, at the same time re-ascribing such sins to within the human psyche (Miola 1992: 24-25).

Although, as Miola observes, Aaron uses Senecan terms of reference (1992: 25-26), his tone of speech, including moodiness, lashing out and hair standing on end is that of Anger personified:

Madam, though Venus govern your desires,
 Saturn is dominator over mine.
 What signifies my deadly-standing eye,
 My silence, and my cloudy melancholy,
 My fleece of woolly hair that now uncurls
 Even as an adder when she doth unroll
 To do some fatal execution?
 No, madam, these are no venereal signs;
 Vengeance is in my heart, death in my hand,
 Blood and revenge are hammering in my head.

(Titus Andronicus II iii 30-39)

Aaron, unlike Tamora or Titus, is not spurred to personal revenge: he is an embodiment and promoter of sin rather than a sinner. He feeds off and feeds the motives of others and as the source of anger infects, exploits and attacks all around

him. His atheism is key to his role and an extreme illustration of his evil alliance: to reject or despise God is the extremest form of anger, as Chaucer's Parson identifies:

he that arretteth upon God or blameth God of thing of which he is himself
 guilty, or despiseth God and all hise halwes,²²(Mann 2005: 735, 580).

However, although he rejects God, he recognises the Devil. He advises Demetrius to 'pray to the devils' and when overcome by Lucius he resorts to cursing, the anger of the weak, but calls for help with it from a devil:

Some devil whisper curses in my ear,
 And prompt me that my tongue may utter forth
 The venomous malice of my swelling heart.

(*Titus Andronicus* V iii 11-13)

Lucius recognises that he 'believest no god'. The Vice or devil needs no motive: Aaron is anger and prefers it to anything else, even spurning Tamora's love for it, instead, schooling her in its application:

T: Ah, my sweet Moor, sweeter to me than life!

A: No more, great Empress; Bassianus comes.

Be cross with him and I'll go fetch thy sons

To back thy quarrels, whatsoe'er they be.

(*Titus Andronicus* II iii 51-54)

He lives purely for anger, ending his life predictably with no remorse and expressing frustration that he did not have time to create more opportunities for anger to thrive. Neither is he personally tempted by greed, another sin which engenders anger: the only use gold has for him is its potential for causing further anger in others:

And so repose, sweet gold, for their unrest
 That have their alms out of the Empress' chest.

(*Titus Andronicus* II iii 8-9)

Frequently defined by himself and others in alien, inhuman, in particular devil-like, terms, he only really identifies closely with his progeny; 'My mistress is my mistress, this myself,' (IV ii 106), whom he intends to bring up as himself, and tutor in the ways of anger; 'To be a warrior and command a camp,' (IV ii 179). His extended

²² He who accuses God, or blames God, for things of which he himself is guilty, despising God and all his saints

confession is the generalist brag of the Vice-figure, utilising the full sin lexicon for anger from murder and rape to horrid japey in describing his mastery of it:

Even now I curse the day – and yet I think
 Few come within the compass of my curse-
 Wherein I did not some notorious ill,
 As kill a man or else devise his death,
 Ravish a maid or plot the way to do it,
 Accuse some innocent and forswear myself,
 Set deadly enmity between two friends,
 Make poor men's cattle break their necks,
 Set fire on barns and haystacks in the night,
 And bid the owners quench them with their tears.
 Oft I have dragged up dead men from their graves
 And set them upright at their dear friends' door,
 Even when their sorrows almost was forgot,
 (*Titus Andronicus* V i 125-137)

By compacting with Lucius who, Aaron knows, is already afflicted with the sin of anger, he manages to perpetuate anger both symbolically by the survival of his progeny and in reality through Lucius. The final angry jape for Aaron is, by getting Lucius to swear his oath to his own god, he has both made a compact with the devil and signed it with the word of god - yet another crime from the Parson's list of anger sins (Mann 2005: 736-737, 586-600). Aaron knows Lucius is doomed to meet him again:

If there be devils, would I were a devil,
 To live and burn in everlasting fire,
 So might I have your company in hell
 But to torment you with my bitter tongue.
 (*Titus Andronicus* V i 147-150)

Finally, as Anger, Aaron is true to his own sin, a sin associated with the tongue, which makes Lavinia's mutilation even more pertinent. He debates whether to die refusing to speak (like Iago) but he knows that 'the devil's silence' is not one of his true characteristics. As the Parson points out, anger is above all a sin of the tongue, and as such his compulsion is to die talking; 'Ah, why should wrath be mute and fury dumb?' (V iii 183), until Lucius gags him.

Titus is the protagonist who best depicts the Senecan passion-impelled fall into deadly sin. Initially his anger is born of pride which he is deluded into believing is honour and as he metes out the state-established retribution on Tamora's son, he feels in a position to counsel her in the anger-controlling virtue of patience; 'Patient yourself, madam, and pardon me,' (I i 124). However, in contrast to Marcus who believes in reason, Titus' *virtus* puts him at constant war with the causes of anger and he sees the virtue of peaceful calm as achievable only in the grave, 'virtue's nest'. He is a great proponent of 'righteous' anger, demonstrating his resolute belief that he lives in fame, that died in *virtus*, rather than 'virtue's' cause by refusing to acknowledge Mutius with the others. His picture of the world, in contrast to the grave, is one of anger-inducing provocation – a world of pride, hatred, envy, gluttony and war:

Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells,
Here grow no damnèd drugs, here are no storms
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep.

(*Titus Andronicus* I i 156-158)

He cannot see his own action as anything other than right, and expects reward rather than revenge for it, even from Tamora:

Is she not then beholden to the man
That brought her for this high good turn so far?

(*Titus Andronicus* I i 399-400)

After his spontaneous, wrathful act in killing his son, Titus reverts to what psychologists would define as traits of 'passive anger', and what the medievalists would categorise as the anger of the weak such as old men, children and women. Like Tamora, he becomes falsely obsequious, adding self-deprecation to his flattery of people he despises:

High Emperor, upon my feeble knee
I beg this boon with tears not lightly shed,

(*Titus Andronicus* II iii 288-289)

In his long speech to the metaphorically and literally absent tribunes, as well as the absent gods, peppered with status-acknowledging vocatives, during which he literally

lies down, he emphasises his age and feebleness, something he would not have recognised earlier, whilst acknowledging the futility of his demeaning action:

If they did hear,
They would not mark me; If they did mark,
They would not pity me; yet plead I must,
And bootless unto them.
Therefore, I tell my sorrow to the stones
(*Titus Andronicus* III i 33-37)

Anger directs his process of alienation initially from his remaining sons and brother, then from Rome, the wilderness of tigers, prompting his remark to the banished Lucius, ‘O, happy man, they have befriended thee!’(III i 51). Beatrix Busse (2006: 436) sees Titus’ self-conscious use of the vocative as indicative of his sense of honour and social decorum, however his use seems rather to display a studied over-performance which in a passive aggressive manner manages to convey the exact opposite of the meaning apparently intended. Eventually he is alienated even from himself in an ineffectual form of suicidal madness as he identifies with the elements:

For now I stand as one upon a rock
Environed with a wilderness of sea,
Who marks the waxing tide grow wave by wave,
Expecting ever when some envious surge
Will in his brinish bowels swallow him.
(*Titus Andronicus* III i 93-97)

In pleading for revenge he applies first to heaven and then to hell, prompting Marcus’ plea to ‘speak with possibility’. At the bottom of the Senecan cliff of passion, he matches his anger to his bottomless sorrow and abandons the reason that Marcus counsels him to have:

If there were reason for these miseries,
Then into limits could I bind my woes.
(*Titus Andronicus* III i 218-219)

The appearance of the messenger with the heads of Titus’ sons has a greater effect on Marcus who, up until this point has preserved his assumptions of a world in which the law and reason prevail. This act, carried out by those who are responsible for law and order finally gives him, ironically, reason to abandon control, ‘Now is the time to

storm,' he claims, but is confronted with Titus' dry laughter of mad revenge and a Senecan promise of justice to the dead, followed by a macabre parade of emotionally and physically mutilated victims carrying the heads of the dead towards their inevitable vengeance. Titus has moved from ineffectual rage to purposeful, if grotesque, retribution. He is more comfortable acting within the formality of duty, however bizarre:

The vow is made. Come, brother, take a head,
 And in this hand the other I will bear.
 And, Lavinia, thou shalt be employèd in these arms.
 Bear thou my hand, sweet wench, between thy teeth.
 (*Titus Andronicus* III i 278-281)

He has no interest in food, as he intends to feed off his own anger, a common motif in anger literature:

So, so, now sit, and look you eat no more
 Than will preserve just so much strength in us
 As will revenge these bitter woes of ours.
 (*Titus Andronicus* III ii 1-3 Additional Folio Text)

In his madness, Titus' reaction to the killing of the fly raises the Christian concept of just anger and whether, given the motive and wickedness of the perpetrators, it is acceptable for them to carry out revenge on anger itself:

Yet I think we are not brought so low
 But that between us we can kill a fly
 That comes in likeness of a coal-black Moor.
 (*Titus Andronicus* III ii 75-77 Additional Folio Text)

While Marcus still holds out hope for God's revenge and justice, and continues to urge prosecution 'by good advice', in his search for justice, Titus has already begun turn his anger on the heavens with a Senecan echo of accusation, questioning the slowness of God's vengeance: *Magni dominator poli, Tam lentus audis scelera, tam lentis vides?* (IV i 81-82). Marvelling at Titus' self-control, Marcus follows him in his appeal to the heavens:

O heavens, can you hear a good man groan
 And not relent or not compassion him?
 Marcus, attend him in his ecstasy

That hath more scars of sorrow in his heart
 Than foeman's marks upon his battered shield,
 But yet so just that he will not revenge.

Revenge the heavens for old Andronicus!

(*Titus Andronicus* IV i 123-129)

Titus' mad efforts to search for justice on land and sea proving fruitless, he appeals to Hell. Publius in an attempt at humouring his uncle's madness, feeds it further:

If you will have Revenge from hell, you shall.

Marry, for Justice, she is so employed,

He thinks, with Jove in heaven, or somewhere else,

So that perforce you must needs stay a time.

(*Titus Andronicus* IV iii 39-42)

Losing all patience and engulfed in anger-related madness, Titus engages and provokes the gods with arrows, a weapon which as well as knives, has a history of metaphorical association with anger. Enclosing a knife in his letter to Saturninus, he provokes his anger, and inadvertently condemns the clown (a bizarre manifestation possibly suggested by the sin of anger's connection with jesters)²³ to death.

The final games, tricks and double meanings Titus uses to wreak his revenge on the revengers is characteristic of the double-tongued japery Chaucer's Parson warns against. He 'stops the mouths' of Chiron and Demetrius and makes them listen to a blow-by-blow account of the revenge he intends to take. The ritual feeding of anger with anger and the bloodbath that follows, with the killing which clears the stage of the murderers and the doomed Lavinia, leaves Marcus, the orator, to justify 'righteous anger' to the state and the gods;

Now judge what cause had Titus to revenge

These wrongs, unspeakable past patience,

Or more than any living man could bear.

(*Titus Andronicus* V iii 124-126)

Marcus offers in compensation an overblown and rather uncomfortably dramatic offer of suicide. This concept of institutional revenge is clearly unchanged. Even more uncomfortably, anger, with all the tenacity of a deadly sin, hints at survival in

²³Cf 'the develes ape', page 155

the embryonic compact between the enthusiastically violent Lucius and the infant son of Aaron.

3.3 *Hamlet*: thwarted anger and the sin of sloth

For a revenge tragedy, *Hamlet* features a hero who is peculiarly risk-averse: the reckless fury which should define his heroic failing proves as affected as the acting he cautions against: he may pretend to out-Herod Herod, but it is sloth which is his downfall. John Lawlor suggests that it is this characteristic, and not the need for or ethic of revenge, which is the basis of tragedy: ‘the centre of attention in any serious drama must be the over-burdened human figure who is yet an agent’ (Lawlor 1961: 127). Hamlet is certainly aware of the expectations of his princely role and of his short-comings in meeting them. The focus of the play appears to be an examination of the moral dilemma of an individual who is chosen, rather than chooses, to act, but as Catherine Belsey maintains, Hamlet’s individual moral dilemmas often direct us anyway to the ethical dilemmas inherent in the play as a whole (Belsey 1979: 143). Hamlet himself in his use of university rhetoric often moves from the particular to the general. His agency is to intervene between the audience and its moral judgement by providing a commentary, something entirely lacking in *Titus Andronicus*, the earlier revenge tragedy. His commentary has both dramatic and didactic application: it functions as both procrastination and moral pedagogy. Hamlet is somewhat of an expert on the theory of sin, both his own and that of others. In particular, he is aware of the sins of the world and the flesh around him:

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world.
Fie on’t, ah, fie, ’tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.

(*Hamlet* I ii 133-137)

From the beginning of the play he demonstrates a driving moral insight and subtle appreciation of the problems and paradoxes inherent in value judgements, even God’s value judgements: this enables him not only to detect sin and predisposition for sin in himself and others but also to weigh its moral ambiguity. Early in the play he identifies his own moral failing of sloth. Indeed the lengthy bouts of querulous

moral analysis of his own inactivity that he undertakes, and the further delay they afford, are acts of sloth in themselves.

Harold Jenkins' convincing argument regarding *Pierce Penniless*, the moralistic work written by Thomas Nashe in 1592, as a probable source for Shakespeare (Jenkins 1982: 104-108) is borne out by the material drawn from Nashe's analysis of the Seven Deadly Sins, in part illustrated through the moral failings of the Danes, the Irish, the Italians, the French and the Spanish. Nashe portrays the Danes as an uneducated nation whose preference for sins resides primarily with the sins of the flesh. They despise learning and love drinking. Predictably drinking leads to further deadly sins, especially anger. The images of gluttony in the play, more particularly drunkenness, and lust underpin the 'rottenness' in a State presided over by a court in which the 'Vice of kings' and Gertrude's 'incestuous' marriage set the moral standard. As an outsider in his role as a university student from Wittenberg, Hamlet is able to see his countrymen through 'other', presumably humanist, morally educated eyes, utilising the pejorative Nashe material to present his observations:

This heavy-headed revel east and west
 Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations:
 They clepe us drunkards
 (*Hamlet* I iv 17-19)

Cast as a thirty-year-old student, Hamlet also represents an ironic take on the Nashe material which presents a far from flattering picture of Denmark's reluctant attitude towards educating their young: 'you shall see a great boy with a beard learn his ABC, and sit weeping under the rod when he is thirty years old,' (Nashe 1972: 76). Shakespeare utilises the late age for education, reinforcing it by the reluctance shown by Claudius and Gertrude to allow Hamlet to return to university. However, rather than the ill-educated conscript, Hamlet is presented as a willing scholar; one who appears to have become intellectually at odds with his environment. His swift and clever intellectual and moral judgements on his elders and his peers are highly perceptive: even before the confirming intervention of his father's ghost he observes the luxurious Claudius; a Queen overcome by lust, and an advisor who peddles trite self-interested folly in the guise of moral advice. His moral deliberations with himself and inward debate take on the style of the scholarly rhetoric *addubitatio* or

aporia and his understanding of predisposition to sin, couched in the science and psychology of Timothie Bright's *Treatise of Melancholie* (1586) and others, effectively explains the tragic flaw with which he and all later tragic heroes must wrestle and in particular, in this play about plays, centres on the ambiguity of fault which pervades all tragic heroes:

So oft it chances in particular men
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty-
Since nature cannot choose his origin-
By their o'ergrowth of some complexion
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens
The form of plausible manners-that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect-
Being nature's livery or fortune's star-
His virtues else, be as they pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault:

(*Hamlet* I iv 23-36)

Hamlet's explanation of human psychology and analysis of the origin of evil is a familiar conflation of Renaissance science and Christian doctrine of sin which explores the ways in which a predisposition can grow to an all-consuming fault. It is reflected in the philosophical discussions of the originators of the Seven Deadly Sins: the process of change from innate instinct to conscious choice represented by Seneca's cliff, or the intervention of evil thought (*logismoi*) on the neutral or instinctive *thumos* devised by Evagrius. These fit with Hamlet's images of uncontained growth and corruption in 'o'ergrowth' and 'o'erleavens' and the loss of control suggested in 'pales and forts of reason'. It is of course, also in character with his sin of sloth that he should provide an explanation for it that suggests it is innate and incurable; but to suggest that it resides in a man, waiting to take him over, has a ring of predestination that other resort of the defeatist, to it.

The similarities between Hamlet and Shakespeare's Richard II are widely recognised. Some critics have suggested that the character of Richard with his irreverent self-absorption, verbal dexterity and despairing defeatism may have been a prototype for Hamlet. Hamlet shares a wide range of sloth characteristics displayed by both Richard and Henry VI. He talks rather than acts; he is witty and bookish, reflecting Bacon's assertion that to spend too much time in study is sloth (Smeaton 1972: 150); he is querulous, indecisive and equivocating; he is a self-confessed procrastinator who is nevertheless highly conscious of time passing and who suspects he is also a coward, certainly a moral defeatist. The length and content of his soliloquies reflect his slothful nature and his apparent inability to address it: his rhetorical deliberations, or 'speculative tendency' rarely come to anything other than continually supplying him with 'pretexts for inaction' (Belsey 1979:129). If he isn't, rhetorically speaking, interrupting himself before he can conclude anything, then someone else is. He repeatedly refers to himself as 'dull' and routinely rehearses with himself and the audience his neglect of duty. As Jenkins points out, 'It is often remarked that through all the excitements of Shakespeare's unfolding drama it would never occur to us that Hamlet was neglecting his revenge if he refrained from doing so himself,' (Jenkins 1982:137). When he chooses to raise again the question of Hamlet's delay in the face of what he describes as 'critical weariness' (Jenkins 1982:136) it is perhaps still in the spirit of those who persist in finding motive for Iago's envy. Once it is acknowledged, what Hamlet himself freely and frequently confesses, that this is his own 'stamp of one defect', no further motive needs to be found. His theoretical knowledge of sloth is as extensive as that of the other sins. He wonders whether his delay is down to indolence or bookish rhetorical procrastination: 'Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple/ Of thinking too precisely on th'event-', and he identifies sloth's pusillanimity in himself as 'one part wisdom/ And ever three parts coward'. As Jenkins himself points out, Hamlet is defeated by a fault which even he cannot find motive for:

I do not know

Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,

Sith I have cause and will and strength and means

To do't.

(*Hamlet* IV ii 41-45)

It is this lack of motivation which leads Jenkins to speculate that ‘what Hamlet shrinks from is not the act of vengeance but the whole burden of living,’ (Jenkins 1982: 147). The burden of living would of course include for Hamlet, as a prince, a responsibility to enter into a marriage and procreate. His rejection of Ophelia, assumed to be based on a moral repulsion towards all women provoked by what he perceives to be his mother’s infidelity also incorporates a lack of enthusiasm which again echoes that of Richard II’s neglect of his duty towards his wife. In advising Ophelia to ‘get thee to a nunnery’ and cut herself off from marriage altogether, he is doing what he often does in the play, that is, voicing advice he really intends for himself. The line also exposes that other facet of sloth much discussed in relation to Hamlet: a tendency to despair which sometimes leads to suicide and which also constantly hovers beneath Hamlet’s discourse. It is clear that Hamlet’s melancholy extends beyond grief for his father’s death: he is surrounded by moral disorder and his own vice prevents him from influencing it. His spiritual despair, an unforgivable sin associated with sloth, is borne out of his own moral impotency: he cannot influence, only remark, so he longs to be out of the world. However in wishing for death he moves deeper into the sin which paralyses him:

Oh, that this too too sallied flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon ’gainst self-slaughter.

(*Hamlet* I ii 129-132)

Given Hamlet’s predisposition to sloth it is difficult to read the much debated soliloquy in Act III scene one as anything other than a rhetorical improvisation on a theme of sloth. Structurally it is circular, containing a series of mutually paralysing dilemmas leading to a generalised statement of human inability to think and act. It ends as it began, without resolution. The language and imagery is full of questions, pauses and options. The soliloquy begins with the rhetorical dilemma of two opposing aspects of sloth; the disinclination to action and the despairing wish to die. In this sense ‘be’ can be read as simultaneously meaning ‘act’ and ‘live’:

To be, or not to be: that is the question.
Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles

And by opposing end them.

(*Hamlet* III i 55-59)

While the attraction of death as a kind of dreamless sleep appeals to a sense of sloth, it is not just the action involved to bring it about which is a problem, it is also the possibility of divine punishment, so three facets of sloth: inaction, suicidal despair and cowardice effectively smother, or ‘rub’ one another into a stop, or pause. The description which follows on the tolerance of life’s hardships out of fear of the hereafter is a general abstraction behind which Hamlet can hide his own particular moral problem and sin:

Thus conscience does make cowards,

(*Hamlet* III i 82)

‘Conscience’, in addition to the meaning taken by Belsey can also mean introspection. The soliloquy ends, or rather fizzles out, with an inference based on the generalisation of his particular dilemma that ‘resolution’ is inevitably weakened by ‘thought’, deploying the metaphor of the hopelessly becalmed vessel in which neither state of ‘pitch and moment’ or inability to move, is particularly to be welcomed:

And enterprises of great pitch and moment

With this regard their currents turn awry

And lose the name of action.

(*Hamlet* III i 85-87)

The self-defeating soliloquy symbolically brought to an end by an interruption typifies Hamlet’s endless intellectual prevarication.

In terms of state governance, there is in *Hamlet* an echo of the sloth versus pride dynamic to be found in the history plays. Hamlet is inevitably compared with, and compares himself to, the men of action and ‘honour’, Fortinbras and Laertes, who are a distorted version of honour which is driven by pride and anger respectively. The role of Laertes as revenger of a dead father, as Jenkins has suggested, throws into relief the inaction of Hamlet but reveals the moral inadequacies of both, and raises the tension between *virtus*, the classical concept of virtue and the Christian sins of pride and anger. Laertes is all action and no consideration: he is a perfect example of the ambiguous combination of pride and anger disguised as honour so familiar in the history plays. The sin of his anger is emphasised through his too hasty accusation of

Claudius and his willingness to participate in Claudius' plot to murder Hamlet. His pride is such that he is openly willing to sacrifice his soul as well as his allegiance to the state for family honour. His sin is all the more deadly because it involves an informed choice. 'I dare damnation' (IV v 129) places his sin at the top of the Parson's list; that of anger against God. His willingness to offend, almost threaten, God with his intention to cut Claudius' throat in the church and consign conscience to 'the profoundest pit' of hell is the direct opposite to Hamlet's wordy moral deliberations. Laertes declares thoughtless rage to be his *modus operandi*:

To this point I stand,
 That both the worlds I give to negligence,
 Let come what comes. Only I'll be revenged
 Most thoroughly for my father.
 (*Hamlet* IV ii 133-136)

The cloak of honour finally falls away from his anger when he plans with Claudius to poison his sword in his fight with Hamlet. It is Laertes, rather than Hamlet, who fits more neatly into the model of faulted revenge hero, with Claudius as the Vice-figure encouraging him to develop his sin of anger. Too late, he 'almost' finds his conscience and acknowledges that he is 'justly killed with mine own treachery' (V ii 250). Hamlet has no Vice-figure to encourage his sin. The potential of the ghost as an instrument of corruption is ever-present in the play; however this is not ever exploited. Horatio initially supposes it may lead Hamlet over the cliff into insanity, depriving him of 'sovereignty of reason' and Hamlet acknowledges that he cannot be sure as to where the ghost is from and whether his motive is personal or divine revenge, sinful or righteous anger. Indeed, he is aware that, rather than dying in innocence, his father was killed while sleeping off his own gluttony: 'unhousel'd, disappointed, unaneled, /No reck'ning made,' (I v 77-78). However, if the ghost is a traditional demonic instrument whose role it is to identify and corrupt Hamlet's potential for sin, it would be fair to say that anger is probably not the sin to exploit. Rather, more like a father than a demon, the ghost frequently berates Hamlet for his obvious and frequently self-acknowledged fault, the sin of sloth and ironically, it is his consistent failure to accede to the ghost's demands which develops in him the sin to which he succumbs. He also is careful to contain Hamlet's revenge to Claudius's act of treason, which as Catherine Belsey maintains has a certain popular secular, if

not moral justification given Claudius' position as state representative of justice (Belsey 1979: 140).

Catherine Belsey argues persuasively that Hamlet's struggle with the act of revenge mirrors the psychomachic dilemma of some of the later morality plays which pitch *Conscience* against *Wrath*. She sees Hamlet's moral dilemma as an evaluation between right and wrong, with the Vice, *Wrath*, dressing himself in the clothes of honourable revenge and accusing *Conscience* of cowardice. This she also supports from her example of protestant casuistry taken from the writings of William Perkins in *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* (1606) in which he makes it clear that other than that of self-defence in the absence of state authority, it is not acceptable to plan and carry out personal revenge (Belsey 1979:133). His statement 'we may not do euill that good may come therof' seems to support the contention of Eleanor Prosser that revenge is damnable (Eleanor Prosser: 1971: 169-170). However Belsey quite rightly raises the issue of moral dilemma implied in the tension between duty to the State and princely honour and 'sacred duty': this reflects the tension between Christian virtue and classical *virtus*. There is also, within the Christian interpretation of the sins, the concept of 'righteous anger' to consider. Belsey's conclusion is that the moral ambiguity Hamlet faces is being presented with 'two courses, both wrong' (Belsey 1979: 130). The Ghost, it is clear, is prepared to make the distinction between Claudius and Gertrude, whose sin he is prepared to leave 'to heaven,/ And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge/ To prick and sting her'(I v 86-88). Philip Brockbank, however, has made a case to suggest that both Hamlet and Shakespeare perceive Hamlet's tragedy as being much more morally complex than that of a simple revenger:

Shakespeare takes only limited interest in Hamlet as an avenger. His deeper interest is in Hamlet the tragic-hero, required to take upon himself the moral distress of the whole community. (Brockbank 1977: 110).

It is Hamlet, immersed in the sin he sees all around him through his moral prism, who undertakes to believe his role is a more all-encompassing one and who, equally quick to perceive his own fault, despairs at his ability to achieve it. In this, his conscience becomes, not the psychomachic representation of good which Belsey recognises in the later morality plays but the assumed cloak of the vice, sloth, which uses conscience as a tool of introspective delay, equivocation, pusillanimity and

later, despair. This is the irony of Hamlet's prevarication. In the same way that, for Laertes, wrath can be seen as synonymous with courage, so Hamlet's sloth is excused by him as conscience. However, unlike Laertes, Hamlet betrays a knowing awareness of his use of conscience to excuse his sloth. His dilemma is classically one of sloth in that he knows what should be done, but cannot find the wherewithal to do it. His complaint discloses the sloth-driven concern with time:

The time is out of joint: oh cursèd spite

That ever I was borne to set it right.

(*Hamlet* 1 v 189-190)

Hamlet is, despite his declared preference for 'that man/ That is not passion's slave' (III ii 64-65), plagued by his apparent inability to sustain his anger sufficiently to carry out his revenge. His extensive theoretical moral consciousness equips him well enough to enable him to act out the madness which comes with anger and to misrepresent his vices to Ophelia, omitting his real vice in favour of those which he feels he ought to have: 'I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious,' when in fact it is these 'active' sins that he lacks. His lack of passion is his handicap and ironically, he apparently aspires to passion in himself but also questions, scrutinises and belittles it in others in a wry, scholarly manner:

What's Hecuba to him, or he to her

That he should weep for her? What would he do

Had he the motive and the cue for passion

That I have? (*Hamlet* II ii 478-481)

Similarly, he contrasts his own inability to act with Fortinbras' lightweight rationale for risking so many lives in battle:

Examples gross as earth exhort me;

Witness this army of such mass and charge,

Led by a delicate and tender prince,

Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed

Makes mouths at the invisible event,

Exposing what is mortal and unsure

To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,

Even for an eggshell.

(*Hamlet* IV i 45-52)

There is, despite Hamlet's dissatisfaction with himself, an element of facetiousness in this observation: Hamlet's 'back-handed' evaluation that Fortinbras is so full of hubris that he is prepared to risk the lives of an army for nothing is followed by another questionable model of honour against which to measure his lack of action:

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honor's at the stake.

(*Hamlet IV i 52-55*)

It is strange that for his role models he should choose someone who pretends to emotion and someone who pretends to argument, if he doesn't mean rather to demonstrate his moral disinclination to revenge and make a case for sloth. When he talks about his shame in the following lines it is difficult not to read the sense ironically or at the least ambiguously:

How stand I, then,
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds,

(*Hamlet IV i 55-61*)

It is by returning to *Pierce Penniless* that the complexity of vice disguised as virtue is revealed to be far less clear than Belsey's analysis of morality plays supposes. All sins can be hidden within the cloak of virtue, just as all virtues can be portrayed by the devil as a vice. In the case of sloth, cowardice and procrastination can assume the guise of conscience. This is particularly pertinent in evaluating political leadership. Nashe has some advice for the slothly nobleman or prince; contrasting their shallow, clever lives with those who opt for 'honourable danger' he maintains:

That is the course he that will be popular must take, which, if he neglect,
and sit dallying at home nor will be awaked by any indignities of his love-
dream, but suffer every upstart groom to defy him, set him at nought, and

shake him by the beard unrevenged, let him straight take orders and be a churchman and then his patience may pass for a virtue; but otherwise, he shall be suspected of cowardice, and not cared for of any. (Steane 1972: 111).

When Hamlet claims that ‘conscience doth make cowards of us’ all there is behind it a sense of the slothful excuse, and that the reality, as he has demonstrated, is the reverse: that cowardice makes moralists of us all. His moral hectoring of himself and his mother has at times more than a touch of the Parson about it:

Assume a virtue if you have it not.
 That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
 Of habits devilish, is angel yet in this,
 That to the use of actions fair and good
 He likewise gives a frock or livery
 That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,
 And that shall lend a kind of easiness
 To the next abstinence, the next more easy.
 (*Hamlet* III iv 161-168)

The contrast between Hamlet and Pyrrhus could not be clearer: his unconvincing, filibustering, moral debate with himself over killing Claudius is further exposed by the parallel irony of Claudius’ inability to repent and therefore damnation. It is Gertrude’s lust which really angers Hamlet enough to want to avenge and punish her by killing Claudius: Gertrude is Pyrrhus’ Troy as well as potential Hecuba. Hamlet’s punishment for this delayed outburst of anger is his killing of a really innocent man, leaving it open as to whether his sin is anger or delay. Hampered with a similarly obsessive weighing of words to Richard II, Hamlet finds it almost impossible to become really angry. His pretended madness, like almost all other aspects of his anger represents a kind of ‘study’ of anger on his part, Peter Mercer (1987: 195-196) draws attention to Hamlet’s self-analysis of his attack on Claudius:

Bloody, bawdy villain!
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
 (*Hamlet* II ii 499-500)

But, even as he lashes the villain with his adjectives, speaks the mighty word that should fill him up with murderous resolution, this brittle

performance shatters on the rock of reality. Simply, he overhears himself and retreats in shame, in acute embarrassment, from such absurd vulgarity, from what immediately sounds like the cruel rant of the popular stage:

Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,

(*Hamlet* II ii 501-505)

Hamlet practises, or attempts to practise, a range of aspects of anger listed by the Parson to no avail: madness, the role of bitter jester in his antics with the skull of Yorick, and a deal of ranting. It is as if he is following his own advice to instil anger in himself that he gives to Gertrude: to practise until it becomes real.

Hamlet is paralysed by his own moral insight and intellectual sloth, and it is difficult to distinguish at times between the two. Caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place, he must decide between sins, or in a different interpretation, between virtues. It amounts to the same thing: sloth or anger; patience or *virtus*. He recognises this when he acknowledges that he is ‘prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell’. He resolves his problem by using ‘the stamp of one defect’ to negate the other, ‘a vice to catch a vice’. There is, as already discussed, precedence for using one sin to prevent another: pride is known to restrain lust as well as sloth to restrict anger. Similarly the Christian virtue of patience, as Nashe suggests, sits uneasily with the Courtly *virtus* expected of Hamlet as a prince. The Machiavellian concept, discussed in chapter fifteen of *The Prince*, of knowing when not to be good reflects a choice which is dependent on the good of the state rather than the good of the soul: Machiavelli believed neither vices nor virtues should be pursued for their own sake.

Seneca’s advice that delay can often prevent anger implies that ‘delay’, in this case, is also morally neutral: the contrary virtue of patience or at the least, passionless revenge carried out as lawful punishment is always preferable to wrath. Curiously, despite his declared preference for the man that is not ‘passion’s slave’, Hamlet makes no secret of his interest in, and apparent admiration for, those who have this capacity. However, his choice implies his envy is tongue-in-cheek: an actor

and an honour-seeking adventurer. One cannot help but read it as the speech of a typically dissembling sin. On the one hand Seneca's advice rings true: by delaying his revenge, Hamlet's 'natural' procrastination enables a resolution in which Claudius is ultimately responsible for his own death, no-one usurps God's vengeance against Gertrude and Laertes, and providential 'ripeness is all'. However, as Loyola recognises, even predestination can be a blind for sloth. Hamlet's reluctance to carry out the one act of revenge against treason which his duty to his father demands ultimately enables the death of Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes and Gertrude, not to mention Rosencrantz and Guildenstern whose culpability in Hamlet's proposed murder is never proved. His procrastination, however, eventually brings about what Hamlet wants for himself, revenge without responsibility and his own death, without having to be morally accountable for either. His final gesture, which is to leave his country in the hands of a man who will risk all for pride, seems to be a *post mortem* comment on a world which continues to regard *virtus* above virtue: a final ironic gesture towards a people who in their support for the enraged Laertes have demonstrated their preference.

3.4 *Othello* and envy

The focus on envy as the moral reading of *Othello* creates a tragedy which, as Spivack has contended is less concerned with metaphysical debate on the nature of good and evil (1958: 50-51). By describing it as 'a story of intrigue rather than a visionary statement' (1949: 109), G Wilson-Knight unknowingly but accurately characterises the nature of envy as a deadly sin: it is a sin which goes hand in hand with intrigue and those sentiments accompanying it such as hatred, suspicion, cynicism, lies, back-biting, jealous watching of others, and the spreading of malicious gossip. Pride and to a certain extent, anger, are much more concerned with issues of metaphysics. Richard Rolle's attributed observation that pride divides a man from God, anger from himself and envy from his neighbour²⁴ firmly places envy in the world and makes the perceived enemy not God or fate, but other people.

²⁴ Refers to an English translation of a work by St Edmund of Pontigny, entitled *Merure de seinte eglise*, or the *Speculum ecclesiae* (Bloomfield 1952: 142)

The singularity of the equal prominence given to the tragic hero and the villain or Vice-figure in *Othello* makes it distinctly different from the other great tragedies. In this play there is no doubt about the moral symbolism of evil exploiting a chink in the moral armour of a potentially good man. Rather than focusing on divine intervention or punishment, evil in *Othello* is personified in the character of the villain. Seen through the eyes of the envious, diabolic Iago, a direct descendent, Spivack argues, of the morality Vice-figure (1958: 3-27), the ambitious Othello overstretched by the social anxiety of his courtly love and marriage is led through a process of concatenation into the anger and jealousy which ultimately chart his fall. This concatenation of deadly sins is also utilised as metaphor in Shakespeare's Sonnet 75, 'So are you to my thoughts as food to life'. It begins with a conceit of wholesome, mutual, life-affirming love which quickly degenerates into one of consuming, life-denying dependency by means of a series of images drawn from the deadly sins, ending with an image of luxurious addiction:

Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,

Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

(*Sonnets* 75 13-14)

The sonnet explores the nature of the kind of love whose satisfaction is primarily based on the pride of acquisition and which craves the constant endorsement of external approval, while at the same time finding it a threat to the private exclusivity of the love relationship:

Now proud as an enjoyer and anon

Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure,

Now counting best to be with you alone,

Then better'd that the world may see my pleasure;

(*Sonnets* 75 5-8)

This causal tension between pride and envy reflects the view held over four decades that the sin of envy, or jealousy, is always the direct result of the sin of pride. The imagery in the play reflects the long history of an iconography which associates envy with toads, dogs, poison, fever and above all eyes and looking. Iconographically and philosophically, envy is nearly always partnered with anger: in the confessional literature they often share or overlap in the lexicon of sub-categories of sin, for example hate and murder. Those souls who are guilty of envy in Dante's

purgatory are condemned to exist with their eyelids stitched shut (Kirkpatrick 2012: Canto 13. 43-72). Hieronymus Bosch's famous painting of the Seven Deadly Sins depicts envy in terms of social jealousy and class conflict, with members of differing classes within society either longingly or contemptuously watching others (Luttikhuizen 2012: 271). In drawing on this tradition, *Othello* not only makes reference to devotional art and literature which survived the re-interpretation of Humanism and Protestant Reformation, but, perhaps more importantly, became an integral part of defining the secular chivalric tradition giving rise to the social hierarchy underpinning the Elizabethan and Jacobean Court, and what Jennifer Richards (1999: 77) describes as 'decorous hierarchies'. Central to this courtly tradition are the sins of pride and jealousy and their virtuous counterparts: humility and *caritas* or true love. It is therefore unsurprising that the main protagonists of *Othello* are so focussed on courtly reputation and their own insecurity within the court.

Although shifting in definition, envy maintains an importance as second only to pride in the hierarchy of deadly sins, particularly in secular society. However, by the fifteenth century as Bloomfield notes 'The increasing complexity of life, the growth of the merchant class, the social unrest... all made for a questioning spirit towards some moral principles' (Bloomfield 1952: 210). The reordering of the Sins which took place in the sixteenth century reflected the dominance of commerce and community and defined its priorities by placing avarice and lechery above anger and envy (Bossy 1985: 38). By the sixteenth century, Bloomfield argues, pride has developed the more morally ambiguous facet of 'self-respect', and envy, the sometimes socially admirable quality of 'ambition'. However, the secular moral ambiguity between the concepts of honour, pride, ambition and envy were not quite so much of a modern idea as Bloomfield suggests. Tilby notes that Evagrius describes the relationship in *Eulogios 3* as 'the search for honour encourages fantasies and ends in pride', describing jealousy in *Vices 8* as 'the garment of pride,' (Tilby 2009: 159). The concept of vice masquerading as virtue which informs Iago's every move, while lending itself well to the moral ambiguity of secular humanism, is nevertheless as old as the Sins. This is what Iago calls the 'Divinity of Hell' when 'devils will the blackest sins put on/ They do suggest at first with heavenly shows' (II iii 325-326). The 'moral obfuscation of the pseudonym' detected by Spivack as the

emblem of the Vice (1958: 159) is also the moral ambiguity which trips up the tragic hero. In *Othello*, this modern dilemma is played out by portraying Othello, the everyman in his ambitious journey to courtly acceptance, in moral struggle with Iago, the medieval Vice or ‘demi-devil’, a personification of envy.

As A P Rossiter has indicated, ‘jealousy’ was once almost indistinguishable from ‘envy’ in Elizabethan usage, later narrowed in its definition to sexual jealousy, probably because of the secularisation of its counterpart virtue ‘love’ (Rossiter 1961: 190), and it is this modern reading of the word which leads critics to concentrate their debate on sexual motive. Certainly in *Othello* the term ‘jealous’ which is used frequently, is generally used in connection with anxiety over fidelity and is most often applied to or about Othello. This has the effect of emphasising the distinction between Othello’s disposition and that of the eternally envious Iago for whom sexual jealousy is only one aspect of his multifaceted portrayal of envy. Iago suspects all, resents all: ‘the filching world’ is his opponent. Rather than being the late morality Vice-figure which Spivack chooses to group with a collection of Shakespearean characters he refers to as ‘Iago’s family’ (1958: 28-59), Iago more specifically relates to the earlier dramatic personifications of one deadly sin rather than a master of ceremonies for them all as some of the later moralities often cast the Vice.

