THE MOTIVATION OF CHARACTERS IN OTHELLO.

KING LEAR AND MACBETH

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THE MOTIVATION OF CHARACTERS IN OTHELLO,

KING LEAR AND MACBETH

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State Teachers College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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De Leon, Texas

May, 1942

98763
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CHAPTER I

THE CRITICAL PROBLEM

Critics of Shakespeare's plays have differed widely in their interpretation of the motives of his characters. Some have believed that the characters occupied the dramatist's attention to a much greater extent than his plots, and have approached their problems of criticism by analyzing the characters minutely, carefully, and sometimes, it must be admitted, extravagantly. This method of psychological analysis, or analysis of Shakespeare's character portrayal in terms of current psychology of various emotions, began in the eighteenth century, among its exponents being William Richardson, probably the foremost psychological critic of Shakespeare in that period, and Maurice Morgann, rated by some modern critics as high as Coleridge, in whom this type of criticism reached its first peak in the early nineteenth century. Coleridge had more influence on later critics, however, his statements in regard to the importance of characters in Shakespeare's plays having influenced Shakespearean criticism through many years, even to the present. He said:

\[1\]

\[R. W. Babcock, The Genesis of Shakespeare Idolatry, pp. 157, 159, 175.\]
The interest in the plot is always in fact on account of the characters, not vice versa, as is a mere canvas and no more.

The characters of the dramatic persons, like those in real life, are to be inferred by the reader; they are not told to him. And it is well worth remarking that Shakspere's characters, like those in real life, are very commonly misunderstood, and almost always understood by different persons in different ways. The causes are the same in either case. If you take only what the friends of the character say, you may be deceived, and still more so, if that which his enemies say; nay, even the character himself sees himself through the medium of his character, and not exactly as he is. Take all together, not omitting a shrewd hint from the clown or the fool, and perhaps your impression will be right; and you may know whether you have in fact discovered the poet's own idea, by all the speeches receiving light from it, and attesting its reality by reflecting it.

Lastly, in Shakspere the heterogeneous is united, as it is in nature. You must not suppose a pressure or passion always acting on or in the character; -- passion in Shakspere is that by which the individual is distinguished from others, not that which makes a different kind of him. Shakspere followed the main march of the human affections. He entered into no analysis of the passions or faiths of men, but assured himself that such and such passions and faiths were grounded in our common nature, and not in the mere accidents of ignorance or disease. This is an important consideration, and constitutes our Shakspere the morning star, the guide and the pioneer, of true philosophy.2

To this philosophic attitude in the analysis of character there are many adherents, among them such famous Shaksperean critics as Dowden and Bradley. Dowden says, "Tragedy, as conceived by Shakspere, is concerned with the ruin or restoration of the soul, and of the life of men." Dowden believes that we should be chiefly concerned with

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2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lectures on Shakspere, pp. 239-242.

3 Edward Dowden, Shakspere, His Mind and Art, p. 200.
the traits and motives of the men who people the dramas and calls attention to the need for understanding psychology if we are to interpret Shakespeare's characters correctly.

Bradley, who has been called one of the greatest Shakespearean critics, follows the philosophic method, but combines it with a more scientific process at times. He goes carefully into the thoughts, motives, and actions of the characters, but he never loses sight of their part in the whole play. Furthermore, he sees in the plays a whole system of Shakespeare's philosophy of good and evil, since the tragic suffering and death of the characters arise from collision, not with a fate or blank power, but with a moral power. The whole aim of the study of the actions and motives of the characters becomes to Bradley, then, a statement of metaphysical belief.

In direct contrast to this philosophic approach to Shakespearean criticism has arisen more recently another school of thought, which might be termed a realistic approach. We may gain a fair idea of this type of Shakespearean study by following the contributions of Stoll and Schucking, who take very much the same practical, realistic view of Shakespeare's art. Stoll states his position in this manner:

We have ordinarily been taught that with the author character comes first and foremost, not only in

4 A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 18.
importance but in point of time, and (cause of no little confusion) that the action is only its issue. But there is no drama until the character is conceived in a complication; and in the dramatist's mind it is so conceived at the outset. 5

Stoll then asserts that the motives of the characters were made to be appropriate to the situations as they arose; the improbable itself had to be motivated and made probable. Motives, however, are less important than artistic development with Shakespeare, and we must not provide the dramatist with motives, even if he omits them. Stoll explains his reasoning in this manner:

Like most of the other Elizabethans, Shakespeare is impetuous, prodigal, and often illogical; but unlike most of them, generally to great effect. Deliberately or instinctively he keeps to the surface; and in the improbable but spacious situations that he presents, deep-seated motives would necessarily reduce the proportions of the hero's passion and our sympathy. An Othello, a Claudio, or a Posthumous with the predisposition to suspicion or jealousy, a Deedemona, a Hero, or an Imogen who had given him any cause for it, or an Iago, Don John, or Iachimo with an adequate motive or grievance for the imposture, how they would diminish our love and pity for hero and heroine, and our fear and hatred of the villain! In the source at times the motive is missing, or is fantastic and bizarre, but oftener it is by Shakespeare omitted when already provided and in itself--though not for the larger or higher needs of his passions--satisfactorily enough. 6

Stoll cites the cases of Iago, who was a rejected suitor, Macbeth, who had grievances against a weak and unjust king, and King Lear, who wanted Cordelia to marry

6 Stoll, Shakespeare and Other Masters, pp. 24, 25.
a man of his choice, as examples of characters whose motives in the sources were ignored by Shakespeare because he was more interested in contrasts and parallels, developments and climaxes, tempo and rhythm, than in reasons and motives. They were not the principal consideration of the dramatist, who "provided motives, and considered mental processes, often but in so far as necessary for a stage presentation, even as a sculptor carves only the front of a figure designed for a niche."

In another study Stoll has this to say about motives:

Motives, when not merely neglected or intentionally slurred over, come boldly to the light of day, instead of betraying themselves casually and unconsciously as in life or in some present-day drama. . . . They are plain and clear like the plans and purposes of the characters, duly announced and confided to the audience.

Schuckling, in explaining his approach to a study of Shakespeare's plays, says:

Shakespearean exegesis has hitherto started almost exclusively with the most advanced side of his art, and has sought to judge all the rest by this. But Shakespeare's art-form is in fact a mixture of the most highly developed with quite primitive elements: on one side an inexpressible delicacy and subtlety in the portraiture of the soul, on the other aids and props to the understanding of the most antiquated description, as well as elements in the plots uncritically adopted and never properly fused into the play of character . . . Only the American scholar E. E. Stoll has lately, independently of the author, sought to promote this view--i. e., that an historical understanding of Shakespeare is to be reached only by taking him much more literally than we have been wont to do, his art as more naive, his methods as frequently far more primitive.

Thus our manner of contemplating Shakespeare is

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7Ibid., p. 191. 8Stoll, Shakespeare Studies, p. 126.
intended to open out new methods for an historically
correct conception of his characters by indicating
the limits of realism and primitive art in Shakespeare’s
technique.9

Schucking then points out that since Shakespeare
strove after a plain and popular form of expression, we
are to take the motives as stated by characters in their
monologues at face value. "It must be made a principle to
deny that Shakespeare makes any character in a monologue
state reasons for his actions that are not meant to be
substantially correct and sufficient."10 The dramatist
uses not only the monologue so as to leave the audience
in no uncertainty as to the reason for the actions of the
chief characters, but also such devices as asides and
direct communications. In cases where he gives no clear
explanation of motives, the simplest explanation in accordance
with his habitual art-forms should be given instead of an
interpretation from the standpoint of modern thought. We
are justified, as a rule, in adding a motive only when no
sense results without it, and whether we are justified or
not should be determined from the point of view, not of
our time, but of the time of Shakespeare and in the light
of Shakespeare’s methods.11

We see then that, roughly speaking, there are two
schools of Shakespearean criticism. On one hand is the

9 Levin L. Schuckling, Character Problems in Shakespeare’s
Plays, pp. 26-27.
10 Ibid., p. 212. 11 Ibid., pp. 224, 230.
group founded, as it were, by Coleridge, who accounted
Shakespeare the "guide and pioneer of true philosophy"
and laid the foundation for volumes of philosophic comment
on Shakespeare's works. On the other hand is the more
modern realistic school, who would have us interpret
Shakespeare in a more common-sense manner, believing him
to be a dramatist concerned primarily with pleasing an
Elizabethan audience, at the same time being an artist of
the first rank. It is our purpose to examine the critical
comment of the leading Shakespearean scholars of each
school insofar as it concerns the motivation of the principal
characters in the three tragedies, Othello, King Lear,
and Macbeth.

Much has been written concerning the jealousy of
Othello as the motive for his killing his fair young wife,
and many and varied are the views. Coleridge's belief in
this matter was quite positive:

Finally let me repeat that Othello does not kill Des-
demons in jealousy, but in a conviction forced upon
him by the almost superhuman art of Iago,—such a
conviction as any man would and must have entertained
who had believed in Iago's honesty as Othello did. . . .
Othello had no life but in Desdemonas: —the belief
that she, his angel, had fallen from the heaven of her
native innocence, wrought a civil war in his heart.
She is his counterpart; and, like him, is almost
sanctified in our eyes by her absolute unsuspiciousness,
and holy entireness of love. 12

Dowden follows Coleridge in this opinion, acknowledging
its source:

12 Coleridge, op. cit., pp. 393-394.
Since Coleridge made the remark, all critics of Othello are constrained to repeat after him that the passion of the Moor is not altogether jealousy—it is rather the agony of being compelled to hate that which he supremely loved... It was Cassio's supposed ignoble thought respecting Desdemona, even more than jealousy, which made him seem to Othello to merit mortal vengeance... It is with an agonized sense of justice that he destroys the creature who is dearest to him in the world, knowing certainly that with hers his own true life must cease.\footnote{Dowden, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 214-215.}

Hudson makes a nice distinction when he bears out Coleridge's defense of Othello by saying, "The struggle, then, in Othello is not between love and jealousy, but between love and honor."\footnote{H. N. Hudson, \textit{Shakespeare: His Life, Art, and Characters}, II, 477.} Othello, he goes on to say, had ample proof from Iago, in whom he had absolute trust, and if the charge against Desdemona had been really true, no one would have accused Othello as having acted from jealousy. He does not state, however, that jealousy was not ever present in Othello, but merely that it was not the leading feature of his character.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 477-478.}

Bradley held that Othello by nature was not jealous, but that upon being possessed by such a passion as he was, he would be swayed mightily by it. In this, then, Bradley goes somewhat further than the critics already quoted, who deny that Othello was ever swept by the passion of jealousy. The Moor's mind was open and free from introspection, but for all his dignity and calm, he was by nature full of the...
most vehement passion and was capable of becoming jealous:

His tragedy lies in this—that his whole nature was indisposed to jealousy, and yet was such that he was unusually open to deception, and, if once wrought to passion, likely to act with little reflection, with no delay, and in the most decisive manner conceivable.16

Brandes expresses Othello's jealousy in somewhat different terms:

This is not a representation of spontaneous but of artificially induced jealousy; in other words, of credulity poisoned by malignity . . . It is not Othello's jealousy, but his credulity that is the prime cause of disaster.17

Stoll points out that critics have been unreasonable in explaining, or trying to explain, the obvious difficulty of an open-minded, trusting, unsuspicous man's so believing any man, however honest and friendly he appeared, that he would be aroused to such insane jealousy of the wife he loved and trusted. The critics' denial of its name to the passion is only word-splitting, in Stoll's opinion. Their doctrine, "that for an unsuspicous person it is easier to hold his nearest and dearest to be traitors than his informer a liar, that innocence inclines to a belief in guilt rather than a belief in innocence, and that the most trustful man is capable of distrust," is unsound critically and psychologically. What we should do, he says, is to accept simply and dramatically the premise that Othello was not jealous at the beginning and that he was made jealous by Iago's

16 A. C. Bradley, op. cit., p. 186.
17 George Brandes, William Shakespeare, p. 446.
machinations during the course of the play, without trying to make the scheme fit into life as we know it. It must be taken for granted like other dramatic artifices, such as Shakespeare's stories of disguise, mistaken identity, eavesdropping, finding of rings and handkerchiefs, and love at first sight. Stoll, then, would accept the fact that Othello, not being easily jealous, fell into that passion for reasons that we must accept by "poetic faith," not by psychological justification. The improbable situation of the play was made acceptable and the hero was realized as a noble figure "by consonance of traits, not consistency of motives, by poetry, not analysis or inner disclosure." 18

Iago's motives have been the subject of more controversy than Othello's jealousy. In his case, too, Coleridge established the basis for discussion, having left for the critics who followed him that famous phrase--"the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity." 19 Despite the number of motives mentioned by Iago in his soliloquies, Coleridge believed that he was not motivated except by his utterly evil nature.

Dowden, citing the lines from the play in which Iago refused to give the dying Othello any reasons for his heinous conduct, follows Coleridge in saying that Iago

18 Stoll, Art and Artifice in Shakespeare, p. 16.
19 Stoll, Shakespeare and Other Masters, p. 211.
20 Coleridge, op. cit., p. 338.
was without motives:

Shakspere would have us believe that as there is a passion of goodness with no motive but goodness itself, so there is a dreadful capacity in the soul for devotion to evil independently of motives, or out of all proportion to such motives as may exist. Iago is the absolute infidel; for he is devoid of all faith in beauty and in virtue. . . Iago finds it right and natural to live in a world in which all men are knaves or fools) and all women are that which Desdemona is unable to name.21

Hudson, in a long explanation of Iago's conduct, advances the theory that he craved action of the most exciting kind and was fascinated by the very danger of crime, possessing "an insatiable itching of the mind, which finds relief in roughing it through the briers and thickets of diabolical undertakings."22 He holds the view that Iago's motives as stated to Roderigo are lies to dupe Roderigo and those in his soliloquies are lies to deceive himself, having come as an afterthought. He accepts Coleridge's view of Iago:

He cannot quite look his purpose in the face; it is a little too fiendish for his steady gaze; and he tries to hunt up some motives to appease his qualms of conscience. This is what Coleridge justly calls 'the motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity'; and well may he add, 'how awful it is!'23

Bradley denies that Iago worked from a desire for revenge because he had not been advanced by Othello or because he was a husband wronged by Othello. This view, he says, would attribute passion to Iago, who was in reality passionless. These motives, which he gave himself, disappear as the play progresses, usually being mentioned once and then

21Dowden, op. cit., pp. 212, 213.

22Hudson, op. cit., II, 472. 23Ibid., p. 473.
forgotten. He was merely trying to justify himself, searching for reasons for his actions even as Hamlet searched for reasons of delay. Iago had certain traits of character that made him what he was, a keen sense of superiority, contempt of others, a spite against goodness in men, an annoyance at having always to play a part, a consciousness of exceptional but unused ingenuity and address, an enjoyment of action, and an absence of fear. To do something in which he could use all these qualities would be a supreme pleasure—something involving triumphant exertion of his abilities and the excitement of danger. That something was his plot against Othello, and he carried it through with all the zest of an artist. His action was a plot, the intricate plot of a drama, and in the conception and execution of it he experienced the joy of artistic creation.24

Stoll says that at bottom Iago was moved by simple hatred, which he flatly avowed at the outset and reiterated again and again. In no doubt at all about this hatred, he gave various trumped-up reasons to explain and enforce it. Nothing else dramatically or even psychologically could have been so adequate as this method when the play depended on a villain who swept not only the hero but everybody else in his way into his net. What motives would suffice, particularly with a poet so little inclined to analysis?25

Schucking's explanation of Iago's motives is entirely different from the views of the preceding critics, but it seems that he come to practically the same conclusion, the difference lying in the fact that he attributes the difficulty to Shakespeare's occasional deficiency as an artist. The motives of Iago's actions, he says, are clearly indicated in his monologues and his confidential communications. Iago stated that his ambition had been wounded by the preference shown to Cassio, that his jealousy and desire of revenge had been aroused by the suspicion that Othello had had improper relations with his wife, that he loved Desdemona and wished to possess her, that he also thought it possible that he loved Cassio, that he feared Cassio's attentions to his wife, and that he disliked Cassio's goodness. Shakespeare, according to Schucking, meant these to be taken at face value, having, in other lines of the play, taken pains to bear them out. They did not, as critics have been wont to say, serve as palliations for Iago's conduct, for stirrings of conscience were unknown to him. However, Schucking admits that a literal acceptance of these motives may cause trouble in interpreting Iago's character, for none of these seem sufficient to motivate his fiendish scheme or to explain his apparent delight in his malignity.

No one, indeed, will receive the impression that Iago is an avenger of his supposedly outraged honor--himself a kind of Othello. Rather do we see him acting obviously out of wickedness, impelled by an evil disposition that makes him envious, malicious, and distrustful.26

26 Schucking, op. cit., p. 211.
The above quotation sounds like a paragraph which might be taken from any of the foregoing critics. But Schuckling has this explanation which sets him apart from the traditional critics:

We then have a discrepancy which results from the poet's instinctive processes of creation conflicting with his conscious intention. . . His Iago's actions on the whole are provided by Shakespeare with an excess of motives. This is a thing to which we are accustomed in ordinary life. When we state too many reasons for our acts or omissions one counteracts the other, and in the end none of them appears quite credible. It is a similar mistake which Shakespeare commits here.27

Concerning Desdemona most critics have the same view—that she was the epitome of all goodness and purity. "And also note," says Coleridge, "the exquisite circumstance of Cassio's kissing Iago's wife, as if it ought to be impossible that the dullest auditor should not feel Cassio's religious love of Desdemona's purity."28 What account, then, is given of her deceiving her father in her elopement with Othello and of her deceiving Othello in regard to the handkerchief? Dowden lays it to her timidity:

But during Othello's courtship Desdemona had shrunk from any speech upon this matter with Brabantio, and by innocent reserves and little dissemblings had kept him in ignorance of this event in her history. The Moor had moved her imagination by his strange nobility, his exotic grandeur. But how if afterwards her imagination be excited by some strange terror about her husband? . . .

For Desdemona, with her smooth, intelligible girl's life in Venice . . . here flowed in romance too stupendous, too torrid and alien, to be other than dreadful.

Shall we wonder that in her disturbance of mind she
trembles to declare to her husband that this talisman
could not be found?  

Hudson attributes her deceits to impressibility:

Desdemona's character may almost be said to con-
sist in the union of purity and impressibility. . . .
It is through this most delicate impressibility that
she sometimes gets frightened out of her proper charac-
ter; as in her equivocation about the handkerchief, and
her childlike pleading for life in the last scene; where
her perfect candour and resignation are overmastered
by sudden impressions of terror.  

Bradley likewise characterizes Desdemona as having been
timid, but says that she showed a freedom and energy of
spirit in defying her father in regard to her marriage with
Othello, and a frank, childlike boldness coupled with per-
sistency, that wrought her ruin in insisting that Othello
restore Cassio to his former position.  

Motives of the minor characters of Othello do not
occupy very much space in the critical works. That Roderigo
was foolish and easily duped, that Cassio was consistently
above reproach in his conduct toward Desdemona, and that
Emilia was truly deceived by her husband and faithful to
Desdemona are generally accepted. However, there is one
matter in regard to Emilia that has given rise to many ques-
tions—her failure to explain about the handkerchief.
Bradley assigned it to her stupidity, which, Stoll says, is
the only solution if we are to keep with psychology; for
fear of Iago, disloyalty to her mistress, and Schlegel's

29 Dowden, op. cit., pp. 210-211.
30 Hudson, op. cit., p. 486.  31 Bradley, op. cit., pp. 203, 204.
"sinful levity" are out of the question. In reality it was for the sake of the plot. The question has been raised as to why Emilia was present at the inquiry concerning the handkerchief. Shakespeare's reasons have been given as a desire to increase the tension of the audience and to produce the effect of irony, but Stoll holds that the effect of stupidity was too great a price to pay for tension or irony merely. It was done for the sake of dramatic illusion:

Really Emilia's want of perception is like that of Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, and everybody else in the tragedy but Roderigo, who is a confidant and tool; and more than that of any other minor character in the tragedy the obtuseness of Iago's wife supports and enforces the fiction of the impenetrableness of his mask.32

The character of King Lear has been the subject of much critical comment, and much has been said about his reasons for disowning Cordelia. Coleridge points out that in the first six lines of the play the division of Lear's kingdom is stated as a thing already determined in all its particulars, and this reveals that the trial of his daughters is but a trick to satisfy Lear's desire of being intensely loved, his cravings after sympathy, and his eager wish to enjoy his daughters' violent professions. That the silly trick resulted in disappointment was the cause of his rage.33

Dowden says that Shakespeare disregarded the motives assigned to the King in the old play King Lear in order to

32 Stoll, Art and Artifice in Shakespeare, p. 34.
33 Coleridge, op. cit., p. 329.
arrive more directly at the passion of Lear in all its stages. However, he says that the first scene is not incoherent:

In the concluding sentences we are reminded of Lear's 'inconstant starts,' of 'the unruly waywardness' that infirm and choleric years bring with them. It is evidently intended that we should understand the demand made upon his daughters for a profession of their love to have been a sudden freak of self-indulged waywardness, in which there was something of jest, something of unreason, something of the infirmity which requires demonstrations of the heart. Having made the demand, however, it must not be refused. Lear's will must be opposeless. It is the center and prime force of his little universe.34

Stoll assumes his customary position in regard to Lear's actions; namely, that they had to be so because of the plot. Attempts, he says, have not been wanting to motivate this opening situation, and much has been said about Lear's being on the verge of madness at the time and his lack of perception of the true characters of those about him. However, he says:

The terrible violence of the old man before the first scene is over, is owing, undoubtedly, to the uncompromising attitude of Cordelia, in disgust with her sisters, and to the blunt interference of Kent, but primarily and mainly to the dramatic purpose of the artist. As Raleigh says of Cordelia, 'if she had been perfectly tender and tactful (which, except with her sisters, she elsewhere always is) there would have been no play.' Also there would have been none ... had not Lear become so angry. The dramatist's concern for emotional effect again asserts itself, though at the expense of character.35

Though Schuckung usually sees Shakespeare adapting his characters to a given action, in King Lear he sees him

34Dowden, op. cit., pp. 233-234.

