

CHAPTER IV

DISSEMBLING COURTESY

We have observed earlier that courtesy is the expression of inner grace in speech and conduct. If it is so, it is quite possible for people to cultivate this art of expression, not as an end in itself, but as a means to gain their ends. In other words, nurture may be possible even in the total absence of the quality of inner grace and so used for an evil purpose. Without any 'inner virtue' people may show a perfectly immaculate exterior or courteous behaviour. There are men and women in Shakespeare who outwardly are models of grace and refinement; they speak fairly and act gently; they are polite, appear to be considerate and deferential to others. They can be brave in arms and yet can produce a supple

knee if occasion so requires to realize their base intentions. Shakespeare sharply marks them out for us as cozeners in courtesy, mean and wicked dissemblers, who abuse the courtly ideal, and show them up in ~~indistinct~~ contrast to people, whose virtuous 'inward' is in keeping with their gentle 'outward'. That Shakespeare does so, lends support to our view that for Shakespeare courtesy means a perfect balance and harmony of inner and outer grace. Though the cozeners may deceive the genuine sometimes, the dramatist usually leaves a clear hint so that we may recognise their simulating wickedness. It would be interesting to study how carefully Shakespeare reveals the dissemblers on the stage.

The Queen in Cymbeline is one such person. At our first encounter with her, we see her performing an act of courtesy, that of helping the young lovers, Imogen and Posthumus. Her kindness to them may well make us think kindly of her, as we know nothing of her character just then. But no sooner she departs than Imogen bursts out :

"O Dissembling courtesy !"
(Cymbeline : I,i,83-84)

It is as if Shakespeare wanted us to use those three words as yard-stick to measure the Queen's character. If we could probe into the artist's mind when he wrote words, it might be revealed to us how much he was thinking of courtesy as an index to character. For any one familiar with Shakespeare's way of using courtesy as a means of revealing character this brief out-burst would be all too sufficient to expose the Queen as a cozening knave, even if Imogen herself had not supplemented ~~with~~ with, 'How fine this tyrant can tickle where she wounds !' (84-85). To such a reader therefore the list of her evil deeds that the physician Cornelius gives to Cymbeline,^(V,5) comes as no surprise.

Lady Macbeth's case is very different. Shakespeare's method is to unfold a character gradually but to give the hints almost atonce. She is, of course, a much subtler woman, if also much grander than the Queen. Her grandeur outweighs her evil. We meet her, 'Macbeth's dearest partner of greatness', first at Inverness reading Macbeth's letter; the news of 'the promised greatness' in the letter is enough to set her thinking about how to accomplish it, as if that

greatness was hers by right. Immediately she proceeds to consider the hurdles on the way and how she may clear them. There is an urgency about her thoughts; she has no time for scruples and therefore there is no question of courtesy. That would come at the proper time. Meanwhile a messenger announces the king's arrival, and by sheer coincidence it falls in with her designs of the moment. Macbeth is coming, too, she finds out; whereas for the fellow who 'had the speed of him' and 'was almost dead for breath' to bring the tidings, she bids : "Give him tending; He brings great news". (I,v,39-40). That is not an act of courtesy because such an act should have sprung from genuine pity. She bids the servant to give him tending because 'he brings great news', that per chance falls in with her secret plans. With all this preparation, Duncan's entrance under her battlements is already 'fatal', 'the raven himself is hoarse'. (40-41).

The first hurdle in the way is, of course, Macbeth himself, 'too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way', but that obstacle she will overcome. Let him come and she will 'pour

my spirits in thine ear, And chastise with the valour of my tongue'.(27-28). The second hurdle is her own womanliness. Therefore to cross it she would be 'unsexed' and propitiate 'spirits tending on mortal thoughts', so that 'no compunctious visitings of nature' may shake her 'fell purpose' (46-47). Already the die is cast and the plan is afoot. At the end of the scene, she has 'the night's great business' into her dispatch.

