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THE CONCEPT OF "ANGEL" AND "DEVIL"
IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

BY

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INTRODUCTION

If we would appreciate the writings of Shakespeare, if we would read him with comprehension, if we would grasp the full import of his thoughts, it is well not to ignore the ideas of his age, since these are naturally reproduced in his writings. In one area of thought, angelology, the problem of determining Shakespeare's concept by a study of his plays and of the commonly held opinions of the Elizabethans has not yet been worked out. It is important that it should be, for although the conclusions of the investigator concerning one concept cannot be applied to the work as a whole, they furnish the foundation for a worth-while synthesis. Modern criticism cannot afford to ignore the heritage which contributed to the blossoming of literature in the age of Elizabeth. It must make an intelligent appraisal of all the elements that contributed to the greatest age of the drama in history; and assess the products of that age at their true value. To this evaluation, we hope the present paper may contribute its mite.
In the present case, references to Shakespeare were located by the use of Bartlett's *Concordance* and Schmidt's *Lexicon*. Hundreds of references to Shakespeare's plays were located under words indicating names, nature, office, and rank of angels and devils; such as, angel, cherub, spirit, genius, legion, fiend, demon, tempter, devil, serpent, enemy, Beelzebub, Lucifer, Satan. Then a working bibliography was developed from Ebisch and Schucking and E. K. Chambers. A bibliography on angels and devils was built up from *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*. A comparative study of Shakespeare's uses of the words "angel" and "devil" and the concepts expressed by these terms as they are and have been used in literature, philosophy, and religion was made. This has proved and interesting and enlightening study.
CHAPTER I

THE TRADITIONAL BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF "ANGELO"

Shakespeare's audience, unlike a modern one, had a common fund of knowledge, handed down by the Middle Ages and expanded by the Renaissance, in the light of which they could interpret his references to the supernatural and preternatural. In order to understand correctly the thoughts, actions, and emotions of the characters in Shakespeare, the student must place them against the background of the age in which they were created. Whether, with Tillyard, he considers the Renaissance as

that phase of culture which nowadays tends evermore to lose its identity and to turn out to be simply the late Middle Ages; ¹ or whether, he considers the age in the literal and etymological sense of the name applied to it, as a time of rebirth, of newly awakened interest in art and literature, of renewed Platonizing; or even if he

interprets this period as a break with the Middle Ages, the student will find that the Renaissance assimilated its heritage in matters philosophical. This is of primary importance to the interpreter of literature since

There are many patterns to be found in poetic drama. . . but the all-integrating and absorbing principle is the philosophical pattern.

To trace this pattern in one important area of thought, namely, angelology, is my purpose. In the minds of men who were vitally concerned with the hierarchy of creatures, angels occupied an important position. Tillyard says that they were always there as part of the general scheme of things and that men were really conscious of them.  

From Biblical and Patristic sources, as well as from pseudo-Dionysius, the early scholastics acquired the traditional fund of knowledge and of problems about the angels.  


2Tillyard, op. cit., p. 47.

The Bible they had always with them; the Fathers were read and re-read; and if the scholastics held St. Augustine's name in esteem, no less so did the leaders of the Renaissance profess for him affection and enthusiasm. However, the most influential account of the angels, *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, was written by a man erroneously supposed to be Dionysius the Areopagite. His writings are an important factor in the propagation of Neoplatonic conceptions within Christianity. Their main thought is that the world of creatures, from the highest of the angels downward, is an ordered hierarchy. Their ascription to the famous convert of St. Paul gave them practically the force of apostolic tradition. Scholars are now agreed that his book was written some centuries after the apostolic age; yet its great antiquity made it deserving of the highest consideration; it largely inspired mysticism and scholasticism; and was accepted by Dante and Aquinas.

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Since Shakespeare's medium is drama, his great ideas are necessarily voiced in scattered bits; now here, now there; sometimes by the high, then again by the lowly; in a passing phrase or in an extended quotation. Gathering the fragments, we find that Shakespeare's concept of "angel" coincides with the traditional Biblical picture; but it is colored with Neoplatonic ideas.

Most of Shakespeare's references to angels are in conformity with the Biblical concept of angels. The fact that they are scattered throughout the plays reminds one of Vonier's comment:

The inspired writers take them (angels) for granted and mention them only in connection with human history. . . . Nothing is more casual and unexpected than the mention of angels in every portion of the Scripture; you never know when to expect an angel. ¹

The function of the angels is indicated by their name; angel denotes an office, not a nature; for the word itself means "one who is sent", a "messenger". The term ἀγγελός was used by the Septuagint to translate

the Hebrew messenger of Jehovah. Angels act as messengers of God and as guardians and helpers of men. The Christian turns instinctively to his Guardian Angel in every danger.

Shakespeare in that striking scene enacted on the castle platform of Elsinore reflects this Christian attitude of mind when the first words he puts upon the lips of Hamlet at his startled vision of the real or imagined spirit apparition are: "Angels and ministers of grace, defend us." ¹

Shielding men from harm is the function of the angel which frequently has inspired artists and writers; and Scripture gives many examples of physical protection by guardian spirits—such as, the rescue of Tobias from the sea-monster that attempted to devour him. How natural it seemed to people who knew the Bible that Gonzalo, warned in sleep of danger to his king, should cry out upon awakening:

Now good angels preserve the king. ²

When a great evil is hinted at, the hearer instinct-


²William Shakespeare, The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. by George Lyman Kittredge. (Boston: Ginn Co., 1936), "Tempest," II, 1, 307. In this paper, as in the present instance, reference will always be made to this edition, which follows the Globe enumeration.
tively replies,

Good angels, keep it from us.¹

In the Old Testament angels often assisted the people of God against their enemies. In the second book of Machabees, angels upon horses, comely with golden bridles, guarded Machabeus but cast darts and fireballs against the enemy. Terrifying also is the fate that befell the army of Sennacherib as recorded in the fourth book of Kings, when the angel came and slew in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000. Very appropriate, therefore, are the benedictions uttered by the ghost of Clarence on the eve of the battle between Richard, the monster, and Richmond, the avenger of the wrongs of the innocent.

Good angels guard thy battle! Live and flourish! . . .

Good angels guard thee from the boar's annoy. . . .

God and good angels fight on Richmond's side. . . .²

Of the old man and his sons who arrived unexpectedly

¹Henry VIII, II, i, 307.

²Richard III, V, iii, 138, 156, 175.
upon the battlefield and turned defeat into victory, it was said:

'Tis thought the old man and his sons were angels.

Richard II, although playing on the word angel, expresses the same idea in the famous challenge:

For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel. Then, if angels fight,
Weak men must fall: for heaven still guards
the right.

According to their opposite points of view, Wolsey and Norfolk attribute the incident of the letter either to evil or to good spirits. The cardinal mutters,

What cross devil
Made me put this main secret in the packet
I sent the king?

Whereas Norfolk had said,

It's heaven's will.
Some spirit put this paper in the packet
To bless your eye withal.

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1 Cymbeline, V, iii, 85.
2 Richard II, III, i, 58-62.
3 Henry VIII, III, ii, 214-6.
But not against the enemies of a nation only do the angels of wrath direct their punishment, for Albany calls them down upon the unnatural daughter of Lear.

If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send down quickly to tame these wild offenses.¹
On the other hand, the soul in need of mercy cries out:

Help, angels.²

For truly, the angels are not only instruments of God's wrath, but also dispensers of His mercy. Even in temporal necessities they bring aid to man. Of old the angel brought Elias a hearth cake and a vessel of water;³ at another time the ravens fed him;⁴ Shakespeare has combined these ideas in

Some powerful spirit instruct the kites and ravens
To be thy nurses.⁵

The prayer for angel guardianship comes naturally to the lips of friendship in the heartfelt sentiments

¹*King Lear*, IV, ii, 46.
²*Hamlet*, III, iii, 69.
³*III Kings*, xix: 8.
⁴*II Kings*, xvii: 4.
⁵*The Winter's Tale*, II, iii, 186.
expressed in greeting. Thus the Bishop of Canterbury's initial greeting to King Henry V is a prayer for divine and for celestial guardianship—

God and his angels guard your sacred throne And make you long become it.¹

Uttered by a person of low estate, the same sentiment is expressed for Henry VIII—

Now good angels
Fly o'er thy royal head and shade thy person Under their blessed wings!²

And the Duke greets the provost with the pleasant wish—

The best and wholesom'st spirits of the night Envelop you, good provost!³

In messages of farewell angels are also mentioned:

Go thou to Richard, and good angels tend thee.⁴

This idea of angel guardianship was associated in the popular mind with a realistic picture of an angel remaining constantly at the side of his charge—a con-

¹Henry V, I, ii, 7.
²Henry VIII, V, i, 159-61.
³Measure for Measure, IV, ii, 75-6.
⁴Richard III, IV, i, 93.
cept familiar to a people who had inherited the traditions of the miracle plays, and Shakespeare employs this notion in the most diverse circumstances and expresses it in a variety of ways. One finds—for example, Prince Hal saying to Falstaff:

O my sweet beef, I must still be good angel to thee;¹

and Gratiano, in his lament for Desdemona, crying out that her father would in his anguish:

Curse his better angel from his side
And fall to reprobance;²

While Hamlet expresses the idea of angel's services in:

A ministering angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.³

God's normal messengers to earth are the angels. This concept of the angels is the one that has so strongly influenced art as to cause angels commonly to be represented with wings. The angel is referred to as a messenger in the prayer of Lennox—

Some holy angel
Fly to the court of England and unfold

¹ Henry IV, III, iii, 200.
² Othello, V, ii, 209.
³ Hamlet, V, i, 264.
His message ere he come.¹

in the pitiful cry of Arthur—

And if an angel should have come to me
And told me Hubert should put out mine eyes,
I would not have believ'd him.²

and in this combined metaphor and simile—

O, speak again, bright angell for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,
As is a winged messenger of heaven
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
When he bestrides the lazy pacing clguds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.³

There is another beautiful simile based on the words of Genesis:

And he cast out Adam; and placed before the garden of pleasure Cherubims.⁴

in Shakespeare's description of the change in Henry V:

Consideration like an angel came
And whipp'd th'offending Adam out of him,
Leaving his body as a paradise
T'envelop and contain celestial spirits.⁵

Even to the gates of death the angels accompany man.