35Stoll, Art and Artifice in Shakespeare, pp. 140, 141.
adapting the action to the character. The strangeness of
the introductory action of the old Leir story compelled the
dramatist to adjust the subsequent action to the first part
of it. Lear's behavior at first shows an irascibility,
and on this fundamental trait Shakespeare based his whole
character. His impatience, lack of self-control, capricious-
ness, and arrogance persist after he is living with his elder
daughters. This is substantially the same view as that held
by Stoll.

Bradley and Dowden both see a change in the motivating
forces in Lear's life as the play progresses. Bradley ex-
presses it in this manner:

There is nothing more noble or beautiful in litera-
ture than Shakespeare's exposition of the effect of suf-
ferring in reviving the greatness and eliciting the
sweetness of Lear's nature. The occasional recurrence
during his madness, of autocratic impatience, or of
desire for revenge serves only to heighten this effect,
and the moments when his insanity becomes merely piteous
do not weaken it. The old king, who in pleading with
his daughters feels so intensely his own humiliation
and their horrible ingratitude, and who yet, at fourscore
and upward, constrains himself to practice a self-control
and patience so many years disused; who out of old affec-
tion for his Fool, and in repentance for his injustice
to the Fool's beloved mistress, tolerates incessant and
cutting reminders of his own folly and wrong; in whom
the rage of the storm awakes a power and a poetic gran-
deur surpassing even that of Othello's anguish; who
comes in his affliction to think of others first, and
to seek, in tender solicitude for his poor boy, the
shelter he scorns for his own bare head; who learns to
feel and to pray for the miserable and houseless poor,
to discern the falseness of flattery and brutality of
authority, and to pierce below the differences of rank
and raiment to the common humanity beneath; whose sight

36Schucking, op. cit., pp. 181, 182.
is so purged by scalding tears that it sees at last how power and place and all things in the world are vanity except love; who tastes in his last hours the extremes both of love's rapture and of its agony, but could never, if he lived on or lived again, care a jot for aught beside—there is no figure, surely, in the world of poetry as once so grand, so pathetic, and so beautiful as his. 37

Schucking thinks, however, that such a view of Lear's later feelings and motives are a complete misunderstanding of the true state of affairs. Lear had become a different person, but it was the result of a breakdown, a decay, and the result was a weariness and lassitude, not a better nature. "This is not a purified Lear from whose character the flame of unhappiness has burnt away the ignoble dross, but a nature completely transformed, whose extraordinary vital forces are extinguished or about to be extinguished." 38

Critical comment on the motives of Goneril and Regan has been limited largely to the common fact that they sprang from filial ingratitude. Coleridge says that Shakespeare was constrained by the fable "to introduce wickedness in an outrageous form in the persons of Regan and Goneril." 39 Hudson says that there is no accounting for them "but by supposing them possessed with a strong original impulse of malignity." 40

Cordelia's motive in refusing to gratify her father's desire for an extravagant expression of love is the only

38 Schucking, op. cit., pp. 188-189.
one that is inconsistent with her otherwise unfeeling devotion to the fulfilment of every wish and need of her father. Critics have described this motive as an inability to speak words of flattery. Coleridge says that there was "something of disgust at the ruthless hypocrisy of her sisters, and some little faulty admixture of pride and sullen- ness in Cordelia's 'Nothing.'"41 Bradley says that Fate made on her the one demand that she was unable to meet. Other heroines could have made Lear feel that he was loved, but Cordelia could not "heave her heart into her mouth"; she was unable to speak of the things nearest her heart. She told less than the truth.42 Brandes credits her with obstini- nacy inherited from Lear, but for which the tragedy would not have arisen. Lear's question and her answer were both wanting in tact.43 Hudson would have us believe that she risked his anger and displeasure rather than "feed his dotage with the intoxications for which he had such a morbid craving." Furthermore, he says that where her feelings were deepest, there her tongue was stillest.44 We have already quoted from Stoll in regard to Cordelia's uncompromising attitude. But for her want of tact in the opening scene there would have been no play.

In regard to Cordelia's actions during the rest of the

41Coleridge, op. cit., p. 335.
play little need be said, for the critics with one accord eulogize her tenderness, love and solicitude for her father. Dowden has this to say:

Cordelia has strengthened the bonds of humanity; she has enriched the tradition of human goodness. It is better for each of us to breathe because she has been a woman.45

Bradley adds his eulogy:

If we condemn the universe for Cordelia's death we should remember that it gave her birth.46

Hudson says of Cordelia:

An impersonation of the holiness of womanhood, herself alone is her own parallel; and all objects that lend beauty when used to illustrate other things seem dumb or ineloquent of meaning beside her.47

Surely to call forth such praise there could have been nothing but the purest filial love motivating her actions.

Not all of the critics mention Kent's motive in daring to defy King Lear and then serving him so devotedly, but Dowden calls it a "spirit of loyalty, unstimulated and unsupported by any faith which can be called theological."

He was motivated, too, by a passionate instinct of right-doing.48 Hudson calls his motive fidelity. Bradley points out that the passion of Kent's life was his love for Lear.

In the secondary plot of King Lear Edmund is the central character, and the only one about whom much has been said in regard to his motives. Coleridge was one of the

45Dowden, op. cit., p. 203. 46Bradley, op. cit., p. 305.
first to explain Edmund's wickedness by his fault of birth. Edmund heard the circumstances of that birth spoken of by his father in a light manner.

This, and the consciousness of its notoriety; the gnawing conviction that every show of respect is an effort of courtesy, which recalls, while it represses, a contrary feeling;--this is the ever trickling flow of wormwood and gall into the wounds of pride,--the corrosive virus which inoculates pride with a venom not its own, with envy, hatred, and a lust for that power which in its blaze of radiance would hide the dark spots on his disc,--with pangs of shame personally undeserved and therefore felt as wrongs, and with a blind ferment of vindictive workings toward the occasions and causes, especially towards a brother, whose stainless birth and lawful honours were the constant remembrances of his own debasement, and were ever in the way of its being unknown, or overlooked and forgotten.49

Not only did he feel this degrading shame of his birth, but he had been cut off from all counteracting influences to this feeling by being sent away from home for nine years.

Dowden explains the evil in Edmund's heart by his shameful birth and his having been thrown abroad in the world, but goes further to say his mind was "destitute of dread of the Divine Nemesis." He had a "hard skeptical intellect unfed by the instincts of the heart."50

Bradley's characterization of Edmund is that he was an adventurer, pure and simple, acting in pursuance of a purpose, ignoring affections and dislikes, if he had any. He was determined to make his way first to his brother's lands, then--as the prospect widened--to the crown; and

49 Coleridge, op. cit., p. 333.
50 Dowden, op. cit., p. 237.
he regarded men and women merely as helps or hindrances to his ends. "How far he is serious in this attitude, and really indignant at the brand of bastardy, how far his indignation is a half-conscious self-excuse for his meditated villainy is hard to say." ⁵¹

Hudson takes Bradley's view that Edmund was motivated by a definite purpose:

 Nevertheless there is not in Edmund, as in Iago, any spontaneous or purposeless wickedness. Adventures in crime are not at all his pastime; they are his means, not his end; his instruments, not his element. ⁵²

How are we to account for the motives of Gloucester in believing the decepts of his bastard son and casting off the true and loyal Edgar? As a matter of fact, critics have said very little as to his reasons for so treating his legitimate son. Schuckling has discussed the difficulty of harmonizing the character with the action in this subplot:

The development of the action in his play proceeds at a breakneck pace. First he shows how the father, the Earl of Gloucester, upon receipt of a most clumsily forged letter forthwith renounces his beloved and devoted son Edgar and puts the slanderer in his place; then he asks us to believe that the victim unhesitatingly follows the slanderer's advice to flee from his father, and even helps to make the way clear for the bastard's villainy, allowing his father to surprise him in a pretended duel for which there is no real ground and which serves only to ruin him. All this is so flagrantly untrue to human nature that one is at a loss to understand how Shakespeare, with all his knowledge of men's souls, could make them behave this way. ⁵³

⁵¹Hudson, op. cit., II, 362.
These scenes, he goes on to say, are very effective on the stage, but why are they not at the same time effective on the stage and psychologically consistent? Shakespeare was capable of achieving both these aims and did in many places. It seems that we have to admit that Shakespeare occasionally neglected to employ his highest artistic faculties. Schuckling believes then that no satisfactory motives can be ascribed to Gloucester. Brandes describes him as the "trusting" Gloucester;⁵⁴ Dowden says that he was self-indulgent and superstitious, and these characteristics suggest gullibility in regard to matters threatening danger to himself.⁵⁵

Edgar's motives are not the subject of controversy by the critics. He represents filial devotion, as does Cordelia. Dowden calls him "the champion of right"; Hudson speaks of his fidelity.

According to Coleridge, Macbeth's mind was already excited to the deed of murdering the King before he encountered the witches, for in speaking of the supernatural elements in Hamlet and Macbeth he says that the object of the first was to excite, and the object of the second was to mark a mind already excited. He calls attention to Macbeth's ready interest in the witches in direct contrast to Banquo's lack of interest in them. The witches, then, were a motivating force in Macbeth's career of crime, as was Lady Macbeth, who goaded him to the first deed. After Duncan's murder,

Coleridge describes Macbeth as "ever and ever mistaking the anguish of conscience for fears of selfishness, and thus as a punishment of that selfishness, plunging still deeper in guilt and ruin."\textsuperscript{56}

Dowden explains Macbeth's start of surprise by saying that he was startled to find that there was a terrible correspondence established between the baser instincts of his own heart and certain awful exigencies of evil. To Dowden, Macbeth at the beginning of the play had neither good nor evil motives; he had aptitudes for goodness and aptitudes for crime. His aptitudes for crime were touched off by the witches and inspired more definitely by his wife until he succumbed; but his aptitudes for goodness kept him in a state of imaginative remorse so that he was a miserable criminal, though never so miserable that he refrained from a crime.

For the dull ferocity of Macbeth is joyless. All his life has gone irretrievably astray, and he is aware of this. His suspicion becomes uncontrollable; his reign is a reign of terror; and as he drops deeper and deeper into the solitude and gloom, his sense of error and misfortune, futile and unproductive as that sense is, increases.\textsuperscript{57}

Hudson says of the witches that "they put nothing in Macbeth's mind, but merely draw out what was already there."\textsuperscript{58}

The Poet's idea, to him, is that Macbeth already had the will, and that what he wanted further was an earnest as-

\textsuperscript{56}Coleridge, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 378.
\textsuperscript{57}Dowden, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 227.  \textsuperscript{58}Hudson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 327.
surance of success. After he had conceived the idea of murder, his falterings and misgivings sprang from his peculiar structure of mind and the poison of meditated guilt. His imagination produced hallucinations; this was his conscience in disguise, making him wavering and irresolute so that he had to have other instigations. To be launched into crime he had to have not only his ambition and thirst for power but also his affection for his wife arrayed against his conscience. Then the same workings of conscience goad him on from crime to crime, for his feeling of guilt creates for him untold terrors, of which he tries to rid himself; "thus his cowardice of conscience urges him on to fresh murders, and every murder adds to that cowardice."\(^{59}\)

Bradley says of the influence of the witches on Macbeth that their influence was great, but it was only influence, with no question of external power. Macbeth was not innocent when he first heard them, or he would not have started with fear. The idea of murder was his own. The witches represented not only the evil in his soul, but the obscurer influences about him, and they added to his own ambition, as did his wife's urgings. Being thus started in his career of crime, he could never give it up, his passion for power and instinct of self-assertion being so strong that no inward misery could influence him.

There is a fever in his blood which urges him on to ceaseless action in the search for oblivion. And

\(^{59}\)Ibid., p. 335.
in the second place, ambition, the love of power, the instinct of self-assertion, are much too potent in Macbeth to permit him to resign, even in spirit, the prize for which he has put rancours in the vessel of his peace.60

All the critics quoted above have similar interpretations of Macbeth's motives. Stoll has a somewhat different interpretation. Macbeth, he says, despite his horror, is impelled by supernatural promptings and his wife's persuasions to commit the crime. The motive of ambition does not shine through his thought and deed, nor does it meet in a real clash with his nobler nature. Psychology does not enter into the play; Macbeth's character and motives are purely a matter of dramatic construction. That Shakespeare would have no psychology to obscure the impression of the play is shown by his ignoring the motives furnished in the source—Macbeth's grievances against Duncan, the king's feeble government, and Macbeth's better one afterwards—and adding to the simple regicide from Holinshed the crime against hospitality and humanity. If we are to judge from the text, the poet does not wish us to be able to decide whether Macbeth had planned the murder beforehand, or had been inspired by the witches, or was mainly influenced by Lady Macbeth. This confusion of motive is offset by the power and skill with which the character is portrayed to the audience. Stoll explains Macbeth's so immediately

60 Bradley, op. cit., pp. 343, 360.
lamenting his deed by saying that he was not ambitious and ruthless by nature, but was made so by a conjunction of influences and circumstances.\textsuperscript{61}

Schucking's characterization of Macbeth is that he was essentially a weak man, a man of unusual bravery, who even so did not initiate his own actions, but had to receive the decisive impulse from without. Though a lion on the field of battle, he was dependent on other people, was a prey to fear, and felt himself helpless in every moral conflict into which his own actions led him. His start of surprise was not caused by the evil in his mind, but by a chronic nervousness. He was a liar, like all weak men, and he was unable to control his face when he became the victim of his nerves. In the end he became master of his nerves and was driven on from crime to crime. He grew accustomed to wickedness; his mind was blunted. It was always against his weakness and lack of assurance that he struggled, not the good part of his nature. From this discussion we see that Schucking believes Macbeth to have been motivated solely by outside influences until the time when he had calloused himself.\textsuperscript{62}

Lady Macbeth, according to most critics, was motivated by ambition even more than Macbeth. Coleridge saw her as a lady of high rank, left much alone and feeding herself

\textsuperscript{61}Stoll, \textit{Art and Artifice in Shakespeare}, pp. 81-84.
\textsuperscript{62}Schucking, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 75-78.
with daydreams of ambition. These daydreams she thrust upon Macbeth at the first opportunity. Dowden says that with her, "to perceive is forthwith to decide, and to decide is to act." She gained for the time sufficient strength by throwing herself into a single purpose without hesitating or looking back. Her strength of will had to serve for both.63

According to Bradley, Lady Macbeth is Shakespeare's most commanding and awe-inspiring figure. She had an inflexible will, which was never separate from deed. She depended wholly upon herself. Her intellect was remarkable, but her imagination was comparatively dull. After the discovery of the murder its hideousness came to her through its effects on her guests, and this caused her to faint. She was the best wife that she knew how to be; what she did was for Macbeth.64

By examining the critical comment of some of the best known critics, who fall roughly into two groups, the philosophical or psychological, represented by Coleridge, Dowden, Bradley, Hudson and Brandes, on the one hand, and the realistic, represented by Stoll and Schucking on the other, I have endeavored to gather the ideas they have advanced in regard to the motives of the main characters from three of Shakespeare's tragedies—Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth. It is

63Dowden, op. cit., pp. 223-224.
evident that the discussion of motives has not been the main consideration of any one of them, though the problem has naturally arisen in the analyses of characters and explanations of plot and dramatic art. Consequently it will be my purpose to study these plays from the standpoint of the motivation of the characters, having in mind two objects: the determination of which motives Shakespeare took from the sources of the plays and which ones he himself attributed to the characters, and the determination of which group of critics, the psychological or the realistic, is more nearly correct in their contentions in regard to the motivation of characters in Shakespeare's plays.
CHAPTER II

MOTIVATION OF CHARACTERS IN OTHELLO

In Othello many problems of motivation occur, and in order to see what motives Shakespeare attributed to the characters it is first necessary to examine the source of the play, an Italian story included by Giraldi Cinthio in his Hecatommithi, the first edition of which was published in Sicily in 1565, to see what motivation he found in the original and how much he carried over into his play.

In the first place we find that the Moor of the old Italian story was deeply in love with Desdemona and she with him. Although they were married against the wishes of Desdemona's parents, they lived together in harmony for a time before the events of the story took place. The story opens as follows:

It happened that a virtuous lady of marvellous beauty, named Desdemona, fell in love with the Moor, moved thereto by his valour; and he, vanquished by the beauty and noble character of Desdemona, returned her love; and their affection was so mutual that although the parents of the lady strove all they could to induce her to take another husband, she consented to marry the Moor; and they lived in such harmony and peace in Venice that no word ever passed between them that was not affectionate and kind.¹

The Moor's motives in marrying Desdemona were purely

those of love and honor. There was nothing in his character or actions to give the slightest hint of his later disposition. That the wicked Ensign, who determined through jealousy to divert the love of the Moor from Desdemona, was fully aware of the trust the Moor had in her is shown by the following passage:

But knowing the singular love the Moor bore to Desdemona, and the friendship which he had for the Captain, he was well aware that, unless he practised an artful fraud upon the Moor, it were impossible to make him give ear to either accusation; wherefore he resolved to wait until time and circumstance should open a path for him to engage in his foul project.²

The Moor's jealousy was aroused at the insinuations of the Ensign when Desdemona tried again and again to reconcile her husband to the Captain of the troop, a dear friend whom he had deprived of his rank for drawing a sword upon a soldier of the guard. This jealousy was manifested first in melancholy:

In vain the Moor went on to question the officer,—he would proceed no further; nevertheless, his words left a sharp, stinging thorn in the Moor's heart, who could think of nothing else, trying to guess their meaning and lost in melancholy.³

This melancholy passed into anger and finally into rage, a passion that Desdemona thought was characteristic of Moors. The following passage tells of his anger:

And one day, when his wife had been endeavouring to pacify his anger toward the Captain, and praying him not to be unmindful of ancient services and friendship for one small fault, especially since peace had been made between the Captain and the soldier he had struck, the Moor

²Ibid., p. 379. ³Ibid., p. 380.
was angered, and exclaimed, 'Great cause have you, Diadem-
oma, to care so anxiously about this man! Is he a brother
or your kinsman, that he should be so near your heart?'

The lady with all gentleness and humility, replied,
'Be not angered, my dear lord; I have no other cause to
bid me speak than sorrow that I see you lose so dear a
friend as, by your own words, this Captain has been to
you; nor has he done so grave a fault that you should
bear him so much enmity. Nay, but you Moors are of so
hot a nature that every little trifle moves you to anger
and revenge!'

Still more enraged at these words, the Moor replied,
'I could bring proofs—by heaven, it mocks belief! but
for the wrongs I have endured revenge must satisfy my
wrath.'

His wrath grew and he became more suspicious, especially
when the Ensign said that Diademona had an aversion to his
blackness, but his anger was not yet so great that he did not
demand proof from the Ensign. However, there is no doubt that
the Moor of Cinthio's story was motivated by anger, for after
the Ensign's lies concerning the Captain and Diademona, his
rage mounted. The story goes on:

Then the Moor, burning with indignation and anguish,
said, 'Make thou these eyes self-witnesses of what thou
tell'st, or on thy life I'll make thee wish thou hadst
been born without a tongue!'

The Ensign's machinations concerning the handkerchief con-
vinced the Moor and he began to plot the death of Diademona.
That he was perfectly sure of her guilt and that he felt jus-
tified in killing her are shown by his words to her as she was
dying:

Thou wickedest of women, thus has thy falseness found
its just reward, the recompense to wives, who, counterfeiting
love, place horns upon their husbands' brows!

4Ibid., p. 380. 5Ibid., p. 381.

6Ibid., p. 387.
Jealousy, instigated by the lies of the Ensign, drove the Moor to such rage that he felt justified in taking his wife's life. The words "anger," "rage," and "indignation" occupy an important place in the story, and in one place the word "anguish" occurs, which is nearer the emotion felt by Shakespeare's Othello. Let us see how Othello's motives are like or unlike the motives of the Moor of the source.

Shakespeare's Moor married Desdemona solely because he loved her. He said to Iago:

For know, Iago,
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,
I would not my unhoused free condition
Put into circumscriptio and confine
For the sea's worth.7

His complete trust in her is shown by his answer to her father when, upon their parting, Brabantio warned Othello to watch her lest he too be deceived by her. "My life upon her faith!"8 Othello exclaimed.

When Iago first began his vile insinuations, Othello did not believe him, but said, "I do not think but Desdemona's honest."9 Upon seeing her, he could not believe the accusations and exclaimed:

If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself!
I'll not believe it.10

Othello did not have a petty, jealous disposition. He said of himself:

7Othello, I. 11. 24-28. 8Ibid., I. iii. 235.
9Ibid., III. iii. 225. 10Ibid., 273-279.
'Tis not to make me jealous
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,
Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well;
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous.
Nor from mine own weak merits will I draw
The smallest fear or doubt of her revolt;
For she had eyes and chose me.11

Desdemona did not believe Othello to be a jealous man, for
when she had lost the handkerchief she was at first unalarmed,
as is shown by this conversation:

Des. Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse
   Full of cures; and, but my noble Moor
   Is true of mind and made of no such baseness
   As jealous creatures are, it were enough
   To put him to ill thinking.

Emilia. Is he not jealous?