All this is quick work, so quick indeed that there is hardly any time to think of other things, particularly things like courtesy. Spirits tending on mortal thoughts are afloat in the air. Did Shakespeare not think of courtesy, as it is his wont to do, even by way of contrast, in revealing so dire a character? Or is it that the play was 'cut', and the author dropped the use of courtesy in the process of cutting it? All this is possible, yet, courtesy is not altogether left out. Lady Macbeth is probably thinking in her quick and secret way of an act of courtesy, while looking on Macbeth's face and finding some 'strange matter' there. King Duncan is coming and his 'noble hostess' will have to welcome him. What

about the husband ? If he is unable to dissemble
courtesy every thing would be lost. Therefore her
instructions to him are :

"Your face, my thane, is a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time : bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue : look like the innocent
 flower,
But be the serpent under 't. He that's coming
Must be provided for :

(I, v, 64-69)

In short, simulate courtesy to welcome the king, which Macbeth cannot to order do. He can be good or bad; but not both at once, not at the present moment any way, when the good and the bad are battling within himself. We have only to wait for a few minutes for the next scene when she, not Macbeth, welcomes the king. Duncan is surprised that Macbeth is not present at the reception. His sudden,

"See, see, our honour'd hostess ! "
(I,vi,10)

.does not surprise us because we know the truth. And Lady Macbeth plays her part to perfection, that of 'looking like the time, to beguile the time'. Each piece of the instruction she had given to her husband, she carries out to the letter, 'looking like the innocent flower' to her finger-tips. It is a great

scene, (one of only 30 lines), in Shakespeare for the exchange of mutual courtesy, and critics have deservedly praised it. To advance the plot, it does nothing more than mark Duncan's arrival; that could have been done in other ways. But the scene, with its grace of courtesy, has the dramatic function of offering relief between two hideous scenes of terrible resolution and contemplation of king-slaughter. It is one of the few sunny scenes in the play. Here in its last twenty lines are contrasted two exactly antithetical characters in point of courtesy. On the one hand is the courtesy of the 'meek' and 'clear' unsuspecting king, with genuine love to offer, ("the word 'love' was native to his tongue; he used it four times in twenty lines of his conversation with Lady Macbeth"¹); on the other is the fawning courtesy of a mercilessly ambitious character, hiding murder behind a most cordial and felicitous welcome. Thus Shakespeare contrasts not only Macbeth but also Lady Macbeth with Duncan. In fact, it is the latter who is the more precise antithesis to the king, and by as it were putting white against black the dramatist accentuates

¹ Mark Van Doren : Introduction to the play in "Shakespeare's Five Great Tragedies" : p.421.

both. The king kissing the hostess, 'By your leave hostess', at the end of the scene is the very height of his grace as also it is the climax of the contrast between the two characters, with all the irony about it. Here in the play at this stage is a triangle, if we may so describe it, with Duncan at one point in his genuinely simple courtesy, Lady Macbeth at the other extreme of the line, in subtle simulating courtesy, and Macbeth hanging up in the middle between the purely good and evil. But the remarkable thing is that Shakespeare renders such effects through the medium of courtesy. It shows also how conscious Shakespeare was all the time of the idea of courtesy, when he was creating his characters.

As these two portraits, of the Queen in Cymbeline and Lady Macbeth, illustrate the women with dissembling courtesy, so among men there are courteous cozeners and a consideration of some of them would bear out the same truth that in Shakespeare, courtesy, to be worthy of its name must proceed from inner virtue.

Parolles in All's Well That Ends Well is a dissembler, who is posed against the old courtier Lafew.

He is simply wicked and there is something very nasty about the man: his picture is drawn with a raw and juvenile hand.¹ He could be dropped out of the play in spite of the drum incident, which may have been intended to bring some rather cheap comic element into the play. If he goes, Lafew goes out with him; but if he remains, the old courtier is artistically and ethically, necessary to it. Not only does he "smoke" the dissembling rascal but he also provides a contrast in courtesy to Parolles. Some others in the play know the profane rogue but Lafew takes some time to detect him; once he does it he begins to act very severely with him. The boaster is directly told that he has been taking too much liberty with the nobility and acting above his station of birth and virtue in his relations with them (II,iii,263-267). The contrast runs practically from beginning to end of the play and if we can excuse the old lord for the surprising offer of his daughter for Bertram, the contrast is realised towards the end of the play when Lafew becomes both merciful and light-heartedly ironical in his treatment of Parolles. All is ending