As an embodiment of envy, Iago displays its full lexicon. Swearing by Janus, the two-faced god, he engages in acts of massive misrepresentation, calumny and backbiting in order to bring about the misery and jealousy in others typical of one whose envy of good fortune in others provokes a desire to either have it or destroy it. The dying Roderigo characterises him as ‘an inhuman dog’. His hatred and mistrust of all, especially women and people out of his class, informs his constant suspicion and low opinion. The insatiability and paranoia of the envious dictates all their actions. Only when no one remains to be envied or suspected can they rest. Even when acknowledging the existence of virtue, as he does in *Othello*, Iago is scornful of it, cynically regarding it as a weakness to be exploited. Chaucer’s Parson describes the nature of the sin, and therefore Iago, with compelling accuracy:

Certes, thanne is envye the worst sinne that is, for soothly, alle othere sinnes ben som time oonly agains o special vertu, but certes, envye is agains alle vertues and agains alle goodnesses, for it is sory of alle the

bountees of his neighebore, and in this manere it is divers from alle other sinnes. For wel unnethe is ther any sinne that it ne hath som delit in itself, save oonly envye, that evere hath in itself angwissh and sorwe. The speses of envye ben thise: ther is first sorwe of othere mennes goodnesse and of hir prosperitee; and prosperitee is kindly matere of joye; thanne is envye a sinne agains kinde. The seconde spece of envye is joye of oother mannes harm, and that is proprely lik to the devel, that evere rejoiseth him of mannes harm. Of these two speses comth bakbitinge, and this sinne of bakbitinge or detraccion hath certaine speses, as thus: som man preiseth his neighebore by a wikked entente, for he maketh alwey a wikked knotte ate laste ende – alwey he maketh a ‘but’ at the laste end, that is digne moore blame than worth is al the preisinge.[...]After bakbitinge cometh grucchinge or murmuracioun [...] Sometime it comth of ire or privee hate that norisseth rancour in herte, as afterward I shall declare. Then comth eek bitternesse of herte [...]. Thane comth discord, that unbindeth alle manere of frendshipe [...].Thanne comth scorninge [...]. Thanne comth accusinge [...]. Thanne comth malignitee, through which a man anoyeth his neighebore prively[...](Mann 2005: 727-729, 488- 513).²⁵

He is capable of expressing completely opposing beliefs as appropriate to his own needs, choosing, like the Vice, only to share his truth with the audience. Reputation,

²⁵ Certainly then envy is the worst sin that is. For truthfully each of the other sins is contrary to one special virtue, but envy is contrary to all sins and opposed to all good. For it is sorry about any of his neighbours good and in this respect is different from all other sins. For there is hardly any sin that does not take delight in its own work save envy which is always in anguish and sorrow. The types of envy are these. There is first sorrow at another man’s good fortune and prosperity; and prosperity is a natural cause of joy; then is envy a sin against nature. The second type of envy is joy about another’s harm, and that is very like the Devil who always rejoices over man’s harm. Of these two types comes backbiting; and this sin of backbiting or detractionhas a certain style such as : A certain man praises his neighbour with wicked intent, for he always makes a wicked knot at the end, he always ends praise with a ‘but’ that carries more blame than the first part gave praise. [...]After backbiting comes grouching or grumbling [...] sometimes it comes from anger or secret hate that is fostered in the heart [...]. Then comes bitterness of heart [...]. Then comes discord that unbinds all sorts of friendship [...]. Then comes scorning[...]. Then comes accusing [...]. Then comes malignity by which a man secretly annoys his neighbours [...].

he represents to the agonised Cassio 'is an idle and most false imposition, oft got without merit and lost without deserving' (II iii 251-252), whereas in his show of reluctance got up to incite Othello to even greater suspicion of Cassio he believes 'Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,/Is the immediate jewel of their souls'(III iii 160-161). As devil's advocate, Iago is adept at utilising the words of God to his own ends, 'Let thy soul be instructed'. His sermon to Roderigo on virtue is a tour de force in favour of the selfishness of envy. Through it he teaches Roderigo the only doctrine: to look solely after number one. It follows then that lust replaces love which is 'merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will'. For the envious, satisfaction is short-lived, and Iago teaches Roderigo that either through jealousy of her or desire of someone else's possession, Othello will turn from Desdemona: 'The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida' (I iii 340-342).

Cast as the ambitious alien, it is easier to recognise, as many critics have, the roots of Othello's courtly insecurity, and the roots of Iago's distrust in him which of course extends to anyone different. His advancement prior to the beginning of the play has been achieved largely within the social confines of the army, the military equivalent to the classless Shakespearean wood. Through his military prowess, Othello has acquired wealth, patronage and position. The play begins with a report of two daring social acts on Othello's part which represent Othello's first subtle move away from the social safety of the army into the world of decorous hierarchy: he marries Desdemona and he appoints Cassio as his lieutenant. Cassio, who possesses all the qualities of true courtly refinement and academic sophistication, signifies Othello's social aspirations. Summarised by Iago's jaundiced social envy as 'mere prattle without practise', Cassio's courtly manners and virtues, validated by his appointment as governor at the end of the play, demonstrate him to be the courtly equivalent of 'the safe pair of hands'. Incensed by his own lack of preferment, Iago despises Cassio for his pedigree and mocks Othello, 'the old black ram', for his lack of one.

Othello's social ambition is also indicative of a kind of envious admiration and this is recognised and exploited by Iago. Othello, however, aspires to the courtly life, whereas Iago merely despises it. The superficial nature of Othello's own tenuous social position is emphasised rather than consolidated by his acquisitions: wealth

through patronage and war rather than inheritance; position through appointment rather than birth; religion through conversion, and status through the quality of his deputy. The ornate, florid, acquired language which characterises his early speech (Calderwood 1987: 298) almost strains in its attempt to achieve a studied grandeur; language such as the elaborate apologia of:

Rude am I in my speech,
 And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace
 For, since these arms of mine had seven years' pith
 Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
 Their dearest action in the tented field,
 And little of this great world can I speak
 More than pertains to feats of broils and battle;
 And, therefore, little shall I grace my cause
 In speaking for myself.

(*Othello* I iii 81-89)

And which is glossed by the envious Iago as 'bombast circumstance/ Horribly stuffed with epithets of war' (I i 12-13). As his insecurity increases, so his language disintegrates, metaphorically unravelling his acquired reputation.

Othello's carefully assembled acquisitions and refinements are made all the more conspicuous by that aspect of himself he cannot disguise, his colour. He is the ultimate outsider with a suggestion of the mercenary, the mysterious knight; there to test court assumptions on birth, inheritance and natural authority. However, like all knights, he also has his weaknesses. The commonly held ethnic characteristics of the Moor of 'simplicity, credulity, pride, proneness to extreme jealousy and anger' (Berry 1990: 317) frame his struggle to understand the complex and often morally contradictory nature of courtly society and gain acceptance within it. His sins are knightly sins: the fundamental problem of combining Christianity with chivalry. As Berry points out 'Othello's pride appears at times as vanity, at times as rightful self-respect' (Berry 1990: 317). This potential for ambiguity of virtue and vice is recognised by Iago as fertile ground: whilst acknowledging Othello's 'free and open nature', he exploits him for 'a credulous fool'.

By leaving the socially levelling protection of the army through his marriage to Desdemona, an action further exposed by the unexpected peace in Act II scene I which removes his military passport to the court as well as his knightly *raison d'être*, Othello's social standing comes under greater scrutiny. James Calderwood is correct in defining the struggle for ownership over Desdemona as 'property is status and status is life' (Calderwood 1989 27-29), but this is a benefit recognised by the opportunist Othello after the private marriage. The defining private nature of the early Othello/Desdemona relationship is characterised by Desdemona's initiation of the match. Like his stilted language, his love harks back to an earlier chivalric court. Desdemona, his lady, loves him for his knightly deeds:

She loved me for the dangers I had passed

And I loved her that she did pity them.

(*Othello* I iii 167-168)

And Othello is also at pains to emphasise the non-physical nature of his love and its place as inspiration for his knightly trials:

I therefore beg it not

To please the palate of my appetite,

Nor to comply with heat [...]

But to be free and bounteous to her mind.

And heaven defend your good souls that you think

I will your serious and great business scant

When she is with me.

(*Othello* I iii 258-265)

The seed of this chivalric love struggles to continue to grow alongside the public marriage, won by Othello from Brabantio, and is finally smothered by Othello's social insecurity and Desdemona's courtly inexperience. Othello's chivalric worship of Desdemona becomes increasingly at odds with the more concrete reality of the public marriage. While Desdemona seems to grasp the need to make the transition, Othello seems unwilling to relinquish his chivalric vision of pure love;

Othello:

If it were now to die,

'Twere now to be most happy - for I fear

My soul hath her content so absolute

That not another comfort like to this

Succeeds in unknown fate.

And he taunts Othello with the ultimate symbol of the contradictory nature of courtly love: ‘that platonic and honourable lovers should sleep together naked’ (Field, 1977: 20):

Or to be naked with her friend in bed
An hour or more, not meaning any harm?
(*Othello* IV i 3-4)

It is no coincidence that Iago fastens on, and abuses, that medieval symbol of a lady’s favour, the handkerchief, to persuade Othello of Desdemona’s adultery.

Cassio, the Florentine, as the experienced courtier, moves confidently around the complexity of Renaissance courtly relationships: he is completely at ease with the idea of using elaborate courtly attention in appealing for the assistance of ‘Our great captain’s captain’. He negotiates well the fine distinction between courtly admiration and sexual attraction. His avoidance of alcohol and other measures calculated to unbalance his courtly demeanour demonstrate the care Cassio takes to preserve it, however as Iago’s demonic insight sees and exploits, he wrestles with an inclination towards the bodily sins of gluttony and lust; sins often associated with the lower orders. Notably, he conducts his sexual relationship outside of the Court. Desdemona, however, shows all the signs of one who is trying to play a part she thinks she knows, but has not yet learned. Her inexperience in courtly play is initially demonstrated by the risqué exchange of banter with Iago that has so troubled some critics (for example, M R Ridley 1958: 54,166). Her intercession for Cassio lacks the diplomatic confidence and subtlety of an experienced woman of the court, in talking Othello ‘out of’ the contrary virtue to anger, she is making things considerably worse:

My lord shall never rest:
I’ll watch him tame, and talk him out of patience,
His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;
I’ll intermingle everything he does
With Cassio’s suit.
(*Othello* III iii 22-26)

She attempts to move into the public role of courtly mistress and failing to pull it off, becomes the dutiful wife, playing patient Griselda of Chaucer’s *Clerk’s Tale* to Othello’s Walter. Both Othello and Desdemona become victims of their need for

public validation which assumes a greater role than the virtuous love necessary for driving out sin.

The search for motive in *Othello* has provoked considerable critical discussion. Coleridge famously puzzled over Iago's motive as 'the motive-hunting of motiveless malignity', Bradley accuses him of assigning too many (1905: 211, 255). This, however, is not a dramatic fault, but an accurate portrayal of the nature of envy. In doctrinal terms Iago, as the Vice embodiment of Jealousy and metacharacter (Calderwood 1989: 115) should have no specific motive other than envy itself. Envy is unique among the Sins as having no perceived benefit or motive. In 1621, Robert Burton echoes Chaucer's Parson:

Every other sin hath some pleasure annexed to it, or will admit
of some excuse: envy alone wants both.

(*The Anatomy of Melancholy* 2001: 263)

What Ernst Honigmann (1976: 95-100) sees as shifting motive in Iago, is exactly what it seems: he suspects everything, hates everyone and wants everything. 'The filching world' is perceived through the eyes of the sin, and the more 'dog in the manger', the better. He suspects not just his wife, but all women; he also displays apparent homosexual jealousy. In his ability to 'distinguish between a benefit and an injury', he perceives any benefit to others to be an injury to himself and vice-versa. Consequently, he distains in others, but wishes to acquire for himself, all evidence of money, wisdom and birth. Emilia, whose experience as the object of envy is long-suffering understands that, 'They are not ever jealous for the cause/ But jealous for they're jealous' (III iv 155-156) One need go no further than Marlowe's rather humanist Envy in *Dr Faustus*:

I am Envy [...] I cannot read and therefore wish all books were burned.

I am lean with seeing others eat. [...] But must thou sit and I stand?

(Kastan 2008: II iii 129-134 A-Text)

Iago appraises everything through the eyes of envy. He suspects all of wanting what is his; he hates all for what they have materially, sexually, socially and intellectually, and as he looks only for the potential evil in people, he has a devil's talent for exploiting weakness for his own ends. He can see gluttony in Cassio, a potential vice of which Cassio himself is aware, and lust in Roderigo. As a devil,

Iago's role is to 'wrought' Othello and everyone else he manipulates into sin. He exploits what he sees as the potential for sin in all around him and, much as Marlowe's Mephistopheles, we should not necessarily look for rational justification in his action; he behaves as he does, because he cannot be any other way. He cannot tempt, as envy has no reward. Instead, Iago plays on Othello's inexpert understanding of the court, encouraging him in his aspirational pride to accept adultery as an emblem of greatness, and through that appreciation provokes Othello's jealousy:

Yet 'tis the plague of great ones:

Prerogated are they less than the base.

'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death:

Even then, this forked plague is fated to us

When we do quicken.

(*Othello* III iii 271-275)

At the same time he plays on Othello's insecurity by implying that Desdemona's very choice of him above other suitors makes his disposition questionable. He not only questions Desdemona's propriety in making her choice but also Othello's standing in being her choice:

Ay, there's the point! As, to be bold with you,

Not to affect many proposed matches

Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,

Whereto we see in all things nature tends.

Faugh! One may smell in such a will most rank,

Foul disproportions, thoughts unnatural.

(*Othello* III iii 227-232)

He compounds this by utilising Christian doctrine in what Greenblatt describes as 'brilliant improvisation' (Greenblatt 1980: 246), alternately faking moral reticence with suggestions of 'auricular' proof of Desdemona's infidelity until he drives Othello to a state of complete jealousy and rage, formally dismissing love in favour of hate:

All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven. 'Tis gone.

Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell;

Yield up, O love, thy crown and hearted throne

To tyrannous hate.

(*Othello* III iii 441-444)

Now at the point of fall, Othello kneels and commits his soul to envy in the form of Iago in a contract ritual reminiscent of Marlowe's *Faustus*:

Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
 Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love
 Till that a capable and wide revenge
 Swallow them up. Now, by yond marble heaven,
 In the due reverence of a sacred vow
 I here engage my words.

(*Othello* III iii 451-456)

Iago acts quickly, kneeling in response and sealing the contract in further ceremony in which he calls, not on God but on the powers of nature to witness the bond. Othello's soul is lost in the line 'Now art thou my lieutenant,' to which Iago responds, chillingly, 'I am your own forever'. The tragedy must follow.

His task achieved, Iago has no need for further explanation:

Othello: Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil
 Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?

Iago: Demand me nothing. What you know, you know:
 From this time forth I never will speak word.

(*Othello* V ii 294-297)

The silence of Iago has puzzled critics. Even those who have cast him in the role of talkative Vice have failed to understand why he doesn't glory in his misdeeds like Aaron. However a closer study of the envy lexicon provides a satisfactory explanation. Silence and sulking is a commonly identified behaviour of the envious. As early as the fourteenth century, in his list of the different manifestations of envy to be found in penitent contemplation of one's own and other sins, the writer of *Ancrene Wisse*, a guide for anchorites which includes a full and lively account of the Sins and their guises, highlights 'luther stilthe, the deofles silence', (wicked silence, the devil's silence) as the last of the 'whelps' of envy.

The distinction between Iago, the embodiment of a deadly sin, and Othello, the victim of a deadly sin is never clearer than in this play. However, the distinction is never completely lost as the dramatic value in having both forms of evil present to

interact on stage provides the tension between redemption and damnation required for the exposure of moral choice in effective tragedy.

3.5 *King Lear*

The Christian and societal ambiguity associated with the sin of anger supplies a rich source of dramatic and moral tension in the psychologically more mature and philosophically complex tragedy of *King Lear*. Whilst the tragedy centres on Lear's predisposition towards the deadly sin of anger as indicated from the outset, the play also provides many other examples of the sin's extensive subset as well as the virtues which are said to remedy it. This world, like that of *Titus*, is steeped in anger, as Gloucester accurately prophesies:

Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities,
mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked
twixt son and father. (*King Lear* Iii 96-98)

In the king's case, his sudden, hasty anger is cast as a sin borne of another sin, one often associated with monarchs, the sin of pride. It is the stubbornness associated with his pride that compounds his sin by preventing him from the humility necessary for retraction. Lear intends to cast off the duty which prevents honour from becoming pride and to hang on to the trappings. The selfishness and greed which this implies suggests the childish cholera identified by Aristotle as indicative of the weak: a petulant expectation to get one's own way, often based on social position and/or parental indulgence. The King's anxious requirement for ritual reassurance of his continued importance to his daughters coupled with his advanced years predictably expose in him the needy, irascible stereotype of old age in terms of the psychology of the Sins, although it is clear this is a sin which has been 'ever' with him. This assumption is confirmed by his elder daughters in their descriptions of him as 'rash' 'choleric' and 'subject to unconstant starts.' Chaucer's Parson is careful to identify this anger as a venial sin (Mann 2005: 732, 540) as it is perceived as a reactive, unthinking or 'natural' response to a perceived hurt or offence, rather than a reasoned action. In the complex Christian understanding of anger which must incorporate the idea of righteous anger, to 'be angry and sin not,' there has to be an allowance for consideration of anger's provocation.

In fact, Lear is presented with two possible sources of provocation in the response he receives to his proffered 'love' challenge to his daughters. He could be righteously angered by the false flattery of Goneril and Regan, or provoked by the unvarnished truth he receives from Cordelia and Kent. He reacts to the latter and in doing so his rage becomes morally unreasonable and compounded by the deliberate action of Cordelia and Kents' expulsion. He chooses, in his pride, to opt for flattery over truth and the consolidation of his non-righteous anger, by the revenge he takes, elevates its status to that of deadly sin. He has, at this point, stepped off Seneca's cliff. His constant warnings to others to avoid his wrath betray his understanding of the irreversible nature of his own action: 'The bow is bent and drawn' (I i 140). However, in a play as philosophically complex as this, the truth-tellers are not as simply virtuous as they may seem. Both Kent and Cordelia display a natural confrontational anger which at times strains to be defined as entirely righteous. Cordelia's struggle with her own anger reflects that of Lear. Shakespeare chooses not to provide Lear with the calculated motive for his behaviour found in the source *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (Muir 1964: xxv). In this source Leir, once he has secured Cordelia's promise to love him all, plans to manipulate her into compliance over her choice of husband. This would have detracted from the picture of Lear's impulsiveness and lost the sense of his fall from grace. However a flavour of the source narrative can be read in Cordelia's response. If her mind is occupied by a love match which may not have been her father's choice, Lear's requirement of her to limit her duty and affections only to him, coupled with the false declarations of her married sisters, is enough to provoke her to abandon her own wise and virtuous advice to 'love and be silent,' in the same way that her father is unable to follow his own injunction to 'be the pattern of all patience' and 'say nothing.' Instead she falls back on a common teenage ploy – that of wilful miscue. She treats Lear's request as one of formal contract. In transactional analysis terms, she plays adult to Lear's parent: 'I love your majesty/According to my bond, no more nor less' (I i 91-92). Closest to her father, Cordelia knows him best and this passive aggressive act is one calculated to provoke. Lear responds in kind and teaches her that he, too, can be contractual:

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
 Propinquity and property of blood,
 And as a stranger to my heart and me,

Hold thee from this forever.

(*King Lear* 1 i 110-113)

As Cordelia confronts with truth, so Kent assumes the role of moral adviser. Firstly, he reminds Lear that God, in this case the thinly disguised Apollo, will not hear the prayers of an angry man: ‘king,/ Thou swear’st thy gods in vain’ (I i 160-161), then reminds him that he is turning his anger against good in favour of evil:

Kill thy physician and thy fee bestow
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift,
Or whilst I can vent clamour from my throat
I’ll tell thee thou dost evil.

(*King Lear* 1 i 161-164)

Chaucer’s Parson warns against this form of angry chastisement, ‘for trewely but he be war, he may ful lightly quiken the fire of angre and of wratthe, which that he sholde quenche, and paradventure sleeth him which that he mighte chastise with benignitee,’ (Mann 2005: 739, 628).²⁶ Lear’s response is predictively explosive and haughty, assuming the royal ‘we’ in answer to Kent’s over-familiar ‘what would’st thou do, old man?’ He rationalises his behaviour by blaming it on the duty of office: he cannot do other than act in the way he is, for as king he must carry out his pronouncements;

That thou hast sought to make us break our vows,
Which we durst never yet; and with strained pride
To come betwixt our sentences and our power,
Which nor our nature, nor our place can bear,

(*King Lear* 1 i 166-169)

This, says Chaucer’s Parson, is the kind of indignant displaced rage turned on the confessor in defence of the sin which is in some way excused as an aspect of the sinner’s nature or status;

whan a man is sharply amonested in his shrifte to forleten his sinne, thanne wole he be angry, and answeren hokerly and angrily, and deffenden or

²⁶ For truly unless he is careful you will stoke the fire of wrath which you ought to be trying to quench and may even end up killing a man you might have calmed instead with kindness

excusen [...]. Alle this manere of folk so wrappen hem in hir sinnes that they will nat delivere hemself (Mann 2005: 735, 584-5).²⁷

By banishing Kent and disowning Cordelia in hate, Lear has committed the sin of ‘spiritueel manslaughter,’ however, not without their compliance in the matter. Once the deadly sin has been initiated,

the Fool takes up the role of caustic agent of anger, using his bitter jibes and discord repeatedly to resurrect the king’s anger, maintain his separation from his reason and prevent his redemption. It is only when the Fool disappears that Lear’s spirit begins to heal. This often over-sentimentalised bitter fool, ‘the develes ape’ and his particular brand of unconstructive, biting truth is a tradition which the Parson includes in his treatise on anger: ‘Thise been the sinnes that comen of the tonge.’ This aspect of the sin of anger is recognised by Edgar in his deception of his own father by representing himself as a mad beggar:

How should this be?

Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,

Ang’ring itself and others.

(*King Lear* IV i 39-41)

Lear’s tragic journey into madness reflects particular aspects of the sin of anger listed by Chaucer’s Parson such as anger’s association with the stereotype of old age; the concatenation of pride or the loss of pride leading to anger, and of course the strong connection between anger and madness. These are selected to reflect his sins as a monarch and also, as his anger degenerates into madness and out of it again, to demonstrate his patchy acquisition of the required understanding of the necessary virtues to control his sin. Curses, which categorise the impotent anger of the weak and feeble, frame his anger towards Goneril and Regan, and are warned against by the Parson who particularly singles out the cursing of children:

²⁷ When a man is sharply admonished by his confessor and urged to change his ways, then will he be angry and answer scornfully and angrily, defending or excusing himself[...] These people wrap themselves in their own sins so tightly that they refuse all help.

And over alle thing men oghten eschewe to cursen hire children, and yeven to the devel hire engendrure, as ferforth as in hem is; (Mann 2005: 739, 621).²⁸

However, even his curses weaken. The first dreadful curse against Goneril has the power and formality of one who is used to the power of issuing decrees and having them fulfilled:

Hear, Nature, hear, dear goddess, hear:
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful.
Into her womb convey sterility,
Dry up her organs of increase,
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honor her. If she must teem,
Create her child of spleen, that it may live
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her.

(*King Lear* I iv 242-250)

The Parson warns that such wrongful cursing returns to him who curses ‘as a bird that returneth again to his owne nest,’ something of which Shakespeare often makes dramatic use: in this case his curse will deprive him of lineage or provide him with disnatured heirs of spleen. Within a short time the bullying of the king by his other daughter has reduced even his cursing to the ineffectual threat: ‘I will have such revenges on you both,/ That all the world shall – I will do such things-’ (II iv 274-275). He has learned that it is difficult to find a curse which will not return to him in some way.

Whilst Lear, in his uncontrolled temper provoked by pride, demonstrates the tragic fall from grace into the madness of anger, by contrast, the original sub-plot contains a narrative which is much nearer morality than mimetic. Edmund, in his controlled and planned ‘revenge’ against his brother and father, illustrates the evil of

²⁸ Above all, men must refrain from cursing their children and giving their children to the devil; it causes great peril and is a great sin

premeditated anger, 'avysed and cast before,' which is borne of envy and in the likeness of the devil:

This ire is so displesant to God that it troubleth his hous and chaceth the Hooly Goost out of mannes soule, and wasteth and destroyeth the liknesse of God, that is to seyn, the vertu that is in mannes soule - and put in him the liknesse of the devel, (Mann 2005: 732, 544).²⁹

Edmund, much nearer to the sin-enabling figure of the Vice (Spivack 1958: 413-414), presents himself in his first soliloquy as a lost cause to conformity and legitimacy. He identifies and exploits the potential for sin in others. His envious anger and calculated plan to oust his brother, presented under the guise of moral right but easily exposed as faulted argument, suggest the sin in the morality play's habit of presenting himself thinly disguised as a virtue. He flags his role as Vice-figure when he contextualises his brother as Virtue, 'Pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy' (I ii 122). In the case of the sin of anger, Edmund needs to look no further than 'righteous anger' for his disguise. His argument shifts swiftly from resentment at being the younger brother to the implication that it is his illegitimacy which militates against him. This pattern of the psychologically or morally weak sinner such as Lear, predisposed to falling or being provoked into sin, in contrast with Edmund, the Vice-figure who is more sin than human, is deployed to heighten the distinction between tragic humanity and the devil. By utilising the differences of the two traditions, the mimetic sin rooted in classical philosophy and the allegorical tradition of the morality play, Shakespeare is able to intensify the tragedy of the fall from grace. Both Titus and Lear, in their sin of anger are able to claim the provocation of one considered by others to be 'more sinned against than sinning' (III ii 58). Like all Vice-figures, Edmund is able to identify and manipulate Gloucester's weaknesses and predisposition to sin. Edmund recognises the potential of superstition to lead Gloucester into the sin of anger, as does the Parson in his treatise on anger:

²⁹ This anger is so unpleasant to God that it disturbs heaven and chases the Holy Spirit from a man's soul and destroys the likeness of God within him, that is to say the virtue that lies in a man's soul, and replaces it with the likeness of the Devil.

What seye we of hem that bileeven in divinailes, as by flight or by noise of
brides, or of beestes, or by sort, by geomancye, by dremes, (Mann 2005:
737, 604).³⁰

He cynically manipulates Gloucester's weakness and Gloucester, who is raised to anger by Edmund as a direct result of his spiritual gullibility, suffers a punishment which is associated with the sin of anger. However, it cannot be denied that it is the same blind gullibility which is manipulated by Edgar, as much a Virtue as his brother is a Vice, to inculcate Christian patience or stoicism. In the psychomachic struggle fought over their father, which foreshadows their actual duel, both brothers use the same weapon.

The theme of physical and spiritual blindness, which is particularly but not exclusively associated with Gloucester, is one which is historically attached to the sin of anger, just as calmness is associated with clear-sightedness and vision. In addition to the more obvious connection between actual and metaphorical blindness, the contradiction between blind anger and blind justice in this play is surely not accidental. In his *Gnostikos* Evagrius describes the angry person as someone who wants to see but pokes his eyes out: 'one who has touched knowledge yet is easily moved to anger is like a man who pierces himself in the eyes with a metal stylus' (Gillette 2010: 27). Just in the same way that Lear in his anger chooses flattery over unpalatable truth, so Gloucester is willingly taken in by Edmund's representation of his brother. His spiritual anger is represented by his increasing lack of faith in God, or what is thinly disguised in this pagan environment as 'the gods'. His reliance on superstition over faith betrays to Edmund how easily he can be persuaded by external signs of betrayal. When these prove to be liars, he loses faith in God and his spiritual clarity of vision is as clouded as his actual vision. He turns his anger, in extremis, against God:

As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods:
They kill us for their sport.
(*King Lear* IV i 38-39)

³⁰ What do we say of those who believe in divination, by regarding the flight or the sound of birds, or of animals, by astrology, by dreams

Rejection of God is the greatest sin in the category of anger. To think wickedly of God and all his saints is, says Chaucer's Parson, a sin so heinous it can scarcely be forgiven:

Yet comen ther of ire manye mo sinnes, as wel in word as in thoght and in dede; as he that arretteth upon God or blameth God of a thing of which he is himself guilty [...] This cursed sinne doon thye whan they felen in hir herte ful wikkedly of God. (Mann 2005: 735, 580-81).³¹

The ultimate act of anger against God is rejection through the act of suicide which can also be an act of *acedia*. This is recognisable as the Stoic defence against tyrannical oppression, to echo Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays*, of frustrating the cruelty of tyrants (Screech 1993: 249-250). However, in Gloucester's case, the tyrant is perceived as God and suicide is an act which Gloucester manages simultaneously to style as a deliberate frustration and rejection of God's will;

'Twas yet some comfort
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,
And frustrate his proud will.
(*King Lear* IV vi 64-66)

Gloucester also presents it, less convincingly, as an act of patience committed to avoid further the sin of anger provoked by providence:

This world I do renounce, and, in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off.
If I could bear it longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My snuff and loathed part of nature should
Burn itself out.
(*King Lear* IV vi 37-42)

Suicidal despair appears in the subsets of both sloth and anger for different reasons: in the first it is the ultimate act of inability to take responsibility, even in accepting grace, in the second it is the ultimate act of revenge against God. Edgar's trick to

³¹ From anger come many more sins as well, like a man who accuses God, or blames God, for things of which he himself is guilty[...].They commit this cursed sin when they think wickedly of God[...]

shake his father out of his nihilist despair which, ironically, plays on the credulity exploited by Edmund, is not very successful. Gloucester, like Lear, recognises that he has been guilty of unjust anger but, also like Lear, continues to frame his anger in the context of one more sinned against than sinning:

O dear son Edgar,
The food of thy abused father's wrath,
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again.

(*King Lear* IV i 22-24)

Both Gloucester and Lear claim justification for forgiveness based on suffering and their own treatment at the anger of others. They fail to recognise that this anger-infested world where daughters are styled as 'tigers', sons are at war and even nature is venting its fury has been created by them. Whether their suffering qualifies their anger as 'righteous' is, however, doubtful. It merely weighs their fault against the template. They do not, after all, appear redeemed by the end of their lives. Just as Lear's last act is one of wrath in killing his daughter's hangman, who is, after all, acting on orders in a jurisdiction of Lear's making, so Gloucester continues in his suicidal wilfulness: 'No further, Sir, a man may rot even here'(V iii 8). If redemption lies anywhere for Lear, Gloucester and the angry world they inhabit, it is in their recognition of another act of spiritual manslaughter about which Chaucer's Parson sermonises: the sin of political and economic oppression:

Leoun roringe, and bere hungry, ben like to the cruel lordshipes in witholdinge or abregginge of the shepe, or the hire, or of the wages of servauntz, or elles in usure, or in withdrawinge of the almesse of povere folk. For which the wise man seyth, 'Fedeth him that almost dieth for honger'. For soothly, but if thow fede him thou sleest him. And alle thise ben dedly sinnes. (Mann 2005: 734, 568-569).³²

³² Roaring lions and hungry bears are like the lords who withhold or reduce the sheep or the chattels they owe or the wages of servants or else by usury or withdrawing the alms for the poor. The wise man says 'feed the man who is dying of hunger, for truly, unless you feed him you will kill him, and this is a deadly sin.'

Both Lear and Gloucester discover truths about the responsibility of governance through first hand experience of the lives of the most poor and neglected in the world over which they have charge. Lear in particular, is brought to see the sin of anger behind the false and hypocritical justice of the rich and powerful:

There, thou mightst
behold the great image of authority; a dog's obeyed in office.

[...]

Through tattered clothes great vices do appear;
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sins with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks.
Arm it in rags; a pygmy's straw does pierce it.

(*King Lear* IV vi 152-161)

He recognises, in the heart of the angry storm, a metaphor for his own proud neglect:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just.

(*King Lear* III iv 29-37)

Jonathan Dollimore, in his materialist reading of *King Lear* (2004: 189-202) foregrounds this particular concatenation of anger and seeks to disassociate it from what he perceives to be the establishment reading of the sins of the 'soul' and the 'psyche' as represented by Christian and humanist interpretations of the play. He sees more similarities than differences between the redemptive, providential readings of the early critics and the later humanist, ethical, self-redemptive interpretations effectively summarised by G K Hunter (1974: 166-200).³³ This is enabled through

³³ AC Bradley *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904), G Wilson Knight *The Wheel of Fire* (1930), JF Danby *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (1949)

the interrogation of the common ground which anger provides, given its adaptability as sin, vice, trait or, in the corrective sense, righteous revenge. In both readings the sin or fault of anger is recognised by Lear and Gloucester through their individual suffering and, in the process of bringing about that recognition, an appreciation of the wider issues of oppression and suffering caused through their neglectful governance, what Chaucer's Parson calls spiritual manslaughter. For Dollimore, the real focus of evil lies with institutional, not individual defect. In Lear's madness and Gloucester's misery he sees not redemptive suffering, but 'a kind of suffering recognition' of the culpability in maintaining such a world 'where pity is a prerequisite for compassionate action' (Dollimore 2004: 191). If *King Lear* is a play about 'power, property and inheritance' as he supposes, then it is illustrated through a political, physical and emotional environment in which anger, so often associated with greed as well as pride, leaks through every crack and at every level, much as it does in *Titus Andronicus*. However the cultural materialist solution is one which initially embodies anger and does not subscribe to endurance. The Christian, humanist and cultural materialist readings can all in some sense recognise the remedies of truth, humility and patience offered in the Parson's treatise, and can also, in other ways, raise uneasy issues with these virtues. While all three virtues needed to be acquired by the anger-infected Lear and Gloucester, and their world adjusted to incorporate them, the play highlights the ambiguity of virtue, too, as reflected in their apparent proponents: Cordelia, Edgar and Kent.

Neither Cordelia, Kent nor the Fool's use of truth can be seen, in its harshest terms, as anything other than a provocation and a spur to Lear's rapid deterioration into madness. Similarly, if Cordelia is an uncomfortable Truth, Edgar is also a highly suspect Patience. Edgar's patience, like Cordelia's truth, appears to be somewhat lacking in charity and the suffering caused through his deception, not to mention the deception itself, calls into question the virtue he appears to represent. The message here appears to be that Vice can do the odd good act, as Edmund demonstrates by his, almost casual, belated decision to save Lear and Cordelia, and Virtue is not as kind as it may appear. The common dramatic popularity of the Sin over the Virtue seems to be utilised in an attempt to present the moral ambiguity of the concept of good and evil in a complex world. Anger, with its Christian history of moral ambiguity is capable of raising questions about the nature of the Sins. If one sin can

be said to control another, then can it be also, as Lear claims, that being sinned against excuses the sin? This is, after all, the reasoning behind the idea of righteous anger, and from a humanist perspective, enables the social psychology of nurture, as well as the precepts for Marxist revolution. In this play, perhaps more than any other, the Aristotelian notion of neutrality which hangs about the Sins, allowing them to adapt to religious, societal, cultural and political change is exploited to its greatest dramatic potential.

3.6 *Macbeth* and vainglory

On the face of it, the dramatic history of *Macbeth* in Holinshed matches quite closely the construct used in Shakespeare's histories: that of sloth creating an opening for pride. Holinshed portrays Duncan in a similar mould to that of Henry VI, as a weak but religious king with Macbeth as the active warrior whose Bolingbroke-like pride brings the coup about and who, for a time at least, is a much more effective king. In dismissing this familiar template, and presenting Duncan as a saintly but responsible king and making Macbeth murder Duncan rather than overthrow him in battle or by political struggle, Shakespeare removes all possible moral or patriotic motives on Macbeth's part. Furthermore, by removing political motive, he also removes the potential ambiguity between honour and pride frequently exploited in power dynamics. Macbeth's is not the quasi-patriotic ambition of the frustrated leader. In fact, in addition to his summary of potential feudal, blood and social iniquities told against himself, Macbeth presents the case for Duncan very clearly, counteracting the potential criticism of weakness with the political virtue of spotless leadership:

Besides, this Duncan
 Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues
 Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
 The deep damnation of his taking off;
 (*Macbeth* I vii 16-20)

Macbeth, by his own admission, has 'no spur' for his actions which can be legitimised as *virtus*: what he craves is the empty position – the name and effects of a king. He aspires to the glory without the power.

Vainglory, which is listed in most concatenations or subsets of pride has often been given a unique and independent status in the Sin literature. It was originally given separate and higher ranking in Evagrius' *logismoi*, or 'evil thoughts'. He identifies it, in addition to avarice and gluttony, the two other temptations of Christ by Satan (Matthew: 3-10), as the base or foundation from which all other sins develop. In particular, vainglory is seen to be associated with an empty craving after recognition and status: not dissimilar from contemporary celebrity culture. Angela Tilby identifies the word as an old English literal translation of *kenodoxia*, a Greek word which is a combination of 'empty' and a word which can mean 'opinion', 'fame', 'reputation' and 'glory'. She associates the craving for admiration which the term implies with an almost secretive, or fantasy, inner conviction of greatness (Tilby 2009: 142). Evagrius characterises it as almost a sin of the imagination: its cause is the process of visualisation, of picturing yourself as great or revered:

Vainglory is the origin of the mind's erring, when the mind is moved thereby it makes attempts at circumscribing the divine in forms and images.

(Sinkewicz 2006: 85).

This leads him to portray vainglory as a horse, rushing forward to obtain praise and repute (Sinkewicz 2006: 85).

The dramatic utilisation of the interest in demonology, created in part by James I, fits well with aspects of the tradition of vainglory and its associations with demonic temptation, and Saint Paul's warning that the devil can appear as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). Macbeth's willingness to believe the witches and Hecate whose prophecy he later describes as 'th' equivocation of the fiend/ That lies like truth' (V v 43-44), demonstrates his vainglorious desire to self-delude. Thomas Lodge (1596) classifies this weakness as 'Curiositie, a 'sonne' of Pride:

Another sonne hath he, and his name is Curiositie, who not content with the studies of profite and the practise of commendable sciences, setteth his mind wholly on Astrologie, Negromancie, and Magicke. [...] Promise him a familiar, and he will take a flie in a box for good paiement: if you long to knowe this slave, you shall never take him without a book of characters in his bosome. Promise to bring him to treasure-troue and he will sell his land for it. (*Wit's miserie and the world's madnesse* 1971: 11).

This ability to self-delude is indicative of the lack of humility, a virtue which Evagrius saw as necessary to keep vainglory at bay. Tilby (2009: 153) quotes from Benedicta Ward's translation of *The Desert Fathers: Sayings of the Early Christian Monks*:

The devil appeared to a monk disguised as an angel of light, and said to him, 'I am the angel Gabriel, and I have been sent to you.' But the monk said, 'Are you sure you weren't sent to someone else? I am not worthy to have an angel sent to me.' At that the devil vanished. (Ward 2003:15. 68, 165).

That Macbeth's tragic sin is one which is closely associated with his own ambitious imaginings is apparent from the point of the witches' perceived 'soliciting'. Macbeth is unable to accept the witches' prophecies without visualising how they might come about:

This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion,
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
 Against the use of nature? Present fears
 Are less than horrible imaginings.
 (*Macbeth* I iii 132-140)

His speech is full of the pictures he is framing in his mind at the incitement of the witches: suggestion, image, imaginings, thought, fantasy, as well as the suppression of reality and the here and now. He is described by Banquo as 'rapt'. In his weighing of the wrongs of the murder he envisions as the means to realising the witches' prediction, he is focussed much more on the act as it will be reflected back upon him if he is found out; as against the worldly benefits derived if he can manage murder without discovery, or indeed, divine punishment. He casts his vainglorious intent as Evagrius pictures it, on a speeding horse, urged by his ambitious desire to jump higher than it is possible to attain; destined for a fall:

I have no spur

To prick the sides of my intent, but only
 Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself
 And falls on th'other.

(*Macbeth* I vii 25-28)

The many references in *Macbeth* to haste, rush and speed, coupled with the rapid pace of the play, reflect the headlong rush characteristic of the sin of vainglory, and the speed with which Macbeth is drawn to sin: first by the witches and then by his demonically inhabited wife and later by the impetus of his own sin. He learns to combine the theologically disputed sources of sin, the thought and the act, practically and morally:

From this moment

The very firstlings of my heart shall be
 The firstlings of my hand.