Des. Who, he? I think the sun where he was born
   Drew all such humours from him.12

What then brought about this terrifying jealousy that
became the motivating force in Othello's life? For jealousy
it undoubtedly was, in spite of its having been denied that
name by many able critics. There are many passages, besides
the ones already quoted, to point out that Iago was trying to
stir Othello to jealousy, for Iago-like he was warning the
Moor against it:

    O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;
    It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
    The meat it feeds on. . . .
    . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
    Good heaven, the souls of all my tribe defend
    From jealousy!13

When Othello became so upset about the missing handkerchief

13Tbid., 183-189.
and acted so unlike himself, Emilia raised the question, "Is not this man jealous?" Later, when Desdemona tried to excuse Othello's actions on the grounds of state worries, Emilia again brought up the possibility of jealousy and answered Desdemona's protestations that she had given no cause thus:

But jealous souls will not be answer'd so; They are not ever jealous for the cause, But jealous for they're jealous. It is a monster Begot upon itself, born on itself.  

Othello himself called it jealousy, for in his last words he spoke of himself as "one not easily jealous." Without doubt Shakespeare used the motivating force of jealousy in the development of Othello's character, but he evidently meant us to feel that there was some justification for it, that he was the victim of a colossal fraud, and that there was something of nobility and dignity in his response to the passion, for our sympathies remain with Othello to the end. How did Shakespeare accomplish this? In the first place, he made Othello by nature an unsuspicious person; that is, if he ever became suspicious of anyone it had to be at someone's instigation, and even then he desired proof. Iago told us about this characteristic of Othello early in the play:

The Moor is of a free and open nature, That thinks men honest that but seem to be so, And will as tenderly be led by the nose As asses are.  

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14 Ibid., III. iii. 165-167, 175-176.  
15 Ibid., pp. 159-162.  
16 Ibid., V. ii. 355.  
17 Othello, I. iii. 405-408.
Othello, then, was of an unusually trusting nature, being himself trustworthy. Furthermore, Iago was so adept in dissembling that he had not only Othello's complete trust, but that of everyone else as well. Over and over again, by every major character in the play, he was referred to as "honest" Iago. When Othello was about to leave for Cyprus, he put Desdemona in Iago's care, saying:

So please your Grace, my ancient;  
A man he is of honesty and trust.  
To his conveyance I assign my wife.  

**********  
Honest Iago,  
My Desdemona must I leave to thee.  

After Iago's lying explanation of Cassio's unseemly conduct with Roderigo, Othello said:

I know, Iago,  
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,  
Making it light to Cassio.  

Then when Iago began hesitatingly his insinuations against Desdemona and Cassio, protesting that he spoke only because he did love Othello, the Moor's reply was:

I think thou dost;  
And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,  
And weigh'st thy words before thou giv'st them breath,  
Therefore these stops of thine fright me the more.  

Later, when Iago had pointed out all the probable reasons for Desdemona's being unfaithful, Othello said of him:

This fellow's of exceeding honesty,  
And knows all qualities, with a learn'd spirit,  
Of human dealings.  

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18Ibid., 284-286; 295-296.  
19Othello, II. iii. 247-249.  
20Ibid., III. iii. 117-120.  
21Ibid., 258-260.
Othello continued to believe in Iago's honesty, even until the last scene when he told Emilia that her husband knew about Desdemona's wickedness, and answered her stupefied, unbelieving gasps with the words:

My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago. 22

Until Emilia revealed the truth about the handkerchief and Iago confirmed it by killing her, Othello believed in the honesty of his ancient.

Cassio, too, was deceived by Iago's seeming concern over his dismissal from service. When the ancient had made arrangements for Cassio's seeing Desdemona about his suit with Othello, he remarked:

I never knew
A Florentine more kind and honest. 23

Desdemona had all confidence in Iago. When Emilia urged that Desdemona seek to make peace between Othello and Cassio because Cassio's dismissal grieved Iago so, Desdemona remarked, "O, that's an honest fellow." 24 When Othello first openly accused her of being unfaithful, in her distress she sent for Iago to have him assure her husband of her innocence, and, upon his arrival, addressed him as "Good friend."

Emilia herself was deceived in her husband. She never dreamed to what use he had put Desdemona's handkerchief, which she had given him. She suspected that some lying villain had caused the trouble, but when she learned that it

22Othello, V. ii. 42-43. 23Ibid., III. i. 42-43.
24Ibid., III. iii. 5.
was Iago, she could scarcely believe it, gasping again and
again in pure astonishment, "My husband!"

Othello's jealousy was aroused by a man in whom he had
complete trust, a man whose mask was so impenetrable that
all the persons with whom he was closely associated were
fooled thereby.) By such a device did Shakespeare make Othello's
acceptance of Iago's vile insinuations seem credible.

The question has been raised as to why, if Othello
possessed a trusting nature, he did not trust Desdemona, in
whom he had every reason to trust. I have already made the
point that Othello trusted until he was made suspicious by
someone else. Perhaps if anyone had ever once suggested to
him that Iago was not worthy of his confidence, the story
would have been different. Furthermore, in all fairness to
Othello, it must be admitted that Iago raised the very ques-
tions concerning Desdemona that would furnish Othello the most
food for worry. She was from Venice, a city in which Othello
was a foreigner, and, Iago said:

In Venice they do let Heaven see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands.\textsuperscript{25}

She had deceived her father, a fact Othello could not deny.

Iago's sly remark,

She that, so young, could give out such a seeming,
To seal her father's eyes up close as oak—
He thought 'twas witchcraft—,\textsuperscript{26}

was broken off with the assurance of his love. That his most

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 202-203. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{26}Ibid., 209-211.
potent remark, one concerning the difference of Othello and Desdemona in complexion and station in life, had its desired effect is evidenced by Othello's ponderings when he was alone:

Haply, for I am black
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declin'd
Into the vale of years,—yet's that's not much—
She's gone. 27

When the Moor began to consider the points in which Desdemona might think him inferior to her, he was really without hope, for jealousy is bred by a feeling of inferiority.

Othello's complete trust in Iago's honesty and the cunning of Iago's diabolical suggestions served to inflame Othello's jealousy, but there were other forces to fan it and keep it blazing until he finally thought he had proof. The evidence Iago brought forth was convincing—the handkerchief plot and the overheard conversation. However, Desdemona, in all her innocence was the final contributing factor, her goodness and her fear the final motivating forces.

Iago took advantage of Desdemona's goodness in furthering his schemes. He knew that the kind-hearted lady would plead with Othello for Cassio's forgiveness, for he said:

And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all. 28

It happened as he had planned. With her innocent insistence on Cassio's being reinstated to his former position, she

27Ibid., 263-267. 28Othello, II. iii. 364-368.
confirmed every suspicion Iago had aroused in Othello. Not only was this suspicious, but her evasion in regard to the handkerchief was incriminating. She was arguing Cassio's case and lying about the handkerchief at the same time. It was small wonder that Othello became angry and believed that Iago was right in his insinuations. One cannot blame the Moor too much for being deceived; there were, it must be admitted, some grounds for his jealousy, that powerful motivating force in his murder of Desdemona.

Although Othello became angry to the point of leaving the room when Desdemona lied about the handkerchief, and angry to the point of striking her when she expressed herself as being glad that Cassio was given the government of Cyprus, he did not murder her in a fit of anger. He deliberately made up his mind that she was not fit to live, and in actual sorrow ended her life. He still loved her, for he said as he kissed her for the last time:

One more, one more.
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee
And love thee after. One more, and that's the last;
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly;
It strikes where it doth love.29

At the last he spoke of himself as "one that lov'd not wisely but too well,"30 and as

An honourable murderer, if you will,
For nought I did in hate but all in honor.31

29Ibid., V. 11. 19-22.
30Ibid., 344.
31Ibid., 294-295.
Shakespeare took the motives of jealousy, anger, and anguish from the old Italian story, but they are made so much more plausible and intensified so greatly that they are hardly recognizable. The fiction of Iago's "honesty" was entirely original with Shakespeare; where the "anguish" of the Moor was merely mentioned by Cinthio, Shakespeare makes us suffer it with Othello; and where the Moor of the source committed an atrocious murder, Othello committed a murder in honor. All this artistic effect was gained by a masterly handling of motives.

The character of Iago is equally interesting from the standpoint of the motivation. From the source Shakespeare took the idea of Iago's desperate wickedness, for it reads:

Now amongst the soldiers there was an ensign, a man of handsome figure, but of the most depraved nature in the world. This man was in great favor with the Moor, who had not the slightest idea of his wickedness; for, despite the malice lurking in his heart, he cloaked with proud and valorous speech and with a specious presence the villainy of his soul with such an art that he was to all outward show another Hector or Achilles.32

However, in the old Italian story, the Moor fell victim to all this depravity because of his ensign's love for Desdemona and the jealousy aroused because that love was not returned. The story goes on to say:

Now the wicked ensign, regardless of the faith that he had pledged his wife, no less than that of friendship, fidelity, and obligation which he owed the Moor, fell passionately in love with Desdemona, and bent all his thoughts to achieve his conquest; yet he dared

not to declare his passion openly, fearing that, should the Moor perceive it, he would at once kill him. He therefore sought in various ways, and with secret guile, to betray his passion to the lady, but she, whose every wish was centred in the Moor, had no thought for this Ensign more than for any other man; and all the means he tried to gain her love had no more effect than if he had not tried them. But the Ensign imagined that the cause of his ill success was that Disdemona loved the Captain of the troop; and he pondered how to remove him from her sight. The love which he had borne the lady now changed into bitterest hate, and, having failed in his purposes, he devoted all his thoughts to plot the death of the Captain of the troop and to divert the affection of the Moor from Disdemona.33

From these passions of jealousy and hatred sprang all the schemes of the Ensign in Cinthio's story. The Italian author never lets his readers forget the villains of the Ensign for he constantly refers to him as "the wicked Ensign" and "wickedest of men." The oiliness of his tongue is illustrated in the following passage, in which he is making his base insinuations against Disdemona:

'Captain,' replied the Ensign, 'I looked for such reward for these my faithful offices, none else; but since my duty, and the jealous care I bear your honour, have carried me thus far, I do repeat, so stands the truth, as you have heard it from these lips; and if the lady Disdemona hath, with a false show of love for you, blinded your eyes to what you should have seen, this is no argument but that I speak the truth. Nay, this same Captain told it me himself, like one whose happiness is incomplete until he can declare it to another; and, but that I feared your anger, I should have given him, when he told it me, his merited reward, and slain him. But since informing you of what concerns you more than any other man brings me so undeserved a recompense, would I had held my peace, since silence might have spared me your displeasure.34

His quickness to dissemble and divert all suspicions from himself is shown in the passage concerning his attack

\[33\textit{ibid.}, \text{ p. 379.}\]  \[34\textit{ibid.}, \text{ p. 383.}\]
on the Captain of the troop:

Thereupon the Ensign, hearing the people come running up, with some of the soldiers who were lodged thereabouts, took to his heels to escape being caught; then turning about again, he joined the crowd, pretending to have been attracted by the noise. And when he saw the Captain's leg cut off, he judged that, if not already dead, the blow must, at all events, end his life; and whilst in his heart, he was rejoiced at this, he yet feigned to compassionate the Captain as he had been his brother. 35

Such then was the Ensign, wicked and depraved, oily of tongue, quick to dissemble and deceive, from whom Shakespeare created the immortal Iago. In the first scene of Shakespeare's play Iago said that he hated Othello because Othello had preferred Cassio as lieutenant when he considered himself much more suitable to the position. He explained to Roderigo that he followed Othello merely to serve his own purposes:

In following him, I follow but myself; Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty, But seeming so, for my peculiar end; For when my outward action doth demonstrate The native act and figure of my heart In compliment extern, 'tis not long after But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve For doves to peck at. I am not what I am. 36

Iago, at the outset, had no liking for Othello, and his bitter enmity had been stirred against him by his slight in appointing Cassio to the position he himself had coveted. Having discovered from Roderigo, Desdemona's rejected lover, that the Moor had eloped with Desdemona, he lost no time in stirring her father to action against Othello, but when the

mischief was started, he left, explaining to Roderigo why
he could not appear against the Moor thus:

Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains,
Yet, for necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign. 37

In the very next scene, we find him telling Othello
that Roderigo had reported the elopement to Desdemona's
father. Then with consummate art in slyness he pretended
friendship and good will toward Othello in regard to his
marriage. Shakespeare lost no time in representing Iago to
the audience as a villain of no mean abilities in the art
of deception, having completely duped both Roderigo and
Othello. These qualities were found in the Ensign of the
source, but Shakespeare introduced a different motive, that
of envy of Cassio because of his appointment as lieutenant
and anger at Othello for making the appointment. Another
motive for Iago's subsequent actions was given by him in a
later soliloquy:

I hate the Moor;
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office. I know not if't be true;
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. 38

In this soliloquy also he made his plans, which involved not
only making Othello unhappy, but also securing Cassio's
place. That he did always keep in view this idea of getting
Cassio's place seems to prove that his envy of Cassio was

37 Ibid., I. i. 155-159. 38 Ibid., I. iii. 392-396.
really a motivating force in his actions, whether it was one of the major forces or not.

In a still later soliloquy he again went over all his grievances and named some new justifications for his wickedness:

That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it;
That she loves him 'tis apt and of great credit.

Now I do love her too;

Not out of absolute lust, though peradventure
I stand accountant for as great a sin,
But partly led to diet my revenge,
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof
Doth like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife;
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment cannot cure. Which thing to do,
If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trash
For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb--
For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too.39

In this passage Iago really seemed to be hunting for motives, for none of the possibilities—that Cassio really loves Desdemona, that Othello had been guilty of improper conduct with Emilia, that Cassio might have been guilty of the same thing—carry any conviction to the audience or even to him.

His plans for revenging himself involved both Othello and Cassio because he hated them both. The play began on

39Ibid., II. i. 300-316.
this note of hate. When Roderigo said to Iago, concerning Othello, "Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate," Iago answered, "Despise me, if I do not." In other places he said, as we have already noted, "I do hate him as I do hell-pains," and again, "I hate the Moor." Though on the first two occasions he was speaking to Roderigo, on the last occasion he was talking to himself so that we may feel that he truly hated Othello. The reasons he gave--Cassio's preferment over him in service, suspicion of Othello's relations with Emilia--do not ring true, however. It seems, rather, that he hated the Moor first and thought of these possible reasons afterward. A statement made much later in the play in regard to Cassio throws some light on the hideous workings of his mind. When he was congratulating himself on having set Roderigo on to Cassio, he said:

If Cassio do remain,
He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly; and, besides, the Moor
May unfold me to him.

There was in Iago an innate feeling of hatred for anyone who was good. The evil in him could not bear to see goodness thrive. He wanted first to see Cassio murdered because he could not endure the "daily beauty" shown in his life. The fact that Cassio might prove his innocence of any improper relations with Desdemona to the Moor was an afterthought. In

40 Othello, I. 1. 7-8. 41 Ibid., V. 1. 18-21.
the same way, then, he felt a hatred for Othello, a for-
eigner in his city, who was so noble, so brave, and so be-
loved by the dignitaries of Venice that they felt they could
not do without him. This must indeed have rankled in Iago's
heart so that he could not bear to have Othello's success
and happiness go unmarred any longer. He himself said of
Othello's connection with the state:

For I do know, the state,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Cannot with safety cast him, for he's embark'd
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,
Which even now stands in his act, that for their souls,
Another of his fathom they have none,
To lead their business.42

Iago, it seems to me, was motivated by an envy, con-
ceived and born in an evil nature with a capacity for lying,
cunning deceit, and cruelty beyond the ability of ordinary
persons to comprehend. Shakespeare took from the source
that "most depraved of all human beings," the naturally
wicked Ensign, deprived him of the motive given him by the
Italian author, i. e., his unrequited passion for Desdemona,
and made him, without motive, save his evil nature which
could not bear to see goodness thrive, plan and execute a
scheme that for pure malignity is almost without parallel
in fiction or history. The multiplicity of motives that
Iago himself gave for his crimes must not be discounted
totally, for each contributed its part to that consuming hatred

42Ibid., I. i. 148, 150-154.
and malice that were the essential core of Iago's disposition, but in themselves they did not account for all his actions.

We have already seen that the first adjective applied to Desdemona by Cinthio was the word "virtuous." In the same passage he referred to her "noble character," and pointed out that her affection for the Moor was so sincere that she married him against the wishes of her parents. Desdemona was of a very loving nature. She loved the Ensign's wife, spending the greater part of every day with her and the Ensign's child, whom she was caressing when the Ensign stole her handkerchief. This loving nature explains her conduct in regard to the Captain of the troop, the good friend whom the Moor had deprived of rank. Desdemona had been kind to the Captain from the first, and the Moor was grateful:

In the same Company there was a certain Captain of a troop, to whom the Moor was much affectioned. And Desdemona, for this cause, knowing how much her husband valued him, showed him proofs of the greatest kindness, which was all very grateful to the Moor.43

When the trouble occurred between the Captain and the Moor, Desdemona's loving nature could not but sorrow, and it was this circumstance that the Ensign used against them:

Not long afterwards it happened that the Captain, having drawn his sword upon a soldier of the guard, and struck him, the Moor deprived him of his rank; whereat Desdemona was deeply grieved, and endeavoured again and again to reconcile her husband to the man. This

the Moor told to the wicked Ensign, and how his wife importuned him so much about the Captain that he feared he should be forced at last to receive him back in service. Upon this hint the Ensign resolved to act, and began to work his web of intrigue.\(^{44}\)

We have already seen how, after the Ensign's insinuations, the Moor's anger was kindled against Disdemona the next time she pled for the Captain, and how she explained that her only reason for insisting on their reconciliation was her sorrow at the Moor's losing such a dear friend. Finally, she gave up her suit, her motives for doing so being explained in this passage:

Disdemona, in astonishment and fright, seeing her husband's anger kindled against her, so contrary to his wont, said humbly and with timidity, 'None save a good intent has led me thus to speak with you, my lord; but to give cause no longer for offence, I'll never speak a word more on the subject.'\(^{45}\)

She was easily frightened, and, as shown above, humble and timid. Her terror of her husband grew so that when he asked her about the lost handkerchief, she was moved by fear to resort to a falsehood. Her agitation is clearly shown:

The unhappy lady, who had been in great fear of this [being asked for the handkerchief] grew red as fire at this demand; and to hide the scarlet of her cheeks, which was closely noted by the Moor, she ran to a chest and pretended to seek the handkerchief, and after hunting it a long time, she said, 'I know not how it is—I cannot find it; can you, perchance, have taken it?'\(^{46}\)

In complete innocence she added to the Moor's rage by grieving over the Captain's loss of limb. This is further

\(^{44}\)Ibid., pp. 379-380.  
\(^{45}\)Ibid., p. 380.  
\(^{46}\)Ibid., p. 384.
evidence of her loving disposition and innate kindness of feeling, which motivated her in most of her actions.

The next morning the tidings of the affair spread through the whole city and reached the ears of Desdemona; whereas she, who was kind-hearted and little dreamed that any ill would betide her, evinced the greatest grief at the calamity. This served but to confirm the Moor's suspicions.47

The unhappy Desdemona of Cinthio's story was motivated in most of her actions by a tender, gentle love and kindness which she felt for all people. In the handkerchief episode she was driven by fear and timidity to evade her husband's questions rather than to confess the truth.

Shakespeare's Desdemona had very much the same motives for her behavior. She fondly loved the Moor even to the point of leaving her father and accompanying her husband to Cyprus. In proof of her devotion she said:

My heart's subdu'd
Even to the very quality of my lord,
I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
And to his honours and his valiant parts
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.48

In her devotion she never once wavered, even though she was at times sorely distressed at Othello's behavior, which she tried to excuse by attributing it to the worries of state. When Emilia exclaimed that she wished Desdemona had never seen him, that faithful lady answered:

So would not I. My love doth so approve him,
That even his stubbornness, his frowns,
. . . . have grace and favour in them.49

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47_Ibid.,_ p. 386.  
48_Othello, I. iii. 251-255._  
49_Ibid., IV. iii. 19-21._
Even as she lay dying at his hands, her final thought was for him. When Emilia asked who had murdered her, she answered with that magnificent lie prompted by her love for Othello:

Nobody; I myself. Farewell!
Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell!

This love for Othello motivated her every action. She pleaded for Cassio's forgiveness for what she thought was Othello's good, giving the following explanation:

Why this is not a boon.
'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves, Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm, To your own person.

She truly felt that Othello should not lose Cassio's friendship. When her request was not immediately granted, she continued to insist, seeming to make the granting of this favor a test of Othello's love for her. Indirectly, the love she felt for Othello was the cause of her telling the falsehood in regard to the handkerchief, for it was a fear or dread of his displeasure which prompted it. After he, in a fit of anger, had left her she said:

I never saw this before,
Sure there's some wonder in this handkerchief;
I am most unhappy in the loss of it.

That she loved him faithfully until her death and died with a lie on her lips to save him, we have already seen. There was not an action on the part of Desdemona that was not motivated by her tender and gentle love for Othello and his friends.