¹ See Quiller-Couch's Introduction to the play in the New Shakespeare edition.

well : the villain has been exposed and humiliated. Though he is^a fool and a knave yet he shall eat; (V,ii,51) all those who are not dead, live, and so will he as long as the spark of life is in him, dignity or no dignity. In the meantime the woeful tale of Helena's misfortune is over : Bertram has received his lesson in courtly behaviour : woman's honour has been vindicated after all the tribulations. That brings a tear to the old lord's eye : to wipe it he gets a kerchief from Parolles, thanks him, wants to make sport with him and calls his courtesy scurvy (V,iii,321-322). He furnishes, with his courtly experience, honesty and candour a running contrast and commentary upon the smooth and oily Parolles.

But such simulators in courtesy as Parolles can be seen through without much difficulty. There are others in the plays so perfect in the art that not a word from them may betray them or profane the courtly atmosphere, its refinement and dignity. Claudius in Hamlet is such an arch-dissembler, who can be courtly cap-a-pea, despite adultery and murder. No one who reads the play can miss his regal dignity poured out

word after word in a breath of smooth, almost benign eloquence. Gartrude, another dissembler, may waver or betray artifice; not so Claudius, watch him, where we may. He cannot speak with the transparent sincerity of a Duncan, but a king may choose not to do so and yet be no sinner. And consider the regal courtesy and dignity, the tone of cordiality and felicity of phrase, even the poetry of the following his first words in the play :

"Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
 The memory be green, and that it us befitted
 To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
 To be contracted in one brow of woe,
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
 Together with remembrance of ourselves.
 Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
 The imperial jointress to this warlike state,
 Have we, as 't were with a defeated joy, -
 With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
 With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
 In equal scale weighing delight and dole, -
 Taken to wife : nor have we herein barr'd
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
 With this affair along. For all, our thanks.

If careful elegant words can gloss over wickedness these ought to do it. But this is giving thanks for kindness done, (or professed to have been done). Now let us hear greetings and farewell, which follow :

Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbrass,
 Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
 Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
 Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
 Colleague'd with this dream of his advantage,
 He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,
 Importing the surrender of those lands
 Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
 To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
 Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting:
 Thus much the business is : we have here writ
 To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, -
 Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
 Of this his nephew's purpose, - to suppress
 His further gait herein; in that he levies,
 The lists and full proportions, are all made
 Out of his subject : and we here dispatch
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,
 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
 Giving to you no further personal power
 To business with the king more than the scope
 Of these delated articles allow.
 Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty
 Heartily farewell.
 (Hamlet : I, ii, 1-41)

In one breath, he thanks, greets and bids farewell,
 the three gestures of courtesy, in language atonce
 facile and dignified, in a voice modulated to the
 utterance of each syllable. That astute and calculating
 of all politicians in courtesy, Bolingbroke, is not
 more suave, smooth and cautious than this 'counterfeit
 presentment'. So difficult even for Hamlet it is to
 pierce through his mask and 'sift' him that the action
 of a full play before him is necessary to tear it.
 Therefore, 'Even with the very comment of thy soul

Observe my uncle' (III,ii,84-85), he tells Horatio, to 'unkennel' his 'occulted guilt !' To every one in the play, Claudius is courteous, simulating his speech and voice to each person and occasion. If a person wears such courtesy in speech as a habit, and if courteous speech and gestures are intended to express inner virtues and keep them in exercise, would not such continuous practice of courteous behaviour make a person even on some solitary occasion morally conscious of himself ? It happens indeed in Hamlet. Polonius, quite unwillingly brings about this rare phenomenon in Act III, Sc. I. The old courtier is generalising his daughter :

"We are oft to blame in this, -
'Tis too much proved - that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself."
(III, i, 46-49)

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And the truth of this as applied to his own conduct, suddenly stings Claudius.

King : (aside) o, tis true !
How smart a lash that speech doth give my
conscience !
The harlot's cheek, beautiful with
plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than my deed to my most painted word :
O heavy burthen !

(III, i, 49-54)

Dissemblance is as ugly as vice. In fact, it is itself a vice. It is significant that this self-consciousness manifests itself before the play scene.