¹Macbeth, III, vi, 45-7.
²King John, IV, i, 68-70.
³Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 26-32.
⁴Genesis, III: 24.
⁵Henry V, I, i, 28-31.
Buckingham expresses this thought when he says,

   Go with me like angels to my end.¹

Shakespeare also pantomimes this idea in the dumb show portraying Katherine's vision of the white-robed, garlanded personages who dance before her like the angels in Fra Angelico's picture, and whom she addresses as

   Spirits of peace.²

   Shall we interpret these spirits as figments of Katherine's imagination? It would mean monstrous complacence, and it would altogether defeat the poet's intention of signifying heaven's recognition of her saintly character. They are but a stage-device, of course, yet they are not subjective; they are—operatically, unconceived—'spirits', 'angels of the Lord'.³

In the Savior's parable depicting Lazarus carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, the last, consoling ministrations of angels are described; and the Church sings for the departing soul, "May a choir of angels receive thee and mayest thou have rest everlasting." Shakespeare's words for his great hero, Hamlet, are almost identical:

¹Henry VIII, II, i, 75.
²Henry VIII, IV, ii, 83.
Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.  

Angels are defined as intellectual beings, superior to man but inferior to God by nature, and wholly spiritual. Because their understanding is so luminous, their knowledge being innate and intuitive, angels are called pure intelligences. Their intellect pierces at one glance from the principles to the conclusion without man's laborious processes of reasoning. St. Thomas calls them intellects and minds, and says that there can be neither falsehood or deception in the angels' knowledge.

Bodies in no sense belong to angelic nature, for angels are completely spiritual substances. The Psalmist speaks of Him, "Who makes his angels spirits." In the quotations from Shakespeare already cited angels are repeatedly referred to as spirits.

Aquinas teaches that angelic knowledge is

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1Hamlet, V, ii, 371.
2Husslein, op. cit., p. 127.
4Aquinas, op.cit., P.I, Q. 58, Art. 5.
5Psalm: CIII: 4.
quidditative, piercing the essences of things and the most sublime truths in a simple act of apprehension. ¹

In view of the fact that this theory of angel knowledge was commonly accepted by the Renaissance, J. Dover Wilson edits the famous lines of Hamlet, thus:

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express and admirable in action, how like an angel in apprehension, how like a god.

"Angel knowledge" used in a wide sense is referred to in Love's Labor's Lost:

And though I have for barbarism spoke more, Than for that angel knowledge you can say.²

The usual association of heathenism with barbarism gives some point to the "angel" knowledge of the second line.³

The beauty and perfection of angels, being purely spiritual, transcends human expression. Since these angelic courtiers cannot be adequately clothed

¹Collins, op. cit., p. 190.


³Love's Labor's Lost, I, i, 112.

in material shapes, forever illusive remains the effort

to embody their charm in living colors. By artistic
strokes, painters and poets have labored to suggest
the notion of aerialness, brightness, subtlety, and
agility.\(^1\) Shakespeare paints pleasing word pictures
in:

Courtiers as free, as debonair, unarm'd,
As bending angels.\(^2\)

\[\text{a thousand innocent shame}^3\]
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes.

And vaulted with such ease into his seat
As if an angel dropp'd down from the clouds.\(^4\)

Ezechiel in the fourth verse of the first chapter re­
presents angels as enveloped with clouds to teach us
that their brilliancy is too intense for human minds
to endure; the eye of man not having strength to gaze

\(^1\)Simon Augustus Blackmore, S. J., The Angel
World (Cleveland: John W. Winterich, 1927), p. 39.

\(^2\)Troilus and Cressida, I, iii, 235.

\(^3\)Much Ado About Nothing, IV, i, 163.

\(^4\)I Henry IV, IV, i, 108.
upon it, can behold it only under a veil.\textsuperscript{1} Shakespeare refers to "angels vailing clouds."\textsuperscript{2} This idea of angel brightness occurs repeatedly in Scripture.\textsuperscript{3} The angel who appeared to Daniel is described as having a face the appearance of lightning and his eyes as a burning lamp.\textsuperscript{4} Dante uses fire to express the light of knowledge and the fervor of love of these flaming hosts of God. Shakespeare refers to this concept in:

\begin{quote}
Angels are bright still though the brightest fell.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

This idea of angel brightness was so common that Prince Hal expresses it flippantly as he ridicules

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\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Love's Labor's Lost}, V, ii, 297.
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\textsuperscript{4}Daniel: X: 6.
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\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Macbeth}, IV, iii, 22.
\end{flushright}
Bardolph's burning face.

By this fire, that's God's angel.¹

The perfection associated with these superb creatures, matchless in merit, is incomparable. Shakespeare coined a strong adjective for goodness, when he spoke of angel-like perfection.² Even the "few" in the following statement is hyperbolic, but the statement shows the esteem in which the constancy and power of the celestial spirits is held.

but we are all men
In our natures frail and capable
Of our flesh; few are angels.³

Scripture also suggests the idea of powerful angel voices.

For the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.⁴ Daniel describes the voice of the angel as the voice of a multitude.⁵ Some such thought must have been in

¹I Henry IV, III, iii, 40.
²Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, iv, 66.
³Henry VIII, V, iii, 10-12.
⁴I Thessalonians. IV: 15.
⁵Daniel. X: 5.
the mind of the king when he said:

Methinks in thee some blessed spirit doth speak
His powerful sound within an organ weak.

and Macbeth says

Will plead like angels, his virtues, trumpet-tongued,

and the Dauphin upon hearing the trumpet exclaims:

and even there, methinks an angel spoke.

J. Dover Wilson points out the fact that angels were proverbially trumpet-tongued.

Christ speaks of the joy of the angels over one sinner doing penance; Shakespeare in a very beautiful passage thinks of how they must grieve over man's stupid pride.

But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured
(His glassy essence), like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep.

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1All's Well, II, i, 178.
2Macbeth, I, vii, 19.
3King John, V, ii, 64.
5Measure for Measure, II, ii, 117-122.
Angels can do only good, and custom is an angel in this respect, that it tends to give to our good actions also the ease and readiness of habit.¹

That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat Of habits evil, is angel yet in this, That to the use of actions fair and good He likewise gives a frock or livery, That aptly is put on.²

Finally, man is destined to share the angels' home.

Her body sleeps in Capel's monument, And her immortal part with blessed angels lives.³

Another feature of angelology is the division of the angels into choirs. Pseudo-Dionysius, sometimes referred to as Philangelus, was the first to fix definitely upon nine choirs. He signified his intention to speak only of those orders which Scripture had revealed, and his fixed enumeration became more and more commonly accepted.⁴ His book was already in circulation during the reign of Pope St. Gregory the Great, who ruled the Church from 590 to 604. The

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²Hamlet, III, iv, 161-165.
³Romeo and Juliet, V, 1, 18.
⁴Blackmore, op. cit., p. 82.
grouping of the angels into three hierarchies by the Pseudo-Areopagite has no support in Scripture, but is only the result of theological speculations. St. Thomas accepts the hierarchies and the nine choirs, citing the authority of the Bible for the various names: Seraphim, Isaiah VI: 2; Cherubim, Ezekiel I; Thrones, Colossians, I: 16; Dominations, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Ephesians, I: 21; Archangels, Jude: IX; angels in many places.¹

The Principalities rank third in order and thus stand highest in the first hierarchy. Aquinas says:

Now in the execution of any action there are beginners and leaders; as in singing, the precentors, and in war, generals and officers. This office belongs to the Principalities.²

Shakespeare uses this idea when he has Valentine, in exalting Sylvia, say,

If not divine
Yet let her be a principality
Sovereign to all the creatures on the earth.³

Banquo, alarmed by his dreams of the Weird Sisters, which he believes to be satanic in origin, calls upon

¹Aquinas, op. cit., P.I, Q. 108, Art. 5.
³Two Gentlemen of Verona, II, iv, 52.
the order of angels which God, in His Providence, has
deputed to be concerned especially with the restraint
and coercion of demons.¹

Merciful Powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose.²

Most frequently referred to are the Cherubim, the
angels of knowledge. The Hebrew word means "to be
near". Dionysius uses the word "oculosos", and adds
"Cherubim Hebraeorum voce ... nominatos".³ A wonderful
and deeply mystical description of the Cherubim is
given in the book of Ezechiel. "And their whole body",
the prophet says, "and their necks, and their hands,
and their wings ... were full of eyes."⁴ By these
innumerable organs of vision the specific gift of the
Cherubim, knowledge, is mystically signified.


²Macbeth, II, i, 7.

³St. Dionysius, De Caelesti Hierarchia, ed. P. Migne in Patrologia Latina, CXXII, 1050.

⁴Ezechiel: X: 12.
Cherubim, consequently were supposed to have miraculously keen sight. Shakespeare calls them "young-eyed". This keen sight is also alluded to in:

Fears make devils of cherubims; they never see truly.

When the king tells Hamlet his purposes are good, Hamlet replies: "I see a cherub that sees them." This is a mad-sounding remark, meaning simply: I have some notion of what they are. Heaven's cherubim, of course, see everything. Shakespeare may have been inspired by the following beautiful verses of Psalm XVII:

He bowed down the heavens,  
And came down  
And darkness was under His feet.  
And He ascended the Cherubim,  
And He flew,  
He flew on the wings of the wind.

when he wrote

or heaven's cherubim, hors'd  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,

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1 *Merchant of Venice*, V, i, 61.  
2 *Troilus and Cressida*, III, ii, 72.  
3 *Hamlet*, IV, iii, 51.  
5 Psalm XVII: 10, 11.
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind.¹

In Exodus we read how the figures of two cherubim,  
wrought of gold, were placed on the lid of the Ark.  
Solomon likewise placed in the Holy of Holies two huge  
cherubim . . . made of olivewood overlaid with gold.²

Artists sometimes pictured the Cherubim in blue to rep­  
resent knowledge; but the Biblical picture of golden  
Cherubim is very common.

Their dwarfish pages were  
As cherubims, all gilt.³

The roof o' th' chamber  
With golden cherubims is fretted.⁴

In all these casual references to angels we  
see that Shakespeare uses the common concept of the  
Bible, as interpreted by medieval philosophers. Their  
function, their nature, their division into ranks is  
that generally accepted by the Catholics and Protes­  
tants of his day.