50Ibid., V. ii. 124-125.  
51Ibid., III. iii. 76-80.  
52Ibid., III. iv. 97-99.
Only one other character in Shakespeare's play was taken from Cinthio's story, Iago's wife, Emilia, and she bears faint resemblance, if any, to the wife of the ancient in the source. The following quotations show the part of the ancient's wife in the Italian original:

This man had likewise taken with him his wife to Cyprus, a young, and fair, and virtuous lady; and being of Italian birth she was much loved by Disdemona, who spent the greater part of every day with her.\(^{53}\)

The Ensign's wife knew her husband's intentions in the Italian story, but she dared not divulge them. When Disdemona appealed to her to try to learn from the Ensign why the Moor was so moody, she would not tell. According to the story, the explanation was:

The Ensign's wife, who knew the whole truth (her husband wishing to make use of her to compass the death of Disdemona), but could never consent to such a project, dared not, from fear of her husband, disclose a single circumstance; all she said was 'Beware lest you give any cause of suspicion to your husband, and show to him by every means your fidelity and love.'\(^{54}\)

The Emilia of Shakespeare's play, although she may have been "young, fair," and even "virtuous," as was the Ensign's wife of Cinthio's story, was a creature whose characteristics and motives were of Shakespeare's own making. We are chiefly concerned with her actions in regard to the handkerchief. Why did she give it to Iago in the first place, and, having given it to him, why did not she tell

\(^{53}\text{Furness, Othello, Variorum Edition, p. 378.}\)

\(^{54}\text{Ibid., pp. 384-385.}\)
that she had it when Othello was pressing Desdemona for it? It was not that she did not love Desdemona, for her devotion to her mistress is evident, especially in the last scenes of the play, as we shall see. It seems to me that, in spite of Iago's taunting remarks to her, she liked to please him, for her first thought on finding the handkerchief was that Iago wanted it and she was glad that she had found it. She was, of course, innocent of his evil designs, for she said:

What he will do with it Heaven knows, not I; I nothing but to please his fantasy.55

When Othello asked Desdemona for the handkerchief and she denied that it was lost, Emilia did not speak up and explain what had happened to it. It was natural for her to keep quiet, for an explanation would have required an admission of a theft on her part. Besides she did not realize the importance of the matter, being quite used to unreasonable actions and quarrelsome words from Iago. To her, Othello's manner was the usual way for a man to act toward his wife, for she remarked to Desdemona after the scene:

'Tis not a year or two shows us a man, They are all but stomachs, and we are all but food; They eat us hungerly, and when they are full They belch us.56

Emilia did not foresee any tragic results from the handkerchief episode. Men were "jealous for they're jealous." Iago had suspected her with the Moor, but no serious result

55Othello, III. iii. 297-299. 56Ibid., III. iv. 103-106.
had come of it. She did not ever suspect Iago of being the "base, notorious knave" that had aroused Othello's distrust of Desdemona, for she was the most surprised of any when Othello told her. When she finally knew, she repudiated him immediately, saying,

If he says so, may his pernicious soul
Rot half a grain a day! He lies to the heart.\(^{57}\)

Her loyalty was all for Desdemona then, and she risked her life to tell Othello the truth about the handkerchief so that Desdemona's name would be cleared. Her dying words were:

Moor, she was chaste; she lov'd thee, cruel Moor;
So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true.\(^{58}\)

From this brief discussion it is evident that the motives of Emilia were entirely Shakespeare's ideas, for in the original story, the Ensign's wife knew her husband's evil designs but was afraid to tell them, while in Shakespeare's play, Emilia was as much fooled by Iago as were the other characters. She gave him Desdemona's handkerchief because she liked to please him, but she never once realized the seriousness of the deed, and besides, as was shown by her conversation about virtue, she did not have a very keen sense of doing right for right's sake. She did love Desdemona very much, and in the end showed that love by defying Iago to defend her honor and virtue, which she knew were dearer to Desdemona than life.

\(^{57}\)Ibid., V. 11. 155-156. \(^{58}\)Ibid., 11. 249-250.
Roderigo is a character of Shakespeare's invention, appearing in no wise in the source. He was simply a tool for Iago, and, being weak and easily influenced, was a good one. He had been under Iago's influence before the play opened, for he said in the opening lines:

*Tush! never tell me! I take it much unkindly
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse
As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.*

The fact that he would follow Iago's suggestions blindly and the fact that he had been a rejected suitor for Desdemona made him an ideal tool in Iago's schemes. When he threatened to drown himself, Iago persuaded him not to, promising him that Desdemona would soon tire of the Moor, and at the same time suggesting that he have plenty of money for use:

*I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be long that Desdemona should continue her love to the Moor,—put money in thy purse,—nor he his to her.*

This plan Roderigo followed, obeying every suggestion made to him by Iago. He gave money to Iago to buy jewels for Desdemona, and involved himself in the brawl with Cassio at Iago's instigation. Finally, because Roderigo knew too much, Iago killed him. The motivating forces in his futile life were his weakness and his foolish and hopeless love for Desdemona.

In summarizing, let us see first how Shakespeare treated the motives found in the sources and then try to determine

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which group of critics are the more nearly correct in regard to Shakespeare's motivation. In the case of the Moor of the old Italian story, Shakespeare took the motives of jealousy and anger for the murder of Desdemona and used them, but he motivated the jealousy by making Othello a man of open, trusting nature, by building up the fiction of Iago's honesty, by putting diabolically twisted truths in Iago's mouth, and by having Desdemona herself unsuspectingly add to her husband's suspicions so that when Othello finally killed Desdemona, he committed a murder not "in hate, but all in honor." By changing the motivation from that of Cinthio's story, Shakespeare made Othello a tragic hero instead of a villain. The chief controversy between the two groups of critics is whether Shakespeare made Othello behave in a manner soundly psychological, or whether he left the Moor's actions unacceptable except by "poetic faith." The evidence, it seems to me, is that Shakespeare did make Othello's actions consistent with his motives and by so doing created a character whose feelings, emotions, and behavior command both the sympathy and understanding of the audience.

The motive for the malignant machinations of the Ensign of the source, i. e., his unrequited passion for Desdemona, was discarded entirely, or almost entirely, by Shakespeare, and a multiplicity of other motives for Iago's schemes suggested--Iago's envy of Cassio and hatred for Othello because
Othello appointed Cassio to the position Iago wanted, his suspicion of Othello and Emilia, his suspicion of Cassio and Emilia, and his desire for Desdemona. As we have seen, not one of these motives, nor even all of them, seem to account for Iago's villainy, and this has led critics to say that Iago was really without motive save his own evil nature. Why did Shakespeare change this motivation? The answer lies, I believe, in this premise—the more villainous the villain, the more noble and justifiable the hero. In this case, the critics who insist that Iago's chief motivation was his own evil nature, as indeed all of them do in the final analysis, are right. Schucking's contention that the provision of too many motives was a mistake made by Shakespeare, instead of an intentional device for making Iago's villainy seem even worse, appears unjustifiable.

The motivation of Emilia in Shakespeare's play is also different from that of the Ensign's wife of the source, for in the old Italian story the Ensign's wife knew of her husband's plot but did not dare reveal it, while in Shakespeare's play Emilia did not suspect Iago any more than did the other characters. Stoll's explanation of this change in motivation seems the most reasonable. It was done, he says, to preserve the fiction concerning Iago. Everybody, even his own wife, was completely fooled by him, and so Othello is the more justified for his acceptance of Iago's lies.

In the case of Desdemona, Shakespeare did not change
any motives. The same tender, loving nature of Desdemona was present in Desdemona, but her devotion to Othello is greater than the devotion of her forerunner, and her persistence more incriminating. Shakespeare took a shadowy figure and made it into one of the best-loved of his heroines by deepening and strengthening the traits of character from which sprang Desdemona's motives.
CHAPTER III

MOTIVATION OF CHARACTERS IN KING LEAR

In the play King Lear Shakespeare had many problems in motivation. One of the most interesting of these is the motivation of King Lear's actions at the beginning of the play. What moved the old king to resort to the strange testing of his daughters' love in order to decide how to divide his kingdom? First, let us consider the problem from the standpoint of the sources. The Lear story was available to Shakespeare in many different forms, among them the story from Holinshed's Chronicles, The Historie of Britaine, the account of Queene Cordila by John Higgins in A Mirour for Magistrates, a version found in Spenser's Faerie Queene, and the old play, The True Chronicle History of King Leir, first published in 1605.

Holinshed gave as the motive for Lear's using the love test as a means for dividing his kingdom his desire to leave more to Cordeilla, whom he best loved:

When this Leir therefore was come to greate yeres, and began to waxe unwieldie through age, he thought to understand the affections of his daughters towards him, and prefer her whom he best loved, to the succession over the kingdom.1

Evidently he believed that since he loved Cordeilla best, she certainly would express more love for him than

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1Raphael Holinshed, Chronicles, I, 447.
the other two daughters.) The King Leire of *A Mirour* for *Magistrates* had the same idea in mind. Cordell, telling her own story said:

> Us all our father Leire did love too well, God wot. But minding her that lou'd him best to note, Because he had no sonne t' enjoy his land, He thought to guerdon most where fauour most he fand.\(^2\)

The intention of the king to give Cordelia a greater share of his kingdom was not expressed in the story as related in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*:

> But three faire daughters, which were well uptrained In all that seemed fit for kingly seed, Mongst whom his realme he equally decreed To have divided.\(^3\)

*King Leir* presented this part of the plot in an entirely different way. Leir's daughters were all unmarried, and he wanted them matched with neighboring kings so that he might divide his realm among them. Gonorill and Regan were willing to accept the offers of Cornwall and Cambria, but Cordella, though she had offers from many suitors, refused to marry anyone whom she did not love. Leir devised the love test so that he could trap Cordella into granting him a request in order to prove the great love for him that he expected her to profess:

> I am resolv'd, and even now my mind Doth meditate a sudden stratagem, To try which of my daughters loves me best Which till I know, I cannot be in rest,

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This granted, when they jointly shall contend, 
Each to exceed the other in their love: 
Then at the vantage will I take Cordella, 
Even as she doth protest she loves me best, 
I'll say, Then, daughter, grant me one request, 
To show thou lovest me as thy sisters doo, 
Accept a husband, whom myselfe will woo. 
This sayd, she cannot well deny my sute, 
Although (poore soule) her senses will be mute: 
Then will I triumph in my policy, 
And match her with a King of Brittany. 4

There was no indication in this older play of King Lear 
that the old King loved Cordella better than Gonorill 
and Ragan. According to his own statement, he loved them 
all very dearly:

How deare my daughters are unto my soule 
None knowes, but he that knows my thoughts 
and secret deeds. 5

The King Lear of Shakespeare's play seemed to have 
had the same motive for using the love test as the Leir 
of Holinshed's Chronicles and A Mirour for Magistrates. 
He loved Cordelia more than her sisters, and probably 
went her to have the largest share of his kingdom, for 
he wanted to make his home with her. In telling her that 
it was her time to speak and express her love for him, 
his tone was more affectionate and his words revealed that 
he wanted her to deserve the best, a share "more opulent":

Now our joy, 
Although the last, not least, to whose young love 
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy 
Strive to be interest'd, what can you say to draw 
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak. 6

4King Lear, i. 77-91. 5Ibid., i. 204-205. 
6King Lear, I. i. 86-90.
Afterwards, in attempting to silence the protest Kent raised against his disowning her, he said:

I loved her most and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery.\(^7\)

There is no indication in Shakespeare's play that the test, as in the older play, had anything to do with Cordelia's choice of husband. The princes of France and Burgundy were at the court as suitors for Cordelia, but Lear did not mean to force his choice on Cordelia. Of them he said:

The princes, France and Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
And here are to be answer'd.\(^8\)

Lear was motivated, too, by a very childish desire for flattery. This is shown by his complacent acceptance of the extravagant professions of love by Goneril and Regan, and his bitter disappointment at Cordelia's failure to gratify his desire for a public avowal of her love. This motive is evident in all the stories of the king and his three daughters and cannot be attributed to Shakespeare, though he did make it more forceful in his play. At first Lear could not believe his ears; his beloved Cordelia would say nothing. A truthful explanation of her feeling for him did not improve matters. Her frankness outraged his vanity, and his rage burst forth:

Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower:
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,

\(^7\)Ibid., 126-127. \(^8\)Ibid., 38-41.
The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist and cease to be;
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.9

That a frank, simple statement of love could pro-
voke such a declaration of wrath can be explained only by
the fact that the old king childishly loved flattery, had
arranged a scheme by which his desire could be gratified,
and then was balked in his plan by his best-loved daughter.

King Lear's treatment of Cordelia after her failure
to meet his approval in the love test and also his motives
for his treatment of her differ in the various accounts of
the story. In the story found in A Mirour for Magistrates
Gonerell and Ragan were jealous of Cordila and deliberate-
ly brought about their father's anger. Cordila said:

What though I yongest were, yet men me
Judg'd more wise
Than either Gonerell or Ragan more of age:
And fairer farre: wherefore my sisters did
despise
My grace and gifts, and sought my wrecke to
wage.

By flattery faire they won their father's heart.10

Though deprived of her portion of her father's land, Cordi-

cila was not cast out of her father's castle.

Likewise, in King Lear, Gonorill and Ragan plotted
to alienate their father from Cordella by flattering him

9Ibid., 101-109.

so much that Cordella could not please him. After Cordella’s simple profession of love, they spoke before Leir could respond, calling attention to her lack of flattery:

Gon: Here is an answere answerlesse indeed: Were you my daughter, I should scarcely brooke it.
Rag: Dost thou not blush, proud Peacock as thou art, To make our father such a slight reply?1

Leir, naturally, took his cue from them and became so angry that he disowned her.

This direct motivation of King Lear by Goneril and Regan is not found in Holinshed’s story, in Spenser’s account, or in Shakespeare’s play. In these accounts, his motive was sudden, senseless anger at being thwarted in his desires. Holinshed said merely:

The father being nothing content with this answere, married his two eldest daughters, the one unto Henius the duke of Cornwall, and the other unto Maglanus, the duke of Albania, betwixt whom he willed and ordained that his land should be devided after his death and the one halfe thereof immediatelie should be assigned to them in hand: but for the third daughter Cordeilla he reserved nothing.12

Spenser’s version was as simple:

But Cordeill said she lov’d him, as behoov’d, Whose simple answere wanting colours faire To paint it forth, him to displeasance moov’d, That in his crowne he counted her no hare, But twixt the other twaine his kingdome whole did sharre.13

11 King Leir, iii. 231-234.
12 Holinshed, Chronicles, I, 447.
In Shakespeare's account of Lear's punishment of Cordelia, as in Holinshed's and Spenser's, the King was not influenced by Goneril and Regan deliberately, but only by his own jealous rage. Such a motivation was the only one possible for the Lear of Shakespeare, who was portrayed to be rash, easily stirred to anger, and firm in carrying out his harsh judgments. These traits were not only shown in his treatment of Cordelia and Kent in the first scene of the play, but were discussed by Goneril and Regan after the stormy scene had ended:

Gon: You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little; he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

Reg: 'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.

Gon: The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long ingrafted condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

Reg: Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment. 14

The banishment of Kent was motivated by the same traits of character that caused his casting off Cordelia. Kent tried to interfere in Cordelia's behalf, protesting that Lear was rash and foolish thus to bow to flattery. Lear became so angry that he threatened to draw his sword, and upon being restrained, pronounced the sentence of banishment upon Kent. He stated his reasons plainly:

14King Lear, I. 1. 282-294.
Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow, Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd pride To come between our sentence and our power, Which nor our nature nor our place can bear, Our potency made good, take thy reward.\textsuperscript{15}

Lear was proud of his power and was determined to the point of tyranny that his commands and wishes should be obeyed.) This motivation of Lear in the banishment of Kent was entirely original with Shakespeare since Kent was an original character. Perillus from \textit{King Lear} probably suggested the character of Kent to Shakespeare, but not this incident, since Perillus was not banished. He and some other lords did protest against Leir's depriving Cordella of her share of the realm, for after an entrance of the King with Perillus and others, Lear made this rather mild remark:

\begin{quote}
Cease, good my Lords, and sue not to reverse Our censure, which is now irrevocable.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

A little later, after lots had been drawn by Cornwall and Cambria, Perillus spoke again in protest of his disowning Cordella, but Lear answered:

\begin{quote}
Urge this no more, and if thou love thy life: I say, she is no daughter, that doth scorne To tell her father how she loveth him. Whoever speaketh hereof to mee agayne, I will esteeem him for my mortall foe.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

This Leir bears only slight resemblance to the stormy, turbulent Lear of Shakespeare's creation.

When King Lear divided his kingdom between his two

\textsuperscript{15}ibid., I. i. 162-166. \textsuperscript{16}King Leir, vi. 504-505. \textsuperscript{17}ibid., 564-571.
older daughters, he arranged to spend half his time with Goneril and half his time with Regan, reserving a hundred knights as his attendants. The arrangements did not prove satisfactory, and we find that Lear left his daughters and went out into a stormy night without shelter rather than humble himself to suffer the slights and insults heaped upon him. Lear's motives for so doing are products of his character, which is, as we have seen, largely Shakespeare's own creation. Lear suffered unkindnesses at his daughters' hands in all the stories, but there the similarity between Shakespeare's play and the sources he may have used ends. Holinshed's account said:

But the greatest griefe that Leir tooke, was to see the vnkindnesse of his daughters, which seemed to thinke that all was too much which their father had, the same being never so little: in so mucho, that going from one to the other, he was brought to that miserie, that scerslie they would allow him one servant to waite upon him.

In the end, such was the vnkindnesse, or (as I male saie) the vnnaturalnesse which he found in his two daughters, notwithstanding their faire and pleasant words vtttered in time past, that being constreined of necessitie, he fled the land, and sailed into Gallia, there to seeke some comfort of his youngest daughter Cordeilla, whome before time he hated.18

In A Mirour for Magistrates Cordila said that her sisters

Cause him to agree
To parte the Realme, and promist him a gard
Of sixtie Knights that on him should attendant bee

18Holinshed, Chronicles, II, 447.
But in sixe moneths such was his hap too hard,
That Gonereell of his retinue barde
The half of them, she and her husband reft:
And scarce allow'd the other halfe they left.19

Leir went to live with Ragan after this bad treatment at
Gonerell's and lived there for a year happily. Then he
fared badly, his retinue being reduced to ten. He went
again to Gonerell and there his situation became unbear-
able, for she allowed him only one servant.

The *Faerie Queene* version was much the same. His
troubles were described thus:

So when he had resigned his regiment,
His daughter gan despise his drooping day,
And wearie wax of his continuall stay.
Tho to his daughter Ragan he repayred,
Who him at first well used in every way;
But when of his departure she despayr'd,
Her bountie she abated, and his cheare empayr'd.20

In *King Leir*, more details were given of Gonorill's
and Ragan's abuse of their father. Perillus first told
of King Lear's mistreatment by Gonorill:

He soliornes now in Cornwall with the eldest,
Who flattered him, un'till she did obtayne
That at his hands, which now she doth possesse;
And now she sees hee hath no more to give,
It grieves her heart to see her father live.
Oh, whom should man trust in this wicked age,
When children thus against their parents rage?
But he, the myrrour of mild patience,
Puts up all wrongs, and never gives reply:
Yet shames she not in most opprobrious sort,
To call him foole and doterd to his face,
And sets her Parasites of purpose oft,
In scoffing wise to offer him disgrace.21


20*Faerie Queene*, Book II, Canto X, ll. 264-270.

21*King Leir*, viii. 748-760.
Skalliger, the wicked courtier to whom Gororill went for advice, suggested that she cut Leir's allowance in order to make him more mindful of his dependence on her. Finally she told her father to seek some other place, and he and Perillus went to Regan, who was not glad to see him. Letters from Gororill caused Ragan to arrange for the murder of Lear and Perillus.

King Lear's treatment by his daughters in Shakespear's play is much the same as that in the sources. The first hint of trouble for Lear was given just after the division of the kingdom when Gororil and Regan planned to "hit together" on some plan for subduing their father's authority. Later Gororil gave orders to Oswald, her steward, to ignore Lear's requests:

Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question.  22

She gave further orders to cause trouble among Lear's knights:

And let his knights have colder looks among you;
What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so.  23

Not content with this, she suggested, or rather commanded, that Lear reduce the number of knights in his train:

Be then desired
By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
A little to disquaintity your train;
And the remainder, that shall still depend,

To be such men as may beort your age,  
Which know themselves and you.  

Lear's treatment by his daughters in Shakespeare's play was somewhat similar to his treatment in the other sources, but his response to his injuries was very different. The first three sources—Holinshed, Higgins, and Spenser—merely stated that Leir left Gororill after suffering slights at her hand, and went to Regan. In *King Leir*, Leir wept and prayed to die after Gororill had so wickedly mistreated him:

Thus, say or do the best that e're I can,  
Tis wrested straight into another sense,  
This punishment my heavy sinnes deservue,  
And more than this ten thousand times:  
Else aged Leir them could never find  
Cruell to him, to whom he hath bin kind.  
Why do I over-live my selfe, to see  
The course of nature quite reverst in me?  
Oh, Gentle Death, if ever any wight  
Did with thy presence with a perfitt zeale:  
Then come, I pray thee, even with all my heart,  
And end my sorrowes with thy falltall dart.  

Perillus persuaded him to go to Regan, where he fared no better and was driven by an attempt upon his life to go to Cordella.

In Shakespeare's play, Lear, as at the time of Cordelia's expression of love, could not believe that this was happening to him. He could not comprehend that Generil, his daughter, would raise her voice against his attendants. In amazement he queried, "Is this our daughter?" and then he said, "This is not Lear." He could

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25 *King Leir*, x. 854-865.
not believe that such a thing could be happening to him—
the King. When Goneril continued, his rage again go-
erned him:

Darkness and devils!
Saddle my horses; call my train together,
Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee;
Yet have I left a daughter. 26

Albany's weak protests were met with violent outbursts.
Lear flatly accused Goneril of lying, bemeaned himself
for his treatment of Cordelia, pronounced a frightful
curse upon Goneril, railed at the tears that coursed his
cheeks, and determined to go to Regan when he could as-
sume a kingly shape again.