The fact is that Shakespeare always keeps alive for us the ideal of grace as harmony of inner virtue and its translation into speech and action. The dissemblers are invariably 'sifted' out either by a contrast with others or by such rare glimpses of self-revelation in the character itself. It is the business of Shakespeare's art to fathom the very soul of a character and often he uses some aspect of courtesy to this purpose. Despite the Queen's wickedness, (and her simulated farewell to Ophelia - sweets to the sweet - we may join in even out of our courtesy to that poor soul !), consider the courtesy that her husband's ghost and her living son, the noblest and most courteous of all Shakespeare's heroes, offer her. The ghost's explicit instruction to Hamlet in seeking his revenge on that 'incestuous and adulterous beast'. Claudius, is to contrive nothing against his mother. Why, we may ask ? Not certainly because the ghost thought that she was an innocent prey to the vile seductions of Claudius. He knew full well she was only "seeming-virtuous" :

"But virtue, as it never will be moved,
 Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
 So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed
 And prey on garbage".

(I, v, 53-57)

It is because such a revenge on a woman would be discourtesy, the reverse of that graceful translation of virtue into action. It would be out of keeping with the dramatist's conception of womanhood (and the ghost's words give adequate expression to its purity) and the reverence due to it. It would therefore 'taint' the mind' and 'corrupt the soul'. When Hamlet meets the Queen, on the subject of her vice, (Act III, Sc.IV), he becomes hard, almost cruel, to her. That makes her see her soul :

" O Hamlet, speak no more !
 Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
 And there I see such black and grained spots
 As will not leave their tinct".

(Ibid : III, iv, 89-92)

Has he forgotten himself in passion, forgotten the command of his father's ghost ?; forgotten courtesy ?
 He thinks so as the ghost appears :

"Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
 That lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
 The important acting of your command ?

(Ibid : III, iv, 107-109)

It was only to 'whet' his almost blunted purpose'. But look at the amazed mother :

"O, step between her and her fighting soul :
 Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works :
 (III, iv, 115)

And Hamlet makes amends, how courteously ?

Ham ! "How is it with you, lady "
 (III, iv, 116)

Forgive me this my virtue,
 For in the fatness of these puray times
 Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
 Yes, curb and woo for leave to do him good".
 (III, iv, 153-156)

Assume a virtue, if you have it not,
 That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
 Of habits devil, 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 ".
 (III, iv, 161-166)

Even dissemblance, that is, would be better than mere rudeness ! If virtue may beg of vice to do it good then why not treat vice also with courtesy ? Why not follow the conventions of good behaviour and polite manners even for the sake of them ? Their habitual use may breed virtue, or wake up vice to its own condition ! These cozeners get their need in the end inevitably in every play. Even when they are forgiven, a smarting and relenting conscience is their reward. With all the secularity brought into Elizabethan literature by the Renaissance, Christian theocratic ideals had an important bearing on the way

dramatists of the age ordain these cozeners to receive their destiny in the plays. Deep down in their simulating characters may be found with proper dissection, the simmering of a moral conscience however faint and unheeded : Claudius, Lady Macbeth, the Queen in Cymbeline, Iachimo are examples of this class of characters.

There is another class of characters in Shakespeare's plays who seem to be totally amoral veritable demons, to whom no code of ethics can appeal; and whose only positive principle of conduct is to destroy grace, peace and harmony, to befoul the face of virtue. There is in them a total absence of conscience and they derive a gleeful satisfaction from their business. No wonder critics like Moulton¹ who have tried to seek a moral system in the plays of Shakespeare have found it difficult to relate their retribution with the enormity of their guilt. Iago, King Richard III, Aaron, the Moore, the bastard John Donn in Much Ado About Nothing are characters of this class. Spivack, in his brilliant study of Shakespeare's relation with the Allegory of Evil has discovered a family likeness in

¹ R.G. Moulton : The Moral System of Shakespeare.