(*Macbeth* IV i 145-147)

As Catherine Belsey describes (1972: 198-291) the image of the speeding horse is one closely associated with pride in Christian imagery. Often the rider is portrayed falling off the horse to illustrate the fall which pride goes before (Proverbs: 16, 83). Belsey also cites the *Psychomachia* in which Pride, on his horse, falls into a pit dug by Fraud and is beheaded by Humility (Belsey 1972: 198). She also asserts Shakespeare's familiarity with the horse/pride motif, referring to two other plays, *Richard III* (V iii 175-177) and *Richard II* (V v 87-89), in which it appears. The significant difference between pride and vainglory is that pride requires no external affirmation: vainglory is an assumption of greatness looked for through the validation of others, whereas pride requires no other validation than the possessor's own conviction of his superiority. This need for assurance is one which pervades the play: in his fruitless attempt to secure his usurped status, Macbeth is drawn further and further into sin and tyranny, confirming Hecate's observation that 'security/ Is mortals' chiefest enemy' (III v 32-33).

It is the worldly, attention-acquisitive, afterlife-denying aspect of vainglory which leads Brian Morris (Brown 1982: 50-51) mistakenly to conclude that *Macbeth* is not about sin because it does not address the hereafter. The haste in which Macbeth moves towards mortal sin and his strong desire to be able to dismiss the idea of

divine punishment, combined with Lady Macbeth's insistent counsel to ignore all things expiatory is, according to Gower, a defining aspect of vainglory;

The proude vice of vein gloire
 Remembreth noght of purgatorie,
 Hise worldes joyes ben so grete,
 Him thenkth of hevene no beyete;
 This lives Pompe is al his pes:
 Yit schal he deie natheles,
 And therof thenkth he bot a lite,
 For al this lust is o delite
 In newe thinges, proude and veine,
 Als ferforth as he mai atteigne.

(*Confessio Amantis* 69, 2680-2690)

This is a characteristic which is also echoed by Hecate in her prediction of Macbeth's fall:

He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
 His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear.

(*Macbeth* III v 30-31)

To emphasise the moral focus on sin, in Act IV Macbeth's empty conceit of fame is, not altogether dramatically successfully, pitted against an exchange between Malcolm and Macduff in which the virtuous and spiritual Malcolm, under the protection of the saintly Edward, tests Macduff with a fake confession, not for his blind loyalty but for his skills as a moral counsellor. In contrast to the dark progress of Macbeth's evil, the scene affords the opportunity to rehearse and examine both sins and virtues in the light of kingship and governance. Interestingly, Macduff's rather relaxed courtly attitude towards lust and avarice in the context of kingship reflect the somewhat liberal attitudes examined in *Measure for Measure*. These lower-order deadly sins are, it appears, to be expected and tolerated from those with status and wealth. However, Macduff demonstrates his credentials as a royal counsellor by ultimately putting faith before blind allegiance:

Fit to govern?

No, not to live. O nation miserable,
 With an untitled tyrant, bloody-sceptred!

When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,
 Since that the truest issue of thy throne
 By his own interdiction stands accused
 And does blaspheme his breed?

(*Macbeth* IV iii 102-108)

Ironically, the picture of innocent virtue to which Malcolm finally owns is in itself so pure it silences the morally pragmatic courtly Macduff:

I am yet

Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,
 Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,
 At no time broke my faith, would not betray
 The devil to his fellow, and delight
 No less in truth than life.

[...]

Why are you silent?

(*Macbeth* IV iii 125-130, 137)

Macbeth's main concerns in his deliberations over Duncan's murder centre on his headlong speed coupled with fear of being found out; of loss of honour, and of losing the status he has acquired in the eyes of others, rather than the morality or the cruelty of the act. Over and over he presents to himself the imagined scenarios of discovery and non-discovery:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
 It were done quickly. If th'assassination
 Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
 With his surcease success - that but this blow
 Might be the be-all and the end-all! - here,
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
 We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
 We still have judgement here, that we but teach
 Bloody instructions which, being taught, return
 To plague th'inventor. This even-handed justice
 Commends th'ingredients of our poisoned chalice

To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
 First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
 Who should against his murderer shut the door,
 Not bear the knife myself.

[...]

And Pity, like a naked new-born babe
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim horsed
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,

(*Macbeth* I vii 1-24)

Macbeth is concerned, above everything else, about how he will be seen, and to secure that he will willingly 'jump the life to come'. As Brian Morris rightly confirms:

His ambition is not for power, but for status. As we have seen, his desire is not for command over others or for some position from which he can decisively influence the onward course of events, but for personal distinction, recognised and conceded by his society and epitomised by a particular social rank: kingship. This is perhaps the simplest, purest and most naked form of ambition [...]. To use the play's own word, what Macbeth seeks is 'greatness'. (Brown 1982: 42).

It is clear that when Macbeth does propose delay in murdering Duncan it is not merely procrastination based on fear, moral or otherwise, of committing the act: he is side-tracked by the attraction of his current celebrity:

and I have bought
 Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
 Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
 Not cast aside so soon.

(*Macbeth* I vii 32-35)

The willing demonic association of Lady Macbeth with 'spirits' and by comparison, with the ambiguously evil witches, and her unnatural 'unsexed' cruelty raises her above the over-ambitious wife portrayed by Holinshed as 'burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of a quene' (Bullough VIII 1973: 496) and

casts her role as proactive, albeit demonically inhabited, Vice-figure. Jacek Fabiszak links Lady Macbeth to the tradition of the Vice through her rejection of femininity; the presentation of herself in her 'Come, you Spirits' soliloquy as a servant of the Devil; her initial attachment to the darkness, and her linguistic manipulation which he compares to the 'chop logic' of the Vice (2008: 69-73). In her very accurate, and Vice-like, knowledgeable assessment of her husband's potential for sin, Lady Macbeth perceives his vulnerability to outside opinion. She understands that vainglorious thoughts often never leave the imagination of their possessor:

Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it.
(*Macbeth* I v 16-18)

She appreciates that the kind of fame he craves makes him eschew infamy and therefore leads to her making the nice distinction between his wishing to do right and to be seen to do right, thus emphasising the vainglorious neglect of divine retribution in favour of public opinion:

What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win.
(*Macbeth* I v 18-20)

In addressing this equivocation Lady Macbeth, with the Mephistophelian skill of a Vice-figure, utilises her understanding by creating a sense of not being able to go back in three ways. First she stresses the proposed act of murder as a defining measurement of their marriage. She then undermines his belief in her adulation by questioning his sexual virility and bravery and withholds her approval of him by suggesting, demon-like, that the murder constituted an agreed contract between them which he is proposing to break:

What beast was't then
That made you break this enterprise to me?
(*Macbeth* I vii 47-48)

Finally, she plays on his earlier imaginings by using theology to compound Macbeth's sense of fatalism. By affecting the assumption that the plan to murder Duncan was initiated solely by him she chips away at the innocence to which he cleaves. He is guilty already, she implies, of the sin by thinking it (*logismoi*):

Art thou afeard

To be the same in thine own act and valor

As thou art in desire?

(*Macbeth* I vii 39-41)

Although there is nothing specifically in the text to confirm that Macbeth has seriously plotted Duncan's murder prior to this suggestion, the image of Duncan's demise, which Macbeth eventually shakes off, is of the strong, wishful imaginings of the vainglorious. Macbeth describes, almost fantasises, the control his own imagination has over him as a murdering of reality:

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,

Shakes so my single state of man

That function is smothered in surmise,

And nothing is but what is not.

(*Macbeth* 1 iii 141-144)

His failure to refute Lady Macbeth's analysis confirms his own ambiguity about his pre-disposition to mortal sin. He could be acknowledging an unrecorded conversation or examining his soul. Either way, Lady Macbeth is capitalising on such thoughts by asserting her knowledge of them and therefore shifting culpability to Macbeth. This sense of 'damage done' allows her to move to an assumption of inevitability in the act of murder and introduce the essential premise of vainglorious thinking, the rejection of an afterlife: 'the sleeping and the dead/Are but as pictures' (II ii 56-57). This is almost a dress rehearsal in which the anticipation of the moral horror is lessened by Lady Macbeth's theological persuasion that the deed is almost less than the thought. Finally, as she builds on this sense of familiarity with the skill of a counsellor, by rehearsing his imagination and making the planned murder seem almost perfunctory, Macbeth's concerns have shifted from the spiritual to the practical, from damnation to failure. She needs only to provide the mechanics of the plan:

We fail?

But screw your courage to the sticking place,

And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep-

Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey

Soundly invite him- his two chamberlains

Will I with wine and wassail so convince

That memory, the warder of the brain,
 Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
 A limbeck only.
 (*Macbeth* I vii 59-67)

Macbeth's recognition of loss of redemption following Duncan's murder, rather than awaking his conscience, completes the process of his willing damnation. This is emphasised by the speed with which he moves from the questioning, 'But wherefore could I not pronounce 'Amen'?' to the irrevocability of his strikingly ambiguous comment on Duncan's death which, while affecting his pretended shock, at the same time portrays the last remnants of his conscience which continue to seep through his psyche by means of his subconscious imagination like Lady Macbeth's does in her, or her inhabiting demon's, sleep. Fabiszak (2008: 72) notes that as her guilt increases, the characteristics which defined her as a Vice-figure diminish: she becomes incoherent and afraid of the dark. Macbeth's pretended elegy for Duncan is really for his own soul. It is the point at which he declares his full allegiance to his sin:

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
 I had lived a blessed time, for from this instant
 There's nothing serious in mortality.
 All is but toys. Renown and grace is dead.
 (*Macbeth* II iii 88-91)

The distinction between individual fame and the everlasting reward of 'renown and grace' become represented for Macbeth by his realisation that he has no legacy, no continuity, either spiritually or in terms of blood. His lack of children symbolise the lack of afterlife: 'For Banquo's issue I have filed my mind'. Even as a king, it is notable how infrequently he uses the royal 'we'. He tends to reserve it for his conversation with Lady Macbeth where it also serves as a reinforcement of their bond of culpability. The speed with which Macbeth and Lady Macbeth move towards the moral irretrievability of deadly sin is, as well as being in keeping with the characteristics of vainglory, indicative of dramatic intention. This play does not chart the gradual lead up to a final tragic fall. Rather it charts the career progression or concatenation of a deadly sin. Macbeth himself recognises it when he remarks

that, 'Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill,' (III ii 54). He sets about the task of refining his craft through practice:

My strange and self-abuse
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use.
We are yet but young in deed.
(*Macbeth* III iv 144-146)

While Macbeth has the capacity to chart clearly the path he has chosen, his sadness belies any real redemption. Evagrius perceives vainglory as being twinned with pride and *acedia*:

For the one who does not obtain glory will be sad
And the one who does obtain it will be proud.
(Driscoll 2003: 51)

Macbeth, in his irrevocable choice of the here and now, experiences both. Once he appreciates that he is unable to return to a sinless state;

I am in blood
Stepped in so far, that, should I wade no more
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.
(*Macbeth* III iv 138-140)

and that his soul is given to 'the common enemy of man', he sticks by his choice. His pride will not allow repentance and his vainglory will not permit a loss of status:

I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
(*Macbeth* V vii 57-59)

Death continues to have no resonance for him, but neither does life. With the gloom of a disappointed existentialist, he effectively combines the slow pointlessness of worldly existence with the momentary, ephemeral nature of its duration in a speech which summarises the impermanence, emptiness and impatience of vainglory:

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle.

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.
 (*Macbeth* V v 19-28)

3.7 *Coriolanus*

As has been seen from the history plays, the moral ambiguity of anger is perhaps displayed at its most convincing when placed in the heart of heroic militancy. Despite the Christian concept of the just war; the classical notion of *virtus* with its *macho*, valiant, state hero, and the chivalric ideal of the knight errant, the Senecan concept of the passion-free individual whose role it is to mete out justice or revenge on behalf of a higher authority is one which is hard to envisage. It presupposes an institutional fairness and a control of human passion which is god-like. The question as to whether the idealistic fighter, whether morally or state motivated, is acceptable, or can even exist, is frequently explored in Shakespeare's work. As Young Clifford shows in 2 *Henry VI*, even if you start with ideals, anger corrupts. In one speech, he changes from chivalric soldier risking life for honour;

Let no soldier fly.

He that is truly dedicate to war
 Hath no self-love; nor he that loves himself
 Hath not essentially, but by circumstance,
 The name of valor. (2 *HVI* V ii 36-40)

to, on discovery of the death of his father, pitiless child-killer:

Henceforth, I will not have to do with pity.
 Meet I an infant from the house of York,
 Into as many gobbets will I cut it
 As wild Medea young Absyrtus did,
 In cruelty will I seek out my fame.
 (2*HVI* V ii 56-60)

There is much in common between the classical *virtus*, the self-sacrificing patriotism of the military hero and the medieval chivalric notion of the knight as protector of

right: in both cases their essential individualism and power to dispense justice can become problematic. David Wallace (1997: 217) notes that, as early as 1237, Albertano of Brescia, the primary source of Chaucer's *Melibee*, recognises the difficulties inherent in the unilateral summary justice which *milites* or knights felt empowered to dispense. *Melibee*, one of the most independently copied of the *Canterbury Tales* (Helen Cooper 1989: 317), is an interesting companion piece to the Parson's treatise, dealing as it does, in a semi-allegorical way, with the control of Melibee's vengeful anger by Prudence, his allegorical wife, following the attempted murder of his daughter Sophie (probably representing Wisdom). *Virtus* is seen in Melibee as fortitude or valiant behaviour without wisdom and the balancing virtues of temperance, prudence and justice which came to accompany it.

Titus Andronicus, in his apparently disinterested and scrupulous sacrifice of Tamora's son to the gods on behalf of a state which already lacks the gravitas or justice to uphold his action, initiates the orgy of anger and revenge which finally brings about his tragedy and questions his heroism. However, more than any other play, *Coriolanus* embraces the difficulties of conscripting human anger for the purposes of state justice. He is portrayed as the destructive, indiscriminate, unstoppable personification of anger without the controlling virtues:

before him

He carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears.

(*Coriolanus* II i 147-148)

Thomas North, the translator of *Plutarch's Lives* (1579), Shakespeare's primary source for the play, approaches his work as a moral critique; a way which would be familiar to anyone who had been educated in an Elizabethan grammar school. As part of his moral reading of classical literature, North takes some time to explain the nature of *virtus*, which he calls 'valiantnes' as only one of the 'speciall virtues beside' which came to be grouped under this term (Brockbank 2006: *Appendix*, 314-315). Coriolanus' lack of moral 'roundedness' exposes him in North's moral reading to be particularly lacking the more humanist virtues of prudence and patience. In his assessment of Coriolanus' character, North blames his moral unreliability on his lack of moral education, a consequence of his fatherless, impoverished upbringing. He describes Coriolanus as possessing 'many good and evil things together as a fat soil that lieth unmanured bringeth forth both herbs and weeds' and stresses, as well as his

courage, his unworldly lack of greed whilst emphasising his choleric and stubbornness. This moral unevenness is, argues North, because he is morally 'self-taught' - the implication being that Coriolanus' character reflects his natural characteristics unrestrained by the balance which formal moral learning would have supplied. Shakespeare, however, presents him as one whose development has been carefully and intensively managed by his mother who, as Janet Adelman notes (1980: 134), never tires of pointing it out: 'Thou art my warrior, / I help to frame thee' (V iii 62-63).

Coriolanus' tragic fall into deadly sin is brought about through his over-reliance on his own perception of righteous anger. He does possess moral understanding as well as a strong sense of state justice and demonstrates an acute awareness of vice and virtue both in his intolerance of what he perceives as fault in others and sometimes in his own reference to sin in himself. For example he can see the sin in envying Aufidius' nobility but not his own pride in rating nobility so highly. His distaste for wealth and lack of covetousness is emphasised by Shakespeare and his source:

Our spoils he kicked at
 And looked upon things precious as they were
 The common muck of the world. He covets less
 Than misery itself would give, rewards
 His deeds with doing them, and is content
 To spend the time to end it.
 (*Coriolanus* II ii 121-126)

His own pride which he defines as honour consistently informs his judgement on others and is the main source of his anger and hatred. However he possesses the sophisticated ability to recognise and disguise it. In a scene which again deviates from the North source, he dresses his pride in humility, ironically, to avoid putting on the gown of humility and to escape the need to 'beg of Hob and Dick that does appear / Their needless vouches' (II iii 109-110). Above everything, he prides himself in his truthfulness and inability to dissemble. However, this proves, as Chaucer's Parson warns, to be morally ambiguous and likely to promote anger rather than dispel it. Like Kent in *King Lear* he cannot help telling the truth as he feels and sees

it, what Kent calls ‘anger’s privilege’ and as Menenius describes Coriolanus, ‘his heart’s his mouth,’. This inability to control his anger, and tendency to speak from the heart is represented at various times in the play as a provocation to anger in others. The lack of a self-revealing, lengthy soliloquy in this play has attracted comment; while it can be seen as a lost opportunity to reveal his character, most would see it as indicative of his outspoken character. He has no need for soliloquy or tolerance for self-reflection. In a mature tragedy such as this a long soliloquy might have been expected and therefore a deliberate decision to avoid it must be considered. Agnes Heller perceives it to be an indication of Coriolanus’ humanity, in particular his inner weakness or lack of willpower as opposed to his outer resoluteness. She considers soliloquy to be indicative of demonic alienation (Heller 2002: 286). Given Coriolanus’ characteristic brand of confrontational truth-telling it is surely in character that he would avoid the secret personal revelation of a soliloquy. His long speech in Act III scene one, which is punctuated only with Cominius and Menenius’ impotent attempts to halt the flow of rancour and Brutus’ provocations to fuel it, is the spoken content of his heart. Once he begins to speak, he is incapable of stopping. It is no surprise that, given anger’s close association with words, he has a fear of them: ‘When blows have made me stay, I fled from words’ (II ii 69). Once he begins to speak his censorious mind, he knows he cannot stop:

Menenius: Come, enough.

Brutus: Enough, with over-measure.

Coriolanus: No, take more!

What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
 Seal what I end withal! This double worship,
 Where one part does disdain with cause, the other
 Insult without all reason; where gentry, title, wisdom
 Cannot conclude but by the yea and no
 Of general ignorance, it must omit
 Real necessities, and give way the while
 To unstable slightness.
 (Coriolanus III i 136-145)

As Paul Prescott observes (Prescott 2005: xxxix), Coriolanus shares with Cordelia, that other angry truth-teller, a strong, high-minded dislike for rhetoric, and he

recognises the role which flattery has to play in the provoking of anger. Far from responding to flattery as the North text implies, his fear and dislike of flattery borders on the pathological. He turns what he perceives to be his righteous anger against that pacifying rhetoric which others see as polity and his less subtle but more honest assessment sees as lies. What is often referred to as his hubristic brand of modesty can equally be seen as his own struggle with, and fear of, his anger and hatred. At the same time as recognising his defining character, ‘what he cannot help in his nature,’ and channelling it where it can do what he perceives to be good, in battle; his self-knowledge also acknowledges the barrier to virtue which anger creates, such as, in his anger towards Aufidius, forgetting the plight of the man who helped him:

I sometime lay here in Corioles
 At a poor man’s house; he used me kindly.
 He cried to me; I saw him prisoner,
 But then Aufidius was within my view,
 And wrath o’erwhelmed my pity.
 (*Coriolanus* 1 ix 80-84)

Just as his anger towards Aufidius makes him forget the man he wishes to save, so his anger with the common people for their lack of heroic patriotism blanks any legitimate complaint they may have. Shakespeare’s deliberate change of the unnamed hostage from a rich to a poor man (Brockbank 2006: 148n 80-90)) emphasises Coriolanus’ contempt for those he should protect: like King Lear he has little interest in their wellbeing. True to the Parson’s prediction that angry curses have a habit of returning ‘as a bird that returneth again to his owene nest,’ he predicts his banishment of Rome as early as Act I:

Mend and charge home,
 Or, by the fires of heaven, I’ll leave the foe
 And make my wars on you. (*Coriolanus* I iv 39-41)

In judging others, his angry pride compares them to himself and finds most men as less than him. He reads them through the anger template: he therefore does not understand their preoccupation with food or peace and reacts with indignant rage when challenged over either. The excuses he and his apologists use for his behaviour are straight out of the Parson’s treatise on anger: he can’t help it; it’s his destiny and his right as someone high-born:

Whan a man is sharply amonested in his shrifte to foreten his sinne, thanne wole he be angry and answeren hokerly and angrily and, deffenden or excusen his sinne by unstedefastnesse of his flessch; [...] or elles his compleccioun is so courageous that he may nat forbere; or elles it is his destinee[...]; or elles he seyth, it cometh hym of gentillesse of hise auncestres; (Mann 2005:735, 583-585).³⁴

This is in direct contrast to Menenius, whose elaborate political metaphor of the stomach as the centre of the body used in North clearly triggered Shakespeare's representation of a man inclined to gluttony, that opposite and sometimes quelling sin to anger. Gluttony informs both his comfortable understanding of the people and his over-reliance on the power of food and drink. A *bon viveur* himself, in a speech worthy of Falstaff, he completely miscalculates the persuasive effect of a good dinner on Coriolanus:

He was not taken well: he had not dined.
 The veins unfilled, our blood is cold, and then
 We pout upon the morning, are unapt
 To give or to forgive; but when we have stuffed
 These pipes and these conveyances of our blood
 With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls
 Than in our priest-like fasts. Therefore I'll watch him
 Till he be dieted to my request,
 And then I'll set upon him.
 (*Coriolanus* V i 49-57)

The two self-important, trouble-making Tribunes, however, who form part of the tense, envy and anger-ridden political environment which Coriolanus encounters on his return from the wars, and which is much of his own neglectful making, are much more adept at recognising and exploiting weakness both in Coriolanus and the people whom they purport to represent. The Parson has them tagged for those who deliberately sow discord and who harbour a grudge and therefore whose advice

³⁴ When a man is sharply admonished in confession and told to give up his sin, then he becomes more angry and defends or excuses his sin because that's how he's made or his temperament is so impetuous he can't help it or it is his destiny or right as someone high-born.

should not be taken: 'Therefore ben they likned to the devel, that evere is aboute to maken discord' (Mann 2005: 741, 643).

'Bred for the wars,' by his mother, Coriolanus is an incomplete human being, lacking in patience, pity and prudence: but he is also an honest one, incapable of flattery and lying, unlike his brother in war and enemy, envious Aufidius, whose pragmatic approach makes up for in craft what it lacks in honour:

Mine emulation

Hath not that honour in't it had, for where
I thought to crush him in an equal force,
True sword to sword, I'll potch at him some way:
Or wrath or craft may get him

(*Coriolanus* I x 11-14)

Coriolanus' anger aspires to righteous anger: his avenging actions and his speech are often couched in biblical rhetoric and his vengeful righteous anger can often have the flavour of an Old Testament God. However, his aspirations are to be God rather than godly, and he is frequently portrayed in those terms. The fact that he is, to all intents and purposes, his anger, forces a choice that he must be god or devil. The response of his soldiers in Act One reflects a sense of religious fervour towards him: 'O' me alone, make you a sword of me,' and the Volscian soldiers 'use him as the grace 'fore meat.' Menenius describes him as an Old Testament Jehovah:

When he walks, he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading. He is able to pierce a corslet with his eye, talks like a knell, and his 'hnh! is a battery. He sits in state as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in.

(*Coriolanus* V iv 17-23)

As avenging hero or knight, he has taken justice into his own hands and eventually turns it upon those whose justice he is meant to uphold in bitter revenge. As this abandoning of moral place for 'a world elsewhere', in a sense, deprives him of both those he champions and their enemies, he is left alone with only his anger. The knight errant, in effect, crosses over and becomes the dragon – that solitary animal whose medieval association with anger is not lost to Shakespeare; 'This Martius is

grown from man to dragon. He has wings; he's more than a creeping thing'
(*Coriolanus* V iv 11-13).

Coriolanus' tragic flaw has been cultivated by Volumnia, who is almost a Vice-figure. In a pattern which mirrors a number of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, Volumnia is much nearer a picture of the sin of anger than himself. The North text places much greater emphasis on the idea that Coriolanus is 'self-made'. Shakespeare's early introduction of her into the play allows a fuller development of character than the stereotypically patriotic Roman matron represented in North. Volumnia becomes the main influence over Coriolanus' aggressive attitude, as opposed to the North text whose moral reading ascribes Coriolanus' wrathful behaviour to the flattering influence of his young men of his class: 'for they dyd but kindle and inflame his choler more and more, being sorie with him for the injurie the people offred him,' (Brockbank 1976: *Appendix* 333). Volumnia's morally questionable influence over Coriolanus is evident from Act I scene one: it takes her a mere two short speeches from her entrance to move away from grand statements about honour and nobility to her real vicarious interest, the aggression, the wound-counting, violence, blood and gore of the fight. She even rehearses Coriolanus' scripts:

Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus,
 'Come on, you cowards! You were got in fear,
 Though you were born in Rome!' His bloody brow
 With his mailed hand then wiping, forth he goes,
 Like to a harvest-man that's tasked to mow
 Or all or lose his hire.

(*Coriolanus* I iii 29-34)

Adelman (1980: 140) describes her as the 'cannibalistic mother who [...] stands at the darkest centre of the play.' She is supported by Valeria, a like-minded reveller in unnecessary violence, whose admiration of such activity in Coriolanus' son is enough to promote a fond acknowledgement by Volumnia of uncontrollable choler in both father and son. Together, they suppress the religious, patient, peaceable anxiety voiced repeatedly by Virginia whose role as wife and mother is fully usurped by Volumnia. Volumnia reflects many of the characteristics listed by Chaucer's Parson in her love of conflict and bloodlust; assumption of superiority; provocation of

violence in others, but also in her cynical manipulation through flattery and lies to achieve power. There is little which is honourable about Volumnia for all her grand speeches. From the point at which Coriolanus declares that he ‘would rather be their servant in my way/Than sway with them in theirs,’ (II i 191-192) mother and son begin to diverge morally. This is the point at which her creation begins to backfire: she discovers that it was not enough to foster his anger, she should also have suppressed his virtuous, if faulted, honesty. The counsel which Volumnia gives him to ‘spend a fawn upon ’em’ creates genuine puzzlement. As someone who has been schooled in class hatred, his honesty cannot square with the sudden rush of apparent prudence she appears to have acquired. He begins to understand her dissembling nature and in one speech reveals a dawning understanding of both his own tactless but undeceitful nature and his mother’s true character:

I muse my mother

Does not approve me further, who was wont
To call them woollen vassals, things created
To buy and sell with groats, to show bare heads
In congregations, to yawn, be still, and wonder
When one but of my ordinance stood up
To speak of peace or war.

(*Coriolanus* III ii 7-12)

Unlike Melibee, Coriolanus’ female advice comes too late and, coming from Volumnia rather than his wife, is merely anger subtly dressed as prudence:

Pray be counselled.

I have a heart as little apt as yours,
But yet a brain that leads my use of anger
To better vantage.

(*Coriolanus* III ii 27-30)

The act of martyrdom in the Market which she enforces on Coriolanus and which fails because she has trained him too well in anger, reduces her to a cursing mad Queen Margaret whose champion has failed and whose anger has robbed her of her wit. In her madness she calls after the Tribunes:

Take my prayers with you.

I would the gods had nothing else to do
But to confirm my curses.

(*Coriolanus* IV ii 44-46)

When Menenius, predictably, attempts to comfort her with food, she shows her true colours. With Coriolanus gone she has lost her comfort and her prey, and declares herself to be self-consuming:

Anger's my meat. I sup upon myself
 And so shall starve with feeding. Come, let's go.
 Leave this faint puling, and lament as I do,
 In anger, Juno-like.

(*Coriolanus* IV ii 50-53)

The image of anger consuming itself is an enduring one, still in use in in Nicholas Ling's Collection, *A Groatsworth of Wit*, 1661. Volumnia's long speech in which she persuades her son to sacrifice himself through brokering a peace for Rome sticks closely to the North version of high-minded patriotic and emotional appeal. However, everything which leads up to that final speech in the play, contributes to a highly unreliable reading of it. By developing the character of Volumnia in this way, Shakespeare is able to reinterpret the *sui generis* of Coriolanus, turning it into a moral struggle between good and evil, righteous anger and sinful anger. To 'stand/As if a man were author of himself/And knew no other kin,' (V iii 35-37) is the struggle of a good man against evil, rather than the reverse. This is the second time Coriolanus has knowingly martyred his principles for his mother and this time when he cries 'O, mother, mother!/ What have you done?' (V iii 182-183) there is a sense that the scales have fallen from his eyes: the line combines the despair of 'My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?' (Mark 16: 34) with 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' (Luke 23:34). In a sense this knowing sacrifice for a sinner, or even in an allegorical sense, a sin, provides poetic, if not moral redemption.

In this morally complex play, the reading of Coriolanus' character is ironically left to Aufidius, his envious other; another unreliable narrator and one who would have made Volumnia a much more genetically believable son. Strangely, Aufidius provides the play's only objective assessment of Coriolanus' moral, political and natural failings, while at the same time planning how best to bring about his downfall, and so demonstrating the difference between a hero and a strategist:

Whether 'twas pride,

Which out of daily fortune ever taints
 The happy man; whether defect of judgement,
 To fail the disposing of those chances
 Which he was lord of; or whether nature,
 Not to be other than one thing, not moving
 From th' casque to th' cushion, but commanding peace
 Even with the same austerity and garb
 As he controlled the war; but one of these-
 As he had spices of them all,
 (*Coriolanus* IV vii 37-46)

Aufidius' equivocation in his moral judgement of Coriolanus as having merit to choke condemnation 'in the utterance,' underlines the difficulties of sin's ambivalence, and in particular the sin of anger. Coriolanus, it is clear from his frequent references to his nature, subscribes to the Aristotelian view of the neutral value of a passion as part of his born self. However, we must suspect this as being indicative of his struggle to disassociate himself from his mother's control and we also recognise it as one of the Parson's given excuses. The difference between acting in anger on behalf of another and acting on one's own behalf seems to form one divide: the difference between *avenge*, traditionally action carried out on behalf of one wronged in order to obtain justice, and *revenge*, which tends to be more retaliatory and personal. Whether a sin can be righteous is a difficult concept: it returns to the differences between the thought, the action and the consequence. Was the saint who threw the bread at the starving man in anger really saved because his action saved a life, however unintentionally? In being truthful to his nature is Coriolanus excused his reaction to others? Is a virtue always a virtue and a sin a sin, whatever the intention or outcome? To an audience which had seen the rewriting of religious belief and the political failures and successes which came from it, Aufidius' summary that 'virtues lie in th' interpretation of the time' must never have seemed more true. However, this does not nullify the existence of pure evil. Over and over, when Shakespeare's heroes balance on the edge of Seneca's cliff, their virtues and sins in the balance of their humanity, there is the ghost of a medieval Vice behind them ready to give them the necessary push in the wrong direction. In combining two dramatic traditions through the moral flexibility of the Sins, Shakespeare is able to

maintain both the complex psychological realism of faulted humanity and the compulsive attraction of the Devil and all his works.

3.8 The ‘stamp of one defect’ and the incitement to sin

By using the framework of the Sins as a dramatically useful reading and analysis of the source material, and concentrating in particular on the higher-order sins associated with the Devil, it would be possible to develop an identifiable, contemporaneously moral reading for each tragic hero based upon what the ever theatrical self-referencing and morally perspicacious Hamlet defines as ‘the stamp of one defect’ or ‘dram of evil’ and which A C Bradley defines as a tragic flaw, ‘the fatal imperfection or error, which is never absent’ (1906: 22). Once established, to consult and deploy the commonly appreciated commonplace resource, whether in actuality or collective memory; a resource of cultural, educational and religious memory, not to say entertainment, for so long seems highly probable.

Tracing the development of the tragic hero from the less individually focussed, sin-soaked environment of the earlier work to the psychological portrayal and personal moral conflict of individual sin found in *Lear*, *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare refines his manipulation of the Sins framework common to his audience. In this way the plays accord to some extent with Kristen Schmidt’s view that it took Shakespeare some time to fully realise ‘the potential of the inner conflict’ and develop ‘a sufficiently mature artistry to portray individuals with a semblance of completeness,’ (1987: 17). The Sins extensive lexicon and the internal struggle with its moral debate regarding the relative culpability of thought and action produced in these plays a kind of tormented moral psychology which, as it develops, begins to expose and question relative moral values of virtue and sin; how they are interpreted culturally and to what extent that interpretation reflects and conflicts with the interests of the society which professes it. To have the Sins with their known capacity to dress themselves as virtues is a dramatic gift to the representation of social and personal hypocrisy.

Shakespeare's inspired retention and use of the Vice-figure as an evil, devil-like inciter to sin effectively exposed and enhanced, as it developed, the moral vulnerability of the tragic hero by throwing into relief his palpable humanity. This concept too, moves from the identifiable figures of evil like Aaron and Iago to the more psychologically answerable and emotionally manipulative figures of wife and mother in Lady Macbeth and Volumnia. These personae repeatedly rehearse the hopelessness of the hero's situation, convincing him of the inevitability of his course of action and reinforcing what Dieter Mehl describes as the 'reality of wickedness and its power to corrupt the good, to make the world poorer and more hopeless' (1986:7).

Chapter Four

‘And well you know through your philosophy that a vice is never sufficiently understood except by knowing the virtue contrary to that same vice’ *The Donet Comedies and the Virtues*

4.1 The Contrary Virtues

In addition to his religious upbringing, whether closet Catholic or early Reformation Protestant, Shakespeare’s grammar school reading would have required the commonplacing of classical exempla which reflected virtues as well as sins. The virtues, or virtue, as a control or suppressor of vice or passion were acknowledged by all major philosophers and writers on sin from Seneca to Cassian. As discussed in Chapter One, the deadly sins emerged as a coherent list quite early, each with its well-developed lexicon or subset of sin; with some later conflation and variations in order and importance to reflect changes in attitudes and society. The seven virtues however, were initially created as a whole in parallel form to reflect the popular hamartiological lists of seven. Initially comprising the Christian ‘faith, hope, charity’ (1 Corinthians 13:13) and the classical or cardinal virtues of temperance, wisdom, justice and courage, the list was further refined by Prudentius in the fifth century *Psychomachia* to provide a group of seven which were recognisably opposed or parallel to, to the Seven Deadly Sins. It is in this poem, hugely popular in the middle ages, that the virtues were first portrayed as acting against the sins, or ‘contrary’ to them; the term Newhauser employs to describe a set of ‘remedial’ virtues which are practised for the purpose of curing, fighting, or acting as a protection against, the deadly sins (Newhauser 2008: 136). Prudentius’ list assigns a virtue to each sin according to its capacity to oppose or neutralise the sin. To do this he relaxes and sometimes crosses over the original list of virtues to produce a list which is more plausibly opposed to each deadly sin: humility (pride), patience (anger), kindness (envy), diligence (sloth), charity or mercy (greed), chastity (lust) and temperance (gluttony). The wealth of confessional literature of the middle ages made full use of the virtues as remedial or curative methods of penance. Chaucer’s Parson makes extensive use of the cultivation of contrary virtues in his analysis of the deadly sins. Just as each deadly sin developed a lexicon or sub-set of related sins, some of which

occurred in association with more than one sin, so individual virtues could also carry several virtuous qualities or interpretations. These lists, however, were not as extensive as the sins lexicon, as the Seven Virtues did not weave themselves into the cultural iconography and literary traditions with anything like the proliferation of the Sins.

As well as the rather different roles of virtue as either weapon or armour (the former implying active attack; the latter reactive protection), the relationship of virtue to sin is not as simple as it may initially seem. In the same way that a sin or a vice can be regarded as innate or acquired, so a virtue is seen sometimes as a natural characteristic, sometimes as a supernatural force. However the term 'virtue' can also be used, and is used by Shakespeare, as a synonym for 'quality' or 'skill' which affords it a more practical, almost morally neutral, meaning. The influence of Greek and Roman literature inevitably centred early modern reading on the classical concept of *virtus* with its focus on masculine honour, duty and strength. Added to this were the social and behavioural rules of the court, inherited from the chivalric code, and reflecting the subtle complexity of a diverse and growing society which adjusted its ideas of virtue in the same way that it lightened the severity and order of importance of certain sins in the light of social, economic and political priorities. So, less anchored in religious belief and the ritual of confession, this made 'virtue' arguably a considerably more flexible term than 'sin'.

Richard Newhauser, in exploring the idea of 'contrary virtues' suggests a morally controlling or curative function, using the word 'counterweight' and citing Cassian's view that 'virtues cannot live together with vices'(Cassian 1997: 201). He summarises:

Indeed, as one can see from Cassian's text, the most common way of describing the relationship between the vices and their corresponding virtues drew on the idea that these phenomena are to be imagined in general as contrary moral qualities [which] does not preclude the metaphorical presentation of the virtues as opposing personifications in battle or remedial curatives for the sins. (Newhauser 2008: 137).

The idea of a contrary virtue as a personification is to be found in the morality plays, notably *The Castle of Perseverance*, and the use of the psychomachic form in other literary works. It has the potential to develop in two ways: internally, as a struggle within an individual conscience or externally as a battle between two opposing forces in a struggle for dominance over events which effect an individual or moral culture. In this case, in dramatic form, the sin may be cast as an aspect of character likely to lead an individual to damnation which is foiled by the intervention of a contrary virtue embodied in the offices of others, saving the day and thus turning a potential tragedy into a comedy. This model of salvation, rather than one in which the protagonist struggles within to save himself might be one which is more attractive to Protestant notions of predestination.

The contrary or remedial virtue, however, should not be confused with the strong tradition of the false virtue assumed by a deadly sin for the purpose of disguise: these ‘virtues’ are what the Sins become when afforded social or cultural respectability or justification, for example the use of the ambiguous terms ‘honour’ and ‘ambition’ for pride; ‘thrift’ for greed, or ‘passion’ for lust. Newhauser, in his discussion on contrary virtues cites A S Byatt’s use of the term to describe her observation on false virtues that ‘all sins have their contrary for which they are sometimes mistaken’ (Byatt 1993: 25-26) and somewhat compounds the confusion when he later groups remedial and false virtues together under the term ‘contrary’ in his discussion on the use of contrary virtues in Middle English sermons:

Through a process of re-naming, any sinner could justify his/her conduct by claiming it was virtuous in conforming to certain social norms. The avaricious person could justify – to himself or herself as well as others – that what appeared as miserliness was actually a sign of thrift, the wrathful could say what seemed to be anger was actually a demonstration of righteous indignation at others’ peccadilloes, and so on. It had long been part of the self-definition of moral theologians both to uncover this ethical free space in the consciousness of penitents and to strip off the disguises used by vices to masquerade as virtues (2008: 160).

This is, of course, accurate and adds weight to the dramatic value with which his audience’s familiarity with deadly sins was enabled to appreciate Shakespeare’s morally complex work, but it is different from what would have been the equally

familiar concept of remedial or contrary virtues and their role in curing or preventing sin. What emerges from any study of the way in which the sins and the virtues operate together in either a religious or secular literary context, is a moral landscape which is far from the simplistic personification of the morality plays or the black and white struggle over the soul of the *Psychomachia*. In the world of renaissance morality sins pretend to virtue; virtues are often reviled, or certainly downgraded, and moral precedence shifts with the priorities of the day. The role of virtue in negating sin is also complex. There is often a difference in purpose, for example, in practising a virtue as a mortification or cure for a sin, to cultivating a virtue in order to pre-empt it. Evagrius, for example advocates the use of fasting and other forms of abstinence as a way to control present anger, whereas he advocates the development of love and patience to prevent it.

4.2 *The Taming of the Shrew*

Shakespeare's exploitation of the potential ambiguity in virtue is apparent even in work as early as *The Taming of the Shrew* when it addresses the management of the sin of anger as portrayed by Katherina. Superficially, what distinguishes comedies from tragedies is the capacity, in a comedy, for virtue to conquer or dilute a deadly sin and so pre-empt the damnation implied by a tragic ending. In comedies, potential deadly sins are often portrayed in a weakened form. Comedies often concentrate on the bodily sins of gluttony and lust, or focus on what may be seen by Shakespeare's audiences as more trivial applications of the sin that are often portrayed by the lower social orders or women. King Lear's anger, for example, is on a grander scale to the domestic anger of the archetypal shrew. In a weakened form, small scale or domestic sin becomes comedic rather than tragic in its scale and effect. Shakespeare's portrayal of sin often implies a hierarchy of moral responsibility not always to be found in the confessional literature it seems: the higher the social status, the higher the moral cliff edge.