He fared no better with Regan. He sent Kent ahead
to tell of his coming, but Regan, having had the news from
Goneril, left her palace so that she would not be at home
when Lear arrived. Lear followed Regan and Cornwall to
Gloucester's castle, but found upon his arrival there that
his messenger had been placed in the stocks and that Re-
gan refused to speak to him. However, Lear would not be
put off; he was not yet accustomed to having his requests
denied. Angered at his treatment and Kent's, he assumed
his kingly dignity and ordered:

Go tell the duke and his wife I'll speak with them,
Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear me,
Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum
Till it cry sleep to death. 27

They came finally, and Lear could hardly speak to Regan

26 King Lear, I. iv. 240-243. 27 Ibid., II. iv. 110-113.
of Goneril's behavior, so heart-broken he was. Regan, however, broke into his pitiful recital with the cold suggestion that he return to Goneril and ask forgiveness for his wrongs. His answer came firmly with curses heaped upon Goneril:

Never Regan:
She hath abated me of half my train; Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue, Most serpent-like, upon the very heart:
All the stored vengeances of heaven fall
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,
You taking airs, with lameness.  28

When Goneril came, she and Regan cut the number of Lear's attendants until finally Goneril said:

Hear me, my lord:
What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?  29

Regan echoed her thought with, "What need one?"
That was the breaking point with Lear. He strove to reason with them; failing that, he prayed for noble anger to keep him from breaking into tears. His speech would have stirred anyone except his own monstrous daughters:

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both:
If it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,
And let not woman's weapons, waterdrops,
Stain my man's cheeks!

28 Ibid., 152-157.  29 Ibid., 254-257.
I have full cause of weeping; but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad! 30

With this, Lear left, ordered him men to horse, and
though a storm was coming on, Goneril and Regan insisted
that Gloucester let him go.

What was it in this Lear of Shakespeare's creation
that caused him to cry down vengeance on his daughters
and ride blindly away from them into a storm? Lear's
feeling as a father was outraged. He hoped that Goneril
would feel some day:

How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child! 31

When Regan finally came down to receive her father upon
the occasion of his visit, she said that she was glad to
see her father, whereupon Lear answered:

If thou shouldst not be glad,
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepulchring an adultress. 32

Even after Goneril had treated him so hatefully, he still
recognized that she was his daughter, and in one of his
quieter moments said:

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:
I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell:
We'll no more meet, no more see one another:
But yet though art my flesh, my blood,
my daughter;
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,

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30 Ibid., 265-280.  
31 King Lear, I. iv. 277-278.  
32 Ibid., II. iv. 123-125.
Which I must call mine: thou art a boil,  
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle,  
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not  
chide thee.33

Lear suffered not only as a parent, but also as a  
king, for he was still in his heart a king. He had given  
up his kingdom, but he had retained a hundred followers to  
do his bidding, and he had not, it seemed, altogether re-  
signed his authority. His peremptory banishment of Kent  
immediately after giving up "the way, revenue, execution  
of the rest" showed that he would still exert some authori-  
ty. He was displeased when his daughter's steward refused  
to obey him and called him "my lady's father" instead of  
king. He answered every insult to his kingly dignity  
with anger and curses. Even after he was mad and had  
dressed himself fantastically in flowers, his prattlings  
were of his power, and when Gloucester asked, "Is't not  
the king?" Lear answered, "Aye, every inch a king."  
Outraged parenthood and outraged majesty drove him into  
the storm and finally into madness.

The motives of Goneril and Regan in King Lear were  
so much the same that they may be discussed together.  
Goneril seemed always to be the leader in their schemes,  
but Regan complied with her suggestions so readily that  
she did not appear any better or kinder than her older  
sister. We have already seen that in two old versions of

33 Ibid., 213-219.
the Leir story, that from *A Mirour for Magistrates* and
*King Leir*, Gonorill and Ragan began their careers of
wickedness by plotting deliberately to cause their
father's anger at Cordella by flattering him, being mo-
tivated by their jealousy of Cordella's beauty and popu-
larlarity. This is not true, however, in the Shakespearean
play. There is no indication that their speeches of
flattery were premeditated, or that they had laid any
plans before the love test. They did begin immediately
after the division of Lear's kingdom a concerted action
to remove all vestiges of his authority. Goneril made
the suggestion:

Gon. Pray you, let's hit together: if our father
carry authority with such dispositions as he
bears, this last surrender of his will but
offend us.
Reg. We shall further think on 't.
Gon. We must do something, and i' the heat.34

We have already discussed their almost unbelievable treat-
ment of their father, but not from the standpoint of their
motives for such inhuman actions. Holinshed and Higgins
were silent on that point; Spenser said that they grew
tired of him:

So when he had resigned his regiment,
His daughter gane despise his drooping day,
And weary wax of his continuall stay.
Tho to his daughter Regan he repayr'd,
Who him at first well used in every way;
But when of his departure she despayr'd,
Her bountie she abated, and his cheare empayr'd.35

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34 *King Lear*, I. i. 296-300.
In *King Lear*, Gonorill gave a number of reasons for wishing to be free of him:

> I prithee, Shalliger, tell me what thou thinkest:  
> Could any woman of our dignity  
> Endure such quips and peremptory taunts,  
> As I do daily from my doting father?  
> Doth't not suffice that I him keepe of almes,  
> Who is not able for to keepe himselfe?  
> But as if he were our better, he should thinke  
> To check and snap me up at every word.

... Judge then, I pray, what reason ist, that I  
Should stand alone charg'd with his vaine expence,  
And my sister Ragan should go free,  
To whom he gave as much, as unto me?36

Ragan in speaking of her father's living with Gonorill said:

> My father with her is quarter-master still,  
> And many times restraynes her of her will:  
> But if he were with me, and serv'd me so,  
> Ide send him packing some where else to go.  
> Ide enterayne him with such slender cost,  
> That he should quickly wish to change his host.37

The Gonorill and Ragan of this older play begrudged the money spent on their father and disliked his interference in what they considered their affairs.

Shakespeare's Goneril and Regan did not complain of the money spent on Lear's entertainment, but they did wish to break completely his authority. Goneril had already suggested to Regan that they work together to subdue him. She repeated this idea again to Oswald, her steward, in giving him orders to neglect Lear and cause trouble between her attendants and Lear's knights:

Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away. 38

Not only did she seek to stir up trouble with Lear's
knights, but to Lear she complained of the bad behavior
of his train:

Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,
That this our court, infected with their manners
Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel
Than a graced palace. 39

This would not have been an unreasonable complaint had it
been true, but Lear bitterly denied it:

Detested kite! thou liest.
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
That all particulars of duty know,
And in the most exact regard support
The worship of their name. 40

We know that she was lying and was merely holding to her
original purpose of stripping Lear of all his authority,
when after Lear had gone, she said to Albany:

'A hundred knights!
'Tis politic and safe to let him keep
At point a hundred knights: yes, that on every
dream,
Each buss, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,
He may enguard his dotage with their powers
And hold our lives in mercy. 41

Regan was quick to take up Goneril's complaints against
the knights. When Gloucester told her and Cornwall of
his son Edgar's plot against his life, she quickly asked:

38 King Lear, I. iii. 17-19. 39 Ibid., I. iv. 229-234.
40 Ibid., 251-255. 41 Ibid., 312-317.
Was he not companion with the riotous knights
That tend upon my father?

.......
No marvel then, though he were ill affected;
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,
To have the waste and spoil of his revenues.
I have this present evening from my sister
Been well inform'd of them, and with such
cautions
That if they come to sojourn at my house,
I'll not be there. 42

After Lear refused to accept their commands to reduce his
train and had gone out into the stormy night, Regan said:

For his particular, I'll receive him gladly,
But not one follower.

Goneril replied, "So am I purposed."43 They were wholly selfish
and completely stubborn. They had determined upon restraining
Lear's authority and they refused to let any feeling of tender-
ness, pity, or remorse change their course of action.

All other actions of Goneril and Regan are motivated
by cruelty and jealousy. The incidents in Shakespeare's
play are different from those in King Leir, but in this
earlier play Gonorill and Ragan are pictured as cruel and
inhuman creatures. They plotted to kill their father.

Ragan struck the Gallian ambassador when he came to in-
quire about King Leir. Later, when confronted by the
Gallian king and accused of plotting Leir's murder, Gon-
orill and Ragan denied the accusation, and no punishment
was meted out to them except that of losing their shares

42 Ibid., II. i. 94-95, 98-103.
43 Ibid., II. iv. 286-288.
of the kingdom. The other sources have no account of the
two elder daughters after Leir fled to Cordila; so it is
evident that Shakespeare's motivation of Goneril and Regan
from the time of Lear's departure is original.

Every incident shows the cruelty of their natures.
When they discovered that Gloucester was aiding King Lear,
Regan's suggestion was to hang him instantly and Goneril's
was to pluck out his eyes. When he was brought in and
bound, Regan plucked his beard, stood by to watch them
pluck out his eyes, and thrust him out to "smell his way
to Dover." Afterwards she was sorry they had let Glouces-
ter live because his sightlessness moved people against
their party. She herself killed the servant who drew a
sword against Cornwall.

Goneril's cruelty was coupled with ambition and in-
tensified by jealousy. After she had succeeded in freeing
herself from the hated authority of her father, she plunged
into a series of crimes with the purpose of getting con-
trol of the entire kingdom. It was evident from her re-
ception of the news of Cornwall's death that she had in
mind some idea of securing his part of the realm, for she
said:

One way I like this well;
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,
May all the building in my fancy pluck
Upon my hateful life: another way,
The news is not so tart.44

44Ibid., IV. 11, 83-87.
She had complicated her plans by falling in love with Edmund and was jealous of her sister now that Regan was a widow. This jealousy led to more schemes—a plot against Albany's life and a plan to poison Regan. The plot against her husband's life was not successful, and upon being accused of it, she slew herself. Regan she had already poisoned. Edmund had been killed. Shakespeare did not allow Goneril and Regan to escape their just punishment for all the cruel deeds that sprang from their mean, crafty, scheming natures. Albany truly pronounced them "tigers, not daughters."

Shakespeare in his enthusiasm of creating ungrateful daughters to contrast with the loving and forgiving Cordelia went almost beyond the bounds of human belief, creating monsters, as it were, instead of persons. That any women could in a short time become utterly devoid of any feeling of sympathy or even of common decency is incredible. Certainly the motive of desire for power and authority seems insufficient for such ingratitude.

The first problem in connection with motivation in the character, Cordelia, concerns her attitude in the love test. Why did she refuse to answer as her father so obviously wanted her to answer? Holinshed gives no motive save that found in the simplicity and truth of Cordeilla's answer to her father's question:

Knowing the great love and fatherly zeal that you have alwaies born towards me (for the which I
not answere you otherwise than I thinke, and as my conscience leadeth me) I protest vnto you, that I have loved you euere, and shall continuallie (while I live) love you as my naturall father. And if you would more vnderstand of the love that I beare you, ascer tern yourselfe, that so much as you have, so much are you worth, and so much I love you, and no more. 45

In *King Leir*, as we have already seen, Gonorill and Ragan were jealous of Cordella:

> Besides, she is so nice and so demure;  
> So sober, courteous, modest and precise,  
> That all the Court hath works enoough to do,  
> To talk how she exceedeth me and you. 46

They planned to frame their speeches so flatteringly that Leir would be displeased with Cordella’s, for he wanted Cordella to profess such great love for him that he might ask her to grant his request that she marry the Irish king. This Cordella would not do, for she had vowed never to marry one whom she did not love. Gonorill and Ragan both had made extravagant statements in regard to their love for their father and promised to follow his wishes exactly concerning their marriages. Cordella hated their flattery and would not stoop to use the same means; neither would she promise to marry whomsoever Leir might choose for her. Consequently her avowal of love for her father seemed tame and uninspired to him:

> I cannot paynt my duty forth in words,  
> I hope my deeds shall make report for me:  
> But looke what love the child doth owe the father,  
> The same to you I beare, my gracious Lord. 47

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45Holinshed, *Chronicles*, I, 447.
When Leir spoke his displeasure at such an answer she attempted to explain her seeming defection in love:

Deare father, do not so mistake my words, 
Nor my playne meaning be misconstrued; 
My teung was never used to flatter.48

Shakespeare's Cordelia faced the same problem as the youngest sister of the other stories. Her sisters had stooped to flattery in order to gain large portions of their father's realm, and Cordelia's innate sense of honor would not allow her to follow their example. From the first she was appalled by their extravagance of expression, realizing that she could not, even if she had wished, summon such words to her tongue. She was sure that her love was greater than she could express, but seeing that her father was interested in the manner of expression rather than the feeling itself, she resolved to say nothing. She was disgusted by her sisters' flattery, and this disgust made her minimize the expression of her own regard when pressed to make that expression:

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
According to my bond; nor more nor less.

... You have begot me, bred me, loved me; I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight
shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty:

48Ibid., 300-302.
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,  
To love my father all. 49

Her sincerity and love of truth, as well as her disgust  
for her sisters, led her to go further than she needed  
to in the explanation that she would some day share her  
love with a husband. She indicated that truthfulness  
was her motive in the following lines:

Lear: But goes thy heart with this?  
Cor.: Ay, good my lord.  
Lear: So young and so untender?  
Cor.: So young, my lord, and true. 50

In yet another place she explained that she could not  
speak without purpose:

If for I want that glib and oily art,  
To speak and purpose not, since what I  
well intend,  
I'll do't before I speak. 51

Cordelia was a person who said little, but felt and acted  
much. Placed in the position her father had created, she  
could not overcome her reticence in order to say as much  
as she felt, much less to say more than she sincerely felt.

Just as truth and honor motivated Cordelia's actions  
in the love test, so love and filial regard for her father  
motivated her actions in her reconciliation with him. In  
all of Shakespeare's sources Leir was forgiven by his  
youngest daughter and was restored to his throne by her  
efforts. Few details are given in most of these earlier  
accounts. Spenser's version gave this report of Leir's  
reception by Cordelia:

49King Lear, i. i. 84-86, 89-97.  
50Ibid., 98-100.  
51Ibid., 218-220.
He to Cordelia him self address,
Who with entyre affection him receav'd,
As for her syre and king her seemed best. 52

Holinshed said:

Being constreined of necessitie, he fled the
land, and sail'd into Gallia, there to seeke some
comfort of his youngest daughter Cordella whom be-
fore time he hated. The ladie Cordella hearing that
he was arrived in poore estate, she first sent to him
privie a certeine summe of monie to apparell him-
selue with all, and to reteine a certeine number of
seruants that might attend vpon him in honorable wise,
as appertained to the estate which he had borne: and
then so accompanied, she appointed him to come to the
court, which he did, and was so iofullie, honorablie,
and louinglie received, both by his sonne in law
Aganippos, and also by his daughter Cordella, that
his hart was grestlie comforted, for he was no lesse
honored, than if he had beeene king of the whole coun-
trie himselfe. 53

King Leir showed Cordelia's grief over the separa-
tion from her father. She was happily married to the king
of Gallia, who made every effort to cheer her, but she
longed for her father's forgiveness. She expressed her
sorrow thus:

I would abstayne from any nutryment,
And pyne my body to the very bones;
Barefoote I would on pilgrimage set forth
Unto the furthest quaters of the earth,
And all my lifetime would I sackcloth weare,
And mourning-wise pour dust upon my head;
So he but to forgive me once would please,
That his grey haires might go to heaven in peace. 54

The King of Gallia sent an ambassador to ask Leir to come to
Gallia to visit Cordella. When Gallia and Cordella went

52 _Peerie Queene_, Book II, Canto X, ll. 275-277.
53 _Holinshed, Chronicles_, II, 447.
54 _King Leir_, sc. xiii. 1078-1095.
to the seaside in disguise for a holiday, by accident
they found her father and Perillus hungry and tired,
seeking her, and their meeting showed Cordelia's tender
love. Leir knelt and asked her pardon, but she said:

You gave me life, you were the cause that I
Am what I am, who else had never bin.55

Shakespeare's Cordelia, too, was motivated by love
for her father. She never held any grudge against him be-
cause of his unfair treatment of her. Her parting words
with her sisters were an admonition to take care of him,
and after she had wed the King of France, she kept in
touch with him. Kent, in the stocks, spoke of having a
letter from Cordelia:

I know 'tis from Cordelia,
Who hath most fortunately been inform'd
Of my obscured course; and shall find time
From this enormous state, seeking to give
Losses their remedies.56

She was grateful to Kent for his ministrations unto
her father; she was heart-stricken over Lear's insanity;
but the surest proof of her affection was in the touching
scene of their reunion. There was so much tenderness in
every word and action of Cordelia. As he slept, she said:

"O my dear father! Restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!57

55 Ibid., scxxiv. 2307-2308.

56 King Lear, II. 11. 158-162.

57 Ibid., IV. vii. 26-29.
When he awakened and would have knelt before her, she stopped him, asking rather for his benediction. She could not control her tears of grief and sorrow that her beloved father had so suffered, and when Lear said she had cause to do him wrong though her sisters had not, she disclaimed any feeling of resentment by answering, "No cause, no cause." None but motives of purest love and filial duty could be attributed to Cordelia in any of her actions.

Shakespeare's only source for the character, the Duke of Kent, is King Leir, in which the faithful Perillus administers to the King. Perillus recognized that King Leir was making a mistake to depend upon the flattery of Gonerill and Regan and to cast off Cordelia. Immediately after the love test, he said to himself:

Oh, how I grieve, to see my Lord thus fond, To dote so much upon vain flattering words, Ah, if he but with good advice had weighed, The hidden tenure of her humble speech, Reason to rage should not have given place, Nor poore Cordella suffer such disgrace.58

Later, after Cornwall and Cambria had drawn lots for the realm, he dared to speak to Leir about the matter:

I have been silent all this while, my Lord, To see if any worthier than myselfe, Would once have spoke in poore Cordella's cause: But love or feare tyes silence to their toungs. Oh, heare me speake for her, my gracious Lord, Whose deeds have not deserve'd this ruthlessse doome, As thus to disinherit her of all.59

58King Leir, i. 335-349.

59Ibid., vi. 562-568.
When Leir bade him cease if he loved his life, he said no more until he was alone:

Ah, who so blind, as they that will not see
The neare approch of their owne misery?
Poor lady, I extremely pitty her:
And whilst I live, eche drop of my heart blood,
Will I strayne forth, to do her any good.60

To this vow to aid Cordella all that he could he added a pledge to aid King Leir when he saw that the old king was being mistreated by Gonorill:

Well, I will counsell him the best I can:
Would I were able to redresse his wrong.
Yet what I can, unto my utmost power,
He shall be sure of to the latest houre.61

True to his promise, he comforted Leir, who could not understand why Perillus should be his friend when he had done nothing for this noble courtier. Perillus answered his question thus:

Where reason fayles, let tears confirme my love,
And speake how much your passions do me move.62

He advised Leir to go to his other daughters, and when Leir determined to go to Ragan's, Perillus accompanied him, making the journey by foot. He was with Leir when the messenger came to murder them, and when Leir tried to bribe the messenger to let Perillus go, Perillus said:

I, who have borne you company in life,
Most willingly will beare a share in death.63

It was Perillus who so scared the messenger with the

60 Ibid., 577-581. 61 Ibid., viii. 769-772.
62 Ibid., x. 906-907. 63 Ibid., xix. 1688-1691.
prospects of being punished in hell for his deeds that the messenger decided to spare their lives. Perillus then persuaded Leir to seek Cordella in Gallia and made the journey with him, sharing all the hardships and thinking only of the sufferings of his king. His reward was to see Leir restored to his throne and to hear him say:

And thou (Perillus) partner once in woe,
Thee to requite, the best I can Ile doe;
Yet all I can, I, were it ne're so much,
Were not sufficient, thy true love is such.64

This brief summary of the part which Perillus played in King Leir shows that Perillus was motivated by his sense of loyalty to the King. His pity for Cordelia, great as it was, could not move him against his king, to whom he owed his love and duty.

Shakespeare’s Kent was modeled upon the Perillus of King Leir, and the motives of sincere love for King Lear and a sense of loyalty to him as king are found in Kent’s loyal service. However, these motives in Kent are intensified in the Shakespearean play. He loved his King more, and dared more for him. Although Perillus’ protests against the treatment of Cordella were hushed by a single statement by Leir, Kent would not be stilled. First, he gave his motives for interfering:

Royal Lear,
Whom I have ever honor’d as my king,
Loved as my father, as my master follow’d

64Ibid., xxxi. 2653-2657.
As my great patron thought on in my prayers, He felt deeply not only a subject's loyalty, but a son's love, and a servant's sense of duty, and feeling thus, he dared to speak plainly to Lear:

Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak, When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound, When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom, And in thy best consideration check This hideous rashness.

Kent was very brave as well as loving and loyal, for when Lear warned him, "Kent, on thy life, no more," he answered without fear:

My life I never held but as a pawn To wage against thy enemies; nor fear to lose it, Thy safety being the motive.

Even after Lear had laid his hand upon his sword, Kent determinedly protested:

Revoke thy doom; Or whilst I can vent clamor from my throat, I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

When his sovereign spoke the sentence of banishment, Kent protested no more, but accepted the sentence calmly, with an expression of good wishes to Cordelia, and an admonition to Goneril and Regan to carry out by deeds their large speeches of love for their father.

The faithful and devoted love of Kent for King Lear shown in the scene preceding his banishment is even more evident in his service to Lear as a disguised servant.