¹Macbeth, I, vii, 22-25.  
²David P. McAstocker, S. J., Speaking of  
Angels (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1946),  
p. 168.  
³Henry VIII, I, i, 23.  
⁴Cymbeline, II, iv, 88.
CHAPTER II

NEOPLATONIC CONCEPTS OF "ANGEL"

In recent times critics have been filling out the picture of the Elizabethans by reading the chroniclers and the religious controversialists as well as the poets. In place of the rather simple and romantic ideas about the spacious times of great Elizabeth, customary a generation or two ago, a more complete and accurate evaluation is now being achieved; therefore, the poets are better understood, since the implications of the words and expressions they used are clarified by being placed within the general picture of the thought of their times.

The Elizabethans accepted the angels because they inherited from the Middle Ages a belief in the Bible as the word of God. But there was another reason why angels were vital to their thinking and that

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was a philosophical one. Sir Thomas Browne found it a riddle how learned heads should so far forget their metaphysics and destroy the ladder and scale of creatures as to question the existence of spirits.\(^1\) In our day philosophy no longer concerns itself with angels; only the theologian contemplates these celestial beings. To the Renaissance such failure to appreciate the composite cosmic picture was unthinkable; the universe was an ordered one with a place for everything and everything in its place. Neoplatonism, the form in which the Church received the philosophical legacy of the dying Hellenic civilization,\(^2\) had provided for a series of intermediary beings in a descending scale between the inaccessible God and man.\(^3\) The idea of the chain of being began with Plato's *Timaeus*, and was commonly accepted in the Middle Ages. In this hierarchy of nature man's position was crucial; below him were the animals, entirely dependent on sense; above

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\(^{1}\)Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, ed. John Grant (Edinburgh, 1912), I, 45.

\(^{2}\)Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 801.

him were the angels, entirely dependent upon intellect. In the angelic world the soul of man was at home for it was the world of the spirit. A writer of our own day has expressed the idea of the great medieval philosopher aptly:

Man stands nicely balanced between the spiritual and the material world. Standing on tiptoe he can almost peer into the city of the angels. Just as in himself he sees the gray spectres of his own bestial potentialities; so also in himself he sees an occasional flash of angelic beauty and perfection. It is not hard to understand a man dreaming of the wings of an angel or the claws of an animal.

The consideration of man in the perspective of the angel to whom he is inferior as well as of the brute which he surpasses does enable one to determine more accurately his proper stature. Shakespeare consistently placed man in the traditional cosmic setting between the angels and the beast. Sixteenth century dramatic convention invariably placed individual

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action against the background of a universal truth.\textsuperscript{1} Especially during the tragic period, Shakespeare was concerned with man's position on the chain of being between beast and angel, but in \textit{The Tempest} he considers the chain itself. This drama is clearly integrated by a philosophical pattern, which is obviously Neoplatonic and pagan. The adaptation of previously formed principles for his own work is to be expected of the artist, for as Curry says:

Now the dramatic artist is rarely, if ever, a philosopher in the sense that he builds a philosophic system of his own. Like the rest of us, he most probably evolves his Weltanschauung from an examination of principles found in systematic philosophy. But whether his philosophical thinking is original or not, when he comes to communicate his aesthetic experience, he is always primarily the creative artist and not the philosopher. There is no reason, however, why he should not appropriate any philosophical concept at hand and use it as the formative principle of his work and art.\textsuperscript{2}

In \textit{The Tempest}, indeed, Shakespeare has striven to fill in even the half-steps in a rising symphony of creation. Inanimate nature repeats and enlarges the theme; thus the billows, the winds and the thunder proclaim Alonso's

guilt.  

Ariel and his invulnerable fellow ministers, the powers that have incensed the seas, the shores, and all the creatures, are all a Neoplatonic expression of the hierarchy of nature, filling in the interval between man and angels. Prospero is the high note of humanity, a theurgist who controls self and nature so perfectly that all respond in harmony to his wishes. Low in the scale of creatures are Stephano and Trinculo; but between them and the beasts there is the interesting figure of Caliban. This misshapen knave, this thing of darkness, as disproportioned in his manners as in his shape, on whose nature nurture will never stick, takes the drunkard Stephano, who comes perilously close to being beast himself, for a god. This comparison of a note with one above it, recalling as it does the hierarchial theme, seems to be the

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1. The Tempest, III, iii, 95 ff.
2. The Tempest, III, iii, 73.
3. The Tempest, V, i, 268.
4. The Tempest, V, i, 274.
5. The Tempest, V, i, 290.
6. The Tempest, IV, i, 188.
7. The Tempest, II, ii, 152.
characteristic melody of the piece. From the low viewpoint of Caliban, Stephano was a god; to Miranda, Ferdinand is a thing divine, although Prospero tries to mislead her by saying:

To th' most of men this is a Caliban
And they to him are angels.

To the charming Miranda, Caliban, for once speaking with an intelligence beyond his nature, pays this tribute:

But she as far surpasseth Sycorax
As great'st does least.

The whole play rises and falls with the rhythm of creation's ascending and descending orders, but it is aware of creation's limit. Caliban shows himself in the end incapable of education, and Prospero acknowledges that man for all his striving towards the angels can never be quit utterly of the bestial within him. The general effect is satisfying, and leaves in the audience an impression of awe.

Another bit of Platonizing, and probably the

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1 *The Tempest*, I, ii, 418.
2 *The Tempest*, I, ii, 481.
3 *The Tempest*, III, ii, 110.
4 Tillyard, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
most poetic, is found in the oft-quoted passage from the *Merchant of Venice*:

> Look how the floor of heaven
> Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.
> There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.¹

The notion of the chain of being was an accepted commonplace; but the Platonists found delight in elaborating the functions of the Intelligences. The Fathers discussed the question whether one could accept the theory of Plato and Aristotle provided one attributed to the angels the office which the pagan philosophers attributed to the gods. Albert the Great said that natural phenomena ought to be explained by secondary causes, but Thomas Aquinas taught the theory of the spirit movers of the stars, declaring that it was acceptable provided that the spirit-movers were not looked upon as the souls of the stars.² The Platonists not only taught that the angels moved the stars, but they added to it the fascinating notion that they

¹*Merchant of Venice*, V, i, 58-65.
are heavenly sirens, each singing a different note and composing a harmony of ravishing beauty.\(^1\) Moreover, the Dionysian scheme still further elaborates the picture. From heaven in descending order the spheres were those of primum mobile, the fixed stars, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon; and the nine choirs of angels were thought each to regulate one of those spheres in the order given.\(^2\) Was Lorenzo thinking of the fact that the Cherubim had charge of the fixed stars, when he imagined all the stars singing to them?\(^3\) Against the background of this harmony, Lorenzo places the harmony in immortal souls, making the entire picture completely satisfying to the poetic love of beauty in man.

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\(^1\)Tillyard, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 58.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 38.
CHAPTER III

"ANGEL" BY METONYMY

The angels, as the most perfect of all created beings, are the most perfect image of divine beauty. Perhaps it was some vague appreciation of this angelic beauty that introduced the words "angel" and "angelic" into love's vocabulary.¹ We find many uses of this in Shakespeare. The Prince of Morocco describes Portia as an angel:

They have in England
A coin that bears the figure of an angel
Stamped in gold—but that's insculp'd upon;
But here an angel in a golden bed
Lies all within.²

Romeo calls Juliet "bright angel",³ and a lover of entirely different stuff, Henry V, says, "An angel is like you, Kate, and you are like an angel."⁴

"Que dit-il? Que je suis semblable à les

¹Farrel, op. cit., p. 203.
²Merchant of Venice, II, vii, 56.
³Romeo and Juliet, II, ii, 26.
⁴Henry V, V, ii, 110.
anges?\(^1\), she asks, but undoubtedly she is not at all surprised. Moreover, Valentine says that to win women you must say "they have angels' faces."\(^2\) And even Imogen's disguise does not conceal her angelic loveliness:

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By Jupiter, an angel! or, if not,
An earthly paragon! Behold divineness
No elder than a boy!\(^3\)
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The King is thinking of angelic beauty, when he says:

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an angel shalt thou see
Yet fear not thou but speak audaciously.\(^4\)
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The page, however, interprets angel as "goodness" in his reply: "An angel is not evil."\(^5\) The word "angel" is frequently used for a person resembling an angel in goodness, innocence, or some other perfection. Richard III refers to Anne as an "Angel" and in the following

\(^1\text{Henry V, V, ii, 111.}\)
\(^2\text{Two Gentlemen of Verona, III, i, 103.}\)
\(^3\text{Cymbeline, III, vi, 43.}\)
\(^4\text{Love's Labor's Lost, V, ii, 104.}\)
\(^5\text{Love's Labor's Lost, V, ii, 106.}\)
line calls her "divine perfection of a woman."\(^1\)

Iachimo, recognizing Imogen's constancy and his own perfidy says:

\[
\text{I lodge in fear} \\
\text{Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here.}\(^2\)
\]

A good wife is an angel.

\[
\text{What angel shall} \\
\text{Bless this unworthy husband?}\(^3\)
\]

When our emotions have been keyed to the breaking point in one of the great climaxes of \textit{Othello}, all our reverence for Desdemona, intensified by the inconceivably false suspicions of her husband, find expression in Emilia's instant cry:\(^4\)

\[
\text{0 the more angel she} \\
\text{and you the blacker devil.}\(^5\)
\]

Calling someone an angel, therefore, is tribute to his beauty, or innocence, or goodness.

\(^1\) \textit{Richard III}, I, ii, 74.  
\(^2\) \textit{Cymbeline}, II, ii, 50.  
\(^3\) \textit{All's Well}, III, iv, 25.  
\(^5\) \textit{Othello}, V, ii, 130.
CHAPTER IV

THE TRADITIONAL BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF "DEVIL"

The Elizabethans, as we have seen, were convinced that there were realms of purity and bliss inhabited by angels, some of whom did God's errands and protected men. They were equally convinced that a part of the angels fell from grace, inhabited hell, and did harm to men. Every sect agreed that they fell through pride.\(^1\) What Pattison says of the England of Milton was even truer of Shakespeare's England; to the people of this age the angels and devils were more real beings and better vouched for than any historical personages could be.\(^2\) Schelling says that we do not believe in God as fervently as the Elizabethans believed in the devil.\(^3\) It is not surprising that in a professedly Christian country and in an age keenly inter-

\(^1\)Tillyard, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 45.


ested in Biblical and theological topics, Shakespearean characters reproduced many ideas expressed by Biblical writers, whether suggested directly by those writers or by intermediates.\textsuperscript{1} Moreover, in Shakespeare's day, philosophy was still the handmaid of religion; the fiction that the Renaissance disowned its medieval heritage in matters philosophical has been refuted repeatedly by scholars. The ready way in which Shakespeare draws similes, metaphors, and other figures from the supernatural shows that they are a perfectly normal part of their author's thought.\textsuperscript{2} Thorndike calls attention to the fact that the attitude of Aquinas is important for us to note since he satisfactorily summed up previous Christian thought and since he was both the most popular and the most moderate teacher of his own time.\textsuperscript{3} Aquinas says that the first sin of the angel can be none other than pride. After


\textsuperscript{2}Stoll, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 239.