In practice, however, no comedy is entirely curative: virtue never entirely negates sin, victory is never permanent and the moral environment portrayed in each play always implies the potential to fall from grace, however satisfactory the resolution. In a moral sense, even Shakespearean comedies rarely have an entirely happy

ending. The early, and morally uncomfortable, even for its time,³⁵ *Taming of the Shrew* is not without these ambiguities, although modern criticism has tended to focus on readings which seek to relieve or foreground the level of discomfiting and, some consider violent, sexism which the play portrays.³⁶

Katherina's identification as 'shrew' leaves no question as to her religious, cultural and literary pedigree. She can be traced in a direct line to Noah's wife. Ann Thompson's suggestion based on H R Trevor-Roper's work on witchcraft (1969: 58-61) that Katherina is associated with dark arts (2003: 7) seems unlikely. The several references in which Katherina is associated with the devil are far more likely to come out of the tradition of deadly sin and its association with devils and the devil's dam. The role of shrew is closely associated with the sin of anger: Shakespeare's own church in Stratford has a shrew-as-anger carving depicted on one of its misericords. The role is at once associated with the deadly sin of anger but has a history of comedic visual and literary presentation. Chaucer's Parson cites the chiding wife in his list of anger-related sins:

So fareth it by a chidinge wif: but she chide him in o place, she wol chide him in another. And therefore 'bette is a morsel of bread with joye than in an hous ful of delices with chidinge,' seyth Solomon. (Mann 2005: 740, 632-633)

Chaucer's Wife of Bath, however presents the more complex, comedic picture of the shrew, demonstrating the ambiguity behind the role.

Petruchio's tactics in curtailing Katherina's anger are strikingly in tune with the *Sins* literature, both religious and secular, on how to remedy or prevent the sin. Initially he suggests that he suppress Katherina's anger by showing his own towards

³⁵ Fletcher's theatrical 'reply' to *The Shrew, The Woman's prize, or The Tamer Tamed* (c1611), at the least suggests a need for balance in the traditional war of the sexes

³⁶ This is best portrayed in a review of modern performances of the play in which directors tend to interpret the play as either farce (Clifford Williams 1973), ambiguously sarcastic (particularly Katherina's final speech which is delivered, in the spirit of Mary Pickford's 1929 film performance, with a real or metaphorical wink) or, (as Charles Marowitz 1975 and Michael Bogdanov 1978) a deeply shocking revelation of physical, sexual and mental abuse.

her: fighting fire with fire or sinful anger with righteous anger. He boasts to Baptista of his own capacity for anger which could be seen as righteous or sinful:

Why that is nothing, for I tell you, father,
 I am as peremptory as she proud-minded,
 And where two raging fires meet together
 They do consume the thing that feeds their fury.
 (*The Shrew* II i 130-133)

However, he cannot help admire her spirited behaviour which very much reflects his own, and her treatment of Hortensio so amuses and attracts him he changes tactic. His boastful approach changes at the point of meeting and, it appears, falling in love with, Katherina, when his strategy becomes one of the opposing virtue of patience: he adopts the advice given by Chaucer's Parson:

And ye shul understonde that, looke, by any wey, whan any man shal chastise another, that he be war from chidinge or reprevinge, for trewely, but he be war, he may ful lightly quiken the fir of anger and of wratthe, which that he should quenche, and paraventure sleeth him which that he mighte chastise with benignitee. (Mann 2005:739, 628).³⁷

With salvation rather than punishment in mind, Petruchio attempts to remove any recognition of her behaviour: he opts to ignore her vice, preferring to see virtue where it is not:

Say that she rail, why, then I'll tell her plain
 She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.
 Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear
 As morning roses washed with dew.
 (*The Shrew* II i 170-173)

According to religious and secular authority, as Katherina's husband, Petruchio becomes responsible for her behaviour (Hattaway 1990: 109-110) and with his

³⁷ And you shall understand you, look, in any way, when any man shall chastise another, that he be careful about chiding or reproving. For truly, unless he is careful, he may very easily kindle the fire of anger and of wrath, which he should quench, and perhaps slay him whom he might otherwise chastise with graciousness.

'policy' of pretending that her public persona is 'curst' by his permission, he essentially removes the personal ownership of her sin, taking it to himself:

'Tis bargained twixt us twain, being alone,

That she shall still be curst in company.

(*The Shrew* II i 302-303)

The gesture, if intended for the right reasons, is almost Christ-like in its combination of cheek-turning and taking on the sin of others. However, the comedic frustration it causes Katherina is palpable and deliberate. Petruchio obfuscates his dominance of her behaviour by owning the guilt of her resistance to himself and others, thus constantly excusing her actions while at the same time depriving her of any free will. Katherina is at once his 'chattel' and his moral responsibility. Potentially morally ambiguous himself in his apparent self-confessed greed and anger, he nevertheless often asserts his religious authority over others, as Ann Thompson observes (Thompson 2003: 34). Petruchio either owns Katherina's behaviour or wilfully misinterprets it as her moral disapproval of others. When he forces her to abandon her own wedding celebration he not only transfers Katherina's disapproval to the wedding party, but also, as Ann Thompson suggests, implies in a mock-chivalric tone that they are breaking a commandment by coveting 'ownership of her' (Thompson 2003: 118 n219-21):

Be mad and merry or go hang yourselves.

But for my bonny Kate, she must with me.

Nay, look not big, nor stamp, nor stare, nor fret.

I will be master of what is mine own.

She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house,

My household-stuff, my field, my barn,

My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything,

And here she stands, touch her whoever dare.

I'll bring my action on the proudest he

That stops my way in Padua. -Grumio,

Draw forth thy weapon; we are beset with thieves.

Rescue thy mistress if thou be a man.

-Fear not, sweet wench, they shall not touch thee, Kate;

I'll buckler thee against a million.

(*The Shrew* III ii 219-232)

This statement, so provocative to modern feminist sensibilities, at the same time as being a macho declaration of ownership, is also a ritualistic vow with slight echoes of the *Book of Common Prayer*'s marriage ceremony. Michael Hattaway reads them as an adaptation of the tenth commandment (Hattaway 1990: 113) and contends that 'out of context', Petruchio's comment may have shocked even a contemporary audience. However, in part, he seems to be affirming that Katherina is his life: it parallels at a domestic level the Christian's relationship with Christ's ownership of the Christian soul over the devil. The connection between Christ, the head of state and the head of the family was one familiar to Shakespeare's audience. The concept of 'ownership' carried with it, at least from the male perspective, the burden of moral responsibility and while this was often exposed as an excuse for a man's physical and mental abuse of his wife, it is worth noting, as Ann Thompson does, that by the standards of the time, Petruchio does not behave so badly towards Katherina (Thompson 2003: 28). Indeed, she cites Ann Barton's assessment in her introduction to the play that he is 'almost a model of intelligence and humanity' (Barton 1997: 106), and observes that:

Pace stage tradition, Shakespeare's Petruchio does not carry a whip, and insofar as he deprives his wife of food and sleep, he imposes the same deprivations on himself. (Thompson 2003: 28).

In this Petruchio could be said to be following the guidance of Evagrius whose advice to the desert monks is to control the corruption of the spirit through the mortification of the flesh. In controlling anger, Evagrius counsels humility, abstinence, fasting, deprivation of sleep and withdrawal from the world (Gillette 2010: 35-36). The privation which Petruchio, ostensibly out of concern for Katherina, elects to impose on both of them includes sleep deprivation, withdrawal from society, starvation and impoverishment of dress. On the pride of dress Petruchio has much to say, giving emphasis, like Chaucer's Parson to the importance of what is 'withinne' over what is 'withoute':

To me she's married, not unto my clothes.
 Could I repair what she will wear in me
 As I can change these poor accoutrements,
 'Twere well for Kate and better for myself.
 (*The Shrew* III ii 111-113)

As the Parson addresses the sin of pride in ‘superfluittee’ of dress, a favourite theme of the confessionals, so Petruchio has a similar lesson for Katherina when she suffers from what she perceives to be the dishonour of old clothes:

For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich.
 And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
 So honor 'peareth in the meanest habit.
 What, is the jay more precious than the lark
 Because his feathers are more beautiful?

(*The Shrew* IV iii 168-172)

Petruchio's final strategy is to manipulate Katherina into the role of apologist or arbitrator of the fabricated bouts of anger he has, apparently on her behalf, against his servants and tradespeople in Act IV scene one. He manoeuvres her into the unusual role of compromiser and peacemaker and, in particular, holds a mirror to the effects of unreasonable anger on others.

The slapstick nature of the violent exchanges in the play is created in part by the known folklore and oral tradition (Brunvand 1966: 345-59) and reinforced by the use of the framework device of ‘the play within a play’, providing a certain moral distance and emphasising artifice over reality. The farcical tone is set by Katherina's physical attack on her music teacher and is picked up, mirrored and outdone by Petruchio, but not actually against Katherina. As observed by Margaret Kidnie there is always a sense of partnership or mirroring between Petruchio and Katherina with a great deal of wordplay and gameplay (Kidnie 2006: xlvi). As has been suggested, dramatic portrayals of Katherine as a physically, mentally and sexually abused victim have little validation in the text other than as a justification of the unpalatability of Katherina's final speech, although it would be fair to say that Linda Woodbridge does have a point in her observation that:

it does not speak well of a hero that the best thing to be said in his favour is
 that he neither beats his wife senseless nor wraps her in salted horsehide
 (Woodbridge 1984: 207)

The ambiguity of Petruchio's moral status has been critically exposed largely from the perspective of Katherina's final speech and in the context of either twentieth-century feminism or sixteenth-century sexism. His open affirmation of greed and anger couched in the exuberant bragging he goes in for cannot be entirely ignored

even within the distancing of the structure and the undoubted sexism of the age. However, his motivation has to be more complex than the guise of pure greed he acknowledges to his friends. Cecil C Seronsy's development of the 'Supposes' idea in which he provides a unifying theme of disguise (Seronsy 1963: 25-30) gives some credence to Petruchio's assumed vices. As Anne Thompson has correctly pointed out, by comparison with the mercenary attitudes and speeches of all other male characters, Petruchio does not seem obsessed with money (Thompson 2003:15). In the same way that he cures or 'kills' anger by assuming it, it could be said that he assumes greed also to cure it. In winning his bet he takes money away from men who have all three revelled in the mercenary aspects of marriage. In this sense he 'supposes' a vice to be a virtue. Ruth Nevo applies a similar reading but applying instead the more 'morality-free' terms of homoeopathy and psychotherapy to the retributive practices of being dosed by one's own medicine. (Nevo 1980: 48-9). A case can perhaps be made to see Petruchio as the virtue masquerading as a vice in the same way as the tragedies have Vice-figures masquerading as virtuous.

In so much as patience is the controlling virtue of anger, this is demonstrated by Petruchio in his lengthy 'taming' and Katherina in her increased tolerance of her morally authoritative spouse by the end of the play. The role of Petruchio as the 'clever and benign educator' (Thompson 2003:34) seems the most plausible reading in a play which, as Lisa Jardine maintains, has 'no locating tone' (Jardine 1983: 59), but it still does not entirely explain the level of hectoring orthodoxy contained in Katherina's final speech. Perhaps what Katherina has learned is that 'patience', 'her new-built virtue' can also have a satisfyingly close relationship with revenge. At the beginning of the play, Katherina's angry frustration is mainly caused by people whose own moral standing does not prove to be particularly high. In particular, this includes her own sister, whose hypocritical and dissembling model of obedience is finally exposed after achieving her objective in marriage. Once she is secure she has what she wants, she 'talks back', exposing the weakness in male assumptions that virtue in women was associated with silence, vice with articulateness (Jardine 1983:33). This is why Katherina is so incensed by Bianca's affected silence and vows 'Her silence flouts me, and I'll be revenged' (II i 29). Rather than capitulation, Katherina's speech is as her husband has taught her; an effective piece of retaliative moral superiority. In being taught not to get angry but to get even, Katherina has the

opportunity to make the most public, morally superior and withering attack on her sister whose affected modesty has angered her most, and her husband has hit the condescending suitors where it hurts them most, in their pockets.

The Taming of the Shrew demonstrates the value of patience over anger but not perhaps in the way it may be expected. The main achievement may be Katherina's obedience but the sub-text is the humiliation of her sister and father. In her final speech, Katherina is no more or less genuine in her moral standpoint than her husband has been in his frequent moral evaluations of others. The analogy which Katherine uses between a wife and her husband and a subject and his king leaves out, perhaps deliberately, the third example: that of the king to his God. By concentrating her example on faulted humanity perhaps Katherina is making a point about the precarious nature of moral authority, framed as she is by the antics of the Lord whose fun at the expense of Sly's gluttony is carried out against the audience's knowledge of his own sin of lust, albeit disguised as art, hanging on the wall of his bedroom.

4.3 *The Merchant of Venice*

Where else but in Renaissance Venice, 'the marketplace of the world' would the sin reside which vies with pride, in the writings of the Christian Fathers, as the parent of all sin (Newhauser 2000: 114-116)? The fascinating novelty of Venice's modern economy, free of autocratic government and reliant on a system of law to reconcile the various, often conflicting, beliefs and behaviours of its multi-ethnic inhabitants provides a backdrop against which to test and expose the increasingly flexible morality of Elizabethan secular England, in particular with regard to the complex economy and attitudes to the acquisition of wealth through trading and speculation. These issues were a matter of both religious and popular debate as evidenced by many sermons but also popular works such as Thomas Wilson's *A Discourse upon Usury* (1572) which stages a debate on and around the subject between interested parties representing the law, business, the church and philosophy.

The Merchant of Venice is a play about greed, its influence and its remedy. The deadly sin of avarice, although being of the world rather than the devil, has always

ranked highly among the Christian commentators. As Newhauser notes, Alcuin is particularly clear in his description:

Avarice is the excessive greed for acquiring, possessing and retaining wealth and is an insatiable plague.[...] Its progeny are acts of envy, thefts murders, lies, perjury, acts of rapine, acts of violence, restlessness, unjust judgements, contempt for the truth, forgetfulness of future bliss and hardheartedness. It exists contrary to mercy and alms for the poor and all pity for those who suffer. (Newhauser 2000: 118,119).

In Venice, all protagonists are infected by the sin which is the main driver of the city's success. Venice itself is a personification of greed and, like Portia's casket of gold, creates a façade of beauty around itself; 'hiding the grossness with fair ornament', and disguising the ugly essentials of its trade beneath a veneer of justice and order:

So may the outward shows be least themselves.
The world is still deceived with ornament.
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt
But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
Obscures the show of evil?
(*The Merchant* III ii 73-77)

Whilst Shylock the Jew performs the necessary role for Venetian society of scapegoat, attracting the anti-Semitic venom and moral disclaim of all around him, a closer reading reveals a world in which all aspects of the sin of greed pervades society. The obverse is the unworldly Belmont, where virtue is valued over wealth, law or even justice.

Mercy, the contrary virtue which intervenes in the potential tragedy of *The Merchant of Venice*, has a long remedial association with the sin of greed. Chaucer's Parson cites misericorde, or mercy, as a remedy for avarice:

Now shul ye understonde that the relevinge of avarice is misericorde and pitee, largely taken. And men mighten axe why that misericorde and pitee is relevinge of avarice. Certes, the avaricious man sheweth no pitee ne misericorde to the nedeful man, for he deliteth him in the kepinge of his

tresor, and nat in the rescowinge ne relevinge of his evene Cristene. (Mann 2005: 757, 804-805).³⁸

This same assessment is made by the preacher, Okerfoe, in *A Discourse upon Usury*: ‘Will you see how covetousnes is rooted in this man? No mercye at all, no charitie, no love’ (Wilson 1925: 346). Richard Newhauser summarises:

Avarice’s final opponent for the control of humanity’s heart and mind was the ethical nucleus of Christianity itself. The precepts of mercy and charity were countered point by point in the commands issued by sin in the form of Mammon (2000: 42).

Central to the theme of avarice is Shylock, the Jew. As a usurer and a Jew, he embodies the common medieval image for greed in which monetary practice and religion are brought together by the Old Testament tolerance of money-lending for profit outside the immediate circle of friends and family (Deuteronomy 23: 20). This anti-Jewish association of greed or miserliness with Judaism was endemic to early modern Christian culture, compounded by the frequent portrayal of Judas as the Jew betraying Christ for thirty pieces of silver. In the argument for the primacy of cupidity among the deadly sins, the exemplum of Judas is frequently cited. In the bourgeoning economies of the early modern world the love of money appears to be more relevant than pride as the root of all evil. The deployment in *The Merchant of Venice* of the cultural trope of the Jewish usurer as the central Vice-figure or devil embodying the struggle between greed and mercy seems to give credibility to Harold Bloom’s assertion that:

One would have to be blind, deaf and dumb not to recognise that Shakespeare’s grand, equivocal comedy *The Merchant of Venice* is nevertheless a profoundly anti-Semitic work. (Bloom 1998: 171).

However, when presented with such an obvious template it immediately begs the question of the Jew’s function: to highlight virtue or to measure vice? Whilst there is

³⁸ Now shall you understand that the remedy for Avarice is mercy and pity broadly understood. And men might ask why mercy and pity is the remedy for Avarice. [805] Certainly, the avaricious man shows no pity nor mercy to the needy man, for he delights himself in the keeping of his treasure, and not in the rescuing nor relieving of his fellow Christians.

undoubtedly anti-Semitism in the play, this does not necessarily make the play anti-Semitic.

The common association of usury and miserliness depicts the usurer as one whose fault is centred in avarice, as illustrated by Gregory of Nyssa's (c335-394) *Contra Usurarios Oratio* example of a moneylender from a city he leaves unnamed, and quoted by Newhauser:

Constrained by the passion, he was also miserly with his own expenditures [...] not setting the table with enough, never changing his clothes except out of necessity, not granting his children the bare minimum for carrying on life. (Newhauser 2000: 31).

The depiction of Shylock as a skinflint who starves his servant and restricts his child conforms to the common stereotype of 'the old miser', greed being traditionally a sin associated with old age. His status as a usurer and a Jew enables him to be depicted according to common Christian conception based on Romans 2: 1-11, as one who is governed by the laws of the Old Testament rather than the New Testament creed of mercy and forgiveness. Gilles Monsarrat's argument that Shylock is a bad Jew because he too, is expected to show mercy is persuasive but only in terms of a more enlightened reading of the play (2005: 6). However, his case that Shylock's decisions are all based on avarice rather than religion or ethics (2005: 8) has some merit when seen, as later discussed, in terms of concatenation from greed to anger and then envy. However much a case is made for Shylock's individualism, it does not succeed in removing the case that both he and most importantly, his detractors choose to see him not only as a Jew but as 'the Jew'. His place in Venice as the centre of trade seems on the face of it, secure: he functions as a necessary cog in the sometimes unsavoury, concealed mechanism by which the city makes its wealth. He is a necessary evil or, in terms of the Christian merchants who benefit from his trade, a convenient scapegoat.

However, as can be seen from *A Discourse upon Usury* the bundling together of usurer and Jew is somewhat of an anachronism. In a country such as England where usurers were, in the main, Christians, drawing on the old 'devil Jew' stereotype could bolster up the association or highlight its outworn reference. For example, the Preacher in Wilson's *A Discourse upon Usury* (1572) makes it clear that, in England

at least, the Christians have taken on the sin and enlarged it. Whilst acknowledging that it is the practice of usury which makes Jews so disliked, he uses the Jew as his template and suggests that by comparison, the Jews were much fairer than the Christians who have supplanted them in England:

What is the matter that Iewes are so universally hated wheresoever thy come? For soothe usurie is one of the chief causes, for they robbe all men that deale with them, and undoe them in the ende. And for thys cause they were hated in England, and so banished worthelye with whom I woulde wyshe all these Englishmen were sent that lende their money or their goods whatsoever for gayne, for I take them to be no better than Iewes. Nay, shall I saye: they are worse than Iewes. For go wither you wil throughout Christendom, and deale with them, and you shall have under tenne in the hundredth, yea sometimes for sixe at their handes, whereas englishe usurers exceed all goddes mercye, and will take they care not howe muche, wythout respecte had to the partye that borroweth, what losse, daunger, hinderaunce soever the borrower susteyneth. (Wilson 1925: 232).

In terms of the progression or advancement of his own sin, Shylock begins the play as the stereotypical usurer and miser. However once he becomes so angered at his daughter's elopement and the theft of his wealth, his desire for revenge hardens his heart and becomes envious, murderous hatred, and his focus for revenge is, as he is a representative Jew, the representative Christian, Antonio. The referencing to the appropriate sin-related animals is in the text: he is initially described as a dog, often associated with greed but eventually becomes a 'wolf' the animal embodiment of the hating sin of envy for whom nothing will suffice but destruction and death. Traditionally envy is the only sin from which the sinner does not benefit: it is grounded in a desire to destroy anything which it doesn't have. Envy has no reason and therefore cannot explain itself. As in the case of Iago, Shylock is reduced to, in his case an ironically verbose, sullen silence:

You'll ask me why I'll rather choose to have
 A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
 Three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that,
 But say it is my humor. Is it answered?
 What if my house be troubled with a rat

And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats
 To have it baned? What, are you answered yet?
 Some men there are love not a gaping pig;
 Some that are mad if they behold a cat;
 And others, when the bagpipe sings i' th'nose,
 Cannot contain their urine; for affection,
 Masters of passion, sways it to the mood
 Of what it likes or loathes. Now for your answer:
 As there is no firm reason to be rendered
 Why he cannot abide a gaping pig,
 Why he a harmless necessary cat,
 Why he a woollen bagpipe, but of force
 Must yield to such inevitable shame
 As to offend, himself being offended;
 So I can give no reason, nor I will not,
 More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing
 I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
 A losing suit against him. Are you answered?
 (*The Merchant IV i 40-62*)

Although Shylock may be expected to be presented as the traditional face of avarice, greed in Venice is endemic. The language of Venice is peppered with evaluation made ambiguous by its constant reference to wealth, worth and value. It is clear the acquisition of wealth has taken over from religion, as testified by the idolatrous remarks of Salerio to Antonio:

Should I go to church
 And see the holy edifice of stone
 And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks
 Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,
 Would scatter all her spices on the stream,
 (*The Merchant I i 29-33*)

The theft of Jessica and Jessica's theft; the crimes which elevate Shylock's sin from greed to anger are a jarring indicator of the normalisation of the vice. Lorenzo jokes about it, Jessica plans it. Even Lancelot Giobbe's moral dilemma at leaving Shylock

is greater than that of Jessica who, despite her acknowledged ‘heinous sin’ of dishonouring her father, chooses to compound that sin with theft. She is more ashamed of appearing in boy’s clothing:

Here - catch this casket. It is worth the pains.

I’m glad ’tis night - you do not look on me-

For I am much ashamed of my exchange.

(The Merchant II vi 34-36)

Lorenzo’s ironical misplaced assessment of constancy ‘And true she is, as she has proved herself’, is the constancy of one who, not content with what she has already stolen, is prepared to delay her escape for greed:

I will make fast the doors, and gild myself

With some more ducats,

(The Merchant II vi 50-51)

Lorenzo’s moral confusion is reflected in his admiration of Jessica’s plan and the ambiguous reasoning he applies to Shylock’s possible salvation due to either his connection to his virtuous daughter, or out of pity for his treatment by her:

She hath directed

How I shall take her from her father’s house,

What gold and jewels she is furnished with,

What page’s suit she hath in readiness.

If e’er the Jew her father comes to heaven,

It will be for his gentle daughter’s sake;

(The Merchant II iv 28-33)

In Venice there are other forms of avarice hiding behind the veneer of virtuous distaste for Shylock’s trade. Wilson’s Preacher considers the borrower, or spender, to be, in many cases, as culpable as the lender:

Albeit ther be that are of a contrary mynd, and would have the receiver to be counted an offender, aswel as the lender; and yet not every receivor neither, but suche as borow to spend wantonly and unthriftely and induce them to lend for gayne that else have not used so to do, [...] and they themselves doe sinne that doe thus borowe, to serve their lust and covetouse desyre, (Wilson 1925: 337).

Opposite in behaviour to the miser, but still classified in terms of greed, is one whose preference is to waste money in excess and on himself. Chaucer's Parson, citing Augustine, defines this greed or 'likerousnesse' as a love of wealth and acquisition which sits as comfortably with one whose profligacy betrays a similar love of wealth. Newhauser cites Augustine as picturing the two sides linked together under the common title of avarice:

For often miserliness cloaks itself under the name of frugality and on the other hand extravagance hides itself under the title of largesse. (Newhauser 2000: 104).

David N Beauregard sees the two aspects of the vice in terms of the Aristotelian ethics of extremes with Shylock representing acquisitive greed and Bassanio as spendthrift prodigality, and Antonio as the virtue of liberality, the golden mean, between the two (Beauregard 1995: 88). Bassanio is a self-confessed prodigal whose willingness to own his own fault of being 'something too prodigal' betrays arrogance rather than repentance, a form of pride in his largesse towards his own wealth and that of others.

'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have disabled mine estate
By something showing a more swelling port
Than my faint means would grant continuance.

(The Merchant I i 122-125)

He acknowledges freely the debt he owes to Antonio and the little care he has taken of it:

I owe you much, and, like a willful youth
That which I owe is lost;

(The Merchant I i 146-147)

Then, using a metaphor which celebrates, rather than regrets, his hazarding ways, he requests more money from Antonio:

but if you please

To shoot another arrow that self way
Which you did shoot the first,

(The Merchant I i 147-149)

His nonchalance towards his debt is also reflected in his timely confession to Portia in which he wraps his former untruths in a semblance of truth. He seems able to hold to his assertion of truth while confessing to deception:

Gentle lady,
 When I did first impart my love to you,
 I freely told you all the wealth I had
 Ran in my veins - I was a gentleman-
 And then I told you true. And yet, dear lady,
 Rating myself at nothing, you shall see
 How much I was a braggart.

(The Merchant III ii 250-256)

For Bassanio, Portia is, foremost, ‘a lady, richly left’ which contrasts with Antonio’s ‘fair Portia’ reflecting his anxiety of competition with her for Bassanio. Bassanio’s capacity to give away that which he does not own even extends to the offer of his wife’s life and her ring. This ‘fool-largesse’ as Chaucer’s Parson names it, is an aspect of vainglory: the prodigal man loses his spiritual wealth in giving away his material wealth and is therefore also damned:

And forasmuchel as they yeven theras they sholde nat yeven, to hem
 aperteneth thilke malisoun that Christ shal yeven at the day of dome to him
 that shullen be dampned. (Mann 2005: 757, 817).³⁹

Even the casket test is no absolute indication that Bassanio has learned the true value of Portia, given how carefully coached he is by the song which accompanies his choice. The evaluation he voices which chimes ironically with his own financially speculative actions could accurately describe his profligacy masquerading as largesse:

There is no vice so simple but assumes
 Some mark of virtue on his outward parts.

(The Merchant III ii 81-82)

³⁹ And forasmuch as they give where they should not give, to them belongs that curse that Christ shall give at the day of doom to them that shall be damned.

Greed has its influence on everyone in Venice and, despite his apparent role as the golden mean, Antonio is no exception. Whether his relationship with Bassanio is homoerotic or not, it is clear that he sets a high worldly and spiritual worth on his friendship. Solanio believes 'he only loves the world for him'. It seems that Bassanio, for Antonio, represents his world and his god, and in losing him, he stands to lose both. His 'open purse' policy towards Bassanio seems entirely passive, apparently based on Christian ethics of lending but inevitably looking like a form of emotional bribery. It is made clear from the onset of the play that Antonio is suffering from the characteristic despair of *acedia*, or sloth. His aggressive opposition to Shylock seems to be the only evidence of purposeful action in his life, and it smacks somewhat of religious scape-goating, as well as linking all three vices of greed, anger and *acedia* in a traditional pattern.

The nice exchange between Shylock and Antonio regarding the distinction between 'thrift' and 'interest' has the flavour and currency of Wilson's debate between merchant, lawyer and preacher. Antonio sees Shylock's argument as the Devil citing scripture for his own ends, but at the same time Shylock exposes the hypocrisy of Antonio's wish to be fed from the hand he bites. Whilst his violent and provocative rage towards Shylock could be interpreted as 'righteous anger', it does contain almost a sense of self-disgust to it. In his distancing of himself from the world of greed of which he is a major part, he reveals his own despair at being part of it. He is afraid of Shylock's proffered friendship, as to maintain enmity is to maintain distance:

If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friends, for when did friendship take
A breed for barren metal of his friend?
But lend it rather to thine enemy,
Who, if he break, thou mayst with better face
Exact the penalty.

(The Merchant I iii 125-129)

It suits Antonio's suicidal nature to collude with Shylock in the proposed condition as, contrary to a 'merry sport', he will have been aware of precedent such as that quoted by the Doctour in Wilson's 1572 discussion:

Septimus Florens reporteth if one man were a debtour to many, hys body was geeven unto them, to bee equally cut in peces, and whereas hee had not to paye in his purse, hys quartered body should paye for all. (Wilson 1925: 340).

Antonio's materialistic and somewhat empty life is, in fact, a picture of the very idleness of which Wilson's preacher accuses the usurer. The risk, or 'venture' which is crucial in determining the difference between an honest merchant and a usurer: 'a thing not in his power to bring to pass' has, by his own admission, been removed by the size of his fortune and the spread of his risk. Whilst Wilson in 1572 is prepared to portray the merchant as 'honest' in contrast to the usurer, by 1603, King James is expressing a somewhat different view of the merchant class:

The Merchants thinke the whole common-weale ordained for making them up; & accounting it their lawfull gaine and trade, to enrich themselves upon the losse of all the rest of the people, they transporte from us things necessary; bringing backe some-times unnecessary things, and at other times nothing at all. They buy for us the worst wares, & sell them at the dearest prices: and albeit the victuals fall or rise of their prices, according to the aboundance or skantnesse therof: yet the prices of their wares ever rise but never fall: being as constant in that their evill custome, as if it were a settled lawe for them (*Basilikon Doron*, Waldegrave 1603, Craigie 1944: 89,91).

Antonio's lack of concern for his investment (and the lives doubtless being risked for it) indicates the level of his personal despair. Whether his despair, or 'want-wit' is, as the unreliably judgemental Graziano sees it, self-indulgent, 'a wilful stillness' or, by his own quasi-religious definition, his worldly trial, it seems to be self-imposed:

I hold the world but as the world, Graziano-
A stage where every man must play a part
And mine a sad one.

(*The Merchant I i 77-79*)

The sacrificial willingness to provide 'my purse, my person, my extremest means' with which Antonio responds to Bassanio's request emphasises Antonio's self-sacrificing, suicidal stance: his fatalism is more a statement of his loss of faith in redemption than his saintliness or 'Christ-like' sacrifice (Drakakis 2010: 341 n113).

Despite his claim to be pitting his patience against Shylock's fury, His wish to die is putting himself beyond God's mercy:

I am a tainted wether of the flock,
Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me.

(The Merchant IV i 114-116)

Within the Sins literature it is not difficult to find a link between greed and sadness.

As cited by Newhauser (2000: 55), Evagrius confirms:

The houses of the avaricious will be
filled with the beasts of wrath,
and the birds of sadness will rest in them. *(Reflections: 18)*.

This would apply equally to Shylock and Antonio, however Antonio conforms to the picture presented by Gregory the Great of the man who acquires wealth in order to plug the gap left by the loss of joy:

Sadness leads to avarice, since when the disturbed heart has lost the benefit of joy within itself, it seeks to find consolation without; and it desires to get possession of external goods the more it has no happiness to which it might return internally. *(Moralia in Job 31.45.89)*.

Shylock's response to the theft of his daughter and ducats and his subsequent torment at the hands of Lorenzo's friends hardens his anger and justifies his desire for public revenge on the city and the man who represents its hypocrisy. The concatenation of greed through anger to envy and murder is a predictable one. The dog becomes a wolf and does not lose his ability to expose the hypocritical heart of the city of greed. Whether he is the devil or not his arguments do suggest more than a passing familiarity with the deadly sins. For example, the argument he uses to justify his bond is to expose the Duke's own dubious right of ownership over human beings:

You have among you many a purchased slave
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules
You use in abject and in slavish parts
Because you bought them.

(The Merchant IV i 90-93)

Chaucer's Parson also dwells at length on the mis-use of slaves as one of his examples of avarice, concluding:

forasmuche as a cherl hath no temporel thinge that it ne is his lordes, as they seyn. But certes, thise lordships doon wrong that bireven hire bonde-folk thinges that they nevere yave hem. (Mann 2005: 751, 753-754).⁴⁰

Shylock argues that it is not his status as 'devil' which enables him to expose Christian hypocrisy, but his fellow humanity. Sin, and in particular, anger and greed, he is at pains to demonstrate, is not just universal, it is infectious:

If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die, and if you wrong us shall we not revenge? [...]. Revenge! If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge! The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

(*The Merchant* III i 53-60)

There is therefore a universality summed up by the outsider, Portia, in her question, 'Which the merchant here, and which the Jew?' In contrast to Antonio's warped solution of self-destruction masquerading as self-sacrifice, Portia recognises the need to look to herself. Her constant self-regulation and checks on her virtue indicate her understanding that to do good she must be good:

It is a good divine that follows his own instructions. I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done than to be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching.

(*The Merchant* I ii 13-15)

Rebecca Krug's view that Portia is mercy personified (Krug 2009: 247) is based on a reference to the medieval sources of the tale of 'The Daughters of God'. Portia is however, the representative of mercy in the city whose justice system is devised to regulate the competing nature of greed rather than eradicate it and as Krug also points out, the ambiguity implied in the *Merchant's* title 'is a good indication of the vexed relationship between mercantilism and morality on which the narrative

⁴⁰ forasmuch as a churl has no temporal thing but rather it is his lord's, as they say. But certainly, these lordships do wrong that take from their bond-folk things that they never gave them.

depends,' (Krug 2009: 252). Portia's speech on the nature of mercy, the opposing virtue to greed is aimed, not only at Shylock but at the whole of Venetian society and in particular, those responsible for ruling it:

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
 The thronèd monarch better than his crown.
 His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
 The attribute to awe and majesty
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings.
 But mercy is above this scepterèd sway;
 It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings;
 It is an attribute to God himself,
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's
 When mercy seasons justice.

(*The Merchant IV i 186-195*)

Drakakis affirms that the 'competing claims of justice and mercy were a familiar topic of debate in the Renaissance' (2010: 347 n180) and this is borne out in Wilson's debate between Lawyer and Preacher in *A Discourse Upon Usury*. Some readings of the play have ascribed this to the distinction between Old Testament and New Testament philosophy, but the Renaissance debate seems rather to distinguish between secular law and heavenly virtue as Quentin Skinner has recently confirmed (Skinner 2014: 214-215). Rebecca Krug notes of the source materials that all stories from the *Gesta Romanorum* are about mercy and concludes:

Shylock's punishment in the play – the loss of his daughter, his money and his religion – [...] is a reminder that he has not, as Portia has, worked to help others [...]. Shylock demonstrates the problem with ideas of law and ownership that ignore human dimension in society: without mercy, which entails recognition of value in excess of market value or justice, any kind of inequality is justifiable (Krug 2009: 260).

Portia offers Shylock mercy for mercy, but in the end is forced to punish 'justly'. Whether this exposes a divide between the behaviours of Christianity and Judaism is questionable. On the sidelines throughout, the verbose and self-appointed 'moral' commentator, Graziano, echoes Shylock's intransigence and lack of forgiveness word for word and in a mocking homage to Judas, presents the option of suicide in a

disturbing, unconscious reference to Antonio's acedia: 'A halter gratis, nothing else, for God's sake!' (IV i 374).

Portia ends the trial having achieved for mercy a partial victory over greed, but she still has not addressed the issue of her husband's profligacy. Bassanio has already demonstrated that his disposition to 'spend' what is not his own by offering her life to save Antonio and the ring test and subsequent 'teasing' is evidence of her continued moral teaching. In removing to Belmont, greed is arguably left behind, but the group she 'saves' exposes the fragility of her victory and the potential danger in allowing them into her virtuous world. The lovers, Lorenzo and Jessica, who have been left in charge can find no better love stories to invoke their own than a collection of images suggesting unrequited or thwarted desire, what Catherine Belsey describes as 'Venice super-imposed on Belmont' (1992: 140-141). Antonio whose questionable transposition of God for Bassanio, having been deprived of the opportunity to sacrifice his life, promptly offers to sacrifice his soul:

I once did lend my body for his wealth,
Which but for him that had your husband's ring
Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will never more break faith advisedly.

(The Merchant V i 249-253)

Antonio, finally, is shown the same small mercy as Shylock – the means to conduct his living and so live. It is ironic then, that it is Portia who, although she has saved him but has also deprived him, presents him with the consolation prize to fill the gap:

Sweet lady, you have given me life and living,
For here I read for certain that my ships
Are safely come to road.

(The Merchant V i 286-288)

Disturbingly, the final words of the play are left to the unreconstructed Graziano and his anxious care over his latest possession. Virtue, it appears, needs to be ever-watchful, because sin is ever-present.

4.4 *Twelfth Night*

Twelfth Night begins with two people sharing the same obsessive, self-absorbing sins of vanity and sloth. Orsino and Olivia are locked together in complementary worlds of self-indulgent inactivity, having both chosen to focus their attention ostensibly on unattainable objects of love, but in a sense, subverting their idolatry towards themselves. Orsino casts himself as the classic Petrarchan lover, poetically tormented by unattainable love:

Oh, when mine eyes did see Olivia first,
 Methought she purged the air of pestilence.
 That instant was I turned into a hart,
 And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
 E'er since pursue me.

(*Twelfth Night* I i 18-22)

However, as Penny Gay suggests (2003: 20), Orsino's early speeches are more focused on his own image as a lover than that of Olivia:

There is no woman's sides
 Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
 As love doth give my heart.

(*Twelfth Night* II iv 90-92)

Olivia's protracted mourning for her brother incorporating a self-imposed seclusion and a somewhat dramatic, particularly given it is a brother and not a husband, face covering is tacitly approved by Orsino: its static pose acts as a prop to his poetic notion of exclusion and unattainability:

Oh, she that hath a heart of that fine frame
 To pay a debt of love but to a brother,
 How will she love, when the rich golden shaft
 Hath killed the flock of all affections else
 That live in her;

(*Twelfth Night* I i 32-36)

His use of emissaries emphasises further what appears to be his desire to maintain his love for Olivia as a perfect, or mysterious, object.

Olivia's self-imposed but very public retirement smacks of dramatic self-indulgence and, given the moral state of her household, there is an abdication of duty which also hints at sloth. Feste, in his role of sententious observer of moral foolishness, a role which prefigures his guise as Sir Topas the curate, highlights what would by the church have been considered the sinfulness of an inappropriately lengthy and extreme mourning (Katherine Goodland 2005: 102-3):

Feste: Good madonna, why mourn'st thou?

Olivia: Good fool, for my brother's death.

Feste: I think his soul is in hell, madonna.

Olivia: I know his soul is in heaven, fool.

Feste: The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven.

(Twelfth Night I v 59-64)

A B Taylor goes further to suggest that:

Although she continues to display all the external trappings, Olivia's grief has now run its course, and by the time this play opens, she is simply a bored young woman with time on her hands. (Taylor 1997: 81).

It is certainly true that, contrary to the enduring character of Viola, Olivia displays a level of indulgent and restless clock-watching that sits uneasily with her initially declared devotion to her brother's memory and chimes with the restless obsession with time associated with sloth. Among the frequent references to time in the play, hers have a sense of urgency, 'The clock upbraids me with the waste of time,' (III i 122), whereas Viola demonstrates not so much the sense of urgency that Lisa Marciano ascribes to her (2009: 19) as a strong sense of the inevitability of time passing.

Into this mutually supported Illyrian malaise of self-absorption which A B Taylor has characterised as a form of collective narcissism (1997: 81-90), arrives a very different, active kind of endurance in the person of Viola, an embodiment of the virtue, patience. The respective responses of the two women to a brother's death best contrast the sinful indulgent acedia of Olivia with the virtuous, patient, combination of acceptance and hope of Viola. This comedy, as Kier Elam has observed, is much pre-occupied with the thought of death as a shadow over proceedings (Elam 2008:

56-57), provoking those who are impatient to act; those who are patient to endure. As Lisa Marciano maintains, characters repeatedly come face to face with mortality and ‘learn that one must, therefore, live well and teach others wisdom accordingly,’ (2009: 5). Olivia chooses to expend her grief in the face of God, concentrating on herself and indulging her emotions. Viola demonstrates the classic demeanour of patience, which she later describes as ‘smiling at grief’; that of showing empathy and hope together. Her brother may be alive, she reasons, because she has survived against all odds, and if he hasn’t, he is in heaven:

Viola: And what should I do in Illyria?
 My brother, he is in Elysium.
 Perchance he is not drowned. What think you sailors?