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65King Lear, I. i. 132-135. 66Ibid., 140-144.
67Ibid., 147-149. 68Ibid., 157-159.
Most persons would have dismissed the matter, thinking they had done all they could to save an old man from his folly, but not Kent. He made it clear when he came back in disguise that the motive for his coming was his love for Lear:

Now, banish'd Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy master whom thou lov'est Shall find thee full of labors. 69

So jealous was he of his king's authority that he could not endure any insults to him. When Oswald was impudent to Lear, Kent tripped him, pushed him out of the room, and later, finding him delivering letters from Goneril to Regan, punished him by beating him with his sword.

He was with Lear from the time the King left his two wicked daughters until he brought Lear to Cordelia, and his every thought, every word was for the King's comfort. His tender feeling for Lear is shown clearly by one simple statement. He was urging Lear to enter the hovel and shelter himself from the storm, and Lear asked, "Wilt break my heart?" Kent's answer was typical of his every action in the play, "I had rather break my own." He had rather suffer than see Lear suffer.

Kent's services to Lear were rendered with no expectation of reward. Cordelia in expressing her gratitude to him said:

69King Lear, I. iv. 4-7.
O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
And every measure fail me. 70

Kent's reply disclaimed any desire for rank or prefer-
ment or reward:

To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid. 71

More and more evidence that Kent's motive in helping
King Lear was love is found at the end of the play. His
grief at Lear's imprisonment was almost unbearable. Edgar's
account of his breaking under the strain moves us to pity:

Whilst I was big in clamor, came there in a man,
Who, having seen me in my worst estate,
Shunn'd my abhor'd society; but then, finding
Who 'twas that so endured, with his strong arms,
He fasten'd on my neck, and bellow'd out
As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my father;
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
That ever ear received; which in recounting
His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life
Began to crack; twice then the trumpet sounded,
And there I left him transecd. 72

When Lear died, Kent's grief overflowed, but even then his
thought was not for his own breaking heart, but for the poor old
king, for he said to those who were trying to rouse him:

Vax not his ghost: 0, let him pass! he hates him —
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer. 73

He wanted to follow Lear even in death, for when Albany
offered him a share in ruling the realm, his reply was:

70Ibid., IV. vii. 1-3. 71Ibid., 4.
72Ibid., V. iii. 208-218.
73Ibid., V. iii. 312-314.
I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;  
My master calls me, I must not say no. 74

Perillus of The True History of King Leir and Kent  
of the Shakespearean play were both motivated by love and  
loyalty to their King, but Kent made more sacrifices and  
was moved more deeply by his devotion.

The Albany and Cornwall of Shakespeare's play are  
characters of Shakespeare's own invention. They did not  
wrest the government from Lear as did husbands of his two older  
daughters in the Holinshed account, which said:

After that Leir was fallen into age, the two  
dukes that had married his two eldest daughters,  
thinking long yer the government of the land did  
come in their hands, arose against him in armour, and  
reft from him the gouernance of the land, vpon condi-  
tions to be continued for terme of life; by the which  
he was put to his portion, that is, to liue after a  
rate assigned to him for the maintenance of his es-  
teate, which in processe of time was diminished as well  
by Maglanus as by Henninus. 75

In Shakespeare's play the unkind treatment of Lear was in-
stigated by his daughters. It was upheld by Cornwall, but  
opposed by Albany. In King Leir the husbands of Gonorill  
and Ragan were kind to the old king.

Cornwall worried over Lear's unhappiness, and, not  
knowing that it was caused by Gonorill's unpleasantness,  
asked:

Father, what ayleth you to be so sad?  
Methinks, you frollicke not as you were wont. 76

He said to Goneril that Leir did not seem happy, and she

74 Ibid., 321-322.  75 Holinshed, Chronicles, I, 447.  
76 King Leir, x. 818-819.
asked angrily whether he had been complaining about her. Cornwall spoke kindly, seeking to keep peace:

Sweet, be not angry in a partial causing, He ne're complayned of thee in all his life.77

When Leir was missed at their court, he inquired about him:

Ah, Gonerill, what dire unhappy chance Hath sequestred thy father from our presence, That no report can yet be heard of him? Some great unkindnesse hath bin offer'd him, Exceeding far the bounds of patience; Else all the world shall never me persuade, He would forsake us without notice made.78

He sent a messenger to Regan to find out if Leir was there, so great was his concern over the old King's departure from their court.

Cambria, too, was kind to Leir. He greeted the king cordially when he arrived at his and Regan's court and offered him refreshment. After Leir left, he, being unaware of Regan's plot to murder her father, wanted to send soldiers to find him. Regan persuaded him that Cordella was plotting against Leir, and Cambria swore to punish the youngest sister.

In Holinshed's Chronicles both dukes were wicked, and in King Leir both dukes were good. Shakespeare took a middle course, making Albany good and Cornwall wicked. (At first, Albany did not interfere greatly in Goneril's treatment of King Lear. Like Cornwall, Gonerill's husband in King Leir, he could scarcely believe that Goneril was capable of treating her father so unkindly. Having come

77Ibid., 841-842. 78Ibid., xii. 944-951.
in just in time to hear Lear's outburst, he disclaimed any part in the quarrel and sought to find out the cause of the old king's wrath. Though Goneril explained that it was only Lear's dotage, he attempted to take the old man's part by saying:

I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
To the great love I bear you.--79

Goneril, however, would not listen, and Albany gave up. He felt the kindness and tenderness for King Lear that he should have felt, and was grateful for his share of the kingdom, but he loved Goneril and could not believe that she had really treated her father so cruelly or would go as far as she did. He was peace-loving and gentle. Goneril spoke deridingly of those characteristics, calling him "our mild husband," "a moral fool," "milk-liver'd man." However, when he was finally roused to anger over the cruelty Lear had suffered, he did not mince words in condemning Goneril for her part in it:

Tigers, not daughter, what have you perform'd?
A father, and a gracious aged man,
Whose reverence even the head-lugged bear would lick
Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
A man, a prince, by him so benefited.80

Goneril taunted him so that his rage mounted into fury:

Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,
Be-monster not thy feature. Were't my fitness
To let these hands obey my blood,
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
Thy flesh and bones: how'er thou get a fiend,
A woman's shape doth shield thee.\textsuperscript{81}

The news that Gloucester's eyes had been put out
quieted his rage and determined him to revenge the cruel
treatment of both Lear and Gloucester:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Gloucester, I live}
To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the king,
And to revenge thine eyes.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

Having determined to avenge Gloucester's loss of his
eyes and knowing that Edmund was responsible for that loss,
Albany yet fought with Edmund and Regan's forces against
the king of France. He did not reach his decision to do
that without due consideration, but he reasoned that the
invading enemy was France, not King Lear, who had joined
his daughter Cordelia. As Goneril phrased it, "these
domestic and particular broils" were not at that time the
question. Albany's motive for fighting on the side of
Edmund then was the love of his country.

He did not lose sight of his original purpose of re-
venge, however. When they had defeated France's army, his
first request of Edmund was for the captives, Lear and Cor-
delia. He accused Edmund of treason and witnessed his
death at the hands of Edgar. When Lear was brought in,
Albany resigned to him during his lifetime all the abso-
lute power of the kingdom. When Lear died, he bade Kent
and Edgar rule in the realm. Thoroughly unselfish, he

\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., 62-67. \textsuperscript{82}Ibid., 94-97.
was motivated in all his actions by a sense of justice and kindness.

Cornwall, on the other hand, fell in with the schemes of his wife, Regan. He went with her to Gloucester's castle in order to avoid Lear's visit. He placed Kent in the stocks, giving as his reason that Kent was like the unruly knights of Lear's train of whom Goneril had spoken. He showed no pity for Lear when Goneril and Regan so hurt his pride that the old king went out into the storm, but said:

Shut up your doors, my lord: 'tis a wild night; My Regan counsels well: come out o' the storm.\(^{83}\)

The phrase, "my Regan counsels well," was the keynote of Cornwall's motivation up to this point. In dealing with what he regarded as the treason of Gloucester, Cornwall took the lead, being governed by the most vengeful spirit imaginable. When Regan suggested hanging Gloucester and Goneril suggested putting his eyes out, Cornwall replied, "Leave him to my displeasure." His displeasure led him to pluck out Gloucester's eyes in one of the cruelest and most sickening scenes of any play. His career of wickedness ended there with the stab of a servant's sword.

Albany found Goneril's cruelty repulsive, and his natural sense of kindness, decency, and justice was magnified until he reached great heights in righting wrongs. Cornwall found Regan's inhumanity attractive, and his

\(^{83}\text{Ibid., II. iv. 302-303.}\)
bestial nature led him into such depths of cruelty that worse horrors would be difficult to imagine.

The king of France was motivated in most of his actions by his love for Cordelia. The earlier stories of King Lear all give evidence that the youngest daughter was chosen for her virtues and was greatly beloved by her husband. Holinshed's account said:

Aganippus notwithstanding this answer of denial to recieve any thing by way of dower with Cordella, tooke hir to wife, onlie mowed thereto (I saie) for respect of hir person and amiable vertues."\(^4\)

In The True History of King Lear the king of Gallia was traveling in disguise in Leir's kingdom when he met Cordella. They fell in love with each other immediately, and Cordella wished to marry him though she thought he was a palmer. The king of Gallia revealed his identity, married her, and took her to France.

In Shakespeare's King Lear the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy were at Lear's court as suitors for Cordelia when he divided his kingdom. When Burgundy learned that Cordelia was dowerless, he withdrew his offer of marriage, but France was more than ever impressed by her virtues when he learned the reason for her father's punishment. He had loved her before, but her sincerity had added respect to his love. He claimed her with these words:

\(^4\)Holinshed, Chronicles, II, 447.
Fairest Cordelia, thou art most rich being poor, 
Most choice forsaken, and most loved despised, 
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon: 
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away: 
Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st 
neglect 
My love should kindle to inflamed respect. 
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance, 
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France. 
Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy 
Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.85

Shakespeare's King of France, too, was motivated in his 
choice of a wife by a love for Cordelia and a respect for 
her good qualities.

The motive for the King of France's invasion of Lear's 
kingdom is somewhat different in Shakespeare's King Lear. 
In all the sources it is clear that the invasion was for 
the purpose of regaining Leir's kingdom for him. Holinshed's story said:

Now when he had informed his sonne in law and 
his daughter in what sort he had been vsed by his 
other daughters, Agenippus caused a mightieermie to 
be put in readinesse, and likewise a great nauie of 
ships to be rigged, to passe ouer into Britaine with 
Leir his father in law, to see him againe restored to 
his kingdome.86

The other accounts are similar. In each case, the invasion 
was successful, and Leir was restored as king.

Shakespeare's play, however, differs in some respects. 
Lear never reached France; however, the invasion of France's 
forces was for the purpose of revenging Lear's injuries. 
We have already spoken of the fact that Kent had been in

85King Lear, I. i. 244-253.
86Holinshed, Chronicles, II, 449.
touch with Cordelia. Gloucester also learned of the plan by letter and was unwise enough to tell Edmund:

I have received a letter this night; 'tis dangerous to be spoken; I have locked the letter in my closet; these injuries the king now bears will be revenged here; there is a part of a power already footed; we must incline to the king. 87

The French forces reached England, but the King of France was called back to his own country by urgent business, leaving his forces to be defeated, since Shakespeare could not allow a French victory over an English army in one of his plays. The fact remains, however, that the motives of the King of France were honorable and just. He loved Cordelia and was willing to send an army to see her father's injuries revenged.

The Gloucester plot in Shakespeare's King Lear was suggested by a story found in Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia, a story of a Paphlagonian King and his two sons, one legitimate and one a bastard. In the story from the Arcadia, the blind father told what he has suffered at the hands of the bastard son:

I was carried by a bastard sonne of mine . . .
first to mislike, then to hate, lastlie to destroy, or to doo my best to destroy, this sonne (I thinke you thinke) undeserving destruction. What waies he used to bring me to it, if I should tell you, I should tediously trouble you with as much poysonenous hypocrisie, desperate frauds, smoothe malice, hidden ambition, and smiling envye, as in any living person could be harbored. . . . So that ere I was aware, I had left myself nothing but the name of a King: which he shortly wearie of too, with many indignities (if anything may

87King Lear, III. iii. 8-12.
be called an indignity which was laid upon me) threw me out of my seat, and put out my eyes; and then (proud in his tyranny) let me goe, neither imprisoning, nor killing me: but rather delighting to make me feel my misery; misery indeed, if ever there were any; full of wretchedness, fuller of disgrace, and fullest of guiltiness. And as he came to the crowne by so unjust meanes, as unjustlie he kept it, by force of stranger soldiars in Cittadels, the nestes of tyranny, and murderers of libertie; disarming all his own countrienmen, that no man durst show himself a wel-willer of mine. 88

The motives of Edmund, the bastard son of Gloucester, were somewhat the same as those of the bastard son in Arcadia, for "smothe malice, hidden ambition, and smiling envie" played their part in his career, but Shakespeare made him a different sort of person. As wicked as he was, Shakespeare gave him some saving graces and drew his character with some sympathy. In the opening lines of the play, Gloucester discussed his birth before him with unseeming levity and explained that this son had been out of the country for nine years and would leave again. It was evident that Edmund had little to love or respect in his parentage or his home life. Coupled with a sense of bitterness at his illegitimacy was a feeling of pride in his mental and physical qualifications. Kent had been impressed by his appearance, for he had said to Gloucester:

I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper. 89

89 King Lear, I. i. 11-12.
Edmund himself realized his equality with Edgar in physical and mental endowments and asked himself:

Why bastard? Wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? 90

Having brooded over his wrongs, he let his envy of his legitimate brother rule him and set out to secure a place above that brother by displacing him in Gloucester's affections. Envy and ambition prompted the scheme by which Edgar was made to seem a conspirator against his father's life so that he had to flee from his home and disguise himself as a madman to avoid capture. Edmund became to his father the beloved and virtuous son, who had refused to enter into a conspiracy to deprive his father of his worldly possessions.

Perhaps that was as far as Edmund meant to go, but circumstances involved him more and more. When Gloucester confided to him that France was to revenge Lear's injuries, Edmund saw an opportunity to climb into his father's place instead of just his brother's. He resolved to reveal his father as a traitor to Cornwall.

In Shakespeare's story Edmund did not, as did the bastard son of Arcadia, put out his father's eyes, but he calmly went away after Cornwall had suggested that the revenges they were about to take upon his father were not fit for his beholding.

90Ibid., I. ii. 6-9.
Edmund made love to both Goneril and Regan, loving neither. By this time he was using every available stepping stone to power in order to satisfy his ever-increasing ambition. He himself did not know which of these women would enable him to take the greatest step upward, and he laid the foundations for advancement by making love to both. After Albany had helped him in the battle, he fully expected Goneril to get rid of her husband. His plans included, too, the murder of Lear and Cordelia, for they would be a threat to his ruling the kingdom.

Edmund was brave. Albany commended him for valiance in battle, and when Edgar, still disguised, came in and challenged him as a traitor, he said:

Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,
Thy valor and thy heart, thou art a traitor. 91

Edmund was not bound by honor to fight Edgar since he did not know he was of equal rank, but he bravely took up the challenge and fought until he fell. When he knew that he would die, he freely admitted his sins and tried to save Lear and Cordelia from the death he had arranged for them. It was as though he were not naturally wicked, but had steeled himself to be in order to make a place for himself in the world. One little remark made just before his death offers a clue to his character. When the bodies of Goneril and Regan were brought in, Edmund said:

91King Lear, V. iii. 132-133.
Yet Edmund was beloved:
The one the other poison'd for my sake,
And after slew herself. 92

He seemed grateful for the love even of monsters like
Goneril and Regan. Perhaps his whole life had been warped
by a feeling of being unloved and unwanted in this world,
and envy, ambition and malice became his ruling emotions.

Edgar of Shakespeare's King Lear was modeled after
the legitimate son of the Paphlagonian king in Sidney's
Arcadia. Like the good son in this old story, he was made
to appear a villain in the eyes of his father and was
forced to flee for his life. He was unlike that original
son in some respects, however. In the earlier story, the
father sought to have his son killed, but the murderers
allowed him to escape, and he became a private soldier in
a country near-by. When he was just about to be greatly
advanced in the service, he heard how his father was being
mistreated by his usurping brother, whereupon he went back
to his own country to give aid to his blind father. The
story of his kindness was told by the old king:

Till this sonne of mine (God knowes, woorthie
of a more vertuous, and more fortunate father) forget-
ting my abominable wrongs, not recking danger, and
neglecting the present good way he was in doing him-
selvse good, came hither to doo this kind office you
see him performe towards me, to my unspeakable griefe;
not only because his kindnesse is a glasse even to my
blind eyes, of my naughtiness, but that above all griefes,
it grieves me he should desperately adventure the losse
of his well-deserving life for mine, that yet owe more
to Fortune for my deszpts, as if he would cary mudde in
a chest of Christall. 93

This son, according to the story of his father, gave up his honored position in a country where he was safe and risked his life everyday to care for his blind father, who had done him a great wrong. His motives for so doing could not be any but a profound love for his father and a sense of filial duty strong enough to forgive any wrong his father may have done him.

Edgar, too, was motivated by these same commendable traits, but there was a difference in his circumstances. Where the abused son in the story from *Arcadia* escaped the country, Edgar did not escape and was forced to disguise himself as a madman in order to be safe. In this disguise he overheard his father grieving over the fact that his beloved son had sought to murder him. Still in disguise, he became his father's guide after Gloucester's eyes had been plucked out. Edgar's grief at his father's misery, the tenderness with which he led him, the kind deceit he used in saving Gloucester from suicide, the bravery with which he fought Oswald to save his life, all gave testimony to the deep and sincere love he had for his father, despite the ill-treatment he had suffered. Edgar, however, did not risk his life any more by aiding his father, and in that respect differed from the dutiful son of Shakespeare's source, who came back into the country where he was in danger in order to help his blind father.
Edgar's denunciation of Edmund as a traitor and subsequent killing of him was motivated not only by a desire to avenge his own and his father's wrong, but also by a feeling of loyalty to Albany. When he told Edmund to draw his sword, he gave these reasons for the challenge:

Thou art a traitor,
False to thy gods, thy brother and thy father,
Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,
And from the extremest upward of thy head
To the descent and dust below thy foot,
A most toad-spotted traitor.\(^4\)

Edgar's motives sprang from a noble character. Even Edmund called him "a brother noble, whose nature is so far from doing harms that he suspects none."

Gloucester, like the Paphlagonian king from the Arcadia, was duped by the hypocrisy of his bastard son and wronged his legitimate son. The malice and cunning of Edmund were too much for him, and he fell neatly into the trap of his wicked son. The very love he had for Edgar proved to be the motive for his anger and desire for revenge, for he could not endure the thought that Edgar could conspire against his father, "that so tenderly and entirely loves him." In telling Kent of his grief at what Edgar had done, he emphasized the fact that he had loved him so much:

I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself: I had a son,
Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life,
But lately, very late: I loved him, friend,

\(^4\)King Lear, V. iii. 133-138.
No father his son dearer: truth to tell thee,
The grief hath crazed my wits.\textsuperscript{95}

Gloucester was loyal to King Lear and endangered himself by entering into the conspiracy of France to help him. In this action he was motivated by his love for his old king, having taken his part all the time against Regan and Cornwall. He protested against their putting Kent in the stocks, begged Goneril and Regan to call Lear back out of the storm, went to Lear's relief at the risk of his own life, and finally rescued him from a death plot by sending him to Dover. For these kind and loyal services to the old king, Gloucester lost his eyes. Still, however, he loved Lear, for when he met Lear, mad and fantastically dressed in flowers, on a field near Dover, he recognized Lear's voice and said, "O, let me kiss that hand!"

Feeling his misery very deeply, Gloucester determined to throw himself off a cliff and so end his life. The Paphlagonian king from \textit{Arcadia} had a motive in throwing himself off the cliff that could not be attributed to Gloucester. He gave as his motive:

\begin{quote}
For well I know, he that now reigneth, how much soever (and with good reason) he despiseth me, of all men despised; yet he will not let slippe any advantage to make away him, whose just title (ennobled by courage and goodness) may one day shake the seats of a never secure tyrannie: and for this cause I craved of him to leade me to the toppe of this rocke, indeede I must confessse, with meaning to free him from so Serpentine a companion as I am.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{95}\textit{Ibid.}, III. iv. 152-157.

Gloucester could not have had the same motive in seeking to take his own life as this Paphlagonian king, who wished to release his son from the dangers attending his care, for Gloucester was unaware that the madman guiding him was his son Edgar in disguise. He simply felt that he could not bear his affliction. Just before he fell forward he knelt and prayed to the gods, giving his reasons for taking his own life:

O you mighty gods!
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.\footnote{108}

When he was not killed by what he thought was a fall from a high cliff, Gloucester resolved to live. He believed Edgar's suggestion that the gods had preserved him and made this promise:

Henceforth I'll bear
Affliction till it do cry out itself
'Enough, enough,' and die.\footnote{109}

However, he was so very unhappy that he envied Lear his madness:

Better I were distract:
So should my thoughtes be sever'd from my griefs,
And woes by wrong imaginations lose
The knowledge of themselves.\footnote{110}

His death came as a relief. He was made happy before dying by learning that his beloved son Edgar had been caring

\footnote{108}{King Lear, IV. vi. 34-40.}
\footnote{109}{Ibid., 75-77.}
\footnote{110}{Ibid., 257-260.}
for him. His actions had all been motivated by love. His love for Edmund made him believe the false accusations against Edgar, and he was the more angered because he had loved Edgar so much. His love for his old King involved him in treason against Regan and Cornwall.