\textsuperscript{3}Lynn Thorndike, \textit{A History of Magic and Experimental Science} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), II, 598.
the sin of pride, there followed the evil of envy in
the sinning angel, whereby he grieved over man's
good, and also over the divine excellence, according
as against the devil's will God makes use of man for
the divine glory. ¹ The sin of the highest angel was
the cause of the others sinning; not indeed as com­
pelling them, but as inducing them by a kind of ex­
hortation. A token thereof appears in this, that all
the demons are subjects of that highest one. ² Their
natural knowledge is not diminished. ³ They remain
ever obstinate in their malice. ⁴ A twofold place of
punishment is due to the demons, one, by reason of
their sin, and this is hell; another, in order that
they may tempt man, and thus the cloudy atmosphere is
their due place of punishment. ⁵ In Scripture no full
account of the devil is given, but its teaching can be

¹Aquinas, op. cit., P.I., Q. 63, Art. 3.
²Ibid., P.I., Q. 63, Art. 3.
³Ibid., P.I., Q. 64, Art. 1.
⁴Ibid., P.I., Q. 64, Art. 2.
⁵Ibid., P.I., Q. 64, Art. 4.
ascertained by combining a number of scattered notices from Genesis to the Apocalypse and reading them in the light of patristic and theological tradition. It is said of the devil under the figure of the prince of Babylon, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, who didst rise in the morning?" Shakespeare is in accord with the opinion of many theologians, who maintain that Lucifer was the highest angel, when he says:

Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.

I charge thee, fling away ambition!
By that sin fell the angels.

There are several other interesting passages relating to Lucifer's pride and fall. The mayor says of Cardinal Beaufort, "The cardinal's more haughty than the devil", and Abergavenny in describing Wolsey during his rise to power says:

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2Isaias. xiv: 12.
3Macbeth, IV, iii, 22.
4Henry VIII, III, ii, 441.
I can see his pride
Peep through every part of him. Whence has
he that?
If not from hell, the devil is a niggard.¹

There is a good deal of irony in the fact that when
the Wheel of Fortune has turned, Wolsey compares his
own fall to that of Lucifer:

O how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours... And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer
Never to hope again.²

The name "Devil" designates his office, not his na-
ture. "Diabolus" answers to the Hebrew name "Satan"; and it means literally an adversary, an accuser, a slanderer. "As slanderous as Satan"³ is a simile bearing directly on Satan's name. "The devil is a liar and the father of lies,"⁴ say the Scriptures as they are ordinarily quoted. But the original text of this passage is infinitely stranger "The Devil is a

¹Henry VIII, I, i, 68-70.
²Henry VIII, III, ii, 365-372.
³Merry Wives, V, v, 162.
⁴St. John. VIII: 44.
liar and he is the father of his own lie."¹ The devil falsifies the very scales of truth, as Macbeth discovered:

And be the juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense,
That keep the word of promise to our ear
And break it to our hope.²

A short time before this realization came to Macbeth, he had begun to suspect that Satan had been cheating him by his regular device of ambiguous prophecy:

To doubt th'equivocation of the fiend,
That lies like truth.³

Both he and Banquo had known from the beginning that the devil is a liar; therefore, Banquo had exclaimed in astonishment when the first prophecy was fulfilled: "What can the devil speak true?" Falstaff's lies are like the devil's in the sense that they resemble the

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²Macbeth, V, viii, 19.
³Macbeth, V, iv, 3.
father that begets them; consequently, Falstaff's are: "gross as a mountain, open, palpable."\(^1\) Feste claims that he is one of those who use the devil himself with courtesy; consequently, instead of using the outspoken word, "liar", he addresses him in a milder term, "Thou dishonest Satan."\(^2\)

This Liar is called the Prince of this World\(^3\); this dark atmosphere is the kingdom of the Angel of Light, whom an act of pride has transformed into an Angel and Prince of Darkness. The word "Prince" is also used in Scripture to denote the Guardian Angel of a nation.\(^4\) But the kingdom of Satan is an attack on mankind, an attempt to lead men into the foulest crimes. However:

> It is not excluded that the men whom Satan rules may enjoy the utmost worldly distinction and respect. The "prince of darkness", even Shakespeare remarked, "is a gentleman". More than that such men may often profess the noblest motives, or assume an air of sanctity that might deceive the elect. "For Satan transformeth himself into an angel of

\(^1\) Henry IV, II, iv, 245.
\(^2\) Twelfth Night, IV, ii, 35.
\(^3\) John. XII: 31.
\(^4\) Husslein, op. cit., p. 60.
light," St. Paul warned the Corinthians. In fact we found Satan quoting Scripture in his effort to tempt Christ, and quoting it correctly.1

When Edgar says, "The prince of darkness is a gentleman,"2 he is quoting a well-known proverb. The devil was obviously a person of rank, and therefore, good enough company even for a king, is the thought implied in Edgar's remark.3 Lucifer has been identified with the Prince of Darkness from the early Fathers down to modern times.

Thou'rt damn'd as black—nay nothing is as black!
Thou art more deep damn'd than Prince Lucifer.4

In a lighter vein, Fluellen says:

Though he be as good a gentleman as the devil is, as Lucifer and Beelzebub himself, it is necessary, look, your grace, that he keep his vow and oath.5

The Clown refers to

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1Husslein, op. cit., p. 34. For reference to the devil as an angel of light cf. Comedy of Errors, IV, iii, 55 and Love's Labor's Lost, IV, iii, 257. For reference to the devil quoting Scripture, cf. Merchant of Venice, I, iii, 99.

2King Lear, III, iv, 148.


4King John, IV, iii, 121.

5Henry V, IV, vii, 144.
The Black Prince, alias the Prince of Darkness, alias the Devil . . . the prince of the world.¹

Feste actually insults the devil by using for him a title appropriate for a person below the rank of gentlemen. "Adieu, goodman devil."² According to the medieval and renaissance dictum, "the Devil is a good theologian."³ For, as Aquinas pointed out, his wonderful power of understanding was retained after his sin. Iago describes his own argument as the kind of reasoning a devil might use:

Divinity of hell!

When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now.⁴

"Divinity" means literally "theology" and so is here applied to reasoning on a point of morals. Iago's kind of reasoning would prove a devil virtuous in tempting a man to the blackest sins under false pretences.⁵

¹All's Well, IV, v, 45, 51.
²Twelfth Night, IV, ii, 141.
³de Rougemont, op. cit., p. 126.
⁴Othello, II, iii, 356.
The "goodly outside that falsehood hath" was Shakespeare's favorite theme in all discussions about temptation. The penetrating genius of Shakespeare could comprehend and analyze character with amazing accuracy; consequently, he clearly recognized the technique of temptation, which plays so large a part in human life. Temptation is the devil's weapon for achieving world domination. Shakespeare was enough of a philosopher to know that the will can tend to nothing except under the aspect of good; therefore, temptation is usually disguised. Fair seeming is the devil's motto and the strongest weapon in his armory. 2

Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness, 3
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.

Virtue is beauty; but the beauteous evil
Are empty trunks; o'erflourished by the devil. 4

But then I sigh, and with a piece of Scripture, Tell them that God bids us do good for evil; And thus I clothe my naked villainy
With odd old ends stol'n forth of holy writ, And seem a saint when most I play the devil. 5

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1 Merchant of Venice, I, iii, 103.
4 Twelfth Night, III, iv, 402-403.
5 Richard III, I, 11, 334-338.
0 cunning enemy, that, to catch a saint,
With saints dost bait the hook! Most dangerous
Is that temptation that doth goad us on
To sin in loving virtue.1

What devil was't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman blind?2

This outward-sainted deputy . . .
is yet a devil . . .
0, 'tis the cunning livery of hell
The damned'ist body to invest and cover
In prenzie guards!3

The Bastard calls expediency "that same purpose-changer,
that sly devil"4, and when someone says that Marcius
is a devil, Aufidius answers, "Bolder, though not so subtle."5 The whole subject is ably treated at length
by Henry V in his scathing denunciation of Lord Scroop.
Canterbury had said:

Hear him [Henry] but reason in divinity,
And all-admiring, with an inward wish
You would desire the king were made a prelate.6

Henry's exposition proves that this was no idle praise.
The devil who tempted Scroop had won for himself the

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1Measure for Measure, III, ii, 180-183.
2Hamlet, III, iv, 76.
3Measure for Measure, III, i, 89-97.
4King John, II, 1, 567.
5Coriolanus, I, x, 16.
6Henry V, I, i, 38-40.
vote of all the devils as being the best of them, for all others patch up a crime with pretences to make it look virtuous; but the devil that molded Scroop like wax to his purpose gave him no reason or excuse, except to honor him with the name of traitor. The words of the Bible: "Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour,"¹ and "My name is Legion: for we are many,"² are recalled. Listen to the discussion in Henry's words:

Treason and murther ever kept together
As two yoke-devils sworn to either's purpose,
Working so grossly in a natural cause
That admiration did not whoop at them;
But thou ('gainst all proportion) didst bring in
Wonder to wait on treason and on murther;
And whatsoever cunning fiend it was
That wrought upon thee so preposterously
Hath got the voice in hell for excellence.
All other devils that suggest by treasons
Do botch and bungle up damnation
With patches, colours, and with forms being fetch'd
From glist'ring semblances of piety;
But he that temper'd thee bade thee stand up,
Gave thee no instance why thou shouldst do treason,
Unless to dub thee with the name of traitor.
If that same demon that hath gull'd thee thus
Should with his lion gate walk the whole world,
He might return to vasty Tartar back

¹I Peter, v: 8.
²Mark. v: 9.
And tell the legions, 'I can never win
A soul so easy as that Englishman's.'

Temptation was usually attributed to the devil.

What spirit, what devil suggests this imagination?