Captain: It is perchance that you yourself were saved.

Viola: Oh my poor brother! And so perchance may he be.

(*Twelfth Night* I ii 3-7)

Patience’s capacity to endure and hope can be misinterpreted, as Penny Gay (2003: 16) misinterprets it, as passivity. Viola is the precursor of the several versions of patience in the late plays (see Chapter 6) representing herself as ‘patience on a monument’, which Kier Elam references to the emblem of patience in Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* (1593), an iconographic dictionary published in Italy, which depicts patience seated on a rock with a yoke across her shoulders and thorns at her feet. Viola has a similar reliance on providence and so sees passing time as an active rather than passive agent, ‘What else may hap, to time I will commit,’ (I ii 59), which will ultimately resolve all, ‘O, time thou must untangle this, not I,’ (II ii 39). She exposes to Olivia and Orsino the stagnation of their lives by holding a mirror up to them (Taylor 1997: 88). Viola is able to carry on her advocacy with Olivia on behalf of Orsino both because she loves him and despite loving him because of her capacity to endure. She has the virtue’s capacity to recognise sin, as she does in Olivia ‘I see what you are; you are too proud’: an inadvertent provocation which perhaps encourages Olivia to pursue her as Orsino’s servant. Viola is also notable for possessing a virtue’s eloquence. She is not *laissez-faire*, nor is she interventionist: she is persistently hopeful and loyal:

Make me a willow cabin at your gate
 And call upon my soul within the house;
 Write loyal cantons of contemnèd love

And sing them loud even in the dead of night;
 Halloo your name to the reverberate hills
 And make the babbling gossip of the air
 Cry out, 'Olivia!' Oh, you should not rest
 Between the elements of air and earth
 But you should pity me.

(Twelfth Night I v 250-258)

By contrast, Olivia's behaviour once she has fallen for Cesario is exactly opposite to the fatalism which she counsels herself to follow by letting it be:

Fate, show thy force. Ourselves we do not owe.
 What is decreed must be, and be this so.

(Twelfth Night I v 292-293)

She immediately engages in 'tempting fate' by means of her ploy in sending Malvolio after Viola with the ring.

Viola's arrival in Illyria shakes Olivia and Orsino out of their stagnant lives and forces them into action, even if that action is somewhat futile. Their real, rather than romantically self-invented, selves are exposed: Olivia re-joins the living with her uncomfortable one-sided passion for Cesario which teaches her how she has treated Orsino, and Orsino reveals a pre-disposition towards jealous anger and a history of war, thus proving himself an ideal life project for the remedially patient Viola. This finally manifests itself in Act Five when his anger towards Olivia, spiked by his own pride and envy 'a savage jealousy/ That sometime savours nobly' (V i 112-113), leads him to revenge. He threatens to kill Viola, an object of love to both him and Olivia, in a spiteful act of self-harm:

But this your minion, whom I know you love
 And whom, by heaven I swear, I tender dearly,
 Him I will tear out of that cruel eye
 Where he sits crownèd in his master's spite.
 Come, boy, with me. My thoughts are ripe in mischief.
 I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love
 To spite a raven's heart within a dove.

(Twelfth Night V i 118-124)

The peak of anger in which he ironically reveals his love for Viola also provokes her to declare her love for him and to demonstrate the power of her contrary virtue of patience to his sin of anger:

And I most jocund, apt, and willingly
To do you rest a thousand deaths would die.

(Twelfth Night V i 125-126)

Olivia's household, morally abandoned due to Olivia's avoidance of duty, or sloth, and characterised by Brown as having been occupied by 'doorkeeper Vices' in the persons of the glutton Toby Belch, the angry drunkard Andrew Aguecheek and the puritanically proud Malvolio, is reflected by the use of prose which conveys the dominant social tone (Brown 2007: 97) and is only changed when Viola, also posing as a servant, imports her eloquent verse to it. The social confusion which embodies Olivia's household is matched by a similar social mismatch of sins. The whole household portrays some interesting reversals of sin and class. Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek together act out a morality based on the interrelationship between gluttony and greed, arguably inappropriate to their social order. The comedic focus for the plot hangs upon the inappropriate association of 'higher orders' with 'lower orders' sin. The concatenation starts with drunkenness, leading to Aguecheek's perpetual anger and Belch's fraudulent exploitation of Aguecheek's pretensions towards Olivia. Brown argues that it is Olivia's neglect which has brought this about: she also notes that, in pursuing Viola in the character of the servant Caesario, she is herself displaying social connections which, because they echo the social and sexual desires of Malvolio only in reverse social order, add to the social and moral confusion.

The comic reversal in which Malvolio and to a greater extent, Maria, assume control of Olivia's household throws up an interesting use of sin for the purpose of social comment. While the comedic elements of Shakespeare's histories and tragedies associated lower orders with lower-order sins of the world and the flesh, the sins associated with Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, with their long-term association with lower orders emphasise their social displacement. The confessionals often associate drunken or gluttonous behaviour with the lower orders; the Bosch illustration of bodily and worldly sins, for example, tends to depict them

as lower class. In *Twelfth Night* these two fallen members of the aristocracy do not really suffer for their sins, although Sir Toby is required to marry 'beneath' him, in status if not in intelligence, providing Maria with a permanent role as mistress of events. Malvolio, however, as the member of the lower orders who pretends to higher status, both in his aspiration and in his sin of pride, 'Oh, you are sick of self-love, Malvolio,' (I v 82), suffers greatly for this breach of 'sin etiquette'. Malvolio's own hubris, which gulls him into believing the fake letter, is comically balanced against the gluttony and low fracas which he holds in such contempt. Such a shake-up of status, reflected in the nature of their socially inappropriate sins, is indicative of the level of misrule in Olivia's house. John Hollander confirms:

The Action of *Twelfth Night* is indeed that of a Revels, a suspension of mundane affairs during a brief epoch in a temporary world of indulgence, a land full of food, drink, love, play, disguise and music. (Hollander 1959: 222).

Brown's view that Orsino and Olivia, too, are afflicted by a form of metaphorical gluttony which she associates with their self-indulgence is less convincing (Brown 2007: 99), although in terms of concatenation, it can be associated with sloth and luxuriousness which certainly could be said to describe their respective moods initially and enable the lack of moral propriety in Olivia's household.

The trick played on Malvolio, a purely Shakespearean addition to the source material (Gay 2003: 9) exploits what is seen to be his puritan pretention which leads him to ascribe the hand of God to his own thoughts, actions and, of course, lust. His inverse logic which was perceived to be the flaw in puritan, particularly Calvinist, ideas of predestination is to assume that because he feels superior then God intends him to be so. Malvolio's imaginative vainglory is peculiarly suited to his religion. In the same way he believes he is 'chosen' and therefore is, so he believes, destined for higher social position and is therefore unquestioning when he finds the fake letter from Olivia. In the same way that he is able to read his election, he reads his romantic preferment:

'I may command where I adore.' Why, she may command me. I serve her, she is my lady. Why, this is evident to any formal capacity.

(*Twelfth Night* II v 104-106)

No one recognises Malvolio's pride better than Maria who, as a kind of female Lord of Misrule, masterminds the process of his humiliation as revenge for his high-handed treatment of her:

The best persuaded of himself - so crammed, as he thinks, with excellencies - that is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him. And on that vice in him will my revenge find notable cause to work.

(*Twelfth Night* II iii 137-141)

One of Malvolio's favourite words 'notorious' conveys his comic sense of dramatic, almost cosmic, importance and of being singled out for greatness. His willingness to read his own wishes in 'signs' like the meaningless M.O.A.I reflects the puritan habit of seeking evidence of justification, a behaviour described by Alexandra Walsham as 'suspiciously self-confirming and potentially egotistical':

Nowhere is the puritan propensity for detecting the finger of God in the most mundane events more vividly exhibited than in their journals, diaries, letters, autobiographies and private memorabilia [...]. Saturated with references to the special blessings and judgements which the lord had graciously bestowed upon the writer such texts record the inner perennial struggle of the godly for the assurance of their elect status on paper.

(Walsham 1999: 20).

The desire for revenge pervades *Twelfth Night's* sub-plot. Feste has a traditional fool's association with madness, which 'he does but read', and anger. His moral observations fit him for his pretended role as curate and Malvolio's assessment of him as a 'barren rascal' critiques not only him but also his brand of religion. Feste wanders between the two houses, intent on provocation and also personal revenge against Malvolio, which he achieves although he sententiously cloaks it as providential rather than devised: 'And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges' (*Twelfth Night* V i 363).

Malvolio's ignominious punishment involves a level of personal humiliation which is not unlike that of Falstaff in *2 Henry IV*. It seems that while the like of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew get away with the relatively mild punishment of staying permanently in the company of the lower orders through marriage and by association with sins of the flesh, Malvolio, who like Falstaff expects promotion beyond his

station, must be taught a much crueller lesson for his pretension, bordering on torture. Contrary to Fabian's assertion (V i 355), laughter and revenge are one from Malvolio's perspective: 'I will be proud' he asserts and in consequence becomes the target of the lower orders for presuming to be above them, even in sin, and the higher orders for presuming to be of them. In the same way by claiming to be 'chosen' he has sinned against the devil and God.

Viola's patience is enough to bring about change to Orsino and Olivia, and to act as a life foil to Orsino's anger. However the play, by Shakespeare's devising, ends with anger and revenge in the air. Malvolio's apparently impotent threat that he 'will be revenged on the whole pack of you' carries with it the underlying menace of the new religion and its fundamentalist challenge to the old and comfortable social and moral order. Anger in some form will prevail. As with every comedy, even a light-hearted Christmas comedy of social misrule, virtue is never presented as the winner in perpetuity, as Feste warns:

Anything that's mended is but patched. Virtue that transgresses is but patched with sin, and sin that amends is but patched with virtue.

(Twelfth Night I v 41-43).

4.5 Mongrel tragi-comedy

Sir Philip Sidney's criticism of comedies as 'mongrel tragi-comedy' (Shepherd and Maslen 2002: 112) and his desire to see classical resolution and balance perhaps misses the point. Shakespeare's comedies play the struggle between vice and virtue against the romance plots traditionally associated with happy endings. This rarely makes for a comfortable fairy-tale or even light-hearted laughter. It could be argued that it is the template of the Sins, providing motive and character reference that spices up Shakespeare's comedies, demanding that they be not allowed to fully relinquish the reality of moral struggle and denying them a world with the prospect of a trouble-free future. It may also be the forge in which the female roles so much lauded in Shakespeare's comedies are forged from the strong metal of the morality virtues, consistently represented as educated, highly articulate, in possession of strong challenging virtues and, above all, female (Weimann 1987: 151-155).

Chapter Five

‘Some rise by sin and some by virtue fall’

5.1 Three ‘problem plays’

Troilus and Cressida, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well* are plays which are often grouped more for what they are not than what they are. Not comfortably fitting the mould of comedy, history, tragedy, romance or Roman, the vague and equivocal term, as Tillyard characterises it, of ‘Problem play’ (Tillyard 1961: 9) has come to represent rather speculative notions of Shakespeare’s development as a dramatist, even as a man. Whilst it is probable that the plays are dated closely to one another, even this cannot rule out any of them having been conceived some years before performance and publication. Richard Hillman has, however, identified common ground which could be gathered under what he refers to as this ‘shop-worn’ term; he has pointed out that all three plays have their roots in what were strongly medieval sources:

The stories dramatized in all three of the Problem plays have Medieval (and to some extent, folktale) origins and appear to have come to Shakespeare in versions that preserved qualities typical of romance: fairy-tale simplicity in the depiction of good and evil; convoluted plots involving journeys and fantastic coincidences; idealization of chivalric values, with the consummation of love figuring as ultimate felicity; above all (as all of this implies), a pervasive flavour of escapism and wish fulfilment. (Hillman: 1993: 6).

Hillman contrasts these sources with the general moral, political and religious instability of the transitional period which incorporated the instability of the latter part of Elizabeth I’s reign and the disaffection of the onset of the Jacobean period. He makes the point that the pessimism, disaffection and moral outrage previously associated with James I, and now generally broadened to incorporate the end of Elizabeth’s reign, accords with the picture drawn by William W Lawrence (1969: 202) as the dramatic environment which gave birth to the Problem Comedies:

Something was wrong with the world; the effort of the day was to strip away glittering illusions and expose the ugliness of vice.

Hillman describes Shakespeare's moral re-interpretation of his sources as 'translating the black and white and primary colours' of the sources into 'various shades of gray' (1993: 7). Certainly there was a literary climate in which there was no shortage of moral commentary and satirical exposure of the seamier side of existence. The Sins were utilised as a framework in Nashe's work as well as writers of other poems and plays referenced in Chapter One. John Florio's translation of Montaigne, with its particular brand of moral scepticism and laying bare of humanity, was published at around the same time: Shakespeare would have possibly been aware of it earlier, given his connections with the Sidney family. The Sins, maintaining their semi-secular literary distance from religious polemic, were an obvious vehicle by which to effect a critique of the surface values and idealised societies represented by the source material. The Sins were flexible, they were recognised as capable of the most complex moral deceit to obtain victory. Why not the virtues also?

5.2 *Troilus and Cressida*

Freed from the shackles of patriotic nicety, *Troilus and Cressida*, written after *Henry V*, deals more overtly with the moral uneasiness often found to be underpinning the heroic, chivalric surface of war in Shakespeare's history plays and weighs it against an evaluation of the chivalric code of love and the courtly mistress. *Troilus and Cressida* exposes the moral tensions inherent in both the chivalric code and the classical heroic notion of *virtus*, revealing a much less palatable reality of politics, war and sexual intrigue. The tendency for chivalric and classical codes of behaviour to weave an artificial, decorous narrative around the sins and vices of mankind is picked apart to reveal Dryden's unintentionally apt metaphor, 'a heap of rubbish' (Novak 1984: 228) beneath. By focussing on what are, in terms of the classical tradition of the renaissance schoolroom, minor characters, it becomes possible through them to reappraise the putative heroes of schoolboy moral reading and commonplace exercises, while also exposing the tensions behind the revival of the romance literary tradition of courtly virtues so despised by Christian humanists like Roger Ascham.⁴¹ As in other plays, Shakespeare draws on both Classical and

⁴¹ In our fathers' time nothing was read but books of feigned chivalry wherein a man by reading should be led to none other end but only to manslaughter and bawdry' (*Toxophilus* 1545).

medieval morality dramatic traditions, but by contrasting the chivalric ‘court’ of Troy with the male-dominated heroic war ‘camp’ of the Greeks he enables one tradition to critique the other. *Troilus and Cressida* eludes classification in the same way that its moral reading appears to evade clear exposition. The protagonists live in a world in which their cultural values wilfully blur the line between vice and virtue. It is a morality play in which the sins play the virtues and the virtues are categorised as sins. Unlike Chaucer’s poem, *Troilus and Cressida* is at once a romance and a war history, but as *Antony and Cleopatra* also demonstrates, war and romance rarely cohabit successfully and Mars and Venus traditionally oppose one another. The ‘honey’ and the ‘sting’, the ‘lechery’ and ‘the wars’ have a mutually destructive relationship, each infecting and paralysing the other. Whilst one may provoke the other, it is not possible for both sins to live in mutual profit, particularly if a third sin, pride, is involved. Given the subject matter of Sonnet 129, ‘Th’expense of spirit in a waste of shame’, lust was a sin of some moral interest to Shakespeare, and whilst *Antony and Cleopatra* concentrates on the effects of lust on the Roman hero, painting a picture of foreign female luxuriousness, centred away from the Roman masculine disciplines of *virtus*, *Troilus and Cressida* creates a picture of societies coping with, and controlling, the two human passions of anger and lust, and details how cynically they can exploit one another.

In addressing the conflicting moral issues of a chivalric society, Shakespeare is, of course, reflecting concerns which were equally apparent to Chaucer. Eric Scott Malin rightly raises the tension between Christianity and chivalry as being recognised much earlier than the Renaissance:

Chivalry barely managed to contain its hereditary discord and contradiction. In its medieval form, chivalry masked savage and unregenerate self-interest; deadly sins were meliorated only by their veneer of martial glory [...]. Knighthood glorified bravery and martial prowess but in doing so it legitimated and rewarded rapacity. (Mallin 1995: 39).

He cites William Caxton’s preface to *Morte D’Arthur* :

For herein may be seen noble chyvalrye, curtosye, humanyte, friendlynesse, hardynesse, love, friendship, cowardyse, mudre, hate, virtue and synne.
Doe after the good and leve the evyl.

(Vinaver 1967: 4-7 cxlvi)

The same issues were raised by Tudor humanists. Norman Council singles out the ‘chivalric sanctioning of greed, violence and adultery’ citing Ascham’s reference to ‘bold bawdry and open manslaughter’ (Council 1980:261). He also refers to Vives in *De officio mariti* who claims books of chivalry ‘kyndle and styr up covetousness; inflame anger, & all beastly and filthy desyre’ (transl. Thomas Paynell 1553).

Chaucer’s subtle raising of the dubious virtues of chivalric love is highlighted through the contrast of Troilus’ experience of Christian love after death which enables him to look down in charity at worldly passions, however dignified, and recognise them for what they are. This has led Ann Thompson to conclude that Shakespeare ignores Chaucer’s religious frame of reference, leaving his characters ‘in the disorder of mortality’ (Thompson 1978: 155). However, whilst not overtly demonstrating the difference between lust and Christian love, *Troilus and Cressida* does examine the consequence of perceiving sin as virtue and virtue as sin, something of which Shakespeare’s audience would have been more than aware, steeped as they were in the ways of the Seven Deadly Sins. Far from not adopting a consistent outlook in ‘its dismantling of the leading aristocratic narrative forms – medieval chivalric romance and classic epic’ (Walter Cohen 2008: 1849), the play is consistent in its revelation of the contradictory and inconsistent nature of their traditions. *Troilus and Cressida* takes the image of Troy and symbolically chips away its walls of chivalry to reveal a culture based on no greater moral base than the transient, morally shifting, divisive Greek camp whose gulf between philosophy and worldliness, words and deeds, *virtus* and humanity reflects a society whose deracination has taken its toll on social and moral sophistication.

The parallels, opposites and contrasts which are exposed in the play constantly reinforce the theme of moral evaluation: love and war, Greeks and Trojans, Paris and Helen, Hector and Achilles, Pandarus and Thersites, all invite critical comparison. The central point, against which this evaluation is carried out, is the story of Troilus and Cressida which is itself incorporated into the play with such a level of self-awareness that it is loaded with a sense of moral predestination or, as Dawson puts it, ‘literary entrapment’:

What Shakespeare uniquely does, however, is to make his characters’ literariness, their belatedness, part of the subject matter of the play. It is as

if the characters were aware of their literary past and mired in it. (Dawson 2003: 32).

In the same way that Chaucer, within the conventions of his chivalric romance, is able to realise two faulted and real individuals, Shakespeare also introduces moral uncertainty into the behaviour of both Cressida and Troilus. Cressida is the daughter of a traitor whose ability to predict the future has informed his defection: this gene is reflected, despite her denial of ‘consanguinity’, in her fatalistic acceptance of her inevitable desertion of Troilus, and his, or any man’s, potential desertion of her. The responsible male in her life is her uncle whose prurient obsession with sex, particularly as a commodity, and whose inappropriately sexually familiar relationship with Cressida, is reflected by her general interest in men. While some of this can be explained as a ‘blind’ to keep her strong feelings for Troilus at a distance from Pandarus, her general demeanour and the fact that Shakespeare does not, as Chaucer does, provide her with legitimate prior sexual experience by making her a widow, gives her behaviour a sexual ‘edge’:

If I cannot ward what I would not have hit, I can watch you for telling how
I took the blow – unless it swell past hiding, and then it’s past watching.
(*Troilus* I ii 246-248)

In Cressida’s dealings with Troilus, she continually informs and debates with herself over strategy and manipulative tactics to prolong their courtship, on the assumption that at the point of consummation, he will tire of her, and that, ‘Men prize the thing ungained more than it is,’ (I ii 267). She is always aware of the insubstantial nature of the idealised notion of women which seeks to make sex honourable in a courtly and chivalric context. The distinction is one of class over virtue: as a woman of ‘degree’ it seems she is entitled to a period of elevation or worship, but she must be aware, given her uncle’s tuition, of the game’s ultimate end. The elaborate, emotional game-playing of courtly love, in which each becomes the other’s quarry, is reflected in Sonnet 129:

Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,
Past reason hated as a swallowed bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad;
(*Sonnets* 129: 6-8)

The exchange between the two lovers is peppered with anxiety about sex, sexual performance and unfaithfulness. Clinging perilously to her role as ‘thing

ungained', Cressida is well aware that the fiction of the ideal love object is the only thing that distinguishes her from the camp prostitutes outside the walls. This divorce between the emotion of lust and its physical reality is inevitably short-lived. On losing the struggle with her own desires, Cressida anxiously reviews her game at each stage of the seduction, separating her tactical self from her desiring self:

I have a kind of self resides with you,
 But an unkind self, that itself will leave
 To be another's fool.
 (*Troilus* III ii 135-137)

The combination of unbridled passion and calculating behaviour is, in embryo form, comparable to the behaviour of Cleopatra whose combination of lust, jealousy and emotional tactics epitomises the experienced mistress or courtesan. If Pandarus, as will be argued, is the Vice-figure, then Cressida is his pupil, as well as his victim, in lust. It is this brand of calculation turned into love talk which Ulysses sees as the game or 'juggling trick' of being 'secretly open'. In the court of Troy, this behaviour can be masked as the ideal unassailability of the knight's lady who dominates him in a secret chivalric romance. In the male-dominated, sex-starved environment of the Greek war camp it turns her into a 'daughter of the game'. The moral insecurity of becoming a mistress, in the courtly sense of the word, means the woman must ensure she stays the object of desire and, full of 'cloying and perverse petrarchism' (Heather James 1997: 93) that he is, Troilus offers little in terms of security in his ever present expectation of her infidelity. For all his image of the faithful lover, Troilus is more credulous than dependable, thus offering that interpretation of truth as his virtuous fault. His self-projected image of intense lover is more indicative of first-love passion than considered commitment. Other critics perceive even that as a front. James considers that Troilus, like others in the play, is a victim of his own image based on a literary future which has not yet happened; what Carol Cook identifies as 'textual psychosis' (1986: 50). 'The prince of chivalry', obsessed as he is with sexual performance and 'achievement' has hardly been the epitome of courtly discretion. Gayle Greene also sees the lechery behind the poetry, noting that his 'too-precise naming of her 'bed' as the goal [...] impugns his lofty idealism' (Greene 1980:138). Rather than attempting to

win his lady's favour by the traditional display of prowess in combat he chooses instead to abjure battle for a most unchivalric reason:

Why should I war without the walls of Troy

That find such cruel battle here within?

(*Troilus* 1 i 2-3)

Even within the context of chivalric values, it can be argued that it is not love, but sex which obsesses him, and lust, as is portrayed in the *virtus*-driven moral context of *Anthony and Cleopatra*, is an acknowledged suppressant of manly anger and therefore an impediment for a soldier. Cleopatra's world of exotically luxurious but emasculating indulgence, combining licentiousness with attendant eunuchs epitomises the enclosed world of Antony's compulsion. Paris, too, prefers to stay at home with Helen, and Troilus, temporarily, suffers the same malaise:

But I am weaker than a woman's tear,

Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,

Less valiant than the virgin in the night,

And skill-less as unpracticed infancy.

(*Troilus* 1 i 9-12)

He betrays his secret to Aeneas, referring to his anticipated liaison as 'sport' to replace the 'sport' of battle, being 'Better at home, if 'would I might' were 'may'' (I i 110). Rather than praising or defending his lady's chastity, he refers to her as 'stubborn-chaste'. The involvement of the third party of Pandarus in the affair casts a questionable light on it in terms of chivalric romance. This is reinforced by the fact that Troilus 'cannot come to Cressida but by Pandarus', and involves Pandarus so fully in what, rather than a chivalric courtship and secret tryst in which the lady has control, seems almost a business arrangement. Pandarus' involvement, had Troilus been intending a marriage, would be proper, but the absence of marriage coupled with Pandarus' 'hard-sell' tactics and bawdy language, gives the assignation a highly unromantic, rather sordid taste. Both lovers voice their subconscious prophetic expectations of their coupling and its outcome in 'trope-plighting' as Heather James calls it (1997: 106). Pandarus seals the arrangement with his own prophecy and more than a hint that a bargain has been struck with the devil:

Go to, a bargain made. Seal it, seal it! I'll be the witness. Here I hold your hand, here my cousin's. If ever you prove false to one another, since I have taken such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful goers-between be called to the world's end after my name: call them all panders.

(Troilus III ii 184-188)

Under the influence of his own desire, Troilus talks a good talk, convincing Hector of the chivalric duty owed to Helen, but even then he confuses 'wife' and 'mistress', and talks as if to tire of a woman is inevitable, using the inappropriate, but closely lust-associated, language of commerce and gluttony to persuade Hector of the loss of honour at stake:

There can be no evasion

To blench from this and to stand firm by honor.

We turn not back the silks upon the merchant

When we have soiled them, nor the remainder viands

We do not throw in unrespective sieve

Because we now are full.

(Troilus II ii 67-72)

In the ethical ragbag of his fevered mind, he searches and finds a metaphor which well describes his own strange combination of sinful virtue, the honourable theft:

O theft most base

That we have stol'n what we do fear to keep!

(Troilus II ii 92-3)

He makes this affected justification of his own desires in the face of having earlier dismissed Helen as not worth the sacrifice:

Fools on both sides. Helen must needs be fair

When with your blood you daily paint her thus.

I cannot fight upon this argument;

It is too starved a subject for my sword.

(Troilus I i 85-88)

He excuses all this dubious and contradictory morality with an attack on the moral reasoning carried out by Hector in his virtuous, but failed, attempt to apply Aristotelian ethics to the war, and effect a golden virtuous mean between the lust and the anger, or pleasure and revenge as he describes it, it has provoked:

The reasons you allege do more conduce
 To the hot passion of distempered blood
 Than to make up a free determination
 Twixt right and wrong, for pleasure and revenge
 Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice
 Of any true decision.

(*Troilus* II ii 168-173)

While Troilus' response to reason exposes further the confused moral tension inherent in chivalry:

Nay, if we talk of reason
 Let's shut our gates and sleep. Manhood and honor
 Should have hare hearts would they but fat their thoughts
 With this crammed reason. Reason and respect
 Make livers pale and lustihood deject.

(*Troilus* II ii 46-50)

The fact is, when Troilus' own honour is tested, he chooses rather to let Cressida go without protest. 'Is it concluded so?' is his initial response, bemoaning the brevity of his sexual conquest with 'How my achievements mock me!' before showing concern for Cressida's fate. The prince of Petrarchan verse couldn't be plainer or more peremptory in his response to Cressida's anguished refusal to go: 'Thou must'. Essentially, he sends Cressida into the lion's den, while at the same time accusing her of a disturbing tendency to act like a piece of meat.

At the centre of the morally questionable 'lustihood' which dominates Troy's courtly society is Pandarus, the key agent in the fruition of Troilus and Cressida's desire. Shakespeare's Pandarus has cast aside all the chivalric justification for his involvement in the affair which Chaucer's Pandarus has: the male friendship and charity which leads him to discover the secret source of his friend's unhappiness. Shakespeare's Pandarus bears more resemblance to the stereotype Vice of the morality play than the subtle portrayal in Chaucer's poem. As an agent of sin, his interest is to provoke and enable lust in others rather than to participate in it himself. He is obsessively drawn to other people's lusts, egging them on with lewd and suggestive language which exposes the potential for lust in everything. Pandarus is all about looking rather than doing, and creating, through constant

sexual reference and behaviour, an environment in which lust can thrive and encourage others by realising their lustful desires. Cressida is his tool in this and Troilus his prey. After finally bringing Troilus and Cressida together, in the true style of the vice, he announces to the audience that he is open for more business:

And Cupid grant all tongue-tied maidens here
Bed, chamber, and pander to provide this gear.

(*Troilus* III ii 196-197)

Troilus and Cressida are his latest victims, but the ease and sexual badinage with which he deals with Helen and Paris in Act III scene one suggests a previous familiarity: he treats them like converts. They are lieutenants in his campaign and his conversation with them hints that they may be party to his latest plans. Paris will cover for Troilus' absence: he declares an association with Cressida by the words 'my disposer'. This term, meaning 'one who arranges, directs or controls', could be referring to the chivalric idea of the mistress. More importantly, in his Vice-like role, Pandarus implies a similar desire-driven relationship to that of Helen and Paris when he says, 'My niece is horrible in love with a thing you have, sweet Queen' (III i 93). This is clearly recognised by Helen as it is demonstrated by her sexually knowing response of 'She shall have it, my lord, if it be not my lord Paris,' (III i 92). Whilst Ann Thompson may be right to point out the lack of Christian insight gained in the play (1978: 155), the difference between the virtue, love, and the vice, lust, becomes increasingly clear. Pandarus recognises the double meaning in Helen's observation 'This love will undo us all,' which at once predicts the future of the war but also expresses the vice's fear of virtue. Pandarus responds 'Love? Ay that it shall, i' faith,' (III i 103) before turning the moment back to what James describes as the 'bordello' (James 1997: 93) with his bawdy song which portrays animal lust dressed as love:

Love, love, nothing but love, still more:
For oh, love's bow shoots buck and doe.
The shaft confounds not that it wounds,
But tickles still the sore.

(*Troilus* III i 106-108)

Pandarus' influence is strong in the society of Troy, dominated as that society is by the illicit relationship of Paris and Helen disguised as a 'theme of honour and

renown', and given as it apparently is to periods of truce. The war as perceived from within Troy appears almost to be a form of chivalric time-passing. The textual confusion in the play, which implies that the two sides appear to be at once at war and in truce⁴² is generally glossed as an inconsistency due to the compression of source accounts (David Bevington 1998: 174) but is more representative of the moral reality of the war than has been recognised. The contention between lust and anger can be perceived in both societies where some still fight, and others, distracted by slothful luxuriance, do not. The Greek camp has been infected by the behaviour of its hero, Achilles, whose success has led to such pride and vainglory that he lives on fame rather than heroic virtue. His luxuriant lifestyle, including a homosexual 'camp' relationship with Patroclus, is born out of his excessive pride: he disdains to fight, preferring instead to make contemptuous fun of his leaders. Ulysses complains:

The great Achilles, whom opinion crowns
The sinew and the forehead of our host,
Having his ear full of his airy fame,
Grows dainty of his worth and in his tent
Lies mocking our designs. With him Patroclus,
Upon a lazy bed, the livelong day
Breaks scurrile jests,
(*Troilus* 1 iii 141-147)

He blames the lack of military discipline and increase in back-biting, or emulous behaviour in the camp on Achilles' pride. The seven years in which the Greeks have been 'deracinated' has reduced the camp to indolent fighting amongst themselves and deprived their leaders of the cultural and social reinforcement of their rank which they would enjoy in their home society. In terms of sin, the anger has given way to envy which it breeds in a confined environment of sloth, gluttony and lust. Ulysses complains that, in their preference for Achilles over Agamemnon they have placed the battering ram before the 'hand that made the engine'. However, as the 'engine-maker' can come up with no strategy other than to endure

⁴² Despite the parade of soldiers returning from the field in Act One, in line 1.iii. 259 Aeneas refers to 'this dull and long continued truce'

the war as a trial sent by god, the sense of frustration and military disarray is unsurprising.

In the envy-ridden, slothful environment of the Greek camp exists the second Vice-figure of the play in the person of Thersites, the ‘privileg’d man’, who is attracted to the anger of the war: ‘I serve here voluntary’. After the fashion of the fool in the *Parson’s Tale*, this is a bitter fool whose ‘tick in a sheep’, anger-provoking behaviour matches that of Pandarus’ provocation to lust in Troy. As the camp, weary of war, has turned in on itself, so Thersites is reduced to stirring envious back-biting and anger through malicious exploitation of gossip and satirical observation. Compulsively drawn to wherever anger is, in the same way that Pandarus is drawn to lust, he rails, curses, raises devils and prays with the ‘devil Envy’, a sin closely associated with anger. Alison Findlay notes (Findlay 1994: 233) that Thersites has nine out of fourteen of the play’s soliloquies and that, in true vice style, half of what he says is addressed to the audience. He is well versed in the imagery of his own sin and that of lust and luxury, and he has made a great study of the sins of those around him. His audience would be very familiar with the ‘five finger reference’ and the close association of lust with the images of indolence and gluttony that abound in the play. As sins of the flesh, both Vice-figures are, in a sense, small scale and institutionalised - almost domestic: they represent the pervasive nature of their respective cultures.

The differing vices operating behind the chivalric culture and the heroic war camp are never more in evidence than during the uncomfortably strange kissing induction of Cressida into the Greek camp. It begins with a courteous but formal kiss from Agamemnon which creates an emulation of apparent gallantry. However with each following kiss and new encounter, things swiftly degenerate into bold hostility from an affronted Ulysses, teaching Cressida, who is a quick study, that a very different game must be played in this environment:

Cressida: I am your debtor; claim it when ’tis due.

Ulysses: Never’s my day, and then a kiss of you.

(*Troilus* IV vi A 50-51)

With his nose for anger and a knowledge of Diomedes’ untrustworthiness, Thersites is drawn to the scene of Cressida’s sexual capitulation to Diomedes, ‘I

will rather leave to see Hector than not to dog him' (V i 89). He therefore forms part of the stage audience spying on Cressida's downfall, calling from the sidelines as if to watch a second match that day. Findlay (1994: 151) recognises the psychomachia in this scene, interpreting Troilus and Thersites as the good and bad angels respectively. However two moral struggles are taking place concurrently. In the second Ulysses presents a tritely moral fight for Troilus' virtue as he loses hold of his patience and succumbs to the wrath that infects him for the remainder of the play. Thersites, while revelling in the 'five fingered' lechery which he knows will be the source of future anger, also cheers on any act which he knows will inflate Troilus' anger. Thersites' aside, 'now the pledge, now, now, now!' is double-edged: he enjoys the final act of betrayal as the sleeve is handed over, but is also aware of the second pledge that he knows is broken too. Troilus begins with 'I am all patience,' moves to being outwardly patient, and finally consigns patience to his past. 'I did swear patience' says Troilus, just before he becomes consumed with wrath. Thersites' delight with the final, brutal war is palpable: he runs from combat to combat, feeding off the anger, and enjoying it with the same voyeuristic instinct as Pandarus. 'The cuckold and the cuckold-maker are at it. Now, bull! Now, dog!' (V viii 1-2).

'Rank' Achilles' being led by concatenation from vainglory to luxury with the assistance of sloth, is a particular focus of Thersites' fury. Neither Thersites' provocation, nor Ulysses' machinations, manages to reassert Achilles' anger: although ironically, he begins to be persuaded of the need to feed his vainglory through the recognition of others than just Patroclus. However this is not enough yet to pull him from the life of gluttony, sloth and lust he has preferred. He declines the challenge of fighting with Hector, apparently out of chivalry towards Polyxena. He appears rather, as Bruce R Smith suggests, to be more interested in Hector as an object of lust, inviting him to feast in his tent and focusing rather on Hector's body with 'a woman's longing' than attempting to engage with him in 'a maiden battle' (Smith 1991: 60-61).

Hector's battle with Ajax is a set piece of irrelevant chivalry in the middle of a bloody war, fascinating in its appeal to all those who seek to preserve the façade of virtuous war. Held in the middle of the real fighting, the battle within the battle

exposes the nonsense of the rules of war. Like a football match played in no man's land, it serves to emphasise the ethical compromises which must be made to preserve the image of chivalric and heroic codes of conduct. In case the audience hasn't got the point, the provision of Ajax as a walking metaphor of questionable 'virtues', the man *per se*, a Greek and Trojan champion whose character is self-made from his own collection of sundry attributes he doesn't really understand, rams the meaning home:

There is no man hath a virtue that he hath not a glimpse of, nor any man an attain but he carries some stain of it.

(*Troilus* I ii 22-24)

The studied exchange between Aeneas and Diomedes, probably the two most diplomatically dissembling individuals in the play, illustrates the ridiculous nature of decorous war with its 'despiteful gentle greeting' and 'noblest hateful love':

Aeneas: Health to you, valiant sir,
 During all question of the gentle truce,
 But when I meet you armed, as black defiance
 As heart can think or courage execute.

Diomedes: The one and other Diomed embraces.
 Our bloods are now in calm, and so long, health;
 But when contention and occasion meets,
 By Jove, I'll play the hunter for thy life
 With all my force, pursuit, and policy.

Aeneas: And thou shalt hunt a lion that will fly
 With his face backward. In human gentleness,
 Welcome to Troy. Now by Anchises' life,
 Welcome indeed! By Venus' hand, I swear
 No man alive can love in such a sort
 The thing he means to kill more excellently.

Diomedes: We sympathize. Jove, let Aeneas live-
 If to my sword his fate be not the glory-
 A thousand complete courses of the sun,
 But in my emulous honour let him die
 With every joint a wound, and that tomorrow.

Aeneas: We know each other well.

Diomedes: We do, and long to know each other worse.

(Troilus IV i 12-32)

As glowing as Aeneas' rather boastful diplomatic descriptions of the chivalric Hector and Troilus are, it remains that chivalry is only as virtuous as the object of its protection and both the men, one from pride, one from lust, have chosen to risk Trojan and Greek lives for a cause they know to be wrong. Similarly the heroic feats on the part of the Greeks appear to have long since forfeited nobility of cause in favour of emulous glory. No one, not even Menelaus, believes in the cause they fight for. Diomedes is openly disparaging in his assessment:

He merits well to have her that doth seek her,
 Not making any scruple of her soilure,
 With such a hell of pain and world of charge;
 And you as well to keep her that defend her,
 Not palating the taste of her dishonor,
 With such a costly loss of wealth and friends.

(Troilus IV i 56-61)

Troilus, constant only in his extremis, turns from Cressida to Diomedes, and after Hector's death, to Achilles, God and then death itself. In lustful passion he was all words, in anger he is all action. Cressida's letter is treated with contempt:

Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart-
 Th'effect doth operate another way.

(Troilus V iii 107-108)

He no longer has time for Pandarus; he answers to a different sin;

I do not speak of flight, of fear, of death,
 But dare all imminence that gods and men
 Address their dangers in.

(Troilus V xi 12-14)

Hector's scrupulous adherence to the 'game' of chivalry and theoretical understanding of the difference between it and morality, affords him the nearest claim the play has to a moral hero. However, as James states: 'Hector cannot maintain his distinguished role as the ethical Trojan after he has been tempted by his equally attractive role as the chivalric one' (1997: 98). He is scrupulous about avoiding the kind of vainglorious bragging his enemies and fellows indulge in.

Well he knows the fate of the hubristic braggart, often portrayed as a knight falling off his horse. In the knowledge that to continue the war is morally wrong, however, he opts for collective pride which he calls honour: my country right or wrong:

For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence

Upon our joint and several dignities.

(Troilus II ii 192-193)

Eventually he realises that being polite and keeping up appearances is sufficient only on the decorated stage of the tournament, and that which pretends to courtesy is also a form of pride. His 'vice of mercy' appears not to have extended to the young and war-fearing Patroclus whose death turns events for Achilles. Achilles' rage, not unlike that of Clifford in Henry VI, reflects the reality of personal loss and brings him back into the war initially for reasons of revenge rather than personal glory:

Come, come, thou boy-queller, show thy face;

Know what it is to meet Achilles angry.

(Troilus V v 45-46)

Patroclus' death enables Achilles to ignore the rules of courteous or heroic war. At the point that Hector, examining the trophy armour of the unknown Greek he has killed, begins to see the chivalric façade for what it is, 'Most putrefièd core, so fair without,' (V ix 1-2), he is unheroically murdered, unarmed, by Achilles'

Myrmidons while Achilles, slothful as ever, looks on. However Achilles cannot help capitalising on the event to feed his vainglory with a hollow victory speech:

On, Myrmidons, cry you all amain:

'Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain!'