In *King Lear* Shakespeare made some changes in the motivation of characters, which influenced to a great extent the tone of the whole play. In the first place, he passed over entirely the motive given the old King for his use of the love test in *King Lear*, i.e., his desire to trap Cordelia into marrying a prince of his choice, and left him without any motive except to gratify a childish desire for flattery and perhaps to afford himself an excuse for giving Cordelia a greater share of his kingdom. The critics who resort to a psychological analysis of character explain that Lear was irascible and peremptory, which he was indeed, but the more realistic critics explain why he was made so. Stoll says that Shakespeare adjusted the character of Lear to the plot, and Lear was made to appear unreasonable and unjust in order to justify the tragic ending of the drama. Schücking's contention that the action of this particular play was made suitable to the character differs from the idea of Stoll merely as to whether Shakespeare's starting point was the character or the plot. That the motivation found in the old *King Lear* was omitted in order to make Shakespeare's *King Lear* a more fitting character
for the tragic ending of the play seems to be the solution to the problem, and that is the conclusion both critics reached. Closely allied with this change in motivation from the old *King Lear* is the omission in Shakespeare's drama of Gonerill and Regan's deliberate plot against Cordelia in the love test. *King Lear*, as characterized by Shakespeare, made his unfair decision uninfluenced by his older daughters. The extreme irascibility and rashness of Lear was shown further by his banishment of Kent, which we have seen was original with Shakespeare. These incidents and others which Shakespeare introduced into Lear's relations with Goneril and Regan showed the old King's peremptoriness and love of authority that led him into his troubles. By such changes and innovations King Lear was made a suitable hero for a mighty tragedy.

Shakespeare went to extremes in the matter of Goneril and Regan. No plausible motives could be supplied for such outrageous treatment of a father and the result was the creation of inhuman monsters. Critics more or less agree upon this conclusion. Again Shakespeare disregarded the reasons given by Gonerill and Regan in *King Lear* for their treatment of their father—the money he spent and his interference with their personal affairs—and left them without motive save their determination to break Lear's authority, thereby making Goneril and Regan more fiendish. Shakespeare added many incidents not found in the sources
to show their cruelty and ingratitude.

Shakespeare's treatment of Cordelia's response to the love test did not differ greatly from that of the sources. Cordelia was honest and sincere and found the flattery of her sisters repulsive. Both Brandes and Stoll refer to her "want of tact," and Stoll points out that but for this want of tact there would have been no story. Naturally that is true, but Shakespeare made her attitude seem natural by providing her with the motives of sincerity and love of truth.

All of Kent's actions are motivated by loyalty and love for his King. These motives are found in Perillus of _King Leir_, but Shakespeare made them much more evident in his play.

Nearly all critics grant that Edmund was influenced to some extent by his shame of birth, and this was a motive originated by Shakespeare, for no mention was made in the _Arcadia_ of a feeling of stigma by the bastard son of the Paphlagonian king.

Edgar's actions were prompted by filial love and duty as were those of the dutiful son in the source, and Gloucester was duped by his bastard son as was the Paphlagonian king, but Shakespeare was wholly responsible for their loyalty to King Lear, since that part of the plot was original with him.
The minor characters, such as Albany, Cornwall, and the King of France, had their motives supplied largely by Shakespeare, who, disregarding the sources, made Albany good and Cornwall bad, and changed the story by having the forces of the King of France defeated by the English. The last change was made for patriotic purposes.

*King Lear* has many changes in the motivation from that of the sources and thus shows clearly that Shakespeare considered motives or lack of motives important in characterization and in the general effect of the whole play. Stoll's opinion that the dramatist's concern is for emotional effect at the expense of character seems to be unfair, for the analysis reveals an abundance of skill in characterization on the part of Shakespeare. On the other hand, Bradley's exposition of the purification of King Lear seems exaggerated. The occasional moods of tenderness and pity that he felt were probably not entirely foreign to him before the opening of the play, especially since something in his disposition had inspired Kent's loyalty. That he was somewhat mellowed by his experiences I think we may accept, but, at the same time, we must take into account Schucking's explanation that the Lear at the end of the play was a product of weariness and a breakdown of vital forces.
CHAPTER IV

MOTIVATION OF CHARACTERS IN MACBETH

Macbeth is a play in which motives are an interesting study. Shakespeare based this drama upon source material found in Holinshed's Chronicles, Volume II, The Historie of Scotland. He followed more or less closely the story of Makbeth as related by Holinshed, but added details found in other stories from the Chronicles as well as some from his own imagination.

According to the history of Makbeth as it is found in the Chronicles, Makbeth's disdain of Duncan as a king must have been deep-seated even though he had never made any outward sign to reveal it. In order to understand the evil designs which came into his heart, we should first know the situation as it existed in Scotland:

After Malcolm succeeded his nephew Duncan, the sonne of his daughter Beatrice: for Malcome had two daughters, the one which was this Beatrice, being given in marriage unto one Abbanath Crinen, a man of great nobilitie, and thane of the Iles and west parts of Scotland, bare of that marriage the foresaid Dun-cane; the other called Doade, was married unto Sinell, the thane of Glammis, by whom she had issue one Makbeth a valiant gentleman, and one that if he had not beene somewhat cruell of nature, might have been thought most woorthie the government of a realme. On the other part, Duncane was so soft and gentle of nature, that the people wished the inclinations and manners of these two cousins to haue beene so tempered and interchangeable bestowed betwixt them, that where the one had too much of Clemencie, and the other of crueltie, the meane ver-tue betwixt these two extremities might have reigned by indifferent partition in them both, so should Duncane
The people of Scotland realized the inadequacy of Duncan as king. Further evidence of dissatisfaction with the Scottish king is shown by Makedowald's feeling:

Manie slanderous words also, and railing tents this Makedowald uttered against his prince, calling him a faint-hearted milkesoap, more meet to governe a sort of idle moonks in some cloister, than to have the rule of such valiant and hardie men of warre as the Scots were.

Similar feelings were current among some of the Scottish nobles and a revolt was organized. Duncan was unable to cope with the situation and Makedbeth's ability as a leader became more evident.

This overthrow being notified to the king, did put him in woonderfull feare, by reason of his small skill in warlike affaires. Calling therefore his nobles to a counsell, he asked of them their best advise for the subduing of Makedowald & other the rebels. At length Makedbeth speaking much against the kings softnes, and overmuuch slacknes in punishing offenders, whereby they had such time to assemble togethier, he promised notwithstanding, if the charge were committed unto him and unto Banquho, so to order the matter, that the rebels should be shortly vanquished & quite put downe.

Thus was justice and law restored againe to the old accustomed course, by the diligent means of Makedbeth.

What things are we to notice from the above accounts?

In the first place, the people wished the inclinations and

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1 Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, V, 264, 265.
2 Ibid., p. 265.
3 Ibid., p. 265, 266.
manners of these two cousins to have been tempered and interchangeably bestowed between them. If the people had seen the good points of Macbeth for king, surely Macbeth had had some hint of it. In the second place, one of Macbeth's personal bravery must have flinched to hear his king spoken of as a "faint-hearted milkesop" and to know that a revolt put him in wonderful fear. In fact, he spoke in the council against his king's softness and slackness. Then by his leadership the revolt was put down and an invasion of the Norwegian king was repelled. It seems incredible, in spite of Macbeth's outward show of loyalty, that he could have participated in these events without ever thinking in his heart (especially since he was next of kin to Duncan) that he would have made a better king. However, such a feeling on Macbeth's part is not suggested in the Chronicles until after his encounter with the witches.

In Shakespeare's play there is nothing to bear out these points except the merest hints. Naturally, in order to develop Macbeth into a villain deserving of the tragedy which fell upon him, Shakespeare would have him murder only good and wholly deserving persons; therefore, Duncan was pictured as a kind, benign sovereign, not necessarily a weak one. This is not the only place wherein Shakespeare departed from the Holinshed account in order to show Macbeth as being truly villainous. However, after the witches had addressed him as one who should be King thereafter, Banquo said:
Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair?  

This seems to bear out the contention that Macbeth was
startled by the witches' naming a thought that had lain
within his mind. Furthermore, though answered courteously
enough, Duncan's words of greeting to Macbeth after the
battle must have rankled in his heart:

O worthiest cousin,
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me! Thou art so far before
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
To overtake thee. 

Macbeth must really have felt "that he was far before," and,
in truth, this speech of Duncan's was an admission that Mac-
beth had performed what in reality was his (the King's) duty
to perform. It seems to me that Macbeth's motive in killing
Duncan must have sprung from a feeling of superiority to his
King, a sense that he himself would make a better ruler.

That feeling of Macbeth's, to which he had hardly given
expression even in his own mind, was crystalized into a defi-
nite plan as a result of his encounter with the witches. The
account from Holinshed was followed very closely by Shakespeare:

Shortlie after happened a strange and vncouth woonder,
which afterward was the cause of much trouble in the
realm of Scotland, as ye shall after heare. It fortuned
as Makbeth and Banquho journeyed towards Fores, where the
king then lafe, they went sporting by the waie togither
without other companie, save onelie themselves, passing
through the woods and fields, when suddenlie in the
middest of a laund, there met them three women in strange
and wild apparell, resembling creatures of elder world,

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4 Macbeth, I. iii. 51-52. 5 Ibid., I. iv. 15-18.
whome when they attentively beheld, wondering much at the sight, the first of them spake and said; "All haile Makbeth, thane of Glamis" (for he had lately entered into that dignitie and office by the death of his father Sinell.) The second of them said; "Haile Makbeth thane of Cawder." But the third said; "All haile Makbeth that hereafter shall be king of Scotland!"

When Banquo inquired why they had not spoken to him, they told him that he would be the father of many kings. According to Holinshed's account, Macbeth did not at first attach any significance to this incident:

This was reputed at first but some vaune fantastical illusion by Mackbeth and Banquo, insomuch that Banquo would call Macketh in lest, king of Scotland; and Macketh againe would call him in sport likewise, the father of manie kings."

Not until he was made Thane of Cawder did the Makbeth of Holinshed begin to be motivated by these prophecies, and then not until Banquo in jest called his attention to what might happen.

But afterwards the common opinion was, that these women were either the weird sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie, or else some nymphs or feeries, indued with knowledge of prophesie by their necromantical science, because everie thing came to pass as they had spoken. For shortly after, the thane of Cawder being condemned at Fores of treason against the king committed; his lands, livings, and offices were given of the kings liberalitie to Mackbeth.

The same night after, at supper, Banquo jested with him and said; "Now Mackbeth thou hast obtained those things which the two former sisters prophesied, there remaineth onelie for thee to purchase that which the third said should come to passe." Whereupon Mackbeth resoluing the thing in his mind, began euin then to devise how he might atteine to the kingdom; but yet he thought with himselfe that he must tarie a time, which

6Holinshed, Chronicles, V. 268.
7Ibid., pp. 268, 269.
should advance him thereto (by the divine providence) as it had come to passe in his former preferment.\(^8\)

Shakespeare's Macbeth was immediately motivated by the witches' prophecy. We have already noted that he started and seemed to fear something when the third witch said, "All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!" As soon as the witches had vanished, Macbeth began to speak about the matter quite seriously, though Banquo could scarcely believe what he had seen.

\[ \text{Ban.} \text{ Were such things here as we do speak about?} \\
\text{Or have we eaten on the insane root} \\
\text{That takes the reason prisoner?} \]

\[ \text{Macb.} \text{ Your children shall be kings.} \]

\[ \text{Ban.} \text{ You shall be king.} \]

\[ \text{Macb.} \text{ And Thane of Cawder too. Went it not so?}\(^9\)

Macbeth wanted to repeat the good news, to assure himself that it was really true. After Ross and Angus almost immediately appeared with the news that Macbeth had been made Thane of Cawdor, he said in an aside:

\[ \text{Two truths are told,} \\
\text{As happy prologues to the swelling act} \\
\text{Of the imperial theme.} \]

\[ \text{I am Thane of Cawdor.} \]

\[ \text{If good, why do I yield to that suggestion} \\
\text{Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair} \\
\text{And make my seated heart knock at my ribs} \\
\text{Against the use of nature?}\(^{10}\)

The thought of murdering Duncan at this time took complete possession of his mind as the result of the actual fulfillment of one of the witches' prophecies so that he actually

\(^{8}\text{Ibid., p. 269.}\)

\(^{9}\text{Macbeth, I. iii. 83-88.}\)

\(^{10}\text{Ibid., I. iii. 127-129, 133-137.}\)
saw the murder being done. However, he resolved at this time not to take that course but to leave matters to chance:

If chance will have me King, why, chance may crown me, Without my stir.\(^1\)

Here the matter stood until something happened that seemed to stand in the way of chance. Holinshed's account of the incident explains fully and clearly Macbeth's reaction to King Duncan's establishment of his son Malcolm as his successor:

But shortly after it chanced that king Duncane, having two sonnes by his wife which was the daughter of Siward earle of Northumberland, he made the elder of them, called Malcolm, prince of Cumberland, as it were thereby to appoint him his successor in the kingdome, immediatlie after his deceasse. Mackbeth sore troubled herewith, for that he saw by this means his hope sore hindered (where, by the old lawes of the realme, the ordinance was, that if he that should succeed were not of able age to take the charge upon himselfe, he that was next of blood vnto him should be admitted) he began to take counsell how he might vsurpe the kingdome by force, having a just quarrell so to doo (as he tooke the matter) for that Duncan did what in him lay to defraud him of all maner of title and claime, which he might in time to come, pretend vnto the crowne.\(^2\)

This must have embittered Macbeth, coming as it did so shortly after he had saved the kingdom from rebellion and invasion for King Duncan, who was not able to save it for himself. His ambition was rekindled by this rebuff, and he began to make plans for becoming king by force. Holinshed's Macbeth, as we have seen, believed that he had a just reason so to do.

\(^1\)Ibid., I. iii. 142-143.

\(^2\)Holinshed, Chronicles, V. 239.
Shakespeare's Macbeth, upon hearing the announcement of King Duncan that he had named his eldest son, Malcolm, as Prince of Cumberland, immediately voiced his determination to carry out the scheme he had laid aside once before:

The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap, For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires. The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be, Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.13

Even though Macbeth had long felt deep within his heart that he was more worthy to be king than Duncan, though he had had his ambition fired by the prophecy of the witches, and though he had had his determination to commit the crime rekindled by the announcement that Malcolm should be Duncan’s successor, it is likely that these motives would not have been sufficient to sustain his resolution had it not been for the fierce and burning determination of his wife. Lady Macbeth’s part in the crime was lightly treated in Holinshed’s account. The following quotation shows her part in Macbeth’s crime:

The worlde of the three weird sisters also (of whom before ye haue heard) greatlie incouraged him herewunte, but speciallie his wife lay sore vpon him to attempt the thing, as she that was vere ambitious, burning in vnquenchable desire to beare the name of a queene.14

Another story from Holinshed, that of Donwald’s murder of King Duff, was used by Shakespeare to supply the details

13Macbeth, I. iv. 48-53.
14Holinshed, Chronicles, V, 269.
of Duncan's murder. From this account we learn that Donw ald, too, was influenced by his wife.

Donwald thus being the more kindled in wrath by the words of his wife, determined to follow her advise in the execution of so heinous an act. . . . Then Donwald, though he abhorred the act greatlie in his heart, yet through instigation of his wife hee called foure of his servants.\textsuperscript{15}

Shakespeare's treatment of Lady Macbeth's influence on Macbeth goes much further than his source. In fact, much of the artistry of the drama is shown in the delineation of Lady Macbeth's character, from whom really came the most powerful motivation of Macbeth's first crime. From the first moment she read the letter in which Macbeth told her of the witches' prophecy, her mind was made up. Fearing Macbeth's disposition, she planned her part in the affair:

\begin{quote}
Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be--
What thou art promis'd. Yet do I fear thy nature.
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it.

Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crowned wherewith.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Learning that Duncan was to come to their castle even that night, she called upon the spirits to unsex her and fill her with cruelty so that she should be unshaken from her purpose. It was as though she realized that she must have strength enough for Macbeth as well as herself. This strength was

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., pp. 234-235. \textsuperscript{16}Macbeth, I. v. 13-18, 23-26.
needed, too, for more than once she kept Macbeth to his purpose. When Macbeth first arrived, she brought the matter to an immediate discussion:

Macb. My dearest love, Duncan comes here tonight.
Lady. And when goes hence?
Macb. Tomorrow, as he purposes. O, never
Lady. Shall sun that morrow see?

And you shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

Macb. We will speak further.
Lady. Only look up clear.
To alter favour ever is to fear.
Leave all the rest to me. 17

Later, during supper, Macbeth left his guests and pondered the murder and its consequences. He had decided that he could not kill the King since Duncan was his kinsman and his guest, and such an act would arouse much pity among his subjects. He had just concluded his soliloquy with these lines,

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th' other, 18

when his real "spur," Lady Macbeth, appeared. To her he announced his intention of proceeding no further in the business of murdering the King, and then she burst forth. She taunted him with cowardice (the surest blow to his vanity), accused him of being false in his love to her, reassured

him concerning the success of the deed, and finally, without
giving him any time for further refusal, planned the murder
to the last detail. [Yes, when a sense of injustice, a belief
in the witches' prophecy, a powerful ambition, and all else
failed to "screw Macbeth's courage to the sticking place,"]
Lady Macbeth was the final, powerful motivating force in the
murder of King Duncan by Macbeth. All of these motives are
suggested in the source; Shakespeare amplified them.

Macbeth's second crime, the murder of Banquo, sprang
from different motives. According to the Holinshed account,
Banquo had known about the murder of Duncan:

At length therefore, communicating his purposed
intent with his trustie friends, amongst whom Banquo
was chiefest, vpon confidence of their promised aid,
he slue the king at Errurns.19

Therefore, Makbeth could not have been motivated by
the fear of Banquo's finding out that he was the murderer
in Shakespeare's source. There his reason for killing Banquo
is explained as follows:

For the pricke of conscience (as it chanceth euer
in tyrants, and such as atteine to anie estate by vnrighte-
eous means) caused him euer to feare, lest he should be
serued of the same cup, as he had ministred to his prede-
cessor. The woords also of the three weed sisters, would
not out of his mind, which as they promised him the king-
dome, so likewise did they promise it at the same time
vnto the posteritie of Banquho.20

The reasons for his murder of Banquho are evident: his
fear that Banquho might rise against him even as he had risen

19Holinshed, Chronicles, V, 269. 20Ibid., p. 271.
against Duncan, and his jealousy of the fact that the
witches had promised the kingdom to Banquo's posterity
rather than his.

Shakespeare used these motives in his play, making,
however, Macbeth's fear of Banquo more acute because it was
a fear of being found out in his crime. In the Holinshed
account, Banquo was an accomplice; in Shakespeare's version
Banquo was a man of uprightness, and it was that in him that
Macbeth most feared, for he said:

Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be fear'd. 'Tis much he dares,
And to that dauntless temper of his mind
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
To act in safety. There is none but he
Whose being I do fear.21

Too, his jealousy of Banquo was rampant. The Sisters had
hailed Banquo as "father to a line of kings." With great
bitterness he wailed:

For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!22

It is interesting to notice in connection with the murder
of Banquo that Lady Macbeth had no hand in the planning of it.
In fact, she was never told definitely what was to happen.
Macbeth, already steeped in the sense of crime and its attendant
fears, was able to devise his own bloody schemes for holding
his precarious position. In order to keep suspicion from

21Macbeth, III. 1. 43-54.  
22Ibid., 64-69.
himself in this crime, he persuaded murderers to commit the deed without his palace. Holinshed's story reads:

He willed therefore the same Banquo, with his sonne named Fleance, to come to a supper that he had prepared for them, which was in deed, as he had devised, present death at the hands of certeine murderers, whom he hired to execute that deed; appointing them to meete with the same Banquo and his soone without the palace, as they returned to their lodgings, and there to slie them, so that he would not haue his house slandered, but that in time to come he might cleare himselfe, if anie thing were laid to his charge vpon anie suspicion that might arise.23

Shakespeare put Macbeth's motives for having the crime committed by others and outside his palace more tersely but none the less plainly. For having murderers commit this crime he gave this reason:

And though I could
With barefac'd power sweep him from my sight
And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,
For certain friends that are both his and mine,
Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall
Who I myself struck down.24

For having it committed outside the palace he gave this motive:

For't must be done tonight,
And something from the palace; always thought
That I require a clearness.25

Banquo's murder was motivated chiefly by Macbeth's sense of fear, an all-pervading fear that his murder of Duncan would be found out, and that the contemplated murder of Banquo would be laid to his charge. This second crime was planned to rid himself of fear, for just before its consummation,

23 Holinshed, Chronicles, V, 271.
24 Macbeth, III. i. 117-122. 25 Ibid., 130-132.
Macbeth said to Lady Macbeth in preparing her for Banquo's murder:

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer, 
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep 
In the affliction of these terrible dreams 
That shake us nightly. 26

Banquo's murder, however, did not give Macbeth any relief from fear. Holinshed's Chronicle says:

... after the contrived slaughter of Banquo, nothing prospered with the foresaid Macbeth: for in manner everie man began to doubt his owne life, and durst vneth appeare in the kings presence; and even as there were manie that stood in feare of him, so likewise he stood in fear of manie, in such sort that he began to make those aweie by one surmized caullion or other, whom he thought most able to worke him anie displeasure. 27

His fear centered upon Makduffe, who had failed to obey a summons to his castle, thus giving him grounds for obey hate and suspicion:

Neither could he afterwards abide to looke upon the said Makduffe, either for that he thought his puissance ouer great; either else for that he had learned of certeine wizzards, in whose words he put great confidence (for that the prophesie had happened so right, which the three faries or weird sisters had declared vnto him) how that he ought to take heed of Makduffe, who in time to come should seeke to destroie him.