these characters and traced their ancestry to the Villaine and the Vice of the old morality and homiletic plays.¹ The difficulty with these characters is that on account of their ethically and socially ungoverned conduct they cannot be grabbed and shoved into any known variety of human behaviour. This is just so; because they are not proper human beings at all, but demons given a human shape, name and habitation. They are certainly, not puppets : they 'realize' themselves on the stage in the very performance of the specific function for which they exist, that of destroying grace and goodness. Shakespeare has turned them into veritable dramatic artists and made them act their devilry before an audience many of whom, while

¹ "Their reasons have neither logical correspondence with their actions, nor - what is more important - an emotional correspondence with their dramaturgic personalities. They express themselves as moved by resentment, ambition, hatred, professional and sexual jealousy, but they do not behave as if they were so moved. In the case of all of them, we are aware of an inexplicable disjunction between the passional implications of their expressed incentives and their inextinguishable vivacity and hilarity. Their one real emotion is effervescent zest in the possibilities of mischief and a jubilant savoring of success therein". Bernard Spivack : Shakespeare and The Allegory of Evil. p.35.

possessing knowledge of their own dramatic tradition, were now feeling the impact of an essentially humanistic culture and the aesthetic warmth of Renaissance. One way of understanding them is to treat them as dramatic descendents in the tradition of the old Vice of the morality and homiletic plays of medieval times, whose business was to display Satan's strength over human souls, to destroy the fair works of God and be pleased with themselves. The image of the old Sire, with various transformations, persisted in literary tradition and was familiar to Tudor audiences. The dramatist now had to dress him up to suit the new humanistic atmosphere of the Renaissance. Shakespeare so successfully transmuted the traditional figure of Vice in these characters and put them so completely beyond recognition that critics had to go on dissecting their anatomy for centuries in order to disinter the bones of an ancient dramaturgic tradition, the old Vice of the moralities; Shakespeare accepted the old image of Vice as he found it and so deftly moulded it as to suit both the new developed dramatic genres, of tragedy and comedy. In the former, we might look for it behind the different shapes of his major villains, Iago, Richard III, Aaron, the Moor, Edmund; in the

latter we might notice meet it behind a Falstaff,
'that Old Vice, that grey Iniquity'.

Thus constituted as dramatic characters, they defy all attempts to interpret them by the measure of any code of conduct except as dissemblers of a given pattern of social behaviour. Yet in a dramatic world like Shakespeare's, where courteous social manners operate in a pronounced degree, and as an ideal must proceed from inner virtue, these demoniac characters have to move and act in an environment entirely antithetical to their constitution. That is why we do not associate courtesy with a character like Iago. When we think of Hamlet courtesy springs to our mind as a natural association of the Prince, the quality of courtesy being an integral part of his character and of the people of his class in the plays. But not so with King Richard III or with Falstaff. How then do they conduct themselves in an atmosphere so foreign to their composition? In fact, in a world of courtesy, grace and harmony they get the widest scope for the display of their craft and with their vile energy are so often masters of the stage. Dissemble they must - and how well they do it when occasion demands we shall

presently see - even to carry out their devilish subterfuges. As artists in simulation, they are simply superb. As they cannot expect to be constantly wary of their mask, they often adopt a general cover of frankness, simplicity and plainness which may excuse their ungente speech and give them a right to be rough as they please. The device serves them in two ways : they can defend their roughness with it and at the same time attack their anti-type, those gentle in speech, as self-seekers. So Richard of Gloster :

"Because I cannot flatter and speak fair,
Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive and cog,
Duck with French nods and apish courtesy,
I must be held a rawcorous enemy.
Cannot a plain man live and mean no harm,
But this simple truth must be abus'd
By silken, sly insinuating Jacks ?"

(King Richard III :I,iii,49-53)

Iago can be audaciously frank even about his fawning. Here is his version of himself, the Villaine, in a different position, that of a servant :

"O, sir, content you;
I follow him to serve my turn upon him !
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly followed. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
For not but provender; and when he's old
cashier'd :

Human life has no value for them, considering the way in which they bring tragedy into it and the rate at which they bring deaths into the plays. They hold as insignificant all values attached to human life, both of individual virtue and social behaviour. Virtue is a fig for Iago and he can set afloat a rumour that his own wife was unchaste with the Moor; Richard makes Buckingham publicly proclaim that his own mother was an adulteress and that the king, his brother, was her illicit child. All this is done so blatantly without a sense of shame that, even at the end, when they get defeated, they continue to display a complete absence of any moral sense. Iago is just mum when put to question :