O thou eternal Mover of the heavens,
Look with a gentle eye upon this wretch!
0, beat away the busy meddling meddling fiend
That lays strong siege unto this wretch's soul.

Take the devil in thy mind and believe him
[Conscience] not.

Our worser genius can—shall never melt
Mine honor into lust.

What Eve, what serpent hath suggested thee
To make a second fall of cursed man?

The devil tempts thee here
In the likeness of a new untrimmed bride.

Sometimes the devil is directly invoked to bring on temptation.

Some devil whisper curses in mine ear

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1Henry V, II, ii, 105-125.
2Merry Wives, III, iii, 230.
3II Henry VI, III, iii, 19-22.
4Richard III, I, iv, 151.
5The Tempest, IV, i, 27-29.
6Richard II, III, iv, 75-76.
7King John, III, i, 208.
And prompt me that my tongue may utter forth
The venemous malice of my swelling heart.

Come you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here.

Clarence admits that the devil's temptation was not the only force urging him onto crime, for when asked what had made him a bloody minister, he replied: "My brother's love, the devil, and my rage." But sometimes men are their own tempters, deliberately deceiving themselves:

'Tis too much proved, that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

I cannot sing,
Nor heel the high lavolt, nor sweeten talk,
Nor play at subtile games - fair virtues all
To which the Grecians are most prompt and pregnant;
But I can tell thee that in each grace of these
There lurks a still and dumb-discoursive devil
That tempts most cunningly . . .
And sometimes we are devils to ourselves,
When we will tempt the frailty of our powers,
Presuming on their changeful potency.

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1Titus Andronicus, V, iii, 11.
2Macbeth, I, v, 41-42.
3Richard III, I, iv, 227.
4Hamlet, III, i, 49.
5Troilus and Cressida, IV, iv, 87-99.
To act with the appearance of evil but without meaning any harm is doubly a temptation.

It is hypocrisy against the devil
They that mean virtuously, and yet do so,
The devil their virtue tempts, and they tempt heaven.

Not making correct distinctions between good and evil may end in a most devastating temptation. Knight says of Angelo's determination to write "good angel on the devil's horn":

Angelo is now quite adrift: all his old contacts are irrevocably severed. Sexual desire has long been anathema to him, so his warped idealism forbids any healthy love. Good and evil change places in his mind since his passion is immediately recognized as good, yet, by every one of his stock judgments condemned as evil. The devil becomes a 'good angel'. And this wholesale reversion leaves Angelo in sorry plight now: he has no moral values left.

The success that the devil often enjoys is described in hyperbolic terms.

The devil knew not what he did when he made man politic. He crossed himself by't; and I cannot think but, in the end, the villanies of man will set him clear.

---

1Othello, IV, i, 68-70.


3Timon of Athens, III, iii, 28.
Satan tempts with a purpose. His name means enemy and accuser.

Defy the devil! Consider he's an enemy to mankind.¹

It is only after the temptation has been translated into action that Satan reveals himself as the enemy. Then, according to his name, he turns accuser.

For now the devil that told me I did well, says that this deed is chronicled in hell.²

Lafew expresses a profound truth in his pun on grace, when to the request of Parolles, "It lies with you, my lord, to bring me in some grace for you did bring me out," he answers:

Dost thou put upon me at once both the office of God and the devil? One brings thee in grace and the other brings thee out."³

Macbeth, doubly cheated, despairs over his eternal jewel

Given to the common enemy of man
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!"⁴

Like Macbeth, one after another, Shakespeare's villains

¹Twelfth Night, III, iv, 108.
²Richard II, V, v, 16.
³All's Well, V, ii, 49-52.
⁴Macbeth, III, i, 68-70.
acknowledge that the devil has won their souls.

Othello, realizing that the demi-devil Iago, human in shape but fiend in his nature, has ensnared his soul and body, and thinking of the day of reckoning cries out:

When we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it . . .
Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down guls of liquid fire.

The murder he has committed haunts the mind of Clarence, and shortly before he himself is murdered he sees in a dream himself in hell.

a legion of foul fiends
Environ'd me, and howled in mine ears.  

Murder has followed murder when Margaret cries out:

Richard yet lives, hell's black intelligencer,
Only reserved their factor to buy souls
And send them thither . . .
Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray,
To have him suddenly conveyed from hence.

\(^1\) Othello, V, ii, 273-280.
\(^3\) Richard III, IV, iv, 71-76.
But not all references to the devil are in this tragic vein; still even in bits of pure comedy, the devil is recognized as the tempter that leads men to sin. The audience laughs at Launcelot's odd soliloquy\(^1\), but they realize that behind the fooling is a picture of reality.

Poins and the Prince put Falstaff on the horns of a dilemma with their questioning and show that he is a lost soul since the proverb bids him give the devil his due.

Poins: Jack, how agrees the devil and thee about thy soul, that thou soldest him on Good Friday last for a cup of Madeira and a cold capon's leg?
Prince: Sir John stands to his word, the devil shall have his bargain; for he was never yet a breaker of proverbs. He will give the devil his due.

Poins: Then art thou damn'd for keeping thy word with the devil.
Prince: Else had he been damn'd for cozening the devil.\(^2\)

This is pure fooling, but there is a grim humor in the drunken porter, who, while grumbling about his work, is struck by the fancy that after all he is not so hard-worked as Satan's gatekeeper. Instantly he

\(^1\)The Merchant of Venice, II, ii, 1-34.

\(^2\)I Henry IV, I, ii, 126-136.
begins to play the part, specifying the proverbial types of sinners he pretends to let in: the farmer who hanged himself on the expectation of plenty, the man who could swear in both scales against either scale, the English tailor who stole out of a French hose. The rest are left to the imagination. There is a good deal of dramatic irony in this little scene, for the audience feels that the porter is more nearly right than he is aware.¹

These many incidental allusions to the spirits of evil show that they are a perfectly normal part of their author's thought. In one play, however, we get a continuous picture of a metaphysical world of objective evil, and that is "Macbeth". Curry says that although the Neoplatonic cosmology was well known to the Renaissance, he can find no evidence that Shakespeare's Weird Sisters symbolized the conception of evil which it elaborates.² That the Weird Sisters are not witches in the ordinary sense of the term is the conclusion of

¹Shakespeare, Sixteen Plays, ed. Kittredge, p. 917.

²Curry, op. cit., p. 66.
many critics.

When we read of the incantations of those terrible beings, the witches in Macbeth, though some of the ingredients of their hellish composition savour of the grotesque, yet is the effect upon us other than the most serious and appalling that can be imagined? . . . a consciousness of the principle of Evil himself being truly and really present with us.¹

There are few scenes which have so caught the world's fancy as the wild overture to "Macbeth". In storm and wilderness we are suddenly brought face to face with three mysterious phantasms that ride on the wind and mingle with the mist in thunder, lightning, and rain. They are not agents of evil; they are evil; nameless, spectral, wholly horrible.²

This play is dominated throughout by the demonic metaphysics of medieval thought; under this system evil is revealed in two modes or categories: objectively as the malignant activity of demons or fallen angels and subjectively in the human spirit as original or other sin.³ This objective realm of evil was not governed


by mere vague and irrational forces; the malignant
wills of intelligences controlled it. These intelli-
gences or evil spirits had the ability to project
their power into the working of nature and to influence
the human spirit.\(^1\) A good explanation of what happens
can be found in Aquinas.

He [Shakespeare] takes the stern truths set
forth by the Angelic Doctor, and clothes them
with flesh and blood; he verifies them in the
arena of life; they are warm and alive in the
characters that move in the cycle of his play,
and they remain, perduring and immutable,
after the strife of human lives is quieted and
man and woman have returned to elemental dust.
St. Thomas and Shakespeare are statement and
illustration to the same truths, and if we
would appreciate the one, it is not well to
ignore the other.\(^2\)

Aquinas says that these demons cannot put thoughts
into human minds by causing them from within, but
they can incite to thought or to desire of the things
thought, by way of persuasion or by rousing the pas-
sions. They can move the human imagination.\(^3\) They

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\(^1\) Curry, op. cit., p. 55.


\(^3\) Aquinas, op. cit., P.I., Q. 111, Art. 2

and 3.
can affect the senses. The demons can work miracles, if we take miracles in a wide sense for whatever exceeds human power or experience, for they can do things which rouse man's astonishment, by reason of being beyond his power and outside his sphere of knowledge. Bodies obey them in local motion. They can assume bodies of air, condensing it in so far as is needful for forming the assumed body. They understand the causes of things and consequently know the future conjecturally. St. Thomas quotes St. Augustine as saying that the angels use corporeal seminal principles to produce certain effects. Curry concludes from the fact that the Weird Sisters have control over the "rationes seminales" that in essence they are demons or devils in the form of witches. Augustine's discussion of the "rationes seminales" occurs in con-

1Ibid, P.I., Q. 111, Art. 4.
2Ibid, P.I., Q. 114, Art. 4
3Ibid, P.I., Q. 110, Art. 3.
5Ibid, P.I., Q. 57, Art. 3.
nection with his estimate of the power of demons to procure marvelous effects. Whatever comes forth to our sight by being born received the first beginnings of its course from hidden seeds which the creator places in prime matter, but the development of these "rationes seminales" may by the permission of God be subject to the will of demons, who know the seeds of matter and handle them as they please.¹

"though the treasure
Of nature's germens tumble all together,
Even till destruction sicken - answer me."²

Why did Shakespeare use witch-figures as dramatic symbols in place of actual devils? The devil had by this time become a comic figure in drama, and consequently would not have portrayed the evil that Shakespeare intended to show. These hags, that he employs, have power over the human soul. In the light of medieval metaphysics, the Weird Sisters take on a dignity, a dark grandeur, and a terror-inspiring aspect which is in no way native to the witch-symbol as such. Whatever happens outwardly among men is immediately known to them. Owing to their peculiar

¹Curry, op. cit., p. 42 ff.
²Macbeth, IV, i, 58-60.
relation to time and place, they can convey the knowledge drawn from one mind to the mind of another by means of communication more express than those employed by men. Through the application of wisdom gained by long experience they are able to prognosticate future events; and to some extent they can manipulate the external causes upon which these predictions are based. However, the forces which move the will of Macbeth are imperfectly known and only indirectly subject to their influence. They cannot read his inmost thoughts but by observation of facial expression and other bodily manifestations they surmise what dark desires of his await their fostering.\(^1\) They seize on Macbeth's growing passion, and nurture it by their pretended prophecies. Banquo gives a fair warning:

\[\text{And oftentimes to win us to our harm,}
\text{The instruments of darkness tell us truths,}
\text{Win us with honest trifles, to betray's}
\text{In deepest consequence.}\]