And suerlie hereupon had he put Makduffe to death, but that a certeine witch whom he had in great trust, had told that he should never be slaine with man born of anie woman, nor vanquished till the wood of Bemane came to the castell of Dunainane. By this prophesie Makbeth put all feare out of his heart, supposing he might doo what he would, without anie feare to be punished for the same, for by the one prophesie he beleueued it was vnpossible for anie man to vanquish him, and by the other vnpossible to slea him. 28

26Macbeth, III. ii. 16-19.
27Holinshed, Chronicles, V, 273, 274. 28Ibid., p. 274.
Nevertheless, according to Holinshed, Makbeth went to Makduffe's castle for the purpose of killing him when he learned through spies that Makduffe had planned to go to England to seek Malcolm.

Immediate ly then, being advertised whereabout Makduffe went, he came hastily with a great power into Fife and forthwith besieged the castell where Makduffe dwelled, trusting to have found him therein. . . . But neuerthelessse Makbeth must cruellie caused the wife and children of Makduffe, with all other whom he found in that castell, to be slaine.29

In this version, Makbeth in a fit of anger that Makduffe had fled, slew the wife, children, and all others in the castle. It seems that he had determined to kill Makduffe, not because he was afraid of him since he had so much faith in the witch's prophecy, but because he was angry at hearing of Makduffe's contemplated flight to England.

Shakespeare, however, lets fear continue to dominate Macbeth's actions. It was while he was in the hideous grip of fear after the visit of Banquo's ghost that he determined to seek the Weird Sisters again to find out "by the worst means the worst." Even then he had other bloody deeds in mind by which to seek to alleviate his fear.

I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
My strange and self-abuse
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:
We are yet but young in deed.30

Macbeth evidently thought that if he committed enough

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murders he would become used to such deeds and could think
on them with a hardened conscience. From his visit to the
witches he learned that he should beware of the Thane of
Fife (Macduff) but that none of woman born should harm him.
Instead of having his fears quieted by this prophecy as did
Holinshed's Makbeth, he resolved to kill Macduff to be
doubly sure of his safety. He said:

Then live, Macduff. What need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance double sure
And take a bond of fate. Thou shalt not live!
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies
And sleep in spite of thunder.31

Before he could carry out this resolution, however, he
had news of the flight of Macduff to England, but he had de-
termined upon bloody deeds as a means of soothing his half-
crazed fears and he would not waver again, as he had this
time by seeking to know the future from the witches before
killing Macduff as he had already planned. He chided himself
for having delayed Macduff's murder, and told himself it
would not happen again:

The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
Unless the deed go with it. From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done!
The castle of Macduff I will surprise,
Seize upon Fife, give to the edge o' th' sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool.32

Macbeth was trying to prove to himself that he was not

31 Ibid., IV. 1. 82-86. 32 Ibid., 145-154.
a man conquered by fears, but a man capable of any kind of
action. The murder of Macduff's wife and children, the most
horrible of Macbeth's crimes because it was the most useless,
was prompted by a fear that was past the power of reason.
This crime was but one of many perpetrated by Macbeth that
made Ross say of Scotland:

The dead man's knell
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.33

If we could believe Macbeth's own words, these deeds served
their purpose of hardening his conscience, for at hearing
the shrieks of women, at Lady Macbeth's death, he said:

I have almost forgot the taste of fears,
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair
Would at dismal treatise rouse and stir
As life were in 't. I have supp'd full with horrors,
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
Cannot once start me.34

However, he was still fighting his fears up until the
time of battle, for he defiantly assured himself:

I will not be afraid of death and bane
Till Birnam Forest come to Dunsinane.35

[It has already been noted that the character of Lady
Macbeth was almost entirely Shakespeare's own product. In
fact, the only motive attributed to Lady Makbeth by Holinshed
was not used by Shakespeare at all; namely, that she was very
ambitious to bear the name of queen. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth]

33Macbeth, IV. iii. 170-173.
34Ibid., V. v. 9-15. 35Ibid., V. iii. 59-60.
never once mentioned her desire to be queen. On the other hand, her concern was always for what Macbeth might become:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be—
What thou art promised.36

Her ambition for her husband was motivated by her love for him. Some critics picture Lady Macbeth as being ruthless and so dominated by ambition that she was incapable of a tender love for her lord, but that was not the case. Her first greeting to him was affectionate:

Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!
Greater than both by the all-hail thereafter!37

[Later she called him, "My Thane" and "Gentle my lord."
After the murder of Duncan was committed and Macbeth was so stupefied by what he had done, her concern was for him. She tried to soothe him; she finished the task by taking the daggers back; she reasoned with him and cautioned him against thinking about what he had done. She helped Macbeth as long as he needed her and confided in her. She saw that he had carried himself safely through the scene of the discovery of Duncan before she fainted. She put away her own feeling of remorse in order to comfort Macbeth, who had not been able to throw off his fears after the murder of Duncan. She realized deeply the error of gaining possessions at the expense of their peace of mind:]

Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content.

36 Ibid., I. v. 13, 14. 37 Ibid., 52, 53.
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Then by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.\textsuperscript{38}

However, the above words, spoken just before Macbeth's entrance, were changed to this greeting and admonition for her husband:

\textit{How now, my lord? Why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making;
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard. What's done is done.}\textsuperscript{39}

When this would not stem his flow of bitter words, coaxingly she pleaded:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Come on;}
\textit{Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;
Be bright and jovial among your guests tonight.}\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

At the feast when he was tormented by the ghost of Banquo, she tried to explain his actions until it became impossible. Then she dismissed the guests, and without one word of reproof for his unseemly behavior, she listened quietly to his plans, finally suggesting soothingly that he needed sleep.

Carried away by his own fears and his bloody schemes, Macbeth no longer depended upon his wife for encouragement and comfort. \textsuperscript{38}When she was no longer needed by her husband, her assumed courage left her, and remorse took its place.

Her last appearance was the sleep-walking scene, and it is remarkable to notice that even in these dream-like fancies her concern is for Macbeth, and her words of horror are

\textsuperscript{38}Macbeth, III. ii. 4-7. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{39}Ibid., 8-12.
\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 26-28.
interspersed with words of encouragement and admonition to him:

"Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier and afeard?—What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our pow'r to account? . . . . No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting. . . . Wash your hands; put on your nightgown; look not so pale! I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he can not come out on's grave. . . . To bed, to bed! There's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come, give me your hand, What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed!"

To the very last her thoughts were of Macbeth. Never in one instance did she put her personal wishes above what she considered his welfare. The strongest motivating force in Lady Macbeth's character was her love for Macbeth.

Banquo's part in the story of Macbeth in Holinshed's Chronicles differs greatly from his part in Shakespeare's play. We have already seen that the Holinshed account made Banquo an accomplice in the murder of King Duncan. This was not true in the Shakespearean version. In every instance of Banquo's appearance his motives and actions were of the noblest. The witches' prophecies that proved Macbeth's downfall were from the first considered evil by Banquo:

"But 'tis strange!
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's
In deepest consequence."

Banquo showed no jealousy when Macbeth was made Thane of Cawdor by the King, or when the King rather tardily and

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41Macbeth, V. i. 41-43, 59-61, 63-65.
42Tibid., I. iii. 122-126.
briefly expressed gratitude to him for his part in helping Macbeth subdue the rebellion and invasion. Evidently Banquo even added his own praises of Macbeth to the others, for the King said:

True, worthy Banquo: he is full so valiant, 
And in his commendations I am fed.43

When Macbeth just before the murder of Duncan suggested that he would like to speak later with Banquo about the witches' prophecy, Banquo made it clear that Macbeth's wishes were his as long as they were honorable.

Macb. If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis, 
It shall make honour for you.

Banquo. So I lose none
In seeking to augment it but still keep 
My bosom franchis'd and allegiance clear, 
I shall be counsell'd.44

Macbeth himself referred to Banquo's "royalty of nature," and though Banquo suspected that Macbeth had "played most fouly" for the kingship, he gave his loyal and courteous allegiance to him. When Macbeth requested his presence at a solemn supper, Banquo's reply was one befitting the occasion:

Let your highness Command upon me; to the which my duties Are with a most indissoluble tie For ever knit.45

There was no indication that Banquo had any designs against Macbeth. He was at the last what he had always been, a good, courageous, loyal noble, without jealousy, undue ambition or rancor in his heart. Shakespeare endowed him with these

43Tbid., I. iv. 54-55. 44Tbid., 25-29.
45Macbeth, III. 1. 15-18.
qualities so that the dramatic contrast between him and Macbeth would be greater, and so that he would appear a suitable ancestor for James I.

According to the Chronicles Makbeth's anger became centered on Makduffe when he refused to obey a summons to come to do his share of building the castle Dunsinane, and Makbeth began to fear him when he learned from wizards that Makduffe would seek to destroy him. His fears abated, however, upon hearing the prophecy of a witch that he should never be killed by any man born of woman, and he did not seek to kill Makduffe until he learned from spies that Makduffe intended to go to England to seek a conspiracy with Malcolm for Makbeth's overthrow. Makbeth, upon hearing this report, went to Makduffe's castle and, finding Makduffe had already fled, killed his wife, children, and all others in the castle. Makduffe, in England, made an alliance with Malcolm, and with the aid of Siward, Malcolm's English uncle, they came with an army and overthrew Macbeth.

Shakespeare's introduction of Macduff was different. He came to Inverness and was the one to discover King Duncan's murder. Though he did not intimate by one word that he suspected Macbeth, he did refuse to go to Macbeth's coronation, and bade Ross good-bye with these words that indicate his distrust of the new regime:

Well, may you see things well done there. Adieu,
Lest our old robes sit easier than our new.46

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46Ibid., II. iv. 37, 38.
He did not go again to Macbeth's palace. That Macbeth noticed his failure to come was shown by the question he asked Lady Macbeth after the fateful supper attended by Banquo's ghost.

How say'st thou that Macduff denies his person
At our great bidding?  

He had heard in some way that Macduff had refused to come, and he meant to find out from his spy in Macduff's household why he had not. Later he did send a messenger to Macduff, and after another curt refusal to go to Macbeth's court, Macduff fled to England. By this time all the nobles had begun to suspect Macbeth of the murders of King Duncan and Banquo. They disliked Macbeth's reign and were in sympathy with Macduff's purpose. This was shown when one noble said:

Thither Macduff
Is gone to pray the holy King upon his aid
To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward;
That by help of these (with Him above
To ratify the work) we may again
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives.  

Macduff's wife believed Macduff's flight to England was motivated by fear, and so she told Ross:

His flight was madness. When our actions do not,
Our fears do make us traitors.  

Ross, however, tried to make her see that his motive was not fear, but a high and holy purpose:

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47Ibid., III. iv. 126-129.  
48Ibid., III. vi. 29-35.  
49Ibid., IV. ii. 3, 4.
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows.
The fits o' th' season. I dare not speak much further:
But cruel are the times, when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves.

Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
To what they were before.50

Macduff's flight to England to secure the aid of Malcolm in overthrowing Macbeth was really motivated by a deep and sincere love for his country. When Malcolm was testing Macduff's sincerity, Macduff spoke feelingly of his country:

Oh nation miserable,
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scept'red
When shall thou see thy wholesome days again?51

Then, too, when Ross came to England, Macduff's first question was for his country:

Stands Scotland where it did?52

Macduff's determination to conquer Macbeth was whetted by the news of the murder of his wife and children. His poignant grief at the announcement gave way to stern avowal of revenge:

Front to front
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself.
Within my sword's length set him. If he scape,
Heaven forgive him too!53

He did not fail in his resolve. The time came when he entered with Macbeth's head and hailed Malcolm king of Scotland. He had set himself a course, motivated by a love for his country and a desire for revenge against the King who had killed his wife and children.

50Macbeth, IV. iii. 103-105. 51Ibid., 16-19, 24, 25.
52Ibid., 164. 53Ibid., 231-234.
From this study it is evident that in many cases Shakespeare departed from his source in the motivation of characters in Macbeth. What reasons can be assigned for these departures and what conclusions may be reached?

In the first place, Shakespeare almost completely ignored the motive which was given Makketh in Holinshed for the murder of King Duncan, that is, the weakness and inefficiency of the King. Undoubtedly Shakespeare was interested in making Macbeth's crime more heinous by depriving him of this particular motive. By killing a kind and good, well-beloved sovereign instead of a weak, inefficient ruler, Shakespeare's Macbeth made himself a murderer for whom there could be no sympathy.

In the source Makketh was not immediately motivated by the witches; he did not resolve to follow their evil suggestions until Banquo brought up the matter. Shakespeare's Macbeth immediately thought of the murder, however. This change from the source, according to Stoll, saved time and hastened the events of the drama, and also resulted in a quickened development of Macbeth's character and consequent downfall.

Lady Macbeth, according to Holinshed, had an unquenchable ambition to bear the name of queen. In Shakespeare's play no such ambition is mentioned; her every thought was for Macbeth. This made her a more sympathetic character, and there is no doubt that Shakespeare meant her, in spite of her part in
Macbeth's misdeeds, to retain to some extent the sympathy of the audience.

Banquo in Holinshed was a conspirator with Macbeth in the murder of Duncan. This is not true in Shakespeare's play, in which Banquo is a noble and good character. Shakespeare changed Banquo's motives so that the contrast between him and Macbeth might be greater, so that Macbeth's crime of killing Banquo would be more horrible, and so that the king of England at the time of Shakespeare's play might not be offended at the characterization of his ancestor.

In the source Makbeth went to Macduff's castle to keep him from escaping to England, and, finding him gone, in a fit of anger, murdered his wife and children. Shakespeare's Macbeth, knowing that Macduff was gone, went deliberately to murder his wife and children so that he could steel his resolution to action and rid himself of fears. Shakespeare spared no detail in showing to what depths Macbeth had descended.

In other instances, Shakespeare takes a hint of a motive from the source and develops it into a powerful force. This was true in the case of Lady Macbeth's instigation of the murder of Duncan. From the bare mention of such instigation Shakespeare developed some of the most powerful scenes of the play, and, at the same time, developed one of his best-known characters, Lady Macbeth.

The evidence, then, to bear out Stoll's contention that
the veiled and confused motives of the play were the result of Shakespeare's attention to dramatic construction rather than psychological characterization is heavy. In nearly all instances the motives were changed in order to enhance the drama. However, Shakespeare did not lose sight of characterization, for critics have made convincing analyses of the motives and actions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth from the so-called psychological standpoint.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A comparison of motives found in the source materials and the motives found in *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* shows that for various reasons Shakespeare made many changes in character motivation. An analysis of these variations from the standpoint of Shakespeare's probable viewpoint does much toward clarifying the differences between the two opposing groups of critics of Shakespeare.

Some changes in motives were made in order to make the characters of *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* into tragic heroes. In the case of Othello the dramatist found in the source material a Moor who became jealous and angry to the point of plotting the murder of his wife, thereby becoming a villain for whom there was no sympathy. Shakespeare from that Moor created Othello, who, being misled by Iago, became jealous and, in deep anguish, killed the wife he still loved. Othello was not a villain, but a tragic hero, with whom the audience lives and suffers. Shakespeare supplied motives for his jealousy to accomplish this sympathetic characterization by building up Iago's "honesty" and cunning, by making Othello a trusting person, and by making Desdemona artless in her actions.
Shakespeare changed the motivation in *King Lear* in order to make the old King deserving of his tragic fate. In the old play, *King Lear*, the love test was motivated by the desire of King Lear to trap his youngest daughter into marrying a prince of his choice, but Shakespeare did not use that motive. He chose rather to go back to other sources, in which the only motive cited was that Leir wished his youngest daughter to have the largest share of the kingdom. Even this motive was not clearly set forth in Shakespeare's play. Shakespeare's King Lear was motivated mostly by a childish love of flattery, and his subsequent harshness toward Cordelia and Kent was the result of a senseless rage at being thwarted. The whole opening scene was an unpleasant one, but the lack of a convincing motive for Lear's behavior was the first step in the justification of his tragic ending. In all the source materials Leir was restored to his throne. Only Shakespeare made the old king reap the harvest of his earlier follies; only Shakespeare made him richly deserving of his fate. Lear's rash treatment of Cordelia, his banishment of Kent, his instantaneous rage at Goneril's suggestion that he cut the number of his train, and the curse he pronounced upon her were all used by Shakespeare to prepare the audience for the tragic ending.

In *Macbeth* Shakespeare again changed some motives in order to adapt the hero to the role of tragic character. Here he was interested in making Macbeth's deeds as black
and horrible as the atmosphere of the play. Thus he omitted the motive found in the Chronicles for the murder of Duncan, i.e., the inefficiency of the king, and made Macbeth's crime more terrible by having him kill a benign sovereign who was his guest. The murder of Macduff also was made more horrible by Shakespeare. Holinshed's Makbeth went to Makdiffe's castle to prevent the latter's going to England, and, finding him already gone, killed the wife and children in a fit of anger. Shakespeare's Macbeth, knowing that Macduff was gone, went deliberately to kill the wife and children. Thus Macbeth's character becomes blacker in Shakespeare's play.

Other changes in motivation were made by Shakespeare in order to create certain dramatic effects. The many motives assigned to Iago instead of the one given in the source, that of the Ensign's love for Desdemona, do not cloak the blackness of his villainy, but serve rather to point it out more sharply. Iago's black-heartedness and cunning contrasted with Othello's honor and earnestness in the same crime make Othello a much more honorable and forgivable character.

Similar to the contrast between Iago and Othello is the contrast between Macbeth and Banquo. In Holinshed's account, Banquo was connected with Makbeth's murder of the King, but Shakespeare does not have it so. Banquo's resistance of the temptation by the witches and his upright conduct throughout the play serve to make Macbeth's deeds appear
worse by comparison. Further reason for Shakespeare's treatment of Banquo lies in the fact that Banquo was claimed as an ancestor by James I, who was King of England at the time Shakespeare wrote the play.

Designed for dramatic effect, also, was the omission of the motive found in King Lear for Gonorill's and Regan's response to the love test. In the old play the two older sisters were jealous of Cordell and planned their flattery and promises in order to bring Cordell into disfavor with their father. In Shakespeare's play it was not so, and the omission of the jealousy of Goneril and Regan for the younger sister as a motive for their actions keeps the attention of the audience focused on their relations with their father. The play directs attention all the way through to the question of filial love and duty, and it was to further that idea that Shakespeare changed the motive of Gonorill and Regan as found in King Lear.

Again, the monstrous ingratitude of Goneril and Regan is heightened by Shakespeare. In King Lear Gonorill's mistreatment of her father did not occur for some time, not, indeed, until after he had begun to interfere in her affairs. In Shakespeare's play the sisters planned immediately after the division of the kingdom to work together to divest Lear of his authority. Such a studied change made Shakespeare's Goneril and Regan much more cold-blooded and horrible creatures.

In certain instances Shakespeare manipulated motives in villainous characters through a desire to create sympathy for
them, as in the case of Lady Macbeth. Holinshed's Lady Mak-
beth had an unquenchable desire to be queen. Shakespeare's
counterpart wanted only to see Macbeth king, and her every
thought was for his success—an unselfish attitude which
attracts sympathy toward her.

A similar case is that of Edmund. In the story from
the Arcadia no hint is given of the feelings of the bastard
son or reasons for his actions. In King Lear Shakespeare
makes Edmund deeply conscious of his circumstances of birth,
and because of this feeling of injustice on his part, he
retains some of the sympathy of the audience despite his
evil deeds. Furthermore, Shakespeare dwelt on the idea of
Edmund's bastardy in order to show that Gloucester, by his
early sins, brought tragedies upon himself, even as King
Lear suffered from his own rashness.

The change of motive in regard to Emilia was made not
for purposes of characterization, but to further the plot
and make Othello's acceptance of Iago's insinuations more
plausible. The Ensign's wife of Cinthio's story knew of the
villainy of her husband but was afraid to tell Desdemona.
Emilia had implicit trust in Iago, which made it much more
reasonable for Othello to be fooled by her husband.

In many cases Shakespeare did not alter the motives
found in the sources, but in every case he developed and
strengthened them so that the characters became real men
and women of his own creation. Desdemona's devotion to
Othello and her desire to help Cassio, Cordelia's love and Kent's loyalty to King Lear, Edgar's filial regard for his father, and Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's ambition are all examples of motivating forces drawn from sources, which at the same time bear the definite imprint of Shakespeare's genius.

From this summary it is evident that Shakespeare made changes in motivation in order to alter the characterization of the persons involved, in order to heighten a contrast, further the plot, or produce some dramatic effect. In the light of these findings, it is reasonable to assume that critics from both the two main groups have been right in some respects. Stoll, who takes the most pronounced stand on motives, is perhaps right in his assertion that motives are less important than artistic development with Shakespeare; but he seems to overlook the fact that characterization is one of the most important phases of Shakespeare's artistry, and that Shakespeare's manipulation of motives was mainly to serve the needs of characterization. Stoll and Schucking have made a distinct contribution to Shakespearean criticism by insisting upon a common-sense approach in our manner of contemplating his works, so that we may gain a correct concept of his characters by studying Shakespeare's techniques and recognizing his limitations in modern psychological interpretation. However, they seem to have gone too far in that direction and fail to recognize that in spite of occasional
faulty craftsmanship and the fact that he was writing for an Elizabethan audience untutored in modern psychology, Shakespeare was a genius in following the "main march of the human affections," and so, whether he was conscious of it or not, produced characters who can stand analysis from the psychological viewpoint. That Shakespeare could take such an improbable situation as Othello's becoming jealous of a trusted wife because of the insinuations of a man subordinate in his service, or such an incident as King Lear's disowning his favorite daughter because she would not flatter him, and, through skilful technique, make the characters respond in thoroughly credible and realistic fashion, is one of the marvels of Shakespeare's genius.
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