"Demand me nothing : what you know, you know !
From this time forth I never will speak word".
(Ibid : V,ii,304-305)

This 'spartan dog, more fell than auguish, hunger or the sea', when Othello wounds him, has the audacity to say :

"I bleed, Sir, but not killed".
(Ibid : V,ii,289)

Richard's behaviour at the end of the play, despite a brief moment of self-analysis, is similar

The two camps are pitched on Bosworth field, God on one side and devil on the other. The whole scene is full of christian sentiments; (the frequency with which the words, God, Devil, Angels are used in it is remarkable). Richard gets terrible dreams in the night before the battle : the spirits of those he had killed torment him'.

"By the Apostle Paul, shadows tonight
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers
Armed in proof and led by shallow Richmond".

(King Richard III:V,iii,218-220)

But this is all the self-analysis that we can
distil from his fright :

Soft ! I did but dream. -
O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me !
The lights burn blue. - It is now dead midnight.
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What, do I fear myself ? there's none else by :
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
Is there a murderer here ? No; - Yes; I am :
Then fly. What, from myself ? Great reason why, -
Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself !
Alack, I love myself. Wherefore ? for any good
That I myself have done unto myself ?
O, no! alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself !
I am a villain ! Yet I lie, I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well : - fool, do not flatter.
My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain.
Perjury, perjury, in the high'st degree;
Murder, stern murder, in the dir'st degree;
Throng to the bar, crying all, Guilty, guilty !

I shall despair. There is no creature loves me;
And if I die no soul shall pity me:
Nay, wherefore should they, - since that I myself
Find in me no pity to myself?

(King Richard III : V,iii,179-204)

The moment soon passes. 'The sun will not be seen today'; The sky doth frown and lour upon our army: (284) but what is that to him more than to Richmond ? He immediately starts giving directions for the battle with all his previous alacrity; and the fright is over, babbling conscience is quiet :

"Go gentlemen, every man unto his charge;
Let not our babbling dreams offright our souls;
Conscience is but a word that cowards use,
Devis'd at first to keep the strong in awe:
Our strong arms must be our conscience,
 swords our law.
March on, join bravely, let us to't pell-mell;
If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell"-

(Ibid : V,iii,308-314)

Before going to hell, he is found on the field crying for a horse :

"A horse ! a horse ! my kingdom for a horse !

(Ibid : V, iv, 7)

The end is near : the day is with the Gods. Unlike 'the spartan dog' who only bled, "the bloody dog is dead". (Ibid : V,v,2)

Beasts and Devil are the terms used in the plays either in direct reference to describe the qualities of these characters; or in oblique criticism of their behaviour, the antithesis Angel and God are used. These antithetical groups of terms are derived from the language of christianity from the story of the battle between God and Satan for the human souls, as also from the Cosmic concept of 'degree'. In the formation of his ideal of courtesy, Shakespeare relates these ideas to the refinement of the Renaissance. We have seen that courtesy is the medium through which "inner grace" flows out into language and behaviour. If these characters are dissemblers in courtesy then, the 'grace' of the people, who are their polar contrary, the genuinely courteous, might have something ultimately to do with Christian moral virtues. Any way, Shakespeare's grace, despite the lustre it reflects of the Renaissance has, as we have already observed, medieval moral virtues at its core.

These dissemblers often endeavour to hide their wickedness under a cover of frankness. Occasions, however, must naturally arise when they would be put to dissemble the language and conduct of courtesy.

This they do with perfect competence and consummate skill. Richard, for example, finds that to win his way to the crown, he must win and marry Anne, widow of the late Prince of Wales whom he has killed. He intercepts her as she is following the cortege bearing the corpe of the late king, her father-in-law whom also Richard has killed. Anne knows him as the murderer and has nothing but curses and hatred for the man. Yet Richard makes a bid to win her. It is exactly the province of vice to challenge virtue when it is or appears to be most invulnerable. There follows a wooing unique in all the plays of Shakespeare, unique also in all the tales of chivalric romances. Though at one stage, Anne spits on him, the Devil in the part of a gallant is so perfect, and so audacious, that the lady is finally won over : albeit that she soon repents and is shortly killed by him. All the tricks in the armour of villainy are used to win Anne. Sweetest words of love, uninhibited flattery, the ardour of deepest passion, a spring of tears, death inviting despair. His technique complete with kneeling and all, enables him even to offer her to kill him. He professes to have killed her husband and his father for her sake ! And as for his love for her, what gallant in courtesy

would want to reform the language and enlarge the
passion ? -

Glos : "Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.