(Troilus V ix 13-14)

The play is carried out against the political and psychological rubric of Ulysses, whose inclination to believe everything Aeneas, the chivalric spin-doctor, tells him rings a warning bell, as is his personal response to Cressida's sleight. He does, however, understand sin and how it grows:

The seeded pride

That has to this maturity blown up

In rank Achilles must or now be cropped

Or, shedding, breed a nursery of like evil

To overbulk us all.

(*Troilus* I iii 313-317)

His analysis of individual moral weaknesses includes a detailed analysis of the sins of pride and envy, and in particular, the sin of vainglory and its need for external recognition. He is a walking commonplace book, but he rarely draws on it for examples of virtue with which to persuade. John Bayley describes him as ‘a charade of polity’ (Bayley 1976: 191). Despite his mass of reference drawn from commonplace Classical and deadly sins literature with which Shakespeare’s audience would be familiar, such as sins ‘eating up’ themselves; the ‘envious fever of pale and bloodless emulation’, as well as the iconographical association of vainglory with knights and horses: ‘like a gallant horse fall’n at first rank’, he is not adverse to encouraging or playing on someone’s vice for political gain. He plays on Achilles’ envy, and uses the explanation of vainglory’s dependence on external recognition to tempt ‘rank’ Achilles out of his lecherous sloth and back to war:

That no man is the lord of anything,

Though in and of him there be much consisting,

Till he communicate his parts to others;

Nor doth he of himself know them for aught

Till he behold them formed in th’ applause

Where they are extended, who like an arch reverb’rate

The voice again, or, like a gate of steel

Fronting the sun, receives and renders back

His figure and his heat.

(*Troilus* III iii 113-121)

Ironically his manipulative attempts to provoke Achilles’ jealousy rather creates another, comic, version of his hubris in Ajax, ‘a man distilled/ Out of our virtues’ (I iii 347-348).

It is clear that, in his representation of these characters of medieval, Classical and commonplace tradition, Shakespeare ‘selects the least reputable versions of characters and events and heightens their unsavoury aspects’ (James 1997: 93) and as Dawson maintains, ‘there is no doubt that Shakespeare shows himself to be

profoundly sceptical about the extravagant claims of chivalric honour, and critical of the destructiveness of aristocratic ‘emulation’ (Dawson 2003: 12/13). The play charts the struggle of morally faulted individuals trying to live under conflicting codes of existence. ‘I know not what pride is,’ says the proud but dim Ajax. Troilus, perhaps most of all, suffers from moral confusion. In the ‘virtuous fight/When right with right wars who shall be most right’ (III ii 158-159), he is distanced from heavenly influence, not knowing who the goddess of Patience is or whether the gods are envious. He perceives humanity as doing the job for itself:

And sometimes we are devils to ourselves,
When we will tempt the frailty of our powers,
Presuming on their changeful potency.

(*Troilus* IV iv 93-95)

His critique on his conflicted feelings for Cressida works equally well for the pick-and-mix, moral paradox in which he exists. As Ulysses opines, authority can only work with one clear line of control: for Troilus, chivalry is neither one thing nor the other:

O madness of discourse,
That cause sets up with and against itself-
Bifold authority, where reason can revolt
Without perdition, and loss assume all reason
Without revolt!

(*Troilus* V ii 142-146)

Beneath every chivalric and heroic quality in this play there lies the potential for vice. Within the Trojan romance and the Grecian indolence there is lust, sloth in the periods of truce, anger in the war, gluttony in the tents, envy in the heroic competition, and pride in both personal honour and military success. Some critics have also accused Hector of greed in his pursuit of the unknown Greek’s rich armour, and the metaphors of trade and commerce in the play are almost as common as those of food and luxury. Kenneth Palmer maintains that only three of the seven deadly sins are of serious concern in the play: pride, envy and lust (Palmer 1982: 77). This observation does not take into account the concatenation of sins and, for example, the close association of food and indolence with Achilles’ lust. Given the nature and cause of the war, Troilus’ conversion to anger from lust,

and anger's close relationship with envy, it would be difficult not to recognise it as a key sin. The confusion which exists around the perception of right and wrong and the nature of sin and virtue is emphasised by the consistently shifting meaning of words such as 'virtue' which can be a Christian virtue, a heroic strength, physical or mental attribute or even good under the circumstances. 'Truth' can mean right, simple or naive. The play is peppered with morally contradictory phrases such as 'vice of mercy', 'godly jealousy', 'virtuous sin', 'truth' as a 'fault' or vice. The inability to recognise true virtue inevitably leads to its death; in Agamemnon's words, it is 'like a fair fruit in an unwholesome dish [...] like to rot untasted'. Perhaps the worldly Shakespeare is ironically reflecting on the simplicity of the schoolroom with its commonplace morality, compounding it with his own individually developed observations in the course of moral reading. In a world where vice is remodelled as virtue and virtue cast as sin, perhaps it is the tragic death of virtue which is charted here. The elevation of lust and anger almost to the heights of nobility in *Antony and Cleopatra* is replaced in *Troilus and Cressida*, by mere crumbling edifices. While Troilus may not be granted the Christian revelation Chaucer allows him, 'the heaven that leads men to this hell', in Sonnet 129, does at least echo the cynical realism in this play which Dorothea Kehler believes *Antony and Cleopatra* escapes:

To agree that Sonnet 129 is the key to *Antony and Cleopatra* is to accept only that the heaven of love on earth includes its apparent opposites – hatred, violence, deception, - that it is not so pretty a place[...] (Kehler 2005: 133).

Sin, and the interlinking of lust and anger, predictably has the final word. What is man, suggests Pandarus, without lust and anger to motivate him?

*Full merrily the humble-bee doth sing
Till he hath lost his honey and his sting;
And being once subdued in armèd tail,
Sweet honey and sweet notes together fail.*
(*Troilus* V xi 41-44)

Thersites, also unsilenced, continues to live off the battlefields for the time being, and the final lines are left to the fading Pandarus whose role as Vice-figure may be

temporarily at an end, but who reminds the audience that he will never really leave them:

*Till then I'll sweat and seek about for eases,
And at that time bequeath you my diseases.
Troilus V xi 54-55)*

5.3 *Measure for Measure*

Whilst central to the plot of *Measure for Measure* is a theme of lust, chastity, hypocrisy and pride, it is also a play about sloth, the kind of sloth associated with lack of engagement or involvement in one's duty. It demonstrates the potential consequences of a ruler who chooses to ignore or delegate his role, a model already exploited by Shakespeare in the timid, religious Henry VI, the frivolous Richard II and the indecisive, bookish Hamlet. Set against the backdrop of the common debate of Justice versus Mercy, Duke Vincentio finds himself, through his own disassociation with Vienna and its people, in the same predicament that James I warns against in the almost contemporary *Basilikon Doron* (1599 revised in 1603), written as a guide for his son, Prince Henry. It is important, he counsels, as a new ruler to 'settle' a country with severe justice at the outset of your reign, to give a taste to your subjects of how you can be, before softening your approach by tempering hard justice with forgiving mercy:

then may ye thereafter all the dayes of your life mixe justice with mercie,
punishing or sparing, as ye shall find the crime to have been willfullie or
rashlie committed, and according to the by-past behaviour of the committer.
(*Basilikon Doron*, waldegrave 1603, Craigie 1944: 63).

Duke Vincentio is not unknowing about his own sin, as well as those of others. From the outset, he is aware of his own fault and its consequences. His bookishness is an aspect of his sloth. A theoretician, he is able to critique the moral and governance issues caused by his neglect of office, but acknowledges his distaste for engagement in it:

I love the people,
But do not like to stage me to their eyes.
Though it do well, I do not relish well
Their loud applause and *aves* vehement,

(Measure for Measure I i 67-70)

He is fully aware of the dissolution caused by his *laissez-faire* approach to justice, and confesses it to Friar Thomas while outlining his strategy for remedy, which is to avoid facing it, and to engage Angelo as his substitute to carry out the necessary dirty work, exploiting his name, while leaving his popular reputation in tact:

For we bid this be done,
 When evil deeds have their permissive pass
 And not the punishment. Therefore indeed, my father,
 I have on Angelo imposed the office,
 Who may in th'ambush of my name strike home,
 And yet my nature never in the fight
 To do in slander.

(Measure for Measure I iii 37-43)

To choose to disguise himself as a friar gives further indication of his desire to remain apart, and he volunteers his profile as one whose reign has faltered through sloth, describing himself as 'an overgrown lion in a cave/ That goes not out to prey' (I iii 22-23) and who has 'ever loved the life removed.' He admits to having 'let slip' his responsibilities and, speaking in his assumed role as friar, it is impossible not to read the self-criticism contained in the statement:

My business in this state
 Made me a looker-on here in Vienna,
 Where I have seen corruption boil and bubble
 Till it o'errun the stew: laws for all faults,
 But faults so countenanced that the strong statutes
 Stand like the forfeits in a barber's shop,
 As much in mock as mark.

(Measure for Measure V i 320-326)

In providing his rationale for Friar Thomas, Duke Vincentio also shares his suspicion that Angelo may not be as he seems and that his plan will also serve to test his deputy's apparently strict morality. This has led Norman N Holland to speculate on similarities between the Duke's motives in appointing Angelo and Machiavelli's strategy for co-ordinating power (Holland 1959: 16-20). Harold Skulsky has also compared it to a Machiavellian testing of subordinates (Skulsky 1976: 109). The

Duke's inability to carry out his behind the scene manipulations with anything like the competence of Machiavelli would suggest that if such a connection exists it is more for the purpose of contrast than similarity. Ernst Honigmann discusses the distance and uncertainty which surrounds the Duke in the play, describing him as an 'observer' and 'the dithering Duke', stressing the inefficiency in the covert management of his state's affairs (Honigmann 1981 (rep 1988): 164-5). These are all indicators of sloth, but if they do not convince, the Duke volunteers the evidence himself. Displaying a strong sense of irritation with Angelo who, he perceives, exposes and seeks to remedy the Duke's sin while not owning or confronting his own, he accuses him:

Twice treble shame on Angelo,
To weed my vice, and let his grow.
(*Measure for Measure* III i 496-497)

However, the proof is also in the speech he makes to Claudio as the Friar which makes sense only as a speech of one afflicted by *acedia*. There has been some discussion on the lack of reference to any afterlife in the speech which paints a nihilist picture of life whilst offering nothing other than an escape to senselessness in death.⁴³ However in context with the loss of hope for salvation associated with sloth, the Duke's speech to Claudio reflects the 'counsel of despair' (Foakes 1971: 22) which makes 'not to be' agreeable as an alternative to life;

What's in this
That bears the name of life? Yet in this life
Lie hid more thousand deaths; yet death we fear
That makes these odds all even.
(*Measure for Measure* III i 38-41)

The speech clearly reflects the Duke's pessimistic suicidal thinking, but ironically, given Claudio's situation, is taken by him and turned into an optimistic expectation of the life to come:

⁴³ (Lever 1965: lxxxvii) 'The Duke's description of the human condition eliminates its spiritual aspect and is essentially materialist and pagan.' See also (Brown 1986: 151) 'The Duke, likewise shows a fascination with morbidity, his 'consolation' of Claudio in 3,1 being conspicuously devoid of Christian afterlife.'

I humbly thank you.

To sue to live, I find I seek to die,
And seeking death, find life. Let it come on.

(*Measure for Measure* III i 41-43)

Duke Vincentio is well versed in aspects of vice and virtue, being aware both of his own defect as well as those of others. However, he struggles to address the problem head-on, choosing rather to rely on abstract preaching or subterfuge. In the same way that his advice to Claudio seems to betray his own despair, so his response to Angelo's token procrastination smacks of advice he should be applying to himself:

Thyself and thy belongings

Are not thine own so proper as to waste
Thyself upon thy virtues, they on thee.
Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves. For if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not.

(*Measure for Measure* I i 29-35)

In this he echoes a passage from the *Basilikon Doron*:

For it is not ynough that ye have and retaine (as prisoners) within your selfe never so many good qualities and vertues, except ye employ them, and set them on worke, (*Basilikon Doron*, Waldegrave 1603, Craigie 1944: 105).

It is as if he is urging himself to action, rather than Angelo whom he knows will be champing at the bit. The statement 'No more evasion' (I i 50), while directed at Angelo, seems more to spur himself to purpose. However, his only actions are to avoid the disagreeable role of imposing stricter control on the city: provide weak excuses as to why Angelo would be better for the job, and throw in the subordinate 'test' for good measure. As with *All's Well*, a good deal of lying goes on in *Measure for Measure* in the interests of a virtuous outcome, and most of it is done or instigated by the Duke, who therefore cannot be trusted in any explanation he gives, even to himself, for his own behaviour. Honigmann's claim that the Duke 'merely improvises irresponsibly' (1981 (rep 1988): 164) and his reference to the lack of certainty about the Duke's double image (1981 (rep 1988): 165) in fact highlights Duke Vincentio's difficulty in assuming an authoritative role of action. His attempts

to control under cover simply reveal to him that, far from protecting his reputation, gossip abhors a vacuum, and his fury at Lucio's calumny is in part, fury at himself for enabling it. By this he learns first-hand what he preaches: that it is not enough to ignore evil, it must be confronted, and that 'virtue must be bold and goodness never fearful'. He must realise his own advice which he, albeit maliciously, gives to Angelo that:

There is a kind of character in thy life
That to th' observer doth thy history
Fully unfold.
(*Measure for Measure* I i 27-29)

Measure for Measure is not a play in which the sins and virtues attached to individuals are hard to discover. Like Duke Vincentio, most protagonists self-identify quite early in the play. The deputy's puritanical approach to the punishment of sin would automatically associate him with the kind of 'proude Puritane' to which James I refers in *Basilikon Doron* (Waldegrave 1603: 81). Angelo's name, of course, anticipates a fall resulting from pride, and his ambition and tyrannical pride are revealed partly through the Duke's slothful discomfort with his zealous nature, pitting the two extreme sins of governance, sloth and pride, once more, against one another. As with the history plays, the one inevitably gives rise to the other. Even the slightly shallow, worldly, Claudio whose sin stems rather from greed than lust, tags Angelo with the traditional iconography of vainglory, an image which is repeated in the play in association with his ambition:

A horse whereon the governor doth ride,
Who, newly in the seat, that it may know
He can command, lets it straight feel the spur-
[...] and, for a name,
Now puts the drowsy and neglected act
Freshly on me. 'Tis surely for a name.
(*Measure for Measure* I ii 148-159)

Angelo seeks to protect his name, unlike Duke Vincentio, by standing 'at the guard of envy'. Indeed, it is his name, rather than his virtue, which is important. How he is seen is more important than how he is, as his remarks to Escalus testify:

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,

Another thing to fall.

(Measure for Measure II i 17-18)

His own, rather self-congratulatory, confession of pride wrestling with lust in which he ironically describes his sin in terms of exclusivity, is peppered with heraldic metaphors rather than Christian imagery:

Yea, my gravity

Wherein, let no man hear me, I take pride,
 Could I with boot change for an idle plume
 Which the air beats for vain. O place, O form,
 How often dost thou with thy case, thy habit,
 Wrench awe from fools and tie the wiser souls
 To thy false seeming!

(Measure for Measure II iv 9-15)

Angelo's history with Mariana reveals a man obsessed with status. Not only does he renege on the marriage because of her loss of wealth and position, but in order to ensure he suffers no loss of good character because of his actions, he is prepared to malign her reputation. At the height of his hubris, Angelo has achieved the pinnacle of deadly sin in that he has pride in his own pride. Even his lust, he argues, is of a more refined nature than normal: only a saint can inflame a saint. He cannot bring himself to believe that he shares such worldly desire with those beneath him:

O cunning enemy, that to catch a saint,
 With saints dost bait thy hook. Most dangerous
 Is that temptation that doth goad us on
 To sin in loving virtue. Never could the strumpet
 With all her double vigor, art and nature,
 Once stir my temper, but this virtuous maid
 Subdues me quite.

(Measure for Measure II ii 182-188)

The dilemma in which Angelo finds himself is one well known to those attached to religious communities. Of all the deadly sins, the sin of pride is most to be feared by the religious zealot. In that sense, as Angela Tilby argues, Aquinas saw pride as capable of turning every virtue into a vice (2009: 170). Whilst pride is sometimes

said to conquer lust, being contrary in its inclinations, in Angelo's case it doesn't and so leads to his downfall. He temporarily hands the reins of vainglory over to lust:

I have begun,
And now I give my sensual race the rein.
(*Measure for Measure* II iv 156-157)

However, even in his horror of what he has done morally, it is his anxiety about reputation which comes to the fore: 'A deflowered maid/ and by an eminent body thus enforced' (IV iv 20-21). As a result he becomes in intention, if not in fact, a murderer as well as 'an adulterous thief/ an hypocrite, a virgin violator' (V i 44-45).

Rather than pride saving him from lust, lust is a means of punishment for his pride. The low-life world of prostitution, drunkenness and debauchery on which he makes judgement seems refreshingly without hypocrisy by contrast. His final exposure provides the necessary and ongoing humility to curb his pride. This, for Angelo, is not preferable to the death which would have provided an escape:

Then, good prince,
No longer session hold upon my shame,
But let my trial be my own confession.
Immediate sentence then and sequent death
Is all the grace I beg.
(*Measure for Measure* V i 372-376)

For someone whose incapacity to tolerate shame is such that he craves 'death more willingly than mercy', a marriage with the woman he has so publicly scorned in full public knowledge of the sins he has committed, is truly measure for measure in terms of remedial punishment. He has a lifetime of humility to counteract his pride.

Thriving beneath all this is the debauched activity of the city. Claudio, in his observation that 'Lust 'is no sin,/or of the deadly seven it is the least'(III I 109-110),⁴⁴ is in accordance with Dante, who sites the offenders in lust nearest the summit and therefore nearest the remission of sins in purgatory (Tilby 2009: 87). This commonly held view is also reflected in the observation of James 1 in giving

⁴⁴ This is the only direct named reference to the Seven Deadly Sins in Shakespeare's Works.

moral advice to his son in which he, in the 1603 revised version, adds the word ‘light’ for emphasis:

And although I knowe, Fornication is thought but a light & veniall sinne, by the most part of the world; yet remember wel what I saide to you in my first booke anent conscience: and count everie sinne & breache of Gods law, not according as the vaine world esteemeth of it; but as God the judge & maker of the lawe accounteth of the same (*Basilikon Doron*, Waldegrave 1603, Craigie 1944: 123)

Certainly Claudio and Juliet demonstrate that they are both capable of admitting and repenting their sin. Arguably, the bigger sin was the greed that led to the marriage ceremony being delayed in order to profit from an anticipated dowry. Claudio learns to look at life differently, observing the infectious propensity to worldly sin in what he sees around him:

Our natures do pursue,
Like rats that raven down their proper bane,
A thirsty evil, and when we drink, we die.
(*Measure for Measure* I ii 117-119)

Juliet is brought to see her sin through the charity she has for her unborn child:

I do repent me as it is an evil,
And take the shame with joy.
(*Measure for Measure* II iii 33-36)

Moving with apparent ease between the court and the brothels is the Vice-figure, Lucio. His close familiarity with lust, and ability to defend it with witty argument drawing upon religious authority, is characteristic of a Vice. He says of himself:

’tis my familiar sin
With maids to seem the lapwing and to jest,
Tongue far from heart, play with all virgins so.
(*Measure for Measure* I iv 32-34)

Lucio’s class mobility and ‘taste for the sordid and perverse’ (Brian Gibbons 2006: 29) coupled with his easy sociability and persuasive, often informed, argument are the tools of the Vice, making him at home and capable of influence in any social situation. J.W. Lever notes his referencing of Erasmus (1965: 24 n 110) in his explanation of Juliet’s state:

Your brother and his lover have embraced.
 As those that feed, grow full; as blossoming time
 That from the seedness the bare fallow brings
 To teeming foison; even so her plenteous womb
 Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry.

(Measure for Measure I iv 41-45)

In his discussion with the Duke-as-friar about the need for leniency towards lechery, he draws upon his knowledge of concatenation, pointing out that, where there is gluttony, lust will follow:

Yes, in good sooth, the vice is of a great kindred, it is well allied. But it is impossible to extirp it quite, Friar, till eating and drinking be put down.

(Measure for Measure III i 347-349)

His knowledge of the extent of his own vice is extensive: he knows, for example, that he need not stand bail for Pompey for, as Pompey discovers, he will find himself more at home in prison than anywhere, surrounded by previous friends and customers. His over familiarity towards the Duke infers what would be a common connection between sloth and lust, which is why the Duke is at pains to stress that, in the growth of lust in the city, he has been merely an enabler, not a participant. This is why Lucio's allegations are so offensive to him.

The final indication of Lucio's association with the vice of lust is demonstrated in his encounter with Isabella, who stands in the play as the contrary virtue, chastity. Once he is aware that Isabella is who she is, his attitude changes. She becomes not a virgin: fair game and subject to his lecherous advances, but a virtue, and therefore his opposite number, whose skills he needs to deploy in order to rescue Claudio. He marks their relationship with this oddly formal speech:

I hold you as a thing enskied and sainted
 By your renouncement, an immortal spirit,
 And to be talked with in sincerity,
 As with a saint.

(Measure for Measure I iv 35-38)

However, versed in the workings of lust, he also recognises Isabella's potential attractiveness for Angelo and it is Lucio who knowingly brings about the meeting between Angelo and Isabella, egging her on as Angelo becomes inflamed by her.

Lust, like all sin, can only be suppressed rather than vanquished. This is particularly true for the sins of the flesh like lust which, as Lucio points out, will only be got rid of at the expense of eating and drinking. However, his punishment, too, fits the crime. Like Angelo's permanent humiliation in his marriage to Mariana, so the Duke tethers Lucio to his sin by marrying him to a whore. The opposite to his *modus operandi*, he must become a cuckold:

Marrying a punk, my lord, is pressing to death, whipping and hanging.
(*Measure for Measure* V i 525-526)

Isabella has been the subject of much interpretive debate:⁴⁵ critics have swung from deifying her to ascribing to her the same cold-hearted hubris of Angelo. Her youthfully passionate and extreme desire for personal sacrifice and restraint, with its slightly sadomasochistic tone (David Willbern 1994: 179) which appeals so much to the dominant aspect of Angelo's hubris, reflects not only her naive desire for sainthood but also illustrates her perception of virtue as a thing apart. Chastity, as a virtue, can be read as either pure in the sense of virginal or as sexually faithful: it is therefore more disposed than other virtues, such as charity, to the concept of being locked away, or closed off. Isabella is presented as an over-enthusiastic recluse in the same way that Helena struggles with the retiring aspect of her humility in *All's Well*; both women struggle to rationalise these aspects with the combative strength of virtue. Isabella is introduced as morally self-absorbed, poised at the point where, contrary to the Duke's albeit theoretical preaching on the role of virtue in the world, she intends to enclose her chastity within the walls of a convent and keep it, not only separate from the world, but if she has her way, separate within the convent, too: 'I speak not as desiring more,/ But rather wishing a more strict restraint' (I iv 3-4). Thrown back unexpectedly into the world, she uncovers its moral complexity. When she has to ask for clemency for her brother, she finds herself, the embodiment of chastity, arguing on behalf of lust out of charity:

There is a vice that most I do abhor
And most desire should meet the blow of justice;
For which I would not plead, but that I must;

⁴⁵ See C J Sisson (1956: 74-87) and J W Lever (1965: lxxx-lxxxi)

For which I must not plead, but that I am
 At war 'twixt will and will not.
 (*Measure for Measure* II ii 30-34)

Isabella's placing of her chastity above the life of her brother has been much criticised: Lever accuses her of being motivated by pride rather than religion (1965; lxxxix). Seen as an embodiment of chastity, in its general sense of faithful as well as pure, her response, however disturbing to more liberal thinking, is in keeping with her virtue's moral character. It is interesting, and rare, that in this case both feminist and morality readings converge. Her furious response to Claudio's plea to 'let me live' is peppered with reference to the enemies of chastity: beast, incest, adultery and perversion. When presented as the contrary virtue to lust, it also follows that Shakespeare cannot allow her, as some source texts do, to sacrifice her virginity for her brother's life. She must be seen, as Whetstone puts it, to have won by 'the confusion of vice and the cherishing of vertue' (Gibbons 2006: 9). That chastity can be combined with charity, Isabella learns from Mariana, the chaste wife who demonstrates her fidelity to Angelo both in rejection, and after a consummation in which she knows he thinks he is sexually coercing Isabella. By sacrificing her own virginity, Mariana transforms the meaning behind the act, turning it from one of deadly sin to an act of salvation. Angelo, ultimately, has sinned in intent only.

As he does in *All's Well*, Shakespeare transforms the acts of sin and sacrifice in the source materials into something more morally complex: a deception performed out of love and an opportunity to atone. Mariana has diverted Angelo's act of mortal sin into an intention only, and acknowledging that this state is at once his punishment and his opportunity to change, she educates Isabella in the virtue of sin:

They say best men are molded out of faults
 And for the most, become much more the better
 For being a little bad.
 (*Measure for Measure* V i 442-444)

Although the audience might be moved to reflect on love's capacity to regard desire to rape and murder as 'a little bad', Isabella takes her cue from Mariana and, avoiding the over-confident moral tone with which she argued for her brother's life, she is prepared to accept, to the distaste of modern audiences, partial responsibility

for Angelo's desires. When seen in the context of the popish virgin inflaming the puritan zealot, however, one can see the appeal to Shakespeare's contemporary audience. Interestingly, in the debate as to when sin becomes sin, she emphasises the act over the intent. Perhaps, rather than the 'feeble' label which Gibbons affords it (2006: 198 n 441-2) this is an indication that she is beginning to realise that virtue, too, can only be measured in the good it does:

I partly think

A due sincerity governed his deeds
Till he did look on me. Since it is so,
Let him not die. My brother had but justice,
In that he did the thing for which he died.
For Angelo, his act did not o'ertake his bad intent
And must be buried but as an intent
That perished by the way. Thoughts are no subjects,
Intents but merely thoughts.

(Measure for Measure V i 448-456)

As difficult as this speech may seem to modern editors and critics, Isabella's admission or recognition of her part in Angelo's moral lapse is consistent with Juliet's acknowledgement that, in the sin committed between her and Claudio, she was, as the Duke-as-friar suggests, the guilty party: 'Then was your sin of heavier kind than his'. The expectation of the virtue of chastity is that it will be an active force against the sin of lust. Given Isabella's silence at the end of the play it is difficult to judge whether her experience of taking virtue into the world has convinced her of her place in it, but the Duke clearly recognises her potential in keeping him in the world and providing him with a model the likes of Claudio would find more difficult to malign. However, life in the real world of sin will present much greater challenges for her brand of uncompromising virtue.

The traditional, simple Morality structure is a faded echo in the complex interaction of the mingled web of *Measure for Measure's* Vienna. Duke Vincentio is a moral man whose theoretical grasp of sin and virtue cannot be faulted. He is aware of the sin in his city and the sin of his deputy. However, he is most aware of his own sin which has enabled that of others to develop. He has allowed his retiring, theoretical, interests to disengage himself from his failure to follow his own advice

and apply his virtues to the world around him. He is well aware that his sloth has created the society of Vienna as effectively as if he had managed it himself. When he sets his deputy the task of resolving the problem, he merely compounds it.

Honigmann casts him as, initially, a familiar Elizabethan stereotype – the story of the clever man who overreaches himself, who initiates a dangerous action, and has to improvise more and more frantically to hold off disaster; a version, he claims, of ‘The Sorcerer’s Apprentice’ (1988: 165). The difference however is that the motivation for the clever man is to be seen to take charge, whereas the Duke always seeks to influence from behind a façade: more Wizard of Oz than Sorcerer’s Apprentice. The play, therefore, constantly hovers on the edge of tragedy with the Duke ‘forever revising his options’ and having ‘to interfere more and more decisively, to resume the active responsibility that he had found so irksome’ (Honigmann 1988: 166). What the Duke learns ultimately is that to absent yourself is merely to leave a gap which others will fill and probably not to your liking. His assumption that, by giving Angelo the role of enforcer he would escape bad opinion, is shaken by Lucio’s gossip about him. He realises that the only accurate biographer of a recluse is himself:

Let him be but testimonied in his own bringings-forth, and he shall appear to the envious a scholar, a statesman, and a soldier. Therefore you speak unskilfully, or, if your knowledge be more, it is much darkened in your malice. (*Measure for Measure* III i 355-388)

The Duke also learns that there is a difference between watchfulness and observation; between being merciful and letting things slide. His ‘misanthropic despair’ (Gibbons 2006: 47) is countered by a clearer understanding of what he is capable. Nothing perhaps illustrates this more than his treatment of Barnadine whose life is a metaphor for the kind of mental despair associated with sloth. Trapped in a prison of his own sin, he has lost any belief in an afterlife. Mortality holds no fear for him and life no joy:

A man that apprehends death no more dreadfully but as a drunken sleep; careless, reckless, and fearless of what’s past, present, or to come; insensible of mortality, and desperately mortal.
(*Measure for Measure* IV ii 136-139)

Duke Vincentio releases him from prison, offering him the opportunity to come to terms with his heavenly offences. The play ends with everyone released into world, sin and virtue alike to play their hands once more. ‘Some rise by sin and some by virtue fall,’ (II i 38) observes Escalus, that embodiment of temperance, in summing up the moral confusion which categorises the problem plays, with their underlying co-dependencies of sin and virtue. The moral ambiguity which surrounds the concepts of intention, action and consequence and which therefore can make a sin virtuous and a virtue sinful is a long way from the old morality idea of sin dressed as virtue, but the family resemblance can still be detected.

While lust and chastity as sin and contrary virtue remain central to the play’s focus, it is the contrasting sins of pride and sloth, involved in the moral management of the dilemma, which present real insight into the operation of virtue. James I, in his discussion of princely virtue, singles them out as ‘the two vices that are on either side thereof’: although they seem contrary, they have the same disastrous effect:

and what difference is betwixt extreame tyrannie delighting to destory all mankind; and extreame slacknesse of punishment, permitting every man to tyrannize over his companion? (*Basilikon Doron*, Waldegrave 1603, Craigie 1944: 141).

Proud Angelo is tempted into lust by a model of virtue, and it is his lust which even his pride cannot control, that exposes him to the concatenation of sin he undergoes. In his policy of ruling by stealth, the Duke sinks into evermore dangerous waters, saved finally by an act of providence. Roland Mushat Frye comments that ‘for the theologians, the major significance of virtues and vices [...] consists in furnishing a warning against both pride and despair’ (1963: 260) and certainly this reflects Angelo’s hubris and the Duke’s acedia. He also quotes from Richard Hooker’s *Learned sermon on the nature of pride* (1612) on virtue and vice:

What is virtue but a medicine and vice a wound? Yet we have so often deeply wounded ourselves with medicines, that God hath been fain to makes wounds medicinable; to cure by vice where virtue hath stricken; to suffer the just man to fall, that, being raised he may be taught what power it was which upheld him standing.

Similarly, Martin Luther (1520) utilises the concept of needing to experience sin to prevent it:

God frequently permits a man to fall into or remain in grievous sin, in order that he may be put to shame in his own eyes and in the eyes of all men, who otherwise could not have kept himself from this great vice of vain honor and fame, if he had remained constant in his great gifts and virtues; so God must ward off this sin by means of other grievous sins, that His Name alone may be honored; and thus one sin becomes the other's medicine, because of our perverse wickedness, which not only does the evil, but also misuses all that is good. (*A Treatise on Good Works*, 1520: XXIV, 32).

In *Measure for Measure*, each person suffers as a result of his or her own sin or, in the case of Isabella, virtue, and most appear to learn something from it. The protection which the sinful derive from experiencing the effects of their contrary virtue, such as Angelo's potential life of humility and the Duke's constant spur to virtuous action in the person of the unrelenting Isabella, is not comfortable, nor even victorious. It is not so much the ending as the possibility of a beginning which saves it from tragedy. Whether subscribing to Catholic notions of grace through confession, contrition and penance, or Protestant notions of grace through faith and predestination, this play ends with the grudging, compromising, mercy of realism rather than the happy ending of romance.

5.4 *All's Well That Ends Well*

The nature of sin and virtue, and their respective roles, both underpins and undermines *All's Well That Ends Well* in the same way that it so deliberately confuses the moral reading of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*. The moral disappointment at Bertram's unreconstructed inclination to pride at the conclusion of the play, coupled with what has appeared to some as the morally erratic behaviour of Helen, has led too often to the conclusion that *All's Well* is a play which has failed to blend the reality of its protagonists with the fairy tale, symbolic, nature of its sources (Janette Dillon 2005: lxviii). Take the folk tale of 'the clever wench', it is argued, and attempt to translate it into romantic comedy and you get the theatre critic, J C Trewin's 'calculating little opportunist' (Roger Wood and Mary Clarke 1954: 58-59), and Muriel Bradbrook's 'social climber' (Bradbrook 1950: 279). This is uncomfortably balanced against the sentimental heroine of the

nineteenth-century critics, direct descendent of Patient Griselda, a persona which is similarly awkward in its fawning stoicism. Dr Johnson's irritation at Bertram's dismissal 'into happiness' (Brian Vickers 1981: 375) is pretty evenly matched by those who consider that he has been outwitted rather than 'won'.

Confused between virtue and blood, Bertram suffers from the sin of pride in such a way as Chaucer's Parson specifically cautions against:

Eke for to pride him of his gentrye is ful gret folye, for ofte time the gentrye of the body binimeth the gentrye of the soule (Mann 2005: 725, 461).⁴⁶

A P Rossiter regards it as 'the one dominant ethical problem in the play' (1961: 98) referencing it to John Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays*, published at about the same time at which *All's Well* was probably written. The essay, *Upon some verses of Virgil*, (1603), discusses the mistakenness of those 'who to do vertue a favour, holde that nobilitie is no other thing than Vertue,' (Morley 1886: 432). Recently promoted to the head of the family on his father's death and made ward to the king, Bertram is anxious to play the part but stymied by the king's interference. In this frame of mind he is therefore incapable of recognising in Helen anything other than his childhood past. His first studied statement to his grieving mother hints at the would-be self-importance of a young man assuming his new, important role, with resentful hints about his wardship:

And I in going, madam, weep o'er my father's death anew; but I must attend his majesty's command, to whom I am now in ward, evermore in subjection. (*All's Well* I i 3-5)

His peremptory and patronising instructions to his mother and Helen also convey his gracelessness as he flexes his newly acquired seniority:

The best wishes that can be forged in your Thoughts be servants to you. [*To Helen*] Be comfortable to my mother, your mistress, and make much of her.
(*All's Well* I i 69-72)

⁴⁶ Also to pride oneself of his noble birth is very great folly; for oftentimes the nobility of the body takes away the nobility of the soul;

He awards his mother superiority through her relationship to him (*my* mother), and places Helen at a clear distance from him (*your* mistress), even though she is, in a sense, as the Countess' ward, equal to his own position as a ward of the King. His propensity to self-importance and self-regard is flagged by his mother, whose wise counsel is that he should aim for goodness equal to his rank, and the King's comparative and pointed assessment of his father as a courtier:

Who were below him

He used as creatures of another place,
And bowed his eminent top to their low ranks,
Making them proud of his humility;
In their poor praise he humbled.

(*All's Well* I ii 41-44)

Bertram's attachment to Paroles, who embodies all the questionable hubris of one who pretends to honour through bragging about war, is predictable. However, as has been noted (Rossiter 1961: 95-96), to imply that Bertram's own pride has been brought about by his association with Paroles is questionable. While undoubtedly encouraging Bertram in his desire for military honour, Paroles does not seem to hold that level of influence. It is almost the reverse case, in that Paroles behaves in the way he does to impress Bertram. Indeed, Bertram learns nothing from Paroles' humiliating exposure. In fact, he goes on to utilise Paroles' tactics of attempting to lie his way out of his trap, despite his first-hand experience of seeing Paroles' failure. Rather it is Paroles as Vice-figure who is drawn to Bertram's pride to feed off and nurture it in the same way that, in *Troilus and Cressida*, Thersites and Pandar are drawn to anger and lust. To read the play in terms of vice and virtue makes Helena's otherwise barely believable obsessive attachment to Bertram more convincing. By utilising the psychomachic pattern noted (Jean E Howard 2006: 56) in Helena and Paroles' struggle for Bertram, it is possible to see Helen as the contrary virtue of humility to Paroles' vice of pride, drawn to Bertram because of his strong propensity for the sin of pride. This reading, while in one sense conforming to Dillon's notion of unreality, actually makes it more believable, to a Shakespearean audience at least.

This reading also accounts for Helen's confessed familiarity with Paroles. As contrary virtue, it is her role to know the ways of her opposite vice and to limit his

influence and effect over Bertram, who is as much her moral ward as he is legal ward to the King. Her relationship with Paroles is one of moral co-dependant: she knows, and will do her best to contain, his faults and attractions. The almost deliberately ambiguous pronouns 'him' and 'his' suggest that the faults of the servant are also only too recognisable in his master. If she doesn't know then, she, and the audience, will certainly come to know Bertram as a liar, fool and a coward:

I love him for his sake,
 And yet I know him a notorious liar,
 Think him a great way fool, solely a coward.
 Yet these fixed evils sit so fit with him
 That they take place when virtue's steely bones
 Looks bleak i'th' cold wind withal. Full oft we see
 Cold wisdom waiting on superfluous folly.
 (*All's Well* I i 95-101)

The King's initial assessment of Bertram's conceit proves prophetic. However, this first lesson in the faults of pride is not a good one as the King, despite his gnomic statements about handsome being what handsome does, such as 'honors thrive/ when rather from our acts we them derive,' (II iii 133-134) is actually enforcing the match as a demonstration of his own status. Bertram, then, loses the battle to a higher form of pride:

My honor's at the stake, which to defeat
 I must produce my power, [...]
 It is in us to plant thine honour where
 We please to have it grow.
 (*All's Well* II iii 147-155)

As a 'learning place' the court simply reinforces Bertram's pride, teaching him to fit into the hierarchy by lying to appease one more powerful than himself. He learns flattery, not fairness, which he demonstrates by praising the King while at the same time also managing to reiterate Helen's lowly state:

Pardon my gracious lord, for I submit
 My fancy to your eyes. When I consider
 What great creation and what dole of honor
 Flies where you bid it, I find that she which late

Was in my nobler thoughts most base, is now
 The praised of the King, who, so ennobled,
 Is as 'twere born so.

(All's Well II iii 165-171)

Bertram's petulant rejection of Helen and defiant escape to war is encouraged by Paroles, whose assessment of honour is illustrated by pride's traditional repulsion of lust, a repulsion which he later acts upon in his written advice to Diana about capitalising from Bertram's lust. He maintains the division between honour in war and lust:

He wears his honor in a box unseen
 That hugs his kicky-wicky here at home,
 Spending his manly marrow in her arms
 Which should sustain the bound and high curvet
 Of Mars's fiery steed.

(All's Well II iii 266-270)

Despite being responsible for Bertram's 'learning', the King also struggles with the sin of pride. He also challenges his superior, God, in that he has decided his own fate and prefers to die rather than risk his reputation by being seen to allow Helen to attempt a cure. Helen's first task at court is to use her virtue to save the King from his proud assumptions about his future life. The King initially voices his resistance in terms of corrupting his greatness:

I say we must not
 So stain our judgement or corrupt our hope
 To prostitute our past-cure malady
 To empirics, or to dissever so
 Our great self and our credit, to esteem
 A senseless help, when help past sense we deem.

(All's Well II i 117-122)

Initially, Helen responds with a humble 'I will no more enforce my office on you', but then she remembers her role, and argues her strength by providing examples of God's work through the small and the weak. Finally she counters his refusal with a lesson on presumption:

It is not so with Him that all things knows

As 'tis with us that square our guess by shows.

But most it is presumption in us when

The help of heaven we count the act of men.

(All's Well II i 147-150)

Ultimately she is prepared, in her role as contrary virtue, to lose all in order to save the King, because she is not merely saving him physically, she is saving him morally, too. She hazards her virtue against his pride. When he asks 'What dost thou venture?' she replies that she will risk the essence of her virtue, her reputation for humility, and therefore, her life:

Tax of impudence

A strumpet's boldness; a divulgèd shame

Traduced by odious ballads; my maiden's name

Seared. Otherwise, no, worst of worst, extended

With vilest torture let my life be ended.