But Macbeth, although his conscience gives him ample

\(^1\)Curry, op. cit., p. 77.
\(^2\)Macbeth, I, iii, 123-126.
light, heeds it not. The demonic powers, rampant in nature, come closer and closer. At last they gain overwhelming control through the direct invitation of Lady Macbeth:

Come you spirits, 
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here. 
And fill me from the crown to toe, top-full 
Of direst cruelty. ¹

Her crime is of the same order as that of Faustus selling his soul to the devil. ² She is not merely unsexed but dehumanized; and the audience watches with horror her steady deterioration. Meanwhile through infernal illusions created out of the air by demonic forces, Macbeth is confused and utterly confounded. The bloody dagger, the voice that cried, "Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep!", Banquo's ghost and the show of eight kings are the result of demonic machinations. Having incited Macbeth to sin and crime, the Devil and his angels now employ illusions which lead to his betrayal and final destruction. ³ Macbeth

¹ Macbeth, I, v, 41-44. 
² Myrick, op. cit., p. 231. 
³ Curry, op. cit., p. 85.
had trusted the promise of the devil's agents and had
given his eternal jewel for a few years of supreme
earthly power and glory. Satan had kept his promise
to Faustus, but with Macbeth he palters in a double
sense. At last, Macbeth becomes the "fiend of
Scotland"\(^1\) for

> Not in the legions
> Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd
> In evils to top Macbeth.\(^2\)

Power becomes a mockery; a moment of peace or worldly
happiness is not granted. Devil-bought and God-for-
saken\(^3\), his horror of himself, his fear of his fol-
lowers, his feeling of agonizing futility may truly
be described as a foretaste of hell\(^4\), the portrayal
of which is one of Shakespeare's greatest tragic
achievements.

\(^1\)Macbeth, IV, iii, 233.
\(^2\)Macbeth, IV, iii, 55-57.
\(^3\)Purdie, op. cit., p. 195.
\(^4\)Myrick, op. cit., p. 233.
CHAPTER V

THE DEVIL OF SUPERSTITION, WITCHCRAFT,
AND MIRACLE PLAYS

While the theologians of the great scholastic period were setting forth the Catholic doctrine concerning angels and devils, there was a darker side in the popular superstition and in the men who at all times continued to practice the black arts of magic and witchcraft and dealing with the devil. During the Renaissance there appears to have been a fresh outbreak of old superstitions and evil practices, and countries were disturbed by the strange stories of real or supposed professors of the black art. Such outbreaks are due, like other panics, to a perturbed condition of the public mind. Hence they are likely to accompany or to follow crises in politics or

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Men were prone to be too credulous in these matters and to exaggerate the extent of obsession, witchcraft, and intercourse with evil spirits. With reference to the many false and dangerous forms of this demonic science, we may use the words of Albertus Magnus, "A daemonibus docetur, de daemonibus docet, et ad daemones ducit."²

Shakespeare for the most part stayed off the shaking ground of unsubstantial science and pseudo-science and did not go too near the pit of vulgar popularity. In his day even outworn delusions and practices for centuries under the ban of the church found things in the new learning to revive them. These things were not merely from the Middle Ages and the darkening past; some of them were from the literature of the ancient world itself.³ Men's views of the embodied powers of evil varied in accordance with their form of

²Kent, op. cit., p. 714.
creed and their grade of culture, and differed as widely as Old Iniquity, the roaring devil of the moral play, differs from Milton's Satan.¹

The Medieval tendency of reducing all knowledge to a compendium, of developing principles by analogy, of classifying all things natural and supernatural, is shown in the many books on demonology. Scholars even arranged nine hierarchies of bad angels to correspond with the nine of the good. Burton lists them as the following: first, the false gods of the Gentiles; second, liars and equivocators; third, vessels of anger; fourth, malicious revenging devils; fifth, cozeners; sixth, aerial devils that cause plagues, thunders, etc.; seventh, a destroyer; eighth, the accusing or calumniating devil, that drives men to despair; ninth, tempters in several kinds.²

In his book "De Praestigiis Daemonium", published in 1568, Wier opposed the witchcraft delusion; still he decked his work with much the same anecdotes and tales of magic as were to be found in other books


²Tillyard, op. cit., p. 47.
on witchcraft. One conclusion he reached was that the Devil's reign includes 72 Princes and 7,405,926 devils, divided into 111 legions of 6,666 hell-hounds each, barring an error in calculation. The opposition of Wier to the persecution of witches was continued and carried further by Reginald Scot in "The Discoveries of Witchcraft", published at London in 1584. But, while attacking the witchmongers, Scot still attempts to satisfy the interest in occult arts and magic, which, although disapproving, he illustrates at length.

In 1603, Harsnet published "A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures" from which Shakespeare derived the names of the various evil spirits whom Edgar mentions in "King Lear". This violent polemic has a certain force due to its vehemence but as a sober argument, a reasoned contribution to controversy and debate, the thing is negligible. As a rule James I,

1 Thorndike, op. cit., p. 516.
2 de Rougemont, op. cit., p. 22.
3 Thorndike, op. cit., p. 516.
4 Summers, op. cit., p. 230.
in his "Daemonologie" accepts the extreme contentions and more superstitious beliefs of writers on witchcraft. James maintains that since the coming of Christ and planting of the church "all miracles, visions, prophecies and appearances of angels or good spirits are ceased." Before the Protestant Reformation more ghosts and spirits were seen than since it, but witchcraft and other unlawful arts have increased since the Reformation.1

The times, then, are full of demonologies and Edgar, assuming madness, has plenty of material for his imagination to work upon. He draws heavily upon the demonology of Harsnet and Scot.

Away the foul fiend follows me! . . .
whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool,
o' er bog and quagmire; that hath laid knives under his pillow and halters in his pew; set ratsbane by his porridge.2

The idea is that a demon may prompt a man to commit suicide. In Harsnet's "Declaration" a new halter and two blaisds of knives left upon the gallery floor were said to have been left by the devil to work some mis-

2King Lear, III, iv, 46-55.
chief upon the possessed. It was believed that ghosts are sometimes demons that lure men to death; they assume a horrible form and unsettle reason when the victim is on the verge of unseen destruction.

Sir Thomas Browne says:

Those apparitions and ghosts of departed persons are not the wandering souls of men, but the unquiet walks of devils, prompting and suggesting us unto mischief, blood, and villany.

The same idea is hinted at by Horatio, who, because he fears that the apparition may take a fiend's shape and drive Hamlet to suicide, tries to keep him from following the ghost.

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other, horrible form
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness?

Later, as Hamlet reflects upon the matter, he himself expresses the opinion that the devil has power to change his shape.

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The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil; and the devil hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me.¹

In "King Lear" Edgar says:

As I stood here below, methought his eyes
Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
Horns whelk'd and wav'd like the enridged sea.
It was some fiend.²

In "Merry Wives" it is suggested that the devil could
aid Falstaff to change his shape.

He cannot creep into a halfpenny purse nor
into a pepperbox: but, lest the devil that
guides him should aid him, I will search
impossible places.³

Note the shape of the animals given to the fiends by
Edgar:

Hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greedi-
ness, dog in madness, lion in prey.⁴

In Harsnet there is a case of seven devils leaving a
possessed person in the form of animals. Hotspur is

¹Hamlet, II, i, 628-633.
²King Lear, IV, vi, 67-72.
³Merry Wives, III, v, 150.
⁴King Lear, IV, iii, 94-95.
introduced to Glendower's weary discussion upon the
devils' names by a long list of symbolic animals.

Sometimes he angers me
With telling me of the moldwarp and the ant. . .
And of a dragon and a finless fish,
A clip-wing'd griffin and a molten raven,
A couching lion and a ramping cat . . .

I tell you what
He held me last night at least nine hours
In reckoning up the several devils' names
That were his lackeys.1

Steevens says: "See Reginald Scot's 'Discoverie of
Witchcraft' 1584, XV, 2, 377, where the reader may
find his patience as severely tried as Hotspur's, and
on the same occasion."2 Edgar has no lack of names
for the demons that he pretends are haunting him.

Peace, Smulkin.
Frateretto call me.
Hoppedance cries in Tom's belly.
Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once: of
lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididence, prince of
dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo of murder;
Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing, who
since possesses chambermaids and waiting
women.3

In Harsnet the first devil that was cast out was
Smolken, who went out at Trayford's right ear in the

1I Henry IV, III, i, 148-158.


3King Lear, III, iv; III, vi; IV, i.
form of a mouse. Modu was a grand commander, muster-
master over the captains of the seven deadly sins;
Maho was general dictator of hell.⁴ Percy says:

Frateretto, Fleberdigibet, Hoberdidance, Tocobatto were four devils of the round, or Morrice, whom Sara in her fits, tuned together in measure and sweet cadence, according to Harsnet.²

A flibbertigibbet is a flirt, a frivolous creature. Hence this is a good name for the demon that prompts affected airs and graces.³ When Ford wishes to call Falstaff names, he uses names that are found in Scot,⁴ but he finds no name that is scornful enough.

Terms, names! Amaimon sounds well; Lucifer, well; Barbason, well; yet they are devils' additions, the names of fiends. But cuckold! wittol! Cuckold! the devil himself hath not such a name.⁵

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¹Shakespeare, Sixteen Plays, ed. Kittredge, p. 1189.
²Shakespeare, King Lear, ed. Furness, p. 194.
⁵Merry Wives, II, ii, 314.
In Feste's clowning only the scriptural name Belzebub is used.

He holds Belzebub at the stave's end.¹

Edgar had feigned being obsessed; Malvolio had possession thrust upon him. Maria tells her mistress that he is possessed; that he is tainted in his wits. Insanity or delirium were often ascribed to demoniacal possession. Olivia says, "This is very midsummer madness."² Midsummer was traditionally a mad season. Midsummer Eve was thought to be a magic time and was celebrated with ancient rites.³ Sir Toby, Fabian, and Maria have concocted a plot worthy of their characters.