Anne : Would they were basilisks, to strike thee
dead !

Glos : I would they were, that I might die atonce;
For now they kill me with a living death.
Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn
salt tears :
Sham'd their aspects with store of childish
tear.

- - - - -

My tongue could never learn sweet smoothing
word;
But, now thy beauty is propos'd my fee,
My proud heart sues, and prompts my tongue
to speak.
Teach not lip such scorn; for it was made
For kissing, lady, not for such contempt".

(I,ii,113-172)

He offers his sword to her to kill him; but at
the end he offers his ring and she accepts. Peace is
made and the lady is won, despite his 'own misshapen
shape'. This is the Devil's own opinion of his perfor-
mance as a gallant, "the marvellous proper man" and the
lady's surrender :

"Was ever woman in this humour woo'd ?
Was ever woman in this humour won ?
I'll have her; but I will not keep her long.
What ! I, that kill'd her husband and his father,
To take her in heart's extremest heat ;

- - - - -

And I no friends to back my suit withal,
 But the plain devil and dissembling looks,
 And yet to win her, - all the world to nothing !
 Ha !
 Hath she forgot already that brave prince," etc.

(Ibid : I,ii,227-239)

It is the Devil's joy at his work of destruction.

Artistically, for the Vice, the scene is a masterpiece of simulation with all the tricks of language and behaviour, the only parallel we can find to it would be the great seduction scene in Othello.

The only purpose of the uncanny art of these dissemblers is to befoul the good and despoil the beautiful in human life, everything, that is to say, which inner virtue may create by its expression in graceful speech and conduct. They do not only commit murders, dupe gullible virtue, attack chastity and commit outrages of a like nature; what they do above all is to contaminate, by their very presence, the atmosphere of courtesy and harmony, of grace and happiness. Because they are endowed with a number of human traits, and created by an artist who stood for Nature, they seek to find an excuse for their foul purpose, in which attempt indeed they are never consistent. Yet it is remarkable that they are spurred to

their hideous deeds, on their own confession, by a natural enmity to the good and genteel. Richard, who can 'set the murderous Machiavel to school'; (III. King Henry VI : III, ii, 193), is jealous of his gallant, affable, gentle, handsome elder brother and thinks that, as his own ugliness has cut him off from all gentle commerce with humanity he will destroy the grace and happiness of the world, and,

" - account this world but hell,
Until my misshap'd trunk that bears this head
Be round empaled with a glorious crown".

(Ibid : III, ii, 146-171)

And, in the play bearing his name, he says :

"And therefore - since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days, -
I am determined to prove a villain,
And hate the idle pleasures of these days".

(King Richard III : I, i, 28-31)

So he directs all his prowess of hate and guile to destroy the days of peace, of love, courtesy and happiness as also the men and women who by their virtues love these good things of life.

Don John in Much Ado About Nothing has a grudge against society because of the stigma of illegitimacy. It involves for him a personal deprivation and social disesteem and is sufficient reason for him to rouse his aggressive instincts. Like Richard for his gentle

gallant brother, Don John is jealous of 'the most exquisite Claudio':

" That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow; if I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way".

(Much Ado About Nothing : I,iii,65-67)

Shakespeare seems to follow a dramatic pattern by creating with these counterfeits in courtesy a negative force, a foil to the society of love and courtesy, of grace and generosity.

Oliver, in As You Like It, has the same motive for hating Orlando. It is the latter's gentleness :

"I hope I shall see an end of him; for my soul, yet I know not why, hates nothing more than he. Yet, he's gentle; never school'd, and yet learned; full of noble device; of all sorts enchantingly beloved; and, indeed, so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprized :

(As You Like It : I,i,167-174)

The use of the words 'gentle', 'noble', 'learned', 'beloved', the attributes of courtesy are significant. Old Adam describes Oliver properly :

"Within this roof
The enemy of all your graces lives".

