

SHAKESPEARE'S "BADDIES" LIST

BY ALFRED J. DRAKE

(With due apologies to any Baddies overlooked)

From Dr. Johnson's "On Fiction" in *The Rambler* No. 4. 1750.

Vice, for Vice is necessary to be shewn, should always disgust; nor should the Graces of Gaiety, or the Dignity of Courage, be so united with it, as to reconcile it to the Mind.

Oscar Wilde, "Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*," 1891.

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.

.....

"I'll find a day to massacre them all / And raze their faction and their family, / The cruel father and his traitorous sons, / To whom I sued for my dear son's life, / And make them know what 'tis to let a queen / Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain."

Tamora, Queen of Goths in Act 1, Scene 1 of *Titus Andronicus*.

Female Baddies in Shakespeare

- Goneril, Lear's daughter in *King Lear* (cruelly pushes her father aside from power)
- Lady Macbeth (prods Macbeth to kill Duncan, then goes mad)
- Margaret of Anjou, Henry VI's queen in the *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*. (ferociously follows her own and Henry VI's dynastic interests; curses the Yorkists. But see [Sylvia Morris's article](#) in theshakespeareblog.com)
- Regan, Lear's daughter in *King Lear* (cruelly pushes her father aside from power)
- Tamora, Queen of Goths in *Titus Andronicus* (carries out vendetta against Titus and the Andronici clan)
- The Queen in *Cymbeline* (plots to poison Imogen, who rejected her son Cloten, and assassinate her husband the king)

.....
 "Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile, / And cry 'Content' to that which grieves my heart, And wet my cheeks with artificial tears, / And frame my face to all occasions."

Richard of Gloucester (the eventual Richard III) in Act 3, Scene 2 of *3 Henry 6*.

Male Baddies in Shakespeare

- Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* (arranges the rape of Titus's daughter Lavinia)
- Angelo in *Measure for Measure* (tries to extort sex from the saintly Isabella)
- Antiochus in *Pericles* (incestuous relationship with daughter, tries to kill Pericles)
- Antonio in *The Tempest* (Prospero's treasonous brother, who usurped his duchy)
- Buckingham in *Richard III* (helps Richard pull off his power grab)
- Caliban in *The Tempest* (tried to rape Miranda, conspires against Prospero)
- Claudius in *Hamlet* (kills his brother, Hamlet Sr.)
- Cloten, the Queen's son in *Cymbeline* (plots to kill Leonatus and ravish Imogen)
- Cornwall, Regan's husband in *King Lear* (blinds Gloucester for helping Lear)
- Don John in *Much Ado about Nothing* (tries to ruin Hero and Claudio's marriage)
- Duke Frederick in *As You Like It* (usurps duchy from Duke Senior, exiles Rosalind)
- Edmund the Bastard in *King Lear* (disinherits his "legitimate" brother Edgar)
- Iago in *Othello* (tricks Othello into murdering Desdemona)
- Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* (falsely accuses and imprisons Queen Hermione)
- Macbeth in *Macbeth* (kills King Duncan, steals his crown)
- Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (disrespects Sir Toby, behaves like a Puritan egomaniac)
- Oliver, Jacques's brother in *As You Like It* (deprives Orlando of proper upbringing)
- Othello in *Othello* (murders Desdemona on false evidence)
- Richard III in *Richard III, 2 & 3 Henry VI* (oh ... all sorts of things)
- Sebastian in *The Tempest* (conspires to kill his brother King Alonso)
- Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* (tries to collect his pound of flesh from Antonio)
- Titus Andronicus in *Titus Andronicus* (a revenger, but bakes his enemies in a pie)
- Tyrrel in *Richard III* (organizes the killing of the princes in the Tower)