Which way is he, in the name of sanctity. If all the devils of hell be drawn in little, and Legion himself possessed him, yet I'll speak to him.⁴

Toby refers to the fact that the devil can change his shape and that his name is Legion. He also calls him a foul collier because of his blackness. The devil was supposed to speak in the person he possessed.

¹Twelfth Night, V, i, 291.
²Twelfth Night, III, iv, 61.
⁴Twelfth Night, III, iv, 94-96.
Maria brings up the point.

Lo, how hollow the fiend speaks within him.¹

Sebastian alludes to the same idea when he becomes aware of Prospero's knowledge of his treacherous intention and says:

The devil speaks in him.²

Maria pretends great alarm. "Pray God he be not bewitched," she says.³ Demoniacal possession is (in strictness) something different from bewitchment; for a demon, it was thought, could take possession of one without the agency of a witch. But in popular belief the two things were confused, and possession was often ascribed to a witch's spell.⁴ The trio decide to put Malvolio into a dark room. This was the regular expert treatment of insanity in old times.

Mistress, both man and master is possess'd.
I know it by their pale and deadly looks.
They must be bound and laid in some dark room.⁵

¹Twelfth Night, III, iv, 101.
²The Tempest, V, i, 129.
³Twelfth Night, IV, i, 113.
⁴Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, ed. Kittredge, p. 146.
⁵Comedy of Errors, IV, iv, 95-97.
Act IV, scene ii, of "Twelfth Night" is mere fooling. It is a long way from any serious exorcism, although Toby thinks that the clown counterfeits well. A few ideas had taken hold of the people and they become matter for common quotation. In the "Comedy of Errors" Dr. Pinch is called upon to conjure up the evil spirits for he was in a position to deal with them in Latin, the only language that they were popularly supposed to understand. A pronounced tremor was thought to be an indication of being possessed by the devil.

Mark how he trembles in his ecstasy.

Pinch proceeds to adjure the fiend.

I charge thee, Satan, hous'd within this man, To yield possession to my holy prayers, And to thy state of darkness hie thee straight.

In "Cymbeline" there is an attractive song against spirit harm.

No exorciser harm thee!  
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!  
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!

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3Comedy of Errors, IV, iv, 54.

4Comedy of Errors, IV, iv, 57-59.
Nothing ill come near thee!^1

Glendower claimed the power to raise spirits, but was answered by a proverb which would shame the father of lies.

Glen: I can call spirits from the vast deep.
Hot: Why so can I, or so can any man
But will they come when you do call for them?
Glen: Why I can teach you, cousin, to command the devil.
Hot: And I can teach thee, coz, to shame the devil—by telling truth. Tell truth and shame the devil. If thou have power to raise him, bring him hither and I'll be sworn I have power to shame him hence. O while you live, tell truth and shame the devil.2

There was a tendency to ascribe marvelous happenings to the devil.

I'll make this statue move indeed, descend, And take you by the hand. But then you'll think (Which I protest against) I am assisted By wicked powers.3

Falstaff refers to the old superstition that gold mines were guarded by devils4 when he says, "and learning a

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1Cymbeline, IV, ii, 276-279.
2I Henry IV, III, i, 53-62.
3The Winter's Tale, V, iii, 89-91.
mere hoard of gold kept by a devil.¹ But if the devil guarded gold, he often asked ridiculous things of his servants.

Some devils ask but the parings of one's nail, A rush, a hair, a drop of blood, a pin, A nut, a cherry stone²

According to demonologists there were devils of air, fire, water, and earth (among other kinds); those of the air being especially responsible for tempests and thunderstorms.³

Some airy devil hovers in the sky And pours down mischief.⁴

Ferdinand cried out in the storm which Ariel had raised:

Hell is empty
And all the devils are here.⁵

There is a hobgoblin mask beneath Herne's haunted oak⁶ and a reference to the witch of Brainford⁷ in "Merry

¹II Henry IV, IV, iii, 125.
²Comedy of Errors, IV, iii, 72-74.
³Shakespeare, King John, ed. Wilson, p. 144.
⁴King John, III, ii, 2-3.
⁵The Tempest, I, ii, 215.
⁶Merry Wives, V, i, 12.
⁷Merry Wives, IV, ii, 100.
Wives." Richard III refers to Edward's wife as a witch who consorted with Jane Shore.¹ Midsummer Night's Dream is purely a fairy fantasy.

Actual contact with demons and witchcraft in its evil sense is presented in two plays. In the first part of Henry VI, Talbot represents the forces of England and righteousness; Joan, the forces of France and demonic malice. Joan's dealing with the devil is emphasized by the English, and immediately before her capture her fiends are actually brought upon the stage and desert her.²

In 'King Henry VI (Part II)' the Duchess of Gloucester employs John Hume and John Southwell, two priests; Bolingbroke, a conjurer; and Margery Jourdemain, a witch, to raise a spirit who shall reveal the several destinies of the King, and the Dukes of Suffolk and Somerset. The scene is written with extraordinary power and has not a little awe and terror. Just as the demon is dismissed 'mid thunder and lightning the Duke of York with his guards rushes in and arrests the sorcerers. Later the two priests and Bolingbroke are condemned to the gallows, the witch in Smithfield is "Burn'd to ashes", whilst the Duchess of Gloucester after three days public penance is banished for life to the Isle of Man. The incidents as employed by Shakespeare are fairly correct.³

¹Richard III, III, iv, 69-70.
³Summers, op. cit., p. 288.
Some of the images men have formed of the devil are drawn from old wives' tales. 1 "I look down towards his feet," says Othello, half expecting to find that Iago's feet are cloven, "but that's a fable." 2 The devil, horned and blackened, with the vague tradition of the ancient heathen festival about him, had rioted through the cathedral aisle in the Feast of Fools or harried the spectators in the marketplace of Beverly or Wakefield in the great days of the miracles. 3 The serious and terrifying devil of the older plays had been gradually transformed into a roaring buffoon. 4 The moral plays often showed the contest between the personified powers of good and evil for the possession of a human soul. The allegorical representatives of the good were the seven cardinal virtues; of the evil, the Seven Deadly Sins or Vices. 5

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1 de Rougemont, op. cit., p. 21.
2 Othello, V, ii, 289.
5 Ibid, p. xlix.
It hath pleas'd the devil drunkenness to give place to the devil wrath.\textsuperscript{1}

O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil.\textsuperscript{2}

Every inordinate cup is unblest, and the ingredience is a devil.\textsuperscript{3}

I have said my prayers; and devil Envy say "Amen!"\textsuperscript{4}

How the devil luxury, with his fat rump and potato finger tickles these together.\textsuperscript{5}

Potatoes, especially sweet potatoes, and dates were believed to stimulate sexual desire.\textsuperscript{6} Othello refers to the spirit of sensual desire rebelling against virtuous self-control\textsuperscript{7} when he says:

\begin{quote}
For here's a young and sweating devil here
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Othello, II, iii, 296.
\item \textsuperscript{2}Othello, II, iii, 284.
\item \textsuperscript{3}Othello, II, iii, 311.
\item \textsuperscript{4}Troilus and Cressida, II, iii, 25.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Troilus and Cressida, V, ii, 55.
\item \textsuperscript{7}Shakespeare, Sixteen Plays, ed. Kittredge, p. 1297.
\end{itemize}
That commonly rebels.\footnote{Othello, III, iv, 42.}

Vices were thought of as evil spirits.

That same knave hath the finest mad devil of jealousy in him, Master Brook, that ever govern'd frenzy.\footnote{Merry Wives, V, i, 19.}

I am Revenge, sent from th' infernal kingdom
To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind
By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes. ... Welcome, dread Fury, to my woeful house.
Rapine and Murther, you are welcome too.\footnote{Titus Andronicus, V, ii, 30-32, 82-83.}

These personifications of serious crimes are echoes from the morality plays. From the seven deadly sins or vices, The Vice of the morals or interludes is without doubt descended. In the latter third of the sixteenth century he wore the habit of the domestic fool. The gradations by which he becomes a satirical make-sport, mischief-maker, and buffoon are by no means difficult to trace. He owes much to the popular satire and buffoonery of the Feast of Fools, the Boy Bishop, and other popular revels.\footnote{Felix E. Schelling, Elizabethan Drama (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1908), I, 53.} He was the frequent but not inseparable companion of the devil. Like Harlequin he wore a vizor and carried a lathe sword, part
of his business being to belabor the devil with his sword. At the end he had to dance down to hell on the devil's back.\(^1\) A long coat and lathen sword were common trapping of the domestic fool.\(^2\) Syracusan Dromio's mind is full of images from the old miracle and morality plays in Act IV, scenes ii and iii, of the "Comedy of Errors."\(^3\)

\[\text{A devil in an everlasting garment hath him...}\\ \text{A fiend, a fury, pitiless and rough:}\\ \text{A wolf, nay worse, a fellow all in buff:}\\ \text{A back-friend, a shoulder-clapper, one that countermands}\\ \text{The passages of alleys, creeks, and narrow lands;}\\ \text{A hound that runs counter, and yet draws dry-foot well;}\\ \text{One that, before the Judgment, carries poor souls hell...}\\ \]

Will you send him, Mistress Redemption, the money in his desk? ... he that came behind you, sir, like an evil angel, and bid you forsake your liberty... Here are the angels that you sent for to deliver you.

S. Dromio plays on the word "angels"; this time the

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\(^3\)Shakespeare, Comedy of Errors, ed. J. Dover Wilson, pp. 104-106.
coins are good angels. He calls the courtesan who then appears on the scene "Mistress Satan", another character in his miracle play. He puns on the word "light" and quotes, "It is written, they appear to men like angels of light." As to the invitation to dinner, he says, "expect spoon-meat or bespeak a long spoon. . . he must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil." In "The Tempest" Stephano had said:

This is a devil and no monster, I will leave him;
I have no long spoon.

Capell says: "The Vice was made to associate with the Devil in the ancient moralities, in which it was a piece of humor to make the devil and him feed of the same custard or some such dish; the devil on one side and the vice on the other with a spoon of vast length." The long spoon was necessary so that he could reach the dish and keep at a distance from the fiend.