(Ibid : II, iii, 19-20)

Iago hates Othello because
"The Moor - howbeit that I endure him not -
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature :

(Othello : II, i, 292-293)

and Cassio, because

"He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly.....

(Ibid : V, i, 20-21)

This hatred of grace is the constant generating impulse behind the villainous actions of these 'counterfeit presentments' in the plays. So they destroy harmony and carry discord wherever they go. It is usual in the plays ~~to~~ to find an atmosphere of cordiality, generosity, harmony, good will and mutual consideration, a sweetness arising from these qualities, where noblemen gather and particularly where women are present. But we sometimes experience a sudden disruptive profonation of this atmosphere when one of these villains comes on the scene or happens to be present there. There is perfect grace in the atmosphere in Cyprus where Cassio and Desdemona are awaiting Othello's arrival, despite their anxiety for the latter's safety (II,i), until Iago, given a chance

brings down the level of the conversation by airing his cynicism on womanhood and profaning the air.

Richard, with his more audacious will, can do it even more effectively. He has the power to transform a serene and noble atmosphere into a scene of bitterness, discord and abuse. King Edward's last illness is an instance in point. The lords are endeavouring to cheer the anxious Queen with all kindness and courtesy. Rivers, Gray, Buckingham, Derby use every consideration to soothe the sorrowing Queen, and until Richard's entry an atmosphere of perfect courtesy prevails; but pollution sets in as soon as Richard enters shouting :

"They do me wrong and I will not endure it".

(King Richard III : I,iii,42)

peace and harmony are rudely broken and yield place to 'blunt upbraidings and bitter scoffs' and, in their turn, give way to frayed tempers and abusive language. If anywhere in Shakespeare there is a scene of downright discourtesy among the nobles it is here, where even women of royalty indulge in unseemly scoffs and taunts. This degradation of nobility from grace is of course the result of deliberate knavery perpetrated by the villain, as he boasts gleefully when left alone :

"I do the wrong and first begin to brawl".

(Ibid : I,iii,325)

Two scenes later (II,i) the dying King Edward is enjoying a sense of relief and satisfaction at having done 'a good day's work', that of bringing love and amity among the warring nobles. Goodwill prevails and the lords embrace each other and pledge their love. A change however sets in as soon as Gloster enters and once again love and amity change into hate, disorder, despair.

These two sets of dissemblers, though different from each other in their dramatic constitution, in reality, bring about the same result, that of destroying what courtesy is calculated to create, an atmosphere of harmony and happiness. The difference between them is that the one set of simulators like Iago and Richard, whose dramatic progenitor is the old Vice, destroy the fruits of courtesy for the sake of it; for to them it is an end in itself and therefore its achievement is a matter of joy to them. As distinguished from this the other set unwillingly brings about discord and pollution in an atmosphere of culture in the process of following their own impulses. They crave for a gratification of their evil instincts, their greed, their carnal passions, their love of power

and the like and find it necessary to simulate for the fulfilment of their aims. But the result of their speech and action is identical : they are pitted against grace and seek to destroy it.

Our study of these simulators makes a few things clear in relation to our argument. The conscious portrayal of these dissemblers as enemies of grace lends substantial support to our view that courtesy in Shakespeare means a spontaneous flow of inner grace into speech and action. Again to unfold these dissemblers on the stage the dramatist makes very artful use of courtesy. It is by their simulation that we come to know them. These characters, as well as their antitype the genuine in courtesy, are a projection of Shakespeare's dramatic intention on the stage. The projection has a design, as of light and shadow, a dramatic contrast between the genuine and the spurious in courtesy. The instrument with which the dramatist draws these patterns of light and shadow is courtesy, which, indeed, gives the characters their 'form' by which we recognize and know them. And courtesy, as we shall still further see, is a very delicate and sensitive instrument with the dramatist

by which he fulfils his dramatic intention in a number of ways and by using it consciously and deliberately, he scores the most artistic effects.