(All's Well II i 168-172)

Helen cleverly wins the argument by offering to sacrifice that which the King's own sense of pride could hardly envision: she exploits his sin to win his soul. Finally she teaches, or at least demonstrates to him, the idea of strength in weakness:

Methinks in thee some blessèd spirit doth speak

His powerful sound within an organ weak,

(All's Well II i 173-174)

As a contrary virtue, Helen is aware of the spiritual importance attached to her success. 'Not helping, death's my fee' (II i 188), works at both physical and metaphysical levels. Rather than, as has been suggested by both Robert Ornstein (1986: 173-94) and R B Parker (1984: 99-113) awakening sexual vigour in the King, an interpretation which has never been carried off satisfactorily in performance, Helen awakens his sense of purpose and recognition of a higher authority, although she still fails to entirely cure him of his pride.

Bertram, however, is not so much of a one-off cure but a work in endless progress. Helen's commitment to him is total. He demonstrates all the faults of proud, impetuous youth and it is his youth initially which enables some moral leeway in terms of his obsession with personal and family honour. His proud behaviour at home and at court is accompanied by the sulky behaviour of adolescence. He is

frequently referred to as a boy, a state emphasised by his wardship and it seems clear that initially a case is being made to excuse his behaviour somewhat. One further explanation is withheld until the final scene. That is the line he speaks referring to Lafeu's daughter, Maudlin, in which he admits:

At first

I stuck my choice upon her, ere my heart
Durst make too bold a herald of my tongue;
(*All's Well* V iii 44-46)

Many productions have introduced a silent Maudlin into Act II scene three to explain Bertram's vehement resistance to the King's proposal, as a desire on Bertram's part to demonstrate where his affections really lay. While an attractive dramatic possibility, it has to be remembered that Bertram's capacity to lie and flatter has, if anything, developed by the end of the play.

The major difficulty with Bertram is that so very little moral development takes place within the context of the play. In fact, the Bertram at the end of the play has grown and developed in sin: he flatters more easily, he lies more creatively, his opinion of himself has not diminished and he has added licentiousness to his competencies, or so he thinks. The honour his pride hid behind as a youth has slipped, revealing the sin beneath. Alexander Leggatt observes that Bertram learns nothing from the exposure of Paroles (2003; 25). Paroles' humiliation prefigures that of Bertram which, rather than the traditional comedy ending of contrition and reconciliation, is the focus of the final scene. This focus is important as it not only punishes Bertram for his behaviour as he has clearly not been punishing himself, but it also exposes the difference between pride and honour. Sin lore recognises that pride can sometimes save an individual from lust as the sense of honour and fear of opinion will prevent it. Bertram's sense of honour has so degenerated during his time as a soldier that he has attempted (and in his opinion achieved) the seduction of Diana, and has also forfeited his ring, the symbol of his family honour in pursuance of it. His battle honours are questionable and as his mother says, 'his sword can never win/ the honor that he loses' (III ii 89-90). Having had kicked away the legs of his 'honourable' standing, leaving him nothing on which to base his pride, Bertram is then exposed as an actively dishonourable liar before court, family, potential wife, and a father-in-law who expresses a preference for a son-in-law bought at a fair.

Ignominiously crushed and caught by a bargain of his own making, he has nowhere else to go other than, without enthusiasm but with humility, into the care of Helen.

That the play ends with a sense that Bertram is still not morally reformed, parallels the fate of Paroles who, wholly exposed and reduced to ‘a poor, decayed, ingenious, foolish, rascally knave’ acknowledges his vice because that it what he is. He hides behind, or disguises himself with, humility, declaring that pride is ‘safest in shame’. As a Vice-figure, however, he is securely aware of his own resilience: to paraphrase the First Lord, he knows what he is, and is it. Where there is humanity, there will always be sin. Paroles concedes with a speech reminiscent of Pandarus’ last speech in *Troilus and Cressida*:

Simply the thing I am
 Shall make me live. Who knows himself a braggart,
 Let him fear this: for it will come to pass
 That every braggart shall be found an ass.
 (*All's Well* IV iii 316-319)

What saves Paroles, as with every Vice-figure, is ironically, his honesty about himself and his willingness to adapt to whatever life enables his survival. Alexander Leggatt observes:

Parolles’ decision to seek out the man who once despised him, not transformed, but as he is, may provide some underpinning for the mutual acceptance of Helena and Bertram in the last scene. (Leggatt 2003: 38).

The ‘volatile mix’ (Leggatt 2003: 30) which constitutes the person of Helen is also not as contradictory as it may seem when viewed in terms of the virtue she represents. Humility is often mis-read as purely self-effacing and humble. While this is a recognisable aspect of the virtue it is important to note that the qualities also associated with it are bravery, modesty, reverence and altruism. Whilst being initially characterised by those who love her as self-effacing, quiet and undemanding: ‘There is more owing her than is paid, and more shall be paid her than she’ll demand’ (I iii 91-92), there is in the play no overt comment on what some critics consider her inconsistent bravery in her ambitious plan to cure the king or her apparently unmaidenly exchange with Paroles on the subject of virginity. Closer examination of her actions in the context of a contrary virtue reveal more consistency than might

appear. Her bravery and apparent personal ambition is not for herself so much as to fulfil her role. Her passion for Bertram, which she describes as ‘idoltrous fancy’ demonstrates the fine line she treads between forbearance and reform drawn as she is, like Paroles, to his sin, but for the opposite reason. She questions and worries about her actions as she has, like Portia, the virtue’s habit of continually checking the morality of her behaviour. Her desire for Bertram is often expressed in the altruistic, self-sacrificing terms of her contrary virtue: ‘The hind that would be mated by the lion/ Must die for love’ (I i 87-88).

The portrayal of the role of virtue in the play as embodied by Helen parallels Paroles’ portrayal of sin in ways which go beyond a simple psychomachia. As two of a kind, Paroles and Helen display an easy familiarity common in opponents who meet frequently and must really understand one another. His role is to encourage Bertram in his sin while hers is to save him from it. However, their mutual knowledge of sin and virtue places them nearer to one another than they are to Bertram. As a contrary virtue, Helen must be familiar with sin, and Paroles must be adept in deploying God’s word and moral argument to his own ends. Helen’s exchange with Paroles on the subject of virginity, which has been cited as evidence of her ‘volatile’ character (Leggatt 2003: 28) and of her strong sexuality, makes considerably more sense when viewed in the context of a Virtue confronting a Vice. Helen has already established her familiarity with the braggart Vice-figure who has made Bertram his friend. She knows Paroles and what he stands for in Bertram, and has established a psychomachic relationship with him rather than confronting Bertram’s sin directly. To debate with Paroles about virtue is to reinforce their respective roles. Helen’s disputation with Paroles has the flavour of a morality debate about the role of virtue in the world. Paroles’ harangue against virginity identifies the sterile nature of a virtue which keeps only to itself, a theme also to be found in relation to the role of Isabella in *Measure for Measure*. He displays the typical Vice’s alacrity in argument and religious authority, arguing a case for the worst kind of pride; pride in virtue:

Besides, virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love - which is the most inhibited sin in the canon. (*All’s Well* I i 136-137)

This plays to an anxiety which Helen consistently voices. She takes seriously the criticism with its associated protestant, anti-monasticism rationale: despite her

natural humility, her place is in the world protecting Bertram from his pride. Virtue, like virginity, when kept to itself has no value or use:

Virginity like an old courtier, wears her cap out of
fashion, richly suited but unsuitable,
(*All's Well* I i 144-145)

To keep virtue to oneself is to be proud: to risk one's virtue to redeem a world of vice is a conundrum. Helen asks 'How might one do, sir, to lose it to her own liking?' Paroles' overtly bawdy response 'to like him that ne'er it likes' (I i 141) has an underlying wisdom. In attaching herself to one who rejects her, the pride-infected Bertram, she is taking on a life's work; it is like taking the veil. This is the vocation she outlines, redeploying terms of contemporary love poetry which, at one level, reflect her anxiety about Bertram's life at court without her, and at another level provide a contrary virtue's job description; that is to be 'a thousand loves' including, of course the 'traitress' or tell-tale that she must become to bring him to heel:

A mother, and a mistress, and a friend,
A phoenix, captain, and an enemy,
A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign,
A counsellor, a traitress, and a dear.
His humble ambition, proud humility
His jarring concord, and his discord dulcet;
His faith, his sweet disaster,
(*All's Well* I i 155-161)

Helen's 'hands-on' approach to the role of contrary virtue leads her to engage in most of the roles she lists. She conducts deception and enables seduction, saving Bertram from himself but, in doing so, going against his wishes. In achieving all this she behaves in ways which could be considered to be far from the accepted role of humility. James L Calderwood makes a case for strong sensuality (Calderwood 1963: 7), for example. As a contrary virtue, however, her role is primarily remedial, and she never fails to point this out. 'Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie/ Which we ascribe to heaven,' (I i 201-202) she maintains, often justifying her results-orientated approach to remedy by highlighting outcome over act; playing with the ambiguity of sin and virtue:

wicked meaning in a lawful deed,

And lawful meaning in a lawful act,
Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact.

(All's Well III vii 45-47)

Ironically, she echoes Paroles' original advice on her loss of virginity with the observation:

so lust doth play
With what it loathes for that which is away.

(All's Well IV iv 24-25)

Just as, for Paroles, any drum will do to convince his superiors and maintain his credibility, so Helen is prepared to resort to subterfuge to bring about the result which will best secure her guardianship of Bertram's soul. While Diana goes along with the trick in order to punish Bertram for his behaviour;

Only, in this disguise I think't no sin
To cozen him that would unjustly win.

(All's Well IV ii 75-76)

Helen does not look for revenge but for victory:

All's well that ends well; still the fine's the crown.
Whate'er the cause, the end is the renown.

(All's Well IV iv 35-36)

This argument in which the means are justified by the moral or virtuous outcome, a repeated mantra in the play, has a certain credibility within Sins-related literature.⁴⁷

Helen is, however, a contrary virtue and Bertram's pride is so entrenched he must suffer public humiliation twice in order for Helen to gain control of him: he is 'doubly won'. Like Paroles, all his sins must be exposed. Helen's faked death is not enough to make him convinced of his need of her. In the face of his continued scepticism she must reinforce the damnation he faces without her; what she provides is not so much reassurance as warning against further doubt:

If it appear not plain and prove untrue,
Deadly divorce step between me and you.

(All's Well V iii 311-312)

⁴⁷ See the story of Piers Toller, Page 28.

Bertram has achieved little else at this stage in terms of redemption than a second chance by means of humiliation; but humiliation is not humility - he has the opportunity to begin again but he is still shouting the odds. Chaucer's Parson provides an illuminating checklist in his section on how to remedy pride through humility. True humility, he maintains, is represented in the heart, the mouth and deeds. He subdivides each category, providing indicators or 'maneres' to illustrate each section:

The humilitee in herte is in foure maneres: that oon is whan a man holdeth himself as naught worth biforn God of hevne; another is whan he ne despiseth noon oother man; the thridde is whan he rekketh nat though men holde him noght worth; the ferthe is whan he nis nat sory of his humiliacioun. [480] Also the humilitee of the mouth is in foure thinges: in atempree speche, and in humblesse of speche, and whan he biknoweth with his owene mouth that is swich as him thinketh that he is in his herte; another is whan he preiseth the bountee of another man and nothing therof amenuseth. Humilitee eek in werkes is in foure maneres: the firste is whan he putteth othere men biforn him; the seconde is to chese the loweste place overall; the thridde is gladly to assente to good conseil; the ferthe is to stonde gladly to the award of his sovereign, or of him that is in hyer degree.

Certain, this is a greet werk of humilitee. (Mann 2005: 726-727, 479-483).⁴⁸

As a checklist, this not only provides an uncanny reflection of much of the unheeded advice Bertram is given and subsequently ignores, but it also demonstrates how far

⁴⁸ The humility in heart is in four manners. The first is when a man considers himself worth nothing before God of heaven. Another is when he despises no other man. The third is when he cares not, though men consider him worth nothing. The fourth is when he is not sorry for his humiliation [480]. Also the humility of mouth is shown by four things: in temperate speech, and in humbleness in speaking, and when he acknowledges with his own mouth that he is such as it appears to him what he is in his heart. Another is when he praises the goodness of another man, and nothing thereof diminishes. Humility in deeds is also in four manners. The first is when he puts other men before him. The second is to choose the lowest place of all. The third is gladly to assent to good counsel. The fourth is to stand gladly to the decisions of his superiors, or of him that is in higher degree. Certainly, this is a great work of humility.

he has still to travel to remedy his pride at the end of the play. Rather than being rewarded with Helen, it seems that he is giving himself up into her moral custody.

That all is fair in love and war, and ‘All’s well that ends well, yet’ underpins the complex relationship between vice and virtue which is also raised in *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*. To understand virtue, it has been argued, it is necessary to have experienced temptation to sin. The confusion of sin presented as virtue is as old as the Seven Deadly Sins themselves. Virtue which relies on, and is attracted to, sinful behaviour to bring about good reveals a more subtle explanation of moral struggle and the interdependence of vice and virtue. Montaigne’s view in his *Essay: Of Crueltie*, translated by John Florio, provides some further definition of the problem:

If vertue cannot shine but by resisting contrarie appetites, shall we then say, it cannot passe without the assistance of vice, and oweth him this, that by his meanes it attaineth to honour and credit. (Harmer 1965: 2:110).

What *All’s Well That Ends Well* seems to be implying is that this moral struggle is as important in its process as its product. Virtue, or vice for that matter, is not, as the religious orders might imply, a hermetical perseverance. In 1644, Milton raises the same argument in *Areopagitica*:

And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evill, that is to say of knowing good by evill. As therefore the state of man now is: what wisdome can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evill? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian *I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister’d vertue, unexercis’d & unbreath’d, that never fallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race,* (1999: 12, my italics).

Paroles’ exchange with Lafeu emphasises the moral interdependence and the interchangeability between God and the devil when he implies that, for exposing him for what he is, Lafeu has a responsibility to own, or even save, him:

Out upon thee, knave, dost thou put upon me at once
both the office of God and the devil? One brings thee in grace,
and the other brings thee out.

(*All's Well* V ii 43-45)

Helen's irresistible desire to love Bertram despite his proud disposition, is the attraction of a contrary virtue to the vice within him and this is what explains a behaviour which otherwise, and particularly through modern eyes, is that of a tragically obsessive woman with incredibly low self-esteem who despite the flattery of all around her, is incapable of raising her sights. As a virtue she is reconciled to constant battle; a series of victories and the dubious salvation of frustrating the intended sin through subterfuge so that he is 'guilty and yet not guilty'. The play not only distinguishes between thought and action as regards culpability but moves further to consequence. Its uncomfortable ending, framed with the 'ifs' which dominate the play, sends an important message. Whereas tragedy is final, in comedy, there are no truly happy endings. At best, there are happy beginnings, but in the problem comedies of *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, even the beginnings are somewhat doom-laden.

In a play equally stuffed with gnomic comment on the one hand and bare-faced lying on the other (Hapgood 1965: 274) the chorus of moral observation drawn from the two Lords Dumaine proves refreshingly telling and down to earth. They pick their way through the confusion of vice and virtue which surrounds them, trying to separate good from evil, but inevitably finding a bit of each in everyone and sometimes preferring honest vice to cold virtue. The message of the play is therefore appropriately summed up by one of these two observers, the First Lord Dumaine:

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together. Our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not, and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues.

(*All's Well* IV iii 69-72)

5.5 The Sins ancient and modern

In these three 'problem plays', Shakespeare utilises the Sins framework, drawing upon the legacy of Sins literature and lore, to expose moral hypocrisy and examine the nature and complexity of the relationship between sin and virtue as it is adapted to fit within conflicting cultural paradigms. The vicious exposé of both heroic and chivalric cultures in *Troilus and Cressida* goes some way to illustrate the shifting

nature of cultural values and how they adjust to reflect and disguise moral bankruptcy. The contradictory and confusing, yet mutually self-policing, relationship between sin and virtue exploited in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well* exhaustively examines issues of inclination, action and consequence; concepts which troubled the desert ascetics in the fourth century. The reference point in this moral exposure, however far removed and culturally adapted, is the Sins and the cultural heritage which underpins them, enabling the drama to air moral ambiguities and critique the use societies make of them by drawing on a collective memory of the commonly understood moral structures which sustain it.

Chapter Six

'Smiling extremity out of act'

6.1 The late plays: anger and patience

The group of plays generally agreed to have been written by Shakespeare, or Shakespeare in collaboration with other playwrights, in the last nine years of his life has been the subject of much debate regarding order, dramatic classification and above all, speculation as to the age-related psychology which produced them. Gordon McMullan in his helpfully objective summary of this lengthy critical debate (McMullan 2009: 5-27), has cut through the traditions of assumption and wishful thinking to reveal a disparate collection of plays whose production may have been influenced by necessary revision of earlier work following the *Act to Restrain the Abuses of Players* (1606); collaborative thinking, and above all, professional response to dramatic fashions and successes. In questioning the value of imagining Shakespeare as 'a laureate-style poet consciously carving out a career – by which I mean either in the early modern sense of shaping a poetic selfhood, [...] or in the later, Romantic sense of the inspired figure in the garret working in isolation to pour out onto the page the record of his current emotions' (McMullan 2009: 19), he highlights the external influences which may have affected the playwright's choice of source and genre, as well as acknowledging the emphasis on 'return' or reassessment embodied in rewriting or re-working earlier writing and ideas. McMullan cites the work carried out in the field of repertory studies, in particular the observations of Lucy Munro, who emphasises the influence of the demands of the repertories in leading and keeping up with popular and lucrative new trends (Munro 2005:165). In considering this approach, McMullan refers to Knutson's suggestion that the success of *Mucedorus*, the Elizabethan pastoral romance play which underwent a revival, could have influenced the production of other romances and tragicomedies of the period (Knutson 2001: 142-3).

The group of four 'last' plays: *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*, whose narrative sources most reflect a romance tradition, form a group that share qualities which link more than divide, collectively placing them within the

categories of romance or tragicomedy. It is interesting that what is considered to be the earliest of the four plays, *Pericles*, exploits a source which utilises the organising principle of The Seven Deadly Sins in the context of a classical rather than Christian milieu. Gower's early use of the Christian humanist adaptation of the classics to moral reading associates well with, not only the commonplace tradition of moral reading, but also the need to stay within the stricter early seventeenth-century censorship requirements on blasphemy.

What is more interesting, however, in this period of professional review and religious compliance following the fierce debates on pre-destination, providence and grace of the latter half of the sixteenth century (Poppi 1988: 667), is the way in which moral reading shifts in order to accommodate contemporary religious debate. Whilst not necessarily subscribing to the often highly complex theological interpretations of these plays, which seem barely credible when taking into account the external influences and pressures of the playwright's art, it would be reasonable to anticipate the impact that such changed beliefs might have brought to bear on the dramatic suspense inherent in the role of the Shakespearean tragic hero, and his individual struggle with sin and damnation. Plays which focus on a spiritual journey of faith towards some expression of an ultimate moral reconciliation, suggestive of a state of grace, would certainly reflect contemporary emphasis on faith and salvation.

Having exploited the dramatic value of the deadly sins and the inevitable tragic Senecan fall from grace; explored the potential of the comedy through pitting contrary virtue against deadly sin to achieve moral victory, albeit tenuous, and developed further the providential ambiguity of sin and virtue through the moral complexity of, and ambivalence of, good sin and evil virtue in the problem plays, the dramatic form of the late plays seems almost inevitable. In a mirror of the changing perspectives on redemption, the four 'late', 'romance' plays shift the focus away somewhat from an individual's control over sin to focus on an individual's learning to accept providence and achieve a form of grace. The medium of the romance tradition enabled the dramatic assessment of life portrayed as a moral test. The popular romance tradition of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period provided a range of tales which embraced all cultural and literary notions of sin and virtue including chivalric, classical and Christian and which, as importantly, allowed for a timescale

that cut across dramatic tradition, enabling both spiritual and, often, actual life journeys to be unfolded, revealing the hand of God through the media of shipwrecks, extreme reversals of fortune, predictions, oracles, dreams, losses and orchestrated recognition scenes.

In most of Shakespeare's comedies a contrary virtue, often in the form of the love interest, prevents or diverts the inevitable course of the deadly sin and the play ends with a final act in which there is often the uncomfortable potential, without virtue on hand to police it, of recidivism, or at least an insecure and unknown future ahead. This is further distorted in the problem comedies by a deal of moral compromise. The late plays, however, make full use of resolution, and not merely the flimsy moral resolution of the moment: these are divine resolutions, the endings which Frank Kermode (1967: 175) describes as those which 'frankly transfigure events in which they were immanent.' These endings are real conclusions with no potential for moral shift: they are at a kind of pre-death, post-confession stage where there is no time, opportunity nor inclination left to sin anymore.

The romance narrative form of *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*, and especially their dependence upon an individual journey, has inevitably led to interpretations of Christian allegory and comparison with the Medieval miracle play⁴⁹. In the case of Sarah Beckwith's more recent study, this has been accompanied with more circumspect speculation as to what this may reveal about Shakespeare's own beliefs and understanding about the nature of grace (Beckwith 2011: 143-44). Richard Halpern rightly argues that the heavy reliance on classical gods distances the play from the more exclusively Christian readings, maintaining that they 'engage thematic elements crucial to the Christian tradition – faith resurrection, salvation – while detaching from an exclusively Christian context' (Halpern 1997: 147). This and the cultural transferability of the Sins lends confirmation to the Christian humanist moral reading of classical and romance sources and enables a dramatic content which concentrates on more universal, and therefore less contentious, notions of good and evil and God. This moral reading accords with Michael Neill's

⁴⁹ See Bethell, SL *'The Winter's Tale': A Study* 1947; Knight, G Wilson *The Crown of Life* 1947; Traversi, Derek *The last plays: A New Approach* 1975.

recognition of the dramatic use of time, and therefore patience which is the contrary virtue intrinsic to it, and its healing effect on revenge and the revenge tragedy. He considers that the renunciation of vengeance in the name of virtue negates the ‘struggle to control and dispose of time in Revenge Tragedy.’ He characterises time as ‘the opponent in this’ (Neill 1983: 36). The power of time which R S White associates directly with patience, ‘The supreme virtue’ (White 1985: 117), combines the human capacity for memory and hope with the ‘god-given’ elements of time and nature. This will ultimately overcome the need for revenge and the despair brought about by ‘fortuitous calamity’. The conflict between anger and patience is central to the *Psychomachia* in which patience is characterised as mild, long-suffering and possessing of a ‘staid countenance’ unmoved by her struggle with wrath (G J Schiffhorst 1978: 3). The iconography of patience conventionally seats her on a stone or rock which symbolises solidity, immobility and impregnable virtue (Priscilla L Tate 1978: 112). She is often weeping tears of comfort, finding content in the centre of discontent and usually leads portrayals of the triumph of virtue. There is a history of patience as a supreme virtue in early modern European iconography and literature.

There is, however, another fourteenth century iconographic representation of patience described in the works of Ulrich, Abbot of a Cistercian monastery in Lilienfield between 1345 and 1357, and identified by Nigel Harris (2005: 234-276). It portrays patience rather less robustly; not on a rock but on a lamb and wearing on her helmet an emblem of a timid young hare. This is a patience whose *modus operandi* is rather closer to Pericles than the rock-occupying, immovable women represented by Viola, Marina, Imogen, Hermione and Miranda:

Patience fights, sitting on a lamb, since the patient man always shows himself to be gentle to everyone. Her ornament is green, since through his good deeds the patient man flourishes in his conscience, but on her shield is depicted a patient donkey, since truly the patient man endures all the blows of words and deeds. She carries a loosened bow in her hand, for the patient man wounds no one, not even one thing. She carries on her helmet a timid young hare, since she conquers all harmful things by running away. (Harris 2005: 274).

The poem *Patience* by the medieval *Pearl* poet (1360-98) sums up the virtue in its opening lines:

Patience is a [nobel] point, þaz hit displeas ofte.
 When heuy herttes ben hurt wyth hepyng oper elles,
 Suffraunce may aswagen hem & þe swelme lepe;
 For ho quelles vche a qued & quenches malice.
 (*Patience* 1-4)⁵⁰

Margaret Williams observes of the poem that the medieval concept of patience included much more than just sitting and waiting:

It was cognate with ‘passion’ the act of suffering, undergoing, submitting as patient to agent, being passive under action. It involved humility and obedience, or acceptance of the right order of things, especially the right order between creature and creator... (Williams 1970: 32).

Schiffhorst identifies patience as a dominant theme in sixteenth and seventeenth century art and literature and sees it as being associated both with expectation and with temperance which has as its antithesis impatient wrath and grief (Schiffhorst 1978: 6).

In all four plays there is evidence of anger and the closely related sin of despair finally becoming resolved through time and the agency of a supernatural influence. In her persuasive literary, philosophical and theological analysis of Shakespeare’s plays as exempla of a new attempt at a language of acknowledgement and forgiveness which somehow replaces the abandoned ritual of auricular confession and priestly absolution, Sarah Beckwith recognises all four plays as an attempt to deploy forgiveness as ‘the possibility of redemption from the predicament of irreversibility’ of the tragic protagonist. In this sense she regards *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest* as reworkings of *King Lear* (Beckwith 2011: 2). In this context she sees the plays as reflecting a form of self-confession which leads to self-knowledge. In what she characterises as ‘the untidily long conversation and conflict regarding the Church of England’s liturgy and

⁵⁰ Patience has its good point though not often pleasant.

When heavy hearts are hurt by something hateful,
 Long-suffering may cure them and cool them off,
 For she quells every evil and quenches malice.

theology', Shakespeare's work, she suggests, admits the shifting nature of meaning in terms of contrition, confession and absolution (Beckwith 2011: 3-6) and enables the development of 'post-tragic' romances which, while not superseding the tragedies, 'stage the recovery from tragedy in the renewed possibility of mutual acknowledgement.'

This is also perceived by Robert Miola who, in his analysis of Seneca's presence in Renaissance comedy and the hybrid genre, tragicomedy, references a classical model which 'often provides an initial tragic impulse which chance, contrivance or supernatural agency turns to comedy' (Miola 1992: 188). Like Beckwith, he detects a close association 'by repudiation' with Shakespeare's former tragic heroes: 'Shakespeare draws eclectically upon his own tragedies, deeply inscribed with Senecan images of revenge, tyranny and *furor*' (Miola 1992: 193). The accommodation of a changing rule book on forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption diverts emphasis away from the archetypal Senecan sinner, driven by his sin and consciously stepping off the moral cliff from which he cannot return, to a greater focus on spiritual helplessness and a need for the struggle between sin and virtue to be acknowledged within the context of a meta-dimensional approach to the Sins. In effect, these plays do not only address a protagonist's propensity towards sin or the virtue inherent in an individual to help save himself or others from sin: they deal with remedy and what brings it about. In doing so, they also address primarily the sin of anger, in the form of revenge or vengeance, its ambiguous qualifier 'righteous' and its contrary virtue, patience or endurance. So, whether it is the challenges of the 1606 *Act to Restrain Abuses of Players* prohibition of blasphemy on stage; the revised ground of religious interpretation of providence and grace, or simply the popularity of romance drama and a need to interpret source material for the stage, it seems that the template of the Sins was still a useful tool in presenting material through a conveniently non-contentious and universally understood medium.

6.2 *Pericles*

Pericles, with its 'odd mixture of antique form, miracle play, medieval pageantry, romance plot and New Comic design' (Miola 1992: 194) represents a good starting point in the development of the revised use of the Sins to provide a sense of dramatic and moral cohesion. The curious first scene in *Pericles* in which the chivalrous Pericles' moral code is shaken by his discovery of a king's shocking immorality lacks the sympathetic telling found in *Confessio Amantis*. Shakespeare's Gower is, in fact, very clear in his moral judgement of 'bad child, worse father' an assessment which contrasts directly with the final image of Pericles and Marina as good father, better child. The sin of lust, so uncomfortable when coupled with pride, as in *Measure for Measure*, inevitably leads to violent attempts to cover up and maintain the status of the lecher. In *Pericles* this consequently leads to the uncomfortable chivalric tension in the scene. There is a suggestion of a cry for help in Antiochus' daughter's only speech to Pericles:

Of all 'sayed yet, mayst thou prove prosperous,
Of all 'sayed yet, I wish thee happiness.
(*Pericles* I i 60-61)

However, she is presented by her father as an object, and appraised and rejected by Pericles in similar terms:

You are a fair viol, and your sense the strings
Who, fingered to make man his lawful music,
Would draw heaven down, and all the gods to hearken.
But, being played upon before your time,
Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime.
(*Pericles* I i 82-86)

Pericles, struggling with the tension between what his chivalric training believes to be the king's 'earth's god' status and the reality of his ungodly vice, has a courtly exchange with Antiochus. He equivocates over confronting Antiochus with his sin and Antiochus responds with equally courteous obfuscation, revealing in his 'gloze' the sin hiding beneath the manners and condemning himself, in Pericles' judgement, not only as a monstrous lecher but also as a hypocrite:

How courtesy would seem to cover sin
When what is done is like an hypocrite,

The which is good in nothing but in sight!

(*Pericles* I i 122-124)

Pericles is, however, cowed by his conformance to courtly tradition and his knowledge of the power of kings. It is not until he experiences the court of Simonides that he begins to understand that, as Beckwith asserts, ‘honor is thus an ethical category, not a class code, as in the old hag’s speech of *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*’ (Beckwith 2011: 98), something Marina knows instinctively. Nevertheless Pericles is introduced to Simonides’ court as a ‘bold champion’, a man of chivalry who recognises corruption and who has been well schooled in the ways that sin operates. He certainly has knowledge of the workings of sin: he understands about concatenation and he fears the results of escalating corruption. He has the wisdom and the single-mindedness of virtue, but perhaps not the courage. This could be because he senses the potential for anger in himself and seeks to escape it; he runs, not from battle, but from sin, including his own sin:

Antioch, farewell, for wisdom sees those men

Blush not in actions blacker than the night

Will shun no course to keep them from the light.

One sin, I know, another doth provoke:

Murder’s as near to lust as flame to smoke.

Poison and treason are the hands of sin-

Ay, and the targets to put off the shame

(*Pericles* I i 135-141)

Pericles begins with sin: an act of sin chosen by Gower for its indisputability, even in the temple of Venus, whose remit as the Goddess of Love extends well beyond the strict Christian definition into the realms of what Chaucer’s Parson would certainly have defined as lechery. This act of sin begins a moral exploration on how to react in an encounter with evil which is reflected in Pericles’ spiritual and physical journey. Advised by Helicanus’ political pragmatism, Pericles chooses to escape once more when he and, by association, his people, are threatened by the wrathful vengeance of Antiochus. Again, the escape has a certain moral ambiguity, however there are clues in the second scene which reveal the potentially more morally damaging sins which Pericles needs to avoid. The ‘dull-eyed melancholy’ of acedia and the ‘angry brow’, against which the loyal and morally wise Helicanus counsels, identify two potential

sins against which Pericles must struggle. As Andrew Welsh makes clear, despair was a sin far more serious than either Antiochus' incest or the murderous envy of Dionyza (Welsh 1974: 106-107). Pericles' potential for what Welsh terms as 'spiritual suicide' reaches a climax following the apparent death of Marina. It transcends Medieval Catholic notions of deadly sin because, as Welsh suggests 'it also belongs to another tradition, a group of sins known as the 'unforgiveable' sins against the Holy Spirit – unforgiveable because they impeded forgiveness' (1974: 107). Importantly, given the context of the tragicomedy, it is also associated with the rejection of grace. Helicanus detects both the acedia and the flattery which is associated with the sin of anger, 'For flatt'ry is the bellows blows up sin' (Scene II: 44). Helicanus is not afraid to challenge Pericles, arguably showing more bravery than his master in persuading Pericles to renounce courtly honour and the use of his power as a king in favour of the Christian virtues of humility and patience. Initially, when he does not know the nature of Pericles' sadness, Helicanus counsels him 'To bear with patience/ such griefs as you yourself do lay upon yourself,' (Scene II: 69-70). Once he is appraised of Pericles' concern for the innocent victims of war Antiochus might initiate, Helicanus' counsel remains one of patience and allowing destiny to find a solution:

Therefore, my lord, go travel for a while,
Till that his rage and anger be forgot, or till
The destinies do cut his thread of life.
(*Pericles* I ii 106-108)

Pericles is pursued by anger and revenge in the person of Thaliard, but he also encounters sin in Tarsus amidst the charity of his generosity towards the starving country. This is revealed in the speech made by Cleon who is unable to thank him except by means of a curse, the emblem of impotent anger and inevitably, in the manner of curses, self-fulfilling:

The which when any shall not gratify,
Or pay you with unthankfulness in thought,
Be it our wives, our children, or ourselves,
The curse of heav'n and men succeed their evils!
(*Pericles* I iv 100-103)

Cleon later heaps up further providential opportunity to punish the action of the envious Dioniza in his second self-fulfilling curse when asked to care for Marina:

If neglection

Should therein make me vile, the common body,

By you relieved, would force me to my duty.

But if to that my nature need a spur,

The gods revenge it upon me and mine

To the end of generation!

(*Pericles* III iii 21-26)

Escaping Thaliard, Pericles leaves Tarsus only to be confronted with the anger of the storm at sea, which eventually spares him. He does not respond as Lear does by angrily challenging the storm: the ‘muchel mone’ in the original source is translated into despair, what Miola describes as Senecan *furor* turning inward ‘toward diminution and cancelling of the self’ (Miola 1992: 197). Rather than, as the *Confessio* suggests, being glad to survive it, the emotionally and physically storm-tossed Pericles lapses into suicidal thinking which, although it is acedia, is born out of anger against God or fate. In a lament in which the storm represents his life so far, he longs for a more final escape from the anger which pursues him:

Yet cease your ire, you angry stars of heaven!

Wind, rain, and thunder, remember earthly man

Is but a substance that must yield to you,

And I, as fits my nature, do obey you.

Alas the seas hath cast me on the rocks,

Washed me from shore to shore, and left me breath

Nothing to think on but ensuing death.

Let it suffice the greatness of your powers

To have bereft a prince of all his fortunes,

And having thrown him from your wat’ry grave,

Here to have death in peace is all he’ll crave.

(*Pericles* II i 1-11)

The sea, however, delivers up to him a symbol of hope in the armour netted by the fishermen, albeit actually and metaphorically tarnished, which will enable him to

carry on. The rusted armour represents both his dented faith in chivalry and his avoidance of action, as well as his heritage.

The court of Simonides and the tournament present a very different image of chivalry to the superficial, warped version at Antioch. However, here there is a clear distinction between the chivalric pageantry of the questing knights with their knightly emblems of love and honour, and the humility of Pericles in his rusted armour and emblem representing hope borne from destruction, embodied in the withered branch with green top shoots. Simonides and Pericles recognise in each other men who seek to know 'the inward man', and Pericles' virtuous combination of courage, humility and hope easily passes Simonides' light-hearted tests, reminiscent of those applied to Ferdinand by Prospero.

Faced with further disaster, Pericles' despair is consistently met with the same counsel for patience. On the presumed death of Thaisa during the second storm, Lychorida counsels him: 'patience, good sir, do not assist the storm,' and when he calls the gods to task for their unfairness, accusing them of acting unjustly towards those who unquestioningly honour them, she counsels it again for the sake of the infant. Even at this point his prayer for the newly born Marina is, ironically, one of hope for calm after the storm:

Now mild be thy life,
 For a more blustering birth had never babe;
 Quiet and gentle thy conditions, for
 Thou art the rudliest welcome to this world
 That e'er was prince's child; happy what follows.
 Thou hast as chiding a nativity
 As fire, air, water, earth, and heaven can make
 To herald thee from the womb.

(*Pericles* III i 27-34)

He challenges the gods on the argument that all his daughter has suffered already amounts to more than would be fair in a blessed life from here on in:

Even at the first, thy loss is more than can
 Thy portage quit with all thou canst find here.
 Now the good gods throw their best eyes upon't!

(*Pericles* III i 35-37)

Pericles' hopeful expectation of good and aversion to anger is revealed in his discomfort at Cleon's second self-prophetic curse:

I believe you.

Your honor and your goodness teach me to't

Without your vows.

(*Pericles* III iii 26-28)

The courtly worlds which Pericles encounters are very different from the brutally indifferent brothel in which Marina finds herself. Pericles must learn to look beyond courtesy to see what is behind it: in Antioch it masks the darkest kind of lust; in Pentapolis it enhances virtue, and in Tarsus it conceals a sense of beholden envy. Conversely, in the 'city comedy' in which Marina is confronted with a callous, worldly society where humanity is seen as an open commodity on sale to satisfy lust, she must learn to wrestle virtue from sin by dint of her own powers of open persuasion. Marina's form of aggressive virtue contrasts strongly with her father who embodies patience struggling with despair and whose accepting endurance is the basis of his faith:

We cannot but obey

The powers above us. Could I rage and roar

As doth the sea she lies in, yet the end

Must be as 'tis.

(*Pericles* III iii 9-12)

Marina embodies the more proactive characteristics of action, knowledge, honesty and wisdom associated with her contrary virtue of chastity. Her capacity for argument, like that of Isabella in *Measure for Measure* knows no fear or diffidence. Each encounter with sin, whether sexual attack or murder, is met directly with uncompromising moral argument: Marina does not attempt to run away because she has no fear of contamination. Where Pericles seeks to avoid, even ignore sin, Marina openly recognises it and attacks until she converts it or sends it packing. As the Bawd acknowledges, 'she would make a puritan of the devil if he should cheapen a kiss of her' (IV vi 8-9). R S White describes her as 'as militantly virtuous and evangelical as Britomart, Spenser's figure of chastity' (White 1985: 128). Marina proves herself capable of exposing the sin all around her, including the hypocrisy of

her own class in Lysimachus' 'wholesome Iniquity'. In the end it is Marina's action, rather than his own inaction which saves Pericles in a moment when, for the first time in his spiritual journey, his patience gives way and allows a burst of anger as he pushes his daughter away. She refuses to comply:

But there is something glows upon my cheek,
And whispers in my ear 'Go not till he speak.'
(*Pericles* Scene V i 86-87)

He recognises his endurance mirrored in her and through it, the patience he struggles to maintain:

Yet thou dost look
Like Patience gazing on king's graves, and smiling
Extremity out of act.
(*Pericles* V i 128-130)

Doreen del Vecchio and Antony Hammond describe Pericles as 'a man without fault' (1998: 56), but this is not the case, His lifelong struggle to reject vengeance against men for their sin and the gods for his life contrasts markedly with the strength with which Marina uses her virtue as a weapon for good. Finally, divine intervention must divert him from his anger:

My purpose was for Tarsus, there to strike
The inhospitable Cleon, but I am
For other service first.
(*Pericles* V i 239-241)

He learns the value of Gower's much repeated mantra 'patience' by learning that the objects of his anger have, through their sin, manufactured their own punishment: Antiochus and his daughter are 'shrivelled' from their own corruption and Cleon and Dionoza are cursed out of their own mouths, with their murder, unlike Angelo's, being judged on intent rather than act. This emphasises that the punishment is divine, not statutory:

The gods for murder seemèd so content
To punish - although not done, but meant.
(*Pericles* Epilogue 15-16)

In his ironic reference to the 'better stars' which guided Marina to the brothel in Myteline, Pericles indicates his acceptance of providence. Beckwith asserts that

‘romance is the form in which chance is converted into providence’ (2011: 102) and the summary provided by Gower echoes her assumption:

Although assailed with fortune fierce and keen,
Virtue preserved from fell destruction’s blast,
Led on by heaven, and crowned with joy at last.

(*Pericles* Epilogue 4-6)

The audience, too, through Gower’s repeated pleas for patience, has been required to wait until the very end of the play for moral resolution and satisfaction that the wicked have been punished. They too, have had to trust in the narrator.

The position of sin in *Pericles* has shifted. Unlike the Senecan tragic heroes, sin has no prominent role as an ‘agent provocateur’. There is no Vice-figure in *Pericles*, encouraging his propensity to sin. As Miola observes, ‘evil strikes Pericles from without, not within’ (Miola 1992: 197). This accords with Richard Harp’s notion of providence as portrayed in Shakespeare’s last plays, where evil is seen as a series of impediments created by fate and its agents, providential in the sense that they are allowed by God, rather than predestined, accommodating the Augustinian belief that God allows evil in the world to produce good from it (Harp 2002: 17-31).