In the contention between the good and bad

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1Cf. II Corinthians. xi: 14.
2Comedy of Errors, IV, ii and iii.
3The Tempest, II, ii, 100.
4Shakespeare, The Tempest, ed. Furness, p. 133.
powers of the soul, the chief representative of the evil principle is naturally the devil; the representative of the good, the guardian angel. The genius or demon, good or bad, attending upon one throughout life, was a familiar figure in the moral plays. In trying to resolve the problem of the "Comedy of Errors", the Duke says:

One of these men is Genius to the other,
And so of these, which is the natural man,
And which the spirit?¹

Hark! you are call'd. Some say the genius so Cries "Come!" to him that instantly must die.²

Thy daemon, that thy spirit which keeps thee, is
Noble, courageous, high, unmatchable,
Whereas Caesar's is not; but near him thy angel
Becomes a fear, as being o'erpow'r'd.³

and under him
My Genius is rebuk'd, as it is said
Mark Antony's was by Caesar.⁴

The word "daemon" in its original Greek sense meant a tutelary deity or spirit. In the moral plays man was

¹Comedy of Errors, V, i, 332-334.
²Troilus and Cressida, IV, iv, 52-53.
³Antony and Cleopatra, II, iii, 19-22.
⁴Macbeth, III, i, 55-57.
accompanied by not only a good angel but also by an evil angel.

You follow the young prince up and down like his ill angel.
Not so, my lord! your ill angel is light, but I hope he that looks upon me will take me without weighing.¹

This is a double play. Satan appears as an angel of light and an angel the coin, if bad is light in weight.²

The fiend hath pricked down Bardolph irrecoverable; and his face is Lucifer's privy kitchen, where he does nothing but roast maltworms. For the boy, there is a good angel about him; but the devil outbids him too.³

The devil has put Bardolph in his list or roll. The phrase "the devil outbids him" may be a reference to Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus" in which the devil does outbid the good angel.⁴

thou thinkest me as far in the devil's book as thou and Falstaff for obduracy and persistency.⁵

they set spurs and away, like three German devils, three Doctor Faustuses.⁶

¹II Henry IV, I, ii, 185-188.
²Noble, op. cit., p. 175.
³II Henry IV, II, iv, 359-362.
⁵II Henry IV, II, ii, 49.
⁶Merry Wives, IV, v, 70.
Bardolph and Nym had ten times more valor than this roaring devil in 'th' old play that everyone may pare his nails with a wooden dagger.1

This refers not to any particular play, but to the old Morality Plays, in which the Devil was frequently the butt of the Vice or Clown. The "roaring devil" had a combination of braggadocio and cowardice just like Pistol. Vice used to offer to pare the Devil's nails.2

Feste has a good description in his song:

I am gone, sir;  
And anon, sir,  
I'll be with you again,  
In a trice  
Like to the old Vice,  
Your need to sustain;

Who with dagger of lath,  
In his rage and his wrath,  
Cries "aha!" to the devil  
Like a mad lad  
"Pare thy nails, dad!"  
Adieu, good man, devil.3

Picturing the devil with horns is a custom from ancient times.

Wert thou the devil and wor'st it on thy horn,  
It should be challenged.4

1Henry V, IV, iv, 75.


3Twelfth Night, IV, ii, 130.

4Troilus and Cressida, V, ii, 95.
there will the devil meet me like an old cuckold with horns on his head.\(^1\)

he of Wales that gave Amamon the bastinado, and made Lucifer cuckold, and swore the devil his true liegeman upon the cross of a Welsh hook.\(^2\)

J. Q. Adams is undoubtedly right in suggesting that Falstaff alludes to Lucifer's horns. No Elizabethan could let slip the chance to mention the horns that were said to grow on the forehead of the husband of an unfaithful wife.\(^3\) Cuckoldom was the "fiend's arch mock."\(^4\)

The association of the devil with dancing and dance music is a venerable notion. Etienne de Bourbon, a Preaching Friar of the thirteenth century, declares that the devil is the inventor and patron of dances.\(^5\)

Heigh, heigh, the devil rides upon a fiddle-stick!\(^6\)

Now I perceive the devil understands Welsh; And 'tis no marvel he is so humorous.

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\(^1\) Much Ado About Nothing, II, i, 46.
\(^2\) I. Henry IV, II, iv, 371.
\(^3\) Shakespeare, Sixteen Plays, ed. Kittredge, p. 568.
\(^4\) Othello, IV, i, 71.
\(^6\) I. Henry IV, II, iv, 534.
By'r Lady, he is a good musician.¹

After all, it is no wonder that the devil understands Welsh; he is so whimsical a fellow that he might naturally take a fancy to learn such a strange language. "Devil", therefore, is sometimes taken in the sense of a comic fellow.

Our house is hell; and thou a merry devil,
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.²

To the gates of Tartar, thou most excellent devil of wit.³

¹I Henry IV, III, 1, 230-232.
²Merchant of Venice, II, iii, 2-3.
³Twelfth Night, II, v, 227.
CHAPTER VI

"DEVIL" BY METONYMY AND AS AN EXPLETIVE

Since in scholastic philosophy, as well as in literature and in popular belief, the devil was thoroughly evil himself and was actively engaged in trying to induce men to evil, the term "devil" came to be used for someone who was conspicuous for wickedness. As King Henry VI says,

'Good Gloucester' and 'good devil' were alike, And both preposterous.

Salisbury exclaims, "that misbegotten devil, Faulconbridge" and Falstaff with characteristic verbal vehemence refers to his enemies as

that fiend Douglas, that spirit Percy, and that devil Glendower

The Prince carries the figure farther by saying that Falstaff is a devil in disguise:

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1III Henry VI, V, vi, 4.
2King John, V, iv, 4.
3I Henry IV, II, iv, 404.
There is a devil haunts thee in the likeness of an old fat man.¹

When Falstaff pretends not to comprehend, Hal continues,

That villainous abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff, that old white-bearded Satan.²

Isabel, who has probed the depths of Angelo's villainy, says to the Duke concerning him:

You bid me seek redemption of the devil.³

Shylock is called "devil" over and over:

Let me say amen betimes, lest the devil cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.⁴

And curb this cruel devil of his will.⁵

Here to this devil.⁶

To Lucius nothing is so vile and depraved as Aaron; therefore he says of him,

¹ Henry IV, II, iv, 492.
² Henry IV, II, iv, 508.
³ Measure for Measure, V, i, 29.
⁴ Merchant of Venice, III, i, 22.
⁵ Merchant of Venice, IV, i, 217.
⁶ Merchant of Venice, IV, i, 287.
This is the incarnate devil.\(^1\)

It is not surprising that Anne's favorite name for Richard is "devil":

> What black magician conjures up this fiend?\(^2\)

> And mortal eyes cannot endure the devil.

> Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell.\(^3\)

> Foul devil, for God's sake hence, and trouble us not.\(^4\)

> O wonderful when devils tell the truth.\(^5\)

Women are also called devils. Othello, who believes that Desdemona has been unfaithful, says,

> I will withdraw

> To furnish me with some swift means of death

> For the fair devil.\(^6\)

Cressida says, "Women are angels wooing"\(^7\); Iago says, "You [women] are devils being offended."\(^8\)

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\(^1\)Titus Andronicus, V, i, 40.
\(^2\)Richard III, I, ii, 34.
\(^3\)Richard III, I, ii, 45-46.
\(^4\)Richard III, I, ii, 50.
\(^5\)Richard III, I, ii, 73.
\(^6\)Othello, III, iii, 476.
\(^7\)Troilus and Cressida, I, ii, 312.
\(^8\)Othello, II, i, 112.
the most inhuman characters Shakespeare ever produced was the unnatural Goneril. Albany associates her so closely with the devil that, although he knows she is a woman, yet she seems to be changing to a fiend before his eyes.¹

See thyself, devil!
Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman. ...
Thou changed and self-covered thing, for shame!
Bemonster not thy feature!²

Both Petruchio and Kate are called devils:

Why, he's a devil, a devil, a very fiend.
Why, she's a devil, a devil, the devil's dam.³

One's viewpoint changes things radically, for Armado says,

Love is a devil. There is no evil angel but Love.⁴

Occasionally, "devil" is used profanely in an imprecation or as an expletive.

Where the devil should this Romeo be?⁵

¹Shakespeare, Sixteen Plays, ed. Kittredge, p. 1198.
²King Lear, IV, ii, 59-61, 63-64.
³Taming of the Shrew, III, ii, 157-158.
⁴Love's Labor's Lost, I, ii, 178.
⁵Romeo and Juliet, II, iv, 1.
The devil take Henry of Lancaster and thee!¹
The devil take order now.²
What the devil art thou?³
Why the devil should we keep knives to cut one another's throats?⁴

Shakespeare's use of "devil", whether he employs it literally or in a figure of speech, emphasizes the malignant nature of the evil spirit. This wickedness of Satan is brought out strongly by comparison with all that is repugnant in the worst of men. "Devil" did not imply an abstract principle of evil to the Elizabethans but a personal enemy of mankind. The greatest harm that could befall a man was to become a victim of the devil's snares. These ideas were a commonplace to Shakespeare's audience.

¹Richard II, V, v, 103.
²Henry V, IV, v, 22.
³King John, II, i, 134.
⁴Henry V, II, i, 95.
CONCLUSION

From the foregoing study, we may logically conclude that basically Shakespeare's concepts of "angel" and "devil" are scholastic and traditional. For Shakespeare and the Elizabethans the angels indeed "keep their ancient places." The angel of traditional Hebrew and Christian thought is the messenger of God and the guardian and helper of men. As such, he appears frequently throughout the plays. Shakespeare's characters refer to the spiritual nature of the angels, their brightness, their beauty, their perfection, and their powerful voices. Of the choirs, he mentions Powers, Principalities, Cherubim. Philosophically, angels are essential in the chain of being; this Neoplatonic concept is stressed particularly in The Tempest. By metonymy "angel" is used for one who is beautiful or good or both.

In medieval and Christian thought, devils are angels who have fallen from grace through pride and who try to do harm to men. The devil is a liar, the
Prince of Darkness, an evil intelligence. He tempts men by disguising evil as good that he may afterwards lead men to hell. As such he appears throughout the plays. The devil's tactics and the horrible consequences which follow when man acquiesces in his suggestions are best brought out in the tragedy of *Macbeth*, which is an illustration of the principles taught by the scholastics.

Unlike many writers of his day, Shakespeare for the most part keeps clear of the exaggerated notions of superstition and witchcraft prevalent at the time. The demoniacal elements in *King Lear* and *Twelfth Night* are camouflage. In Shakespeare's works there are also echoes of the Devil and the Vice of the morality plays. "Devil" is used by metonymy for a malignant person, and occasionally as an expletive or in a curse.
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