6.3 *The Winter’s Tale*

Whilst *Pericles* sets in motion a chain of suffering as a result of escaping actual sin, Leontes confronts imagined sin and suffers in consequence of it. In *The Winter’s Tale*, patience conquers revenge in a different way to *Pericles*: the first three acts contain an apparent revenge tragedy and the remaining part of the play gradually turns it into a tragicomedy as the barely surviving Leontes learns patience from an absent Hermione. The rapidity with which Leontes’ jealousy surfaces and its apparent lack of cause have been questioned. However his shift from pride to envy or jealousy and thence to anger is a fairly typical pattern of concatenation as Chaucer’s Parson Observes:

He that is proud or envious is likely wrooth (Mann 2005: 731, 535).

His starting point is pride, and the ground for jealousy is prepared by the history of the two kings. The play begins in an atmosphere of social anxiety in which the two courtiers’ exchanges foreshadow the respective social anxieties of the two kings:

Leontes' obsession with line and succession, and Polixenes' with courtly decorum. There is something precarious and 'nouveau riche' in the manner of both kings. RW Desai has suggested that Leontes' social anxiety may be associated with his more 'southern' and therefore comparably less prosperous country (Desai 1996: 311-324). Both kings defer to Camillo's apparently superior knowledge of the court. They do not appear, unlike their own heirs, to have spent their formative years in their fathers' courts, as might be expected in an established monarchy. Rather than learning the complex ways of court and kingship, they:

knew not
the doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
That any did.
(*WT I ii 69-71*)

This is a matter of noteworthy interest to the socially confident Hermione, the daughter of a Russian Emperor, a role which Shakespeare transposed from that of his source, placing her as Leontes', rather than Polixenes' wife. Hermione's regal credentials of 'a great king's daughter,/ The mother to a hopeful prince' are rehearsed by her as a public reproof of Leontes' action. There is even a suggestion that they achieved their respective positions through the status of their wives:

Had we pursued that life,
And our weak spirits ne'er been higher reared
With stronger blood,
(*WT I ii 71-73*)

The 'levelling perspective' (Richards 1999: 78) of Polixenes' speech in the famous art/nature debate only makes sense when read as the classic irony of the interloper who perceives his own advancement as strengthening, but his son's proposed marriage as demeaning.

Leontes' insecurity is exposed, like that of Othello, through use of Latinate, overblown, studiously kingly language (Smith 1968: 317-318) and the royal 'we', particularly in the arraignment of Hermione, when in an attempt to exert authority over the court, she is tried not for adultery but for 'high treason' (Neeley 1975: 327). This language however, quickly degenerates into the language of the street, what Jonathan Smith calls 'an Othello language, coarse and full-blooded' (Smith 1968: 318) when his social anxiety gives birth to motiveless (Coleridge called it 'fishing')

jealousy. Also like Othello, he compounds the sin of pride by wearing his jealousy as a chivalric badge:

Not noted, is't,
 But of the finer natures? By some severals
 Of head-piece extraordinary? Lower masses
 Perchance are to this business purblind?
 (*WT I ii 223-226*)

Rather like the princess and the pea, only the elite, apparently can drink and see the spider. Leontes is familiar with the courtly requirement to display his wife as a courtly mistress but is clearly uncomfortable with the practice. Hermione is supremely confident in her courtesy and as such she is a catalyst to Leontes' inferiority complex: when accused, she exploits it by asserting her own royal credentials above his own. The envy he feels regarding the status of others becomes expressed in terms of sexual jealousy which is linked to issues of lineage and paternity. Rebecca Olson has also observed that jealousy in Shakespeare's plays is often associated with men who are 'married or betrothed to the only children of important men' (Olson: 2015: 5). Hermione is more capable of making the nice distinctions between courtly demeanour and sexual attraction, and she further destabilises Leontes by reading him a lecture on courtesy:

I do confess
 I loved him as in honor he required,
 With such a kind of love as might become
 A lady like me;
 (*WT III ii 60-63*)

What compounds Leontes' decorous insecurity is the court's loyalty towards the queen which leads him to a paranoid isolation which ultimately excludes even God. He, like Othello, suffers the fate of the interloper: a heightened awareness of the instability of relationships. Polixenes, even when faced with Leontes' jealousy shows himself to have more understanding of his friend's anxious jealousy than Camillo and the court:

This jealousy
 Is for a precious creature. As she's rare,
 Must it be great; and as his person's mighty,

Must it be violent; and as he does conceive
 He is dishonoured by a man which ever
 Professed to him, why, his revenges must
 In that be made more bitter.

(*WT* I ii 449-455)

The pastoral scenes, with their confusion of high and low language serve his point by demonstrating the ease with which ‘the filching world’ can upset social hierarchy. Autolycus is able to drop into and out of court with a change of clothes, and the Clown, in his social naivety demonstrates how easy and meritless social preferment can be:

but I was a gentleman born before my father, for the King’s son took me by the hand and called me brother; and then the two kings called my father brother; and then the Prince my brother and the Princess my sister, called my father father. And so we wept; and there was the first gentleman-like tears that we ever shed. (*WT* V ii 129-134)

The inability of Leontes to manage his social anxiety leads to jealousy and then to anger. His interrupted soliloquy at the beginning of Act II scene three displays all aspects of a fully blown anger with its associations of restless impatience, madness and of course a fanatical desire for revenge:

Nor night nor day, no rest. It is but weakness
 To bear the matter thus, mere weakness. If
 The cause were not in being – part o’th’cause,
 She, th’adultrous; for the harlot King
 Is quite beyond mine arm, out of the blank
 And level of my brain, plot-proof. But she
 I can hook to me. Say that she were gone,
 Given to the fire, a moiety of my rest
 Might come to me again.

(*WT* II iii 1-9)

He has become mad with revenge: desperately seeking immediate action by the killing of whoever is in reach. Ironically, forced by the distance and greater power of Polinexes, he counsels himself to be patient, but in fact merely diverts his angry frustration back to Hermione, who cannot understand him, ‘You speak a language

that I understand not'(III ii 78), she later tells him. With his anger, he loses his patience:

The very thought of my revenges that way
 Recoil upon me. In himself too mighty,
 And in his parties, his alliance. Let him be,
 Until a time may serve. For present vengeance,
 Take it on her.

(*WT II iii 19-23*)

Paulina, although she infuriates Leontes even more, casts herself as his spiritual advisor; she calls herself his 'physician'. Utilising paralipsis as a form of passive aggression, she carefully shows her anger in its moral form as 'righteous anger', aiming her criticism at the deed, not the person. As Chaucer's Parson puts it, 'nat wroth against the man, but wroth with the misdeed of the man (Mann 2005: 731, 540):

I'll not call you tyrant;
 But this most cruel usage of your queen-
 Not able to produce more accusation
 Than your own weak-hinged fancy- something savors
 Of tyranny, and will ignoble make you,
 Yea, scandalous to the world.

(*WT II iii 116-121*)

Driven by his anger Leontes is overcome by desire to kill all those, including the female child, who have challenged his already insecure status. When he chooses to reject the oracle and in doing so symbolically rejects God, he has reached the highest level of the sin. Tragedy inevitably follows, with the death of Mamillius who symbolises his hopes of lineage, and therefore his pride. At this point Leontes is shocked by what he sees as divine justice, into finally acknowledging his sin:

Apollo's angry, and the heavens themselves
 Do strike at my injustice.

(*WT III ii 143-144*)

Leontes' repentance, coming as swiftly as it does, does not satisfy the balance of virtue against sin. To remedy anger such as he has demonstrated, patience must be learned. It is of course much too early to demonstrate redemption: this is the stage at

which comedies such as *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Merchant of Venice* end, leaving in the air the possibility of recidivism. Leontes' proposed remedy, accompanied by an almost breathless confession of sins rarely relieved with a full stop, and incorporating a diversion largely dedicated to Camillo's virtues rather than his own sins, comes out in such a 'frenzied hurry' (Ewbank 1968: 101) that it demonstrates he has acquired no virtue of patience from his moral awakening:

Apollo, pardon

My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle.
 I'll reconcile me to Polixenes,
 New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo,
 Whom I proclaim a man of truth, of mercy;
 For being transported by my jealousies
 To bloody thoughts and to revenge, I chose
 Camillo for the minister to poison
 My friend Polixenes, which had been done,
 But that the good mind of Camillo tardied
 My swift command, though I with death and with
 Reward did threaten and encourage him,
 Not doing it, and being done. He, most humane
 And filled with honor, to my kingly guest
 Unclasped my practice, quit his fortunes here,
 Which you knew great, and to the hazard
 Of all uncertainties himself commended,
 No richer than his honor. How he glisters
 Through my rust, and how his piety
 Does my deeds make the blacker!
 (WT III ii 150-169)

Paulina's management of the apparent death of Hermione and paralipsis-ridden inventory of Leontes' sins, befits her for her future role as scold/conscience to the man she now calls tyrant to his face. Inga-Stina Ewbank (1968: 104) marks the contrast between Leontes' previous impatience and Paulina's schedule for atonement:

A thousand knees,

Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting
 Upon a barren mountain, and still winter
 In storm perpetual, could not move the gods
 To look the way thou wert.

(*WT* III ii 207-211)

However Beckwith makes the point that no simple remedy or self-appointed atonement will suffice if Leontes is to achieve forgiveness, either human or divine (Beckwith 2011: 133). As a survivor of his own sin he is unable to gain forgiveness from his wife or his maker. Paulina keeps his awareness of sin alive through constant reminder, although she does offer a trade-off in return for his patience: 'Take your patience to you/And I'll say nothing' (III ii 229-230). In return he commits to a lifelong endurance of public shame for his pride, and celibacy and sorrow as remedy for his jealousy and anger:

So long as nature
 Will bear up with this exercise, so long
 I daily vow to use it.

(*WT* III ii 237-239)

As Beckwith notes (2011: 133), 'the question of sufficiency,' that is, the depth of repentance required of the sinner, haunted the Reformation in the same way as 'salvation anxiety' was said to have affected late medieval society (Marshall 2009: 43). Whilst Leontes can learn to endure his guilt and sorrow, Beckwith maintains that he cannot forgive himself. Paulina instructs him in the virtue of patience, whilst Time, like Gower in *Pericles*, engages the audience by also requiring its patience, 'Your patience this allowing,' (IV i 15) and Hermione, who knows 'False accusation blush and /Tyranny tremble at patience,' becomes the monument associated with the virtue, awaiting the time when she can forgive:

I must be patient till the heavens look
 With an aspect more favorable.

(*WT* II i 101-108)

The return of his daughter and 'resurrection' of his wife finally fulfils the oracle's prophecy, and the virtuous love between the young couple is a remedy against Leontes' jealousy. Beckwith's extensive analysis of Reformation thinking on

confession and absolution and the nature of forgiveness, incorporating the doctrine of the keys⁵¹, concludes that in his work Shakespeare appears to have steered away from a Calvinist doctrine of divine grace towards an individual notion of human absolution:

What Shakespeare adds to Calvin is the beauty and the miracle of what Calvin might call ‘the merely human.’ Shakespeare utterly abjures the eradication of the human in reformed versions of grace, for it was axiomatic to reformed grace that as God-given, and to be God-given, it must be free of all human words and deeds. It is a human response that is, for him, rather the medium of grace. (Beckwith 2011: 143-144)

However, the more convincing reading seems to be in the association with the word ‘remedy’ which she highlights in her discussion of *Measure for Measure* and acknowledges as a concept which ‘takes up old associations from the confessional handbooks which provide remedies for sin in the tradition of the virtues,’ (Beckwith 2011: 61). Leontes has learnt to be patient, which will remedy his anger and jealousy. He has learned Hermione’s language. She has, in her sacrificial patience, secured a future for them both. Many would argue at what cost: she returns to Leontes having lost both her son and sixteen years of her life. Similarly, a feminist might note, those sixteen years have placed her beyond the age to provoke sexual jealousy and through the marriage of Perdita and Florizel she becomes sister to Polixenes. Richard Harp considers that the speeches of Leontes and Hermione affirm that ‘Hermione is better off for the undeserved suffering than her husband Leontes,’ (Harp 2002: 24) and furthermore maintains that, from the perspective of those who affirm providence ‘it is not necessary that all evil be turned to good [...] simply that it is better to suffer evil than to do it,’ (Harp 2002: 23).

6.4 *Cymbeline*

Cymbeline shares many aspects of both *Pericles* and *The Winter’s Tale*: it is a tragedy averted by providence; it shares the sententious language of *Pericles*, particularly the cave scenes with Belarius, Guiderius and Arviragus - Imogen’s moral home - and the ‘jealousy’ plot of *The Winter’s Tale*. Posthumus shares with Leontes

⁵¹ Ref Matthew 16 v18-19; Matthew 18 v15-18; John 20 v 21-23

the same pathway to sin: social anxiety and pride give rise to jealousy, anger and revenge. Ruth Nevo describes him as ‘a fatherless youth whose very name orphans him’ (Nevo 1987: 69) and Martin Butler confirms a similarly subordinate and socially dependent relationship with his wife to that of Leontes and Othello, maintaining that ‘subordination to a wife of superior rank puts him under threat of emasculation’ (Butler 2005: 28). There are early clues to Posthumus’ anxiety over status: ‘the ‘manacle of love’ he presents to Imogen, and the recognition of his virtue, not for its own sake, but, as in the opinion of the First Gentleman, out of respect for his wife’s good assessment:

By her election may be truly read,

What kind of man he is.

(*Cymbeline* I i 53-54)

This somewhat patronising evaluation is augmented by Iachimo’s scathing appraisal of Posthumus as being ‘weighed rather by her value than his own,’ (I iv 12).

By investing his standing and reputation in Imogen, her position and her virtue become central to Posthumus’ status. Beckwith’s identification of the diamond ring as Imogen’s metonymy (Beckwith 2011: 123) conveys the easy way in which, for Posthumus, what is a virtuous and morally highly prized jewel is very quickly transformed into a wager in defence of his own hubris. Martin Butler makes the connection between the language of trade and the mercantile setting of Boccaccio’s tale of Bernaba from the *Decameron*, one of the possible sources of *Cymbeline* (Butler 2005: 24-36). Beckwith, less convincingly, ascribes it to a Lutheran critique of penance as counting and accounting (Beckwith 2011: 107).

Posthumus’ incipient pride, jealousy and anger are whipped up easily by Gachimo who identifies Imogen as the central point of his social anxiety and therefore pride. He plays on Posthumus’ insecurity until he has angered him sufficiently to commit to the wager. There is of course a longstanding association with contracting with the devil and Gachimo is well aware of the binding nature of this agreement. Once convinced by Gachimo’s trick, concatenation of sin takes place and Posthumus is as overcome by anger and the need for revenge as he is by jealousy. Imogen, whose virtue, ironically, formed the basis of his pride, is transformed in his mind to one who possesses every deadly sin. His diatribe against her turns into a blazon of evil

qualities: she becomes, iconographically, the *Frau Welt*: the medieval portrayal of the Seven Deadly Sins as a woman upon whom all the sins are depicted:

for there's no motion
 That tends to vice in a man but I affirm
 It is the woman's part; be it lying, note it,
 The woman's; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers;
 Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers; revenges, hers;
 Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain,
 Nice longing, slanders, mutability.
 All faults that may be named, nay, that hell knows, why hers
 in part, or all, but rather all. For even to vice
 They are not constant,
 (*Cymbeline* II v 20-29)

In his fury of revenge Posthumus refuses to listen to those advisors who counsel patience to his anger; in particular Pisanio who, like Camillo, fails to comply with his master's wishes, re-ascribing vengeance to time and the proper ownership of divine providence. However, Posthumus differs from Leontes in one major respect. He learns to forgive as well as to repent. He discovers that his love for Imogen is stronger than his investment of pride in her virtue. In recognising this he begins to learn that the casting of stones is not his place:

Yea, bloody cloth, I'll keep thee, for I wished
 Thou shouldst be colored thus. You married ones,
 If each of you should take this course, how many
 Must murder wives much better than themselves
 For wrying but a little?
 (*Cymbeline* V i 1-5)

This is unique, as H D Swander confirms:

No hero in any other medieval or Renaissance version of the story forgives the slandered woman until he knows she is innocent, at which time there is, of course, nothing to forgive, and even after her innocence is certain, no hero from the analogues arrives at any similar condemnation of himself.
 (Swander 1966: 249).

As ‘the villain’, Gachimo has been difficult to place: he is somewhat of a victim of a play Miola characterises as ‘that *omnibus* gathering of literary themes, conventions, genres and motifs’ (Miola 1992: 199). Cast as a morally degenerate form of chevalier, he exploits the ambiguous morality of chivalry and his poetic, often high-blown language plays to Jacobean prejudices about Italians. In terms of true Machiavellian villainy, he suffers by comparison with other Shakespearean villains, notably Iago. James Nosworthy says of him that he is ‘less a symbol than a stock figure, a reduced pattern of the Italian villain [...] Iachimo is a vainglorious, self-dramatising rogue, but his acts of villainy do not carry any real conviction,’ (Nosworthy 1955: lvii). However, he fits comfortably into place when cast in the role of corrupting Vice-figure, set against Imogen’s virtue in a psychomachic struggle for Posthumus’ soul. Rather than sinning himself, his efforts as Vice-figure are concentrated in creating jealousy, rage and desire for revenge in others. As a Vice-figure, his skills are linguistic: he can talk his way around his subject with true ambiguity; has an excellent knowledge of good and evil, and is able to sermonise at will. Catherine Belsey recognises his descendancy from the morality Vice and speaks of his capacity to easily moralise two meanings in one word (Belsey 1999: 58). He disconcerts Imogen by rehearsing aloud a discussion on the incomprehensible desire of lust over love, sin over virtue. There is within his speech, however, a sense of regret often found in Vice-related characters; a hankering after the virtue they can never experience. He is able to describe the nature of being in sin so evocatively because he speaks from experience:

That satiate yet unsatisfied desire, that tub
Both filled and running,
(*Cymbeline* I vi 47-48)

Gachimo’s motive towards Imogen is two-fold. Initially his aim is to win the bet through straight seduction, by provoking her to jealousy and thence to revenge. However he discerns her inviolate virtue very quickly, about as quickly as it takes Imogen to recognise his vice:

If thou wert honourable
Then wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not
For such an end thou seek’st, as base as strange.
Thou wrong’st a gentleman who is as far
From thy report as thou from honor, and

Solicits here a lady that disdains
 Thee and the devil alike.
 (*Cymbeline* I vi 141-147)

Gachimo has to revert to trickery to get her to ‘pawn her honour’ so that he can construct a false report with which he can torment Posthumus. Much has been made of the intrusion of Gachimo into Imogen’s bedroom. Critics have viewed it as a symbolic rape and the surrounding iconography as representative of suppressed eroticism in Imogen. Catherine Belsey has discussed the symbolism of the iconography in Imogen’s bedchamber as itemised by Gachimo:

The bedchamber of the newly married Imogen is [...] a place where the dual meaning of feminine in the period is put on display, as modesty on the one hand and sexual invitation on the other. (Belsey 1999: 56).

She suggests that the contrasting images of Diana, an image with which Imogen is repeatedly compared, and Cleopatra depict what is, for Posthumus, a difficulty in believing in his wife’s virtue. She draws the parallel between Posthumus, ‘who interprets his wife’s chastity as lasciviousness’ and Cymbeline who ‘too easily takes his wife’s sexuality for virtue’ (Belsey 1999: 57). Rather than suggesting the dual nature of Imogen’s sexuality, the images of purity and eroticism in Imogen’s bedchamber could be seen as forms of moral exempla depicting good and bad behaviour. Imogen is presented reading of the rape of Philomel which, rather than providing the titillation it clearly offers Gachimo, provokes in Imogen a prayer for protection:

To your protection I commend me, gods;
 From fairies and tempters of the night
 Guard me, beseech ye.
 (*Cymbeline* II ii 8-10)

What Gachimo sees when he emerges from the trunk in Imogen’s bedchamber is, for him, virtue personified. The sense of longing conveyed by him as he looks at her is infected by the regret of his own sin: he is drawn to where he is forever excluded:

Fresh lily,
 And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch,
 But kiss, one kiss.
 (*Cymbeline* II ii 15-17)

This is surely the anguish of the fallen wishing for what he can no longer have and not the prelude to an actual kiss as some modern directors have interpreted. Gachimo is lost and at this moment well understands his position:

I lodge in fear;
 Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here.
 (*Cymbeline* II ii 49-50)

Imogen, whose self-appointed name of Fidele casts her into the role of devotion and faithfulness, is frequently associated with images of patience or endurance. Early in the play she warns her father of her impervious reaction to anger, while at the same time counselling him against it:

Harm not yourself with your vexation.
 I am senseless of your wrath;
 (*Cymbeline* I i 134-135)

Like Marina, Hermione and Viola, she is metaphorically associated with the endurance of stone: she tells Posthumus she is his rock (V v 261).⁵² Gachimo describes her as a monument in a chapel. The Second Lord also sees her in terms of virtuous solidity:

The heavens hold firm
 The walls of thy dear honor, keep unshaked
 That temple, thy fair mind, that thou mayst stand
 T' enjoy thy banished lord, and this great land.
 (*Cymbeline* II i 59-62)

Even when faced with the truth of Posthumus' intention to have her murdered, she assumes the suffering role of a patient Griselda, because she has nothing else to live for. However she will not kill herself because she also knows that to be 'past hope and in despair' and suicidal is to be 'past grace' and damned. She is in effect saved from death because she cannot commit a sin.

Posthumus in prison, like Leontes and Pericles, draws very near to despair. Faced with his own sin of anger he begins to work through what Swander identifies as an

⁵² This is a disputed passage. The Norton Edition prefers 'lock' above the first folio 'rock':

'Think that you are upon a rock, and now/ Throw me again. '

orthodox structure necessary for the remission of sins: sorrow, repentance and satisfaction or penance (Swander 1966: 255).

My conscience, thou art fettered
 More than my shanks and wrists. You good gods, give me
 The penitent instrument to pick that bolt,
 Then free for ever. Is't enough I am sorry?
 So children temporal fathers do appease;
 Gods are more full of mercy. Must I repent,
 I cannot do it better than in gyves
 Desired more than constrained. To satisfy,
 If of my freedom 'tis the main part, take
 No stricter render of me than my all.

(*Cymbeline* V iv 8-17)

Beckwith identifies the language as ‘straight from the medieval confessional’ (2011: 106), and Swander notes that ‘Shakespeare emphasises the orthodox structure and fullness of the contrition by anchoring those three alternate lines with the operative word’ (Swander 1966: 255). Swander however, also suggests that in the very asking for ‘the penitent instrument’ he has been granted it’: that to be able to ask for grace implies a state of grace. Beckwith’s argument is subtly different as she considers the language used to be aporetic (2011: 107). Posthumus cannot offer his life as it is not his to offer. He must learn to live within the knowledge of his sin. In effect, he must learn patience. Like Leontes, he cannot ask forgiveness so he must wait, literally and metaphorically, in chains. He sees Imogen as a religious icon or monument in the same way that Leontes does, transferring the silence from himself to her, ‘O Imogen/ I’ll speak to thee in silence,’ (V iv 28-29).

The play’s images of lust and anger are echoed by the almost cartoon personae of Cloton, who Miola describes as ‘Posthumus’ grotesquely comic *Doppelganger*,’ and the wicked Queen, who is straight out of the fairy tale. Both two-dimensional characters die, almost casually (R A Foakes 1971: 95): they conform to the ‘providential’ category of evil which, Richard Harp maintains (Harp 2002: 17-31), exists in order that it may be used for good. These characters are balanced against the providentially ‘good’ characters of Belarius and his ‘sons’. Gachimo’s fulsome, over-dramatic confession, which has to some extent wrongly earned him the benefit

of the doubt morally and lost him the credibility as a full blown villain, has also a providential function. The detailed confession is, in fact, Gachimo's final attempt to rile Posthumus sufficiently to revenge himself by killing Gachimo in anger. Posthumus, however, first turns his anger on himself and then, in an action which almost mirrors that of Pericles towards his yet unknown daughter, strikes out unknowingly at Imogen and nearly loses her again. This second chance almost lost finally teaches him the lesson of patience. Gachimo, echoing Posthumus' own speech in prison, asks for death but is denied it and so is defeated absolutely:

Kneel not to me.

The power that I have on you is to spare you,
The malice towards you to forgive you. Live,
And deal with others better.

(*Cymbeline* V v 416-419)

As if in illustration of Jupiter's aphorism 'Whom best I love, I cross', the play's final scene which is loved and hated in equal measure for its anagnorisis involving twenty-four revelations, maps out the complexity of providence in a masterful dramatic display, finally confirming the wise counsel of Pisanio who has always understood the benefit of waiting:

by time let them be cleared:

Fortune brings in some boats that are not steered.

(*Cymbeline* IV iii 45-46)

The acquisition of patience through the providential imposition of time is a much revised construct in these tragicomedies. *Pericles* employs Gower the story-teller to manage time; *The Winter's Tale* presents a personification of time to explain Leontes' long period of penance, and *Cymbeline* contains an ever more complex gathering of loose ends, only to weave them together at the last moment to prove how time eventually resolves all problems.

6.5 *The Tempest*

In *The Tempest* which unlike the three previous plays, observes the classical unities of time, place and plot, the waiting is over and the play concentrates on

testing whether the lesson has been learned. As Prospero recounts the story of how they came to be on the island as a result of the malicious envy of his brother Antonio and the usurping greed and ambition of Alonso, Miranda, the epitome of patience quietly listens. She has already displayed her deep compassion over the sight of the shipwreck and in her active listening and the compassion she shows her father, she nevertheless displays patience's belief that life has a meaning and that there is a purpose to grief:

O the heavens!

What foul play had we, that we came from hence?

Or blessèd was't we did?

(*Tempest* I ii 59-61)

However, as Prospero's tale unfolds it becomes clear that he is a man not without a deadly sin himself which has contributed towards his situation. Like Henry VI and Richard II, he is guilty of sloth, having pursued his own bookish, magical interests to the detriment of his State, so enabling the ambitious Antonio to usurp him. As Joseph Summers suggests:

Prospero has reason to be a nervous narrator. Despite all his special pleading, his story indicates that he had thoughtlessly made Lear's cruel mistake of assuming that one can retain the title and power of a ruler while neglecting or abandoning the functions and duties. Prospero's claim that his own virtues begat evils in his brother is surely seriously flawed. (Summers 1984: 141)

His strong insistence throughout the play of his brother's perfidy indicates a subconscious masking of his own sin in that of his brother's:

My brother and thy uncle, called Antonio -
 I pray thee mark me, that a brother should
 Be so perfidious - he whom next thyself
 Of all the world I loved, and to him put
 The manage of my state, as at that time
 Through all the signories it was the first,
 And Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed
 In dignity, and for the liberal arts
 Without a parallel. Those being all my study,

The government I cast upon my brother
 And to my state grew stranger, being transported
 And rapt in secret studies.

(Tempest I ii 66-77)

His light acknowledgement of his fault is undermined by the emphasis he places on the worthlessness of office and the duty he has delegated:

I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
 To closeness and the bettering of my mind
 With that which, but by being so retired,
 O'er-priced all popular rate,

(Tempest I ii 89-92)

Prospero's long exile then perhaps carries more than an indication of penance to it: to punish his self-exile with real exile has a kind of just irony. That has been the role of the island in the past. The banished Sycorax, who herself was an embodiment of rage and envy, ruled the island through the entrapment of Ariel, a spirit of benevolent nature. In taking over the island, already inhabited by her angry, envious son and to some extent oppressing its inhabitants himself to his own ends, Prospero carries at least a faint echo of his predecessor. By the commencement of the play his only 'subject' is all rebellion and resentment: Caliban's anger takes the form of the oppressed and weak. He has learned to curse:

You taught me language, and my profit on't
 Is I know how to curse.

(Tempest I ii 362-363)

Prospero's repressive almost 'micro-management' of the island is the direct opposite to his previous governorship of his state, but betrays the sloth's obsession with time. Uniquely, of the four plays, Prospero is himself given limited scope to have providential foreknowledge of events and 'divine' control over action. The question is whether he uses those powers for revenge or forgiveness. His problems start with the shipwreck when the island becomes flooded with every deadly sin and he has to cope with the potential fallout. Summers compares him with the Duke in *Measure for Measure*:

With limited prescience, Prospero is to have for a few hours something like the power of providence to work out a happy ending. [...] If Prospero and the other Duke are ever truly figures of divine providence, it is only as they provide comically flawed human imitations of the extraordinary lengths to which God must go in order to grant human beings freedom while still keeping them from destroying themselves. (Summers 1984: 142).

Not only must Prospero and Ariel deal with ‘the three men of sin’ who Prospero intends to hold to account for their behaviour towards him, but he has to deal with the plotting of the lower orders also who display the inevitable sins of the flesh and the world of greed, gluttony and lust as well as the predictable social ‘overreaching’ so often punished in Shakespeare. They, egged on by Caliban, comically aspire to ambition and murder too. The reality of the island is a far cry from Gonzalo’s imagined paradise, free from the drivers of deadly sin:

I’th’commonwealth I would by contraries
 Execute all things. For no kind of traffic
 Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
 Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
 And use of service, none; contract, succession,
 Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
 No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
 No occupation, all men idle, all;
 And women too, but innocent and pure;
 No sovereignty –
 (*Tempest* II i 142-151)

Central, however, to the sin of the island is Antonio, whose Vice-figure qualities set him apart from the others. His role is to act on ambition, envy and anger, but, more importantly, to infect others, too. Detecting the remorse in Alonso, he concentrates his efforts on Sebastian: he promotes a plot which mirrors his own usurpation of his brother from envy and ambition. He has pride’s detestation of sloth: ‘idle’ is a word he uses with contempt. He persuades Sebastian to replace ‘the hereditary sloth’ of the younger son for an ambition which capitalises on Alonso’s apparent loss of an heir and involves fratricide and murder of ‘conscience’ as

represented by Gonzalo. In a speech which seems to echo his own rationale for ordering the presumed death of his slothful brother, he makes the point that:

Say this were death

That now hath seized them: why, they were no worse
Than now they are. There be that can rule Naples
As well as he that sleeps; lords that can prate
As amply and unnecessarily
As this Gonzalo;

(*Tempest* II i 253-258)

The state of despair which Ariel, in the guise of Destiny, induces in them is fitting as it gives them a taste of being beyond forgiveness:

you 'mongst men

Being most unfit to live. I have made you mad;
And even with suchlike valour men hang and drown
Their proper selves.

(*Tempest* III iii 58-61)

What is wished upon them, 'lingering perdition' is to be lived with 'nothing but heart's sorrow' and a sin-free existence being the only offering with any prospect for redemption. Alonso wishes for nothing but suicide; Sebastian sets off in desperate anger to fight 'the fiends', Antonio, the Vice-figure follows to further encourage their sin, 'I'll be thy second'.

As Miranda is truthful, she must be believed when she tells Ferdinand that her father's anger is a recently acquired behaviour. It is certain that the prospect of his revenge and the introduction to the island of so much sin has created in Prospero a range of angers. His anger with Ferdinand and Miranda is simulated to keep lust at bay and his frustration with Caliban veers, as Summers observes, 'from that of one injured by incarnate evil to that of a thoroughly exasperated teacher,' (1984: 144). In an unconvincing imitation of the fake providence he has temporarily assumed, he excuses his vexation with Ariel as 'but my trials of thy love, and thou /Hast strangely stood the test,' (IV i 6-7). Prospero's rage seems to reach its height as the sub-plot of Caliban's plot to murder him and take over the island provides a safe target for the revenge he feels for Antonio's attempted fratricide. This is the turning point of his understanding. He confesses to Ferdinand that his anger is an 'infirmity' It is difficult

to distinguish between Caliban and Antonio in Prospero's angry description which, although it is aimed at one, on another level, is an accurate assessment of the other:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;
And, as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers.

(*Tempest* IV i 188-192)

Caliban and Ariel teach Prospero to own his human frailty. He must be reminded of his humanity by one who can't feel:

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself-
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they - be kindlier moved than thou art?

(*Tempest* V i 21-24)

He must also acknowledge his own capacity for sin in his ownership of Caliban: 'this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine,' (V i 278-279).

Prospero learns that his 'rough magic' is not providential at all, it is a tool of providence. The magic of the tempest must be put away and he must abjure fury in favour of the 'nobler reason' of virtue over vengeance. He forgives all his enemies and all of his enemies but one acknowledge his forgiveness. Only the unredeemable Antonio, like Iago, that other personification of envy remains quiet, taking refuge, like Iago, in the devil's silence. Prospero must try to learn the real ways of providence from the patient virtue of Gonzalo and his ability to smile and cry together:

I have inly wept,
Or should have spoke ere this. Look down, you gods,
And on this couple drop a blessèd crown.
For it is you that have chalked forth the way
Which brought us hither. [...]
Was Milan thrust from Milan, that his issue
Should become kings of Naples?

(*Tempest* V i 200-204, 205-206)

Prospero recognises also, albeit with the irony of old age, in Miranda, the capacity for patience to see good and god in everything:

Miranda: O wonder!
 How many goodly creatures are there here!
 How beauteous mankind is! Oh, brave new world
 That has such people in't!

Prospero: 'Tis new to thee.

(*Tempest* V i 181-184)

Summers' evaluation of Prospero's achievements is perhaps harsh, but fair, and chimes with the experiences of Leontes and Posthumus, if not entirely Pericles (Summers 1984: 153-155). He observes that someone who can find little patience at a time of crisis manages to possess it fully once the critical moral action is over and the end is in sight. His verdict on Prospero is that he 'has not redeemed the world [...] All he has done is to make good an old wrong (for which he is largely responsible), and to provide a chance for another generation to make a new beginning.'

While *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest* are undeniably all different in aspects of structure, dramatic presentation and narrative, as well as reflecting other new and popular genres and showcasing some of Shakespeare's poetry, what persistently brings them together is the skeleton of moral reading and the seemingly endless possibility to deploy the deadly sins to present it. Underpinning each play is the medieval struggle of patience with anger: the difference with these late plays is that the virtue, being patience, wins with a sense of hope and almost permanence.

The knaves are delt, the game is plaid
 And with this wish concludeth Spade:
 I would all knaves who ere they bee,
 Were known by sight as well as wee.⁵³

Conclusion

The lure of the Sins needs little explanation. The fascination with evil, its colourful horror, and disquieting charms are represented in virtually every aspect of art and architecture of the early modern period. Confessional literature was packed with characterful examples of wickedness, all too easily recognised in the world and at home. Morality plays provided both the attractiveness and the repulsion of sin in the persona of the Vice whose easy familiarity served both to entertain but also to remind how easy it was to follow ‘the primrose path’ to Hell. To a Renaissance audience, deprived of the frisson of the confessional and nostalgic for its didactic drama, rediscovering the Sins through the mimetic theatre would surely have provided an opportunity to engage again in the drama of the fight between good and evil. John Parker summarises:

According to a conventional reformist critique [...], the damaging allure of confession has always been to some extent at one with the thrill of mimesis: ‘who goes happily to the day of confession?’ asks Calvin, before giving an answer that no one does save, perhaps for the little priests themselves, who delight in exchanging narratives of their crimes as if they were merry tales. (Parker 2013: 31).

In examining the extent to which the framework and traditional moral wisdom of the Sins might inform and underpin the reading and interpretation of dramatic sources; the development of character, in particular that of the tragic hero, and the enablement of moral discussion and judgement, sufficiently distanced from the dangers of polemical association, this thesis has not sought to offer an answer or even a key to unlock the Shakespeare canon or the mind of its writer. It has focussed on the potential of the Sins as a dramatic tool and how, within the context of the religious

⁵³ Concluding lines of ‘Seaven Deadly Sins All Horst and Riding to Hell’ Samuel Rowlands (1611)

laws and restrictions of the time and inherited lore and lexicon of the deadly sins, the plays may have utilised the familiarity of this shared knowledge.

That Shakespeare was trained in moral reading and the discipline of applying that reading to the moral categorisation of commonplacing is highly likely. That he continued to read, process and acquire further material throughout his life is equally probable. Quentin Skinner supposes that the classical rhetoric which Shakespeare acquired at grammar school was sufficient even to enable him to develop the judicial rhetoric which Skinner claims is evident in several plays (Skinner 2014: 10). There is, however a distinction which separates Shakespeare's learning from that of his university-trained contemporaries: his method of learning would have been much more likely to be grounded in moral reading. It is the contention of this thesis that it is this very aspect of his education which separated the way in which he treated source material from that of his university trained contemporaries. He may have continued to learn from books for the rest of his life, but he probably did not change the method by which he approached that learning.

J M Lechner asserts that 'the virtue and vice function of the commonplace remained constant and sharp through the Renaissance' (1962: 223) and it certainly appears that the cross-referencing of the Sins accompanied by the complex and varied illustrative exempla extracted from wide reading and a habit of moral commonplacing would be a rich and available resource on which a dramatist might draw. Lechner concludes her study with a confirmed assumption that he would:

The student's mentality was so conditioned by the habit of conceiving of everyone and everything in terms of virtue or vice that when he reached manhood and his career, in the world of politics, of literature, of the court, or whatever it may have been, he continued viewing life through the telescope of the commonplace tradition. (Lechner 1962: 225).

It is easy to imagine that, as a working dramatist, once the moral reading and dramatic appraisal of his source material had been completed, Shakespeare might turn to the relevant compilations in his commonplace books listed, for example, under the dominant sin of his hero, and draw on the character and psychology therein, including his own observations of both traditional understanding as well as the ambiguity and contradiction thrown up by his individual insight and

interpretation. It is not impossible to imagine that this might direct the themes and the dramatic development of the plot. It is even easier to imagine the commonly shared understanding and moral shorthand which it utilised in conveying meaning to an audience schooled in the same methods. Kevin Sharpe confirms:

Commonplace books were also read and re-read, albeit most commonly by the keeper who returned, as it were, from a different outside world to the text with each re-reading. (Sharpe 2000: 281).

The ‘conflation and overlap’ of both Classical and medieval literature which Miola regards as being the norm in the experience of a Renaissance writer (Miola 2000: 1-18) lent itself particularly well to a moral template which not only had its roots in both cultures, but also looked forward to the more individually analytical psychology of the future, a connection recognised by Edward Peters, paleopsychologist, who argues (2005: 59-73) that the moral lexicon of the Sins was a precursor of the vocabulary used to explore and define motivation and the psyche. The absence, apart from *Measure for Measure*, of direct reference to the Sins which Newhauser takes to be indicative of Shakespeare’s lack of interest (Newhauser 2012: 178) demonstrates rather that the plays’ use of the Sins draws on a kind of psychological short-hand too familiar to be referenced.

As a moral template, the Sins not only were able to supply the vocabulary and dramatic context within which to position the tragic hero; providing in each case a recognisable deadly sin and utilising the lexicon and capacity of concatenation to realise the psychological complexity of each fall, but they were also able to supply the external influence to sin in the Vice-figure, the devilish inciter to evil, often disguised in a cloak of virtue. In addition to moral location, the Sins were often utilised in the plays to give a sense of social location and dislocation by playing on an association of particular vices with a certain class. The template, with its well-developed history of moral wisdom was also so well established that it could be deployed, as it is in the problem plays, to convey, with the assistance of the equally familiar remedial or contrary virtues, the ambiguity of sin and virtue, critiquing the hypocrisy of governance and other cultural moral codes and exposing the interdependence between good and evil. This interdependence, or requirement, as Montaigne asserts, that virtue can only really shine in active opposition (*Essays* 11:

11, 308) also enabled the creation of powerful, articulate and challenging female roles in the comedies and late plays.

While the reformists might have been irritated by the stubborn resilience of and allure of the Sins, Shakespeare consistently demonstrated, particularly in the late plays, that they were capable of adapting to radical changes in religious perspective, while maintaining the comfort of a collectively inherited understanding of vice and virtue. As John Dennis was later to affirm, echoing Sidney's desire to convey the truth to a foolish world:

A poet has no other way in the drama of giving an audience an aversion for any vice, than by exposing it or punishing it in the persons of the drama.

(The Usefulness of the Stage 1698: 527).

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⁵⁴ Please note that for all textual referencing of Shakespeare's plays the Norton Shakespeare Third Edition (2016) has been used, as has the combined text of *King Lear* within this edition. Any further editions used for editorial and critical references can be found listed in Secondary Sources, by editor and/or critical contributor.

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